



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

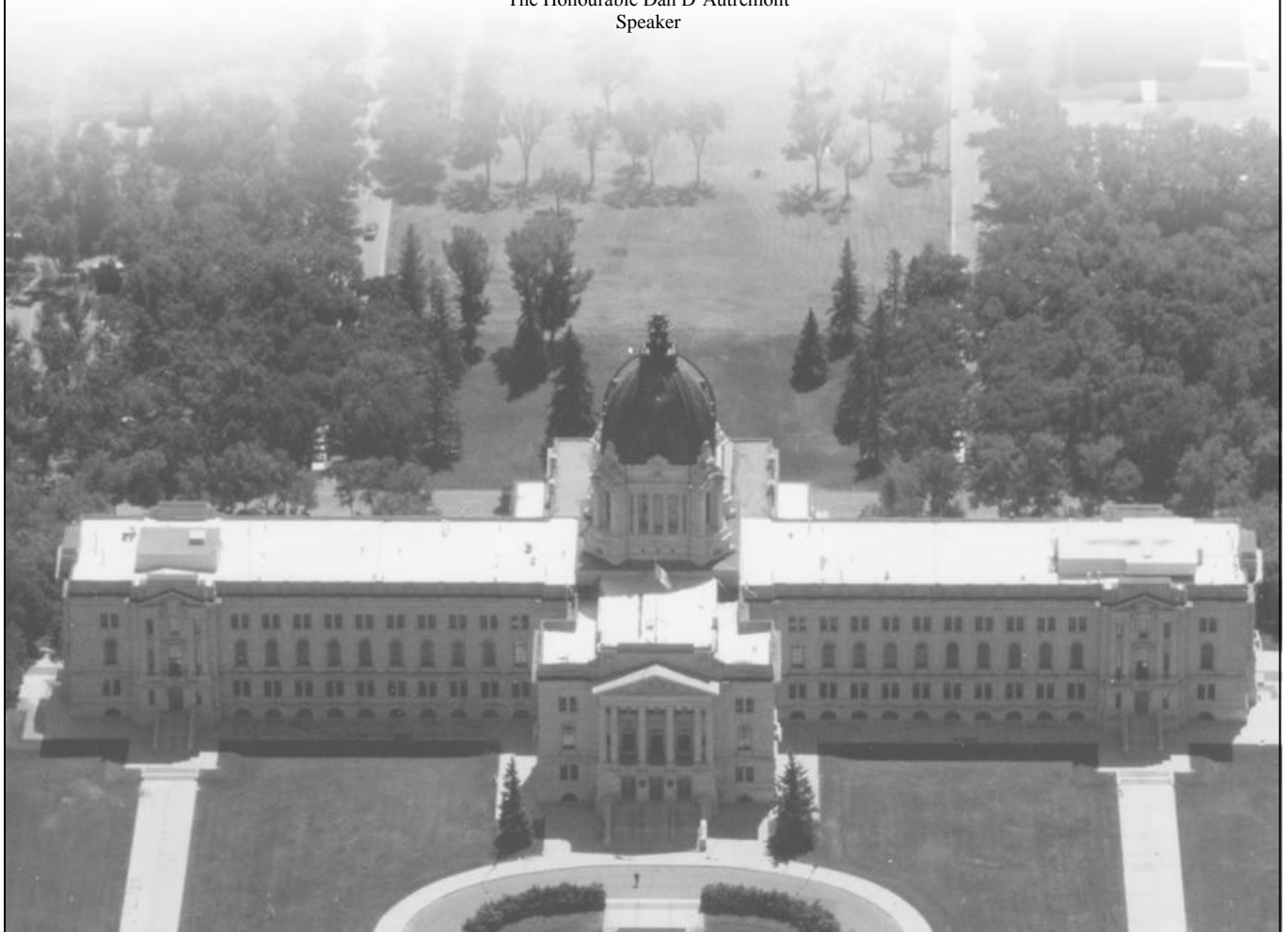
of the

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 met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Martensville.

Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I would like to introduce my friend Kristin Anderson. Kristin is the vice-president of western operations with Global Public Affairs out of Calgary.

We met in the Conservative war room in Ottawa in 2004. And despite all of her very many misgivings about me, we've become friends, and I certainly appreciate that. And she's also befriended some of my colleagues over the years as well. So I would like to have all of my colleagues welcome Kristin to this Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to introduce a person in your gallery who's very close to me. It's one of my sisters, one of my four sisters, seated up in the gallery.

And, Mr. Speaker, you know you'll be in good hands today. My sister Maureen is an RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] officer stationed in Wadena. And so I've warned her about the Social Services minister, who's the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for that area, who likes to get to meetings in a hurry from time to time — and to keep an eye out. So Maureen's in town for some training at the RCMP depot and I just wanted to welcome her to her Legislative Assembly.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all members of the Legislative Assembly, I'm pleased to give a general introduction to all the folks from the film and television industry who are in all three galleries here today.

I know that they've got some concerns about the film employment tax credit and need a little bit more from this government. But with that I would ask all members to join me in welcoming these folks, the face of the film and television industry, to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the government side of the House, I too would like to welcome the members of the film industry. They're welcome in their Legislative Assembly and we certainly look forward to working with them in the future.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — To you and through you, Mr. Speaker, seated in your gallery, much like the member from Northeast, I also have my sister that's here today, Mr. Speaker. A pleasure to introduce Chantel LaHaye to the Assembly, and here with our incredible nephews, her boys, Nicholas — can you give us a wave? — Elijah, and Dominic. I think he was making a little noise during the prayer, Mr. Speaker. So anyways, very pleased to have Chantel and her boys come here. Of course they're very important to Stephanie and I.

Chantel's husband Brian and her both live in Regina. Chantel is a community health nurse. And she's incredibly special to me as a friend from a personal perspective, but also an incredible political ally and supporter. I've been pretty lucky, Mr. Speaker. My sister has timed . . . And I know she hasn't timed these things. For me it's been convenient she had a mat leave, Mr. Speaker, in 2007. She had a mat leave in 2011, and it was . . . We've spent a lot of good time out there on the campaign trail this summer. In fact, that little Dominic was bouncing along door to door, door knocking with Uncle Trent. Anyways, I'd like to introduce my family to the Assembly. Chantel, so good to see you and boys. Nice to see you. I'd ask all members to join with me in welcoming them to their Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, it gives me a lot of pleasure today to introduce 23 public service employees who are seated in your gallery. They're here today to take part in the parliamentary program for the public service. And with us today, we have employees from the following ministries: Agriculture, Energy and Resources, Environment, Finance, First Nations and Métis Relations, Intergovernmental Affairs, and Municipal Affairs, Public Service Commission, and Social Services. And we have staff from Elections Saskatchewan.

The program that they're in part of today is an in-depth tour of our Legislative Building. They're going to have briefings by the Legislative Library, the Office of the Clerk, and Executive Council. And they're sitting in the Chamber to observe the House proceedings. And they're going to meet with members on both sides of the House. Mr. Speaker, we all know that we can't do our work in the legislature without the important people that work with us in the public service. So I'd like to welcome you to your legislature today.

And while I'm standing, I'd also like to welcome the RCMP member from Wadena, my favourite RCMP member, especially when I'm on the road. Welcome to your legislature.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to join with the minister in welcoming the public servants that are here for the parliamentary program to their Legislative Assembly. Certainly public service is of course about service of the people, and we in this Assembly benefit greatly from the work that they do on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. So on behalf of the official opposition, I'll be

participating later on. I look forward to that exchange but, most importantly, welcome to your Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Walsh Acres.

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to introduce my constituency assistant, Heather Howell-Shiplack. She joined me shortly after the election and like my colleague, Gene . . . sorry, my colleague from Regina Dewdney said the other day, CAs [constituency assistant] are very important to us. They do good work for us when we're sitting here in the House, and make sure that we know what our constituents are saying. And I just want to welcome her to our Legislative Assembly, and say, thank you for all your hard work so far.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for greater protection for late-night retail workers by passing Jimmy's law.

And we know that in the early morning hours of June 20th, 2011, Jimmy Ray Wiebe was shot two times and died from his injuries. He was working at a gas station in Yorkton, alone and unprotected from intruders. And we know that armed robberies such as the ones that took place in Regina in late January and also the one in Saskatoon just a few weeks ago show that Jimmy's law is needed more than ever to give workers added protection in the workplace.

We know that British Columbia and other provinces have brought several safety precautions through law, including a requirement that workers cannot be alone during late-night, early morning hours. And if they are required to work, there must be protective barriers such as locked doors and protective glass.

I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: cause the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately enact Bill 601, Jimmy's law, to ensure greater safety for retail workers who work late-night hours.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition come from Glenavon, Balcarres, Lumsden, and the city of Regina. I do so present. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents from across Saskatchewan as it relates to the management and accounting of our finances. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly call on the Sask Party

government to provide Saskatchewan people with the fair, true state of our finances by providing appropriate summary financial accounting and reporting that is in line with the rest of Canada, in compliance with public sector accounting standards and following the Provincial Auditor's recommendations; and also to begin to provide responsible, sustainable, and trustworthy financial management as deserved by Saskatchewan people, organizations, municipalities, institutions, taxpayers, and businesses.

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

These petitions today are signed by concerned residents of Saskatoon and Swift Current. I so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm presenting a petition today calling on the Sask Party government to support the seniors' bill of rights:

We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring to your attention the following: that many Saskatchewan seniors live on fixed incomes and are victims of physical, emotional, and financial abuse; that Saskatchewan seniors have a right to social and economic security and a right to live free from poverty; that Saskatchewan seniors have a right to protection from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan enact a Saskatchewan seniors' bill of rights which provides Saskatchewan seniors with social and economic security and protection from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition concerned with the future of the film and television industry in Saskatchewan. It runs parallel to an online petition that was presented today which included 7,637 signatures, just being up online since last Friday.

The undersigned residents call attention to the fact that previous support for film, video, and television sectors created thousands of jobs. They state that in 14 years the film, video, and television industry has used \$100 million of public investment to bring \$623 million of revenue to the province. They call attention to the fact that the industry has created thousands of jobs, including over 1,200 jobs in the 2009-10 season alone, and that the film employment tax credit is money in rather than money out.

The prayer reads as follows:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan continue to

provide a tax incentive for film, video, and television employment to leverage investment, employment, and growth in the province's film, video, and television sector.

This petition is signed by citizens from Regina, Shellbrook, Wolseley, and Kindersley. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of trappers of Saskatchewan. The current regulations being enforced are creating challenges that are a concern for our traditional trappers. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to recognize that the experience gained through practical experience be valued; and in so doing to cause the government to review the current legislation and regulations with respect to trapping regulations and firearm use in consultation with traditional resource users.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

It is signed by many trappers of northern Saskatchewan. I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Housing Availability and Affordability

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week the Finance minister delivered a strong and balanced budget, a budget that expands the plan for affordable housing and introduced a new corporate income tax rebate on new rental housing to address the housing availability and affordability for Saskatchewan people.

The tax incentive has been widely acclaimed across the province. Saskatoon Mayor Don Atchison called it wonderful. Moose Jaw Mayor Glenn Hagel celebrated the initiative as removing the biggest deterrent to building new rental units. Prince Albert's mayor, Jim Scarrow, said, and I quote, "The province is clearly listening to its stakeholders and taking action to lead the nation in provincial approaches to housing incentives."

Mr. Speaker, it wasn't just municipal officials who were excited. Bill Madder of the Association of Saskatchewan Realtors noted on budget day that this lowers the key barrier that has kept private dollars from flowing into the rental market. And as Mr. Madder put it, "This initiative puts Saskatchewan in a national leadership role."

Mr. Speaker, under the direction of the Minister of Social Services, this budget investment will develop 12,600 new homes and over 10,000 new rental units, helping to keep the Saskatchewan advantage. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Support for the Film Industry

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday the minister told this Assembly that the preservation of our film and television industry was not a real issue. I'm happy to rise today to help my colleague from Regina South understand how real this issue is.

This industry is one which has invested more than \$600 million in our province since the introduction of the tax credit. It is one with a 6 to 1 return on every dollar invested. The film and television industry has been told by this government that it's not that it hasn't made money; it's just that it hasn't made enough money — a ridiculous contention.

It is also a creative industry which brings Saskatchewan stories to audiences around the world. Saskatchewan films have been screened at the Toronto International Film Festival, Cannes, and Sundance and are honoured with Gemini and Emmy awards. It offers us the chance to build pride of place when we see our friends and neighbours, our landscapes, our province on the screen, but it also allows us to share our province with the world.

Most importantly, film and television may be an industry, but that industry is made up of real people — moms, dads, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, grandmas, grandpas — many people who pay taxes, buy homes, spend their money here, volunteer in their communities, and enrich our province with their work.

We see children in the gallery today because they too are affected by the short-sighted decision to axe the film tax credit. This government talks about the need to attract and keep skilled, creative, entrepreneurial people within our borders; this is why the decision to kill the tax credit makes no sense. These are exactly the people who make a living in this industry. Mr. Speaker, I can assure the minister that the preservation of our film and television industry is a real issue.

[13:45]

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

Tender Awarded for New Hospital

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there was good news this morning about the new regional hospital in Moose Jaw moving forward.

Today the Five Hills Health Region announced the awarding of a combined tender for both the design and construction of the hospital. An innovative team of world-class engineering, architectural, and construction professionals will work collaboratively on the design and construction of the new facility.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the consortium that won the tender, made up of: the Devenney Group Architects, an award-winning health care architectural firm; Boldt Company, a

leading lean construction firm; Black & McDonald, the national leader in the health sector; as well as local leaders, Graham Construction, Stantec Architecture Ltd., and Stantec Consulting Ltd. This project team will listen to the health care needs of the patients and design a facility with those needs as the focus.

Unlike a traditional construction project, we will see a team of designers, builders, health providers, and government working with patients, families, communities, and staff to create a new kind of facility that emphasizes safety, comfort, convenience, and quality service. Our government is committed to putting the patient first in the health care system. We look forward to more progress in Moose Jaw as this project gains momentum.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Support for Western Development Museum

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Western Development Museum operates in North Battleford, Yorkton, Moose Jaw and, luckily for me, in my constituency of Saskatoon Nutana. These museums are the pride of the province as they tell our story to as many as 200,000 visitors every year. Some come from away, and many are our children and friends and neighbours.

I've had the opportunity to take a class in blacksmithing at the museum, and have spent time in the blacksmith shop right there in Boomtown. I've also performed and attended at many events and celebrations at the museum, like the annual Festival of Trees and the Heritage Festival.

Despite requests to help them with increased costs and salaries and utilities, the museums did not receive any additional funding in last week's provincial budget. As a result, the Western Development Museum must now close its branches on Mondays. Museum officials say little or no increase in funding during the past several years has led to a \$400,000 operating deficit.

A teacher in my constituency who taught my son a few years ago sent me the following message this morning:

It seems ironic that Boomtown doesn't get any extra support to keep up with inflation costs during our current boom and growth in our city. As you know, I've taken my students to the museum for a hands-on look at our history every year I've been teaching in Saskatoon. It's one of their favourite trips. It's so much easier to teach about our unique heritage with the wonderful displays and exhibits. They deserve to be supported when times are good in our province.

The Western Development Museum does us proud. Our history deserves to be told in the best light we can shine on it. This government should keep the boom in Boomtown.

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

Celebration of Cultures

Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, March 25th, I had the privilege of attending the Celebration of Cultures community event along with my colleague the MLA for Regina Dewdney. The celebration took place at the Glencairn Neighbourhood Recreation Centre, located in the Regina Northeast constituency. The event was a combined effort by the Glen Elm Public Library, Regina Open Door Society, the Dewdney East Community Association, and ward 5 city councillor, John Findura, and they did a fantastic job.

The goal of this project was to involve community leaders in the Dewdney East community to develop and implement a cultural arts program that allows for interaction between new community members, helping to increase the social engagement and participation of immigrants in the community. It was an afternoon of celebrating the many different cultures that make up our communities, our city, and our province, Mr. Speaker.

The afternoon saw over 400 members of the community come out to participate and take in the array of festivities. Families were introduced to a variety of cultures through kiosk displays, ethnic foods, and performances. Visitors were treated to performances from the Regina Chinese Phoenix Dancers, Spanish performers Arodi Blanco and the Amigos, Irish dancers, Filipino singers, Bhutanese folk singers, and a grade 1 and 2 class, Mr. Speaker, from St. Catherine School.

It was great to be a part of an event that embraces our differences and brings the community together. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in recognizing all of the event organizers for putting on such a very successful event. Thank you.

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

Three Inducted to Saskatchewan 4-H Hall of Fame

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the 4-H clubs of Saskatchewan and to congratulate the 2012 4-H Hall of Fame inductees, Carol Masecar, Eileen Peters, and Claude Wasden. The inductees have made outstanding contributions to the 4-H program in a volunteer capacity. I was honoured to bring greetings to this annual event on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture.

I have a special affinity and passion for this organization, having served as a youth member in the Silver Spurs Lighthorse Club as a district 32 rep and as a 4-H leader for 15 years. Participants in the 4-H club take on a responsibility and are able to make decisions that affect end results. Our members have become better citizens and learn the value of contributing to their community and mentoring others by following the ideas of the 4-H pledge: I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, and my health to better living, for my club, my community, and my country.

I recognize the value of 4-H personally and, as a result, our four children were members of the West P.A. [Prince Albert] Beef Club. 4-H provides service to community and country,

operating thanks to enormous volunteer and sponsor support. Please join me in applauding hard work, dedication, the development of great citizens, and our 2012 Saskatchewan 4-H Hall of Fame inductees. Thank you very much.

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

Winning Coach, Winning Team

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, this last weekend the city of Regina hosted Hoopla, which features the top high school basketball teams from across the province competing for the gold medal in their respective categories. I would like to congratulate the Hudson Bay Riders senior boys' basketball team for bringing home the gold medal to the Carrot River Valley constituency. The boys represented the North East School Division in the 3A division and showed tremendous skill, heart, and determination, defeating Caronport and Dalmeny on the way to a hard-fought final game against Moosomin where they came out on the winning side of a very close final game, 71-70.

Nine of the players, including coach Gene Hauta, won provincial gold in six-man football this year as well. Gene has taught for 34 years, coached football for 30 years — four gold medals and six silver medals in football; basketball for 25, and this, his first time attending Hoopla, he is successful in bringing home the gold. I should mention that this is Gene's last year of teaching, as he retires this June. What a way to go out. Once again, congratulations to the Hudson Bay Riders and their coaches, Gene Hauta and Trent Salmond, provincial champions in 3A senior boys' basketball.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Support for the Film Industry

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier announced yesterday the film tax credit will remain alive until the end of June. He left the impression that this allowed for some breathing room. Some would say this gives breathing room for the industry, but many think the government's real goal was to give itself some breathing room to distance itself from the public backlash for this bad budget day decision.

Unfortunately for the people of Saskatchewan, this isn't a new movie for the government. This is a rerun. We saw the same movie when the government sold SCN [Saskatchewan Communications Network]. After the public outcry, the government created a task force to help take the heat off. Important recommendations from this task force sat on a shelf for 18 months. In yesterday's news release, the government yet again said it would work with the industry in solving the problem created by the government.

To the Premier: can he explain what steps have been put in place to ensure the industry is not only heard, but that

meaningful and prompt action is taken by the government?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — We thank the member for her question. As mentioned before, we did in fact have a very productive meeting with the representatives of Saskatchewan's film industry on Monday. And once again, our sincere thanks to Mr. Goetz and his colleagues for their time and their insight.

At the meeting, the Premier confirmed our government's decision to move away from the old model of direct grants that reward companies whether they pay income tax in Saskatchewan or not, and our decision not to enter into a bidding war with other jurisdictions.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we fully understand that this sets us apart from other provinces in Canada. Here's something else that sets us apart: we delivered a balanced budget. We also extended the old FETC [film employment tax credit] program deadline to June 30th, exactly as requested. And we're looking forward to working with the industry representatives to find creative solutions within our balanced budget.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier's announcement yesterday may have bought him some time and it may have given those in the film industry three months of hope, but what happens on July 1st?

Clearly people are still concerned about their future here in our province. We can see by the number of people who are here in our galleries today and are in the building today. Many were not able to come to the legislature, but they have voiced their concerns and told their very personal stories in letters, email, and other communication with the Premier, including a petition that has more than 7,000 signatures on it. Clearly there is still too much up in the air when it comes to what this government plans to do at the end of June.

To the Premier: what assurances does he have for the many families who make their livelihood in the film and television industry that they will have a job beyond June 30th and will be able to continue building their careers here in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we've been reminding the opposition that our promise to the people of Saskatchewan was to provide sustainable spending for programs and important infrastructure investments within a balanced budget. Mr. Speaker, we kept that promise.

We also recognize that priorities often are different in other provinces. We're told that New Brunswick has found more money for film, and their new budget was tabled with a deficit approaching \$200 million. We know Manitoba has actually entered the bidding war for film production, and their third-quarter results show a deficit of over \$600 million. And

Alberta, which is working to maintain its current share of film activity, just tabled a budget with a deficit of \$900 million.

Mr. Speaker, our priorities are different, and our solutions are too. We have honoured the industry's request for time to complete this season's business cycle and welcome the opportunity to work together to find creative new options within our balanced budget.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if anyone on the government side has been paying attention to the outpouring of support to keep the tax credit. I would hope so. It's not just the people who directly work in this industry but it's people right across Saskatchewan who know the value of the film and television industry and the fact that it creates jobs, stimulates the economy, and puts Saskatchewan on the map.

Even owners of small businesses and mayors are weighing in on the benefits of the tax credit. For example, in Dundurn people are concerned about the government's action. The community was looking forward to Karma Films setting up an animation studio. Clothing store owner Tammy Beltrani, who has seen \$8,000 purchases for one production alone, says it's a good day when a costume designer walks into your store. Now mayors and small-business people are left wondering what's in store for them without a vibrant film and television industry.

To the Premier: he and his minister haven't offered any specifics about the future for those who work in the industry. What does he have to say to the many communities and small-business owners who benefit from the job creation and economic spinoff generated by Saskatchewan's film and television industry?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No one is denying the fact that the film industry creates economic activity, and no one is denying the fact that it also creates employment as well. And certainly no one is denying that the film industry matters. The real question, Mr. Speaker, is this: how much public money should be invested in an industry in which economic activity has dropped almost 70 per cent and employment is down almost 55 per cent in the last five years alone?

Mr. Speaker, do we put more tax dollars into this industry and subsidize it at an even higher rate as requested when we are also being asked to deal with issues like affordable housing, child care spaces, autism funding, cancer treatment, surgical wait times, and building schools and hospitals and highways? Mr. Speaker, we determined that we couldn't get it all done within our balanced budget. That's why we're winding down the program and that's why we're working with industry members to identify creative alternatives.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to quote an excerpt from a letter to the Premier regarding the government's decision to kill the tax credit: "This news caught us all off guard. It is particularly disappointing as we were previously given solid assurances by your government that the tax credit would remain intact." This is not a letter from someone working in the industry here, a mayor, or a small-business person working in Saskatchewan. This letter comes from Paul Bronfman Jr., a man who would generally seem to have the Premier's ear.

The people of Saskatchewan and those who do business here did not hear a word about the cuts to the tax credit leading up to the election. In fact they were assured of the exact opposite: the Premier and his government gave assurances that the film tax credit would remain in place and business people like Paul Bronfman invested accordingly. Now that commitment has obviously been broken.

To the Premier: what message does the decision to kill the tax credit send to people like Mr. Bronfman and others who want to do business here in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

[14:00]

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have an excerpt. Here's what they've said about us in the *Winnipeg Sun*, Friday, March 23rd of this year.

Under the headline "Sask. kicking our butts with budget," the article states:

In Manitoba the NDP government has plunged taxpayers into a deep, structural deficit with no end in sight to the red ink our elected officials have us swimming in . . . So why are they doing so much better in Saskatchewan . . . The truth is, Manitoba hasn't taken the steps over the years that Saskatchewan has in transforming itself into a lean, competitive province that has done a bang-up job attracting industry, skilled labour and capital . . . But that's not the only reason the Wall government has its financial house in order . . . The Saskatchewan government has maintained a level of discipline in its spending even during relatively good economic times.

Mr. Speaker, we couldn't have said it better ourselves.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Massey Place.

Security of Health Information

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We learned yesterday that the government released 44 computers with highly confidential personal health information. Thirty-two of those computers have been relocated, but 12 of those hard drives, Mr. Speaker, are still missing. My question to the minister: when was he notified of this issue, and did he notify the public at the earliest opportunity?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we take the privacy of all health care information very, very seriously. I'll update the member opposite that there have been 37 of the hard drives now located out of the 44. Having said that, there's still seven missing that we'll be certainly working hard to track down.

I was informed of this on March the 12th. We immediately went to eHealth and made sure those officials were notified which then in turn went straight to the Privacy Commissioner to make sure that he was notified, Mr. Speaker. The Privacy Commissioner has since come out and said all the proper steps were followed once we learned of the breach, Mr. Speaker.

This is a serious, absolutely serious situation, but when you listen to Susan Antosh the CEO [chief executive officer] of the new eHealth, Mr. Speaker, she states that she feels that most of the hard drives had no personal information. Mr. Speaker, having said that though, we are still looking into this to see what else we can do to secure those hard drives, Mr. Speaker, and make sure this never happens again.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — I agree with the minister. This is a very serious issue. And whether it's an issue of eHealth losing hard drives or whether it's an issue of medical records being found in a dumpster, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people really care about this issue because it's about personal, private information; information that people want to know is being kept with the highest amount of security as possible.

Now my question to the minister, he spoke some about this in his comment: does he have an idea, Mr. Speaker, about how many individuals may have been put at risk of their personal information being out in the public? And will he be notifying individuals if their personal information has been put at risk?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, to again quote Susan Antosh, the CEO of eHealth. Mr. Speaker, she says, our investigation is not complete yet, but we're pretty confident knowing that these computers were not used for . . . and that we believe the risk is minimal.

Mr. Speaker, I can only take the word of the CEO, and we're certainly looking into them. What they are doing is looking at the hard drives that we have brought back into the eHealth to see what type of information was on that. We are quite sure, and I should say the CEO is quite sure, that there was no personal information that has been let out. But having said that, Mr. Speaker, we're taking all the steps that we need to take to make sure that this never happens again. We have strong policies in place. I would say that this was a human error, not certainly an intentional human error, but a human error where computers were let out. The policy is, no computer is to be let out without the hard drive taken out of the computer and destroyed, Mr. Speaker. This was a situation where some were let and it's unacceptable. And as I say, we're still investigating.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question was specifically about informing the public if in fact their information has been put at risk.

So my question to the minister: if individual patient's information has been put at risk, does the minister pledge today to inform the individuals and the public that information has been put at risk? And how soon could individuals in the public expect that notice once the answer is determined as to whether or not individuals' information has been put at risk?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, the Privacy Commissioner Gary Dickson has weighed in on this as well. As I said, we notified him through eHealth as soon as we were aware. And this is his quote, Mr. Speaker:

I think at this stage I'm satisfied that they're taking the appropriate steps to investigate. They're going to be putting together an internal investigation report. They have offered to review that with us and then at that stage my office will determine if there's any further investigation we need to do.

Mr. Speaker, we're following through with the proper steps to ensure that these will be secured if we possibly can. The investigation is under way, Mr. Speaker. We have a very good idea of what happened here. The corrective measures have been taken.

As there is more information learned, Mr. Speaker, as with this government on many, many other issues, unlike the members opposite when they were government, we are very transparent on this. We notified the right authorities as soon as possible, Mr. Speaker. We take these issues very seriously.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, I didn't hear a clear pledge in the minister's response that the public would in fact be notified if individuals' information was put at risk.

In 2003, Mr. Speaker, the previous NDP [New Democratic Party] government introduced the health information privacy Act in order to enhance the protection of individuals' private information. Past incidents when there has been a breach of information, Mr. Speaker, and there's been a violation of the HIPA [*The Health Information Protection Act*] legislation, it's been often due to a couple of factors. One, perhaps it's an absence of policies or procedures to ensure that information is taken care of properly. Or, Mr. Speaker, it could be a lack of a culture of security, an organizational culture, to ensure that information is kept secret in a very intentional way.

My question to the minister: as the investigation continues and the cause is determined by officials, does the minister pledge today to fully make the findings of that investigation open to the public?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, the legislation came into effect under their watch. And I remember at different times under their watch, there was breaches of the legislation at that time where personal information was let that shouldn't have been let.

Mr. Speaker, as recently as about a year ago — no I guess, yes about a year ago, Mr. Speaker — there was some information found. We acted swiftly and decisively, Mr. Speaker. I remember seeing, I think, the former member from Dewdney kind of going through a dumpster, pulling out boxes, Mr. Speaker. At that time, we took it very seriously, and we sent a letter to all the medical, all the trustees of medical records, especially physicians, to make sure they knew how important this was. In fact at that time, shortly after that letter was sent, the former leader of the opposition, who no one has seen since, Mr. Speaker, had very, very positive things to say that we have taken it seriously, and he was glad to see the steps this government took.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Employment and Education for Northerners

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, there is a large sector of people in northern Saskatchewan that feel abandoned by the Premier and the government. They hear the Premier talk about his trip to Ireland, and they listen to him talk about how he was saddened and humbled by the unemployment. Mr. Speaker, they wonder why he isn't saddened by the unemployment in northern Saskatchewan.

My question to the minister: with all of the need for jobs and economic development in the North, why is the Sask Party slashing the northern economic development fund by over 38 per cent?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis Relations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, thank you very much to the member opposite for the question. And let me assure the member that First Nations and Métis people from across Saskatchewan, people in northern Saskatchewan are a top priority for this government, Mr. Speaker. Time and time again, budget after budget, the money is there, the programs are increasing. But, Mr. Speaker, more importantly, the results are there.

Mr. Speaker, an increase of 5,900 people working in northern Saskatchewan, First Nations and Métis, a 17.4 per cent increase. And, Mr. Speaker, something that we should all be proud of, an increase of 1,400 in aboriginal youth employment, Mr. Speaker. There's more work to do. We're ready to do the work, Mr. Speaker, but members in this House should be proud of what has already been accomplished.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, northern economic development fund plays an important role in helping bring jobs

to a region of our province that is in such need of them. This government is taking more than \$1 million out of the fund at a time when jobs and northern economic development is needed more than ever. My question to the minister: why is the government spending millions on three more politicians while they are cutting the northern economic development fund by 38 per cent?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that the premise to his question is absolutely wrong. There will not be one more dollar spent in that regard. Where there will be more money spent and where there has been more spent is in First Nations and Métis funding, Mr. Speaker. It has gone up to \$172.4 million, an increase of \$4.7 million or 2.8 per cent. Well, Mr. Speaker, members opposite may not feel that \$4.7 million increase is large enough. We know that today they have \$5 billion of reckless spending on their website that they promised, and evidently by keeping it up there, they want to continue that.

Mr. Speaker, First Nations and Métis people across the province, people in northern Saskatchewan know that when this government makes a commitment, it's sustainable and it's there for their long-term benefit, unlike members opposite.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Well, that's interesting because northern Saskatchewan First Nations, Métis know the cuts that this government has made in this budget. Mr. Speaker, northern unemployment rate is currently 18.5 per cent, more than three times that of the province. The North needs economic development and jobs, not cuts to the economic development fund. When people talk to me back home, the last thing they mention to me is that we need more politicians. Will the Premier commit to restoring the funding to the northern economic development fund in this budget and bring jobs in hand to the North?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis Relations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, I've already laid out the facts. There's more people working in Saskatchewan than ever before, more people of First Nations descent that are working in Saskatchewan than ever before. Mr. Speaker, this government has made it clear that we will put the training programs in place, Mr. Speaker, that are necessary. We will ensure that the education and employment outcomes are funded.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity on Monday morning to join with ministerial colleagues and the FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] to talk about the task force on education and employment, Mr. Speaker. And this indeed is a fruitful endeavour, not because it came from government, Mr. Speaker, because it came from talking to First Nations leaders. And together, working together with people like Gary Merasty and Rita Bouvier and Don Hoium, we will come forward with the ideas. Mr. Speaker, there is in fact more work to do. We are collaborating with leaders across Saskatchewan to make sure

that we have more people employed, more people educated, whether they're First Nations or not in this province, Mr. Speaker.

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

Emergency Shelters

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on March 29th last year, the Minister of Social Services was questioned in this House here regarding the funding crisis at the Battlefords Indian and Métis Friendship Centre emergency shelter for the homeless. The shelter was forced to close early and when questioned last year, the minister responded, and I quote, "I'm well aware that there is an issue in North Battleford at this time, and all of us know that everybody needs a roof over their head."

Mr. Speaker, the minister may have been aware, but unfortunately this did not help the emergency shelter when again this year, they announced that they would have to close even earlier, in the dead of winter.

To the minister: why did this government choose to ignore the warning signs and abandon those needing shelter in North Battleford?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I'm well aware of the issue that's going on in North Battleford and the issue with the shelter rates. And I think the member opposite knows that we have increased the per diems to shelters. And we have contingency plans to make sure that if there isn't shelters, that people can go to hotels.

But right in North Battleford, the per diems provided to people staying at the shelter are still there. The member opposite is aware of that. We're working with community partners right across Saskatchewan to make sure that there is emergency shelters and maintaining it. And to the member opposite, there is funding until March 31st for this shelter in North Battleford. We're aware of that, and we will continue to ensure that people who need a space in our province will have one.

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

Mr. Forbes: — So, Mr. Speaker, the minister did know about the funding crisis facing the Battlefords Indian Métis Friendship Centre last year, and she let it happen again this year, only earlier. Mr. Speaker, it's only because the city of North Battleford and a prominent citizen, the retired Senator Herb Sparrow, stepped in to keep the emergency shelter open for February and March. And we know on some nights there's as many as 16 people needing that shelter in that city. Now she promised action, and she failed to deliver. How could she let this happen? Is she saying she's having the proper amount of funding this year on April 1st?

[14:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — The members opposite know very well, the members opposite know very well that our government has spent an incredible amount of money ensuring that there is emergency shelters. And we've looked at it right across our province. We've got new shelter spaces in Saskatoon and Regina and Prince Albert. We've doubled the number of . . . We've increased the emergency shelter rates by up to 85 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, North Battleford is well aware that we have per diems for them. That's the kind of money that we provide for people who need emergency shelters if they haven't been asking for money for their shelter except for the per diem. That's what we are doing, Mr. Speaker. There is individuals right across this province are aware that if there isn't a shelter space for them, we will go to hotels. But the member opposite should know the hotel uses in this province has gone down considerably since they left government.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, she talks about her looking at the issue, looking at the issue. But people in North Battleford need action. And this is cold comfort for the people, the ones who are homeless in North Battleford.

But, Mr. Speaker, this speaks to a larger issue of homelessness right across this province. And since this government took power in 2007, the homelessness crisis has steadily grown. Housing First, or the rapid rehousing, is a relatively new approach to housing that aims to find people a permanent residence rather than providing people a succession of shelter and transitional housing before addressing other issues such as mental health, addictions, or employment. Now proponents say it saves taxpayers money compared to the jumble of social services, shelter, and other emergency responder resources used to help the homeless.

Will the minister commit to fully embracing the Housing First strategy and show real leadership in our communities to ensure that all people have a safe place to call home every night?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I went to Alberta a few weeks ago and talked to members in Calgary and in Edmonton about the Housing First initiative. We actually went to some of the shelters and looked at the work they were doing. And then I came back to Saskatchewan and talked to people like the Salvation Army. And you know what they said? Housing also needs supports. They said you can't just talk about housing without ensuring their supports. So that's why, Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased just a couple of weeks ago to go to Downtown Browne and support the very first youth emergency shelter in this province, Mr. Speaker.

The members over there were absolutely delighted that we are taking an initiative of ensuring that youth in this province have something new to look at and that we are spending money on the opportunities for people to have a home . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Will the member from Saskatoon Centre come to order. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — I think if the members opposite want to talk about records, I would love to talk about some of the records that they have. The children that are living in low-income, single-parent homes doubled under the NDP. Today we have 2,000 fewer children living in low-income homes in the province. Seniors living in poverty more than doubled under the NDP. In 10 years, Saskatchewan . . .

The Speaker: — Question period has ended.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

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

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

Mr. Marchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a privilege and an honour for me to resume my remarks regarding the budget. The applause I just heard, I'm not sure whether that's for the excitement that they're anticipating in so much as I . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I was going to debate whether I should start from the beginning again. However I rethought that, Mr. Speaker, and I'll begin where I left off.

Mr. Speaker, our guiding principles speak to a high-quality health care system for all Saskatchewan people regardless of where they live in the province. Mr. Speaker, regional health authority funding increases of \$98 million, \$60.5 million for Saskatchewan surgical initiative, \$2.5 million increase to reduce costs for those with diabetes, expanding the children's insulin pump program, \$4 million to expand the colorectal cancer screening program, and go-ahead planning for hospitals in Moose Jaw and North Battleford, as we already heard today in member's statements.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard comments from across the floor about common sense priorities. Mr. Speaker, if improving health care for all of our citizens, for all of our citizens no matter where they live isn't a common sense priority, I'm not sure what is.

Mr. Speaker, creating a strong social safety net which protects those who truly need support, another one of our guiding principles, is evidenced in this budget. Since taking office in 2007, government funding for disabilities programming has increased by \$308.8 million.

The Saskatchewan assured income for disabilities program, SAID, is most important. This program truly allows people with

disabilities to live independently and live with pride and live with dignity. Couples with disabilities living independently will receive \$230 a month increase.

One million dollars for the enhancement of autism spectrum disorder therapies, bringing the total funding for autism to \$7.6 million. Six hundred thousand dollar increase for FASD [fetal alcohol spectrum disorder] prevention services. Five hundred thousand dollars to maintain literacy camps for underprivileged youth. And, Mr. Speaker, literacy, in my mind, if we're ever going to close the gaps in outcomes for the marginalized, the answer lies in literacy.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I accompanied the Minister of Social Services to one of Saskatchewan's approved private service homes serving people with intellectual disabilities. The Minister of Social Services announced an 11.6 per cent funding increase effective May the 1st. This investment, Mr. Speaker, this investment builds on the government's four-year commitment to eliminate the wait-list of 440 Saskatchewan people with intellectual disabilities who require programs and services by 2013.

Mr. Speaker, this is truly a common sense approach to service for people who are disadvantaged. Mr. Speaker, what I witnessed yesterday was a warm and caring family environment for three young men with challenging disabilities.

You know, in my background, Mr. Speaker, I was sitting in my office with an elder, and we were talking about report cards. And the elder said to me, you know, sir, sometimes we don't really need to have a report card. When my child comes home from school and I see a smile on his face, Mr. Speaker, I know that good things are happening. Well yesterday when I was in Bev Duncan's living room and I saw the smiles on the three boys that were in her care, Mr. Speaker, the warmth and genuineness in that living room was obvious. Good things are happening, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this budget introduces a new education funding formula and increases K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] funding to help with the transition to the new formula. As a result of the new funding formula and education funding increase, all school divisions will see an increase in funding, ranging anywhere from 1.7 to 14.4 per cent.

I'd be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I didn't mention two new schools going up in Regina Douglas Park: Arcola Community School and Douglas Park elementary school — state-of-the-art facilities that we've been waiting for a long, long time for that kind of infrastructure and investment in our future. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend our Minister of Education and her ministry officials for a job well done.

Mr. Speaker, I've been around education for a couple of years now, and I have the first-hand experience with a couple of versions of the old foundation operating grant. And I could go on ad nauseam about the inequities that those tools created. I have to say that this new model addresses those inequities. And what is equally important, Mr. Speaker, is that our Minister of Education has provided opportunities for more input as we move forward should there be a need to address any fundamental flaws should they appear, Mr. Speaker — common

sense and consultation exemplified.

Mr. Speaker, in the past, and prior to this government coming into office, the provincial government's share of education expenses was 40 per cent and local ratepayers were responsible for 60 per cent. Under this government, that dynamic is reversed with government's share at 65 per cent and local ratepayers the remaining 35 per cent. Mr. Speaker, public education is exactly that — public. And I can report, Mr. Speaker, it's alive and well in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, parents send us the absolute best children they have, and they expect us to give them the very best we have. What we have in this budget allows for school divisions to do that, to make decisions that are unique to them without having to worry about burdening a very supportive local community. Again, Mr. Speaker, if the education of our children is not a priority, I don't know what is. In fact, Mr. Speaker, and I quote from a news release by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, headline, "STF Welcomes Priority Placed on Education in the Provincial Budget."

"The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation welcomed the provincial government's pledge that PreK-12 education is a priority in this year's provincial budget." Further, Mr. Speaker, from the president of the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation], Mr. Steve Allen:

The increase to funding is welcome in the fact that education is placed as a priority by this government. We think education is an investment. It is an investment in not just the infrastructure; it is an investment in children, in the people in this province, and to the future. That is very important.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this government is addressing the common sense priorities I keep hearing about: health care, education, people with disabilities, highways, municipal revenue sharing, affordable housing, seniors, and we go on. And, Mr. Speaker, above all, program sustainability.

Mr. Speaker, the 2012-13 provincial budget is about keeping the Saskatchewan advantage — balanced budget, a growing economy, and government services that are affordable and sustainable in the long run.

Mr. Speaker, there are many examples around the country and around the world where governments are in trouble because of economic and financial decision making that was based on populist thinking. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's economy and Saskatchewan finances are in great shape. And, Mr. Speaker, that is how we will maintain the Saskatchewan advantage.

Mr. Speaker, thank you. And, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the budget and I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With pleasure to join in on the debate of the budget and make some comments, and I guess . . . But before I start out with making comments on why northern people are very concerned about the budget and

areas that affect them, I want to make it . . . I want to put out a thank you to my staff, CAs, and the wonderful job that they do. They truly are front-line dealing with issues that affect all of our constituents. So I just want to acknowledge the CAs that are out there, and it's a good job that they do.

But before I go into that, I want to thank my wife and family for their support, and all those individuals that are out there that give us the support. And some days when the job is tough, you're frustrated with some of the issues, and you hear some of the challenges that people are going through. And I think about a lot of the young people in northern Saskatchewan. You know, I get a chance to visit lots with them, and go to workshops and conferences for northern Aboriginal people, young people. And you know, truly, they want to have hope. They want to make sure that their government is taking care of them, that their government hears their concerns. And unfortunately the frustration's there, Mr. Speaker.

You know, we talk about a budget and it's over \$11 billion being spent. But unfortunately for northern Saskatchewan, some of the conditions . . . And I'll get into that very clearly. We see nothing but a bunch of cuts. And been talking to a lot of people and if it was Aboriginal programs, if it's northern Saskatchewan, there were cuts to it. Pretty frustrating for a population that has such a high unemployment rate. For a province that is supposed to be the advantage, they're not feeling the advantage.

And yes, some people have good paying jobs in the mines and that's fine, you know. They're happy, we're happy, and it's good. It's good that people are working for Cameco, Areva. There are some big companies out there making sure people make a good living in northern Saskatchewan. But in the rest of the province, there are many people who work in the mining industry in northern Saskatchewan and they come from the South and they work in the mining industry.

[14:30]

There are jobs that are special jobs that are needed and special talents and I guess training that individual . . . [inaudible] . . . and they're okay with that. But they want to make sure that they get a chance first and that dollars are put there, Mr. Speaker, that the dollars are put into education, that the dollars are put into training to make sure that Aboriginal people, First Nations have a chance at those jobs. They want to make sure that they're getting a level playing field. That's all they ask. They want no special deal. They just want to have a level playing field with funding.

And we see in the cuts that this government has made to northern Saskatchewan, whether it's, you know, training, employment . . . And there are wonderful and excellent institutes out there — GDI [Gabriel Dumont Institute], SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies]. They do excellent job of training. We have Northlands College. They do a lot of good work out there. And we know that, in partnerships, they do a good job.

But unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, you know, we see the cuts and how they affect . . . And you want to talk about roads in northern Saskatchewan. Some of our roads are in such bad

shape. I mean some of the companies that are transporting goods to mines, you hear them, the truck drivers, complaining constantly on the dangerous roads and that they have to travel on. And that's not wrong. And it's not just the transport companies that have to travel these roads. There are many community members in the North that have to travel these roads.

And they know, in northern Saskatchewan, they know the Sask Party. And I think clearly that's why they rejected them in the two northern ridings very clearly. They know the Sask Party will not support, will not take care of them. They've seen every time it's a Conservative government or a Sask Party government or whatever they want to rename themselves, it's just been cuts, cuts, cuts, because they do. We have our elders. We have our community members who do believe in a party and know what the NDP Party has done, the New Democratic Party has done for northern Saskatchewan, and will continue to do. And we will have to fight for those individuals in northern Saskatchewan.

But I just, you know, I look at some of the areas of concern in housing. And in this budget — I have to be honest with you — there is not going to be an opportunity for northern people, people in our province to have the home ownership program. This government has abandoned that. It was a program that allowed many northern people, people in our province, to purchase their home, to own something to call their home. And they're very proud of that, and they worked hard to do that.

This government is making cuts and we see that. We look at long-term care in northern Saskatchewan. We look at La Ronge. And we have served petitions. We've had announcements and everything else in other communities, photo ops, but unfortunately for northern people they just want to be treated fair.

And when you look at some of the roads they have to travel on, when you look at the long-term care facilities, the neglect by this Sask Party government to our elders, our seniors . . . When it comes to long-term care in the North, so many of them have to be taken away. And there's such a long waiting list to get into a long-term care. So we see some of these areas.

You know, we look at addictions. And you know, the front-line workers out there are doing an excellent job. But we're burning them out. There's more resources. There's got to be a better plan, and we don't see that. And you look at the cuts. And I go into that area and I say . . . You watch some of the communities that I go to and you talk to the young people and they say, for instance some of the leaders told me mental health workers are supposed to be in there dealing with community members. And when you have some communities have a large population of young people and they lose hope. There's no jobs. They may graduate, but they stay in the community. And it doesn't take them long to be pulled into the gangs, to be pulled into activities, whether it's alcohol, drugs; they get pulled into that. And they need supports. And we see some of the communities have been without mental health workers for 18 months.

And it's unfortunate to see that, to see these young people all over, and they're struggling. They just want a level playing field. That's all they ask from the government. But this

government doesn't seem to want to do that. In northern Saskatchewan they feel that. The First Nations communities, they know that. You can have . . . I mean all members of this House, we have a responsibility to work on behalf of all citizens. They may not support the Sask Party. That's fine. They may not support the NDP Party. They may support another party. But we don't turn our backs on them. We don't just go after them and say, well we're going to cut — we're going to show you; we're going to play hardball.

And you can sit in here and talk about all the numbers you want, Mr. Speaker. They can say how good thing, and you can cheerlead all you want. But when you go back home to northern Saskatchewan and some of the First Nations communities and you see what's truly going on in there . . . When they announce their numbers and they want to cheerlead around the numbers that they're doing so good, I say this very clearly to the members, the backbenchers, the Aboriginal individuals: make sure you're fighting, make sure you're . . . Make a fight for the Aboriginal people. They are part of this province. Have that backbone. You're a backbencher. You have a lot of say. I encourage you, speak up.

That's a way we can get the message across that times have to change. Times have to change. We have a population that is being left behind. And Eric Howe, the professor, he talks about the economic disaster going on, that we have such a potential if we will just put the investment into training, education of our young Aboriginal population, to make sure we reach out to the industry, to make sure we see what they're going through in their homes.

Some of the young people in northern Saskatchewan, they're put in an environment that's not been so easy for them. But sometimes, you know, I talk to them and I listen, and it's pretty sad. And you know, in northern Saskatchewan we have such a large youth, but unfortunately we have so many committing suicide because they've lost hope. You know, and we try to encourage them, whether it's a conference that they put on. There's different things that go on, activities. They try to work with them to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that they understand there is hope and never lose hope, that there is opportunities and maybe through training. But when we lose a young person or we lose anyone to suicide . . . And in northern Saskatchewan, suicide is . . . It's just overwhelming sometimes when you have to go see the family, the mushom and the kohkom. You pay your respects as a leader of the community. And they don't know why. They're hurt; they're angry, confused. But they're in the reality. That's what they have to deal with, and they wish they could do more.

But the government has to do more. This government has to do more. Can't put your head in the sand and say, oh no, it's not our responsibility. It is your responsibility. And they need the government, those 49 members of the government to stand up and say, we can do better. We have a right to the young people. We have a right to make sure northern people in northern Saskatchewan get treated fair — not special — make sure they get treated fair.

So when I look at the different cuts that are going on, and we look at the forest fire, you know, protection unit, we see the cuts that went on there, over \$3 million. A time when . . . And

people are concerned up north that it's going to be a dry season. So we're having cuts, Mr. Speaker. And if you're going to cut, a time when there is concern, we wonder why. Is it again northern Saskatchewan didn't support a certain political party? They didn't support the Sask Party, so they're going to be cut, cut, cut. There's a lot of frustration going on out there.

You look at our seniors, look at some of their homes that they're living in. Look at some of the First Nations communities. The leadership are doing all they can to work with them, the community members, the agencies that are around there. There's a lot of individuals out there trying to do . . . They're not asking anyone just to come in and fix. They understand. They have solutions and ideas. But when they come up with a solution and an idea, they need resources.

And when you have \$11 billion a year spending, and we hear them cheerleading out \$11 billion, well spend some money on individuals who truly have the highest unemployment rate, the highest youth suicide, highest addictions, unemployment, the list goes on, the worst housing conditions. If you look at the Conference Board of Canada, they make it very clear. Northern Saskatchewan is not doing good under this Sask Party government for the last five years. It's getting worse. It's not getting better. More programs being cut.

When you look at the trappers, they don't even support the trappers. They don't support the trappers. They had a big convention. Not one government official showed up. So you look at that. You look at the fishing industry. The freight subsidy has been totally gone, wiped out, 450,000 wiped out. Fishermen used that money to get their fish to the marketplace. It was helpful. Why would a government cut something? Why would you not consult with the individuals, with the fishermen? Why would you not consult with trappers? Why would you not consult with individuals who you impact when you make these cuts? This government doesn't believe in consulting.

And people have said that time and time again, that I have sat here for just about five years watching it. Very little talking with the industry that they affect when they're making their cuts. They do very little consultation, whether it's First Nations, Métis. I don't know why that is, but yet they want to some days come in the House and make it sound like everything's going good.

And there are things that are going good in our province. That's right. Nobody will deny. We have over \$11 billion to spend. Nobody's denying that. Our province is doing wonderful. It is a beautiful province. It's a province to be proud of. But unfortunately we have a lot of issues that we're not dealing with, and it may not be the government's priority. But let me make it very clear to the members, the 49 members over there. Speak up very clear. Speak up. Yes, yes they can say 49, and I know how humble you guys are. Forty-nine; we've got nine. That's okay. We're very clear. We're going to make sure . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, yes, yes. Thank you for that, yes.

But I'll make it very clear that the nine of us are speaking for community members that are suffering. Our seniors are being asked to pay more for their prescriptions. The children are being asked to pay more for their prescriptions. For an ambulance, for

an ambulance service, seniors are going to be asked to pay more, have families that are struggling. And affordability, and they talk about affordability.

This government has money and millions of dollars for more politicians, but not to help the seniors to make sure they don't have added costs. They're struggling already. And we've heard our colleagues say already and very clearly that some of the seniors are not getting the medications that they need because they can't afford to balance it. It just isn't enough.

Why, when we know that stuff, would we actually put any more costs to our seniors, children who are . . . Parents cannot afford the extra \$5 prescription. It is, it's tough for some of them out there. They're barely making ends meet. I don't see anyone else, I don't see politicians having to suffer that way. So it's amazing to watch how we expect some parts of society and some parts and groups to pay for this government's cuts for whatever.

And I mean we look at the different areas. And I want to go back to our commercial fishermen. They had hope that this government would support them with a building and a facility, and it sounded all good. And they walked away from it. I was hoping maybe in this budget they would announce that they had found the money because they had so much money. We keep hearing of how good everything's going. They have their pompoms, and they constantly cheerlead around here. I've never seen it like it. They want to bring out stats and they want to read members' statements and they want to talk about numbers and they want to say, oh, how great everything's going. But they truly forget about some of the First Nations and northern communities, how bad things are.

Have a tour. Go and look. Look for yourselves and see what's going on. Go for yourselves and have a look. See if I'm making it up. Go out there and check it out and see if I'm telling you something that's not right. They are struggling. I've seen seniors who have . . . Their homes are falling apart. They have no programs to get renovations, windows. There's so much going on out there, how people are being treated in a province that goes around saying it's doing so good. It's just unbelievable.

There's the advantage. Well you know, go and look at some of those individuals that are struggling and see how an advantage they think, and see if they think the pompoms and all the great numbers are just wonderful. You will see the frustration, the hope that they are losing.

But I tell you this. The leaders are getting tired of being not listened to. Community members are tired of not being respected by this government. You are making them angry. You are making them feel like they are not important. You are making our young people feel like it doesn't matter. It isn't right to do that to anyone. But I say this to the member, the backbenchers — speak up. Speak up for the individuals that are out there. You are our government. Do the right thing. And when individuals have issues and they're raised, speak up for them.

I want to make it very clear. Back home people are struggling, every community I go to. Yes, some people have good jobs,

some of them. Yes, don't get me wrong. Some of them are doing good things. We have community members, leaders who are doing excellent in economics. When they need it the most, you cut programs and you cut the funding from different programs. And I can't understand, when you're hearing about all the needs in northern Saskatchewan, the First Nations communities, why you even consider cutting any programs. If you want to cut things, why don't you go and consult them and ask them, is there better ways we could do with this money? If you would go and talk to them . . . But you don't consult them. You just cut and then you tell people after the fact what's going on.

[14:45]

That's why the people in northern Saskatchewan on First Nations, Métis communities are frustrated. They are not feeling the big boom. And I want to make it clear. Some of them are doing an excellent job, whether it's GDI, SIIT, there is a lot of good things going on. We know that. Individuals who run business, who are doing an excellent job. But there are so many people left behind. They don't see the advantage. And our young people, again I want to make it clear, are losing hope. And when a young person loses hope, it's unfortunate. It's suicide, and that's pretty sad. Like I said earlier, when you have to go and see a family, mother and father, a mushom, a kohkom, and pay your respects as a leader because their young one's gone, because they feel that lost hope, wasn't any hope for them and they leave this world, it's pretty sad.

So government has a responsibility to do better. And they can do better if they will just listen and go out to the communities. I've invited the minister to come, and I hope the Premier and some of his colleagues will come to visit the North and have a look at what's going on and see if it's . . . why, why it's happening. And not just to . . . And I mean look at education — and I know they have a task force that they're going to put out there and they're going to look at it. It's supposed to be eight months ago, but it's finally going. Let's see what recommendations come from that and what action comes. That's what I'm curious to see. Because we've seen other reports that government has gone out and actually gotten groups to go out and do a report, and in the end it sits on a shelf and never does anything.

So I want to make it very clear. If they have an opportunity to join the minister when he comes to northern Saskatchewan — any of their colleagues — to see what's going on, I'd encourage them to come. See some of the challenges. Talk to some of the community members and see what they're going through. And see maybe when you're around the cabinet table and you're around your caucus table, you don't say, hey it isn't all good out there. It isn't right. We've got a group of people who are not being treated right. They don't have a level playing field. That's all they want. They don't want a handout. They just want to be treated with respect and a level playing field.

And if you give them that opportunity, they will take it, and they will move forward, and we will have a better province for it. We will have a province that is truly balanced and a province where we can all say we enjoy the affordability. But for right now affordability is something that northern communities are struggling with. The cost to live in northern Saskatchewan is so

much higher. And they struggle, but they stay there with their roots, with their families. They want to stay in their communities. Some people say, oh well, you should move, move, move. And some do. They get a better education and they get a job and they have maybe a trapper's cabin or they have a home in the North that they keep.

There are so many things . . . And we talk about, you know, the advantage and, you know, you hear that, and I hear the advantage, the advantage. And truly if you go to northern Saskatchewan to some of our First Nations and Métis communities, they sure don't see the advantage. You know, not one of them has mentioned to me, you know, Doyle, what we really need to help us here is three more politicians. They don't say that. I haven't had one person contact my office or anything else and say we need more politicians. I've had people asking, how come they want to raise prescription drugs with seniors, children? Why do they want more politicians? And we say to them, that's the Sask Party's push. Their priority is three more politicians.

So the frustration out there, when they're hearing the cuts and they see what's going, they wonder. So maybe we can do a better job in northern Saskatchewan with a housing plan, making sure that northern people can purchase a home. There was a program, worked really well. Why this government had to cut it, I don't know. And I don't know what else they're going to cut, if all of a sudden we're going to lose the RRAP [residential rehabilitation assistance program] program. Who knows what this government will cut? It's amazing.

But for northern Saskatchewan, make it very clear. They just want a level playing field. They want their government to take care of them. There's a boom, the advantage if that's what you want to use. I don't care what you call it. At the end of the day, they just wanted to be treated with respect, and make sure of that funding. Our municipal leaders, our First Nations leaders, our Métis leaders, our youth, our elders, our community members want to have a fair chance, want to be respected.

There's a lot of resources coming out of northern Saskatchewan, and some of the leaders are frustrated and they're saying, enough's enough. When we see conservation officers leaving the area who did so much for those communities, and we've got a couple of communities where the . . . You decided to shut down an office that did so much to help those communities, whether it's their fur licence, fish licence. There were so many things that those officers did, the offices did, conservation officers did in the community of Pelican Narrows, Cumberland House. But in this budget, you slashed them. They're gone. Now those communities will have to be serviced out of Creighton and Nipawin.

So it's pretty sad to see cuts when we talk about the boom and you talk about so much money; there's so much wealth; our province is doing so much. There is a group of citizens that are totally neglected by the government for whatever reason. I don't know. But, Mr. Speaker, all the different cuts I've been talking about are affecting people in northern Saskatchewan, whether it's roads, whether it's the training, education dollars, whether it's long-term care, whether it's more prescription costs to our seniors, housing. There are so many issues affecting northern Saskatchewan, whether it's our addiction services and

the lack of.

And I say this again: the front-line workers are doing an excellent job, but we need more. We are losing the battle, and it's time that the government . . . If they were serious, serious about this, they would say, this can't go on; we have to do something better.

Northern people — First Nations, Métis — deserve better. They deserve to be a part of this province. They don't want no special deal. They just want to be treated fair. This government has turned their back on northern Saskatchewan, on Aboriginal people. And that's clear if you talk to the leadership, and they're getting frustrated. And I think if there isn't a change and this government doesn't start to respond to some of the needs in northern Saskatchewan, whether it's our roads that are falling apart and are not getting fixed. If you look at Highway 2 going to north of La Ronge, half of one lane, it's just about, half of it's gone. The culvert and everything else, it's still been like that for a year.

We have the bridge where there's concrete and everything else. The pavement is out of the bridge and people are travelling over that. They're trying to fix it. The local workers do what they can do to patch it up, but there's so much more needs to be done. The northern roads, they're so heavily impacted by transportation trucks, by the big trucks. They're pounded, the roads.

So we see all these different things. We see the unemployment rate. We see all the different things I've talked about and challenges that northern Saskatchewan has. And they're frustrated. The leaders are frustrated that this government isn't responding. And again, I'll say this, these are the reasons why northern people, First Nations and Métis people, are frustrated. They're tired. They don't believe this government supports them.

And if you look at the legislation that's coming forward to rule out a certain age group, 18 and under we don't want to use in the boundaries, we can see what's going on. People are talking; they're figuring that out. There's a group of young people — and it's a large Aboriginal population of First Nations and Métis — that you don't want to use in the formula. We understand that, what you're up to. So the frustration out there, it's a trust thing. You talk about trust.

And I'm going to, before I finish, I want to make one last . . . To the individuals, we have a number of Aboriginal MLAs in this House. Aboriginal MLAs, they have an obligation, and they should be honoured to fight, honoured to take the fight on for First Nations and Métis individuals. They should speak up when they see areas that are being attacked and cut by a government, whether it's this side of the House or it's that side. The Aboriginal members should make sure that they're fighting for the Aboriginal people to make sure they're getting their fair share — just their fair share, nothing else. But what we've seen by this government has been nothing but cuts, cuts, cuts, and it can't continue.

As I've said, our young people, they're losing hope. Our leaders are getting frustrated. I know that there's northern people who are tired. They want to take more aggressive action. They're

angry. They're tired. They feel like they're not being heard. They're not being respected and they're just tired of it. They're tired. So I see some of them very frustrated, and it concerns me how frustrated they are. Again some of them are angry.

And you know, I was with the trappers. And the frustration, they're hoping to get support. And we'll see what happens. I'm still hopeful that the government will respond with them. I know they're putting in a proposal. I'm hoping it'll be very positive. That's something then I could say yes, you guys did the right thing. They asked for some funding. You gave it to them.

I have no problem with saying to somebody when it's something good and done right, that it's the right thing to do. I have no problem with saying, way to go. If it's a new long-term care in La Ronge, which we need, wonderful. If that's what a government wants, to have the people say thank you very much for doing this for us, we can do that. And we will. We'd be honoured to say that.

But you have to make sure we get some of the announcements. You have to make sure we get some of the \$11 billion you're spending so that northern peoples feel a part of our province. They just want to be treated with respect. And I just encourage those members to remember that when they're around the tables and you're hearing the issues, make sure you fight for all Saskatchewan people, so we all have a level playing field.

At this point, Mr. Speaker, this is clearly why northern people do not support the budget, and I cannot support the budget. I will be voting on the amendment and not the budget at this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Campeau: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I rise in the House today to talk about the 2012-13 budget. However first I'd like to thank my constituents of Saskatoon Fairview for entrusting me of this position to represent them in this Chamber.

An Hon. Member: — Doyle, don't go away. You'd better listen to this one.

Ms. Campeau: — Yes, please stay.

I would also like to thank my team once again who took many hours out of their family and work time to have an effective campaign, no matter what challenges we faced. And unfortunately the member opposite left, but I'd like to have this on record. I do have a backbone, and that's why I'm sitting on this side of the House. I want to remind the members opposite that I am the only First Nation in this Chamber, and none of them represent me or my views. They do not speak for me . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Can I? Okay.

I would like to thank my daughter, who has sacrificed time with myself, the only parent in her life, and has been patient throughout this whole process. She has been my little rock from when she was a toddler when we would travel across country to moving to new places, which have been a little scary as I've

been a prairie girl most of my life, and some of that has been as a rez girl. She has been a great navigator in our travels, and can remember her holding a map that was five times her size while I was driving from Houston to Fort St. John, BC [British Columbia] to visit my mother. And she was eight at the time and she was already an experienced little traveller.

I am so very blessed to have this child in my life and she's never complained. She's very resilient and has friends from all the places we have lived in, which ranged from Georgia to Texas to Saskatchewan to Alberta, and of course our journey back home to Saskatchewan where we belong, where I am very honoured to sit in this seat representing my constituents.

This government has integrity and it is reflected in the balanced budget, and not to sound redundant, fiscal probity is quite important in this day and age of global economic uncertainty. The global economic crisis should not be taken lightly and perhaps the miscommunication that seems to be happening from members opposite when examining the Saskatchewan provincial budget of 2012-13 is just that — miscommunication. Whatever it is, either way it puzzles me.

Prior to my role as the MLA for Saskatoon Fairview, I had the opportunity to work as a sessional lecturer, and I quite enjoyed the role and process. I am a life-long learner and it has been quite a few years since I have taken economics courses, but I remember that they were the ones that I looked forward to going when pursuing my undergraduate degree.

[15:00]

And taking the cue from the member opposite who reviewed basic accounting a few days ago — revenue minus expenses, etc. — and, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank him for that, it's a good exercise. And the six years in business school, both undergraduate work as well as graduate work in the M.B.A. [Master of Business Administration] program, I spent, was summed up in one sentence, thank you. Also the years I spent in administrative positions in both the private sector and public sector.

So on that note, I believe that it would be beneficial to review some economic terms and why fiscal responsibility is so important. Scarcity is a pervasive condition . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Please listen . . . is a pervasive condition of human existence that exists because society has unlimited wants and needs but limited resources used for their satisfaction. In other words, while we all want a bunch of stuff, we can't have everything we want. In slightly different words, the scarcity problem means there's never enough resources to produce everything that everyone would like produced, and that some people will have to do without some of the stuff they want or need. That doing one thing, producing one good, performing one activity, forces society to give up something else and that the same resources cannot be used to produce two different goods at the same time.

We live in a big bad world of scarcity. This big, bad world of scarcity is what the study of economics is all about. That's why we usually subtitle scarcity the economic problem. Opportunity cost . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The seven years in post-secondary school I think gave me some time for some

critical thinking and I think I . . . Opportunity cost is one of the most frequently used tools for modern economic analysis, deriving many important economic theories and models. It is also a powerful tool in analyzing individual decision-making processes. Whoever you are — an individual, a company, or a nation — you face opportunity cost when making decisions.

Nearly all decisions involve trade-offs. When we are choosing, we are also giving up. Every action and choice is associated with advantages and disadvantages, costs and gains. A key concept that recurs again and again in analyzing the decision-making process is the notion of opportunity cost. The full cost of making a specific choice is what we give up by not taking the alternative. That what we forego in making a choice or decision is called opportunity cost of the decision. More precisely, opportunity cost is not all that we are not choosing added up, instead it is the most valued one among all that we let go. Sometimes opportunity cost can be measured in terms of money, although money is not usually part of it, the only part of it.

Economic policy and the four criteria for judging. Theories and models are positive statements, helping us understand the mechanism of the world, but the formulation of economic policy requires a second step, the step to further these theories and models into practice to get what we think it should be. What are the objectives? How to define better, this is what changes to our situation are positive. Do we . . . better off or worse off?

Four criteria are frequently applied in making these judgments. Efficiency, in economics efficiency means allocated efficiency. An efficient economy is one that produces what people want and does so at the lowest possible cost. More technically, an efficient change in the allocation of resources is one that at least potentially makes some people better off without making people, without making others worse off. Since most changes in an economy will leave some people better off and others worse off, we have to devise a way of comparing gains and losses from a given change. So a change is considered at least potentially efficient if the value of resulting gains exceeds that of resulting losses.

So I think you'd all appreciate equity, fairness. Few people agree on what is fair and what is unfair. For thousands of years, philosophers wrestled with the principles of justice to guide social decisions despite the impossibility of defining equity or fairness universally. Public policy makers judge and regulate the fairness of economic outcomes all the time.

Growth. Economic growth is an increase in the total output of an economy. This is what happens when we invent new and better ways of producing what we use now and develop new products and services. However, all economic policies do not encourage economic growth. Some discourage it. The members opposite would be familiar with that.

Stability. Economic stability refers to the condition in which national output is steady or growing with low inflation and full employment of resources. An economy may at times be unstable, characterized by high unemployment and severe inflation. The causes of instability and attempts to stabilize the economy by government regulation are the subject matter of

macroeconomics.

So why I'm talking about this. And why I thought we would need a brief lesson, shortly after the budget was released, an article from Tom Brodbeck of the *Winnipeg Sun* was released. It was titled, "Sask. kicking our butts with the budget." He then stated we were teaching a "hard lesson in Economics 101." This was the reasoning for my little review of economics. He then goes on to state, "The Saskatchewan government has maintained a level of discipline in its spending, even during relatively good economic times." This discipline is going to be the bubble that shields us from the global economic uncertainty.

Tom then goes on to mention, "Saskatchewan generates 86% of its own revenue and relies on only 14 per cent from the federal government." I also have a little bit of teaching experience for a few classes that deal with comprehensive budgeting. And to me this is amazing — a province that generates 86 per cent of its own revenue and only 14 per cent in federal transfers.

I wanted to talk a little bit about the positives of this budget. I would, however, like to reiterate the vision of the Saskatchewan government that 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 build a life. Our government has identified four new goals to set the direction for the province: to sustain growth and opportunities for Saskatchewan people, improving our quality of life, making life more affordable, and lastly, delivering a responsive and responsible government.

I want to repeat again, to drive the message home, that our government has been rewarded with its careful fiscal management, receiving a AAA credit rating from Standard and Poor's in 2011, which is a big deal.

It would be remiss for me to not discuss the education and training aspects of it as that is where my heart lies, and it is my belief that we need a strong mandate in education and training to mitigate the challenges of growth. As a student, the number of initiatives to encourage students to further their education in Saskatchewan is clear: this budget providing 12 million, which is a 2 per cent increase to support operating costs of our post-secondary institutions.

The 4.6 million which will be invested in a new Saskatchewan advantage scholarship program that we'll provide to every high school graduate from 2012 on, with up to 500 per year to a maximum of 2,000 per individual, resonates with me because I have an 18-year-old daughter who will be graduating from high school this year. Like a lot of parents, this will lighten the load financially when she goes off to post-secondary studies.

This budget provides an increase of 6.7 million for an increased access to the Student Aid Fund, total program funding of 36.5 million.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on and take up a lot of time, but I wanted to reiterate once again that I am the only First Nations person in this Chamber, and none of the members opposite speak for me here. So, Mr. Speaker, I do not support the amendment, and I do support this budget. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melfort.

Mr. Phillips: — Now that is a tough act to follow. I am very pleased to enter into the debate on the 2012 balanced budget, *Keeping the Saskatchewan Advantage*.

I would like to thank the minister, Hon. Minister of Finance, for delivering a budget that will continue to move this province forward. I would also like to thank a few people back home. First of all, I would like to thank my wife, April, for her confidence and her encouragement. Most of all, thanks for accepting our new life together. My CAs back at the home office in the constituency, for a rookie MLA to have experienced CAs is a godsend. Thanks to Laurie and Peggy for all the work that they do back home.

I would also like to thank the members on the government side of the House for helping me find my footing. And that could be a while. I would also like to thank the members opposite for being every bit as effective in opposition as they were in government.

Across Canada and around the world, these are tough economic times. And this budget will be one of two budgets across the country that will be balanced. The budget will allow Saskatchewan to keep growing, keep programs sustainable, and keep our election promises.

Monday night I listened — and it may have been unfortunate — but I listened to the member from Athabasca talk about revisionist history. After 43 years in government over the past six decades, he suggests that they were just starting to get things right when they were unfortunately rejected by the voters.

I think of their record when I look at the map back home in my office, of the oil production in the '90s, and how the oil production stopped at the Saskatchewan-Alberta border — and I think that's awful strange — and how fortunate that the Saskatchewan Party was that oil developed in Saskatchewan after the NDP left office. In those 27 years of government, there were no new potash mines. Not one in 27 years — from the time 1971 to 2007 — 27 years that they were in power. Now, incredible development, Mr. Speaker. We have \$12 billion in expansions and at least another \$12 billion in new mines.

Now what I find really fascinating, and the Saskatchewan Party has said this before, that this is actually a policy that was brought in by the last NDP government. And yet what's really, really strange about this and really has my, I'm scratching my head, is the fact that in this past election they wanted to rip up that agreement. They wanted to . . . It was working. So even when they get things right, they decide to rip it up.

Revisionist history, I don't think so. I think more like selective memory on the member's part. But revisionist history — you know, highways crumbling, 52 hospitals closing, skyrocketing education taxes, depopulation — no. No, we remember. And obviously looking at the opposite side of the House, the citizens of Saskatchewan remember. Only the members opposite have chosen to forget. But I'm sure, if they listen carefully, we will remind them, Mr. Speaker.

This budget makes a number of key investments, including a \$98 million increase or a 3.5 per cent increase to the regional health authorities. And I pinpoint that one because that is an

investment in every man, woman, and child in this province. There are investments for the Saskatchewan surgical initiative, the Cancer Agency, the colorectal screening, STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society], the SAID program. And contrary to the Leader of the Opposition, we have decided to also invest in our towns, cities, and RMs [rural municipality], the municipalities, and also in agriculture. Plus we have funding for the Saskatchewan advantage scholarship, increased active families benefit program, new housing initiatives. And as well, the 2012-13 budget also makes available \$788 million of capital funding across government including long-term care, health care, education, highways, and food security, as well as others.

But there is one feature of the budget that I would like to discuss in-depth, and that is the responsibility of this government in a budget that keeps the momentum of this province going and also protects the next generation and the generations after that. This budget has taken a serious approach, a responsible approach, to keeping our social programs not only in place but also enhanced.

Our senior citizen population is very important to me as it is to all members on both sides of the House. I've learned a great deal from these people in the past. I still learn today, and I look forward to learning tomorrow. This is a growing demographic that is going to strain programs in the days ahead. And we want these programs safe, and we want them there.

A Russian proverb that I read the other night that I thought was a very fitting proverb is a person is judged by his deeds, not his words. Now the opposition likes to be all, all — what's the word? — all sanctimonious when they're asking questions about this budget. And they come up with lines like, do the right thing. Because they know what the right thing is. None of us do apparently. We don't understand. On this side of the House, they're telling us, we just don't understand because they know. But we don't understand. The people of Saskatchewan don't understand.

[15:15]

They do try to make the public believe that they are the friends of senior citizens. Yet in their last year of government, they decided to take \$700 more in income tax from a senior citizen living on a \$25,000 income — \$700 more in taxes. That doesn't include education taxes and other benefits that every person in Saskatchewan has benefited from.

And for the low-income seniors, the seniors' income plan has been increased or will be increased this year by up to \$1,800 over the last year when they were in power. I'm particularly proud of this because, you know, we made an election promise, and we made a promise that this would happen — \$80 increase over four years. Now it seems to me the logical way of going about it, the way some people would have gone about it, would have been \$20 a year or \$20 a month per year for four years. And you know, some people maybe in the past might have gone through it that we'll have zero increase this year, zero increase next year, Mr. Speaker, but then in the last two years we'll build it in. No, this program under this government put it in \$50 this year — \$50 per month, each and every month this year — and \$10 increase again next year, the year after, and the year after that, Mr. Speaker. That's the way people do better in this, in

this society.

The friends of the seniors across the House, they're in . . . The friends of the seniors across the House would be the . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, yes, you guys. What they did was they had zero increase for the first year, zero increase for their second year, third year, fourth year. I know, it just goes on and on and on. Sixteen years that they had, 16 years without an increase. With friends like that, who needs enemies?

Yes, Mr. Speaker, in today's Saskatchewan, we look after our seniors. We look ahead, and we make sure that these programs are there and they're going to be there tomorrow and they're going to be there in five years and in ten years and for many, many years to come. And because of those reasons and so, so many more, I will be supporting the budget, and I will be voting against the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Walsh Acres.

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand today to join in this budget debate. And first I must thank the constituents of Regina Walsh Acres. It is because of them that I'm able to stand here today and reply to our first budget on our second term.

Mr. Speaker, in my first five months as an MLA, I have been able to meet many new constituents, whether being in our constituency office, they came in and chatted, or being at events, the Spring Free From Racism where I attended it with my colleagues from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley and Regina Dewdney and, from across the way, Regina Rosemont. And, Mr. Speaker, I've been able to attend the Luther invitational basketball tournament and bring greetings and meet some constituents there as well. And it's just people have been . . . a pleasure to meet many people within our area.

So, Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I'd like to say my thanks to some very important people in my life. And first and foremost that would be my wife, Larissa. She's an amazing person, and she is the reason I am able to stand here today. Her support means the world to me, and, Mr. Speaker, she is the person most in this world that keeps me grounded and I will be forever thankful to have her in my life.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to thank my brothers and sisters for all of their support. Although we live a far ways away from each other, they always remind me that if I ever need advice, they're just a phone call away.

And, Mr. Speaker, I forgot to mention these people during my Speech to the Throne, and I heard about it a little bit, so I have to thank my in-laws: my in-laws, Larry and Loretta Kopan and my brother-in-laws, Lance and Lonny. They have been there from the very beginning, and they're very supportive. When Larissa and I told them that I was going to run in politics, and I think little did they know what they were going to get in for. They were all there for us during the election, whether it was dropping literature or driving to polls on election day and for this . . . Mr. Speaker, I am certain that our volunteers were the best fed during election day. They had homemade soups and sandwiches for lunch and homemade perogies and sausage for

supper. And everyone was very pleased with that, and I have to thank my mother-in-law and wife for that. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my campaign volunteers once more. These people worked tirelessly to support us and our bid to win Regina Walsh Acres and put . . . on this side of the House. If it wasn't for their effort, Mr. Speaker, I would not be here today.

Finally, to the budget. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Premier, the Minister of Finance, the Treasury Board, and all the ministers and staff that have worked tirelessly to help keep the Saskatchewan advantage in this budget. The message that I took from the budget was to allow sustained economic growth while living within our means. And I think we've accomplished this. This is an important point, Mr. Speaker, because no decisions in this budget were taken lightly. Overall spending was held to 4.7 per cent increase this year — 3.9 of that is increases in operating spending, the rest in capital investment. Mr. Speaker, overall spending will be \$11.2 billion, and this is virtually identical to the spending promise that we made in our campaign platform last November.

Mr. Speaker, while on this topic, this seems like something the NDP are a little sheepish talking about. I would be remiss not to bring up the fact that the current Finance critic and front-runner for the leadership of the NDP was the architect of the campaign platform, and that platform would've plunged our province in a deficit budget for the next four years. And, Mr. Speaker, I've had the opportunity to get to know the member from Rosemont, and he seems, he seems like a nice enough guy. He seems like a good guy. And you know, he seems like a good guy, but with budgeting skills like his, I would not let this man be the treasurer of my beer league hockey team.

Mr. Speaker, our budget ensures the programs are sustainable and our government is focused both on the short-term and long-term financial sustainability of our province.

Mr. Speaker, our province is in a unique situation. Last Wednesday our Finance minister was able to stand and present a budget that was balanced both on a GRF [General Revenue Fund] and summary financial basis. Mr. Speaker, he was the only Finance minister in Canada that had that honour.

This budget is about keeping the Saskatchewan advantage. And, Mr. Speaker, people have asked me, what exactly do you think is the Saskatchewan advantage? To me, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan advantage is seeing the opportunity for youth in our province to stay right here and work, the opportunity for new Saskatchewanians to build a better future here in our province. And, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan advantage is a promise of a better tomorrow.

As always, when I was writing my speech, my wife was there and helping me out, and I . . .

An Hon. Member: — Did she write it for you?

Mr. Steinley: — No, and I . . . She didn't write it for me, Mr. Speaker, but I said, honey, what do you think the Saskatchewan advantage is? And she put it the best. She said, the

Saskatchewan advantage can be seen in people's eyes. There is a sense of pride you see in people's eyes in Saskatchewan now, and that has only happened in the new Saskatchewan. She's a very smart lady, very smart lady.

Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, the Saskatchewan advantage is seen in lower taxes, less debt, in sustainable spending, and programs now and into the future. And as a government, we've made great strides in this province. And you may have heard the phrase — and I know the opposition says this lots — you may have heard the phrase that we used, there's more work to do. And, Mr. Speaker, I see that that's true, because people of Saskatchewan, they understand that we have a lot of work ahead of us, so that's why they sent 14 members more on this side of the House during the last election.

Mr. Speaker, our population is at an all-time high. Just last week StatsCan released its population estimates, putting Saskatchewan at an all-time high of 1,067,612 people. And we haven't seen this increase since 1953, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, while the rest of the country's experiencing net losses of residents, Saskatchewan is one of the only two provinces in Canada to maintain a net migration. Basically what this means, Mr. Speaker, is there's more people coming than going. And that's something that we didn't see in the 16 years of the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, I remember the days when our young people were fleeing our province in droves in search of greener pastures. Well every young family was faced with this question, and I remember this word: do we move away or do we stay here and persevere? Persevere — that's such a strange word to me. See, it's an interesting word. But it's a word that fit perfect with that NDP government of the past. The words prosper or grow just never entered their vocabulary. The people within the NDP and their followers were just happy to be. And, Mr. Speaker, don't take my words for this. It was summed up best by a former minister of economic development — get this, Eldon Lautermilch — who summed up their position the best. When asked about our province's declining population, he said it was okay because the more people that left just meant there was more people from the ones that stayed. Really? An economic development minister that approved of people leaving the province so that there's more for the people that stayed? That, I don't know, for me that . . . I don't get that philosophical ideology, so maybe that's why I'm over here.

Mr. Speaker, I was thinking what attracts our people to this province and I keep coming back to one thing — quality of life. This budget maintains our quality of life here in Saskatchewan by keeping our economy strong, sustainable, and growing to continue to attract people from other provinces and other countries.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is also about keeping our promise. In the last election, just a few short months ago, we promised a first-time homeowners' tax credit. We are keeping this promise by delivering the 1,100 non-refundable tax credit. Mr. Speaker, and I'm in the same boat. My wife and I just bought a new house and we were moving in. And it's pretty overwhelming with all the costs, the down payment, the lawyer fees, the moving expenses the property tax. And lawyers' fees, they do get up there you know, and I guess they get paid what they think they're worth.

But, Mr. Speaker, I found the ranting and raving speech of the always entertaining, although sometimes mostly grossly inaccurate, member from Athabasca interesting. And as we all know, we just went through an election and I had the ability to go and walk around Walsh Acres and meet many new residents. And for me I was very fortunate because I saw a lot of young, new homeowners in Walsh Acres. They're young people. Walsh Acres is a great place for people to get started in the housing industry. And I'm opening these doors and really, Mr. Speaker, it's young families, and they're in their first home and they're happy, they're smiling, and they're very optimistic to the future. And I believe that our government is able to support more young people moving into homes for the first time. And that's something that is very close to my heart, and I think it's really helping for us to attract more young people to this province when we can give them a homeowner . . . a foot in the door to home ownership. So that's one of our promise we kept over our platform.

Mr. Speaker, we're keeping our promise to provide up to \$2,000 more over four years to new high school graduates. And that's the new Saskatchewan advantage scholarship. This 2,000 will help new post-secondary students with their tuition payments right here in our province.

And I'm going out on a limb here, Mrs. Deputy Speaker, but I think I may be the most recent high school graduate in this Assembly . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Madam Speaker, I am sorry. I think I was the most recent high school graduate on our side for sure; I'm not sure about that side. But I remember when I graduated high school and I go around and I was thinking of what I was going to do after high school and, Mr. Speaker, I know that these questions are pretty difficult for young people aged 18 and 19 to decide what they're going to do, or in some people's cases 21, 22. But after this, after these decisions are made, it's nice to know that a government's there to support them.

And I just have to say a few things on behalf of the member from Greystone, that I don't think there's been a post-secondary minister that has put more time and effort into promoting our post-secondary schools in the history of our province. He's done a great job to promote the U of R [University of Regina] and U of S [University of Saskatchewan] and SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] campuses. And the money he put in there, the money he's put in there to help build on their reputations and help build their facilities make . . . There's a top-notch kinesiology facility right here in the U of R. There's a top-notch business school here in the U of R, U of S. And I'm just proud, and he's done a heck of a job, and I just wanted to make sure that he knew that. So congratulations to the Minister of AEEI [Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration]. Mr. Speaker, that being said, our minister is second to none.

I attended university under the NDP actually, Madam Speaker. And I just want to say that, you know, I attended university when the NDP were in power, and it's something that . . . The people at the U of R, they were very happy when they rolled out these ad hoc tuition freeze programs. And you know, the one thing about tuition freeze programs is, you know, it's kind of, it's a short-term gain for long-term pain because that offloads costs onto future students going there, which makes it 10 times

harder for someone that's going to graduate four or five years down the road to go to school because those tuition increases are exorbitant. They're at 10, 15 per cent. We've seen this all across, all across the country about these tuition freezes. And, Mr. Speaker, our minister made sure that there's not more than a 3 or 4 per cent tuition increase, and that means a lot towards the people and the students of this province.

[15:30]

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say our government is committed to the SAID program. It's a program and it's a commitment that we made in our campaign and it's another promise we kept during this budget, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the benefit of the Saskatchewan assured income disability benefit . . . [inaudible] . . . \$17.8 million to enhance this program. What this means, Mr. Speaker, is that individuals enrolled in the SAID program will be receiving more money every month to improve their quality of life. And in June 2012, couples living independently will receive \$230 more a month, and single individuals living independently will receive \$200 a month. Mr. Speaker, these increases will make a huge difference in the lives of people within the SAID program. We've also increased the numbers of individuals eligible for the program through a new assessment process. This will open up the door for 7,000 new people living independently to become eligible for the SAID program.

Mr. Speaker, what this says is . . . That's a lot of numbers, and I know the Finance critic doesn't like numbers. But what this means basically, Mr. Speaker, is that I'm so proud to see our government standing up for those most vulnerable in our society. And that's what this budget does.

We promised to increase the seniors' income plan, a supplement that helps low-income seniors in Saskatchewan. And just to be clear, those people across the floor never once thought it necessary to increase the senior income plan in 16 years — not once. And that's how they feel about seniors. And you can see it in their record, not their rhetoric.

Mr. Speaker, in 2009-10 our budget, our government raised the maximum monthly benefit from 90 to \$190 for single seniors, more than doubling the amount set under the previous government. I don't have to go into that again. Mr. Speaker. In this budget we've committed an additional \$50 per month with another \$10 a month every year for the next three years. This means by the end of this term our government will have tripled our benefits to low-income seniors that they receive every month. Again, Mr. Speaker, we are standing up for our society's most vulnerable.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most important components of this budget is the investment in affordable housing. This will have a very positive impact on Regina. Because of the diverse demographics in Regina, finding an affordable housing, I know, can be a challenge. As it crosses the province, we have committed to addressing this issue. And I can think of no better way than through the initiatives announced in this budget.

We've introduced a new corporate income tax rebate on new rental housing in the province. This means that more people will be building rental units, increasing the supply of affordable housing. This income tax rebate removes a huge barrier of

development of the rental housing. This project also includes a \$2 million funding increase for the rental construction initiatives in affordable home ownership program and 9.2 million for the rental development program to develop an additional 200 rental units in a community with a long-term housing need. This will result in — remember this number — this will result in 12,600 new affordable homes, of which 10,000 units will be of the rental kind.

Mr. Speaker, by taking this responsible route, we ensure the sustainable . . . Sorry. By taking this route, we ensure the sustainability of the construction of affordable housing in our province.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, Bill Madder of the Association of Saskatchewan Realtors had this to say about these initiatives:

Over many years, we've had a real shortage on the rental side, so I think this is a big help. I think it's a potential home run for the provincial government.

Bill Madder of the Saskatchewan housing . . . Madam Deputy Speaker, Steve McLellan, president of the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, said that this housing move was a positive one, stating, and I quote:

One of the biggest challenges to our growth is a lack of housing from the new people, immigrant, and new people moving home. But overall they've struck a good balance.

Mr. Speaker, we've all experienced the pain of watching someone that we love waiting for surgery. I know I have. And, Mr. Speaker, it's something that this budget moves forward with innovative health care initiatives. Mr. Speaker, it's a hard thing to watch when a loved one's suffering and waiting for surgery. That is why our government has increased the health budget: we are putting patients first. And we want to ensure that no Saskatchewan resident waits more than three months for surgery by 2014.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency was given an additional \$16.9 million in this year's budget. Mr. Speaker, I don't think I have to tell people about cancer. It's hit each and every one of us in this Assembly and it's something that . . . It's a terrible disease. And I think when people from across the floor talk about misplaced priorities, I don't think they include this in it. I think having a priority of dealing with cancer as best as we can is something that we over here take great pride in. And I hope people over on the other side will support us in this initiative for sure. Mr. Speaker, Scott Livingstone the CEO says, and I quote, "It will allow us to maintain and improve access to cancer services over the next year." And, Mr. Speaker, I think that going forward, that's just another thing we can build on.

One thing that Regina Walsh Acres constituents should be aware of is that the amount of provincial income tax they will pay in 2012 is substantially less than just five short years ago. For example a family of four with an annual income of \$50,000 will save \$2,638 per year in 2012 as compared to 2007. Mr. Speaker, this works out to about \$220 per month, which for a family of four means a lot. For example, Mr. Speaker, it means that people that didn't really have the ability to go and play

sports, take a piano lesson, you know, do some things, it's really about improving the quality of life for people, which we talk about, which is part of the Saskatchewan advantage, Mr. Speaker. And this side will always believe that people themselves will know what best to do with their money and government will not, Mr. Speaker. So the more money that we can put into people's pockets, we always will. And we always will think that that's a good thing.

Mr. Speaker, keeping the Saskatchewan advantage is exactly what this budget does, Mr. Speaker. And this is a balanced budget that keeps our promises and ensures that spending is sustainable, and it keeps our economy growing. And all of the Saskatchewan citizens, whether they've been here their entire lives or are just new to this province, know that they can enjoy a quality of life in Saskatchewan second to none.

Madam Deputy Speaker, just a few more comments. First and foremost I see that my wife is here now, so I guess I want to say hi and thank her very much for making it. And she reminds me of one thing, and the one thing is that, Mr. Speaker, our people, our people are our greatest strength. They all share a distinctive spirit — one of hard work, dedication, and pride in where we live and where we come from. And together, Mr. Speaker, we can keep Saskatchewan's momentum going as we continue to lead the country in the coming years. After years of being a have-not province, Saskatchewan citizens deserve to be where they are right now. And it's through their hard work — not government — through the people's hard work. And that's why we're here and where we are right now, and we're leading the country in many economic indicators, Mr. Speaker.

And I am so very humble to be able to speak to this balanced budget, this sustainable budget. And on behalf of the great constituency of Walsh Acres, I will be supporting this budget, and I will not be supporting the amendment put forward by my friend from Regina Rosemont.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Tell): — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak to the budget. I'm the last in the lineup for our group except for our leader, who will be speaking tomorrow. And I've been listening to a lot of speeches, Madam Deputy Speaker, and finding out a lot of things about the views of our colleagues opposite. And certainly I've enjoyed hearing the comments of our colleagues here in the loyal opposition.

To begin with, I think the first point I want to talk about is that budgets are about choices. And my learned colleague here from Regina Rosemont has indicated that in his comments as well. There are a lot of choices to be made here in Saskatchewan in this budget; in fact there's 11 billion choices to be made. So that's the revenues that are coming in as projected by the government.

Other comments that have come from across the way was that, you know, is there anything good? Do we see anything good in this budget? And I do, and I'm going to talk about those first. So there are some good things about what's going on in our economy right now. Maybe it's about time. Crops are good. The price of wheat is good. We see that cattle and hog prices are

doing really well. We know that potash prices are doing really well. Oil is doing well. Uranium is doing well.

We have abundant renewable resources in our province, and we also have abundant non-renewable resources. And thank goodness for that, Madam Deputy Speaker, because those non-renewable resources contribute 28 per cent to the income of this province. That's just the resource royalties themselves. So that's \$3.1 billion. Almost a third of the revenues that are coming in are coming in from our non-renewable resources, and that's a large part of the revenues that this government has to do programming with.

The good points about the budget, what I did is I've highlighted a few that I think are fine additions to the province's programming. And I'll start in health. Two of the things in health that I think are particularly good additions to the programming of health, and one is the children's insulin pump program. And that in particular is because of my son's friend Jordan. And Jordan is a juvenile diabetic, and he has struggled with it his whole life. He's 18 now. And part of it as being a young fellow is just having the insulin with him when he needs it. And he gets into sports and he goes around and hangs out with his friends, and often he doesn't have his insulin with him when he needs it. And he's been severely in danger with his diabetes because he's an active kid and just sometimes forgets. So I think the children's insulin pump program is going to really help folks like Jordan.

The other increase that I'm pleased with and think is a good addition to our budget is the 16.9 million increase in the Cancer Agency. Obviously as the previous speaker indicated, cancer affects families. Every family in Saskatchewan's affected by it, and it's an important thing to make sure our Cancer Agency is strong and helping people. I've had friends go through chemo in the past year, and certainly I know the good folks at the Cancer Agency have been very supportive for them. And it's good to know that they'll have more support through this item in the budget, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Another item that I'm glad to see is the increase of 4.4 million to deal with increasing costs in court services and prosecutions. Unfortunately in this case, Madam Deputy Speaker, it might be a bit short-sighted because we know there's a new crime Bill that's been introduced by the federal government, and I don't see any plans in this part of the budget under Justice to deal with the additional costs that are going to be imposed upon Saskatchewan as a result of that particular Bill.

Now we found out, I just heard today that in British Columbia, their courts are so backlogged right now that they're actually having to cancel trials, that potential criminals are not being found guilty because their courts are too clogged. And we see that there's a 50 per cent increase in court appearances in Saskatchewan since 2000. So given the crime Bill, and it's on its way, I'm worried that this particular increase in Justice is simply not going to cut it. So although I'm glad to see it's 4.4 million, I'm worried that the Justice department hasn't been able to do the accurate projections to determine what the impact of the new crime Bill will be, and we know it will be great, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I think the one single most important item in this new budget is

the 113 million to provide expanded SAID or Saskatchewan assured income for disability eligibility. That was the single most important issue in my riding when I was going door to door during the election was those people that are living on social assistance that have disabilities. And they are struggling, Madam Deputy Speaker, and their quality of life is traumatic. For me it was a shock to know that these . . . to meet people that were living in my community that were suffering so much and struggling so hard with not only their disability but all the realities of life that they had to cope with: finding a place to live, making sure that they had access to their meds, and trying to work when they can. But when work didn't pan out, and they got sick again, then they were on and off social assistance. And it was really difficult, it's very, very difficult for those people.

So I think that's the one thing, and I commend the government for that particular program. We know that there are, I think, a number of people on the list, and hopefully as this program grows, it will also be extended to other people who are just simply not able to cope with the demands of life and are disabled in various ways. So I do commend the government for that particular program.

I'd also like to commend them for the support for the crop insurance, AgriStability, and AgriInvest. And I'll talk a little bit more about that later when I talk about my family.

And finally I think there's a couple more I'd like to address. The support and continued support for reforestation under the environment budget, we see \$3.8 million being added there, and that's just to meet the government's current obligations. The only unfortunate thing about that particular addition is that the rules of engagement have changed for tree planting, Madam Deputy Speaker. And the government has now changed the application process, so a number of the forestry companies that have been doing a fine job of reforestation in Saskatchewan since the 1980s when the program began are no longer able to compete in the market, the reforestation market, because there are much larger companies from out of province that are being given a preferential treatment for those contracts. So although it's good to see that the government is still meeting its obligations in the forestry sector, I'm sad to say that Saskatchewan companies are being excluded from that work, and they will have to look for work elsewhere as well.

[15:45]

Innovation Saskatchewan has introduced money to support research and development for a cyclotron. That's one of my critic areas, is Innovation Saskatchewan. And I think that's a noble enterprise. Again however — and I've spoken to the minister about this — I would like to see more balance in this kind of funding because these types of the research that's being done is based on the use of a non-renewable resource. And I think that we can be very innovative in a number of other areas. And Innovation Saskatchewan, it would be great to see research and development being extended to renewable resource research and development, particularly in the area of energy production. So I've expressed that concern to the minister, and I hope that we see more of that type of innovation in the future.

I guess that's some of the positive notes I will make about the budget. However I need to fill my role as a member of the loyal

opposition, and our job here is to propose alternative solutions and constructive criticism to ensure that our citizens are protected by good laws. And the minister of state for the United Kingdom has indicated that MLAs have to ensure the fundamental principles of accountability and transparency are upheld. And what he said is, transparency is the foundation of accountability.

So we know that our job on this side of the Chamber, Madam Deputy Speaker, is to hold the government to account. And we wouldn't be doing our job if we didn't examine the budget very, very closely and look closely for areas that maybe the government's missed the mark. They have \$11 billion to spend, and our job is to sift through it. And I think our Finance critic has done a fine job of that, and he's given us some guidance in that as well.

It's not an easy document to read. I've read balance sheets for my own company, and I've also read balance sheets for a number of non-profit corporations, and my first experience with the provincial budget is a little different than those. So it's a complicated document.

And I know my colleague, the Finance critic, has pointed out that there is some manipulation of numbers here that makes the picture look maybe a little more rosy than it really is, Madam Deputy Speaker. And surely we'll know that once the numbers come down the pipe at the end of the year in terms of the estimates. And also, just the way the numbers are being presented to the good people of Saskatchewan, we want to make sure that the people understand that the way the books are being presented are one way of presenting them, and that there are other provinces who present them differently. And certainly the petitions that we bring in here every day indicate that.

So this is what I will now try and talk to a little bit is some of those other areas that maybe aren't as rosy as we would like them to be. My critic areas, there's three areas I want to speak to right now in terms of what my role as a member of the loyal opposition is, and that's in the areas of agriculture and government services and then energy and resources.

And in agriculture we see increased spending. And in fact we are hearing lots about how this is probably the richest agricultural budget in history, and that's a good thing. However we do see there are some cuts in agriculture, and one is the cut to shortline rails. I've risen in the House before, Madam Deputy Speaker, curious about why this government hasn't made any plans for the transition for farmers from the Canadian Wheat Board single-desk monopoly to the destruction of that monopoly and concerns about the availability of transportation, how transportation is going to happen for our grain farmers now that the Canadian Wheat Board's influence, great influence and powerful presence in the grain transportation process . . . And we haven't seen anything yet. And I was really hoping we'd see something in this budget for farmers to make that transition.

Certainly the cut to the shortline rails is going to have a serious impact not only on the bottom line for those farmers but also on highways. And I know we have funding for highways, but I'm not sure that they've taken into account the incredible pounding that a lot of our highways are going to experience because of the loss of the shortline rails and again the incredible cost that

farmers are going to have to incur because of the loss of the shortline rails.

So we see nothing in terms of a transition for farmers that are experiencing the loss of the single desk in their grain marketing. We see new companies coming in, large multinational companies coming in to pick up companies like Viterra, our own prairie-grown company, and we have to ask why. Why are they here? Well the pundits have said it's because they can make money. So if they're making money, we know whose pockets it's coming out of. It's coming out the farmers' pockets, Madam Deputy Speaker.

In terms of government services, I've raised this earlier in terms of the funding that's being provided to judges, but we see quite a bit of investment now in — I just want to find the page, Madam Deputy Speaker — in construction for correctional services. We see that 9.6 million is going to be provided to expand Pine Grove and another 3 million for an expansion to the Prince Albert Provincial Correctional Centre.

Given what I said earlier about the caseload increases that we've seen since 2000, a 50 per cent increase in caseloads, with the introduction of the crime Bill, again, although this money is absolutely necessary to provide the right levels of accommodation for people that are incarcerated, I just wonder if there's been any foresight looking into the impact of the crime Bill on the future incarcerees — I don't know if that's a word or not — the people who will be put in jail as a result of the crime Bill. So I'm hoping and I'm sure that the Minister for Government Services and the Minister for Corrections and the Minister for Justice are closely examining this and look forward to the thoughtful analysis in the near future as to the impact of the crime Bill and how these facilities are going to manage those types of large increases.

And in energy resources and innovation — again I mentioned it earlier — there's a lot of funds going into interesting research and development projects. And that's all good and fine, however, none of them are looking into research and development for renewable energy and renewable resources. And you know, I might throw in that I see people as renewable resources in many ways. And the film industry is a good example of the type of industry that maybe could use some research and development support in terms of how to grow the industry given that, if we're not going to have the tax credit which is being proposed, are there other ways to grow the industry.

So innovation to me goes beyond research and development, although that's the phrase and that's the way the word's being used nowadays. To me it goes much further than research and development into pure science. I think there are other ways to apply it. And certainly in terms of renewable resources, there is pure science applications that could be explored.

And they're being done throughout the world, and I just worry that we're falling behind in that area. So although I applaud the investments in those types of research and development, I would encourage the Minister of Innovation, and Energy and Resources, to further research and development in non-renewable, or pardon me, Madam Deputy Speaker, in renewable energy and resources. So those are a few of my

comments on the critic areas.

I'd like to talk just a little bit now about my view of the world from this side of the bench and this side, being in opposition. My constituency is Saskatoon Nutana, and they supported me and elected me in the last election. And I have to say that — with no offence to my other colleagues from Saskatoon — that I think that Saskatoon is, or pardon me, Saskatoon Nutana is really the cultural heart of our city.

Right down the middle of my riding is the Broadway area in Saskatoon. It's a very popular area that's filled with good eating establishments and live music. There's several places where you can get live music. There's bookstores. There's art stores. And there's the Saskatchewan Craft Council, which is the pride of the craft community in Saskatchewan.

We have many, many, many artists and musicians that live in my riding. Some of the world's best jewellers, like Megan Broner. We have Craig Campbell who's a brilliant blacksmith artist. Dagen Linder, Paul Jacoby, Grant McConnell, Greg Hardy — all famous and world renowned painters. We have Lyle Gustin who lived in my riding and his house is still a heritage house in Saskatoon Nutana. And he was one of the foremost piano instructors, really, in Canada when he was alive, and they still have concerts at his house. I have many players from the symphony that live in my riding. Saskatoon Chamber Singer members, archivists, professors. I even have, you know, The Sheepdogs. I have a sheep dad and mom that live in my riding; Sheldon Corbett, Margie Corbett. And Sheldon is also an acclaimed studio musician.

So you just need to walk around Broadway and you will find all these people. And it's a joy for me to walk down Broadway Avenue and meet people and chat with them all the time. It's a very vibrant, vibrant community and I love living there. And I think everybody who is living there is there because it's one of the best places in the world to live.

However, when I was out walking around during the election and going door to door, I did meet people who were struggling. And the one group I think that touched me the most, in addition to those struggling with disabilities, are the seniors that live in Saskatoon Nutana. A lot of them are making ends meet. They're living in their own home and that's incredibly important to them. They are proud to be living on their own. And many of them are widows and widowers, and they are literally alone. They're living in their house by themselves, but they've managed without their spouse, and they're very proud to be living there.

We have a seniors' income plan that can help people like that when they're short on money, but so many of them told me they just can't make ends meet. They're struggling with their property taxes. They're on fixed income. And once illness hits and they have to start taking prescriptions, things get really, really tough for them. And they're scared and terrified to leave their homes. They're comfortable in their own home. They may not have family supports. Lots of them do. But once the squeeze on the margin gets tighter and tighter and tighter, they get scared and terrified and realize that, you know, they might be in trouble. So unfortunately I think the new cost for prescriptions that are being proposed in this budget are going to have a very

serious impact on those seniors, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And the seniors' income plan, that's \$3 million. So on that side of the equation, we have give. But on the other side of the equation, the new cost for the prescriptions could be as high as \$10 million. So then we see take. And then we see take on the ambulance bills, and we see take. So the equation doesn't quite add up despite the economics lesson that we got from the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Students — same story for students.

And I guess for seniors, I haven't talked about this either. If they live, own their own home, then they're all right. They have problems with property taxes, but they're managing. For those who don't own their own home, it's even worse. And in my riding, rental costs go up and up and up.

I have Yvonne who's a lovely lady that I've met since I got elected. She's not 65 yet, so she's not quite on pension. And she had an apartment, and she was thrilled to be living in Saskatoon Nutana. And she's helping in her church. She's a very active and a very vibrant lady, although she is disabled with arthritis. So she can't work, but she has some income. And she came and saw me, I think probably late January, said, Cathy, I've got to move; I just got a \$200 rent increase. That was \$800 she was paying. It went up \$200. And now she has found another place, but she's had to move out of the area. So I'm going to miss having her pop into the office. That's a problem with rental.

And the same problem applies for students. Again rent. My area is really, really close to the university, and there's a number of apartment buildings in the area where students live, and that's the same problem they're facing. Their income, if . . . Well they don't have income. They're working off student loans, or they may have some income from their summer jobs or working while they're students. But the rents are going up so much in my area that they're having to go farther and farther to find accommodation. And even then, I think, across Saskatoon the rents are really, really high.

So we have the rents going up for students and then the tuition increases. We're expecting that we'll see tuition increases because of the off-loading that this government has now passed on to the universities. So there's no way the universities can absorb that. It will be off-loaded on to the students. So that's another burden that they're going to have to deal with as well.

We know that the government has introduced a tax credit for people to construct new units and there's a lot of new units that are going to be constructed, and that's important. Saskatoon's growing and we have definitely a shortage of spots. The problem is whether these students and these seniors are going to be able to afford the rent on those units. So although there's a tax credit and an incentive for people to build, we still don't have enough low-income, affordable housing for students and seniors in Saskatoon, and I suspect that's similar for a lot of areas in the province, including Regina. So that's of concern.

And it just seems that the focus on creating programs where people put in effort and get a tax credit is useful and helpful, but it's leaving people out. And as a member of the loyal opposition, looking for concerns in this particular budget, that's

where I'm focusing, is on the fact that people are being left out. And I've met them. They're in my constituency. I met them on the doorsteps. And I worry about particularly the ones that are in their 60s and 70s. They're still living a good life but, you know, their health is starting to decline and they have to take prescriptions. They may have emergencies that they have to go to the hospital. They aren't able to own their own homes, so they're renting and all those things squeeze and squeeze and squeeze. And one lady told me, it's often a choice of food. So I just think that's not a good way for our seniors to have to live and I look to this government to do the right thing — somebody mentioned — and make sure those seniors aren't falling through the cracks in this prosperous time.

[16:00]

I guess that leads me to all the actors and writers and artists and musicians that live in Saskatoon Nutana and the hard work they do and the passion they bring and the creative talent they bring to our, not only our sense of who we are . . . I don't know if you've ever seen Joey Hamilton do Saskatoon, a love story. He's a brilliant spoken word artist that lives in my riding. And he was honoured in a national competition for a, sort of a beat poet, poetry piece that he said, Saskatoon, a love story. And I recommend everyone go on YouTube and watch it, even if you're not from Saskatoon. Because he perfectly describes the heart of our city and to me, Madam Deputy Speaker, that is culture and the arts. There's no doubt about it.

And that's what people look for when they look for a place to live. They want to see a vibrant cultural and arts scene. That's important to people. People spend more money on arts than they do on sports. I just read that from a VP [vice-president] of Enbridge in Calgary and it's definitely part of our constituency's personality and culture, by far. And people come from all over Saskatoon and all over the world to enjoy the cultural offerings of Saskatoon Nutana, including the fringe festival. And I think there was a member from my constituency here this afternoon, Madam Deputy Speaker, Anand Ramayya from Karma Film. He's one of the leading producers and film companies in the province. And of course that leads me to the film employment tax credit.

I guess the single most important investment in this budget is in the SAID program, as far as I'm concerned. And this is the single most disappointing part of the budget for me, Madam Deputy Speaker. The film and television industry creates pride in our province. They work hard and they are creative people and they're entrepreneurs. For every \$1 that's invested, we heard earlier, it actually turns into \$6. And I just don't understand why that's not a good thing. Although the source of the funding may be offensive to the Premier, I think what's being said by the people is that, can you look beyond that? Can you just kind of put that behind you for a moment and look at the whole picture and what's going on here?

What is it about this particular industry that has them singled out in the budget? We're confused and not certain why this particular industry is being singled out. Is it because they're experiencing struggles? We hear that there's a bit of a downturn in the economy, in the film economy right now. I think part of that certainly, we know, is because of the global recession, and that's affected the whole industry. So what do we do when

someone's struggling? Do we cut and run? These creators and these entrepreneurs, do we fade to black?

It's still paying for itself. And this to me, Madam Deputy Speaker, appears to be just another case of ideology trumping common sense. The return on investment, to use an economic term, is great. We see it's \$6 for every dollar. It employs many. Many people have chosen to follow their dream here. They don't want to leave Saskatchewan. We've heard that from the other side. They're proud that people are coming back to Saskatchewan. These people want to stay here. They want to raise their families here and they want to be creative and show off Saskatchewan to the world. That's a good thing, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Now we know their struggles are . . . They're undergoing struggles right now. But we know also that in these types of industries it ebbs and flows. And our hope and dream for these people is that this government can recognize that it may be in a lull; there may be struggles. But with the support, strong support of a government to bolster them when they need it — just like we have crop insurance and all kinds of AgriStability for farmers, or there's other programs — that's the key.

And some of the problems with the industry may be that SCN was taken away. That was certainly a positive aspect for the industry. Another issue that they're dealing with — and I heard this in the rotunda — was that there's problems financially with processing the tax credit itself. Sometimes it takes 18 months to two years for the Finance department to actually process the tax credit, and cash flows for those companies, which are tight to begin with, become even more difficult. So that creates struggles for them. Those are just a few of the things that I've heard about the film and television tax credit, and I know you will hear more.

What I would like to do at this point though is stop using my words, and I'd like to share with you three letters from my constituents about this issue. And the first one is from Candace Savage. Now Candace is a renowned author. She's written more than 20 books and been nominated for a number of awards. Her books on the prairie ecology are brilliant and fascinating, and I recommend that everybody read Candace's books. But anyway, she wrote an email to the Premier and she said:

I'm still reeling from the news that you have cancelled the film tax credit, a decision that strikes at the heart of my family. My daughter returned to Saskatchewan from Ontario to work on the Genie-award winning series *Wapos Bay* and has since been kept alive by working on independent productions. I'm very worried that you have just destroyed her livelihood and my chance to live in the same city as my daughter and her family. [And she has a beautiful grandchild.]

Productions like *Wapos Bay* and *Corner Gas*, amongst others, put Saskatchewan on the map. They tell stories from here that no one else can tell. These voices deserve our support. The talented and determined young people who have worked hard, against steep odds, to build the film industry in Saskatchewan deserve to be able to stay home. But why would they stay when Saskatchewan is closed for business and the door is wide open next door?

Please, please reconsider this destructive decision.

That's from Candace Savage. This is another one I got today from a teacher in my riding, in my constituency. And he says:

Hi Folks, [And I assume this is to the government.]

You know . . . people respect others when they fess up that they've made a mistake. It's not too late to do so. I know the golden rule in politics tends to be "don't flip-flop" but I have always thought that is a ridiculous idiom. As human beings we constantly re-evaluate based on new information. I think it is great that the government is trying to save the taxpayers money . . . but not when it threatens jobs . . . or at the expense of the arts . . . and getting rid of the film tax credit is threatening jobs and sends a message that the arts are not important. I am an art teacher. I know, have worked with and have taught the folks whose jobs are being endangered by this momentary lapse of judgement.

One of my students, Nathan Wahl, from many years back has been working as an animator as well as an illustrator for comic books and graphic novels. I remember that this was what he always wanted to do . . . and I encouraged him to follow his dream. How impractical is that? No talk of finding a "real job" or "making sure he had something to fall back on." He is very talented and has been able to make a living at it being involved in productions such as Wapos Bay and that vampire movie shot in Dundurn called Rufus. Earlier this week I was talking to a current student, Connor Wall . . . who is in grade 9 and who is also very good at drawing. I asked him what he wanted to do when he graduated, and he said he wanted to become a graphic designer or to create comic books. He's a student that struggles in other areas so I happily told him about my buddy, Nathan. Well now, here's the thing. Nathan would have been working in this animation studio in Dundurn. His is one of the jobs getting axed because of this move. It's all well and good to talk about working with the film industry or coming up with new incentive to help the film industry, but that sounds like trying to save face. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

I would have much more respect for the government if, instead of being inflexible at the risk of appearing to backpedal, they simply decided to keep the Saskatchewan film tax credit in its current form. The arts are important. They may not generate as much revenue as oil sands or be as practical as math or science, but a world without the arts would be a dull place indeed. Thank you.

And that's Sheldon Mojelski who's a teacher in Martensville, and he's one of my constituents.

And I have a third letter that I'd like to share with you, and this is from Kent Allen. Now Kent Allen is one of the most prominent actors in Saskatchewan. He's been recognized across the country as a brilliant actor, and he's one of my constituents. He says:

Dear Ms. Sproule, I am writing to you today to convey my feelings of deep disappointment and sadness

regarding the government's decision to cut the film tax credit. I was born here, and lived here my whole life. I have been a professional actor for more than 35 years. Many years ago, I made a commitment, as did many others, to stay in Saskatchewan to work towards making this province a place that would be recognized, within and without our borders, as a place that was full of creative energy, opportunity and forward thinking. We wanted to help in changing the perception that this was a flyover zone, a flatland only. We have failed.

Saskatchewan has indeed changed. People have built many things here that serve us all. I have worked from coast to coast, and the things that have been accomplished here have been noted in other cities, and many were amazed with what was achieved. That was not our failure. It was that we now know we did not change the perception of this province with people within our borders, with our own government. Our work has been dismissed. My professional commitment to this province has come to nothing and is now meaningless. It is heartbreaking.

Previously when it was suggested that I might find success in other jurisdictions, it was not something I would have considered. Now we, as a family, must think again. We love this province, but not the direction it has taken. I can no longer encourage my children to consider this province as a place to pursue their creative dreams. Now when I talk to aspiring, young, talented people who wish to pursue a career in the arts, I can no longer advise them to build a resumé in Saskatchewan. The pursuit of their passion will be better served elsewhere. Yes, our great failure was in not realizing that our government, charged with the responsibility to represent all people in the province, really couldn't care less about what we've spent our lives and our careers trying to achieve. The government has done this. What will be next? It's a frightening question.

Respectfully submitted,
Kent Allen

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, those are just some of the words that I'm hearing from my constituents and about this film employment tax credit. And I have to say, and we've said it before, not a single one of them have asked me to encourage this government to add three more politicians. It's just not on anybody's radar screen. We all knocked on doors here and I know that not one of us heard it. And yet, that is being put front and foremost on the agenda and the less support for arts is a strong message that's going out to the people of Saskatchewan, and it's sad to be here today speaking about it.

A few more things I want to talk about today in terms of this budget, in terms of my province, what I see as important in our province is, there's a few things generally that I'm interested in. And one, I'm very interested in First Nations, Métis issues. I worked with the federal government for 17 years with First Nations and I've seen some of the stories that my colleague has talked about. I know the struggles that First Nations and Métis people are living in this province. And there's many ways we can move those people forward. Eighteen per cent

unemployment is simply unacceptable and any cuts to economic development really cut out the heart of progress in particularly northern Saskatchewan, but other First Nations communities and Métis communities around the province.

In terms of where I come from in the province, I come from the southern part of the province, pretty close to the border of Montana, and my grandpa came and homesteaded 100 years ago. We now have a Century Farm Award from Information Services Corporation. And my dad farmed, grew up there. I remember as a kid looking out across the prairie and we could actually see the town of Woodrow from our front yard. It was 14 miles away. We could see the Wheat Pool elevator, yes. And there's lots of pheasant hunting in the area; certainly my dad was an avid hunter.

My brothers are still farming, and I know that as my grandpa farmed, he went through the '30s and, if it wasn't for the support of the government of the day, he would have had to leave. And many people did leave because it was really rough. He had off farm employment through the Wheat Pool and so he was able to put bread on the table. Well actually my grandma made the bread, but he was able to support the family financially off farm. And certainly that's not exclusive to my grandfather's generation. A lot of farmers have had to work off farm. My dad did and my brothers do as well.

But, you know, I think the support that they got from the government, both federally during the '30s and throughout the decades, has really helped them stay on the farm. And they are very appreciative and I am too. I mean, it was a great place to grow up and it was always, you know, something that . . . They also put passion and creativity into their farming, and they care deeply about the land and we are very connected to the land. And so again, role of government, keep them in place and keep them in the province. We didn't have to leave, because we had support. And I think that's just another reason why Saskatchewan's a great place to live.

I just want to talk a little bit about my city, Saskatoon. I grew up on the farm and as a young kid I left to pursue a professional career and ended up in Saskatoon. I've been in Saskatoon really since the '80s and I love Saskatoon. However I've noticed a lot of changes in the last few years, and obviously the price of housing and rental prices have gone up, and the busyness. It's a way busier city now. We know the population's growing like mad, and so new subdivisions are being put up. We see all kinds of infill. People are prosperous and they're doing really well. They're making good livings in Saskatoon.

And part of that growth, though, brings some growth stories that aren't so positive. I think if anybody's driven down Saskatoon since, you know, frequently in the last 10 years, they'll see the roads are way, way busier. And there's a lot more going on in Saskatoon. We're building a new bridge this year with the support of both levels of government, and that's a good thing. But any time you hear Mayor Atchinson speak, he'll say, don't forget we need two more bridges. It's just not enough, because the growth is so great.

[16:15]

So growth requires care and management. We need smart

growth, Madam Deputy Speaker. And what we're not seeing is support for all the offshoots of growth. There's more children, and so we're short on daycares. We need more schools. We hear that from my colleague from Massey Place every day: Hampton Village does not yet have a school. There are young families there, and we've spoken to school boards. Kids are being shipped all over the city in buses, and they're in the portable learning mobile units, so we need more. The emergencies in the hospitals, if anybody's spent time in the emergencies lately — I know I have — it's a pretty busy place. And so all of these incidentals of growth come with issues that need to be attended to.

We're short on care homes. I got a call this morning from a woman whose husband is needing care, and the list is so long that the place they found is one that just isn't one he can live in. We also need interchanges. We need highways. And they aren't in this budget, and I don't know where the government is going to propose that they find the money. But certainly the 30 per cent of the revenues that come from natural resource royalties isn't enough. And so we need to see a better plan, and we also need to see smart growth so that those resources are available for us for a long time.

I guess the one thing that we do see that we're going to get more of is politicians. And I'm not sure that that's going to help the city of Saskatoon dealing with our bursting at the seams, but maybe the mayor could figure out a way to use these more politicians. I'm not sure.

One other item in the budget that hasn't been talked about a whole lot — and I'll just mention it briefly because it doesn't really relate to a whole lot of money; I don't think it's an in and out money issue — but it's the turning of Tourism Saskatchewan from an independent agency to one that's going to be tightly controlled by the government. And what I understand is the government wants to manage the message.

And again that's something that's of concern to me, Madam Deputy Speaker, when you see a viable agency that is member driven, that has considerable skills in marketing their industry — because they are the ones running the campgrounds. They're the ones running the hotels. They're the ones managing the ecotourism adventures and . . . No offence to public servants, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was one for a long time. But I know how bureaucracies work. And when this particular agency is going to be brought back into the government fold, so to speak, it will seriously impact their ability to continue the message that they've worked hard to develop and I think has been very successful. So we will be watching that with concern and care.

And one of the things that's really unfortunate is that this government hasn't even talked to the industry. So I find that very disappointing. The industry was completely broadsided. They had no idea this was going to happen and the agency itself was reeling. And I know you were at the dinner on Thursday night and may have heard some comments about that last Thursday. I certainly did.

And there is a number of concerns from all levels, the agency itself and certainly the operators, that are stunned by this. So I hope . . . And we will watch that carefully. But if it becomes a

marketing propaganda machine, I think it's a real loss to the tourism industry for Saskatchewan.

At this point, I guess it's time for me to give some thanks. As a rookie MLA it's been a heck of a learning curve here in the last few months, and one of the most interesting things for me is how to think on your feet when people are heckling you. That's been a real wild trip.

An Hon. Member: — You're doing good.

Ms. Sproule: — And I'm learning it. I'm doing good? I get words from the folks over there that I'm doing good, so I'll go with that for now. It's quite a different way of expressing oneself, may I say. And certainly in any other job I've ever had, this wouldn't happen. So it's just something I'm getting used to.

And part of the reason I am getting used to it is because of my colleagues. So I wanted to say a big thanks to all my colleagues here with the loyal opposition. They're loyal colleagues as well, and they've been incredibly supportive to me as I take on this new journey. I told one of them the other day that I have to change everything I learned in 50 years to figure out how to get the message that we want to get across. And I'm learning, I hope, quickly.

I also want to thank the Speaker for his assistance. He's been very helpful to me as I learn. And I am also thankful for the folks across the way who've been very kind to me, and I'd like to say thank you for that as well . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . My colleague says I might change my tune, but at this point I'm still feeling the love, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Other people I really need to thank are my two kids. I get a little misty about that, so I might come back to them. I want to thank my family. And my brothers on the farm are helping me a whole lot — for the Minister of Agriculture — they're my consultants and they've been in farming a long time. And my dad has lots of advice for me as well. So I'm very thankful for that. Thankful for my friends. I'm even thankful for my ex because he's helping me look after the kids when I'm away, so that's been fantastic.

I really want to thank my CA, Troy MacGillivray. He's been a total support to me and he has been so good with the computers. We've got a great system set up in the office now. He's so good with the constituents who come in, and he makes me laugh. So I really appreciate that. And it's good to have someone there . . . You know, when these days get pretty long, you'll go to 10:30, and it's a groggy kind of night, and then you wake up in the morning and get a nice fresh email from the constituency assistant. It helps me get going. So I want to thank Troy for that.

I also really want to thank my Saskatoon Nutana executive. I've been with the executive since probably 2003, off and on in various capacities, and now they're supporting me as the MLA. So they're a great bunch. We just had a really successful fundraiser a couple of weeks ago, and great stew. We had an Irish ceilidh. It was great fun. And we do, we have fun. We enjoy politics and we enjoy each other. So I'm very thankful for my executive.

I'm also thankful for everyone who elected me: artists, activists, academics. The arts are important in my riding. It's important to the people that voted for me. And the freedom of expression and creativity and inspiration and passion that those people bring to our economy and to our province are beyond pale. And I really want to thank everybody who voted for me.

So why won't I support this budget, Madam Deputy Speaker? I've talked about a few things, and I'll just mention a few more.

First of all, we're losing 500 civil servants. I'm a civil servant. I was a civil servant. And I know those people do hard work. Every time a vacancy is not filled, it puts more stress and strain on the work unit. And I've seen it. I've lived it. And I think, you know, it's all fine and dandy to not fill a vacancy because there's an easy way to cut a position. That has an impact. So there's 500 positions. If they're not going to be filled, or if they're just being cut through attrition, let me tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, let me tell you that that has a real impact on the people that are left behind. And a strong civil service . . .

I think it's something you have heard from our side is that we are all about smart growth. And growth is good, but untrammelled growth is scary. And I think just to make sure that we're not just growing for the sake of growing, and, you know, that's not healthy. And I think the growth has to be managed. And I've said it before in our energy production. It's great that we have the wonderful resources that we have in this province, but they are not renewable. And we need to be looking to the future for not just our kids but our grandkids and futures to come, or generations to come. So that's something you will hear from me more than once as we go through this session.

Common sense, you hear us talking about common sense. To me it's common sense to support a film industry to ensure that it thrives. This industry is bringing all kinds of benefits to our province, not just economic. We've heard about that. But also the soul of our province is in the creative arts, and the film and television industry, huge part of that. And the way the business is set up, this tax credit is essential to their survival.

One other concern, and this is what I'm learning from my colleague our Finance critic, is that the notion of it being balanced is an ephemeral one, and we see that in the commentators as well. It's based on an optimistic estimate for the price of potash. So we know that it's just an estimate, and it could go either way. That may be a risky assumption, and we'll see at the end of the year. We know that assumptions have been made in the past and they weren't bang on and it did have an impact on our province, you know. So that's something I think that we will continue to keep a watch on. And certainly the numbers will prove themselves out as the year goes on.

And it's also easy to say it's balanced when we know that the debt has been off-loaded onto other third parties like the universities and the municipalities. We know it can look like it's balanced when the Crowns are stripped. So those are things that my colleague has effectively and well described to this House, and we will continue to do that as we go along.

So at the end of the day, Madam . . . I can't believe I just said that. I think that although there are some very good things in

this budget . . . There's \$11 billion. There better be some good things in a budget of \$11 billion. Thanks to the federal government for the support they give us because that's money we get in the budget. It's 14 per cent. And we had 28 per cent of that money that's coming in simply from the royalties. And then in terms of tax revenue, much of that is coming from the royalties themselves, the production of those non-renewable royalties. So although it's a blessing, it's a blessing that we need to nurture and use common sense and smart growth to make sure that it's there for people in the future.

So with that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will not be supporting the budget motion, and I will be supporting the amendment. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Tell): — I recognize the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to thank you for allowing me some time today to enter some comments on the balanced budget that was presented by our Finance minister last week.

In light of worldwide economic conditions and a few other provincial budgets that were released recently, it's incumbent of us to appreciate our Saskatchewan provincial budget for what it is — balanced. It is my pleasure to state today that I'll be speaking in favour of the budget and against the amendment.

I would like to take a few moments to recognize a few people that help our constituents on a daily basis. I would like to mention all of the ministry staff and the caucus staff. Without their dedication and effort, a balanced budget such as the one presented last week would not be possible.

I would like to thank Sally Gunderson, my constituency assistant. Sally, like many of us in this Assembly, is new and has had a steep learning curve over the past few months. I am thankful for her hard work ethic, her ability to attend to detail, and the respect with which she acknowledges each and every person that she comes in contact with each day. She works hard to represent the Government of Saskatchewan in the Rosthern-Shellbrook constituency.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all the people of the Rosthern-Shellbrook constituency. They are who I represent, and not a day goes by that that isn't forefront in my mind. I graciously appreciate their input and their support.

I would also like to take a moment to thank my family. My children, Carter and Taryn, are supportive, and they tolerate the fact that they are required to modify their schedule at times to accommodate their father's. And I would be remiss if I did not thank my lovely wife, Krista, who encourages me and keeps me grounded. I am forever thankful for the person that she is.

Many who are presently serving in this Assembly, as well as many of those who have served in the past, realize the commitment that families make to allow us to serve here. And I am very thankful for mine.

I would like to begin my comments on the budget on the topic

of municipal revenue sharing. The municipalities in Rosthern-Shellbrook are thankful for this government's commitment to providing a stable and predictable funding model for our municipal governments. You see, Mr. Speaker, representing the constituents of Rosthern-Shellbrook at the municipal level are over 30 governing municipalities. I can assure you, each one of them has the expectation that their provincial member of this Assembly is not only accessible and available to them but also working full-time, representing their requests on their behalf.

It was last year's budget that provided over 216 million, or one full percentage point of the PST [provincial sales tax] collected, to the municipal governments. This was exactly the type of stable, predictable funding model that was requested by these and other municipalities, and it was this government that delivered the municipal revenue-sharing formula.

This year's budget builds on this with an increase of nine and a half per cent or over \$20 million. This will bring the total revenue sharing in the coming year to over \$237 million. This amount is 87 per cent higher than it ever was under the New Democratic Party. Through municipal revenue sharing, we are placing one full percentage point of the PST collected directly into the hands of our local municipal governments.

[16:30]

In our constituency, this results in tangible increases in funding to communities such as Hafford with a 111 per cent increase, Rosthern with a 114 per cent increase, Blaine Lake with a 108 per cent increase, Spiritwood with a 96 per cent increase, and Shellbrook with 130 per cent increase. This in turn improves these communities' financial ability to respond quickly and appropriately to local concerns and challenges that we know they face each year.

The budget introduced last Wednesday by the Finance minister laid the foundation that will repair over 1200 kilometres of highway to keep our commitment to invest \$2.2 billion in Saskatchewan highways over the next four years. This includes over \$70 million in upgrades through the rural highway strategy. This will bring 150 kilometres of rural highway up to primary weight.

There has also been 63 million invested in the gateway corridor projects that improve the safety and the efficiency of our highway traffic. A project of significance to Rosthern is the twinning of Highway 11 from Saskatoon to Prince Albert, which is funded in part through this program.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the introduction of the passing lane initiative will add another economical option to improve the efficiency and safety of many highways that are now experiencing increased traffic flow. This government's investment of over \$581 million in highways in this budget will sustain the Saskatchewan advantage.

As I travel through the 30-plus municipalities in Rosthern-Shellbrook, it is abundantly obvious that agriculture is a primary industry and part of the backbone of the economy in our province. I have previously spoken of the importance of funding to such programs at the outset — such as AgriInvest,

AgriStability, and crop insurance — to ensure their availability. It should also be noted that with the introduction of this year's budget, crop insurance investment at 177 million is record provincial investment.

With continued investment and productivity by Saskatchewan producers, it is prudent to provide an insurance program that meets their changing needs in the industry. And these changing needs that I am referring to is our provincial ag exports. In 2007 ag exports totalled \$6 billion. Last year in 2011, our Saskatchewan agricultural exports increased by over 60 per cent to over \$10 billion. Much of this increase in production value must be attributed to our province's producers. The producers that we have in Saskatchewan today are educated in all aspects of agronomics, business management, and marketing.

In past decades, a limit in crop quality and production factors have often been overcome by successful research. Research and development have improved agronomic traits with respect to crop varieties, and best practices have added to not only higher production but better quality products to sell at the farm gate. This government feels it's prudent to invest over \$20 million in agricultural research. It is imperative, with agriculture being such a significant component of our economy, that we invest in its research and development to ensure continued success of our world-class Saskatchewan agricultural products.

Health investment by the people of Saskatchewan will be greater than it has ever been, and, more importantly, this investment will come with a patient-focused system. Health care investment will increase 4.9 per cent to improve access for all Saskatchewan residents. This includes investments in areas such as infrastructure, professional recruitment and retention, as well as continuing their approach to the reduction of surgery wait times.

Improving access is moving forward with design and construction of health care facilities in the province. This includes funding to continue the design and construction of 13 long-term care facilities, as well as continuing funding to a completed pilot project with a non-profit organization. The Amicus facility is now a place that many Saskatchewan citizens call home.

Maintaining the Saskatchewan advantage is advancing the design and construction phases of the children's hospital in Saskatoon, the Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford, and the replacement of the Moose Jaw Union Hospital.

Improving access is providing \$60 million to move forward with the Saskatchewan surgical initiative. We are continuing with the four-year plan to provide, by 2014, all Saskatchewan residents the ability to have the necessary surgery performed within three months. The Saskatchewan surgical initiative is proudly supported again in this budget and is producing positive results for patients and their families in our province.

Improving access in rural areas continues to be addressed in this budget. The budget supports the increase of training seats for nurse practitioners and physicians. It continues to support the doubling the number of residency positions available to this province's medical grads as well as creating opportunities for placement of medical grads from other areas of the world.

Combined with the increase in training opportunities is the forgiveness of Saskatchewan student loans of up to \$120,000 for physicians and \$20,000 for nurses and nurse practitioners that choose to work in identified underserved rural locations. This incentive will encourage new health care professionals to practise in our province. This is yet another example of improving access in health care in Saskatchewan.

1.5 million in this budget will directly fund the rural locum physician pool. The formation of this locum pool is crucial to the continuity of service in rural care. This was a campaign commitment by this party and now will be funded and implemented by this government.

Improving access includes a \$5.5 million increase to the Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society as well as a \$16 million increase to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency to support access to cancer services. 4 million has been provided to expand the colorectal screening program province-wide to increase early detection, thereby improving patient outcomes. There's been an increase of \$98 million to the regional health authorities to continue to deliver services to the people of this province.

These are some of the initiatives that will improve access for all Saskatchewan residents to their health care system and in turn contribute to sustaining the Saskatchewan advantage. The balanced budget that the Minister of Finance presented last week was in culmination of hard work of many on this side of the House, as well as the guidance of the Premier. I am very thankful and blessed to have the opportunity to work with such a strong group of colleagues. This budget keeps the commitments made in last fall's election campaign, does not raise taxes, and most importantly this budget is one of very few balanced budgets in North America.

Mr. Speaker, in summary this balanced budget will keep spending sustainable. This balanced budget will keep our economy growing. This balanced budget will keep our election promises and, most importantly, Mr. Speaker, this balanced budget will sustain the Saskatchewan advantage for all Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, for these reasons I will not be supporting the amendment, and I will be supporting the budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to rise today in my place and speak. This is the first opportunity that I've really had to stand and speak on any major issue since the budget. I've stood often in this Assembly, but it seems to be a one minute at a time I get to stand, and so today I'll be able to expand quite a bit more, Mr. Speaker.

And as a former member of this place, and I wonder if anybody who were here before remembers someone that used to stand and go well, well, well. I think that used to be the member from Regina Dewdney, and now we have a new member from Regina Dewdney, Mr. Speaker. And he's doing an amazing job as all the new members are.

I can tell you that I had the opportunity to sit and listen to many of the, all of our new members speak on the Speech from the Throne. And many of them have now spoke on the budget, Mr. Speaker, as well as one new member on the opposition side that spoke today. And I know she had spoke on the Speech from the Throne. I want to welcome them all to this Assembly. It is a great place to spend time. Sometimes at 9 o'clock at night on a Monday or Tuesday night, you wonder if it's that great of a place to spend time, but you know, it is.

This is the, I guess, the 13th budget that I've had opportunity to respond to, and time flies by; 13 years has flown by. But it is a real honour to walk up to this building each and every day to serve the people. And I'm blessed with being able to serve the people of Indian Head-Milestone. Others may have said that they have the best constituency. I think there'd be probably 40 . . . no, I guess there'd be 58 arguments to that. I am blessed to have served the people of Indian Head-Milestone for, this is now the 13th year.

This past election, it was certainly a privilege again. I can tell you even after I guess this would be my fourth . . . And I know there's members in this Assembly that have served longer, Mr. Speaker, than four elections, some quite a bit longer than that. But I know that I, certainly leading up to that date, you knock on a lot of doors and you think it's all very, very positive. But really, literally, until you see that first poll come in, you kind of wonder, how is it going to turn out? And I like many others saw their plurality increase significantly, Mr. Speaker, and we saw the number of seats on this side increase significantly. So it was an excellent night, that night of November 7th, 2011.

As I said, this is the first opportunity I've had to stand in my place, and I need to thank a number of people that have allowed me to be where I'm at today starting with . . . and no particular order of priority because I'd hate to do that — because, you know, some would feel that they were maybe more important than others — but I'm going to start kind of at the ground level for my political career, and that's at the constituency level.

Certainly the people of Indian Head-Milestone have been great. But also my constituency association has been wonderful and most importantly is my constituency assistant who has been with me for five years now, Nicole Entner-McCullough, who runs the office in Balgonie. And as we all would say, and some of us that have been here longer than others would realize, you know, they're the first contact quite often to your name in the constituency. And that first contact is so important and those constituency assistants, you know, are excellent resources and the first contact, as I said, for us. So I wanted to thank Nicole. She's done a great job and continues to do a great job.

In my office as the Minister of Health, I'm fortunate to have great staff in my office, whether it's Kim who has been there since the start, four, a little over four years ago. Jessica, Kaitlyn, Crystal, Lindell, and my chief of staff, Laurie, do an absolutely amazing job. As you can imagine, the Health file is fairly busy. There seems to be the odd issue come up from day to day, and those staff members do a great job in making sure that I'm as briefed, as well briefed as I can be. In fact I think they do a much better job. They give me an awful lot of information. Some of it I can retain and some of it I don't. But they always have the appropriate amount of information and do a lot of

work on that front as well as deal with cases that come in. Crystal does the casework; does a great job. And they all work very, very hard in the office, and I want to thank them all. Lindell, Laurie — all of them do a great job.

As well as I want to also recognize the ministry as well. The ministry does a great job. I have a very strong deputy minister that . . . Dan Florizone, and then below Dan, the assistant deputy ministers and all the other people that work within the Ministry of Health do an absolutely amazing job on that front on a very difficult file.

I mean we spend 42 per cent of the budget and people always, I think, at times expect more. But the ministry staff, I can say in the opportunity that I've had in the last four and a half years, are an amazingly dedicated staff and really, really have the best interests of the Saskatchewan population and patients as their priority number one. So I want to thank the ministry for that.

Finally, I do need to thank my family. I didn't need the note to tell me that I should probably thank my family — that was put in front of me. But I do want to thank my family, not only my immediate family — Cindy, my wife, and our two sons, Craig and Mark — but also my mother, who lives in Fort Qu'Appelle, who is . . . She probably won't want me to say this, but will be turning 92 in July and does an amazing job; lives on her own. And I always call her for advice and also to hear what people are saying.

And I was interested, because we've made some changes in Health and some changes, for example, in the drug plan. And I really felt guilty, because I know mom hangs around with a lot of seniors, of course, and I wanted to give her a heads-up before that. But I did talk to her, I believe, on Sunday. I was down in Fort Qu'Appelle on Sunday and wondered how it went. And she said, well you know, nobody's mentioned it to me yet. So I guess that's a good thing, that people aren't lobbying my mom for a government change.

My brother and my two sisters, who both live in . . . are married and live in Saskatchewan, helped out through the campaign. I want to thank them as well. But I also had a little bit of help during this past campaign. For the 28 days, my uncle had come from British Columbia and spent the whole election writ period here in Saskatchewan. And it was interesting because he had the opportunity to travel with me, or I would stop down in Fort Qu'Appelle and — he was staying with my mom — and pick him up and travel with me.

And that was always really quite interesting because he is a former surgeon in British Columbia. And from stop to stop, he kept asking me why, you know, we haven't fixed the health care system. And if we could go back to the way it was in 1966 and '67, everything would be so much better. So I certainly learned insight from him. And I would say that — not that he's used the health care system — but he wasn't overly complimentary of the British Columbia health care system, Mr. Speaker. But it does shed some light that it is a challenge from province to province across this country. I think that's about all I'll say on that, other than, as I said, the family is very supportive.

[16:45]

Cindy has been great. She works in the health care system. And I would say that there is probably a couple of things we can't talk about at the supper table, and one of them is Health. We tend to come at it from two different angles. As a registered nurse and as the Minister of Health, we tend not to kind of see eye to eye on the Health situation. So we tend to stay away from that.

And of course, the boys are travelling around the world and living the life, living a dream. And we get to catch up with them every so often, but never quite often enough. We had the opportunity to be down in the States twice when they were competing in Aspen and in Breckenridge, and it is quite a thrill to see them do well in competitions and when they're competing worldwide.

So the budget. It was a heck of a budget, I think. I've heard a lot of people speak from this side, and I've heard a number — well I guess, nine — speak from the other side. It's easier to keep track of that than it is, I think, on this side. But I was really interested to hear the nine speak from their side. And until this last member, the newly elected member, I don't really remember many of them — and I tried to listen to quite a few of their speeches — really have a thing positive to say about a budget of \$11 billion, which is really, really hard to believe.

Now I think maybe if it could have been a budget, if they had been in government, if it could have been a budget of 16.5 billion because they promised 5.5. They never said where they'd really cut. You could add another \$5.5 billion towards the budget; would they have something positive to say then? Or on the health care side, you know, if they could add another \$550 million worth of spending, would they have something positive to say then because until the last member — and thank heavens she had something positive to say, even though she would kind of counter it with lots of negative — that was the first sense of anything optimistic coming from the opposition benches.

Now I know what it's like to be on the opposition side. We happened to spend a few years there, and for myself it was eight years. And you oppose. But I can tell you that you could always find something positive in a budget. There is, you know, when you spend that much money, whether it's in health care or in highways, there is always something positive. But unfortunately we didn't hear that from the opposition members. And it reminds me of the way it was prior to the 2011 election. You know, leading up to that it was negative, negative, negative.

And, Mr. Speaker, I quite frankly hope they continue that because it worked really well for them in the 2011 election. They had been negative all the way leading up, Mr. Speaker, and I would say that most of them have carried on right where they left off prior to 2011, except for the one new member. Now maybe she saw the light. But I can tell you, the other eight continued on right where they had left off.

I need to talk a little bit, in the time that I have, about health care. And it has been mentioned many times on this side, but it is a record number, a record amount of spending in health care this year. It's \$4.68 billion. That's hard to believe. \$4.68 billion spent in health care. What that works out to is about \$12.8 million each and every day, 365 days a year; \$12.8 million

spent on a million people, well actually more than a million people, and growing. But it's an amazing expenditure. And so when you're spreading that much money across the province, it's by far the biggest employer in the province, and it employs people in every corner of this province to deliver the health care programs that we have.

But we are going to see an increase, as some have mentioned already, about an \$89.2 million increase to the regional health authorities. They're the ones on the ground that deliver the programs — whether it's the acute care, long-term care, public health, mental health — across the province. They're the ones that deliver that care on the ground. And so we're going to see a nice increase. But, Mr. Speaker, if you were to ask some, they would certainly take more. With this increase, there are going to be challenges. Health regions are challenged to find efficiencies. But I think that's extremely important that we keep challenging not only the health regions but the Cancer Agency to find efficiencies in the delivery of care.

If we continue to do everything that we've always done, Mr. Speaker, that isn't prudent either. We need to look at the best efficient, most efficient delivery models that we can. And health regions have answered this call in previous budgets where they've found efficiencies, whether it's in time management, overtime, other issues like that. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm quite confident the health regions are pretty much on track for all balanced budgets in this fiscal year. And, Mr. Speaker, we would expect nothing less from them as we move forward with their management of the health care dollars.

The one big area . . . So it's \$98 million to the health region. But on top of that is another \$60.5 million just for the surgical care initiative. This surgical care initiative stems from the Patient First Review done by Tony Dagnone where patients told us one of the most important things was access to care, making sure that we could get in in a timely manner.

And why would they say that was the most important issue to them? I think why they would say that, and we would hear it on the doorstep, is in 2007 and prior we had the longest wait-lists in Canada. There was no other province that had longer wait-lists than we did in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. So what we have done is gone to work over the last three years with a surgical care initiative, investing \$60.5 million into that initiative, and we've seen some huge gains.

Mr. Speaker, people that are waiting 18 months or longer are down 90 per cent. That's amazing when you think of people that had to wait 18 months or longer for surgery, and that was not uncommon. But that level of wait has been cut down by 90 per cent. People waiting six months or longer has been cut by 55 per cent. So we're making huge gains, Mr. Speaker. We have some of the shortest waits now that we've had in probably 20 years, Mr. Speaker.

Ninety-nine per cent of all surgeries are conducted within 18 months. Our target this year is to make sure that nobody should wait longer than six months. Right now going into the year, 87 per cent of all surgeries are conducted within six months. We need to continue to increase that number from 87 up to 100. That's why this \$60.5 million is not only . . . is quite frankly, it's putting money where our mouth was. We said we'd

continue to drop the wait-list and, Mr. Speaker, this government is doing it. Huge, huge change.

Roughly about what that enters into is roughly about 8,000 more surgeries done this year than when the surgical care initiative started back in 2007. Mr. Speaker, we're putting 2.5 million to reduce costs for those with diabetes. And, Mr. Speaker, we had the announcement just shortly after the election. That is one thing that I can honestly say that has allowed me to serve with the greatest pride, is we campaign on a commitment, we form government, and we follow through with that commitment, Mr. Speaker. It is certainly, certainly a far cry from what we saw in previous governments under the NDP where they promised the moon, which we saw again this election. They promise the moon and then they could never fulfill those commitments when they became government.

This \$2.5 million for an expansion of the long-acting drugs for diabetes — I should remember both of them, but I'm not going to go there — the two drugs that are long-acting as well as the extension from up to age 25 for the insulin pump. Mr. Speaker, we certainly heard from the juvenile diabetes society, as well as others that had been lobbying for this, so we were able to fulfill our commitment just six months after forming government on yet another promise that we had made.

Mr. Speaker, and I heard it mentioned earlier before, but \$4 million is going to expand the colorectal screening program for the province — a huge investment, Mr. Speaker. And this is an investment that pays off into the future. Early diagnosis on colorectal cancer means for the most part a very, very treatable disease. We've had it piloted first of all in Five Hills, which is around Moose Jaw area, then it's moved into Regina and a few other health regions. We're expanding it across the province, Mr. Speaker. Anybody from the age of 50 to 74 will certainly be sent a kit in the mail. I would ask you to follow through with that and mail it back, drop it off at the appropriate site. And, Mr. Speaker, it's maybe not the most pleasant, but I've had the opportunity to visit the Allan Blair clinic when people are in there with colorectal cancer, and talk about unpleasant. So this is a minor, minor test that you can do to help prevent that.

Mr. Speaker, there are other investments such as the \$16 million that goes into the Cancer Agency, which will certainly again improve care for cancer patients. I think this is significant. In 2007, we look at the cancer budget in 2007, and we look at it in 2012. It was an increase in the cancer budget by 76 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we had some of the longest waits. I remember it was over three months from first referral from the GP [general practitioner] to the oncologist, Mr. Speaker. We've reduced that significantly. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that average patient waits between appointment approved is 92 per cent reduction. Huge, huge changes, Mr. Speaker. For the first time the Cancer Agency is fully staffed. We have the proper complement of oncologists, Mr. Speaker, and so it's moving in the right direction.

There are many other things that I would like to talk about regarding the health care budget, but what I do want to touch on is some of the spending that the NDP said that they would do in the last provincial election. Now they made commitments during the last provincial election. They had a lot to say.

In fact, you know, I remember during the campaign — I don't know if anybody remembers this — but during the campaign talking to some of the media. They were frustrated because the NDP would have up to two or three announcements a day. They just had so much to say that they just spread the media so thin because they had so much to say. In fact just in health care alone they were going to promise \$550 million extra spending, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that would take this year's budget from 4.6 billion to well over \$5 billion just on health care.

But not once did I hear anywhere that they would reduce spending to add their spending, you know, whether it was \$100 million for 750 assisted living units. I guess you could put money in if you took away all the surgical care initiative money, all the Cancer Agency money. That's what it would have to have taken for them to be able to afford their promises. Not once did they take anything away; they just continued to add and add and add.

In health care there are many, many examples. I do want to correct one thing though, Mr. Speaker. I stood in the House and I feel bad about this. I really do feel bad about this. I stood in the House one day and I was asked about Alzheimer's, Mr. Speaker. And I said that we were moving forward on it. And I said that they didn't put any money into Alzheimer's during the last campaign. Mr. Speaker, I stand corrected. They did. I know they promised so much, and I didn't see it on the list. They had put money into Alzheimer's. The disconcerting part was the opposition MLA probably could have really put me on the carpet on this one because they had it in their platform. He was part author of the platform. He didn't know it was in their platform. You know you've done a lot of spending when one of the authors doesn't even know what's in the platform, Mr. Speaker, and that certainly was the case.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition promised \$5.5 billion extra spending, Mr. Speaker. And when asked about it, Mr. Speaker, how would they ever come up with that, I think it was very telling the day after the budget when the interim leader, Mr. Speaker, finally explained to the Saskatchewan people how they would come up with balancing the budget. And here is what he said, and it was the Leader of the Opposition — well, practically — he also has a lot of hand movements, but I'm not going to do that.

There are a number of areas where they could have left money for films. One of those things they could have done is look at some of the initiatives around the agriculture, and look at some of the things they've done for municipalities.

Pretty clear, pretty clear, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, they haven't elected a member in rural Saskatchewan for 14 years at least. Well, no. No, not that long. They haven't elected a member in rural Saskatchewan and with statements like that — not that we will ever take it for granted — but they will never elect another member in rural Saskatchewan with statements like that.

Mr. Speaker, their pride and joy were the cities, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they're taking money from municipalities, they take money from municipalities. They've only got nine

members now, Mr. Speaker. The only thing that the opposition leader could have said is they take it from northern Saskatchewan because they've only got two left of those. And the other seven rural MLAs, Mr. Speaker, would be gone.

The Speaker: — It now being after the hour of adjournment, this House stands adjourned to 10 a.m. Thursday morning.

[The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.]

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Premier of Saskatchewan
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
Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for SaskTel
Minister Responsible for The Global
Transportation Hub Authority

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Minister Responsible for Northern Affairs
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
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