



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

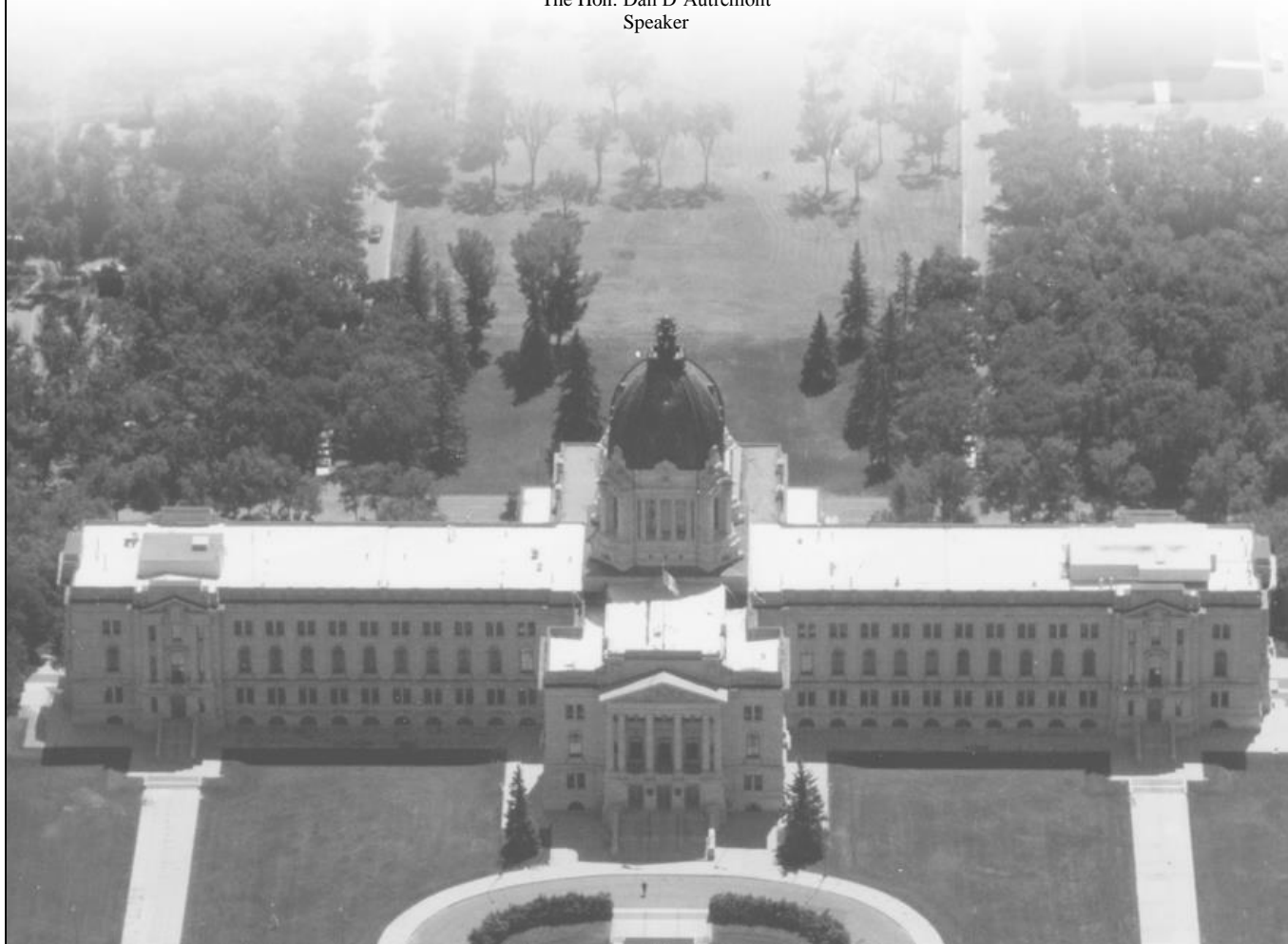
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Dan D'Autremont
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. Dan D’Autremont
 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — Cam Broten

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Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
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Weekes, Hon. Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Wyant, Hon. Gordon	SP	Saskatoon Northwest

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I'd ask for leave for an extended introduction.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly several visitors this afternoon. Today we have students who have been articling with the Ministry of Justice and the courts in Saskatchewan since June of last year. I had a chance to briefly talk with them earlier today and I was very impressed by their energy, their knowledge, and their enthusiasm, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if these students are any indication of the legal profession in Saskatchewan, the future is in very, very good hands.

Mr. Speaker, accompanied by Jeffrey Crawford from the ministry, we have Leona Andrews, Ali Shah, and Lerissa Thaver who have been articling with the Ministry of Justice. Maybe just if you could give a wave.

Leona Andrews obtained her law degree from the University of Saskatchewan's College of Law after completing a Bachelor of Arts in political science and psychology at the University of Alberta. Her previous experience includes time as a summer student at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre and volunteer work with Victim/Witness Services Unit in Lethbridge.

Ali Shah obtained his law degree equivalency from the University of Toronto. He also holds degrees in law and journalism from the University of the Punjab in Lahore, Pakistan. Before coming to Canada, Ali worked as a lawyer in Lahore. His work experience includes time with Cooper Barristers as a student of law in Toronto.

Lerissa Thaver studied at the College of Law in Saskatoon after completing a Bachelor of Arts in psychology with great distinction at the University of Regina. She's worked with the Regina Open Door Society and has also put her legal expertise to use with organizations such as the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and Just Rights college law students' group.

Annie Alport and Michael Stevens also join us in the Legislative Assembly today. Annie and Michael have been articling with the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal.

Annie Alport graduated from the Saskatchewan College of Law after completing a Bachelor of Arts in political science and Italian at McGill University in Montreal. Her legal expertise includes work as a summer student with the Miller Thomson law firm. Annie also was the president and founding member of the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] Student Animal Defense Fund.

Michael Stevens is another College of Law graduate from Saskatoon. He obtained his law degree with great distinction and also holds a Bachelor of Arts in history. Michael worked as an editor for the *Saskatchewan Law Review* and is an active volunteer with Habitat for Humanity.

We also have with us today Jared Biden who is articling with the Court of Queen's Bench and Colton Fehr who is articling with the Provincial Court.

Jared Biden graduated from the University of Saskatchewan with great distinction after receiving a Bachelor of Arts in philosophy, also with great distinction. He has worked as an editor for the *Saskatchewan Law Review* and represented the College of Law in the national Gale Moot legal competition in 2013.

Colton Fehr graduated from Saskatoon's College of Law at the university with distinction after completing a Bachelor of Arts in political science with a minor in Russian. Like Michael and Jared, Colton has served as an editor of the *Saskatchewan Law Review*. His experience includes work as a volunteer student with Saskatoon's CLASSIC [Community Legal Assistance Services for Saskatoon Inner City Inc.] program where he assisted inner-city clients with a variety of legal issues.

Mr. Speaker, as always I'm proud that we have a strong group of articling students and wish them all the best in their future endeavours. Please join me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the Minister of Justice in welcoming all of the new lawyers-to-be, I guess very soon, to the legislature. It looks like sometimes that there are too many lawyers in the legislature, but there aren't. And so what I would say is, always include in your career plan to work hard at whatever you're doing, but then consider serving the people of the province in the legislature. Welcome, all of you.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition against Saskatchewan health care laundry privatization. And we know that in May 2013, the Government of Saskatchewan announced its plans to privatize health care laundry in Saskatchewan, handing it over to a for-profit, Alberta-based corporation, K-Bro Linen, and that as a result of that decision to privatize health care laundry, six non-profit health care laundry facilities will be closed within two years in

the communities of Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Yorkton, Weyburn, Regina, and Saskatoon. And we know that the privatization of health care laundry will put patient care at risk as health regions lose direct control over health care laundry services and that the privatization of health care laundry will mean that fair-wage jobs will be replaced, poverty wages, and public accountability will be lost. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly be pleased to cause the government to reverse the misguided decision to privatize Saskatchewan's health care laundry, which will result in the devastating loss of over 300 jobs in the communities of Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Yorkton, Weyburn, Regina, and Saskatoon.

And moreover, the privatization of health care laundry will misuse vital taxpayer dollars by taking money out of Saskatchewan's health care system to boost the profits of an Alberta-based corporation; and furthermore, the privatization of health care laundry will put patient care at risk as Saskatchewan's health regions will lose direct control over laundry and thereby will have a significantly reduced ability to quickly and effectively respond to infectious outbreaks in health care facilities.

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

Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition come from the city of Moose Jaw. I do so present. Thank you.

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 that are in support of safety on Dewdney Avenue and rerouting that current heavy-haul truck traffic from Dewdney Avenue. They're concerned by the unacceptable delay of this government to address a problem, a safety issue created by this government. And their prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly call on the provincial government to immediately take action as it relates to the unacceptable danger, disturbance, and infrastructure damage caused by the heavy-haul truck traffic on Dewdney Avenue west of city centre, to ensure the safety and well-being of communities, families, residents, and users; and that those actions and plans should include rerouting the heavy-haul truck traffic, receive provincial funding, and be developed through consultation with the city of Regina, communities, and residents.

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

These petitions today are signed by concerned residents of Regina. I so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition. Many northern residents benefited from the rental

purchase option program, also known as RPO. These families are very proud homeowners in their communities. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this government simply ignored the calls to maintain this program. Instead it cancelled the RPO. That means the dream of home ownership is destroyed for many families in the North. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly cause the Sask Party government to restore the RPO rent-to-own option for responsible renters in northern Saskatchewan, allowing them the dignity of owning their own homes and building community in our province's beautiful North.

It is signed by many good people of this province. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to present a petition in support of Highway 918. And Highway 918 is the only road to and from the community of Patuanak and the English River First Nations in northwestern Saskatchewan. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause the provincial government to commit to repairing and upgrading Highway No. 918.

And, Mr. Speaker, people that have signed the petition are primarily from Ile-a-la-Crosse. And I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Saskatonian Honoured at Breaking the Silence Conference

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of attending the 17th annual Breaking the Silence conference at the University of Saskatchewan this weekend. It was a fun and informative weekend focused on issues of sexual orientation and gender expression in our schools.

Each year at the conference, a person or organization that has had a long-term impact on social justice for sexual minorities is honoured with the Peter Corren Award for Outstanding Achievement. This year the award honoured Don Cochrane, professor emeritus at the U of S and the organizer of the first Breaking the Silence conference in 1998.

Mr. Speaker, it was moving to hear the words of Murray Corren on why Don Cochrane was so deserving of this award, and I quote:

The Breaking the Silence conference would have never happened and grown year after year if it had not been for Don Cochrane. He has inspired and motivated people to become involved and provided them with outstanding leadership that is necessary for such an achievement not only to survive, but to grow and mature into the extraordinary event that it is today. I can think of no more

deserving recipient for the Peter Corren award, and I'm delighted Don's tireless efforts, enthusiasm, and dedication are finally being recognized and celebrated.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Don Cochrane for his very deserving receipt of the Peter Corren Award for Outstanding Achievement. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Habitat For Humanity Key Ceremony in Moose Jaw

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to inform members that today we're celebrating another Habitat for Humanity home dedication. Today keys were presented to a Habitat for Humanity partner family, Robert and Kathy Bennett and their two children, Hannah and Logan, to mark the beginning of a new future in a home of their own.

I am pleased that the government was able to assist Habitat by contributing \$50,000 to build the Bennetts' new home. Additional funding was provided by Conexus Credit Union and Mosaic potash corporation, with the land and building permits donated by the city of Moose Jaw. Mr. Speaker, this is truly a wonderful example of how communities can work together to reduce their monthly expenses to give a family more financial freedom.

Like Habitat and its partners, our government, through the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, continues to work hard to meet the diverse housing needs of Saskatchewan people. Mr. Speaker, our government has committed a total of \$7.85 million for Habitat for Humanity across the province since March of 2009, and we can see the results of this investment with each and every build.

This is what the Saskatchewan plan for growth is all about: to keep our province growing, improve our quality of life, and continue to make Saskatchewan the best place to live, work, and raise a family. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Saskatchewan Book Awards Brunch

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, last Sunday Linda and I had the opportunity to attend the Saskatchewan Book Awards brunch at the Delta Bessborough Hotel in Saskatoon. This brunch was an opportunity to showcase the Saskatoon and area finalists in the running for the upcoming Saskatchewan Book Awards gala on Saturday, April 26th at the Conexus Arts Centre in Regina.

The Saskatchewan Book Awards aim to highlight talent, celebrate excellence and diversity in Saskatchewan writing and publishing. In Saskatoon this weekend, Marie Battiste, Lisa Bird-Wilson, Mari-Lou Rowley, and Allan Safarik were the guest readers, giving listeners an early chance to recognize the depth of Saskatchewan talent leading up to the awards.

Each year the Saskatchewan Book Awards presents numerous awards to acknowledge the accomplishments of our province's

authors and publishers.

Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to take this opportunity to congratulate all of the nominees for their outstanding works and wish them best of luck leading up to the awards gala next month. I would also like to extend thanks to the Saskatchewan Book Awards staff and board for incredible work in raising the profile of Saskatchewan books, authors, and publishers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[13:45]

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

Hoopla 2014

Mr. Marchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise in the House today to congratulate all the schools that participated in the Saskatchewan High Schools Athletic Association basketball championships, Hoopla.

Hoopla is Saskatchewan's March Madness, Mr. Speaker, and by all accounts the competition was as intense. Forty-eight teams from all across the province descended on Regina to vie for provincial titles in their respective divisions. Ten champions were decided, Mr. Speaker, five girls' and five boys' teams.

In the girls' division, Mr. Speaker, it was Middle Lake Avengers, Wynyard Bears, Caronport Cougars, Notre Dame Hounds, and the Regina Campbell Tartans. In the boys' divisions, Mr. Speaker, it was LCBI [Lutheran Collegiate Bible Institute] Bisons from Outlook, Saskatoon Legacy Christian Eagles, Regina Harvest City Reapers, Moose Jaw Peacock Toilers, and the Regina LeBoldus Golden Suns.

Thanks to the Saskatchewan High Schools Athletic Association, the hosting schools, the volunteers, coaches, parents, and players, this event was a huge success. Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of all the athletes and the very hard work that they put into each practice and game and the level of sportsmanship displayed. Special thanks of course to all the coaches, trainers, volunteers, and parents for all the time, effort, and support that they provide our young student athletes. Well done, everyone.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in recognizing the Saskatchewan High Schools Athletic Association on the success of Hoopla and congratulating all the teams and coaches on their hard work. Thank you.

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

Rejuvenation of Moose Jaw's Balmoral Apartments

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March the 7th I, along with Palliser Member of Parliament Ray Boughen and officials from MMRD Properties, officially opened Balmoral Apartments in Moose Jaw.

Balmoral Apartments is a 100-year-old building on Moose Jaw's Main Street. This heritage structure underwent massive renovations to rejuvenate the entire apartment block while keeping the heritage ambiance which is prevalent in many

Moose Jaw structures.

The building had to be vacated due to the extent of the renovations, but upon completion 23 apartments were totally upgraded, including all new bathroom fixtures, fridges and stoves, lighting fixtures, as well as electrical and plumbing upgrades, structural repairs, and renewal of interiors right down to the laminate floors.

This renovated structure is the most recent achievement in the government's housing plan. Working together with the federal government and with the private sector, we were able to provide additional low-cost housing in Moose Jaw's tight housing market. Our government continues to work with partnership organizations to develop housing opportunities, and the nearly \$100 million investment in our community is greatly appreciated in assisting low-income residents.

I want to thank MMRD Properties for their experience and their expertise in renovations and to thank the federal government for assisting in housing developments in Moose Jaw. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. Colorectal cancer is 90 per cent preventable and easily treated if detected early. It is the second most diagnosed form of cancer in both men and women. We encourage everyone to do their part in preventing cancers by maintaining a healthy lifestyle, getting regular exercise, and avoiding tobacco use.

Our government has also strengthened our prevention and detection efforts. Last year the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, working with health regions and the Saskatchewan disease control lab, expanded the colorectal cancer screening program to cover the whole province. Mr. Speaker, the program saves lives by identifying colorectal cancer long before any symptoms are present.

Every two years, Saskatchewan men and women between 50 and 74 years of age are able to complete the test in the privacy of their homes with an easy-to-use test kit. More than 70 per cent of people with abnormal test results end up needing treatment. Annual funding for the program is about \$3.6 million, with another \$2 million to health regions for additional diagnostic procedures needed by patients with abnormal test results. We encourage anyone who receives a test kit to do their part in the detection of colorectal cancer by mailing in the kit and pursuing follow-up diagnosis if needed.

Thank you to the people of the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency and the health regions for all that they do to combat colorectal cancer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Prince Albert Northcote.

Prince Albert Restaurateur Receives Legacy Award

Ms. Jurgens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday I was honoured to bring greetings on behalf of the Minister Responsible for SaskPower to the 2013 Legacy Awards brunch hosted at the Travelodge hotel by the Prince Albert & District Chamber of Commerce.

SaskPower took part in the event as a sponsor of the Legacy Award, which is named after one of Prince Albert's earliest settlers and entrepreneurs, Samuel McLeod. This year's recipient of the Samuel McLeod Legacy Award was Mrs. Maria Yannacoulias, who is the proud owner of the Venice House restaurant in Prince Albert and has been so since 1976. Over the past 37 years, she has seen countless changes to the community and restaurant industry. Her advice to all business owners is, and I quote:

You have to know your customer, know your city. To the best of your ability you give the people what they want — you're willing to work hard, work long hours but work smart. Be able to adapt to change, but not lose your identity at the same time. Make a good product and stand by it.

Mr. Speaker, the Venice House has been an important part of Prince Albert for decades. Maria is a big inspiration to the business community and is certainly deserving of this award. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating Mrs. Maria Yannacoulias of Prince Albert on being the recipient of the 2013 Samuel McLeod Legacy Award. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Provision of Home Care

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Premier confirm that people who need home care in our capital city are being rejected right now because there is currently no capacity for home care to take on any new clients?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are looking to provide supports to seniors right across the province, whether that be through long-term care, personal care homes, and the subsidy that's provided for low-income individuals, as well as an innovative program called Home First/Quick Response which is an enhancement to the existing home care that is already provided.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite will know that the budget that just came out, that we have an opportunity to vote on, that will see record increases to the regional health authorities, Mr. Speaker — \$4.99 billion budget for health, a record-level investment, Mr. Speaker — to provide such services as home care across the regions.

To the Leader of the Opposition's question, I'm not familiar with any concerns that have been raised recently with home

care in Regina.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, a memo was circulated on Friday stating that home care cannot take on any new clients. An email we've received says that no new clients will be taken on for probably at least a week, but they don't actually know when they will be able to fix the situation and start taking new clients again.

So my question is to the Premier: why is home care stretched so thin that it can't take on any additional clients?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll certainly look into the situation that the Leader of the Opposition has outlined. Considering the fact that regional health authorities would have just found out late last week what their budget numbers would be and don't in fact set their budgets until a couple months from now, Mr. Speaker, I'll certainly look to find out what, endeavour to see what the problem is in terms of the memo, any memo that perhaps may have been circulated. Mr. Speaker, because I do not have that memo, I'd ask the Leader of the Opposition if he'd table that in the House. Then I could have access to it.

But what I can say to the members opposite is that the home care budget for the regional health authorities in the last full year under the NDP [New Democratic Party] was \$122.5 million. That's just what the government paid. That didn't include the fees that home care recipients paid. In the '13-14 budget year that is just ending at the end of this month, it's \$168.9 million, a 48 per cent increase in just six years, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, this government should be paying attention to the patients and the residents in the province right now who need home care today and are not receiving the program because it's not available. If the discharge plan for patients in hospitals right now includes home care services but there aren't home care services available because the system is stretched so thin under this government, then those patients have to stay in the hospital.

So my question, Mr. Speaker, is for the Premier: how many patients are stuck in hospital beds because this government doesn't have the proper home care services available?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The regional health authorities work with each of our patients on a discharge plan, whether that be, Mr. Speaker, back to their own home. In some cases, there may be some respite available for individuals that need that additional support, Mr. Speaker, or perhaps it's back to a long-term care facility.

Mr. Speaker, through some of the work that we're doing that does, yes, include lean methodology, Mr. Speaker, even today

the regional health authority, Regina Qu'Appelle Regional Health Authority reports that in the last three months since a new electronic bed management system has been put in place for that very issue of discharging patients, Mr. Speaker, in the last three months, compared to the same three-month period a year ago, the occupancy rates have been reduced by 10 to 20 per cent at the General and the Pasqua Hospital. The time that people are waiting from the emergency room admission to a bed within the acute care setting is down nearly 55 per cent, Mr. Speaker. We're making improvements, and certainly I would offer the opportunity for the Leader of the Opposition to table the memo.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health, this government should know what's happening in the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region and should know what's happening for people here in Regina who need home care services.

Last week, Mr. Speaker, this government said it was going to spend \$5.5 million for a new home care program for Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert.

[Interjections]

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, perfect evidence of the disconnect between what patients and residents are feeling here in the province and what this government would like to clap and thump on their desks for.

Mr. Speaker, the existing home care program is stretched so thin under this government that it's turning people away that desperately need home care here in our capital city. And patients that would otherwise be discharged from the hospital but who need home care as part of their plan to go home are stuck in hospital beds without the proper supports to go back into their homes. And this pattern fits, Mr. Speaker, with this government's approach of neglecting the basics, neglecting the basics for seniors' care, neglecting the basics in health care. It has all the money, Mr. Speaker, for a US [United States] consultant, for Japanese senseis, and for pet projects, but it's neglecting the basics.

My question to the Premier: why is this government neglecting the existing home care program to the point that it can't even take on any new clients?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I've mentioned before, the home care budget for regional health authorities has increased nearly 50 per cent since when the time the members opposite were in government, Mr. Speaker. I think at that time, in those six years, the rate of inflation hasn't increased 50 per cent. The rate of our clients within home care haven't increased by 50 per cent, Mr. Speaker. I think that that shows that we are putting significant supports. In fact in the year that's just ending, nearly \$170 million in regional health authority budgets will go directly into home care.

In terms of, Mr. Speaker, I think the comment by the Leader of

the Opposition, the Home First/Quick Response program, Mr. Speaker, that is an important program. That is something innovative that we're doing in Saskatchewan that we've learned from other jurisdictions that have piloted. We're trying that here in Regina, in Saskatoon, in Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker, to help return those seniors home more quickly, Mr. Speaker, to defer a placement in an acute care bed where possible and with the hopes that that senior will not even have to go into an acute care bed, Mr. Speaker. It's a pilot project. I think it's going to work well and it is an investment in the seniors of this province.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the minister talks about the pilot project but ignores the fact that he's starving the existing program. The existing program is not able to take on new clients.

Let me get this straight, Mr. Speaker. This government has \$40 million for a US consultant, \$3,500 a day for Japanese sensei, and who knows how many more millions for its lean project. Yet our home care program is stretched so thin, Mr. Speaker, that it can't even take on new clients.

The Premier needs to listen to this. It's turning away individuals who need help, leaving them in hospital beds, Mr. Speaker, and leaving seniors out in the community without the supports that they so desperately need. And we have no idea, Mr. Speaker, when the home care program will actually be able to take on new clients again.

My question to the Premier: when will this government get its priorities straight and start focusing on the basics in health care like having the appropriate home care services available for people here in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Leader of the Opposition's question around the memo, you'll forgive me, Mr. Speaker, if I say that I will wait for the regional health authority and the Ministry of Health to actually confirm that a memo actually does exist, Mr. Speaker. And we'll certainly look into that situation.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to home care, the home care budget within the regional health authorities has increased 48 per cent, from \$122 million to nearly \$170 million up to the end of the year '13-14 which ends at the end of this fiscal year, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the supports that we do provide for our seniors, whether that be home care, whether that be a new program called Home First/Quick Response, Mr. Speaker, that I think will be a good benefit to the seniors that are in our care that perhaps do not need placement within the system, Mr. Speaker, this is all about a continuum of care for seniors. With respect to the Leader of the Opposition's specific question, we'll certainly follow up on the concerns that he's raised.

[14:00]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon

Riversdale.

Costs and Benefits of Lean Initiative

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier and the Health minister steadfastly refused to provide the grand total of what it will spend on its lean project in health care. Either the government doesn't know the full cost of its massive lean project in health care, or it doesn't want the public to know the full cost. Either way it's unacceptable. To the Health minister: how much will taxpayers be paying for its lean project?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned yesterday to the Leader of the Opposition in his questions, what we've spent to date is approximately \$26 million. That's \$18.8 million of the Ministry of Health, which a major part of that is the \$40 million that we're estimating that we'll spend should the contract go the full length of the four years, Mr. Speaker, which would be about \$40 million.

To date, the regional health authorities have spent \$6.7 million. Mr. Speaker, I think with the regional health authorities now receiving their dollar allotment in the budget here just a week ago or not even more than a week ago, Mr. Speaker, the regional health authorities will be looking to put forward what their plans are in terms of the deployment of lean this year as well as next year, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we think that this is an investment that, first of all, it's paid for itself, Mr. Speaker, with \$40 million in savings so far to the system. That's in the first little over two years of actual deployment within the system, Mr. Speaker. And I think that we'll see more in terms of savings, terms of patient safety and efficiencies within the system.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, just in the 2013-14 budget year, taxpayers spent 17.2 million on kaizen promotion offices. This government spent almost \$300,000 on international travel for lean training this past year. And the year before, they spent \$430,000 on international travel for lean training. So that's almost \$18 million right there, just on the kaizen promotion offices and international travel. And that is over and above this government's \$40 million contract with John Black.

To the minister: why won't this government be transparent with the total amount of money that taxpayers are spending on this massive lean project?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to correct the member opposite. The lean kaizen promotion office within the Ministry of Health resides within the strategy and innovation branch. It employs five employees, Mr. Speaker, two that were existing strategy and innovation branch employees that have now been assigned directly to lean, Mr. Speaker, and three additional staff within the Ministry of Health that were reassigned to lean, Mr. Speaker. So it's not

new dollars, Mr. Speaker. It's a reorganization within the Ministry of Health.

Mr. Speaker, we know, and I've said the number already, approximately \$18 million from the Ministry of Health in the first two and a half, close to two and a half years of lean, Mr. Speaker. We know that some of that does involve the work of the kaizen offices, some of it does involve travel, Mr. Speaker.

We know that under the member from Lakeview, when he was the Health minister, a fund was established where, over a two-year period, \$400,000 went to the Five Hills Health Region to begin lean work, Mr. Speaker, within that health region; also, Mr. Speaker, which is 0.2 per cent of Five Hills health budget over that same time, which is 0.2 per cent of what we expect to spend over a four-year period.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan families are footing the bill for this government's massive lean project and they deserve to know how much in total they will have to pay. We know the \$40 million contract with John Black. We know about the \$17.2 million for kaizen promotion offices just in 2013-14. We know about the \$730,000 just for international travel for health administrators in the last two years. We know that doctors are being paid \$30,000 each for lean training, and we know about the \$3,500-a-day Japanese sensei. To the minister: what is the total tab?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, I'll try this again. Mr. Speaker, \$18.8 million from the Ministry of Health and, to date, 6.7 million spent by the RHAs [regional health authority] themselves. Mr. Speaker, that includes what has been spent under the JBA [John Black and Associates], in terms of the terms of the contract of JBA. There was also some lean work that was done prior to the JBA contract, Mr. Speaker, through other work that was done prior to JBA.

Mr. Speaker, does the member opposite also want me to include the \$400,000 that was spent under the NDP government to implement lean in some projects? I believe there was 70 projects in Five Hills over two years. Does she want me to include the travel that was spent by five health officials and regional health authority officials who travelled to Seattle in 2005 for training and development and to participate in rapid process improvement work, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, this is really just an extension of what has taken place for several years.

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

Ms. Chartier: — And the meter continues running, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again either the government doesn't know the full cost of its massive lean project in health care or it doesn't want the public to know its full cost.

Here is what we do know: a \$40 million consultant, \$17 million kaizen promotion offices, \$730,000 for international travel for

health administrators, \$30,000 each for doctors to get lean training, and \$3,500 per day for Japanese senseis. And that is not the total bill, Mr. Speaker. Again to the minister: why won't he share the full details? What will the full cost be?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in terms of the work that we're doing in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker — just remind the members opposite if they didn't know this, and I've mentioned it a couple of times — there was a fund established for lean initiative. I believe 70 initiatives were funded in Five Hills over two years.

And here's an excerpt from the evaluation of the project under the member from Lakeview: "The region has successfully pioneered the adoption of lean across all the aspects in the health care enterprise. As a result of the success experienced in the Five Hills Health Region, the province is in a position to implement lean throughout the health care sector." We, Mr. Speaker, thought that that was, I think, a good idea in terms of trying to find efficiencies, trying to find cost savings, improving the health outcomes, improving the quality care and safety record of the health system, Mr. Speaker.

And here's what we're hearing from front-line staff. Here's from a registered psychiatric nurse: "As a nurse, I fully support the implementation of lean in Saskatchewan health care and am extremely proud to be on this journey within the province."

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

Support for Children in Care

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, just in the last four years 81 vulnerable children, those in the care of Social Services and those who have just left the system, have died. Eighty-one deaths of vulnerable children just since 2010, and that doesn't include the deaths from natural causes. It's heartbreaking, Mr. Speaker, and it ought to be a cause for major concern for this government. That's why many were incredibly concerned to see this government's budget when it cut \$5.6 million in salaries from the child and family services division of Social Services.

To the minister: how can this government justify cutting jobs in the child and family services division?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the members opposite. We know that the death of any child is a tragedy, and we know that all the workers that we have in this province work together with the caregivers and with government to see what we can be doing better. When we look at the budget that has been spent and the one that was released last week, we know that there was additional money spent to the child and family agenda to ensure that there is more money for the workers. We're making sure that money is spent to go across ministries so we can evaluate the work that's being done. Any time there is a death, we review it not only within the ministry but we work with the Children's Advocate as well.

Mr. Speaker, there is not a . . . We continue to invest in our

children. There is fewer children in care, and we know that every one of these children are special. So, Mr. Speaker, we know that the work that we do continues. Our job does not mean that we are trying to take children into care. We must keep them safe and keep them with their families if at all possible. But, Mr. Speaker, there is not a cut when it comes to our children.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, when we know that 81 children have died, either in care or shortly after leaving the system just since 2010, we should be seeing significant improvements to child protection and family services. And here's what the budget document says, the child and family services division, and I quote:

Provides programs, services and financial assistance to protect children from neglect and abuse and support the safe care of children through a continuum of family arrangements. It also operates residential facilities for youth who require structured living arrangements.

This is an incredibly important unit because its job is to protect some of our most vulnerable citizens — children and youth in care. Again to the minister: why is this government choosing to cut front-line jobs in the child and family services division?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I know that the member opposite is aware that there is no cuts to the front-line services. In fact what we have is 90 more front-line workers for fewer children in care. Our goal is to make sure that we have . . . that children are supported within their own home if possible. If not, we make sure that they are going into foster homes where there is support as well.

Mr. Speaker, we have the Linkin system. We no longer have children being kept track of on paper. We have a structured decision-making process. We have an assessment to see what we can be doing for our children.

Every time there is a child death, we look at it through the eyes of families and people that are loving the children to see what else we can do. In fact I had the opportunity lately to speak to the ministers in Alberta as well to see if together we can decide what else we can be doing in learning best practices from each other.

Mr. Speaker, there is no cut for our children. There is more workers for our children. And our goal as a government is to keep our children safe.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Children's Advocate has said repeatedly that this government's cut to staff at Social Services are having a negative impact on children in care. And here's a quote from the Children's Advocate in September, and I quote:

The quality of case management and case planning has to

improve. If that's a resourcing issue, which I believe it is, I know the ministry has added 90 staff, but the ministry as a whole also has cut over 100 staff members.

To the minister: why is this government refusing to listen to these warnings and failing to properly protect children in care?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, we make sure that the work that we're doing within the ministry, within the administration, within the policies, whatever we're doing within ministries, yes, we make sure we do that work in an efficient manner as possible.

What we do not look for is cutting care for children. What we do not . . . We make sure that there are front-line workers. We've cut back the number of . . . There are fewer children in care. There are more contact people to be able to go out and meet with our families. There is more help for our foster families. There is more help for assessment.

And there is working across ministries, the first time in Canada where we've had the chance to look across ministry and make sure we see the children through the eyes Education and Social Services and Health at the same time. We're looking at more money for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, more money for autism, and more money to protect our children. There is never a doubt in this province that children are our first priority, and I cannot say the same for the members opposite.

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

Mr. Forbes: — But this is the fact that the minister does not dispute, they've cut \$5.6 million in salaries. That is the fact.

Mr. Speaker, there is perhaps no greater responsibility of government than to protect our most vulnerable citizens. Yet we keep hearing major concerns about our child protection system: 81, 81 vulnerable children have died just since 2010 and that does not include deaths from natural causes. And in December, the Provincial Auditor reported that this government is still not doing enough to protect vulnerable children. Yet this government is cutting front-line workers in the child and family services division.

To the minister: when will this government listen to the auditor and the Children's Advocate, stop cutting front-line workers, and start properly protecting vulnerable children?

[14:15]

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I cannot say often enough how much everybody's heart aches when we hear about the death of a child. We know that many of the children that come into care in this province are medically fragile. We also know that the number of children that come into care, we automatically think that they are younger children, ages six and down. Children are also what we would call young adults up to the age of 18 years old. And we look at the statistics, we find that some of them have died from homicides. Some of them

have died in car accidents. Some of them have died from suicides. Every one of those breaks our hearts.

But we have not cut front-line workers. We do not cut money to the care of our children. What we do is work together to make sure that we can protect the lives of the most vulnerable and the most valuable asset we have in the province, and that's our children.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, the minister should go back and read through the government's own child welfare review report from 2010. Here's what that report said, and I quote:

High caseloads and worker turnover result in lost continuity in planning, increased time children spend in care, attachment and relationship challenges for children, and increased recruitment and training costs for the Ministry and agencies.

To the minister: this government knew about this issue for the last four years from its own review. Why is it cutting staff when its own review and Children's Advocate and Provincial Auditor all have called for better support for vulnerable children?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, to the hon. member, I have said — and I know, and I believe he knows it as well — we have not cut support for vulnerable children. There may be . . . There are cuts within the ministry. We decide how we can do things in a better way. We decide that processes may be done differently. We look at the way the money is spent so we can take money and put it to the front line. Every time we go to treasury board, every time we go in front of the caucus we say, what else should we be doing? They tell us, look after the children in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we have 90 more front-line workers. We have fewer children in care. We have more supports for those children that are in care and we have supports for a family who need help for their children as well. Mr. Speaker, that is a priority for our government. It always has been. It always will be. And I do not care how many times the member opposite asks that question, children matter on this side of the House.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to order the answers to questions 264 through 266.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has ordered questions 264 to 266. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the answers to questions 267 through 275.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has tabled answers to

questions 267 to 275 inclusive.

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 Minister for Crown Investments.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and it truly is an honour and a privilege to be able to stand in this House today and speak to what I believe will be the best budget in our entire nation. Before I begin though, Mr. Speaker, I have a number of people that I would like to thank, and that is my family and friends who have supported me now for a number of years of being elected. I have a dad that has been just incredibly supportive of my career as well as three amazing daughters who have been as well.

I have the best staff ever back home in Humboldt, Mr. Speaker. I have Susan Dunne who entirely runs my office and does a super job of it. And here in Regina I think I have the best staff in the building.

I also want to thank my constituents, Mr. Speaker. I represent a super riding. Humboldt and the surrounding communities right through to the edge of Saskatoon are very progressive, industrious people, and I am truly proud and honoured to be able to represent them.

And I want to thank the Minister of Finance and treasury board for all of the work they do because I know, I served on the treasury board for three years since we've been in government. I know it's a lot of hours. It's a lot of work. So I truly am grateful for the work that they did.

I'm proud of this budget, Mr. Speaker, and I'm proud to speak in favour of this budget. It is a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker. It's a balanced budget with no tax increases. It's a balanced budget with no debt increases. And it's a balanced budget because they have controlled spending, and yet it still found money to invest in infrastructure and to invest in people.

Mr. Speaker, my responsibility in government right now is Crown Investments Corporation, known as CIC. And I know last night I was listening intently as the member from Saskatoon Nutana spoke about the debt. And so I think that since much of that debt quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, and definitely the debt increase, has been in the Crown corporations, I would like to address that very issue. Because there is quite a difference, quite frankly, of debt within Crown corporations than the debt within the operations of government, and significantly different.

In our first six years in government, Mr. Speaker, we invested

in the capital within SaskTel, SaskPower, SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance], and SaskEnergy by nearly \$8 billion. We know that the Crown corporations are vital to the growth within our province. We know that we need to keep our Crown corporations strong, and we need to have them moving forward in order to sustain the growth within our province.

This investment, Mr. Speaker, in infrastructure within the Crown corporations is 140 per cent more than the NDP spent during their final six years in government. The NDP who say, quite frankly, that they support the Crowns, did not put their money where their mouth is. And they didn't support the Crowns because there was an infrastructure deficit within our Crown corporations.

Now in 2014 we're estimating that we'll be spending an additional \$2 billion. Again, Mr. Speaker, that's because we understand how important our Crown corporations are, how critical they are to the growth that's happening within this province, and how they are important to the quality of life for the people within our province. So the net debt within Crown corporations is rising. But the important thing that we need to watch is that it's rising at a slower pace than total asset growth. From 2008 to 2013, Mr. Speaker, Crown debt increased from 3.6 billion to 6.1 billion, which is a \$2.5 billion increase. We do not deny that, Mr. Speaker. It is in the summary financial statement. That is an increase in debt.

But during that same period, Mr. Speaker, which is very, very important — and the member from Regina Rosemont should listen very, very carefully because he has a lot to say right now — during that same period, Mr. Speaker, Crown assets increased by more than 4 billion. Mr. Speaker, from 7.7 billion to 11.8 billion is the value of the assets. That is a dramatically greater increase in the value than the debt.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share this and I want to quote, and that is:

Even after taking into account the debt of state-owned enterprises, which forms the major part of debt financing, the government still maintains a debt/GDP ratio of between 11.2 and 12.6 per cent until at least 2017. This compares very favourably with large provinces like Ontario and Quebec, both of which maintain net debt-to-GDP ratios in excess of 35 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, that quote is from the Conference Board of Canada report when it says *Financing Growth in the New Saskatchewan*, June 2013. Again, I want to just repeat the important part of that and how it is that we are mindful of managing the debt within the Crowns, and point out that the debt-to-GDP ratio is between 11.2 and 12.6 within our Crown corporations, whereas similar Crowns in other provinces such as Ontario and Quebec is as high as 35 per cent.

So like any business, Mr. Speaker, Crown corporations borrow to help fund their capital spending. And we need to manage that borrowing and we are. Each Crown corporation has a debt ratio target. We are watching those targets, and we are ensuring that they remain strong and supporting the people within our province.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP again will point out that debt. They will criticize that debt. But to give you examples of what kind of infrastructure our Crown corporations are investing in, I would just like to point out that SaskPower has invested \$286 million in new generation to meet the existing demand within our province. They have invested 495 million for transmission and distribution in generation maintenance and upgrades and 248 million for customer connections.

I am just curious, Mr. Speaker, what of those expenditures the NDP would like SaskPower not to make? We are a growing province. There's a lot of new connections that are required within our province. There is a lot of additional transmission that different investors and businesses are requiring within our province. Is the NDP suggesting that we shouldn't accommodate those connections?

And maybe they are, Mr. Speaker, because I remember very well sitting in opposition when they were quite pleased and quite comfortable with the fact that our province wasn't growing. They didn't see any purpose to growth. I can give quote after quote of different NDP cabinet ministers that were . . . They just didn't even think it was statistically possible for our province to grow. There was a cabinet minister said that growth is not necessarily a good thing because if we don't grow that means there's more for the rest of us. They laugh at those quotes now. We laughed at them at the time too because they were hilarious.

But in fact, it is the same old NDP. It is the same old attitude. Nothing has truly changed over there. In fact, 45 per cent of the members over there, Mr. Speaker, were in cabinet. They were able to make decisions, and those are the decisions they chose to make. Those are the attitudes that they have, and that has not changed, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about what the NDP did have as priorities when they were in cabinet when it came to the Crown corporations. They question the debt, and we can justify the debt in infrastructure that's necessary to support the growth within our province.

But what did the NDP have as priorities in the Crown corporations? Well, Mr. Speaker, they lost 15 million in Channel Lake, which was a SaskPower natural gas subsidy. They lost 2 million in South American power company. They lost 16 million in NST Chicago, which was a US Midwest fibre optics company. They lost 9.4 million in Persona Inc., which was a Newfoundland cable company. They lost 24.7 million on Retx.com, which was an Atlanta dot-com company. They lost 6.7 million in tappedinto.com, which was a Nashville dot-com company. They lost 3 million, Mr. Speaker, in clickabid.com, which was an Internet business of some sort. They lost 5.6 million in Soft Tracks Enterprises Ltd., which was a wireless electronic payment company. They lost 90.8 million, Mr. Speaker, in Navigata Communications, which was a BC [British Columbia] communications company. They lost 10 million in Craig Wireless, which was a Manitoba Internet company.

Mr. Speaker, I much prefer the investments that our government is choosing for our Crown corporations — which is expanding the transmissions, which is expanding the number of

connections, which is supporting Saskatchewan people and Saskatchewan businesses — to this whole entire list of out-of-province, crazy ventures that the NDP thought was so important when they were government.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I saw the NDP press release. I listened very carefully to Regina Rosemont's speech. He is the NDP Finance critic, and the whole theme is cuts and crumbs. And I listened to all of it, and I just . . . It was very hard to try to take it seriously. It really was difficult to try to think it was seriously. He's correct. He just said now it was too long. I absolutely agree. His speech was way too long, and it was nonsense. It was utter nonsense. And what it was was the typical NDP of playing politics over good policy.

[14:30]

And I need to remind not only the NDP opposite, because they seem quite mystified by this, but the public in general that the NDP that are sitting in this room here today, that have the criticism, calling this budget cuts, you know, nothing but cuts and crumbs, 45 per cent of those NDP sitting in this Assembly today were cabinet ministers in the NDP government when it was government in our province. Forty-five per cent of them sat in cabinet. They had every opportunity to make decisions on how they wanted to spend money.

And so let's see how they spent money. Let's just see what their priorities were, Mr. Speaker. And they're saying that our budget does not meet their priorities. Well okay, are their priorities health? Is that a priority for the NDP? Because their last budget, Mr. Speaker, to this budget today, health spending has been increased by 45 per cent. Mr. Speaker, 45 per cent is the increase in health spending.

During that time period, Mr. Speaker, inflation has only been 12 per cent. So if health was such a priority when their members were sitting in government, why didn't they act like it? Why didn't they act like that was a priority when they were able to make the decisions? And now they sit back and they say, oh you're doing this wrong. You're doing that wrong, not enough money. We've increased funding by 45 per cent.

How about education? When they were government, Mr. Speaker, they called it learning, but now it's education. You go back to their last budget, you compare it to ours. And the increase in funding in education, Mr. Speaker, from their time when they could make decisions to our government today is 78 per cent, 78 per cent increase for education funding, Mr. Speaker.

Advanced — that's K to 12 — advanced education, Mr. Speaker. What about that? Was that a priority for the NDP when they sat and they had decisions, they could make the decisions? Well not really, Mr. Speaker, because in the years when we've been government, inflation's been 12 per cent. We've increased funding for advanced education by 22 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Yet that's, all of a sudden now when they can just criticize they don't think that's good enough.

Mr. Speaker, they had community resources. Now we call it Social Services, and I was the minister when we first formed government. There was questions on that very issue today,

which is kind of shocking. The increase in funding under our government has been 54 per cent. Mr. Speaker, when they talk about children in care, Mr. Speaker, when we formed government and I was the minister, there was 21 children in one foster home. That was what we inherited from the NDP. That's where their priorities were when they were able to make the decisions. And now all of a sudden it's just a joke. They're denying that that ever happened. That government didn't exist? Well yes, 45 per cent of them were in that government. It did exist and that was their priority.

Mr. Speaker, highways. You know we have the member from Athabasca who was asking about highways. He's got lots to say all the time. He was Highways minister, Mr. Speaker. He was the Highways minister that never got anything done.

Mr. Speaker, if all of this increase in funding, a 45 per cent increase in Health funding, a 78 per cent increase in K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education funding, 22 per cent increase in Advanced Education funding, 54 per cent increase in community resources or Social Services funding and, Mr. Speaker, 53 per cent increase in Highways . . . I'm sorry I forgot to mention that earlier but we've increased Highways funding by 53 per cent. If all of that is crumbs, what would we call the NDP budget? What should we call what they gave for the people of Saskatchewan? A smidgen, speck, pinch, sliver? I'm not sure, but if ours is crumbs and we have increased funding in all our areas or priorities, what on earth were they thinking when they were able to make those decisions?

Municipal revenue sharing, Mr. Speaker, up 109 per cent from the NDP days. Mr. Speaker, the U of S, the U of S alone has seen a 61 per cent increase in operating grants when the enrolment at the U of S has only been an 8.7 per cent increase. The U of R [University of Regina], maybe that was crumbs. Crumbs? Forty-five per cent increase in funding; increase in enrolment, 12.1 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, K to 12 operating grants, 24 per cent increase under our government; enrolment increase, 1.5 per cent. K to 12 capital: now that's an interesting one because again the member from Regina Rosemont has a lot to say about school capital. He has a lot to say considering he sits with a party that when in government was on average closing a school a month. He's got lots and lots to say about what our government is doing for school capital, K to 12 school. We've increased the funding over the NDP by 859 per cent — 859 per cent. Mr. Speaker, is that crumbs? Is that crumbs?

You know, it's kind of interesting. Now you know, now the member from Rosemont's a little appalled because he said we're just living in the past. Okay, fair enough. Mr. Speaker, let's just talk about right now. Let's talk about what's happening now. Let's talk about this specific budget. And what is that member going to do? That member has stood in this House and asked questions about school capital. We're building schools in this budget. Is he going to vote for it?

That member stood in this House — many, many questions — and asked about going to summary financial statements instead of GRF [General Revenue Fund] funding for their budget. We've done that, Mr. Speaker. Is he going to vote for it?

You know, he doesn't know what to criticize anymore. He knows he has to because it's a matter of politics over good policy. They don't have policy. That's why they don't know what good policy is. Because they've taken everything off their website. They have a leader that hasn't made any policy. They have never made a statement. There was the tree book. I have it with me, but I understand they took it off their website. There is no policy. There is no plan. There is no direction. Mr. Speaker, they have no clue what to do to help facilitate growth within our province, to encourage the growth within our province. They aren't even all that good at criticizing because what they criticize one day, they change their mind and do it differently the next day. So I don't even think they're very good at that, Mr. Speaker.

But they have a past. And quite frankly, nothing's changed. They don't like any changes. They want everything to be what it was when the NDP were in power when 45 per cent of them were sitting at the table making decisions. And the people of the province have said no to those policies, to that attitude. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to support the budget, and I will not support the amendment.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to enter into the 2014 budget speech. And I have been finding it very interesting listening to the government side defend this budget. And really in many ways, so many ways it's indefensible, and we'll get into that over the next little bit.

But I have to tell you that I have some deep concerns, and I know the people I represent and, as I travel around, people have some real concerns, the concerns that we've outlined and talked a lot about in question period about the cash cow contracts that are going out, the \$40 million. How is that defensible? And I agree with the other side that \$40 million is not a crumb. That is not a crumb. That is something pretty special, that John Black in Washington would think is not a crumb. In fact that's pretty rich cake, isn't it? That's pretty rich cake.

Unfortunately the people here in Saskatchewan don't feel the same largesse from this government. You're giving \$40 million to some consultant and Japanese sensei \$3,500 a day, and we're getting people asking, how can I be one of those consultants? I'd love to get a job with this government that pays \$3,500 a day. The member in the back is saying the same thing. How can I get this job? How can I get this job? So you wonder why we say crumbs. Because people are feeling like that. People are feeling like that.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know this is an opportune time to thank my constituents. You know, I've had the pleasure of serving Centre for several years now, and they have come in and raised concerns and they keep me focused on what's really important, what's really important for the people of this province, the people that are here now but also for future generations, that we don't do things that, whether it's financial or whether it's through the environment, put our futures at risk. So I want to take a minute and thank my constituents.

I also want to take a moment and thank my constituency assistant, Erica Spracklin who's doing a fantastic job. She's

been with me now for a while. But she really has captured the essence of what a constituent assistant does, and it's so important that they're there to hear the concerns, the hopes, and worries of our constituents. And as a constituency assistant, she's done a fantastic job and I'm so glad that I've got her. And I know constituency assistants across both sides really do so much, but I really do feel I'm very fortunate.

I want to thank also my executive and people who really talk to me about the issues at hand, and my own family and my wife. And you know, it's not easy being an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly]. We're often called on to do different things at different . . . And you know, these days can turn into long evenings and so it takes a lot of patience. And over the course of time, she has shown so much grace in that support so I also want to thank her.

But, Mr. Speaker, I do want to say that this message that this budget sends to everyday families is one to brace themselves. And the Premier sent that out early in the new year when he was raising flags or flying trial balloons about different types of taxes that we might have. I think that's really unfortunate when you do that just to test the waters.

But I think that that's . . . People had got that message early on that this was not going to be a message for the people, that unfortunately there was going to be a lot of challenges in this budget. And I will get into that as we go forward because I know that people today are working harder than ever before and they deserve a budget that uses, that really uses the strong economy that we have right now to benefit them, and also into the long term, whether it's cost of living and the questions we've raised in the House in terms of what that means in terms of housing, what does that mean in terms of jobs, what does that mean in terms of utilities.

I mean we have a government side that would rather reflect on eight years ago when we were in power rather than talk about the here and now, take a moment to acknowledge challenges that people do face here in Saskatchewan. But that's not what they're really interested in. They're interested in patting themselves on the back and not talking about real issues that people are facing.

And so we would hope that and we think the people of Saskatchewan deserve better hospitals, smaller classrooms, a better cost of living, but that's not the case here in Saskatchewan. In fact when we have one of the strongest, if not the strongest, economies in Saskatchewan, these are the kind of things that we're seeing.

You know, and we see a government that is investing in its pet projects, i.e., the lean project, that is now . . . And it's hard to get a sense from this government what the overall cost is. They tend to want to deflect this, and they tend to . . . And they go strong on this. They say if you have the audacity to even question, to say how can we do this better, that's a problem because you're not stepping up the line to support their latest pet project, lean. And we have some real concerns about that. And it's not just us. And we've heard from the nurses who talk about this just-in-time health care where it really should be about just-in-case. And I think that's the way that we should be approaching this. And so we have some real, real concerns

about that.

[14:45]

And so what we see, and we see some of the concerns that have been written in the paper, and I think that . . . Now we haven't heard the government on the other side talk about what was written in *The StarPhoenix* on the weekend. You know, they love to quote the paper when it's going their way. When it's not, it's not in existence.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to read from the editorial on Saturday, March 22nd, *The StarPhoenix*. And this is what *The StarPhoenix* opinion says, "Our seniors deserve better." When Health minister . . . and I quote:

When Health Minister Dustin Duncan said he was angry at what he called "dismaying" and "heartbreaking" conditions at Saskatchewan's long-term care homes and quickly announced a \$10 million "urgent issues action fund" in October, the expectation was that the March budget would commit to addressing the problems identified.

However, sometime between Mr. Duncan's reaction to the findings of "unhygienic, unsafe and unacceptable" conditions at the seniors' homes by health region CEOs who toured the facilities and when the government presented its 2014-15 budget this week, it appears that the issue has been moved well down the priority list.

Now we're not saying this on the other side. This is *The StarPhoenix*. This is *The StarPhoenix* who's saying, you know, really? What happened? What happened between the outrage that we're going to get this job done to last week when somehow it slipped off the edge of the desk? It slipped off the edge of the desk. Now they will insist it's not. But to a third party, it sure looks like it. It sure looks like it.

And I agree with the headline. Our seniors do deserve better. They truly do. And so the question is, what happened? What happened between those times when he had that emergency issues report and last week when we got the budget?

Now it goes on, and I quote again:

Now that the budget is here, it's evident that Mr. Duncan's mitigation measures fall far short of the mark, even though there are some relatively small but positive steps taken to support seniors living in their . . . homes longer.

As for the long-term plans, there's little indication that measures are being contemplated to accommodate the influx of boomers who will begin to place greater demands on Saskatchewan's aging, and in some cases decrepit, care facilities in the not too distant future.

So, Mr. Speaker, you know, if it makes sense, we are there to say, right on. And these people will say . . . And what happened in the budget speech when the government was forced to move to one set of books, one set of books, we acknowledge that. We acknowledge that. So there are some things to acknowledge.

But here you have to say, now will they deny what these people are saying at *The StarPhoenix*? Will they say no, that's not true; you've got it all wrong? And this is the question we have. We have the minister just before us say, it's the best budget in the nation, best budget in the nation. Now really, really, how can you say that? How can you really say that when you're getting editorials like that? A little humbleness would go a bit of a long way here. But what we get is arrogance and people saying, you guys, it's not crumbs; it's cake and you should be happy with it. Well people are saying, you know what? Really that's not the case.

And here I want to take a moment, and this is one that we've been talking about and I've been talking about for quite a while, and the minister and the former minister of Social Services will know this, when they introduced the increases in the senior income plan, and it's in the record, that I thought that was a good thing. That was a good thing. And good on government when they do good things.

But the question is, and this is the problem, that program has some significant problems, and we've asked about them correcting this. We've asked them to correct this problem because as you look at what's happening in the budget as it is today . . . And they will go on about SIP [seniors' income plan] and how much more money it is. And this year it's 25 million, 25.9 million. But do the folks over there know what it was last year? What was it last year? Anybody know? It was 27 million.

So how can it be, when you're increasing the payments, that it's actually going down? Well this is what's happened. This is what's happening. This is what's happening, Mr. Speaker. At its peak in 2009, in June of 2009, there was 18,600 members or people taking SIP. That's a good thing. That's a good thing. What is it today? According to the written answers we got last week, it's 15,437. Three thousand fewer seniors are getting that program. Now why is that, Mr. Speaker? Why is that? So that's the question before us. That's the question before us. This is a program that needs to be managed right. Now they will get outraged. And I just want to hear what the Minister of Social Services has to say. If she speaks loud enough, we'll get it on the record. What is it?

Mr. Speaker, this is what happens. This is what happens every July. This is what happens every July to the seniors. This is what happens every July. Do you know this, Mr. Speaker? On average, every . . .

An Hon. Member: — We income test.

Mr. Forbes: — She's saying it's income tested. I'll ask about that because this is what happens every July. Almost 2,000 seniors are thrown off. They're thrown off, aren't they? So this is what's happening. You have 56, 66, somewhere less than 100 seniors are falling off. They get on the program, and all of a sudden they're off the program. So what's happening is this program . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh this is seniors making too much money. This is a problem. Seniors are making too much money. So we see a program where you have over 3,000 seniors since 2009 thrown off the program because they're making too much money.

This is really interesting to hear from the Minister of Social

Services. And we'll have questions, I'm sure, in estimates where she gets to talk about, why is it that seniors who get hope . . . Now they will talk about how they knock on doors, they knock on the doors and seniors are loving this program — except for the day you get thrown off, the day you get thrown off. And we see that day every July where 2,000 seniors will be thrown off the program.

So, Mr. Speaker, is this program well run? No, it isn't. Something's happening that all of . . . Why is it that we had that shock? Something is wrong. Something is wrong. So I don't think these folks know what's really going on. They are all up and they say this is the greatest program, but it's not quite right.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I also have to take a moment and talk a bit about this editorial which I found very interesting in *The StarPhoenix*. And I appreciate that the minister in her remarks yesterday talked about who she met in terms of the poverty costs reduction strategy, and I'm glad that she met with them. I don't know. When I read her remarks, it didn't sound like a commitment to actually do anything. She talked about how they had a catchy phrase. It had a catchy slogan. But nothing, no commitments to actually dealing with poverty here in Saskatchewan.

And this is what *The StarPhoenix* had to write on March 15th, 2014: "Ideology beats sound policy." And I find that interesting because here is a government that really is bound by its ideology and not about policy that makes a lot of sense, not a lot of sense. So this is what they say, and I quote, Mr. Speaker:

What at first glance may seem to be a couple of disparate news items identify a larger issue of the provincial government allowing ideology to impede sound public policy that would save taxpayers money over the long term.

Mr. Speaker, this is very interesting because they're talking about how they're committed to saving money through the lean program, some 40 . . . and how they will do anything to save money except if it makes sense, except if it makes sense. Now I'll continue reading. I'll continue the quote. I quote:

The first involves the government reaction to the Cost of Poverty campaign launched by a coalition of Saskatchewan community groups, which notes that poverty ends up costing Saskatchewan's economy \$3.8 billion a year, including \$420 million in health care alone.

And I continue. I quote:

In both cases, the attitude of the government seems to be that the other provinces can heed good advice and get positive results, but Saskatchewan will do its own thing despite evidence that says the government would avoid costly problems down the road by taking action now.

Saskatchewan and British Columbia are now the only provinces without a poverty reduction strategy after Alberta, long the standard bearer for personal responsibility, recently adopting a comprehensive policy. Yet Social Services Minister June Draude insists that Saskatchewan's growth in average weekly earnings and its

low unemployment rate somehow point to a superior anti-poverty strategy in this province where a tenth of the population is impoverished.

So, Mr. Speaker, forgive us if we raise the issue of crumbs where you have a tenth of the province living in poverty and this government refuses to do anything to acknowledge it and then says, when 2,000 seniors a year are thrown off SIP, that's just the way it goes; they're making too much money. Mr. Speaker, we think, we think it's the right thing to ask the tough questions. And if the government is uncomfortable by those questions, they have to live with that because that's what's really going on.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the rental housing supplement and the federal-provincial affordable housing agreement that now I understand we're getting \$9.2 million a year. And I thought it interesting that the Finance minister stressed, and he was correct in talking about how some of that can be used to pay for supplements.

Mr. Speaker, when this government took power, that supplement cost the provincial government \$6 million a year. This year it's going to cost the government \$38.9 million, \$38.9 million. Now in many ways I think that it was a program we started, and that's a good thing because it makes rental units more affordable. But at some point, somebody's got to say, don't you think \$40 million is an awful lot of money to be paying out?

And we've asked this question. We've asked this question to the minister. And we will ask again. Who actually gets the \$40 million? Is it Sask Housing? Is it Boardwalk? Is it Main Street? What are we doing to really make the best use of that \$40 million? We have some questions on that.

Mr. Speaker, I also have some questions about child care parent subsidies. And I know my colleague will talk a lot about this one, but I have to say I'm amazed at this one. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when this government took power, that fund, the child care parent subsidies, was at \$16 million and what was actually spent was \$15.986 million. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know how much they've allotted this year for it? \$14.675 million, \$1 million less. Now I don't know about you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but in my riding I think people could really use the subsidies for child care. So while this government is celebrating its achievements here, this is the kind of crumbs that we're talking about. These are the kind of crumbs we're talking about.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will remember two years ago when this government announced a program called the corporation income tax rebate on new rental housing. And this was an innovative program in terms of encouraging new builds for apartment units. And of course I had some concerns there because they could be turned into rentals, but this is what they did. Mr. Deputy Speaker, at that time, and I'm reading from the budget documents of 2012-13, the budget summary, page 68. It talks about: "A maximum of 10,000 rental units will qualify for the tax rebate. Eligible units must be constructed and available for rent before the end of 2016." And they had to apply by January 1st, 2014.

Now I asked a question about how many units have come in

under this program. How many units? Was it 10,000? Was it 9,000, 5,000, 4,000? 317 units, 317 units. We asked where did they get the number of 10,000 two years ago? And we had an idea that that was going to be a hard mark to reach. But really, they have 10,000? They were talking about 10,000. That what was they were pitching two years ago — and 317.

[15:00]

So if you wonder why we talk about crumbs, that's the reality that people in Saskatchewan are facing. There aren't the apartments. There's the high rent. Not everyone gets the rental supplement. And then the government can't keep track of where the 40 million is going. It's just going out the door. You know, Mr. Speaker, it's really interesting. I don't know. The number 40 million comes up several times, whether it's rental supplement — that's the number from their budget — whether it's J.D. Black and Associates. They're 40 million.

But here's another 40 million. Here's another 40 million. And that's the Linkin system, and the minister referred to it today as one of the things that's going really well in Social Services. And this is from . . . Yes, this is a system and again, you know, if it makes common sense, we're for it. And what we want to do is make sure we keep track and know where the kids in care are, what's happening with them. But we were the last province to have a computerized system, I understand.

Why we couldn't have taken one from another province, or bought one from another province in 2008 or '09, I don't know. But this government was bent on spending money with an Irish software company, and here we are now. And I want to read from December 2nd, 2013, the Human Services Committee, and this is page 581. And I say, and this is my question, and I quote:

So now I have kind of followed this Linkin process, and as I've changed roles in opposition, I think the total bill — and correct me if I'm wrong — but it was approaching \$16 million through the Linkin system? What has been the total cost for Linkin?

Mr. Brown replies, "In terms of the implementation costs?" I say, "No the purchase, the implementation, the whole nine yards."

Mr. Acton, the deputy minister, says, and I quote, "So its total cost is \$37.6 million. That delivers the child and family side, but it also is some foundational work for the income assistance side as well."

I say, "Now is it completely purchased and completely up and running, and we're just dealing with maintenance costs now?"

Well he talks about the child and family side: "We are still doing some work on the financial piece to issue payments, and of course we're just doing some foundational work as it relates to the income assistance side."

So I say, "37 could grow?" Sorry, pardon me. "The 37 million could grow." Mr. Acton said yes.

So we're talking about a \$40 million project, \$40 million project. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is interesting. We have a lot

of questions about Linkin, and I was amazed that the minister brought that up as a positive, as a positive. And you know, this is again why people go, I don't know what's happening with this government; it seems to be out of touch. Forty million dollars for lean, \$40 million on the rental supplements so nobody knows where it's going, \$40 million for Linkin. What's the story with that? All right, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a lot of questions with that.

I want to also take a minute and talk about . . . I know I've been talking a lot about Social Services, and I may go back to that, but I have a lot of questions about Social Services. And people have been talking about the crumbs, and what's been really happening with that. And actually it was good the member from Nutana last night talked about the cuts in Sask Housing, the apparent cuts in Sask Housing. We don't know. The \$9.2 million in transfers from the federal government in their housing agreement, what's really going to happen to that? Is there really going to be some action?

But I want to talk a bit about the Minister of Labour and what he had to say about what's happening with Labour Relations and Workplace Safety. And this is interesting because what he talks about . . . And I was glad to see that he was talking about injuries and the second-highest workplace injury rate in Canada and that we need to do something about it. And I agree with him. It's simply unacceptable. And this is something both the minister and the critic agree, that we need to work on this. This is absolutely an issue that must be resolved.

He talks about seeing a 43 per cent reduction since 2002. But he has talked about increasing the number of workplace inspections and the number of files being sent to Justice and we've increased the maximum dollar of fines. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this will be a question we have because we know when *The Occupational Health and Safety Act* was passed a few years ago and then when the employment Act was passed last year, that in fact one of the pieces that was not put into action was the part around the fines. And in fact some of us may remember I had questions about that just a while ago. And while I'm glad to see that the fines are happening — that's a very good thing — we also see that the government has not increased the fines as it said it would. And we have some questions about that. When will that actually happen? And while corporations are being fined I think at a lower level than what they should be, in fact what the legislation calls for, what is the reasoning behind that? And so we'll have a lot of questions about that. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that we need to do much more work on that.

I am looking forward to seeing the \$100,000 go to continue the high-quality advocacy services for workers' comp. That's very, very important.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I say, this government that's tied to its ideology and not common sense, while we can talk about some of the positives we see in there, they can't see that. They can't see that. It's all great or it's not, and we have some real concerns about that.

So as I said, you know, Mr. Speaker, we were happy to see that there's now only one set of books, but the razor-thin surplus of \$71 million over this size of budget, we'll be interested to see if

they can maintain that or if they can maintain that. We know, for example, there's been no commitment in the budget in terms of the bridge in Saskatoon. And while that may be a year out, it's funny that you can use a budget document to say, this is what we're going to do but we have no money for it. And I know people in Saskatoon are wondering. So what really is the budget really going to be delivering for the people of Saskatoon?

So I think though, Mr. Speaker, what was happening in the past, and we're so glad the Minister of Finance got around to it . . . It reminds me of that saying, something is rotten in Denmark, you know. While these folks over there can say over and over again it's a balanced budget and all of this, but we've never had a failed audit from the auditor. We've never had those flags.

And while they would go on and go on and on and on that it was exactly the same as we did, we knew there were four key differences, four key differences, and that's what the auditor highlighted. It wasn't the same as what it was in the past. So something was rotten. It did not pass the sniff test, and so the consolidation into one set of books is a good thing. The question will be, as we go through this year of transition, how transparent and accountable they will be. I think that's the challenge here and we want to make sure that it is.

So, Mr. Speaker, we know that the budget does call for another \$51 million to be cut from health care. We're really worried about what that really means, particularly when you've got the issue with lean and the kaizen offices and all of that. And the government is not being clear about the total costs. They're saying its cost is with that, with the regional health authority, and not with us.

We know that the budget reannounces 3.7 million already allocated to the issues with seniors' home care. We know that this government continues to plow ahead with a standardized testing regime. We know that the public is not with the government on this. And for some reason this government continues to plow ahead, hard-headed on this, and this is really, really an issue.

And we know our schools are overcrowded. And I was so disappointed to see yesterday that Pleasant Hill School was taken off the list that it's been on for so many years, so many years. So we have a real problem with that. And we heard the speaker before me continue to talk about building schools. And you know the issue that we have with the P3s [public-private partnership]. We continue to raise that. People in our neighbourhoods, in our communities wonder about what's really going to happen there. Are we going to have the Alberta issues that they had in terms of the community control? Are we just renting our schools? Who really owns these schools? And this is a real problem, and so we have some questions about that.

So, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to hearing more about what's going to happen around housing. What are the details of that, the \$9.2 million? Are there any other initiatives? What are they going to do to see more rentals being built? We are looking forward to hearing more about the details. And when we saw that that was released yesterday afternoon in some form about the \$800,000 and how it's going to play out, we are curious

about what's going to happen with human rights.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have some real issues here. And I think that while the government can be offended that we have the audacity to ask questions about it, we will continue to do our job. We will continue to do our job because that's important. That's how democracy works. And I know some folks over there get a little frustrated when they have to do some explaining and they can't just use their slogans. And, Mr. Speaker, it's the way that people expect us to do our work here in Saskatchewan.

And so when we see cuts, we see crumbs for Saskatchewan families and we see, and I've highlighted those issues, whether it's 40 million for Linkin or \$40 million for John Black, people are saying, what about us? What about our schools? What about our seniors? So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will be voting for the amendment. I think that's the only reasonable thing to do. And I will be voting against the main motion. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Lakeview.

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'd ask for leave to introduce a guest.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Regina Lakeview has requested leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In the east gallery, I am pleased to introduce to the legislature Carl Cherland. Many of you may know him. He has roots in Estevan but he has lived in Regina for many decades now. Carl, for quite a number of years, was the music director of the Luther College choir and we all enjoyed when he brought his choirs here to the legislature to sing at Christmastime.

And he's been retired now for a few years and well he's always been really interested in politics, but he has taken a special interest in looking at a number of the issues that are of concern in Saskatchewan. That includes the P3 issue. It includes obviously education issues and many of the issues around how Saskatchewan fits into the world economy. So I ask all members here to welcome Carl Cherland to the legislature.

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

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Krawetz that the Assembly approves in

general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Wotherspoon.]

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to have the opportunity to enter into this debate. I think it's the 11th budget that I've seen in my time in the legislature, four when I was in opposition and then seven that this government has presented. I must say the last seven have been much more interesting, although I was Finance critic for a period of time and that made it very interesting from a different perspective.

It's great to be here to talk about the budget. I want to begin by talking about some personal notes, some thank yous. I want to thank certainly my staff, both here in the legislature and back in the constituency office. I want to thank Cole and Theo and Amanda and Shelley and Annie and Kaitlyn and Sara. I think they're the A team, and I'll put them up against any other team in this legislature or any other legislature for sure. They're a great team, but they're part of a wider team. They're part of the Saskatchewan Party team. And again I thank them very much for what they do each and every day helping me do my job, both in the constituency and here in the Legislative Assembly.

[15:15]

I also want to thank my family. As many members have said, all members have said, we couldn't do our job without the support of our family. My wife, Trish, she's going through some changes on her own, some career changes, starting her own business, becoming a communications consultant, and very much enjoying it and looking forward to being part of the growing economy here in Saskatchewan and the business community of Saskatoon and the province.

I also want to thank my kids, Carter and Paige. Carter is in grade 11 at St. Joe's, a very active student, now part of the driving community. Last time I had a chance to speak in the Legislative Assembly, he was just getting his licence, and now he's able to manoeuvre the streets and side streets of Saskatoon. And Paige, a student in grade 8 and loves life and is just full of energy.

But I think what I reflect on the most, Mr. Speaker, now with the kids getting to be into their teen years, and we talk about their careers, we talk about what they want to do with their lives going forward, we can talk about what they want to do here in Saskatchewan and tell them that they have every opportunity to be whatever they want to be, and they can do it here in Saskatchewan. And I'm so proud to be able to have those discussions with them. This is indeed an exciting time, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan.

I'm very fortunate to represent the constituency of Saskatoon Silver Springs. It's a growing constituency, one of the largest population-wise in the entire province. And many, many people that reside in the constituency are new to our province. They're very excited about being here. They come from countries across the world, and they're just happy to be in Saskatchewan at this most exciting time. And I'm very, very fortunate to be able to represent them in the legislature.

My only regret is that, through redistribution, I'll be losing about 40 per cent of them to another constituency. But I know that they'll be well taken care of by another member in this Legislative Assembly. It's an exciting . . .

An Hon. Member: — On this side.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — On this side of the House, of course. That goes without saying, Mr. Speaker, I know. In fact I hope all of Saskatoon next time around is represented by the Saskatchewan Party government. I know we're working hard, and I know that that'll be the goal of members on this side of the House. I'm not sure what the member opposite has to say about that. He may not agree with me, but certainly there is a chance, an opportunity, and a goal to see that happen.

This is an exciting time to be in our province. Our province is thriving. Our economy is growing. Our population is growing.

And the budget that the Finance minister presented on March 19th is something that we can all be proud of. I want to take this opportunity to thank him for his diligence and his commitment and what he's done with the province's finances and how he made that presentation that we can all be proud of. So I'd ask members to help me in thanking the Finance minister for the work that he's done. He's always saying, he's always saying that we have to live within our means, whether it's when cabinet ministers come forward with our budgets earlier in the year or when he stands in this legislature and delivers that budget. We have to live within our means.

Mr. Speaker, that's a very, very different theme than we heard from the opposition in the last election. Five billion dollars in promises with no costing estimates, no idea of how they were going to pay for it, but that's what they took to the people of Saskatchewan. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's why those members are on that side of the House because that's not a Saskatchewan value. That's not how you do things. You live within your means, and you present a budget in that way. That's what we've done. And that's why I'm so proud to be here talking in favour of this budget, Mr. Speaker.

Being fiscally responsible is something that our government is very, very proud of. We continue to ensure that we live within our means. And we talk about it, but more importantly than what we say about it, it's important to examine what people across the province are talking about.

Steve McLellan, the CEO [chief executive officer] of the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce stated in a recent news release, "The province has put forward a budget that, while dealing with demands for increased expenditures due to growth and the cost of living, has managed overall expectations across the board."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Don Atchison, mayor of the city of Saskatoon, a man that I have a lot of respect for, a great visionary for my city. I think that he has done a great job as a mayor, and I would consider him among the top mayors in the country, not only in the province, Mr. Speaker. Here's what he had to say about this budget: "Because of the bridge being announced there, I think there's a real great step for us. They certainly didn't disappoint today. They came through." Mr.

Speaker, and that's from the mayor of the largest city in Saskatchewan and someone who really knows what he's talking about.

Another individual that I want to quote is Amy McNeil, executive director of SARC [Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres] and in the *Leader-Post* of March 20th, 2014. And Amy is somebody that I have a lot to do with in a professional capacity through her involvement with Sarcan and other agencies that deal with the Ministry of Environment. And here's what she had to say: "We are leading the country, if not North America and the world, in supports for people with disabilities, and it's something the Saskatchewan Party should be very proud of." Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank her for that. Indeed there is a lot to be proud of in this budget.

Ilene Busch-Vishniac, the U of S president, said in *The StarPhoenix* March 20th, 2014:

Despite this being a tight budget year, the government has sent a clear message that they recognize the value of post-secondary education to the economic vitality of Saskatchewan.

We appreciate the continued support for the U of S. The increase to our budget and allocations to specific initiatives allows us to continue to build a stronger university, one that will continue to serve the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it's very, very reassuring to hear words like that from the president of the University of Saskatchewan. Saskatoon Silver Springs is a constituency that has many, many students that attend the university, many faculty members that live within the constituency, and to have the leader of that university come out with this ringing endorsement of this budget is certainly a compliment to this government. It's a compliment to the Minister of Advanced Education. And it's just very, very reassuring to hear.

Now I could go on and on in talking and quoting people and what they have said about this budget. I want to talk about the opportunity I had this last Friday. I attended a speech by the Finance minister. It was in Saskatoon, to the North Saskatoon Business Association. This is something of a tradition.

North Saskatoon Business Association has been involved in public policy and advocating ideas to governments for 40 years. And every year, they ask the Finance minister to come and to talk about his or her budget, and I was very privileged to be able to be there. I know the Minister of Education was there as well.

And we had an opportunity first-hand as well to hear the Minister of Finance talk about his budget but also to hear what other people had to say. There were many, many people in the room from across the city, from across different backgrounds, and they were very, very pleased with what they had to hear. He went from table to table and talked to the individuals, and they were very, very pleased with a budget that certainly lives within its means, is balanced. That's something that we can all be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, I've also had the opportunity to go and talk to constituents. And that's what we all value most when we come to this Legislative Assembly. I had a chance to talk to the people of Saskatoon Silver Springs, and we had a lot to talk about of course because the mention of the bridge in Saskatoon is something that is very, very important. We all know that the new bridge that we have today, the south Saskatchewan bridge in Saskatoon has changed the way that we travel in the city and changed the provincial infrastructure, and we know that the next bridge will do that as well.

But more importantly the people of Saskatoon know that this government will be there for them at the time that the bridge comes into place. We were there before. No matter what type of infrastructure it is, we've been there for the people of Saskatoon and Saskatchewan, and we will continue to be there going forward.

Very specifically to my constituency, Mr. Speaker, I must chat about the four new schools that are going into Saskatoon Silver Springs: two in Willowgrove, two that were announced very recently for Evergreen. Again I've said before, it's a growing area, but that's what people come to Saskatchewan for. They want to be able to have their needs, whether it's health care or education, taken care of. And when they move to a constituency like Saskatoon Silver Springs, they can be reassured that they have a government in place that will ensure that they have the finest education possible. And we look very much forward to seeing the new Willowgrove schools open sometime this fall, and then look a couple years down the road as the new schools in Saskatoon Evergreen come into being as well.

Mr. Speaker, I also have to congratulate the Finance minister. And I want to give a compliment to members opposite as well, those that stood in the legislature here, day after day, reading petitions and . . . petitions, Mr. Speaker, petitions. We'll leave petitions for another speech. But you know, whether it was the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre or whether it was the Leader of the Opposition talking about wanting a new school in Hampton Village or if it was the member from Cumberland talking about a long-term care facility, this government listens. And we all come here to put those ideas forward.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that wasn't always the case. My first few years in the legislature here, when members opposite, some of them that were in government, when the members in opposition — of which I was one — would come with those petitions, they would not be listened to. They would not be acted upon. And the words that would come from ministers on this side of the House in an NDP government would be, too bad; sorry about your luck, and things like that.

You know, I advocated for a school in Arbor Creek in Saskatoon when I was an opposition member, and those pleas fell on deaf ears. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm very proud to say that now we're a government that listens to all members of the Legislative Assembly on both sides and provides for infrastructure where it is indeed necessary.

Mr. Speaker, our government is investing \$5 billion in health care. We are investing in education. We are investing in infrastructure. We're ensuring that the growth continues and that we continue to foster that growth and to take care of the

infrastructure needs that are challenging at times but indeed are important to our government.

I want to talk a little bit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this afternoon about the areas that I'm responsible for and how they're impacted by this budget. The Water Security Agency for example is one area that I'm very proud of. I think that the people, the men and women that work in the Water Security Agency just do an excellent job. And we saw that last year. They were tested to the top on the flood situation that we had, but they came through with flying colours.

And what they wanted this year, and they made their case very strongly, was additional funds to put into new technologies, into forecasting tools to be able to give them the information that they need to ensure that Saskatchewan residents are safe and that they're able to have the funds to do that. We increased the budget in that regard \$191,000 specifically for that technology. And I know it's very much appreciated, and it'll help them do their job even better.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk about the 25-year water security plan that we have in place. And that's a plan that extends 25 years into the future, and it certainly is an opportunity for us to look at the long-term value of the water resources that we have in our province. And we want to make sure that we're able to fund that plan going forward.

While this year's not expected to be as wet as 2013 or 2011, we will still see above average runoff in many areas of the province. And our government again was there in the past and will be there again in the future.

I want to talk a little bit about the emergency flood damage reduction program. It's an emergency program. It's put in place when necessary. But over the last two years, we've had the opportunity to invest some \$35 million through the program in different works around the province and have an opportunity to make sure that we mitigate imminent flooding and an opportunity to partner with municipalities and to work with other groups throughout the province and ensure that we can do the best we can to protect our province.

But again, you know, we can sit on this side of the House and say we're doing a good job, but what is most important is when the people of Saskatchewan take the opportunity to talk about it. I just want to read to members in the House today a letter that I received about the Water Security Agency. It says:

... Council and volunteers worked long hard hours to mitigate the impacts of the flood in the resort village of B-Say-Tah and it was reassuring to not only have the guidance of the Saskatchewan Water Security Agency but also the assurance that there would be Emergency Flood Damage Reduction Program moneys available to help relieve the financial burden of the flood preparedness on the ratepayers of B-Say-Tah.

The program was straightforward and we appreciate the dialogue our office was able to have with the Saskatchewan Water Security Agency staff. Learning from the 2011 ... [and the flood programming that we had] in place for 2013 worked extremely well for our community

and again we would like to thank you and the Saskatchewan Water Security Agency staff for their hard work providing the engineering, technical and financial assistance to the resort village of B-Say-Tah in the successful effort to protect our community.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not the only letter that I received in that regard, but it represents many, many letters. And we don't have an opportunity very often to thank the people involved in our ministries and the front-line people in many other ministries as well. I know Government Relations and Highways and Agriculture and others worked very, very closely, as we wanted to make sure that we keep people safe and that the opportunity is there to manage our water resources.

It's only a year ago that we, you know, had water coming in from Alberta that was unprecedented before, and we had an opportunity to make sure that we managed it well in our province. And in fact an independent audit of the work that was done over the last couple of years said that for every dollar spent on flood mitigation, we saved 20 to \$30 in flood damage costs. So I think that's money well spent on behalf of the taxpayers. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just wanted to highlight that as part of the good work and also the funding that continues to flow to those agencies through this budget.

In looking through this budget, it stands out that we are providing \$394.6 million in direct provincial support to municipalities, an increase of \$32.8 million or 9.1 per cent from last year. Revenue sharing, just with my city alone, just with the city that I represent, Saskatoon, is \$45.9 million this year, an increase, Mr. Speaker, an increase ... How much do you think the increase is? 159 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Now I know that that's an incredible number. That's even a higher percentage than the member from Yorkton received when he was going to school. I know that for sure.

Mr. Speaker, in all seriousness, this is something that municipalities are very pleased about. Debra Button, the SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] president stated, "The government's investment in our communities will go a long way to helping us meet the demands of growth."

Well, Mr. Speaker, we saw it in spades. And I know all members on this side of the House in the last month or so had an opportunity to go to the SUMA convention and the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention, and we very much looked forward to it. We look forward to it because we get an opportunity to meet people from across Saskatchewan, but we see it as a real partnership.

And again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it wasn't always that way. I can remember when I was first elected to this legislature, and NDP cabinets and government would go to those functions, and they'd get kind of a rough ride over there because they weren't listening to the people of Saskatchewan. And I don't know if they've learned their lesson yet or not, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I think it's the same way. They refuse to listen to the people of Saskatchewan. They get together, the nine of them. They come up with some ideas. And I don't think they're connecting with the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had the opportunity to very recently, and

I don't get an opportunity very often, to speak about environmental matters in the legislature. I want to speak about them as much as I can. And I want to speak about our record. I like speaking about their record, the environmental record of the members opposite as well because we know that the environmental record between the years 1991 and 2007 wasn't a very good one. In fact it was one of the worst times for an environmental record in the whole history of the province.

But today I want to talk about what's happening in our province regarding environmental technologies, something that we are very, very proud of. Our government invested in the Go Green Fund. We spent about \$60 million in that fund from the years 2008 to 2011, and today we're reaping the benefits of those investments. We're helping to build the economy, but doing so in an environmentally sustainable way, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Basically the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions on a per-capita basis in the province is something we are very, very proud of. Waste water and energy conservation, biodiversity protection — Saskatchewan has amazing capacity to develop innovative environmental technologies, and we are doing that today.

And I had an opportunity to see the results of this investment that the Saskatchewan Party government made in the Go Green Fund, whether it was the Aquistore carbon capture and storage project with the Petroleum Technology Research Centre, the wood pellet district heating project. Mr. Speaker, the high-level wind turbine storage technology development, that's a project with the Saskatchewan Research Council and Cowessess First Nation getting together to look at how can we improve wind energy in Saskatchewan, how can we look at battery technology to ensure that we can better use that form of energy.

And also solar energy, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite, they don't like to hear us talk about this, but we were in favour of all types of energy in our province in an environmentally sustainable way and in an innovative way using the very latest technologies.

Mr. Speaker. with that I just had an opportunity to talk about my constituency, the constituents of Saskatoon Silver Springs, the people in Saskatoon that I've talked to, and those across the province. And I think we're just very, very fortunate to have the ability to present a budget that is balanced, the budget that is resourceful, a budget that will indeed serve the people of Saskatchewan very, very well into the future.

And I always look at this opportunity to stand in the legislature and represent the constituents of Saskatoon Silver Springs as a real honour and a real privilege, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So with that, I want to let you know and let all members know I of course will be supporting the budget. I won't be supporting the amendment. But I again thank you for this opportunity, and I look forward to further discussions in the legislature. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm absolutely honoured to participate today in the budget debate and obviously to support our government's 2014-15

budget.

First, like my colleagues, I'd like to start out with a series of thank yous to people right across Saskatoon Greystone. I want to say what a great privilege it is to serve as an MLA. Serving and learning is a humbling experience, and as they've allowed me to go into their homes and open up their hearts, I've had a chance to hear heartwarming stories and a few heartbreaking stories. And it's always important for us to remember those that have given us the honour and the privilege to stand in this Chamber and do our best to reflect the views and wishes and dreams of our constituents. And so everyone across Saskatoon Greystone, I offer that.

To my family, to my wife Martha, to our daughter Jacqueline, to my sister Leah, to her partner Barry, my nephew Scott, my mom and dad, and my grandmother. My grandmother Sheila just recently had a birthday. It was a couple weeks ago and I was able to give her a call and she was reflecting on the importance of sound public policy. She lives in another jurisdiction where they've had some turbulence as of late, and so she was speaking about the solid performance that she sees in Saskatchewan.

Within the constituency office, I'd like to thank Katie. Katie, without her actually I just couldn't do much of anything when I get back. And I just want to make sure I'm thanking Katie for her tireless efforts.

And here within the building, to Shelly and to Tessa, to Michael and to Kris and to Aimee. You know, Aimee has joined us and she plays an absolutely vital role. She comes in every morning, and I ask her how things are going across the province. And she gives me a run-down on what she's been listening to or what she's heard, and she really gives me a very unique, direct perspective for people right across this province. And so to everyone in the office a special thanks.

To everyone in the ministry, I appreciate their tireless efforts on behalf of people right across the province and especially our post-secondary community. To our team, to our team, to our caucus led so ably and in a remarkable fashion by our Premier. And for his work on the budget, our Finance minister, I want to say what a special thanks and privilege it is to be part of this team.

To any number of friends and stakeholders that have helped to ensure that I've had the opportunity to be here and that we continue to work together, I can highlight a few of them. To the Donlevy-Konkin family: Mary and Doug, Kathleen, David, and Colleen. To any number of stakeholders, to Curtis and Keith, to Wayne and any number of others, I want to say thank you very much, including to the mayor of Saskatoon who works tirelessly to ensure that again the views and vision for people right across that city are heard and understood. And we appreciate his tireless efforts.

Mr. Speaker, just after the budget I had a chance to drop by coffee row, so to speak. There are a few places I like to drop in throughout Saskatoon Greystone, one of the most commercially vibrant constituencies right across the province. I have a chance to share a cup of coffee, sit down, and the question came, well what about the budget? And I said, well the budget's balanced.

And people looked up and said, that's the right answer. And then I was able to mention that as other jurisdictions have had their AAA credit rating questioned, we've secured ours for the first time. And again that was well received. That's consistent with the values of people in Saskatoon Greystone and right beyond.

Mr. Speaker, this is a balanced budget. And as a result, it marks and measures prudent progress for our province, prudent progress for Saskatchewan. And I think that reflects the very best of the people of this province. It invests in people. It invests in infrastructure, and it invests in ways that can ensure sustainable success. It's a budget that's based on principles, and in fact will help to foster steady growth for people across this province.

You know, increasingly that notion of growth in Saskatchewan is important. In fact there's a recent book just out, *Looking West* by Loleen Berdahl. She's a professor at the University of Saskatchewan, department of political studies, and Roger Gibbins, long-time academic and policy leader. And they've written on page 61:

The emerging consensus is that the western Canadian provinces are an increasingly important part of the national economic picture. Indeed some go as far as to argue that they are the most important part.

[They add] In 2011, in 2012, in 2013, the Conference Board of Canada predicted that western Canadian cities would lead urban economic growth in Canada, with Saskatoon heading the pack.

And the statistics go on. It's important for us to recognize that Saskatchewan is now directly connected to our nation's growth. And people see the full potential of this province as we work together to ensure that we're meeting that full potential.

This is a budget that's fair to the people of Saskatchewan. In fact we want to make sure that we're encouraging new investment, we're encouraging more opportunity for the private sector to play a key lead role in the creation of new jobs. And we want to see that economic growth continue, as is consistent with our plan for growth.

Mr. Speaker, within the plan for growth we highlighted an important role, a vital role for the Ministry of Advanced Education in partnership with other ministries, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, in partnership with the Ministry of the Economy among others. Some key roles were identified. First, in ensuring an educated and skilled workforce to meet existing and future labour market demands. Mr. Speaker, today in Saskatchewan there are more than 15,800 jobs open and available on the SaskJobs website. There's one indicator of the vibrancy of both our labour market but also our growth.

Secondly, the plan for growth highlights that supporting students as they enrol and succeed in advanced education programs, with a special emphasis on our First Nations and Métis students. And third, there's a goal of supporting growth by funding that is supporting research and innovation, supporting those value chains that connect directly from our natural resource portfolio, among the broadest natural resource

portfolios of any Canadian province, indeed probably any North American jurisdiction.

We can think about the Sylvia Fedoruk Centre that's doing important work in key areas of nuclear innovation. We can think of the Global Institute for Food Security. We can think about the International Minerals and Innovation Institute, among many others that are leading the way both within and beyond our post-secondary system.

[15:45]

This budget supports these goals. And I'd like to highlight through example just a few of the investments that are helping to make a difference (a) today for our students, and (b) tomorrow for their success, not simply in their studies but in their careers.

I'm happy to report, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the budget invests nearly — and this is an important number — \$818 million for advanced education. Nearly \$818 million for advanced education, that's a record in the history of Saskatchewan. That's a 3.7 per cent increase over last year.

Mr. Speaker, this includes an increase of \$24 million to support operational increases and several other additional key investments across our post-secondary system. It includes a 2 per cent increase in base operating funds for post-secondary institutions. This is our seventh consecutive year, our seventh consecutive year has increased operating funding.

And, Mr. Speaker, we know how important that is because it's through this base operating commitment, this kind of increase that we secure (a) the expertise and excellence that is associated with Saskatchewan's post-secondary community, with our institutions, but also we help to secure the core tenets of affordability and accessibility. This is vitally important, Mr. Speaker. In fact it stands in stark contrast when I arrived in Saskatchewan 20 years ago. Mr. Speaker, 20 years ago, the members opposite, the NDP, had cut funding at both the University of Saskatchewan and University of Regina by 4 per cent. Mr. Speaker, we continue to see important growth that's reflected in these budgets.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we think about the investments that are under way, I want to highlight that when we think about what's going on in many other jurisdictions across the country and well beyond, we see that other provinces and other jurisdictions are forced into positions of freezing or cutting or providing minimal funding increases. In fact we can draw on the words of the president of the University of Regina, President Vianne Timmons, as she said about our operating funds increase, and I quote, "When you look at that relative to other institutions in provinces across the country, we are in a favourable position."

Mr. Speaker, this budget provides as well \$2.6 million, an increase in funds to fully implement the expansion of physician training seats in the province as well as an addition of five more nurse practitioner seats.

Let me just highlight the significance of this kind of investment when it comes to physician training. On March 6th, *The Star*

Phoenix ran an article that just simply highlighted some important facts, titled “63 per cent of medical grads to stay in Saskatchewan for residencies.” The lead sentence goes as follows:

A growing number of medical school graduates will stay in Saskatchewan for their residency training.

The University of Saskatchewan says 53 of the 84 medical students graduating this June have been matched with residency positions in the province.

It then goes on and continues:

Retaining medical residents is important, because doctors often establish a practice where they did their postgraduate training.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this reflects directly why we’ve increased the number of seats and increased the number of residencies available right here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I’d also like to add that beyond the health sector, we think about some of the other types of investments that are helping to make a difference. Specifically we can think about \$5 million in operating funds for the Health Sciences facility at the University of Saskatchewan, that is, that blend where training is under way and research is under way, connecting our academic community, our scholars, and our researchers with our health care community. We know how important that is.

We can also think about how we’re working to reach our platform commitment of 690 nursing seats, again so important for people right across this province.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the new D and E wings are now fully operational at the Health Sciences facility. We know how important these wings are for us to ensure that we’re able to see excellence, excellence at the University of Saskatchewan in medical research, in teaching, but most especially to ensure that we’re able to help provide more doctors for more people right across this province.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to this investment, we’ve also invested \$4.5 million in this budget to support the construction of the Trades and Technology Centre at Parkland Regional College in Yorkton where the MLA for Yorkton, joined by many others including the Finance minister, have really worked to roll up their sleeves and ensure that this project is a success. To this I would add \$1 million to support the ongoing construction of Southeast Regional College’s Weyburn campus.

And when we think about the University of Regina, we can think about almost \$4.5 million in capital funding that’s moving forward.

And, Mr. Speaker, this allows us to think about some of the work that’s under way right across our system when we can think about the importance of our regional colleges offering front-line skills training so that students can learn closer to home, and not simply learn closer to home, but then stay and have their careers closer to home. And we know how important that is right across the province. In fact when we think about the

investment between Advanced Education and the Economy, we see that the investment is over \$48 million for our colleges and, Mr. Speaker, we know that’s important to those families right across Saskatchewan because that connection between learning and earning is increasingly important.

Mr. Speaker, I’d also like to highlight that we have a number of other investments that are helping to improve the lives of people right across the province. We can think specifically about post-secondary education becoming more affordable and more accessible because of some of the student supports that we put in place. In fact across government we see supports for students are now at \$216 million in direct funding to support students from right across multiple ministries.

Mr. Speaker, when we think specifically within the Ministry of Advanced Education, that’s \$134 million in student supports. And we know that this kind of investment, this increase that’s a 14 per cent increase year over year just from this ministry, offers some key examples of why we’re seeing some real success in some basic indicators like population growth.

The budget includes \$82 million for the graduate retention program that now has more than 55,000 graduates — 55,000 graduates, these numbers are just out — 55,000 graduates from across the province that traditionally would have probably had a second look at other options and opportunities, now staying here within the province because of this opportunity, helping to contribute to our record population growth that is now more than 1.117 million people.

Mr. Speaker, we also know that there are a number of other initiatives. And we’ll hear more about the launch of this coming up in short order, but the Saskatchewan advantage grant for education savings is \$7.5 million of an investment to ensure that our children’s education again offers opportunities for increased affordability and accessibility.

We know that there’s \$32.5 million for the Student Aid Fund to support grants and bursaries through our student loan program; nearly \$12 million in scholarships, including the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship which provides up to \$2,000 — 500 per year — that now has 10,000 students participating. This amounts, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to about a 9 per cent savings on average tuition fees. That’s important for us to make sure that we’re highlighting in any conversation regarding tuition fees: students, those transitioning from high school into post-secondary education, are eligible when it comes to the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship.

And importantly we also have the Saskatchewan Innovation and Opportunity Scholarship. This is a \$5 million scholarship. It’s available for those from the apprenticeship system all the way through to graduate school. And I thought what I’d do is just highlight some of the feedback we’ve received.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on March 4th, 2014, Felicia Towson wrote in from Warman. She said:

Dear Scholarship Sponsor,

My name is Felicia Towson and I am enrolled at the Great Plains College in Warman, SK. I’m taking the Education

Assistance [program] so that I may work with children in the communities who have special needs.

I would like to thank you for your generosity. Your scholarship helps students like myself to get through these courses financially and it is appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, we also have one from Kaylee Bannerman at Parkland College:

Thank you so much for awarding me with the Saskatchewan Innovation and Opportunity Scholarship. With these funds, I plan to have even more time to focus on my studies with less financial burden. It is greatly appreciated.

After this academic year is completed, I plan to continue my education at the University . . . and pursue my dream of teaching. I'm majoring in physical education and minoring in English language arts. As this program is very competitive, it is pertinent that I am able to put 100 per cent effort and as much time as possible into my studies. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to achieve my goals.

Another from Matthew Beaudry, again from Parkland College:

I would like to thank Saskatchewan Innovation and Opportunity Scholarship for the award. It is greatly appreciated. It goes to show that working hard really does pay off. I worked hard to become a journeyman welder and I look forward to my future in welding. Thank you for the recognition.

And Kaitlyn Deck, again from Lakeland:

I'm in my second year of the university transfer program at Lakeland College. Being a student in this small college has been a wonderful experience. I've really been enjoying my time as a student. I love learning, and scholarships such as this one help to reduce the financial stress I feel as a student. Thank you so much for your generosity in giving me the Saskatchewan Innovation and Opportunity Scholarship.

Those are just a few examples of the type of feedback that we're receiving from students. We know that there are burdens, and we don't make light of those. But we have put in place some significant innovations to help support our students, to help make sure post-secondary education is increasingly affordable and accessible. And we're going to continue to listen to students, listen to faculty members, listen to staff, listen to families so that we can continue to make progress on ensuring that there's increased affordability and accessibility.

But we are making some progress. Since 2008 there's been an increase of 18 per cent in the number of Saskatchewan workers with a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree, an 18 per cent increase. And Saskatchewan continues to address the need for workers. Students continue to take full advantage and maximize the opportunity of educational opportunities right across our post-secondary community.

We're also seeing some positive results from investments from both the government, from the federal government, from the private sector, and across communities when it comes to education and skills training for our First Nations and Métis students. Indeed since 2008, there's been a 25 per cent increase in the number of First Nations and Métis students in Saskatchewan who've obtained a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree. A 25 per cent increase. We know there's more to do.

In fact the number of First Nations and Métis students that have earned a university degree since 2008 has jumped by 40 per cent. Investments are making a difference. We know there's a lot more to do here, but we're able to actually measure some of these outcomes and measure the success of our students and better understand what some of the barriers are so that we can continue to help provide support.

Mr. Speaker, there is much to do in closing the education and employment gaps for our First Nations and Métis learners. Institutions like SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology], the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Regina, continue to show increased enrolment. The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology offers key programs in which employment is achieved, for example, 100 per cent employment through their aircraft maintenance program. Our regional colleges are continuing to play a key role. And the Gabriel Dumont Institute is doing valuable work.

This budget is helping to sustain that kind of momentum. Through the ministries of Advanced Education and the Economy, there's \$49 million that is invested directly. We also have \$6 million housed within the Ministry of Education for a total of \$55 million that will serve to support post-secondary education and skills training. The reference to education reflects directly our government's response, our response that has doubled this year regarding the joint task force on education and employment.

[16:00]

Mr. Speaker, overall our government has a track record of investing more than \$5.5 billion over the past seven years in post-secondary education and training as well as student supports — more than \$5.5 billion. It's an all-time record. In fact, what we see is a 61 per cent increase in funding for post-secondary education and our students since our first budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that there are a number of opinions about this budget. Many of them have demonstrated real support for that vision of prudence and that vision of sustaining the growth that's under way.

So I'll begin with just a series of quotes, Mr. Speaker.

Despite this being a tight budget year, the government has sent a clear message that they recognize the value of post-secondary education to the economic vitality of Saskatchewan.

That comment comes from the president of the University of Saskatchewan, as the Minister of the Environment has already

highlighted, Dr. Ilene Busch-Vishniac.

And here's what the president of SIAST, Dr. Larry Rosia, has had to say:

The government's continued commitment to providing students with increased access to post-secondary education — despite competing demands — will help ensure labour market development keeps pace with employer requirements. We see this budget as an investment in the province's future.

Parkland College's president, Dr. Fay Myers, had this to say:

All this is good news for students in communities in the Parkland region.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a number of other quotes that we can turn to. I'll highlight just a couple. From the Graduate Students' Association at the University of Saskatchewan, one of the vice-presidents, Steve Jimbo, has said: "The U of S GSA are happy with the increased allocation for the GRP in this year's provincial budget. Thank you."

From Dr. Andy Potter who leads VIDO-InterVac [Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization-international vaccine centre], the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization, and InterVac which is now a level 3 containment facility recognized around the world: "Many thanks to you and your colleagues for the continued support of VIDO-InterVac."

A couple of examples from Twitter that help to reinforce that while making prudent investments, balancing the budget, we're also making investments that matter to people right across the province. And, Mr. Speaker, that's our goal. We're working to meet the challenges of our growing province by investing in post-secondary education in record amounts and ensuring that education is increasingly affordable and accessible while at the same time ensuring that Saskatchewan's tradition of excellence, a tradition that has been more than 100 years in the making, continues to be a defining feature of this province.

The 2014-15 budget continues our government's strong commitment to our students, to their families, to our post-secondary institutions, and to key areas of infrastructure right across our community. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that there's more to do in Saskatchewan, but this budget, the 2014-15 budget, offers real support for students, their families, our post-secondary institutions and, Mr. Speaker, that's why I'll be supporting this budget. Thank you so much.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before I enter into the discussion in support of the 2014-2015 budget, there are some thank yous that I would like to extend to my family — I'd like to thank them very much for their support — my constituency assistant, Kelly Zazula, who is a constant person within my constituency office, very supportive, always there to ensure that the constituents' needs are being met.

And I also would like to thank my constituency association of

Regina Qu'Appelle Valley. They have, most of them in fact, have been with me since my first being elected in 2007. And so they are also a constant, and I've enjoyed their support, their advice, and sometimes very lively discussions. So they have been a real good support for my continuing work as an MLA for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, today I had the wonderful pleasure, along with my colleague, the MLA from Walsh Acres, we attended the citizenship ceremony here in the city of Regina, and we had 130 new Canadian citizens sworn in today.

And it's very moving, very emotional, and I'm going to encourage each and every one of the members in the House here, if they have an opportunity to go and participate in one of the citizenship ceremonies. These are people who are coming here. They're excited but they've also made a very important choice, and that is Saskatchewan. So besides being sworn in as Canadian citizens, they have also selected Saskatchewan as a province they wish to live and work and raise a family.

And today I had the opportunity to speak to a gentleman who said him and his wife had first moved to Quebec, and they left Quebec and chose to come here. And he just said this is the land of opportunity for them. They just felt so welcomed. They felt that this was a province, but also a government that understood families, understood families' needs, and were putting families first. So that was really nice to hear that the kind of work that we are doing as a government is being realized and understood by people within our community. So that was, like I said, it was a very emotional experience, and it's one that solidifies in my mind the importance of becoming good citizens within our country.

We also instruct them that they should become involved, that they should make sure they become informed, and that they vote, both federally, provincially, and within their cities or communities, and that they also volunteer and participate to ensure that they really understand the importance of what it is to be a Canadian. So like I said, today was very emotional, but also a very rewarding day.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, just this past month I had the opportunity to also participate in a panel discussion for the Muslim women at the University of Regina. And that was very interesting, but also very rewarding, but also very educational for me to be able to participate, because again I had the opportunity to meet women who have chosen to leave other countries and locate here. And most of these young women were starting their families, starting their careers, and they again chose Saskatchewan. Why did they choose Saskatchewan? Because all of them believe that this is a province and a government that has unlimited opportunities for them.

And so for us, it's incumbent upon us to ensure that we keep our word and that the agreements that we've made with our citizens are being realized. And that's one of the things. I mean, I can read the five points here: balanced budget, no tax increases, controlling spending, investments in infrastructure, investments in people.

These five points kind of say it all, and I could sit down, but I've got a lot more to say.

One of the things the young women talked to me about was the importance of education, of child care. And you know, it's not just young women that are immigrating from other countries. It's women and families that we talk to every day that say, you know, this is a government that really supports us. The other government, the previous government, they paid lip service. But when the Saskatchewan Party formed government in 2007, we increased child care spaces by 48 per cent. Now that's a government that is committed to ensuring that families have the opportunity, especially young couples, that they have the opportunity to go out and work within the community and create a good, safe environment for their families.

Another thing that a lot of the different women organizations that come and talk to me, they like that we are . . . ensuring that we've got safe communities are top of our mind. And I know through the leadership of our Minister of Social Services, and Justice, they are leading the way in ensuring that we build safer communities for our families, for our individuals, but also for our seniors.

I know that we've had some interesting questions in question period about seniors and the support for seniors. But in fact this is a government, this is a budget that in fact supports seniors. We don't just talk about it. We do it. We've increased the number of long-term care facilities for our seniors in this province. The other members across the way in the opposition, they were more than . . . For them to be able to deal with the situation, they either closed a hospital, closed a school, or closed beds in senior care.

This is a government that in fact has made a commitment to the people of Saskatchewan. It's a growing province. We've got a growing population. But we're prepared to step up to the plate and do what's needed to ensure that our residents within this province feel that they have a government that's listening to them.

It's not just paying lip service, which is what the opposition did. We, in fact, are doing what we set out to do. And when we put forward a budget, it's a balanced budget. It's not just reckless spending as what the opposition . . . I mean, they keep coming up with all sorts of either press releases or . . . Well, we don't think that they've come up with a platform, but kind of ideas of, you know, they say, well why don't you do this? And never once do they ever cost it out or do they ever do any forward planning to say, is this doable and is it needed?

I must say that, in fact, we can be very proud of our Finance minister. Some people may think he's a little stingy. But he's not stingy. He's very prudent to ensure that when we have a tightening budget but in fact it's still a balanced budget, and that we've ensured that we've got controlled spending but wise spending.

Every time I talk to people within my constituency or the city of Regina, one of the things they say to us is, please ensure that you live within your means. And that's what this budget is. This budget is a . . . It sets out, how do we still provide services for the people of this province but we do it in a controlled manner but in a responsible manner and it's within our means?

And one of the difficult things is, how do you balance things

off? Because I'm sure everyone has lots of asks. I mean, you just have to go out and sit down in a restaurant and have a cup of coffee and there's going to be someone that is more than prepared to come up and have an ask. But we have to ensure that we have the money to be able to pay for this.

This is where the infrastructure . . . I mean, we've got more highways and roads than any other province. However, what do we have to do? We have to ensure that we are meeting the needs of the province, we are meeting the needs of the people within this province. And so it's very careful planning and projections and planning ahead to ensure that today's needs are being met, but also for the future.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said, I'm more than pleased to stand in the House today and support this budget. It's a balanced budget. It has no new tax increases, which is what again people within the city of Regina, within this province, within my constituency say, we would like to ensure that our taxes don't keep going up. We know that maybe the revenue isn't as strong as it should be for our province, but we want to ensure that our taxes are not increasing. And so that was the challenge that was set out by the Finance minister to the ministers across the cabinet to ensure that the budget that was presented was done in such a manner that there was no tax increases for the people of Saskatchewan.

So as I said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a budget that believes in steady growth, that believes in supporting the people of this province, but also it's a balanced budget. And I don't think that too many provinces in Canada can proudly say that they have a balanced budget. So with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting this budget. Thank you very much.

[16:15]

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Corrections and Policing.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to join in the debate today in support of the motion on this government's budgetary policy or better known as the budget.

I would also like to share some of the great things that are happening in the Ministry of Corrections and Policing as well as in my constituency, Regina Wascana Plains. I was first elected to the legislature in 2007 for Regina Wascana Plains. Having been born and raised in Regina, it is indeed a privilege to serve the people of this community.

As an MLA, I have seen dramatic growth, not only in my constituency, in our economy, in our population, and our global reputation. I can tell you that there is excitement in the air every day and the belief that our potential is limitless.

We know we need to . . . we must have appropriate foundations for ensuring that growth is sustainable. That isn't just talking about the structures, Mr. Speaker, it's talking about other areas such as health care, including mental health. Like implications of a burgeoning job market, infrastructure deficits and increased crime are mitigated. But, Mr. Speaker, we have a plan. In 2012 Premier Brad Wall introduced *The Saskatchewan Plan for Growth* and we are continuing to build on this plan.

Our plan contemplates a thoughtful approach to continued growth supported by appropriate resources for maintaining the stability of the necessary economic and social foundations. These foundations include safe and healthy communities, which my ministry is an integral part of, as well as the province's recently announced child and family agenda aimed at creating strong, healthy families who can benefit from Saskatchewan's growth. And this year's budget supports these foundations. Our goal is to create safer and healthy communities by addressing the full spectrum of crime reduction, prevention, intervention, and suppression.

The success of our Community Mobilization initiatives is internationally recognized and is based on the partnership between government, the community, police services, and others to address the causal factors of crime and victimization. We are investing point eight six million in the building partnerships to reduce crime initiative.

Two additional centres of responsibilities, or better known as CORs, will be implemented in 2014. These CORs are made up of the human service professionals who collaborate on longer term solutions to crime reduction and victimization. Ten hubs have been implemented so far, and there are several other communities that are interested in implementing this model.

The Hub, Mr. Speaker, is a multi-disciplinary group of front-line workers that provides immediate intervention and short-term solutions to those who are in need. Addressing the risk factors that contribute to criminal behaviour is so important if we want to successfully reach our goal of prevention and intervention. And the most prevalent risk factors affecting society today are mental health and addictions.

Mental health, Mr. Speaker, runs the entire spectrum of health. It is mental health, Mr. Speaker. Mental health affects all walks of life, and the discussion of mental health requires an openness and discussion. The people facing mental challenges, Mr. Speaker, need supports and a society and government not shying away from it, looking at the issues surrounding mental health, finding the proper resources in order to address the challenging life of someone with mental health . . .

I read an obituary recently that really moved me. It was a mother who was an alcoholic and a son who was a drug addict and a paranoid schizophrenic. These two individuals, and I quote, "represent the struggle many face just to get through a day. It is hard to imagine that for a large portion of the world, life sucks most of the time." I'd like to continue on reading a bit more from the obituary, Mr. Speaker, however it's in very small writing.

I'll call these individuals Bob and Sue and this obituary was written by this man's son.

. . . [Bob and Sue] were dished out a particularly large serving of suck, yet they never lost their humanity. They were not saints, far from it, but at their core, they were not mean or vindictive, they were not spiteful or hateful, they were not racist nor homophobic, and that is something. I am . . . [Bob's] son and . . . [Sue's] grandson.

The essence of this particular obituary does highlight the life in

very poignant terms, Mr. Speaker, the life of someone who is suffering from mental health and addictions. We cannot let individuals like this or the ones just described through the cracks of society. The government cannot do this alone. It takes partnerships like building partnerships to reduce crime, our human service sectors, police, and local communities working collaboratively to increase community safety and wellness in Saskatchewan.

And I'd like to highlight right at this particular time, Mr. Speaker, that this government is committed to ensuring those with mental health have the proper supports available to them. The mental health and addiction strategy that we are currently working on through the child and family committee . . . You know, I'm not sure when exactly that will be completed, but it does speak to our government's commitment to this particular issue, something that isn't talked about enough, Mr. Speaker.

Saskatchewan's growth is steady and strong. We continue to be among the leaders in Canada in job growth, average weekly earnings, manufacturing sales, retail sales, investment in new housing construction, and the value of building permits. With a record year in 2013, Saskatchewan was also the largest per capita exporter in Canada. We do have a lot to be proud of. And as Saskatchewan continues to move forward, our government will support growth in 2014-15 through investing in people and needed infrastructure, encouraging economic growth through sound policy and financial decisions. We are ensuring that we are being accountable to the taxpayers of this province by making every dollar count and investing in what works, not what we've always done, Mr. Speaker, taking the money and reinvesting in outcomes based on evidence.

The other side of the House should be pleased that we are taking such a rational and common sense approach. Doing it this way, the way it's always been done as I referred to earlier, is no longer a viable option. We need to explore a more effective and efficient way of doing business. Decisions need to be based on best practices with those measureable outcomes. It just makes sense, as the Opposition Leader is so fond of saying.

Corrections and Policing's 2014-15 budget supports government's goal to create safer communities by reducing crime and assisting victims of crime and those who are most vulnerable in society. It also supports the growth plan through initiatives that provide a holistic approach to meeting the demands that Saskatchewan faces in supporting vulnerable people and dealing with marginalized citizens and community safety. Corrections and Policing's 2014-15 budget is 413.2 million. This is an increase of 1.4 per cent from last fiscal year, and this is an increase of more than 46 per cent since 2007-08 when the budget was only 282.1 million. We are investing when the previous government did not. Fifteen million will be invested this year for a total investment of 24 million for an addition at the Prince Albert Provincial Correctional Centre. This new living unit will add 144 new bed spaces.

But that's not all we did. In 2009 we added the first new bed space since the late 1980s. 5.5 million was spent on a 90-bed dormitory at the Saskatoon Provincial Correctional Centre. At Pine Grove provincial correctional centre for women, 13.4 million was invested in a 30-cell living unit that added 60 new bed spaces, and this opened in October of 2013. And last year

we not only invested \$1.8 million, we re-invested in existing facilities by converting a vacant unit at Regina's Paul Dojack Youth Centre into the new White Birch female holding facility. Previously, the Pine Grove Correctional Centre in Prince Albert was the only women's facility in the province. It opened, this White Birch opened in February of 2014.

In our first term of government we spent \$9.4 million in security enhancements. This year we will continue to invest in our facilities — 8.62 million will be directed towards continuing the installation and staffing of video conferencing technology in our custody facilities to provide offenders with access to the justice system. Saskatoon Correctional Centre will increase capacity from one video courtroom to four video courtrooms. Regina Correctional Centre increased capacity from two video courtrooms to five video courtrooms.

Staffing the new White Birch female holding facility in Regina. Continuing work on the criminal justice information management system, which will replace and integrate four aging computer applications that are an important part of the operation of both the Ministry of Corrections and Policing as well as the Ministry of Justice. Supporting mental health assessments of offenders in our custody and ensuring that these facilities are maintained at a level that ensures the safety of the public, inmates, and the staff who work there.

And my ministry is supporting our policing partners throughout the province. As of April 1, 2012, Saskatchewan and Canada signed a 20-year provincial police service agreement for the continued service of the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police]. 2014-15 budget recognizes the increased costs of policing and includes increased funding of 3.93 million. The total RCMP budget is approximately 170.9 million in 2014-15. The RCMP is finally operating at its full officer complement. In our first term we fulfilled our promise to hire 120 additional police officers across this province. In addition, 47 new RCMP positions were added, 29 for the emergency backup policy.

In this budget, municipal policing grants for targeted policing initiatives will increase to more than 14.2 million, a \$5,000 increase for each of the 125 officers that we delivered on — 100 per cent increase from 2007-2008 — for a total of 6.78 million. This funding supports our specialized units of investigators, supported by crime analysts, who are trained in specific areas of criminal activity.

Examples of targeted initiatives include organized and serious crime enforcement, enhanced community policing, missing persons, the Internet child exploitation unit, and enhanced investigative policing.

Connecting the police to our communities often leads to a higher level of confidence and co-operation. It also fosters trust at a local and organizational level. Our government recognizes the challenges that the province is facing due to the increased cost of policing. That is why Saskatchewan is taking a lead role in the national effort to address the economics of policing.

We are also continuing our work with SARM, SUMA and the RCMP and the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police to design a model that would complement existing police services by addressing low-risk, high-priority public safety concerns at

the local level. The joint SUMA and SARM task force on the administration of justice, which determined in the year 2000 that all residents of Saskatchewan were responsible to pay for policing, has been invited to reconvene and look at our current formula and possibly come up with alternative formulas.

Government's vision is to be the best place in Canada to live, work, to start a business, to get an education, to raise a family, and to build a life. Our government is committed to establishing Saskatchewan as the best place to do those things, Mr. Speaker. This vision is supported by a balanced budget that is forecasting a surplus of 71 million. This budget contains no tax increases, controls spending, and makes investments in infrastructure and people. It demonstrates the strong and steady growth of Saskatchewan. We are investing in what matters most to the people in this province: \$5 billion in health care, 2.9 billion in infrastructure projects, 1.76 billion in education, and 664.5 million in highways and transportation.

[16:30]

We are addressing the pressures of growth and creating a better quality of life for everyone in Saskatchewan, ensuring affordable housing is available; improving the quality of life for our seniors; assisting our partners, our local municipalities, and First Nations and Métis people of our province; as well as supporting our children, our families, and citizens with disabilities. We continue to support our economy through our strong investments in agriculture, our Crown corporations, the business community, mining sector, our parks, community-based organizations, our post-secondary institutions.

This budget is helping us achieve this vision by sustaining growth and opportunities for Saskatchewan people, meeting the challenges of growth, securing a better quality of life for all people, delivering responsive and responsible government. As elected officials, we are accountable to our constituents. There are many competing issues that we must consider in our decision-making processes. It is always satisfying when issues that are important in your community, our community are addressed. And that's why I'm excited about what's going on in my own constituency.

The work is continuing on the east Regina bypass which includes interchanges at both Pilot Butte and White City-Emerald Park area. A new elementary school in Emerald Park and White City, a proposal for three joint-use — for the city of Regina — schools, two remodels at Sacred Heart and Connaught. And, Mr. Speaker, those two schools aren't in my constituency; however when the entire community is doing well and good things are happening, we all sense it and we all know it.

I also have a lot of people to thank for their continued support — my family, my husband, Gary; sons, Regan and Cameron; my mother and my father.

And I have to speak a very brief minute about my father. My father has advancing Alzheimer's and the quality of his life is at that point in time, Mr. Speaker, where he is going to probably require alternative care. I still have moments and glimmers of conversations with my dad that connects me to him. And it used

to be politics, Mr. Speaker, and he doesn't seem to want to talk about politics anymore. But I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, he still recognizes me — I know I'm hard to forget — and he still recognizes me and I still get bear hugs. So again in speaking about infrastructure in our province, and speaking about health care, my father will be well looked after when the time comes that he has to go into alternative care.

I want to speak briefly about my mother. She is absolutely an incredible woman, the rock. And her and I, we've had some pretty interesting conversations over the last period of time, especially in dealing with my father. And she is the ultimate caregiver. And you know, she never wants to ever give up the care of my dad. However, she is 78 years old and her time is . . . It's taking its toll on her. She is the strongest woman I know, and I guess I come by it honestly.

Jackie and Joette in my constituency office . . . Oh before I leave that, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about my mom and dad in the last election. My mom would drag my dad along from door to door. My dad would talk to all the young kids and pet all the dogs. But I'm telling you, those two, they motored. They did polls on their own time as they could. And I have a lot to be grateful for with my mom and dad.

Jackie and Joette in my constituency office, and as everyone here today has spoken or in past days spoken about their constituency assistants, mine are just as wonderful and just as terrific. And I'm so very, very lucky to have them in my office. My constituency president and the association provide the support needed to continue on business as a Saskatchewan Party MLA. My constituents and of course my government colleagues.

This is a very exciting time to be in Saskatchewan. We are laying the groundwork to successfully deal with the ongoing pressures of our growing and prosperous province. We are working hard to represent the people of our province in this legislature. We are committed to making Saskatchewan the best place to live, work, and raise a family. And I believe this government's budgetary policy will help us achieve this commitment that we all have made and it will also ensure Saskatchewan's steady growth.

Marilyn Braun-Pollon with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business also believes this. In CFIB's March 19th, 2014 news release she says, and I quote, "Overall this balanced budget keeps Saskatchewan moving forward." There really isn't much left to be said, is there, Mr. Speaker?

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I along with others want to declare my full support for this year's budget. Thank you.

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

Mr. Tochor: — Courage, my friends. It is not too late to build a better world. Courage is a great strength. Thanks to people that help me with the courage I need to fulfill my great honour and privilege to represent the good people of Saskatoon Eastview.

Mr. Speaker, I need to thank my wife, Danielle. She's currently

watching at home and, Danielle, I am so grateful to have a woman like you in my life. I love you very much.

An Hon. Member: — You're lucky, too.

Mr. Tochor: — Also speaking of luck, we got to welcome Jacob, my first son, into the world on June 19th of this past summer. He could be at home right now pawing at the TV screen as I deliver this speech, but I love you, Jacob. Also with my wife and son right now is my mom and dad are in Regina. And I'd like to thank them for all the lessons they taught me and all the work they put into raising me. Thank you.

I need to thank the people of Eastview that gave me the nod, and I appreciate the support from everyone in Eastview in the last election. I need to thank my CAs [constituency assistant], Helen and Conni, for taking care of things back in Regina, or back in Saskatoon when I'm in Regina. Couldn't do it without them. I need to thank the people of Eastview that have given this honour to represent them down in Regina.

And I've, since the budget was released, had an opportunity to speak with a few different groups and it's been overwhelmingly supportive of the direction of the government, the direction of the budget. We've held coffee parties with seniors. I like to get back into the different complexes in Eastview a couple times throughout the year. And once again, overwhelmingly support of the direction we have in government.

Mr. Speaker, I talked about courage and how that's an important theme in our province, along with hard work and integrity. When I am talking to people of Eastview though, the number one concern that they have, from year in, year out with the budget that's getting released, the number one question they ask is, is it balanced? Mr. Speaker, I can proudly say that this is the seventh budget that this government has brought in that is balanced.

Mr. Speaker, this is a far cry of how things were run in this province in the past governments. We can only look at the problems in the '90s and the early 2000s of that government. That debt that they left was different than other government's debt. Their debt was hidden away in crumbling infrastructure, Mr. Speaker — a ticking time bomb in every area of the province.

Mr. Speaker, we only have to look at long-term care facilities in the province. The past government of the day closed a long-term care centre every year of their mandate. Mr. Speaker, we're in the process of opening up 13 new care facilities throughout Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, if you'd like to look at the past record, they closed 52 rural hospitals. That took courage, courage of a different type.

In the Crowns, such as SaskPower where we have over 1 million power poles that need replacing in this province, Mr. Speaker. It's decisions in government and past governments that have crippled this province in infrastructure deficits.

In education, Mr. Speaker, the NDP closed over 170 schools. What's worse though, they've also starved what was left with preventative maintenance, making very difficult decisions for this government.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Eastview is very thankful that we found courage in this budget to be balanced. I also heard from the people of Eastview, loud and clear, that they are very appreciative of the taxes that we've lowered.

Speaking of tax reductions, we had the largest income tax reduction in Saskatchewan's history under this government. We had the largest property tax reductions, also within this government. We've also had 112,000 people no longer pay any Saskatchewan income tax. This has been accomplished because, Mr. Speaker, this government values the taxpayers' dollars.

We also know, Mr. Speaker, what the alternative of cutting taxes would be, which is raising taxes. We had, the last campaign, that the Leader of the Opposition wrote their campaign book, the tree book, and it called for jacking up royalties and increasing taxation on the people of Saskatchewan. We know that that's a brake on the economy. We know that that would stall the economic growth that we've enjoyed in this province.

We're blessed to be in a province now that's finally growing. We've just heard the recent population numbers. We've grown just over 20,000 people in the past year, which is wonderful news. We're now over 1.1 million people that call Saskatchewan home.

We know that reckless financial policy of past governments, a policy that the NDP proposed, would take us back, take us back, Mr. Speaker, to deficit budgets. They would take us back to the population decrease. They would take us back to a time when our economy was shrinking. We will not go back, Mr. Speaker.

What I've heard from talking to different people in Eastview is that we need to control spending. Mr. Speaker, I'm pretty proud to represent the people of Eastview, the people that entrusted me to take their views to Regina. And one of the views that I've heard loud and clear is that we have to live within one's means. I've got to thank our members of treasury board and our Finance minister for this budget, and especially on this line item, of the ability to bring in spending at the levels that they have done while still investing in important projects and the infrastructure and people.

Mr. Speaker, in this budget, we have the . . . [inaudible] . . . for the people of Saskatoon, is that we have a commitment that we're going to be there for the Saskatoon commuter bridge. We've also got twinning projects on Highway 16 east of Saskatoon, on Highways 6,7, and 39. These are important infrastructure pieces that this government is fulfilling.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to, just a couple of quotes I'd like to just read off, and it goes back to the views of people out there after the budget was released: "Funding for child care, early learning child care programs, care for the disabled. I think women at the table on both sides matter." This is Equal Voice Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They're very supportive of the work and the investments we've done with people with disabilities and early learning children's programs.

Mr. Speaker, I've got another quote here: "The government's investment in our communities will go a long way to helping us

meet the demands of growth." That's Debra Button, the SUMA president. That was released March 19th, 2014.

Speaking on the economy, Mr. Speaker, "Although job training for First Nations is one other area where I think people might be surprised, in general terms over the last seven years of this government, particularly over the last four, that has been focused and has been increasingly successful compared to what has been done in the past." That's Murray Mandryk, CBC radio.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the investments in education, "We're happy that the government put the education as a priority this year. We knew it was going to be a tight budget so we're quite happy. We're also happy to be working with them and having the conversations going forward." That's Janet Foord, the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association] president.

[16:45]

So you can see, Mr. Speaker, we have made those investments in education. It is important. Another one on education: "We are overjoyed by today's announcement of the rebuild of Sacred Heart Community School," Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's one that we may hear in this Chamber because we have members opposite that have railed against or railed for investment in Sacred Heart. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? This budget fulfills that need out there. It'll be interesting to see if they vote for that.

Mr. Speaker, I've got one more on education. "Well, for the Regina Public School Board it was good news. We saw the commitment to fund a rebuild of Connaught School. That's something that we requested a year ago. Seeing it in the budget, as a board we were very pleased with it." That's from the Regina Public School Division.

Mr. Speaker, that's the school in the member from Regina Lakeview, I believe — Connaught School — that you would think that he would have people that he represents that would be wanting that school replaced. You'd think that that member would have the courage, the courage to vote for this budget that would help his residents, for his people that he represents from Regina Lakeview. It'll be interesting to see, Mr. Speaker, if he does have that courage.

We have another quote here:

"I think it's the biggest announcement is that there is no education tax increase, no personal tax increase, no tax increase at all for all residents of the province of Saskatchewan," said Dionne, "so I think that that's a big, positive consideration considering the revenue that they've lost. And they were looking for new sources and they were talking at the SUMA conference about increasing education tax."

That's Greg Dionne, mayor of P.A. [Prince Albert].

Mr. Speaker, it'll be interesting. The members opposite have . . . I think they actually, they like to increase taxes. That's what their history has shown. You can look at the different programs that they've, when they were in government, they introduced

and put money into. It all came from increasing taxation. We saw the PST [provincial sales tax] increase. We saw the different taxation levels that the NDP would bring in. Mr. Speaker, we're going to take a different path.

Mr. Speaker, just talking about the courage that I would hope that the opposition members would show and vote for this budget, and I think of the member from Saskatoon Riversdale. And I'd like to ask that member from Saskatoon Riversdale to show courage and vote for this budget that has \$7.7 million for Creative Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. She speaks passionately about creative industries, and I would hope the member would show that courage.

Mr. Speaker, just briefly here a couple more quotes. And this is speaking to the agreements that we have out there with the municipalities. I believe the Leader of the Opposition when he was . . . Or sorry, the leader from Lakeview, when he was the Leader of the Opposition, would want a cut from. And this is talking about on what he would spend his dollars on.

We're very pleased to see the number. This record-setting revenue sharing that is still in place with municipalities because that is what it really tells us, really says to us that we believe that to grow this province we need to inject money into municipalities. We need to help them grow. We need to make sure that they are healthy and we're healthy.

That's Debra Button, the SUMA president.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina Lakeview mused before that that is where they would find money for their projects. They would cut money from revenue sharing. Mr. Speaker, we're not going to take that path.

Mr. Speaker, I've got one more from Debra: "As the president of SUMA, today I'm very pleased with the amount of revenue sharing we are still getting," Mr. Speaker. They're happy that the level of revenue sharing is at the levels that it's at. And, Mr. Speaker, we're going to work every day to earn the trust of the people of Saskatchewan to make sure that this government stays on this side of the House and that funding will stay in place versus if that opposition ever got a chance to form government.

Mr. Speaker, we need to talk just briefly about overall the budget that was crafted. It was presented in a summary budget, which is new for Saskatchewan. It took courage, Mr. Speaker. We inherited the practice of producing the summary financials and the general revenue financials. This was adopted by the NDP, and we've listened to the Provincial Auditor saying that we should really release just the summaries. We'll have our operational plan, but we're going to listen to the auditor.

And this is what she had to say:

Acting Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson is pleased with the Government of Saskatchewan's changes to . . . [the] 2014-2015 budget . . . "These are critical steps in eliminating confusion and helping legislators and the public better understand the Government's finances."

Judy Ferguson, Acting Provincial Auditor. Mr. Speaker, that

took courage. It took courage for that change. And, Mr. Speaker, that's something that I can say honestly I'm very proud of, being a member on this side. That's a change, a large change in how this government operates.

Mr. Speaker, another quote here I'm going to read just briefly. We saw countless times the member from Regina Rosemont would rise in his seat and comment about the credit union tax credits. And he was, well I won't say spreading fear, but he was definitely provoking the public that there was a tax increase that was going to occur. So what happened on budget day? Well let's read a quote from Keith Nixon, CEO of SaskCentral:

Saskatchewan credit unions are truly appreciative of the government's decision to maintain the current tax regime. It is clear the Saskatchewan government recognizes the contributions credit unions may have made to the communities of this province.

Mr. Speaker, that fearmongering that that member put out there is damaging. It's damaging to the public's perception of the credit unions in Saskatchewan and I encourage him to apologize for all the fearmongering that he did prior to the budget.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk a little bit about health care. And this is one of the key reasons why I got involved in politics is that I saw the direction of health care in Saskatchewan was in an embarrassing state. We had the longest wait times in Canada. We had wards being shut down because of lack of nurses. I'm proud to say we have over 1,000 new nurses, since we formed government, joining us in Saskatchewan. We have over 300 more doctors. But health care is one of those services, I think, and especially for the seniors in Saskatoon Eastview and for everyone in Saskatchewan, I think it is probably the top priority that we can invest in.

And I'm pretty proud of the investments that we've made in health care, and it's also some of the innovation. And I'm pretty proud of the work that we're doing on hot-spotting. And we know that 1 per cent of the population makes up roughly 21 per cent of the expenses of, or visits to the ERs [emergency room]. So we're going to send some specific teams out there to identify those people and find out how we can provide better health care for them. And that's an important innovation, Mr. Speaker.

Another innovation — and I'm not surprised the NDP wouldn't be supporting this — but it's the lean initiative, Mr. Speaker. And in health care there has been some talk about innovation and efficiencies that we're trying to find in health care. And I'd like, you know, I would hope that the member from Lakeview, Regina Lakeview, the former Health minister that introduced lean to Saskatchewan, I may add, Mr. Speaker . . . I know that he knows the benefits in finding efficiencies in health care. And being the father of lean, I would hope that he would have the courage, the courage to stand up and vote for this budget, Mr. Speaker, courage. It's not too late, the member from Regina Lakeview, to build a better health care in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this is the efficiencies that this government is looking for in health care. It's important because we know that it's probably the most vital area of services that we provide as a provincial government. And we know that we can't keep increasing that budget without looking at where we can find

efficiencies. I'm such a huge supporter of what our Health minister is doing and everyone in health care in Saskatchewan is looking at how they provide . . . how do they provide the services that the people need in Saskatchewan in the most efficient way possible? Mr. Speaker, that's how we're going to improve health care in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we saw specific monies put into health care to address the surgical wait care list. We know that we need to reduce that list to even shorter. We have stated the goal that no one would wait more than three months to access surgical care. And, Mr. Speaker, I know through the dedication of the health care providers in this province, we will get there.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about courage and making a difference in the world, and I've just got a couple other requests for courage from the opposition. And it's for the member from Nutana to show courage and vote for this budget.

The member from Nutana is the critic for Agriculture, and you'd think that she would know that in this budget, we have improvements in crop insurance. We've also introduced the livestock price insurance. And if this member from Nutana would talk with real producers, she would be encouraged to vote for this budget, Mr. Speaker. But I doubt that she's going to.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, they don't have the courage to make a better world, Mr. Speaker. And there's other moments that I would hope that members from the opposite would show courage and vote for this budget.

Mr. Speaker, we have examples such as the member from Cumberland to show courage and vote for a long-term care facility in La Ronge. Mr. Speaker, this is a facility they have asked for, repeatedly presented petitions for. They've brought questions forward in the question period, and now that it's in the budget, you'd think the member that represents the people that would be from that town would be voting for this budget, Mr. Speaker. Now we'll find out later this week if they have courage.

We talk about Regina Rosemont's member. I wish that he would show courage, show courage and vote for a summary budget. This is the first time ever in Saskatchewan that we're presenting a summary budget and only a summary budget, Mr. Speaker. This is a member that has railed hundreds of times in this Assembly that we should be following through. And it will be interesting, Mr. Speaker. Does he have the courage to come through with his conviction and vote for that budget?

Mr. Speaker, we have asked for the member from Elphinstone to show courage and vote for the replacement of the gym at Sacred Heart. This is something, once again, he's asked for day in and day out, and this budget has that. Will he show the courage and vote for this budget? We'll find out in a few days, Mr. Speaker.

And you know what? I'd ask the Leader of the Opposition finally to show some courage, show some courage and vote for the budget that makes Saskatchewan one of the few provinces with a balanced budget, if not the only province. This is a budget that will improve seniors' care in the province. And he

should show courage and vote for this budget, Mr. Speaker. He should recognize the leadership and the solid public policy that is contained in this budget, Mr. Speaker. I hope that the members opposite would find courage because, my friends, 'tis not too late to build a better world. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In conclusion, I will be supporting the budget and against the amendment, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Deputy Whip.

Mr. Makowsky: — Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I'll do my best to talk out the clock here before our supper break. Of course it's always a pleasure to stand on behalf of the people of Regina Dewdney and talk about the budgets, the third budget I've been able to speak on behalf of my constituents, and certainly looking forward to that.

Of course before I do that there's a few thank yous I'd like to give out, if I could, and it seems to be a tradition with all the members. We get to speak twice per year, some of us. And of course I'd like to thank my family first of all and my wife, Tami. She looks after four boys, myself, and our three children, and she certainly is a very patient person. And certainly I know my sons and I are very lucky to have her in our lives, and so I thank her very much. Certainly we all know how much family is important in everybody's lives, Mr. Speaker, and I very much enjoy my family when I'm able to spend time with them.

Mr. Speaker, I'd certainly also like to thank . . .

The Speaker: — It now being after the hour of 5 o'clock, this House stands recessed to 7 p.m.

[The Assembly recessed from 17:00 until 19:00.]

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