



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

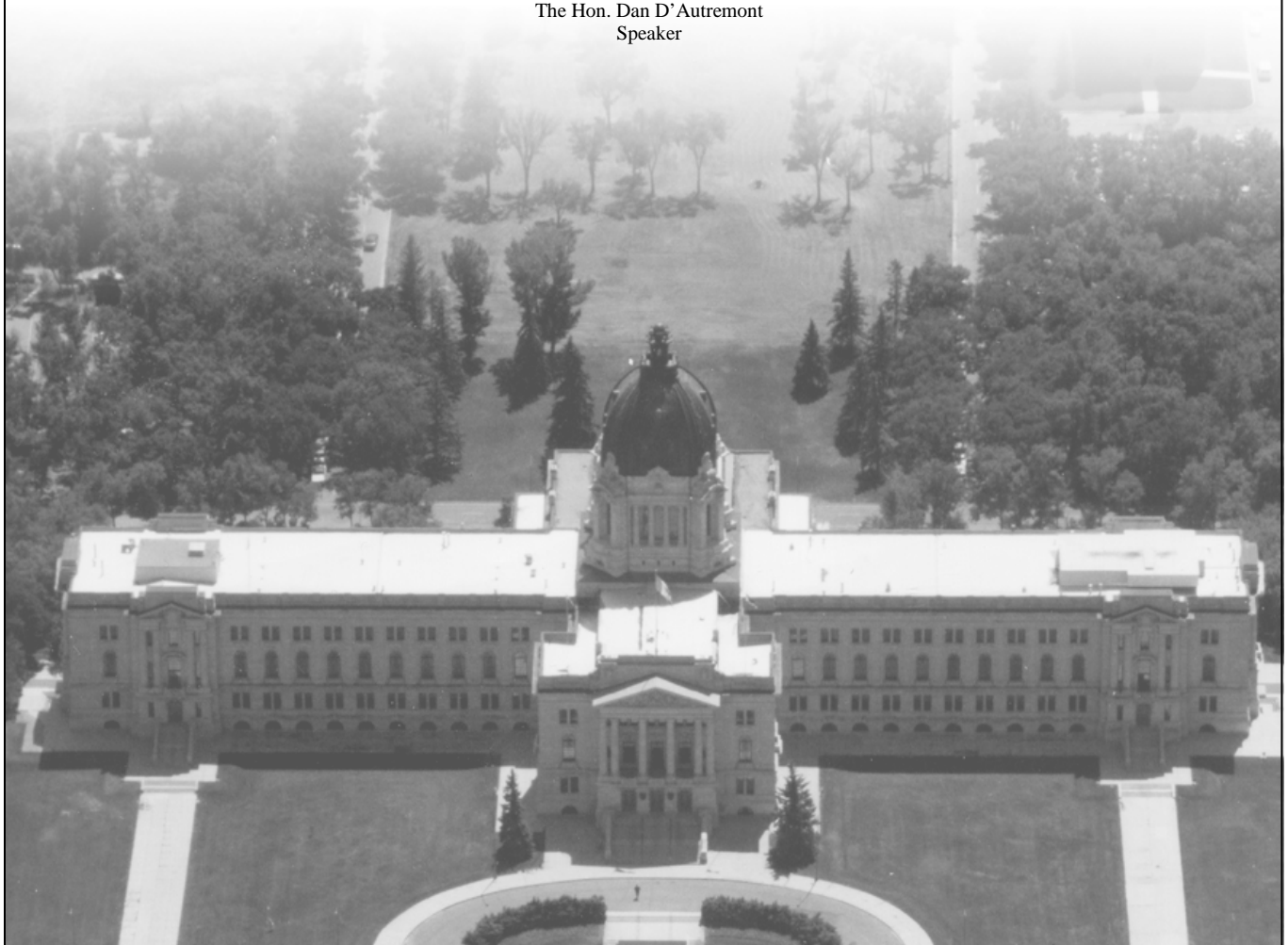
of the

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

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

[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

The Speaker: — It now being 7 o'clock, debate will resume.

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 of Rural and Remote Health.

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to enter into the debate on our 2015-16 budget for the Saskatchewan government.

I would like to follow with a lot of my other colleagues here, do a few thank yous before I commence into the budget itself. Firstly, of course, thank our families. I thank my family. First of all, my wife, Leone. I wouldn't be able to be here and do this job if it wasn't for her looking after me and looking after everything back at home, for certain. Also my daughter, Katelin, who is just at this point finishing up her nursing career, nursing training actually, doing her practicum in Saskatoon at RUH [Royal University Hospital]. So I'm really looking forward to what she's going to offer the nursing profession in this province. And admittedly one of the recipients of the expanded nursing program that we do have here in the province. And I did mention these two previously, I think my Throne Speech reply, Mr. Speaker, but my daughter Rayanne Krahenbil and her husband, Austin Krahenbil. Austin's from the Lemberg-Melville area, Rayanne, of course, from Yorkton, but living in Ottawa for four years and moved home just about a year ago to start their life here in Saskatchewan.

As my friend, the one member from Saskatoon, mentioned a grandchild on the way, we too are expecting a grandchild in the coming days, actually. I think April 4th is my daughter's due date so we're looking forward to welcoming our first grandchild, Leone and my first grandchild, into this world. We know that's going to change the whole environment around our house, and we're really looking forward to that. And so I think now we were up to 1,132,641; 642 now we're going to have in the province. So we're really looking forward to that, Mr. Speaker.

Again I would be remiss if I didn't thank the people of Yorkton and area for honouring me with the privilege of representing them in this fine building with this fine group of colleagues and people on this side of the House and colleagues across as well, Mr. Speaker. The community has been great to my family, whether it's been business, raising our kids, support through

admittedly some of the most difficult times in our life, also support for this job, Mr. Speaker.

Recently I took part in a roast in Yorkton raising money for Boy Scouts, raised about \$16,000, myself being roasted, but again good-hearted fun. And you know, bordering on some maybe sketchy jokes, but everybody kept it well within the family bounds of a Scouting event, and it was a real great event there.

I want to thank also my staff, firstly back at home: Laurreta, Ingrid, and Rachelle that keep the office in Yorkton running so efficiently, and I really am thankful for the great work that they do for me there and for the constituents of Yorkton, and represent me specifically there very well, Mr. Speaker.

And the staff in Regina. As you know, I was sworn in to this position September 24th. Very honoured to take this portfolio working alongside my esteemed colleague, the Minister of Health from Weyburn-Big Muddy, a man probably almost two decades younger than me, Mr. Speaker, but I look up to him. He's very, very detail oriented, does a very good job, and is a mentor to myself in this position, Mr. Speaker.

But the staff here in this office, Minister Responsible for Rural and Remote Health office, my chief of staff Mike Kindrachuk, just a great young fellow who does just an unbelievable job in keeping me informed and keeping the office running well. Selena Beahm, who I know you know, Mr. Speaker, and just a really great administrative chief that really keeps the office running well. Ashley Boha, our head MA [ministerial assistant] that does the casework there, just very caring, very dedicated young lady who recently got married. I was blessed to be invited to her wedding. We had a really great time there. And last but certainly not least, Mr. Speaker, Brittany Gogel who keeps me on track when we're on the road — communications, ministerial assistant, casework. And she just does an amazing job. So very, very blessed to have all those working with me.

And, Mr. Speaker, as I've pointed out to them, although my name might be on the door out in the hallway, collectively we are the Minister Responsible for Rural and Remote Health. And I want to acknowledge as well the staff in the Minister of Health's office, that we do work very close together, very much supportive in both offices, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank Cole and Christopher and Dale over there, as well as Chaelah, Mr. Speaker.

My colleagues, the Premier specifically, my colleagues over here, we truly are a big family. Admittedly, you know, there's a bit of a political spectrum represented over here, a lot of diverse backgrounds. I think I heard one of the members last night when they were speaking talked about the diversity of our caucus, Mr. Speaker. It is great to have that diversity. I looked across the floor and, you know, not meaning to ridicule or poke at all but, you know, quite a narrow focus of expertise in the nine members across. Mr. Speaker, the 48, 49 members on this side, again going all the way from health backgrounds to business backgrounds to agriculture to you name it, Mr. Speaker, very wide variety of backgrounds, union backgrounds. So very well represented spectrum over here to represent the issues and the people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

I want to also recognize not specifically each one, but all of the members that are leaving us, some that have left already, some that won't be running again, some relatively new members and some very long-term members, Mr. Speaker, that their expertise and their mentorship and the knowledge is going to be very, very missed, Mr. Speaker, including the member from Moosomin who has become a very good friend of mine over the last 10 years. I look at as somewhat of a father figure, although he's not that old, but a father figure, a really good mentor, and a really, really good person, Mr. Speaker, to befriend, learn this place, learn the expertise being here. I think by the time he retires it will be almost 30 years, twenty-nine and a half years, Mr. Speaker. And I really am thankful for his friendship.

And the one I will mention specifically of course is the member from Canora-Pelly who, I know myself, I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for him. I had sort of made a decision to maybe go down this path, but if it wasn't for him and his wife, Gail, being mentors and getting us, my wife and I, kind of the inside tracks and really specific information on what it takes to do this job, I wouldn't have been as prepared as I was, and I probably wouldn't have done this either, Mr. Speaker. So you know, I know the recognition he's gotten previously as the minister of Education, of course the Deputy Premier. But, Mr. Speaker, in foreshadowing, I'm going to be very happy to support this fifth budget of his, this fifth balanced budget, our eighth overall balanced budget, Mr. Speaker. And of course I certainly want to recognize him for again his friendship, his wife's friendship, Gail, his mentorship, Mr. Speaker.

And again another member of this House that . . . Any member that's newly coming in or has been here for any length of time should really look to the front row, Mr. Speaker, in the centre, and pattern their career, their work ethic, and their dedication to not only this place, their constituents, but the people of the province, after the member for Canora-Pelly, the Deputy Premier, Mr. Speaker. He didn't even have to pay me to say that. Joking aside, Mr. Speaker, I really do admire him and cherish his friendship. Although you know, I don't want to just count him out too soon here. He's got some time left here yet. He's got a few useful months left here, Mr. Speaker, so we're going utilize that expertise to the bitter end.

So, Mr. Speaker, getting to the budget, you know, when I was elected here in 2007, admittedly a lot of the business community is who were supporting me and asking me to do this job and run in this position. And the message I got for them was, you know, you run a business, a very successful business. You've done well, you're engaged in the community. Run the province like you run your household. Run the province like you run your business. And, Mr. Speaker, I would say by most comparisons, virtually all comparisons, many members on this side would have had the same input and take that to heart and actually do do that, Mr. Speaker.

You know, when things are good, you live within reason, you invest in your family, your home, your extras. You pay down debt. You save for emergencies. Things get a bit difficult, you know, you have to make some tough decisions, but you make the best decisions with the information you have at the time. You maintain your home, you look after your family essentials, use the money for emergencies when you need to, continue to maintain and invest in your home, and borrow to maintain your

assets if you need to, Mr. Speaker. If you've got the cash in the bank, of course utilize it. If you have to borrow for significant investments that have value, that have . . . capital assets, Mr. Speaker, whether it's a new vehicle, specifically a home or, you know, family infrastructure or in the case of business, business infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, very important to continue to do that.

When it comes to a business, operate efficiently and effectively as possible. I know I'm always accused of being probably a little bit tight, Mr. Speaker, but if I had the cash for equipment I'd buy my equipment in cash. If I had a 2, 300, \$400,000 piece of equipment, you've got to amortize that over time because you just can't absorb that instantly. But again a long-term plan; you have a debt repayment plan, Mr. Speaker, on that equipment. And number one, Mr. Speaker, in business: you look after your customers. And something I'm proud to say that I always did, my brother did, as he was my partner for some time, and I know the people that are now running our old business is definitely doing the same, Mr. Speaker. And I think we're going to continue just to do that.

So, Mr. Speaker, you know, we've heard it . . . I'll get into the, where did the money go, maybe a little bit more in depth. I don't want to take up a whole bunch of time here. I know there's a lot of members who want to speak. But you know, I focused on emergencies, floods. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's where a lot of the money went. Unforeseen circumstances we . . . The members across know how many floods, how many emergency situations we've had in this province over the past number of years, specifically in our last seven and a half years. Some great years, admittedly but again, a lot of those savings put aside going to support the people of the province, whether it's flood damage, you know, some agricultural issues, Mr. Speaker, supports for industry, whatever it might be. We've been there for the people of this province. And although, admittedly, many people would want more, you know, I think we've done a fairly good job at addressing some of the needs, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to infrastructure, I hope we'll have some time to get into more detail about infrastructure, specifically around health care. But you know, I'm driving back and forth to Regina — and I think a few members touched on it here — I've got to stop myself from getting a bit angry. You've got to slow down to 60 over and over and over; stop for traffic, Mr. Speaker, at stop lights; replacing bridge after bridge after bridge; culvert after culvert after culvert along specifically Highway 10 corridor, Melville to Yorkton where there was significant flooding.

Calls from people. You know, I credit the Highways minister; she's done a great job in addressing the needs of a lot of those constituents where they were, admittedly, concerned over culverts and more culvert capacity and water flows and, you know, acting very, very quickly and addressing a lot of those concerns, Mr. Speaker. So very proud of my colleagues, specifically the Minister of Highways.

You know, looking through this budget, Mr. Speaker, you know, where did the money go? Well again we can pride ourselves on no tax increases, in fact a lot of significant tax reductions, Mr. Speaker; no property tax increases, in fact

significant property tax cuts over the years; record income tax cuts, Mr. Speaker, whether it's seniors, those of low income — effectively most of those people of low income, especially seniors and those with some disabilities, likely zero income tax payable on the provincial side and totalling up to \$5 billion in tax relief over the years, Mr. Speaker, of our tenure.

Controlled spending. We see our budgets year over year admittedly increasing, but when we listen to the members opposite comparing 8 billion to 14 billion, Mr. Speaker, a general revenue budget to a summary budget, we've got to, as the Minister of Finance pointed out the other day, we've got to compare apples to apples. We look at the last year of the NDP [New Democratic Party], about 11.7 billion on a summary basis. This year with this government, just over 14 billion, Mr. Speaker. So over a seven-year period, almost eight years, a \$2 billion increase but very effective, very targeted spending, Mr. Speaker, in areas that are very needed, so a controlled spending that we're very proud of.

And we look at again highways projects, very important in keeping the economy moving, keeping traffic moving, the twinning projects that have happened throughout the province effectively increasing safety in many areas, Mr. Speaker. Twinning projects, I know I think the first ones we did were between Fort Qu'Appelle and Regina or Balgonie, Mr. Speaker. And I know myself travelling that highway, quite often daily and I know weekly, the flow, the safety of traffic now in that corridor is second to none. It just, it moves so great. It works well, and exciting to see that many of those projects are going to continue throughout the province. I won't be naming them specifically.

Schools. Aside from the nine joint-use schools that we've announced, Mr. Speaker, whether it's Connaught or other schools that admittedly a lot of them I think, if not all, affect the members opposite, yet they vote against these budgets where we see . . . I think the member for Cumberland was up on his feet today, you know, criticizing us on our long-term care and seniors' issues. And, Mr. Speaker, that's what's this place is about is debate and addressing and acknowledging those problems.

And, Mr. Speaker, you know, to totally disregard a \$500,000 investment in his own constituency for planning for a new long-term care facility in La Ronge that admittedly is, as the Minister of Health had pointed out, that that money hasn't been spent yet; they're still in the planning stage. I'm not sure if he decides to build something without a plan, without even a foundation set down, Mr. Speaker. But again I'm very proud of our government's record on those things, Mr. Speaker.

[19:15]

And you know, the members again across continually talking about us patting ourselves on the back. Where did the money go? What would you do? Where did the money go? So you tell them, and you're patting yourself on the back. Like the hypocrisy is astounding in here some days, Mr. Speaker. But you know, I can tell by the eye I'm getting from you, Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to leave that one alone. I'm just going to move on, but . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I don't think that was a twinkle.

New schools. I'll get into some of the infrastructure projects, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan Hospital, 100-year-old project. There's a hospital that's a health care and mental health facility, Mr. Speaker, that needs replacing. This government's going to get it done. You know, I know there was a former member from North Battleford, NDP. I know he was in cabinet, never got it done. Our Whip, Mr. Speaker, member from North Battleford, he's getting it done. The hospital in Moose Jaw, I think it was pointed out by the member last night — I was really enjoying the speech last night from him — two cabinet ministers, premier from Moose Jaw, no hospital, Mr. Speaker. These two members — they can criticize the members from Moose Jaw all they want, backbenchers and all the rest — they got it done, Mr. Speaker.

I won't get into all the different incentives around a lot of the job creation, Mr. Speaker. Our record speaks for itself, I believe, with the increase in population, the opportunities for people here, including my daughter who now won't have to move out of the province to get her nursing degree, practise in nursing, Mr. Speaker. She'll have opportunities here.

I would be remiss if I didn't talk a little bit about investing in people, specifically, Mr. Speaker, increased supports for those with disabilities and seniors. Now I know it was pointed out but it can't go without saying, Mr. Speaker, that the members' opposite seniors' income plan, untouched from 1992 till they lost government in 2007. Mr. Speaker, under this government, this final budget, with the increase brought forward by the Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker, tripling that benefit and also increasing the number of seniors able to access that program by I think it was 10,000, Mr. Speaker, because of changing of the limit on income that you can access that program.

I know when I was legislative secretary for Social Services, CBO [community-based organization] sector, Mr. Speaker, we heard over and over again about an income plan specifically for those with disabilities. Mr. Speaker, this is the party, this is the government that put it in place, increasing it year over year to the point now that these people with disabilities have their own dignity, their own dignified source of income through the Saskatchewan assured income disability plan. This government did it. They didn't, Mr. Speaker. So again, pat ourselves on the back. Call it if you want. We're proud to look after those in this province that have challenges, Mr. Speaker.

So you know, I touch on a few points here fairly quickly. Municipal revenue sharing, I know it's a very good, well-received part of our budget. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I won't even have to use a quote because the mayor was so happy during the budget. I was sitting here listening to the minister, the Deputy Premier, deliver his budget, and the mayor's texting me, he's so happy, and really happy about of course the additional funds going to finish the Parkland College. And he didn't even know about . . . I had to let him know about because it's not specified in the budget speech, Mr. Speaker, but the extra \$500,000 for 100 more training seats at Parkland College in Yorkton.

So again, you know, our record: keeping taxes low, continuing to invest in infrastructure, which we know is part of keeping our economy strong. I won't go through all those different initiatives, Mr. Speaker, but controlled spending, creating jobs,

balancing the budget.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know the members opposite are going to talk about, is it balanced? Is it not? You know, I go by Moody's, Mr. Speaker, Moody's independent agency, AAA credit rating, and it continues. And again what do we see the NDP do in times like these that are a little bit tough, smaller increases, smaller budget times, Mr. Speaker? They neglected infrastructure. They neglected seniors, and they neglected the disabled.

And I remember talking to the deputy premier back then. It was Mr. Serby from Yorkton. I talked about some of the challenges he might be having in business, and he had the same attitude in business that they had in government. Just charge more. Raise taxes 17 times. Stop investing in infrastructure. Drive the economy into the ground.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be wrapping up pretty soon here because my seatmate is looking at me. But you know, the investments in health, I'm not going to really go too much in depth, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Health went ahead of me here a few speakers ago, and he really did a great job about the increased funding for health authorities; increased funding for Cancer Agency; capital investments in Swift Current, Leader, Moose Jaw, Kelvington, Weyburn; critical infrastructure repairs, Mr. Speaker; and of course the 13 long-term care facilities we have been building across the province.

I really wanted to read into record the 19 long-term care facilities that the members opposite closed, but of course time won't allow for that. But it's pretty easy access, and over the coming days, I'll try and read those into the record, Mr. Speaker, the 19 long-term care facilities that the NDP killed in 19 different communities around the province, forcing health care workers and doctors and those services away from rural Saskatchewan. And now they stand in the House and proclaim to be the saviours of rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Again I find that, you know, laughable. I'm not meaning to be disrespectful, but it's just laughable.

You know, I want to touch on another point very quickly, Mr. Speaker: the NDP record in closing hospitals. I'm not going to name those. But you know, the curious thing I found when we talk about the Saskatchewan international physician practice assessment program brought in by this government to bring more doctors to the province? Ninety-six per cent of those grads are practicing in rural areas, Mr. Speaker. Fifty-two communities at last count were accessing those services. That's the same amount of hospitals that they closed. That's the kind of things that make you go hmm. More doctor seats, more training seats, more residency positions — a lot of those in rural Saskatchewan — 22 nurse practitioner seats all funded in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

So you know, investments in the Crown corporations, they talk about, you know this, where's all this debt coming from. Mr. Speaker, they neglected their Crowns so badly, SaskPower needs a billion a year. SaskTel needs millions a year. SaskEnergy needs millions time over time to increase the safety of the infrastructure and expand the infrastructure for our growing economy and our growing population.

So, Mr. Speaker, you know, they talk about the state of long-term care in the province, the state of health care. Admittedly there's issues to address but, Mr. Speaker, I'll stand in this House and defend our record day after day when I look at the record of the members opposite. It's deplorable. I mean what they left the province with — admittedly focused a bit on Regina, Saskatoon, P.A. [Prince Albert]; Moose Jaw, maybe a little bit, although our members got the hospital there, they didn't — but just a terrible record in rural Saskatchewan. And then they stand in this House and they expect people to forget how they decimated rural Saskatchewan, whether it's with health care or schools or whatever else it might be, Mr. Speaker.

But my last point I want to touch on, and I apologize to my colleagues for maybe going a bit long, but this, I think I've spoken about this very briefly, but it's something that I'll admit is pretty emotional for myself and my family. But you know, the first official duty I had after being sworn in as minister, I think it was actually the day after, was I did a trip up to Saskatoon. We were doing the sod-turning, official sod-turning on the children's hospital. And, Mr. Speaker, what was surreal for me was, we're sitting there, we're turning sod, and I'm looking into the hole where they're putting the foundation in, and that used to be a parkade. And I remember that parkade full of cars, but I remember that parkade because, if I look up to the right of where I was standing, is Peds 3000. That's where a lot of the cancer kids would be getting treatment, Mr. Speaker.

So I thought, how would I have ever guessed that 14 years, maybe 15 years later, the windows I used to look down on, and my son used to call that parkade the car collection. Because you look out, it'd be like a hot wheels thing. You flip it open; all the cars are laid out there. That was his car collection. So we'd be looking down at this car collection. So I'm thinking, how cool is this? Fifteen years later I'm looking up at this window, you know. Some of the staff is still there and we're turning sod on this facility, \$235 million lean-design children's hospital that's going to benefit people throughout the province.

And I know members opposite, some of them criticize, some of the members of the media criticize: spread the money throughout the health care system, target it in certain area, and address situations, Mr. Speaker. But you know, we look at . . . I'll use an example of a different type of facility in Yorkton, the Gallagher Centre: wave pool, curling rink, hockey rink, Flexihall. If we waited to have the money to do that and fix everything else, Mr. Speaker, we would be lacking facilities for the people of this province to improve their quality of life.

We've got to have those and address issues as we can, as we can afford, and try and make the best decisions we can, again with the information we have at hand, Mr. Speaker. But if we were to neglect that children's hospital, if we were to neglect that facility, Mr. Speaker, that hurts everybody in the province. That facility is going to benefit rural, remote, and urban alike in this province. The children of this province are going to be very well treated in that hospital, very well looked after, Mr. Speaker, as they are up in the pediatrics ward, as they are in other pediatric wards around the province, Mr. Speaker. But from personal experience I know the caring, the dedication of those healthcare workers. And I am so proud to support that project.

But, Mr. Speaker, you know, taking all that aside — this is, I think, the last point I'm going to make — taking all that aside, the members opposite make their points and some members in the public make their points about, you know, is this really the best source of funds? What really made me focus on why that's a good project, Mr. Speaker, and I'm going to use a name here, Dr. Yager. Dr. Jerry Yager was our neurologist back in 1998 when my son was diagnosed all the way till 2000 when we lost him. And, you know, lo and behold we're doing this the sod turning, and who's one of the main fundraisers? Who is one of the main pushes behind this facility? Dr. Jerry Yager, Mr. Speaker, a man respected in this province by all circles, Mr. Speaker, just an unbelievable great man and became somewhat of a friend, a friend of ours, Mr. Speaker.

And I thought, you know what? That's the measure I'm going to go by — a dedicated physician, a neurologist who not only supports the project, but he's behind fundraising for the project, Mr. Speaker. And that's why I'm behind this project because of the reasons brought forward by my colleagues across on this side of the floor, the Minister of Finance, my friend, the member from Canora-Pelly, Mr. Speaker. That's why I'm supporting this budget, and I will not be supporting the amendment brought forward by the members across.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to be able to rise tonight to speak to our 2015-16 budget. And as so many of my colleagues have done, I'd like to start off with a few thank yous, first of all to my constituency assistant, Whitney, who's on year 21 as a CA [constituency assistant]. I value his input and his advice and taking care of things at home when I'm down here so very much, so I want to thank him.

To my staff in my Regina office, to Annie and Kim and David, Adam, and Cole. I want to thank them. We have a lot of fun in my office, and Cole has the misfortune of being my chief of staff again. He was my chief of staff when I was Central Services minister for a while and I managed to get him back. And I appreciate the conversations that we can have.

I also want to thank my girls, Jasmine and Sharmaine. Jasmine is turning 21 or just turned 21, and Sharmaine just turned 18. They've just turned into such great young ladies. And I just got a text from Sharmaine today. She got 94 per cent on her English midterm, so her grandfather would be very proud of her.

And I also want to do what so many of my colleagues have done and thank the Finance minister. I have had the absolute honour of sitting beside this man on treasury board for the last five years. And I've told him this personally, and I'd like to say it publicly that I'm a better minister and MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for the time that I've spent with him and his advice and counsel. And so thank you to him.

I also want to thank the staff and my ministry, to my deputy minister, Nithi, and to the executive team, to Blair and Jen and Ron, Wayne for all of the input and advice that they have given me over this last year, Mr. Speaker, and especially the input into this budget. We know that this was going to be a difficult budget year, and they offered so much advice to me along the

way when we were preparing this.

And also, Mr. Speaker, to the staff in the Ministry of Highways. I know that they go above and beyond. We saw that again today. As soon as we knew that there was going to be a weather incident today, the plow operators are out making sure that our citizens are safe on our highways. But in particular, Mr. Speaker, last summer when we had a torrential rainfall in the end of June, beginning of July, a lot of those folks from Highways who stepped up to make sure that our people were safe were scheduled to be on holidays. It was Canada Day long weekend, and they forfeited their holidays, Mr. Speaker, to serve the people of this province. And I want to publicly acknowledge them as well.

And, Mr. Speaker, to my mayors and reeves, I have some of the fastest growing communities, not only in the province of Saskatchewan, but in all of Canada. They have faced some particular challenges that come with growth but, Mr. Speaker, they all embrace the challenges that come with that. And they've really taken on a regional approach to problem solving and coordinating our efforts, and it is such a pleasure to be able to work with them. So I want to thank them as well.

And, Mr. Speaker, my last thank you is to my major stakeholder group, the Saskatchewan Heavy Construction Association. As I've said to them and to others, the Government of Saskatchewan doesn't build highways. These people do, the contractors that are members of the Saskatchewan Heavy Construction Association. So to their board, to Shantel and Carmen and Sean and Allan and the rest of the board members and their regular members, I want to say thank you to them for their dedication to our province, for sticking around when things were not good for them in this province, and for stepping up now when we've asked them to do more than ever before, Mr. Speaker.

And while I probably shouldn't single out just one contractor, I will — a man named George Wilson. He lives in my constituency but he's originally from Buchanan. And I stopped by to visit him last fall. He started his business, G W Construction, over 60 years ago. He's now 90, I believe he turns 91 this year, and, Mr. Speaker, you'd think that a man of that age would be retired. But he isn't; he is still running his business. The convention last fall, I asked him if he was going. He said he was too old to go, and then I found out he spent the day working instead. And he is a true builder of our province, Mr. Speaker. He's been building roads in this province for over 60 years. And he's so very proud of family involvement.

So one thing I've come to realize with our contractors is that so many of these businesses are family-based businesses. They're second and third generation. And George Wilson and his family are just a shining example of the dedication that they have to this province. And like I said, I shouldn't just single out one, but Grandpa George is kind of a cool guy, and I wanted to give him some recognition for all the work that he does. I'm sure he'll be working long into his 90s because I don't think that man is capable of retiring. So thank you to him and his company and to the rest of the contractors in this province.

[19:30]

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about what this budget does for my constituency. The biggest issues at home have been schools and roads, and I'm happy to say that when it comes to our highways, most of those have been fixed. 305 was recently rebuilt and opened between Martensville and Warman, and 305 from Martensville to Dalmeny is under construction as we speak. That will be such a great improvement for those communities, Mr. Speaker. When I was elected in 2007, they were pretty much just goat paths going to some of these communities. I'd ask the Highways minister at the time to come out and take a little tour of my constituency, but that offer was not taken up, which is unfortunate.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'm so very proud of our government and Highways ministers in the past who have stepped up and fixed some of those roads in my constituency. And, Mr. Speaker, in this budget, as you would know, there's money set aside for interchanges on Highway 11 at Warman and Highway 12 at Martensville to accommodate the increased population and traffic on those particular highways, Mr. Speaker, and the safety that these interchanges are going to provide is most welcome.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue that I have at home is schools. We've invested heavily in capital. In my constituency, Prairie Spirit School Division has received over \$90 million in school capital since we've been in government. It's a far greater share than any other division has seen in our province, Mr. Speaker. And with the two joint-use schools, one in Warman and one in Martensville, that's going to greatly benefit the young families that continue to move there.

Mr. Speaker, as we know, when the NDP come into this Chamber, we spend a lot of time on this side of the House correcting the things that they say on that side of the House because they're not always coming out with all the facts in their back pocket, Mr. Speaker. And the NDP Education critic was up last week complaining that we weren't doing anything about child care spaces. Mr. Speaker, if they had bothered to ask a question or dig into this a little bit more, they would know that every one of the nine joint-use schools in this province that we are going to be building comes with child care spaces. I believe it's over 800 spaces that are going to be going into these schools, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the Highways budget. As Highways minister, obviously that was my focus the last few months. Mr. Speaker, as you would know, there's unprecedented investment in our province in transportation infrastructure since we took office. We were left with a billion dollar pothole. Last year's budget was a record investment in transportation infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, and this year we broke that record again. Record budget this year is \$842 million. It's a 27 per cent increase over last year's budget.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note that in our eight budgets that we have introduced, we have invested \$1 billion more in transportation infrastructure in those eight budgets than the NDP did in their entire 16 years — half the time and \$1 billion dollars more, Mr. Speaker. I think our commitment to rebuilding and building new infrastructure in our province is quite evident, Mr. Speaker.

Highways capital budget has increased 135 per cent from

'08-09 to 2015-16, Mr. Speaker. And we know that when we went into this budget deliberation process that, while the revenues of our province might have been hit by the oil situation, our economy is doing quite well, and the worst thing that we could do is stop building. We are committed to invest in capital in our province, whether it's schools or hospitals or long-term homes for our seniors or highways, Mr. Speaker, and I think our dedication to that is evident through this budget.

We know, Mr. Speaker, under the NDP, roads fell apart because of neglect. We see challenges in our road system now because of increased population, increased traffic, and more truck traffic because our economy is doing so well, Mr. Speaker, so we have to invest. Not only are we catching up to the horrible legacy that the NDP left behind, but we're continuing on with regular maintenance and then building infrastructure for the future, Mr. Speaker.

Some of our investments include: the number of culvert projects from '08 to 2014 increased by over 2,000 per cent, Mr. Speaker. The number of TMS [thin membrane surface] roads upgraded is over 24 per cent over what we saw before, Mr. Speaker. By the time this construction season is over, we will have improved almost 9,000 kilometres of our provincial highway.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the NDP like to ask, where did the money go? I'm happy to say where the money went. We are investing in massive projects, things that the NDP would never imagine investing in, Mr. Speaker: twinning of Highway 7, twinning of Highway 16. We finished twinning Highway 11; as I mentioned, interchanges at Warman and Martensville. We're working on the Regina bypass. We're planning for the Saskatoon perimeter highway. There are passing lanes on 7, passing lanes on 10, and money in this budget to plan for passing lanes on Highway 5.

And, Mr. Speaker, the member from Athabasca questions this. It's all in the budget. It's in black and white. All he has to do is read it. But we know, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP don't actually want to read what's in our budget. We saw that this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, when the member from Cumberland was up saying that we weren't investing in northern roads. Well, Mr. Speaker, here are the facts of the matter. Once again we have to correct what the NDP say. The budget last year for northern roads was \$37 million. The budget this year is \$56.3 million. Mr. Speaker, I don't know what kind of math the NDP are engaged in, but in my world \$56 million is more than \$37 million. So then, Mr. Speaker, when I pointed that out to them, then he said, the member from Cumberland said, well that's all for maintenance. There's no capital.

Of that \$56.3 million — and I wish the member for Athabasca would listen because he was questioning this earlier as well — of the \$56.3 million, \$30 million of that is for maintenance. The rest is for capital projects, Mr. Speaker. It's for construction. That construction includes improvements to Stony Rapids airport and Buffalo Narrows airport, including investment in capital projects in roads in the North, Mr. Speaker.

So I explained that to the member from Cumberland, and then he said, well it doesn't matter because none of this is new money because it was all announced last fall. Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps the members opposite don't understand how a

fall tender plan works in the Ministry of Highways. We release a fall tender plan so our contractors have an idea of what's coming up in the next construction season. It is paired then with the spring tender plan, which is the rest of our capital investment but, Mr. Speaker, the fall tender plan is funded with the next year's budget. So whatever came out . . . And maybe the member from Athabasca can listen because he didn't believe me earlier this afternoon. The fall tender plan that we released last fall in 2014 will be paid for in the '15-16 budget, so even though it was on the fall tender plan, Mr. Speaker, those are new capital projects, including projects in the North.

And I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that our investment in the North has increased by 42, by 42 per cent over the NDP, and that was when the member for Athabasca, a member who represents the North, was the Highways minister, Mr. Speaker. We've invested 42 per cent more than the NDP did.

And I know that the member for Athabasca doesn't stand up on his feet and ask some questions. I'm not sure why. Happy to answer his questions if he ever gets up, but I know that he's beaked from his seat about 924, Highway 924. Well, Mr. Speaker, the maintenance budget for 924 since 2011, not even comparing to the NDP's horrible investment in highways, from 2011 to 2014, we have increased the maintenance budget for that particular highway — listen — 485 per cent. So, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite can sit there and say that we're not investing in the North but, Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely not the case, and I think our investment in this year's budget demonstrates that, Mr. Speaker.

I know that the member for Athabasca did an interview last year about the budget and said that it was flat, that there was no increase in funding. Well again, Mr. Speaker, I think I'm in estimates next Wednesday, and I would imagine as the critic he's going to show up and we can explain to him that \$37 million last year, \$56.3 million this year is not flat. It's an increase. So we can have that discussion with him. We can have that discussion with him next week, Mr. Speaker, if he's interested in that.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the NDP had absolutely no plans to invest in roads. We saw that. We drove all those highways all those years, bumping along. And even now when they're in opposition, highways is not any kind of priority for them.

We saw before last year's budget, the NDP put out a press release asking for their must-haves in the budget. Was there any mention of highways, Mr. Speaker? No, not a word. And then before the Throne Speech last fall, again the members opposite issued a press release asking for their must-haves in our Throne Speech. How many times was highways mentioned? None. Zero. Not a word, Mr. Speaker. And then before this year's budget, just last week, the NDP issued yet another press release asking for their must-haves in this year's budget. And how many times was highways mentioned? None. Not once. Zero.

So I don't know what the Highways critic over there is doing, if he has no input into caucus or if they're just ignoring him or if it is, as we've always believed it to be, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP have absolutely no interest in fixing our roads. And I think, Mr. Speaker, there might be some politics behind this because they know, Mr. Speaker, that rural Saskatchewan

doesn't support them. I don't know if it was retaliated, but they certainly didn't reward anybody in rural Saskatchewan in their time in government because they ignored our highways, Mr. Speaker, and that is not the approach that we are taking.

And we know, Mr. Speaker, as well, their former leader, Dwain Lingenfelter, I know they don't like talking about him. He said, Mr. Speaker, and I quote, "The government will look seriously at the idea of volunteer maintenance." They were going to send people out with shovels and a bucket of cold fill and go make them fix their own potholes. That was the NDP's approach to highways maintenance in this province, Mr. Speaker. It is absolutely embarrassing, the NDP record in highways and infrastructure investment overall in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Just in closing, I want to mention I think what some of my colleagues have mentioned as well, Mr. Speaker, is what we didn't do in this budget. As I said, we faced some challenges when it came to revenue. And we know under the NDP, when they faced challenges, they'd dip into the pockets of taxpayers across this province, Mr. Speaker. They'd raise taxes: PST [provincial sales tax], income tax. They'd raise taxes or, Mr. Speaker, they'd download onto municipalities.

As an example, urban revenue sharing in 1993-94 was \$50 million. By 2000 it was \$26 million, Mr. Speaker. And my chart's a little bit old, but 2012-13 was 151. And I'm sure off the top of his head, the Finance minister can tell me what revenue sharing is this year. I think it's about \$265 million, 265. So, Mr. Speaker, we can see the downloading to municipalities that the NDP did by slashing revenue sharing to municipalities, Mr. Speaker. Not only did they slash revenue sharing, they didn't fix their roads either, so it was a double hit to these municipalities, Mr. Speaker. That's not what we're going to be doing.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the NDP have no plan. We are a year away from an election. We keep asking them for it. They come into this House and criticize, and that's fine. Their job is to hold government to account, and we understand that. There were those of us who served in opposition, Mr. Speaker. You can criticize what the government is doing, but on the flip side of that you're supposed to have a plan to say how you're going to do things differently. And, Mr. Speaker, the NDP have absolutely failed in that respect.

I think that the people of this province understand that the NDP have no plan. So without a plan and looking at the NDP's record, Mr. Speaker . . . I know that they complain about the three extra MLAs that are going to be in the next election, and I think they're just a little sad that those three MLAs are not going to be sitting on their side of the House because they're going to be lucky if they bring back even the nine that they have now, Mr. Speaker.

I am very proud to support our government's budget, and I will not be supporting the amendment.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak on this 24th day of March. This day has a lot of importance for me and for my family. And the first thing I

want to say is happy birthday to Solveig, my daughter. She was born on this day 26 years ago, and so it's an important day. And I think some of my colleagues here at the legislature remember one or two times when I've had a chance to speak on the 24th, that I've gotten the chance to say happy birthday to her. So I appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you to a few people and point out some of the supports that I've had in doing this job as a legislator. I'm going to start off with my wife Linda. This is our 41st year of marriage, and she's put up with a lot, especially the last 20 years. I also want to thank my daughters, Ingrid and Solveig. They've provided a lot of support. My parents, who live in Regina, are 89 years old this year, Tom and Randi Nilson. And they watch faithfully for all of the things that happen here in the legislature, and I want to say a special thank you to them.

And I also want to say happy birthday to my godmother, my aunt, Gertrude Satre. And this is a very sad day in our family today because my uncle Curtis, my godfather, died last Wednesday. We had a funeral in Saskatoon on Sunday and today he's buried at his home church with his parents in Irma, Alberta at Sharon Lutheran Church. And my uncle Curtis who was 90 years old, he was somebody who was there when I was born, basically was part of my life all the time for my whole life. And I want to say thank you to him and to all of his family for the support that I've had right across the province.

[19:45]

I also want to say thank you to my wife's parents, Stan and Betty Lee. They're 96 and 91 this year, living in Everett, Washington, and they've continued to provide support. They can't drive out here during session to help out with the kids anymore, but I know that they follow what's going on and we look forward to see them over Easter.

And the other people I want to say thank you are to my brother Ralph and his wife, Suzie, and their daughters Anna and Bethany and families. Then my sister JoAnn Nilson and her husband, James Lokken, in Saskatoon and their four boys, Nils, Olaf, Torbjorn, and Knut. And they provide all kinds of support in various ways throughout Saskatchewan including listening very carefully when people have concerns about things like this budget.

My family in Saskatchewan has been here for a long time. My mother's father, John, came to Saskatchewan in the summer of 1903 to homestead with his father just south of Outlook at Macrorie, and he then married my grandmother Anna in 1913. He lured her away from her home in Banff, Alberta. She'd lived there for a lot of years, but had come from Norway originally via Minnesota, South Dakota, and Manitoba. So on that side of the family we have strong roots right around Outlook.

And then my father's mother came up to Regina and to Moose Jaw on July 4th of 1912 just after the hurricane hit Regina, and she ended up living in Regina in the early years. She married my grandfather, Andrew, and they then ended up on the farm out at Parkbeg, and it's through that connection that we have all of the Parkbeg and Gainer the Gopher connections.

Also I want to say thank you to people in Regina who are family but they're friends, and that's Rick Hordern and Nancy Talsness Hordern and their daughters Marja and Kjersten and Kjersten's husband, Aaron.

The important part of being a legislator is that you have the honour and ability to support and work for your constituents. And I have to say that being the member of the legislature for Regina Lakeview has been an honour. I also want to thank all of the people who have come up to me and asked me very difficult questions. Sometimes they provided advice, but they've continued to be very supportive in the role, whether it was on the government side or in opposition side. So I want to say a great thank you to the people of Regina Lakeview.

Also I want to thank the members of my New Democratic Party executive, because they've asked even harder questions. I always tell them that no matter how hard a question you get in this place, theirs are usually twice as hard because they know a lot of things about that.

My constituency assistants that have helped me in Regina Lakeview at the present time are Conni Yakimchuk and Cory Oxelgren. But they come and support . . . not a very long list of people, but starting with Elaine Wood who helped me for many years, Karen Pattison, Bernie Yakimchuk, and Judy Kerr. They, over 20 years, have made sure that the messages get to me and also that their issues can be dealt with professionally and in a very good way.

I also want to say a special thank you to a number of women who worked with me when I was in the ministry, and two of them are Wendy Hollinger and Elaine Maksymiw. They were with me all 12 years that I was a minister, and I would have to say that they were instrumental in making sure that I didn't go down the wrong path on different things that we did and that we made sure we had all of the things done properly.

Also my chiefs of staff over those years: Betty Ann Cox, Heather Nord, and Conni Yakimchuk, as well as Michele Kobayashi, were very much a help.

It's been very interesting to be part of a caucus in five different forms, but I have to say that the last number of years with this caucus has been probably the, you know, in some ways the most rewarding, because the nine of us are very much I think supportive of each other. We understand each other's abilities. We push each other to do things a little better.

And I want to say a special thank you to Cam for all of the leadership that he's provided now over the last two years. And I look forward to the tempering, if I can put it that way, of the people on this side of the House as they prepare to form government at some point in the future. And I know that some of the members opposite who are retiring this year know that process of how much you learn sitting on this side that's helpful for when you're over there working on the government side.

And I also want to say a special thank you to the caucus staff that we have. They do a tough job. We don't end up having as many people as you do when you're in government and many times that's quite frustrating, but I think that we have excellent people working with us and we very much appreciate the work

that they do.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this budget this year I think surprised me. And I'll say where the surprise comes is that after all these years of working pretty carefully to try to make sure that we were spending money here in Saskatchewan in a way that we could afford, it appears as if the Premier and the Finance minister and the team over there have made a big bet. They basically said, well let's spend all the money we've been spending already and let's borrow a bunch more and let's go and do a whole number of things so that basically we can try to put out any fires of people that want things.

Now the part that surprised me was that we've forgotten the lessons of the '80s and the '90s. We know that when the government changed in 1991, we had some extreme difficulties in Saskatchewan that meant that all of the citizens, all of the businesses, all of the institutions had to work together to try to get the ship back onto a more stable position. And I think, Mr. Speaker, that that exercise, which was very painful for many years, produced some very good results for the province of Saskatchewan. And we've been living with those results probably for about the last 10, 11, 12 years. And to take some steps now to start dipping . . . not into the pockets of people right now — I've heard people say that — but we're dipping into the pockets of our children and our grandchildren. And we're doing it very directly, but we're trying to cover it up. We're trying to hide it.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we got the documents about this year's budget, there were so many things that we still can't tell exactly what the financial moves are. And I mean it's things like the mayor of Regina saying, oh yes, we agree that we won't get the last \$25 million on building the stadium until after March 31st, 2016, so it doesn't have to show up in this year's books even though that was the supposed plan, or that we've basically delayed the third-quarter report so that you can adjust some of these numbers. And the potash deferral or speeding up of getting revenue, well a major part of that was to put a bunch of money into this present year, this '14-15 year, to try to fill in some of the holes that are there.

Mr. Speaker, every time I go back and look at these documents, I spot something else where I say, well, why are they doing that? And, Mr. Speaker, that's not how we should be doing things.

I'm a bit, you know, I'm a bit sad about the legacy of the Finance minister because this is his last chance to do this job, and there's a whole number of things that we won't be able to tell what kind of decisions or choices they made until we get the auditor's reports probably 18 months to two years from now. And, Mr. Speaker, that's not an appropriate plan. That's not an appropriate thing to do as a Finance minister, and that's not an appropriate way to present the books of the province.

Some of the excuses that we had right off the top were, well, we're making that transition from the GRF [General Revenue Fund] to summary reporting, but we've been in that kind of a transition for quite a few years, and there's no reason to obscure what's going on unless there's something here that they don't want people to see. And unfortunately I think that that's what's going on, and I'm not sure where it goes.

Now the members opposite, the Minister of Highways is chirping here, but one of the things that's quite frustrating is that we've seen a steady shift of debt over onto the Crown so that people can pay for that debt through their utility bills. We've seen now a straight-up borrowing of \$700 million to fill in the holes.

Now there's all kinds of justifications, but it's the same kind of justifications I used to hear in my law practice when I would deal with businesses that were on the edge. I had a practice where I would work with farm machinery dealers or car dealers or other businesses, farms that were in financial trouble, and often they would get to a point where they would make the big bet. They'd say, well we'll just go and spend a whole bunch of money in the hope that we're going to come out the other side. And, Mr. Speaker, that's the time, sort of six months to eight months after that kind of a decision, where they'd show up in a lawyer's office and say, now what do I do?

And, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately I have the feeling that we're, as a province, have that kind of a bet being made. And, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that that's an appropriate legacy for the Minister of Finance. I don't think it's an appropriate kind of thing for the Premier. And, Mr. Speaker, when we in this province have to try to sift through all of the different decisions that are made to figure how much we actually owe to all of these various institutions, we know that we're in trouble.

Now the P3 [public-private partnership] financing which is . . . They continue to say, oh we'll only do it if we've got the full disclosure. Well, Mr. Speaker, we set out a bill on this side of the House that would provide some ways so we could actually get some comparisons on that. But we know from other provinces where P3s have gone in that it costs more to do that. It's just logical that it's going to cost more than what government's doing, and so there we have a whole area of debt that we don't know where it's going.

Mr. Speaker, we end up having other areas where we know that they've pushed services into various agencies. And if you look at the numbers of jobs that have gone from the public service into these agencies or into other places, there's also costs that are going there that cost us more to provide the services for the people of Saskatchewan.

[20:00]

And so what are we to say about this legacy? We all have a responsibility. Whether it's the member from Kindersley, whether it's the member from, you know, Yorkton, or wherever, we all have a responsibility to be watching carefully how we spend this money.

Now we've heard quite a few glowing reports about treasury board and the decisions that they've been making but, Mr. Speaker, part of the job when you're in caucus, especially a big caucus, is to have some people who really ask some hard questions about the spending and about the long-term commitments. And, Mr. Speaker, the Finance minister often will do that. But when you get in a financial jam or when you're in a spot where you don't quite know how to meet all the demands of all the people in the province, you sometimes make decisions that are not going to be helpful. And unfortunately I

think that we're in that kind of a spot. And so it's sad for me. And that's what I said when I saw the documents. I thought, well no, we don't want to go down this kind of track again. We don't want to get ourselves caught into trying to finance by borrowing more money. And frankly when you look at the initial reactions of the press, of people in the province, they continue to say, well how can this be a balanced budget when you have to borrow \$700 million, plus you've got other borrowing other places, plus you're shoving debts, other corners and hiding them from the public? And I think that that's why there's a frustration.

Now the Minister of Finance is chirping from his seat here, and I think he should be, because it's his responsibility. I'm talking about his legacy for the province. We know what's going on here is that when you're with a Premier who's made all kinds of promises and you have to figure out how to pay for them and that's your job and your treasury board's job to come up with the money, you work to figure out how you can get that money. I mean why would you run a whole series of ads with the Premier promising the students of the province that we have this great graduate retention program and then just a few years later, a few months later, you defer that expense and you do it in a way so that the poorest people aren't ever going to collect it?

Now I think that that's a kind of decision that's wrong. I know that the potash corporations have raised some questions about how this was done. We know that working to try to get the right balance between revenues for the province and other places, you need to be very, very careful.

Now the kinds of things that are in this budget are the kinds of things that are obscured right now in different ways, but as we dig into this . . . Now the other part that makes me really frustrated about this budget is that the Minister of Finance has done this for the last I think two or three years, where he'll basically say, here's the amount of money to do this but we want you to try to save money, send some money back. And we saw that in health; we see it in post-secondary education; we see it in a few other places.

And what does that do? Well that ends up meaning that, oh well there's maybe not quite as much staff to do some of the jobs. And guess what happens? We end up with the sad stories like we hear in this legislature on a regular basis. And you hear in the coffee shops and you hear in other places where there are not sufficient staff in many of the procedures. And we know that the people who work in our health system, whether it's the CEOs [chief executive officer] or the people in the kitchen or the nurses or the doctors, they all want to do a good job. But when you've got a situation where there's pressures on this, plus you add in some of the stupidity of this John Black lean stuff that basically frustrates a whole series of workers, you deal with the morale issues; you deal with a whole number of issues.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Highways minister and the Finance minister love to talk about how much money they spend on highways, but they don't want to talk about how many kilometres of road they do because I know . . . I asked the Premier. He gave me information to show that the amount of money that it costs to do the same work that was there five or six years ago has gone up dramatically. And so they don't want to talk about what they actually are doing. They want to talk

about how much money they spent.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let's have more information. And I can assure the Finance minister I'll be asking again this year like I did last year to please provide me with the cost per kilometre of highway. Because we need to see how much money you're spending. And sure, you're spending a lot more money, but I don't even think you're getting as many roads as we had 10, 12 years ago.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think the overlying or the underlying or the piece that isn't here is a longer term plan. And we know about it when we talk about the futures fund. We hear today that the Premier of Alberta has made some promises about a futures fund in Alberta when they supposedly, or I think they do, have a much more dramatic hit from the oil industry than we do. I think there must be some discussion that we need to have here in this province about that.

We also need to talk about simple things like why three more MLAs. I mean that's a simple question. Why three more MLAs? And we've heard some different explanations from people across the way but I think that it's one of those ones that maybe was a . . . It seemed like a brilliant idea a few years ago, but it's starting to come back to say, hey, who thought that one up? And I guess it's the Premier and people in his staff that did that. But there needs to be a lot better explanation of that than what we've had so far.

Mr. Speaker, in my constituency here in Regina, one of the difficulties relates to the overall sense of confidence in the provincial government. And when the provincial government is doing things that are not understandable by the ordinary people in the province, they're even less understandable by the civil servants who are working within the government or the Crown employees. And so, Mr. Speaker, I'm worried for our city that because of the uneasiness about this kind of budget, we're going to end up having more pressures and more people being very careful how they spend their money, how they do things in Regina.

And so, Mr. Speaker, this budget has too many little hidden pieces, too many things that are not explainable on the face of it, too many new ways of describing things for it to be a budget that we can trust. And as I said when I started, that makes me very sad because so many years of work by all of us, you know, whether you're in opposition or in government, we all worked hard to try to get something back on to the right track. And I think, Mr. Speaker, we're in a situation where we need to be very careful, and we need many more and much better explanations than we've had so far.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have no further comments tonight about this budget, but I'm looking forward to asking lots of questions in the estimates committees because there are too many mysteries. I'm sad for the province. I'm sad for us as legislators that this is what we have to deal with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and speak to this budget. Mr. Speaker, this is my

first budget as minister, and I'm happy to say I'll be supporting this budget motion put forward by the Finance minister and seconded by the member from Lloydminster.

Mr. Speaker, this is the last budget put forward by the member from Canora-Pelly, and I can say, and I'm sure reiterated by my colleagues, that we will miss Canada's best Finance minister. We will miss his humour, his thoughtfulness, and his shrewd financial wisdom, but most of all, Mr. Speaker, we'll miss his love of this province. So, Mr. Finance Minister, thank you.

I'd also like to thank treasury board, cabinet, caucus for your thoughtfulness, your thoughtful budget deliberations. And as is customary, I have people to thank as well. I'd like to thank the constituents of Coronation Park for their support. Thank you for your trust in me as your MLA.

I'd like to thank my partner, Lisa, for her continued support and your belief in me. I couldn't do it without you.

I'd like to thank my constituent assistants, Kristy and Bonnie, for the conscientious work you do serving the people of Coronation Park. And actually they also serve an awful lot of the opposition's constituencies as well because we have one of the busiest offices in the province.

I'd also like to thank the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport, the staff as well as the minister's office staff, for the great work you continue to do. So thank you, Morgan and Morgan and Tara and Dylan and Bob.

Mr. Speaker, it has been an interesting spring session, lots of questions and posturing by the members opposite. I understand that they have a job to do as critics, but as witnessed, a little too contrarian and no solutions, and no costed-out solutions.

Last election we heard about the game-changer calculator and maybe we'll see it again. Actually I would encourage the members opposite to please bring back the game-changer. There's someone else I can think of to bring back as well, but I think the members opposite hope that that name is buried in the archives.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of this month, my ministry launched the park reservation system over a 10-day period. I'm confused, Mr. Speaker. Not a word out of the members opposite on the launch. And I'd like to tell you why, Mr. Speaker. The park reservation system, early March, we have 28 campgrounds under our reservation system. When we compare this year to last year, 22 campgrounds saw an increase in reservation on launch day. In 2014 we had 22,276 reservations. In 2015 we had 25,760 reservations. That's a 16 per cent increase. When you compare 2015 to 2013, it's actually a 42 per cent increase.

I want to point out a couple of parks in particular. In Buffalo Pound in 2014 there were 1,377 reservations; this year we had 1,747 reservations. In Sask Landing 2014, there were 1,189 reservations; this year we had 1,618 reservations. In Cypress Hills in 2014 there were 2,835 reservations; this year 3,674 reservations.

Mr. Speaker, the people of this province love their parks and for

good reason. They're great. Our park staff are great and the ministry did a great job. Maybe the members opposite don't utilize our parks. Maybe they do. I don't know. They don't say much. I'd have to assume that when they are silent on an issue, which they're silent an awful lot, that they're actually in agreement. And since they have been silent on an awful lot, we could take that as agreement. So thank you for your continued support.

You know, Mr. Speaker, there's been a lot of factual errors on the other side. You know, Mr. Speaker, I think the members opposite think they are baseball players and not members of the legislature. Mr. Speaker, in baseball if you hit 500, if you bat 500, you're going to the hall of fame. Mr. Speaker, actually you might be going to, yes, probably you can even go to the archival hall of fame. But well, Mr. Speaker, if you're 50 per cent correct in this House, you're relegated to the bench of nine or less, and you'll quickly become an archival memory.

[20:15]

The member from Nutana gave a member statement where she talked about watching *WolfCop* and *Big Muddy*, and remarking that both of these films were recipients of the film tax credit. Not bad. Half right. But sorry, this isn't baseball.

Mr. Speaker, this government has taken a large step forward in support of the province's creative industries. In addition to funding creative sectors that were completely overlooked by the NDP, we have also implemented an organization to support all of the creative industries, including screen-based media. To date Creative Saskatchewan has provided \$4 million to the film industry alone out of a total of \$7 million in direct grant support and an additional \$2.1 million to creative industry associations. There is more access to markets, development, and financial support because of this overarching agency.

Mr. Speaker, we've been criticized and Creative Sask has been criticized for telling the Sask story. Mr. Speaker, this government, unlike the previous government, likes to tell our story outside of the province. Back in the NDP days, they didn't promote Saskatchewan. They didn't tell the Saskatchewan story. It's a shame, because we have a good story to tell.

We have a story of a musician, Andy Shauf, who just recently signed with The Windish Agency, winner of the Independent Booking Agency of the Year at the 2015 Pollstar awards. We have the story of author Anne Lazaruko who won the Women Writing the West literary award for historical fiction and was able to travel to the ceremony. We have the story of Jess Moskaluke who, besides her gold record, won the Female Artist of the Year at the Canadian Country Music Association awards.

What do all these people have in common, Mr. Speaker? They all received funding from Creative Sask to help further their careers. We'll make no apologies for telling Saskatchewan's story to the world. We'll continue to celebrate the success of Saskatchewan's creative industries.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite accused the CEO of Creative Sask of bypassing the established funding application. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite accused again this funding application of Jess Moskaluke, based on the information they

heard. This is simply not factually accurate, as all funding applications, as mandated, are to be adjudicated by an independent jury. This has been far too fitting for members opposite, getting the facts wrong.

Well for the benefit of the House today, I would like to share real information from people within the industry. This is from the president of MDM Recordings Inc., the company that represents Jess Moskaluke: "In closing, Jess would not be where she is in her career today without the support and funding she received from Creative Sask to expand her career prospects."

The executive director of SaskMusic, Michael Dawson: "It is our hope that her gold certification will not only be celebrated as a milestone in Moskaluke's career, but also accepted as evidence of the success of Creative Sask's mandate and programming support."

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to list more accomplishments. And again I'm going to have to correct a statement by the member from Saskatoon Nutana. She also said, "We've heard that Creative Saskatchewan spent \$10,000 to print up fake gold records for Jess Moskaluke. No jury, no competition, just the chief executive officer writing a cheque."

I find these comments confusing, especially when contrasted by an industry professional: "All approved applications to that program are determined through a juried process. The purchase of additional gold record plaques by an artist is a proven strategy to ensure further growth in an artist's career." You know who said that, Mr. Speaker? Michael Dawson, the executive director of SaskMusic.

Jess Moskaluke is the first Saskatchewan female artist to earn a gold status single, and the first female country music artist to do so since who, Mr. Speaker? Shania Twain. We're proud of her success.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to list more accomplishments. Mr. Speaker, a meeting with the international studio & curatorial program led to a partnership with the MacKenzie Art Gallery to sponsor a Saskatchewan artist to attend this program. A showcase at BreakOut West forged connections between musician Megan Lane and the Reeperbahn Festival in Germany for an international tour. Cheshire Smile Animation received production support from Creative Saskatchewan for the kids' show *Quizzine*, and now it has been green-lit by City Saskatchewan and TVO.

Mr. Speaker, our stakeholders are happy with the avenues opened to them by Creative Sask. SaskBooks said, "It's nice to finally have an agency that supports production, marketing, and promotion."

Again SaskMusic said, "... with the work that the SaskMusic has been doing over the last three years, coupled with the support of Creative Saskatchewan, I've been watching the rest of the world really start to take notice." Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to promote Saskatchewan because we are getting results.

You know, Mr. Speaker, last night, I was here last night, Mr.

Speaker, and I was listening to the member from Saskatoon Centre. And it was kind of unfortunate but, you know, I listened anyways. But he asked why we never talk about the '80s. And apparently we talk about the '70s, the '90s, the 2000s. Well, Mr. Speaker, I started thinking about things and I got a little nostalgically archival. Then, Mr. Speaker, I started to think about the commercials featuring the Leader of the Opposition of where did the money go. I kept thinking about these two pieces, these references to the archival '80s and where did the money go — '80s and where did the money go? Then it clicked, Mr. Speaker. I apologize to the opposition for not getting it sooner. Sometimes I'm a little obtuse or ensconced in my own hubris.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite were celebrating some classic archival rock from the '80s. I didn't know they were such fans of Robert Palmer, and in particular his song "Simply Irresistible" because, Mr. Speaker, apparently there's no telling where that money went. That's right, Mr. Speaker, they're channelling Robert Palmer. And unfortunately for the members opposite, this is where the money went.

Mr. Speaker, the money went to debt reduction. Three billion dollars went to reducing operating debt since our government took office, saving nearly 1 billion in total interest costs. It went to tax reduction, Mr. Speaker. Nearly \$5 billion has gone into Saskatchewan peoples' pockets, through the largest income tax reduction and education property tax reduction in Saskatchewan history. Infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, building highways, schools, and hospitals.

In our first seven budgets, \$6.6 billion has gone into addressing the massive infrastructure deficit left behind by the NDP. That's more than double what the NDP invested in infrastructure in the last seven years in office. Mr. Speaker, that's where the money went. It went to building a strong Saskatchewan through debt reduction, tax reduction, and building infrastructure.

It's a lot different than the questions people used to ask under the NDP. Where did all the people go? Where did all the jobs go? Where did all the investment go? Where did all the municipal revenue sharing go, etc., etc.?

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to talk a little bit in particular about where the money went in relation to the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport and to my particular budget, Mr. Speaker. So where did the money go: \$80 million committed to Regina's new stadium, \$20 million to Evraz Place, 1,000 additional seats for the Brandt Centre, a new Co-operators Centre.

In our first seven years, we've committed over \$71 million to Parks capital projects, a 244 per cent increase over the last seven years of the NDP. In our first seven years, we've increased overall spending in arts, culture, and heritage by 39 per cent compared to the last seven years of the NDP.

In 2011, we implemented the Main Street Saskatchewan demonstration program. Last year we launched the new Main Street program in 15 communities: four demonstrations, two accredited, nine affiliated. We've increased annual funding to the Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation by 74 per cent as compared to the NDP. For the past four years, the government has invested in artsVest, \$250,000 a year, Mr. Speaker. My ministry has invested over \$8.5 million into the construction of

Mosaic Place in Moose Jaw, which just this year hosted the Scotties.

In the summer of 2013 we designated Great Blue Heron Provincial Park, which is the first new park to open in almost 20 years. We've added 1,400 additional campsites. Nine hundred sites have received electrical upgrades and, by this summer, we will have added 242 brand new electrical campsites.

Mr. Speaker, I also wanted to talk about some more budget highlights in relation to Parks, Culture and Sport. This government has fulfilled its commitment to provide an additional \$10 million over four years, over and above the existing capital budget, for provincial parks capital projects. The '15-16 budget provides \$14.6 million for parks capital projects, just slightly below last year's record investment.

Projects undertaken this year include development of a new campground at Greenwater Lake Provincial Park with 68 fully serviced campsites that is scheduled to open this summer, development of a new campground at Blackstrap Provincial Park with 60 electrified campsites that is scheduled to open in 2016, development of full-service campsites at Buffalo Pound and Moose Mountain Provincial Park, the addition of over 200 electrified campsites throughout the provincial park system for a four-year total of over 800 electrified sites.

Funding for the Saskatchewan Arts Board, Creative Saskatchewan, and other third party organizations remains stable, demonstrating the government's commitment to a strong arts and culture community.

Funding for the Main Street Saskatchewan program continues. Eleven new communities were accepted in 2014 and, in the past four years, the government has invested nearly \$2 million in the program. The popular community rinks affordability grant will continue for a fourth year, following through on the government's 2011 election promise. In the first three years, over \$4.8 million has gone to 387 communities. Mr. Speaker, I've got many more, many more highlights I could come up with.

I want to talk a little bit about again Creative Saskatchewan's success. Creative Saskatchewan has distributed over \$6.4 million in direct grant support to the creative industry sector, \$2.5 million to designated creative industry associations. Thanks to Creative Sask, Mary Lynn Podiluk used a market travel grant to attend the *Niche* magazine awards where her piece won the engagement ring category. *WolfCop* received production and marketing funding for the project and has obtained international distribution deals, and high demand for the film led to a promised sequel currently in development. Sova Design Millinery, based in Saskatoon, has received production funding for the creation of their hats as well as travel support to represent Saskatchewan internationally.

Stakeholders, they've been impressed with Creative Saskatchewan. SaskBooks has said, "It's nice to finally have an agency that supports production, marketing, and promotion." I already said that, Mr. Speaker. Again the executive director of SaskMusic: "... with the work that SaskMusic has been doing over the last few years, coupled with the support of Creative Saskatchewan, I've been watching the rest of the world [and

again they're] really . . . [starting] to take notice."

Mr. Speaker, Creative Saskatchewan had film commitments. These are the film commitments that they had to date, up to March 4th of 2015: screen-based development, they had 45 applications received; 36 applications were supported for \$569,000 and change, Mr. Speaker. Three applications were withdrawn by the applicants. Six applications didn't meet the eligibility. Screen-based production: 21 applications received; 20 applications supported for \$2,096,000, Mr. Speaker. Market and export development: 22 applications received; 17 applications supported for \$843,000, Mr. Speaker. Business capacity research: 11 applications received; 6 applications supported for \$181,000, Mr. Speaker. Market travel grants: 37 applications received; 31 applications supported at \$304,000, Mr. Speaker. So in summary of all of these pieces, apparently it's we're not supporting the film industry. Well, Mr. Speaker, this sector, in terms of film commitments, received \$3,994,236.

Mr. Speaker, I was thinking back to the time when I worked in government in Social Services and, Mr. Speaker, I was also involved in a community-based organization called Street Culture Kidz. And I thought . . . And we started the organization back in about 1996. You know, during that time, Mr. Speaker, we applied and asked for financial assistance from the government of the day.

Well how did that go for us? Well, Mr. Speaker, we received zero dollars, so then we tried again in 1997. We received zero dollars. So then we tried in 1998. We received zero dollars. Then we tried in 1999 — zero dollars. We applied again in 2000 — zero dollars. Then 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 — zero dollars. And during that time, Mr. Speaker, we worked with social service clients almost exclusively because you know what, Mr. Speaker? It was exactly the right thing to do.

And you know what happened in 2007-2008 and onwards? We started to build partnerships with the Ministry of Social Services, the Ministry of Corrections. And what did we get, Mr. Speaker? Funding, operational funding, Mr. Speaker, partnerships, partnerships to support our most vulnerable, our most vulnerable children and youth. Well, Mr. Speaker, it was unbelievable at the time, but that's exactly what happened.

[20:30]

Mr. Speaker, I find it an absolute shock that the members opposite have any problem with this budget. The problem is, Mr. Speaker, we understand making good choices. We've made good choices. We're going to continue to make good choices. The people of this province, they get it. They understand. They look at us and they nod their heads, and they go yes, yes. You made some choices. Some of them were tough, but you made good choices. And they thank us. We've been thanked.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to do good quality work. We're going to continue to represent this province, continue to think again outside the box and try different things. But we'll also, if nothing else, continue to have this province to grow.

I'm proud of the work that our cabinet does. I'm proud of our caucus. I'm proud of our Premier. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of this government. And if nothing else, I'd like us to continue to

go forward. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to support this budget motion, and I'm not going to support the amendment. With that, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to rise in this House and speak in support of the budget that was presented by the Minister of Finance and seconded by the member from Lloydminster. Mr. Speaker, as you know, I have decided not to seek re-election, so this is the last opportunity I will have as an MLA to respond to the budget speech. But there are a few comments that I'd like to make before I get to the budget.

I've had the honour and privilege to serve the people of the Estevan constituency since 1999, and I really thank them for their trust and support. Mr. Speaker, I can remember the first time in 1999 when I won the election. I had 46.7 per cent of the vote. And it went up gradually, and last election in 2011, I had 79.2 per cent of the vote. So I know that this seat, the Estevan seat, will continue to be held by a Sask Party MLA.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank the girls in my office, my CAs. Rosalie is still on maternity leave. She had a little girl Ava that was born last August. Also Susan and Wilma, and I just want to thank the three of them for everything they do. As all members know, they are our eyes and ears out there, and they are the first people that constituents come in contact with, and first impressions are lasting impressions. And, Mr. Speaker, I don't think I'm a really hard person to work for, but I always had one stipulation when people come into my office, and that's that the CA is never to say, what do you want? It's always, how can I help you? And I think that has went a long way.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the caucus staff. John Saltasuk is the chief of staff. I work very closely with him and also all the researchers, the communications people, and Karalee at the front desk. They make our job so much easier, and I thank them.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not mention my family: my kids, my grandkids, my mom, my siblings. They have always been so supportive to me, and I thank them for that love and support. And also to my special friend Al, he's just been a rock to me, and I really want to thank him. I'm really looking forward to spending more time with all the people I just mentioned, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, just before I get to the budget, I just have to say this, that last night I was at home and I was listening to the speeches that were being delivered by members on this side, and they were really good speeches. I have to say that the member from Regina Dewdney, I enjoyed his speech. And he was talking about how the Premier may not be in the Chamber at certain times. He might be meeting with the Prime Minister or on a trade mission or something, and yet the Leader of the Opposition gets up and questions the Premier and wants him to meet with people that are in the gallery. He almost seems indignant that the Premier doesn't respond to it, and the Premier isn't even in the Chamber when this is going on.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that reminded me of something else

that I don't think is very parliamentary that happens here, and in fact I think it's really sad. That is when opposition members are giving speeches, and it's usually during a serious part of their speech, when they'll pick out a member on this side and say that the member is laughing at what they are saying.

I have been targeted, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by a member over there. The member from Saskatoon Riversdale was giving a very sober speech one evening, and she accused me of laughing when she was speaking about a death in her family. And, Mr. Speaker, I have lost people that I love more than my own life and I would never, ever do that. And I can remember that very evening. I could remember that very evening, I was talking to the Minister of Advanced Education, and when she said it, it just caught me off guard.

So I just want to say that that statement was so far from the truth. People watching on TV don't realize it, and unfortunately we don't get a chance to correct it, Mr. Speaker. But for those members to say that we're laughing at someone's hardship or sorrow is despicable. It's stooping to a new low. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad I finally got to correct that because that is something has been bothering me for a very long time, and people who truly know me know that I am not that kind of a person. And there isn't one person on this side that would laugh at someone else's hardship.

So, Mr. Speaker, now that I've got that out of the way, I will get to the budget. I just want to say that I am very proud of this budget. It is a budget that is balanced. It is a budget that keeps taxes low because it has no tax increases, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a budget that invests in people, a budget that keeps Saskatchewan strong.

And, Mr. Speaker, the NDP asks, where has the money gone? Well there are a number of areas where they can look. Let's look at the SIP [seniors' income plan] program. SIP paid \$90 per month in 1991. In 2007 it was still \$90 a month — not one increase, Mr. Speaker. With the increase announced in this budget, SIP benefits will now be \$270 a month. That's triple what the NDP gave them.

Mr. Speaker, what is so amazing about that is that it's the NDP that get up day in and day out and claim ownership of issues regarding seniors, and they have a very dismal record with seniors' care in this province. They closed 1,200 long-term care beds, Mr. Speaker. They were going to raise the long-term care rates by 90 per cent. In fact one of the NDP ministers at the time said it was "the right thing to do." And that minister was Mark Wartman who was Minister of Highways at the time. And I think in the end it cost him about \$7 million out of his highways budget.

Many times the Leader of the Opposition or the first Health critic and the member from Riversdale, Health critic number two, rise in this Chamber and criticize those who care for seniors in care homes. Mr. Speaker, I know several caregivers in my constituency, and they do an amazing job. They do a job that I couldn't do. I know of instances where there are no family members close. Many of them volunteer to take the residents that are able to get out. They take them for an outing to the mall. They do this on their day off, Mr. Speaker, on a volunteer basis. And I know several times you can go to a home, and a

senior will have their nails painted and their hair done and everything, and it's one of the staff that have volunteered to do it on their day off.

I know of one instance where a lady wanted a new dress. Her family was coming home for Christmas, and she wanted a new dress for Christmas, and one of the care aids went out and bought her a new dress. I just think that they do an amazing job. They make the long-term care residents feel so special, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I know there are issues in some of the care homes, but overall I think that the treatment of the seniors is very, very good in this province. The seniors become an extended family of many of the workers in there. And I think that for the members opposite to imply that all seniors are not receiving the best of care is, well frankly, it's a slap in the face to the caregivers. It's very offensive, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, we just opened up a new long-term care home in Radville, and that was something they had been waiting for for many, many, many years. And it is truly a beautiful and yet practical facility. There are adjoining suites for married seniors that both require care, and that is a step in the right direction, Mr. Speaker.

I know that issue didn't arise . . . Although members opposite want people to believe that this is an issue that's just happened since 2007, for a long time there was an issue where married people were put in different homes. And you know, Mr. Speaker, after they've been married for 40, 50, 60 years, whatever the time is, they deserve to be together, and it's nice to see that happening now. Unfortunately when the NDP were in government, they didn't do one thing to advance that, but I guess that would have been pretty hard to do when they were closing all the nursing homes that they closed.

Mr. Speaker, Estevan has been fundraising for a new regional nursing home, and I'm happy that they reached their goal of \$8 million, which is their share of the \$40-million project. And as you would know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government changed the split for monies that are needed for building new long-term care homes. Under the NDP it was a 65/35 split, 35 per cent being raised by the community. Now it's an 80/20 split, 20 per cent being raised for the community share and truly more affordable for the community, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Since we formed government in 2007, we have built or are in the process of building 15 new nursing homes. Compare that with the dismal record of the NDP. They closed 1,200 beds, and that is absolutely pathetic.

Mr. Speaker, money has gone to highways. Since 2007 when we formed government, historical funding for highway infrastructure . . . in this budget. And, Mr. Speaker, we all know and many other members have got up and stated about the huge infrastructure deficit that was left by the NDP.

The people in my constituency are very happy with the announcements in this budget, and I'll just mention them, Mr. Deputy Speaker: 7.6 million for twinning Highway 39 from Estevan to Bienfait; 1.2 million twinning 6 and 39 from Regina to Estevan, and of course that's planning work, Mr. Deputy

Speaker; 14.7 million for continued work on the Estevan truck route, which I understand will be paved later this year. Last year, Mr. Speaker, Highway 39 was repaved from Estevan to Macoun. Under the urban connector program, Highway 47 north into the city of Estevan along Souris Avenue was repaved, and the people there are very, very thankful for that.

[20:45]

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, again that is where some of the money has gone and that is a far cry from the days of the NDP government. People were told to fix their own highways, and they did, Mr. Speaker. And I think it was out in the western part of the province. I can remember seeing pictures in the paper of farmers taking their front-end loaders and buckets filled with tar or gravel or something — probably gravel because they turned a lot of highways back to gravel — and they were out there with their shovels and filling in the potholes and doing the job that the government of the day would not do. So some money went there, Mr. Speaker. Lots of money went there.

Money went to revenue sharing. Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that revenue sharing was an issue for many, many years. In fact I think it was Tommy Douglas, their hero, that first raised the issue. He didn't do anything about it, but he raised it. And then in May of 2003 the NDP government commissioned Ray Boughen to do a report. Well the NDP took that report and then implemented at least one of the recommendations, if my memory serves me correct. The Boughen report said that if the PST was raised, then revenue sharing would be implemented. Well guess what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? The NDP raised the PST by 2 per cent but they forgot to implement revenue sharing. And that's their history, Mr. Deputy Speaker — tax revolts, hunger strikes because people were just truly, truly fed up with them. And I'm proud to say that once again revenue sharing is in this budget, \$265.3 million, more than double the investment in '07-08 and the largest revenue-sharing investment in the province's history.

And child care spaces, Mr. Deputy Speaker, some money is going there. They may be tired of listening to where the money is going, but they were the ones that asked the question and I'm just happy, I'm happy to oblige them with the answer. Child care spaces, \$53.3 million for child care spaces, and that's up \$2.2 million over last year. In fact, Mr. Speaker, child care spaces have increased in number by 53 per cent since 2008. And even former NDP minister Pat Atkinson said that the NDP government failed miserably when it came to child care spaces, and just another area where the NDP record is absolutely pathetic.

Mr. Speaker, regarding agriculture . . . And, as you know, I have my farm in the Macoun area, Mr. Speaker, and so agriculture is pretty near and dear to my heart. And I have never lived in a city. Living in my apartment up in Regina here on the days when the legislature is in session is the closest I have ever come to living in a city. So I am a farm girl and I love that life.

But I'm thankful in our government that we have an Ag minister that not only understands agriculture but is presently involved in the industry. So he knows, he knows what effect the policies that are instituted will have on farming, Mr. Speaker. The current minister, the member from Thunder Creek, and the

former Ag minister, the member from Melville-Saltcoats, have worked extremely hard to put Saskatchewan back at the leadership table at first ministers' meetings, and that was something that was just lacking so horribly in the NDP years.

They are eager to defend the interests of Saskatchewan farmers and ranchers. And, Mr. Speaker, I can remember the spring of 2011 when southeast Saskatchewan was devastated with the worst flood in anyone's memory. Crop Insurance stepped up when in many cases farmers could not get 1 acre seeded, and I was one of those farmers. And, Mr. Speaker, I know that, I mean I've been on my farm for many, many years and I know how much I appreciated that. So I can only imagine how young farmers that are paying for land, paying for farm equipment, you know, have small children, and just you know the everyday expenses of living, I can imagine how they felt.

And you know, not only the farmers not getting their crops in but also homes flooded, and of course that wasn't limited to the farms, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That was, you know, even in the cities and the smaller communities, the villages and towns. But PDAP [provincial disaster assistance program] kicked in, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and you know, gave some order back to their life. And PDAP kicked in with a new formula, I should add, and this government changed the formula so that it was \$240,000 max that they could claim with a 5 per cent deductible. Under the NDP, the deductible was a lot higher and the maximum benefits were a lot lower. I think the deductible was something like 20 per cent. Maybe it maxed out at \$160,000. I do stand to be corrected on those numbers. But in answer to the NDP's question, that's where a large amount of money went, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Still in agriculture, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can remember in 1991, the newly elected NDP government began its revenge on rural Saskatchewan. And I think they decided to get even with the people in rural Saskatchewan for not supporting them in 1982. I think they were also angry that their beloved land bank met its demise in the '80s with a government that didn't believe that government should be aggressively buying up farm land.

The NDP, in the 16 years when they were in government, never stood up once for agriculture. We saw bankruptcies, auction sales, tax revolts. We saw sit-ins in this very building, all because the NDP would not defend agriculture during some pretty tough times.

And they were tough times, but some of those tough times were brought on by the fact that Ag ministers did not understand agriculture, and they would not sign on to programs. I think they were CFIP [Canadian farm income program] probably back then, and AIDA [agricultural income disaster assistance], and they wouldn't sign on to them till the very, very last, and really left farmers wondering about their future.

And I sometimes I guess I hope the NDP have learned something, but I really don't think so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and here's why I say that. About two years ago when the film tax credit came to an end . . . And it's not really a credit; for the record, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was a grant. Anyway, Mr. Speaker, the member from Lakeview stood in this Chamber and said, the film tax credit should be reinstated. And when asked how, where the funding dollars would come from, he said,

agriculture and municipalities. Can you believe it? Agriculture and municipalities. So they haven't got over that feeling that they shared for rural Saskatchewan in 1991 and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is why they have absolutely zero credibility out in rural Saskatchewan today.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just yesterday when we entered the Chamber, on our desks were little members' newsletters. And it's a publication that's put out by the Legislative Library, I think on a monthly basis. But in this paper I found a quote and I believe it makes quite a statement, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I quote: "Burn down your cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic; but destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in the country." William Jennings Bryan. And, Mr. Speaker, when you really, really think about that, that has a lot of meaning to it about how if you don't support the people that put the food on your table that pretty soon like the cities will meet their demise as well.

Mr. Speaker, I know my time is running short. There are many more areas I could speak on but I know other members have touched on them. Members that spoke before me and those that are speaking after me will focus on others. But I'll just do a quick recap, Mr. Speaker. Where did the money go? Under a Sask Party government, back into the pockets of the citizens of this province through lower property taxes, lower personal taxes, higher sick benefits, PDAP, historical investments in infrastructure like the energy training centre in Estevan, like Boundary dam 3, highway twinning projects, hospitals. And I'll put our record in health care up against theirs any day of the week. They closed 52. Long-term care homes, again we've got 15 that have been built or are in the process and they closed 19. Schools, they closed 176 schools during their reign. That's one a month. We are building schools, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I know the member from Regina Rosemont gets up and he's on about overcrowding in schools. And you know what? That is an issue but it was never an issue under the NDP because there was lots of room in the classrooms. There was no crowding because people were leaving this province in droves.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where did the money go under the NDP? I can remember \$1.5 million being spent for an exclamation point after the word Saskatchewan. And some other members have mentioned some of these but I'll just review them for people that maybe didn't see their speeches: tappedinto.com, 6.7 million; Persona, 9.4 million; Navigata, 43.4 million; Retx.com, 26 million; Clickabid, 1.9; Soft Tracks, 2.2; Ag Dealer, 8.9; SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company] — we all remember SPUDCO — 35 million; Channel Lake, 15 million; Guyana, 2 million; mega bingo, 8 million; and of course the Belle Plaine ethanol deal, \$750,000.

I can remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they hauled the kids out there on buses. They had tents set up out there. I think there was a few clowns out there, and the former premier in a track hoe. I mean it was amazing and nothing ever come of it. So just a total, total waste of taxpayers' dollars. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP may have a different leader. I don't really think he's any more popular than the old one. But make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, they're still the same tired, old, backward NDP.

In closing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister of Finance, treasury board, caucus, and all those who worked tirelessly in preparation for this document. I am so proud to be a part of this government under the capable leadership of our Premier, the member from Swift Current. And I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Finance for all his hard work, his friendship, his diligence, and being a mentor to I think pretty well every member on this side. And I just wish him all the health and happiness in the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be supporting the budget.

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, it's really an honour to stand here tonight to discuss the budget that our government has just introduced.

Mr. Speaker, before I begin I will say a number of thank yous, as many members do when they have the opportunity to speak in this House. And I want to begin by thanking my three daughters, Crystal, Shannon, and Lindsay. They have been by my side. They are three very, very accomplished young women who were raised with a political mom who couldn't always be there with them. I want to also thank my son-in-law who's truly supportive, and now I want to thank them for four truly wonderful and precious grandchildren.

I also, Mr. Speaker, want to thank my fiancé. And yes, I am engaged, so not everybody knew that, but I want to thank Tom Wildeman. Tom and I have a very, very, very long history. We knew each other since we went to high school, and he says that he's a patient man. And I'd like to think high school days were just yesterday but unfortunately a few decades have passed since then. And he truly is a patient man and he's very tolerant of the lifestyle that I lead. So I thank him for that support and his encouragement and for being by my side.

So, Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank my father who has been supportive of me my entire life. I have had the privilege and the honour of spending a lot of time with him lately. He moved to Humboldt to a facility. He's 94 years old and my heart, my thoughts, and my prayers are with him right now as he struggles in a hospital bed. So, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell my dad I love him and I wish him well.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my constituency assistant. She keeps the home front in good order. She's so organized. She is my face in the constituency and she does an amazing job, and I want to thank her.

[21:00]

Other staff that do an amazing job is the staff here in this building, the staff within my ministry office as well as the staff within the Ministry of Social Services. There is the staff that I see fairly regularly that come over and meet with me and we discuss issues and policies and various things within the Ministry of Social Services. But who I don't get to meet often, and I think they do amazing work, is those front-line workers. They are out there. They are having to make the very difficult

decisions. They are dealing with vulnerable people, the most vulnerable within our province, and I commend them for the work that they do. I don't think I could do that work, and I'm in awe of how hard they work and how they are able to make those difficult decisions.

Lastly I want to thank the Finance minister and my treasury board colleagues. Yes, we spent many hours together and it was not always happy times when we were together and there was tough decisions to be made. We had great guidance in the Finance minister so I want to thank him for all of his work, for his guidance and his leadership.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to focus my comments, quite frankly, mostly on my own budget of Social Services, starting with the child and family services component of the budget. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite ask where did the money go, and I'm more than happy to explain that to them. And a lot of money went to the most vulnerable within our province, and I'm going to begin with the most vulnerable within our province, and that's our children, Mr. Speaker.

This budget contains a \$3 million increase for foster care and extended family. I will speak a little further on how the NDP managed with foster care, but Mr. Speaker, we have increased what we pay to our foster families quite substantially since we formed government. And we also have undergone a fairly extensive effort to find family members that will take children that are coming into our care so that they can have some continuity of their lives, so that they can have some stability instead of being placed all the time in a stranger's home.

Mr. Speaker, we also are increasing the budget by \$2 million for medically fragile children with complex needs. Prior to this, Mr. Speaker, these children were often housed in hospitals. They have extreme medical needs, and we have set up CBOs with CBO partners who do amazing work. One example is Hope's Home. And they are looking after these extremely medically fragile children and giving them a more comforting and warm home environment. So I commend those CBOs and the work that they do.

This budget will increase the supports for assisted adoption client services by \$1.3 million, Mr. Speaker. Quite often we have foster parents who will have children in their home that perhaps have high medical needs or they have behavioural challenges, and these foster parents fall in love with these children, Mr. Speaker, and they want to adopt them. And we give them ongoing support and we commend them and thank them so very, very much for giving that stability for these vulnerable children.

And, Mr. Speaker, this budget also increases, by 1 million, preventative services to keep children in our care. So another effort that this government has undergone is to give supports to families before they are in a complete crisis and we have to take children into our care. That is again helping to stabilize the families and to keep the children at home and hopefully keep them safe and protected. And we don't always have to take them into our care as long as we're able to support them.

So, Mr. Speaker, since forming government, our government has increased funding for the child and family services from

88.2 million under the NDP to this budget of 226.14 million. Mr. Speaker, that is a 156 per cent increase. It's a strong commitment for support for vulnerable children and families and it is the choice of our government. That is where our money is going, Mr. Speaker, and I think it bears repeating. We have increased supports to our most vulnerable, to our children in our province, by 156 per cent. We are investing more even when the number of children coming into our care, Mr. Speaker, has been less.

Our government is providing more supports for foster families. Under the NDP, the compensation for foster families was among the lowest in our country and they couldn't figure out why they were having a very, very difficult time recruiting foster families, Mr. Speaker. This budget includes funding for PRIDE [parent resources for information, development, and education] training for those foster families, which includes a cultural component because many of our children that come into care, sadly, Mr. Speaker, are First Nations children and this allows or gives some training to foster parents so that they can keep those children in touch with their culture.

Mr. Speaker, it includes funding for in-home support workers. Many of our foster families perhaps have two to three to four, and sometimes more if there's a large sibling group. We will supply support workers to come into that home and help those foster families so that they can manage with these children and give them a warm, safe, loving environment. So we thank those foster families, Mr. Speaker.

This budget includes a program that our government introduced, which is flexible response. Again it's intervention supports to families before they come into complete crisis so that we don't have to always take children into our care, but rather we can support the families. Another in-home support that we give for at-risk families is called the intensive in-home supports, and we give that support to both families and also extended family members who are willing to take the children.

Mr. Speaker, we also introduced the positive parenting program. Again supports for families before they go into crisis so we don't always have to take the children into care.

Mr. Speaker, we developed an IT [information technology] system to track the children in our care, something that was promised by the NDP. I think they even put out a press release saying that they were going to do this, but it never got done.

In our province under the NDP, in the province with the NDP, we could track a library book anywhere across the province but we could not do that with our children that were in our care. The children that we were responsible for, we could not track them in our province because there was no IT system that had them on file, but we could a library book. That was the NDP priorities.

When I was minister the first time for Social Services, I said that we need this in our province. We need it in order to keep our children safe. We needed it for the front-line workers to make their job easier. And, Mr. Speaker, we got the job done.

So let's take a look at what the NDP choices are, because it is about choices. When the member from Saskatoon Centre sat at

the cabinet table and he made decisions, as I mentioned, the budget at that time was only \$88.2 million, which is 156 per cent less than what it is today. The IT system didn't exist. It was never delivered. It was just a shallow, hollow press release.

Mr. Speaker, there were 90 fewer front-line workers, even though there were more children in care than there was today. The welfare caseloads for children grew by 53 per cent between 2000 and 2007. Under our government, those numbers are declining.

Mr. Speaker, they underfunded foster homes, and no effort was ever made to build to capacity. I remember when I became minister of Social Services the first time, the Children's Advocate released a report shortly after, and the report was on the years just prior to our forming government. It was called *A Breach of Trust*. And in *A Breach of Trust*, it talked about how there was a foster home with 21 foster children in that home. It talked extensively about the overcrowding in foster homes. That was the NDP record. That was what their priorities was. That's what their choices they made at that time, and nothing's changed, Mr. Speaker. They may talk the talk, but that was what the NDP chose to do.

In April 2000 the Children's Advocate report stated that there was a, and I quote, "serious gap and major disconnect" in the way family child welfare services are being provided. And he's talking about the NDP, Mr. Speaker, and I couldn't agree with him more.

Our government have different priorities than the NDP has, Mr. Speaker. We are saying, this is where the money goes. The money's going to support our most vulnerable children, Mr. Speaker, and we're not going to go back to the days of the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, another area of my responsibility is disability services. Our budget includes a \$5.7 million increase for the Saskatchewan assured income for disability program, known as SAID. It also includes a \$6.1 million increase residential spaces and for day programs for people with disabilities. Since we formed government, Mr. Speaker, across the number of ministries, our government has invested over 2.7 billion to support citizens with disabilities. That's where our money's going, Mr. Speaker, and that is the choice of this government.

For years the disability community asked for a separate dignified support program. For years the NDP ignored them. It wasn't a priority for them. Well it was for our government, and in 2009 we introduced the SAID program, and we have enhanced it every year since. This budget, Mr. Speaker, increases the SAID benefit amount for the fourth year in a row. It was a promise made by this government and a promise kept by this government. Even in a tight budget, we kept that promise, Mr. Speaker, because this government views it as a priority.

When the NDP took office, Mr. Speaker, there was no wait-lists for residential supports and day program supports, but it wasn't their priority. So by the year 2007, there was a wait-list of 440 individuals that were looking for or needing residential supports or day program supports or both.

There was a family in my area, Mr. Speaker, where the mother was 83 years old. She was looking after her adult disabled daughter. Mr. Speaker, she didn't know what she was going to do. She could no longer cope with looking after her daughter. She herself was aging. But that government, the NDP, when they had the chance to make decisions, when they could make choices, didn't care, Mr. Speaker. They did nothing. Well our government made different choices. We expanded the residential supports and the day programs year over year over year, ever since we've been government. And that's where our money's going. Mr. Speaker: it is to support our most vulnerable citizens, Mr. Speaker. And we don't want to go back to where the NDP had their choices and what their priorities were.

In the area of housing, Mr. Speaker, the NDP, well the vacancy rate at that time was less than 1 per cent in most of our major cities. They ignored it. It wasn't a priority until finally, I think, the public pressure got under their skin. So they put together a task force, and it consisted of three cabinet ministers at that time. They're gone now, but there was Judy Junor and there was Kevin Yates and there was Frank Quennell. But they didn't hold public consultations. They talk about it now, but they didn't when they had the chance to hold public consultations. There was a report, I suppose, but it was never made public. It was concealed and hidden, and no one ever got to see it and nothing was done, Mr. Speaker. I really think the NDP housing strategy, Mr. Speaker, was to let Alberta build the houses, and then we just shipped our families and our children into Alberta to live in them because they really did very little to deal with the housing crisis that our province was facing at that time.

Our government's choices and government's priorities are very different. We've invested more in housing than ever before in the history of our province. Since 2007 we have invested 581 million and developed over 12,500 units. Along with direct development and delivery and through extensive consultation, Mr. Speaker, all of which is public, we have developed a number of programs to encourage private development. And these programs have worked, Mr. Speaker. Housing starts are up 108 per cent since the NDP were government. Multi-unit rental starts are at — are we ready for this? — 598 per cent since the NDP were in government.

Mr. Speaker, we introduced a new housing ownership program called Headstart, and it's a huge success. It has far surpassed our original goal, so now there are over 1,500 citizens that are enjoying a new home. We support the great efforts of Habitat for Humanity. It's a great organization. The NDP, when they had the chance to support that organization, did not. That was not their priority. That was not their choices. But every year we have supported Habitat for Humanity. That's where our money is going, Mr. Speaker. That is our choices and that is our priorities and we do not want to go back to the NDP with their choices and their priorities.

In this year's budget, Mr. Speaker, there are no program enhancements, I have to say, in the Saskatchewan assistance program or the transition employment allowance. And the allocation for those programs, quite frankly, in the budget reflect sort of projected client numbers rather than changes to the program. We did have to make tough choices. We couldn't enhance every single area within our budget. We simply didn't

have the money this year. But we chose the area of disabilities, we chose the area of housing, and we chose the area of our most vulnerable children as our priorities.

And in the situation of income assistance, Mr. Speaker, and I know the one member opposite earlier said that we were concealing things, well I'm not going to conceal this at all. We made a reduction in one program and that was the Saskatchewan employment supplement, and that reduction will come into effect on October 1st, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan employment supplement is a transitional program designed to assist low-income working families with the cost of raising their children. It's calculated on a sliding scale, where the subsidy decreases as the family's income increases or improves. It is a transitional program. Families are generally not on that program for a long period of time and the average time that a family remains on the Saskatchewan employment supplement is about seven months, Mr. Speaker.

[21:15]

The intent, as I said earlier, is to assist families with child expenses and, without a doubt, one of the most costly expenses when raising children is child care. Children who are older than 13 years of age seldom need child care so, in a difficult budget, we made the choice that we would change the program that there wouldn't be a supplement component calculated for any children over the age of 13. We are grandfathering existing families, so existing families will not see a reduction. But this will, as of October 1st, will affect new entrants coming into the program, and it will affect children that are in the program under that age that then will age out at the age of 13 rather than 18.

So, Mr. Speaker, that was a reduction to one program. It won't affect a lot of families and in fact, for those very same families, this government has put in a number of other support areas to help them cope with their expenses. Mr. Speaker, since 2007, our government has increased minimum wage six times which calculates to a 28.3 per cent increase since we formed government. That will help these very same families.

Mr. Speaker, our government has implemented a number of other programs that's going to help those same families. We introduced the children's drug program so no parents pay more than \$20 for their children's prescription drugs under the age of 14. Mr. Speaker, that helps those very same families.

Mr. Speaker, we introduced the active families benefit so that families can access \$150 per child under the age of 18 to help with the expenses of eligible activities. That helps those very same lower income families. Mr. Speaker, it was our government that eliminated PST on the clothing for children under the age of 17, and that will help those very same families.

Mr. Speaker, it was our government that doubled low-income tax credit that helps those very same families. We still support a child care subsidy. Any family that's in this particular program also qualifies for the rental supplement. And, Mr. Speaker, we have also, as a government, implemented the largest personal tax decreases in the history of our province. We've taken 114,000 people, low-income people and families off of the tax rolls completely, and that will help these very same families.

So if it came to this one reduction that we had to do to one program or going back to the way of the NDP, where none of these other supports were in place, where they were raised . . . they had to pay higher taxes time and time again where they didn't have a drug program, where they didn't have an active families program, where they didn't have a rental supplement, where they had to pay PST, I think their choice will be to give up this small part of one program and keep all of the programs that this government has implemented.

Mr. Speaker, another area in the income assistance that we have changed — and the NDP, again not their priority; they may talk the talk but they didn't walk the walk, Mr. Speaker — was in the area of income assistance. We indexed and adjusted every six months the amount that they would pay for shelter. That now has plateaued, but there was a number of years where that was escalating, Mr. Speaker. And we stepped up to the plate and we increased shelter allowances for those people that were on assistance. What happened under the days of the NDP? Well from 1990 to 2007, which I think is around 16 years, two increases. In all those years they only increased the shelter allowance twice. That was the priority of the NDP. This government has different priorities, and we have shown that we will support individuals for their shelter costs.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk for a minute about seniors. I know that the NDP have brought up seniors and senior support time and time again. They talk about long-term care homes and how the staffing levels should be more. Well I'll tell you, no one wants to go back to the staffing levels of the NDP because this government has increased in long-term care homes, Mr. Speaker, licensed practical nurses by 40 per cent. We have increased registered nurses by 6 per cent. We have increased care aids by 11 per cent. So we have quite substantially increased the workers in long-term care homes, so I don't think anyone wants to go back to the staffing levels of the NDP. We also have implemented, or added an additional 10 million to enhance seniors' care services that is in the health care budget.

Mr. Speaker, in my own budget we have added, for the fourth year in a row, increases to the seniors' income plan. The NDP left that plan at \$90 a month for 16 years. Basically it was frozen. It was not addressed whatsoever. Mr. Speaker, we have now tripled the amount of money available to our low-income seniors because we believe in supporting them because they are a priority for our government.

Mr. Speaker, we've also implemented a brand new program called the personal care home benefit. It helps seniors who are living in a private care home, Mr. Speaker, with the expenses of that private care home. That program never existed before, but that is a priority of our government and that was also increased again this year in this particular budget.

So, Mr. Speaker, I've talked quite some time about the choices of this government and the choices of the NDP. Our government chooses to keep Saskatchewan strong. We choose to invest more in health care, education, social programs, and infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. We choose to do that without raising taxes and downloading onto our third party partners.

Mr. Speaker, when the NDP had a chance to make those very same choices, what did they choose? Well they chose to raise

taxes 17 times. They raised the PST three times. They raised the income taxes twice. They raised business taxes four times. And that doesn't even count all of the education property tax hikes that they implemented while they had the opportunity to make choices, Mr. Speaker, but I remember well the tax revolts across this province.

They chose to stop investing in infrastructure and they chose to close 52 rural hospitals. They chose to close the Plains hospital right here in Regina. They chose to close 176 schools, which was nearly one a month, Mr. Speaker. They chose to close 1,200 long-term care beds, Mr. Speaker. That was the choices of the NDP. And what happened in Saskatchewan? Well we declined. People left and our population kept declining, Mr. Speaker.

Our government's making different choices. We're choosing to keep taxes low. We're choosing to invest in infrastructure and we're choosing to keep Saskatchewan strong. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I support the motion put forward by the Finance minister. I will not be supporting the amendment by the NDP.

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

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me to be a part of the debate here tonight in support of the government's 2015-16 budget. As we all know, politics is really about people and it is important that I acknowledge some really important people, Mr. Speaker. Without their support and dedication, I wouldn't be standing here today: my constituency assistants Jackie and Joette, my ministerial staff Enyinnah, Alex who was my past chief of staff, Wendy, and Clint, my family of course.

And I really want to pay special attention to the members who are leaving on our side of the House. They will leave a part of their soul, and it will remain with this party for as long as we are in existence. And I truly . . . It's important to recognize what they have been and what they have done for this government, this party, and they need to know that they will be remembered, and it will bring a smile to all of our faces.

I was elected to the legislature in 2007 in the constituency of Regina Wascana Plains, and I want to thank my constituents for twice putting their trust in me. I'm excited about the amount of growth that has been taking place in my constituency. This continued growth has been met with continued investment by this government. Investment such as the Regina bypass that includes interchanges at Pilot Butte, White City, Emerald Park is critical new infrastructure, as well as the \$22 million that has been invested for the Emerald Ridge Elementary School in White City.

Every member here owes a debt of gratitude to our constituency assistants, and that's just what I said earlier. My constituency president and the association always provides overwhelming support and help in ensuring that everything runs smoothly.

And lastly, I want to thank my government colleagues, each and every one of them, and the Premier for his continuous leadership and guidance, ensuring that Saskatchewan remains on the path to growth. I think it's important to acknowledge that

for many important members . . . and I mentioned them earlier, and I'm not going to speak about that again.

Mr. Speaker, these members that I referred to earlier are going to retire from politics. And I especially wish to thank our Finance minister for delivering a responsible and very forward-looking final budget. I understand a few wonderful candidates have already been selected. Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I mean potentially succeeding our wonderful colleagues because frankly, Mr. Speaker, as we all know, they are truly irreplaceable.

We are entering a period of controlled spending. We have a balanced budget with a surplus, but it came with some very tough choices. But it is not all doom and gloom, Mr. Speaker. It's important to put the Saskatchewan economy in a much wider perspective — a perspective that shows that we are more than just oil, a perspective that shows that Saskatchewan's economy as a whole is diversified and resilient.

Earlier this year, the Fraser Institute released their annual report or survey of mining companies. The report stated that Saskatchewan is the most attractive mining jurisdiction in Canada and the second-best mining jurisdiction globally. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is one of the best places in the world to invest in mining. That did not just happen by accident. Another indication of just how important the mining climate is in Saskatchewan is it was announced this month that Mosaic will be investing 1.35 billion in potash development.

Mr. Speaker, also on the topic of investment, Crescent Point Energy Corp., a Canadian oil company from Calgary, is investing \$1 billion in Saskatchewan's oil fields in 2015.

The latest numbers released from Statistics Canada show that Saskatchewan has one of the lowest unemployment rates in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, more good news. Saskatchewan had record merchandise exports in January of 2015 that increased to 2.8 billion compared to 2.4 billion the year before.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's population grew by another 17,396 people in 2014 to an all-time high of 1,132,640, or 42 that apparently some of my other colleagues have referred to. This is unprecedented, and I can see this growth first-hand, Mr. Speaker. In my constituency, Regina Wascana Plains, we see growth and expansion in the areas that I mentioned earlier — Pilot Butte, White City, and in subdivisions in Regina such as the Greens on Gardiner and the Creeks. It will be a result of hard decisions that this government has made that will keep this province on the path to sustained growth.

We are continuing to invest in this province, and crucial investments have been made in all areas by our government. The following is just a list, a small list of some of the investments in the 2015-16 budget that will keep Saskatchewan strong, investments that meet the challenges of growth while ensuring that Saskatchewan remains competitive and inclusive.

26.7 million is being invested in agricultural research and innovation.

2015-16 budget introduces two new tax incentives for job creation and capital investment.

Part of the growth plan is ensuring that Saskatchewan is the best place for people with disabilities, and to that end our government is adding \$200,000 to the employment assistance program for persons with disabilities. And I know my colleague had spoke quite eloquently on that issue. This addition will bring spending on programs and services, helping people with disabilities find a job, to more than \$10 million, Mr. Speaker.

3.7 billion in total investment in education.

5.5 billion is being invested in health care, focusing on senior care, major capital projects, and in programs aimed at reducing emergency room department wait times.

A commitment of 46.6 million in capital for this budget for advanced education and training.

And 581 million in 2015-16 for transportation infrastructure.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to some important work that is being done within the Ministry of Corrections and Policing. Our overarching goal within the Ministry of Corrections and Policing is helping to create safer, more secure and healthier communities. The 2015-16 budget, Corrections and Policing is spending 424.9 million, which is an increase of 2.9 per cent over last year's budget. Our goal within the Ministry of Corrections and Policing is to fight crime through increased police presence and targeted initiatives, as well as stopping crime before it happens through innovative initiatives like the Hubs and the CORs [centre of responsibility].

[21:30]

The ministry is starting to look at ways, we are looking at ways of bending this cost curve, of looking at ways of driving down the demand by addressing risk factors that contribute to criminal behaviour like mental health and addictions, as well as the need for jobs and literacy skills training.

Mr. Speaker, our youth facilities are underutilized, and our adult facilities are overcrowded. This is why we've developed a plan that focuses on realigning our resources and ensuring that offenders get the necessary job skills and literacy training without losing focus on ensuring that we have invested the necessary resources into our correctional infrastructure, both physical and technological. It is why, in 2012, the province signed a 20-year police service agreement with the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] in Saskatchewan. The RCMP budget for '15-16 is 179.1 million, which is an increase of 4.5 per cent over last year.

The ministry continues to fund and support targeted policing initiatives and programs. Funding for municipal policing grants are \$15.7 million and goes to fund officers in serious crime units: Internet child exploitation; targeted crime initiatives in Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, North Battleford, and La Ronge; serious and habitual offender comprehensive action plan, which focuses on targeting and holding repeat offenders under the age of 25. This is to ensure that they are held accountable for their crimes.

Three combined special enforcement units that focus on dismantling organized crime: northern drug and gang enforcement unit was created under this government to combat illegal drug use and related criminal activities in northern Saskatchewan, a security intelligence unit helps gather and shares information with law enforcement, witness protection program offers protection to witnesses not covered under the federal witness protection program, serious violent offender response to target violent offenders before they reoffend. In 2012, \$1.9 million was invested by this government.

Safer communities and neighbourhoods, also known as SCAN, allows for the closing of houses and other properties in our communities that are used for selling drugs and other organized crime activities. Seven positions were added to safer communities and neighbourhoods in 2009. This government wanted to offer municipalities more options when it came to addressing their community safety concerns. That's why the alternative enforcement model was established.

As was mentioned in the House yesterday, the Ministry of Corrections and Policing has been working with SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association], SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], and the RCMP, Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police to develop the community safety officer program, which will offer municipalities an additional option to support and enhance current policing services by addressing the high-priority and low-risk concerns of any particular community.

The CSO program, community safety officer program, will reduce demand and pressure on the RCMP and other policing services, as well as provide the uniform presence that community members seek as a mechanism of community safety. They will also have the ability to liaise with the building partnerships to reduce crime and the SCAN units. The first class of special constables of the community officers will be finished this April.

This government and the Ministry of Corrections and Policing also want to stop crime before it starts, Mr. Speaker, and building partnerships to reduce crime is a crucial element of this strategy. Building partnerships is a cross-government approach that includes nine ministries, eight policing services. The ministry's goal is to create safer, secure, and healthy communities by addressing crime prevention, suppression, and intervention through the building partnerships to reduce crime, in particular its Hubs and CORs.

The Hub is a made-in-Saskatchewan solution that aims to stop crime before it starts by getting community agencies, health and education providers, as well as police to sit down together. The focus is to address the unique needs of the individuals brought before and families facing acutely elevated risk. The goal is to connect individuals with services within 24 to 48 hours. Two more Hubs were recently added for a total of 12 Hubs in the province, and there is potential for more in the future.

Centres of responsibility, also known as the CORs, increase the collaboration and resource support between the Hubs. CORs also provide research and analysis on trends, gaps, and reoccurring issues in order to better mobilize resources to longer term systemic issues. There are currently two CORs in

Saskatchewan: one in Prince Albert and another in Saskatoon.

BPRC [building partnerships to reduce crime] will continue to analyze the data and examine the possibility of expanding the network of CORs by adding an additional centre in 2015-16. It should be stressed that this initiative was spearheaded by this government. It was this government that said, we simply don't want to do things the way we have always done them. That is a hallmark of this particular government. If we continue to do things the way we have done them in the past, and we — I use that "we" as the province of Saskatchewan — will get exactly that same result.

BPRC is being emulated in other parts of the country and elsewhere in the world. There are made-in-Saskatchewan Hubs in Ontario, Alberta, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and there is also interest coming from the United States. Mr. Speaker, as everyone in Canada is well aware, radicalization has become a growing concern, not only outside of the country but now within it. Within the ministry we are looking to ensuring that the building partnerships to reduce crime has the capacity to address radicalization within Saskatchewan.

We are working with partners in the RCMP, municipal policing services, mental health professionals, and religious leaders, especially those in the Muslim community that have reached out to us, in order to ensure that we have the internal capacity and the necessary cultural understanding to be able to deal with radicalized behaviour. I'm attending a conference at the beginning of April in Saskatoon called Unified Approach to Global Peace, put on by the Imams Association of Western Canada. We are making anti-radicalization a priority in 2015-16.

Our ministry is also addressing the issues of overcrowding in our adult facilities, jobs and literacy training for inmates, and the underutilization of our youth facilities with a transition plan. Our youth facilities are running at 49 per cent capacity while our adult facilities are over 100 per cent capacity, so the ministry needed to make a change. The plan was developed, and we found areas that needed more focus and areas where strategic decisions could be made. The purpose of the plan is to consolidate our youth facilities, repurpose other facilities to reduce the demand on our adult facilities, and to provide skills and employment training. This will help provide offenders with the opportunity to integrate back into the community and become valued and productive members of society.

Mr. Speaker, the nature of the youth criminal justice system is changing. Most youth will not see custody as part of their sentencing, open or closed. One of the longer term goals of this government is to keep as many youth out of our facilities as possible. This makes good economic sense but, more importantly, it is the best thing for the young offenders because where they really should be, Mr. Speaker, of course is in school with the proper supports.

Yarrow Youth Farm is an underutilized open-custody facility that sits on the edge of Saskatoon. Kilburn Hall is an established facility. It was a home for troubled youth in the '80s, housing both open- and closed-custody youth until the early 1990s when new facilities came online and the open-custody program was phased out. Currently Kilburn Hall

has two empty wings which will be purposely converted to house open-custody youth. Makes sense to move the programming from Yarrow to Kilburn Hall, the youth are already going to school and attending other programming within the city of Saskatoon. Most of the programming that the youth had access to at Yarrow will be transferred to Kilburn. The savings from closing the Yarrow facility will be reinvested back into all youth programming across the province.

As part of the transition plan, the Orcadia youth facility in Yorkton will be retooled into an adult male facility that will eventually become a skills training facility. This will reduce pressure on our adult system by realigning resources to meet the demand, plus eventually providing offenders with the ability to obtain skills and training that will allow them to fully integrate back into their communities.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share a statistic that is indeed concerning. There are 17 traffic deaths per 100,000 people in this province, which is completely unacceptable. To address this concern, Corrections and Policing along with SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance], RCMP, and municipal police have partnered to establish two dedicated traffic safety enforcement units within the province to reduce traffic injuries and fatalities. Mr. Speaker, this is SGI-supported funding with \$1.5 million for the municipal police in Saskatoon, Weyburn, Estevan, and \$4.1 million for the RCMP. We all realize that enforcement is an integral part of keeping our roadways safe. We anticipate through this particular program or this initiative that we will have fewer deaths and injuries resulting from our very defined and focused enforcement on our roadways.

I would like to also highlight the northern integration initiative. This initiative is to address violence in Pelican Narrows, Deschambault Lake, and Sandy Bay by working with partners in those communities and the federal government through the National Crime Prevention Centre Public Safety Canada and will establish programs and services for youth and young adults, federally supported funding of \$900,000 for the first year of a five-year northern integration initiative pilot totalling 4.51 million over five years.

Mental health is indeed very important and a concern, Mr. Speaker, with significant numbers of correctional inmates suffering from mental health issues: 248,000 will be directed to the forensic psychology Ph.D. [Doctor of Philosophy] program. Two psychology Ph.D. residents, each in Regina and Saskatoon, train and work with these inmates to reduce recidivism and public risk. The assessments that these residents do are instrumental in having an understanding of the type of offenders that are entering into our system and so that the proper supports and programming can be implemented. Federally supported funding of 100,000 for increased capacity in the intensive rehabilitation and custody supervision program for violent mentally ill offenders as well.

I am going to finish off, Mr. Speaker. I got a bit of a high sign that my time was just about up. So I would like to speak briefly about some of the issues that Saskatchewan has faced. And I say these things, Mr. Speaker, I think they bear repeating for sure. I believe that there needs to be strong understanding, a visceral understanding of what Saskatchewan has faced under the years under the NDP: raised taxes 17 times, raised the PST three times, raised income taxes twice, raised business taxes four times. That

doesn't even count all the education property tax hikes as a result of their failure to properly fund education.

Mr. Speaker, I remember my dad actually many, many years ago, and it was when the NDP were in power, that my question to him given some of these things that we have seen, the raising of taxes and how difficult it was to have a business in the province of Saskatchewan, and the reason he stayed in Saskatchewan was he wasn't going to abandon it in its tougher times.

And I am certainly glad that Saskatchewan now sees a light, where things are much brighter. People are excited to be here. People are wanting to come here and open businesses. I know my dad, on the election of this government, that there couldn't have been anybody more excited. It's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that he now suffers Alzheimer's and isn't seeing the end results or the middle results, whatever, that we all see and that other business owners see. But he committed to sticking it out in the province of Saskatchewan in Regina just because that was the way you do things, and I'm certainly glad he did. And I wished that he could see what Saskatchewan is today. Unfortunately that won't happen for him.

[21:45]

People stopped investing in infrastructure and closed facilities. The government, the NDP government stopped investing: closed 52 rural hospitals; closed the Plains Health Centre, and as a Regina resident, Mr. Speaker, I recall that particular institution, that hospital being closed and how devastating it was for the city of Regina and southern Saskatchewan; 176 schools closed, nearly one a month for 16 years; closed 1,200 long-term care beds.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on but I won't. All my colleagues have definitely covered these particular areas in their addresses, and there are just some things, Mr. Speaker, that we have to keep repeating and repeating because we have to vow that this province will never go back to the way it was under the NDP. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to keep going. I will be supporting this budget, Mr. Speaker, and I will not be supporting the amendment.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — What's your point of order, please?

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, point of order under rule 51. Earlier this evening the member from Estevan made some comments about the member for Saskatoon Riversdale, referring to some previous debate in this House. And I would ask that the Speaker look at *Hansard* from November 4th, 2013, page 3833 and also watch the video from that date for what was happening at 7:28 p.m. That was during the Throne Speech debate. The member from Estevan was referring to that particular time, and the types of comments that she made tonight were not accurate.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr.

Speaker. In responding to the point of order, I certainly was listening to the member's speech. I don't think I heard it in its entirety, but I was in listening to most of it. Everything that I heard at that time was within the course of regular debate, and I would certainly encourage the Speaker to review the *Hansard* in that regard, but I would certainly believe that the point would be not well taken. Thank you.

The Speaker: — Thank you for the Opposition Deputy House Leader and the Government House Leader. I will take the point of order under review and return tomorrow with a ruling on the point of order. I recognize the Minister for Advanced Education.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, and thank you to my colleagues. It's a pleasure to join in on the debate this evening with respect to the '15-16 budget as presented by the Minister of Finance in this Chamber last Wednesday, Mr. Speaker, on March 18th.

Prior to getting to my remarks about the budget itself, Mr. Speaker, I want to join with a number of my colleagues in saying some thank yous to very important people in my life. First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the constituents of Regina Northeast. In November of 2011, they entrusted me, a newcomer to the political scene with respect to running for elected office, they entrusted me with their vote — the majority of them in any case — to elect me in a seat that had been held previously for 26 years by the opposition NDP. And it was a team effort, Mr. Speaker, and I never take any day for granted in this Chamber by not taking that vote seriously that those individuals, those men and women in the constituency of Regina Northeast, lent me their vote on that particular day, Mr. Speaker, and I thank them for that.

I want to thank the Premier as well for his confidence in me to serve in Executive Council, in the cabinet. And I always say, Mr. Speaker, that I serve as an MLA at the pleasure of the constituents of Regina Northeast, and I serve in cabinet at the pleasure of the Premier, and I take both of those responsibilities very, very seriously. And I want to thank the Premier for that.

Mr. Speaker, here in the Legislative Building I am very capably served in my ministerial office by a wonderful staff. I have Michelle and Aimee, Kris, Amanda, and Tyler, who are in there working doggedly on my behalf and on behalf of the people of this province, on behalf of our ministry and the various stakeholders that we serve in the Advanced Education ministry, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank them for all of their hard work and helping me out on a daily basis.

I want to thank my constituency assistant, Mr. Ron Naidu, who's been with me since day one, was a volunteer on my campaign and then became my constituency assistant. Ronnie, as I like to call him, is a retired civil servant who still has a lot of energy and wants to be involved, both helping out the people of Regina Northeast and the various folks that come into our constituency office as well as still wanting to be involved politically as he enjoys the cut and thrust of politics, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank Ronnie for all of his service to not only me but, most importantly, to the people of Regina Northeast.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also very well served in the Ministry of Advanced Education by a number of officials, many of whom I never get to see on a daily basis because they do all the work behind the scenes over at the ministry on behalf of our stakeholders and on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, those that rely on their services — primarily students, Mr. Speaker, in the post-secondary education sector.

The Ministry of Advanced Education is very ably led by Dr. Louise Greenberg and all of her senior officials that I typically get the opportunity to interact with. I want to thank Dr. Greenberg who is a very unique individual, and I quite enjoy working with her. And she sends pictures to me on the weekend as well as to the Minister of Education of various foods that she cooks and that the Minister of Education cooks, and they like to trade these pictures back and forth and make me very jealous about the kind of food they're eating on the weekend, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the leaders of all of our post-secondary educational institutions in this province. I've had the opportunity to work with them for almost a year now since being appointed to this cabinet post. And I believe that we — not only myself, but we in the ministry — have a very good, strong working professional relationship with all of the leaders across the entire post-secondary spectrum, Mr. Speaker, from our universities to Saskatchewan Polytechnic to our regional colleges to First Nations University and to Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies.

I quite enjoy working with all of these very accomplished individuals. We had some difficult discussions this year, Mr. Speaker, with respect to this budget. As difficult as this budget was, I think that in the end point where we came out with respect to the support from this government to the post-secondary sector speaks well of this government's priority of wanting to support post-secondary education in this province, Mr. Speaker.

As a member of treasury board, I want to thank all of my colleagues, the various ministers that came before treasury board, along with their officials and the staffs from their respective offices. It can get quite heated at treasury board from time to time, Mr. Speaker, over the course of developing a provincial budget. We typically start in the early fall and work our way through until we literally arrive on budget day here last Wednesday, March 18th, where the Minister of Finance delivers the budget to the people of this province. But in between time and in the meantime, Mr. Speaker, to coin an old phrase from wrestling, there's an awful lot of work that goes on behind the scenes with respect to the treasury board members, my colleagues on treasury board, and the Minister of Finance and his officials.

So I want to thank all the ministers and I want to thank my caucus colleagues who have a good deal to say about the budget, Mr. Speaker. When we get down to some of the final strokes, we have some pretty intense discussion, I think is the best way to put it, with respect to some of the things that go into the budget, perhaps don't go into the budget, where we modify things in the budget and amend things. So I want to thank all of my caucus colleagues for their advice and their wisdom. And I think the end result is what you see is a group of individuals,

men and women, coming from across the entire province who represent diverse interests and represent diverse constituencies, putting their collective minds together, Mr. Speaker, to come up with a budget that I think well serves the people of this province.

I want to thank the Ministry of Finance officials who work tirelessly, whether it's treasury board analysts or those in the revenue division or treasury and debt management, the various areas of the Finance ministry. We on treasury board get to interact with them on a fairly regular basis during the development of the budget. And I know that they put in long hours and particularly as we get towards the cabinet finalization on the budget, they are working, burning the midnight oil in trying to provide us with the best advice and the latest numbers and estimates that allow us to make better decisions with respect to where we're going to allocate the people's money on an annual basis, Mr. Speaker, and very capably led by Clare Isman, the deputy minister of Finance, and all of her officials. So I want to thank them.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to join with all of my colleagues in congratulating the Minister of Finance on his fifth and, by his own admission, final budget as he is retiring from public life here at the end of this term and not seeking re-election in the constituency of Canora-Pelly in next year's provincial election, Mr. Speaker.

I've had the opportunity to serve on treasury board with the Minister of Finance since I was elected. And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that this is a gentleman who has dedicated his life to public service here in the province of Saskatchewan. He has dedicated his life to education. He was an educator. He was an administrator in the education sector, Mr. Speaker. Then he got involved on the school board in his hometown, his home school division, and continued to serve the people in that area in that capacity, and then he went into public life as an elected Member of the Legislative Assembly some 20 years ago, Mr. Speaker.

And I think what I've learned most from the Minister of Finance, the member from Canora-Pelly, is he's never stopped being a teacher. He's been a mentor to me. He's been one that has served us well with respect to educating us on treasury board as to the intricacies of developing a provincial budget. It's not an easy process, and he has been very patient. He's been a source of wisdom, a source of patience, and one who has, as I said, been a mentor to me and one who I look up to. And I think I speak on behalf of all of my colleagues, Mr. Speaker. I don't know of a member in our caucus that is more well respected than the Minister of Finance.

And we're going to miss him dearly but I do wish him and Gail and their family all the best as the Minister of Finance moves on to other things after this next election. And the people of this province I can say have been well served, have been well served by this gentleman, Mr. Speaker, in whatever capacity he has been involved in in this legislature, both on the opposition benches and on government benches in the various portfolios that he's been responsible for. The people of this province have been well served, and I congratulate him on a terrific budget and all of the work he's done on behalf of the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to spend a few minutes going over what the '15-16 budget looks like for Advanced Education and just outline some of the highlights with respect to where the money's going. We've heard that refrain here for a while now this past few weeks on television ads and in speeches and in questions from members of the opposition. And I know it's somewhat rhetorical but it does beg the question of, where does the money go here in the province of Saskatchewan?

And I can tell you in the Advanced Education budget, Mr. Speaker, my budget's quite interesting because about 98 per cent of my budget goes out the door the day after we vote off the budget here in the legislature, Mr. Speaker. About 88 per cent of the budget goes towards supporting the actual institutions themselves: our universities, our regional colleges, Saskatchewan Polytechnic. That's for their facilities. That's for their faculty staff salaries. That's for the various and sundry operating costs that they have to run those various institutions, Mr. Speaker. About 88 per cent of the \$783 million that is allocated in my budget goes out the door to the institutions the day after we vote off the budget.

The other 10 per cent, another 10 per cent taking you up to 98 per cent, goes to student support services here in the province. That's in programs that are designed to assist students in attending post-secondary education, whether it's in the student loan program, the bursaries and scholarships that are available in a variety of manners to the students of this province, as well as ensuring that there is scholarship dollars available through the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship and SAGES, the Saskatchewan advantage grant for education savings, to assist parents and their families in providing some savings for their children as they grow up and eventually attend post-secondary education.

So I have a budget of about \$783 million, Mr. Speaker. That's a lot of money. But relatively speaking, if you compare that amount of money to what was spent in the previous eight years by the previous government, because it's always interesting to do a benchmark analysis with respect to how are we doing relative to where we were . . . And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that that \$783 million into the post-secondary sector represents a 64 per cent increase, 64 per cent increase in what was being spent by the previous government in 2007.

Over the last eight years, Mr. Speaker, we have spent in excess of \$6.5 billion — billion with a “b” — in the post-secondary sector since forming government in 2007. And of that \$6.5 billion, additional dollars, 5.3, Mr. Speaker, was spent in supporting our post-secondary educational institutions in our first eight years. That represents \$1.9 billion more than the NDP in their last eight years, Mr. Speaker.

I had my staff do some research in the archives to determine whether to do some comparative analysis with respect to what was spent previously under the NDP government and what's being spent in our government, Mr. Speaker. And I can tell you that when you're doing research — just not to get off track here — but when you're doing research at the archives, the Provincial Archivist is very helpful in assisting both myself and the staff in researching these kinds of historical documents to give you some analysis, Mr. Speaker.

And I know, just to get off track a bit, I was having a conversation with the Minister of Highways, who had responsibility for the Provincial Archives not that long ago, and she told me there's some very, very interesting things housed in the archives, Mr. Speaker. I would encourage anybody, if they ever have to research historical documents for this Legislative Assembly or the Government of Saskatchewan, the Provincial Archives is the place to go, Mr. Speaker.

[22:00]

So when I was looking at some of the historical data for what we were spending, what we are spending today, Mr. Speaker, relative to what was being spent in the previous eight years by the former NDP government, we are spending \$670 million, Mr. Speaker, in support of students and student support services, as I said earlier. That's a \$400 million increase or a 160 per cent increase relative to what was being spent under the previous government, under the previous NDP.

And I hear every single day when the members come into this House and they ask questions, every single day, Mr. Speaker, they ask under the premise of, why are you cutting funding? Why are you cutting funding? Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that I'm not sure how you add that up. You have 160 per cent increase over an eight-year period, and someone can equate that to a cut. But somehow the NDP try to do that every single day, Mr. Speaker.

I know that closing the gap in Aboriginal education in this province is a priority of this government. It's been identified in our growth plan as something that we want to focus on, Mr. Speaker, both at the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] level and at the post-secondary level. In this budget this year, between the Ministry of the Economy, with my colleague, the Minister of Immigration and Skills, we are providing \$51 million in First Nations and Métis post-secondary education funding, Mr. Speaker. There's about just over \$20 million coming from Advanced Education and about \$31 million coming from the Ministry of the Economy. That is nearly double, nearly double, twice as much as what was being spent in this particular area in 2007, Mr. Speaker. That's where the money's gone.

We have provided in this budget, in a very difficult budget where a number of ministries' budgets were actually cut, we are providing a 2 per cent increase to our technical institutions, that being Saskatchewan Polytechnic, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, and our federated colleges associated with the universities, Mr. Speaker. And we are providing a 1 per cent lift for our universities, our affiliated colleges, and the regional colleges.

We are also, as I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, under the First Nations and Métis post-secondary education sector, providing an additional \$428,000 in operating funding for SIIT or the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies. That's a 24 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker, year over year from last year, and a 121 per cent increase since 2007 that we are providing to that particular institution. And I know that the president of that institution, Riel Bellegarde, was quoted in the newspaper as saying that they were very pleasantly surprised at that level of funding increase for their institution and will do great things

with that money.

We had last year, in-year, Mr. Speaker, found \$375,000 in-year to provide that institution to assist them with student support services. What President Bellegarde tells me is that they have a number of students coming, particularly from northern Saskatchewan, from First Nations, who attend SIIT campus either in Saskatoon or Prince Albert, and the biggest challenge he has is keeping them there for their first full year. If he can keep a student there for their first full year, Mr. Speaker . . . Because it's very culturally different for some of these students who are landing in downtown Saskatoon. The size of that city relative to where they come from seems like New York, and they need to have a lot of student supports in adjusting to life in the city of Saskatoon, going to these classes, and taking the various programs that they're taking. And so they're providing one-on-one coaching and counselling for these students. And he told me, he said, if I can get them through the first year, I can get them to graduate. And so we were able to find those monies last year in-year, Mr. Speaker, and we've repeated that again this year: \$375,000 for that institution to work with their students in ensuring that they get through their first year.

We've increased funding to First Nations University of Canada, and we've increased their funding 60 per cent since 2007, Mr. Speaker. We've increased funding to Gabriel Dumont Institute, increased their funding 44 per cent since 2007. We've increased funding to the Dumont Technical Institute, a 169 per cent increase since 2007, Mr. Speaker. And we've increased funding for the northern teacher education program and Northern Professional Access College, or what we call NORTEP and NORPAC, 42 per cent since 2007.

As well in this budget, Mr. Speaker, we provided some additional capital infrastructure dollars, or what we like to refer to as PMR, or preventive maintenance and renewal, to all of our various institutions. We've increased those dollars by 14.6 per cent year over year, Mr. Speaker. These dollars are allocated to the various institutions across the province to help them when they have problems with their roofs or their floors or those minor infrastructure problems that they need to deal with. Now does that answer all of their problems? Of course not, Mr. Speaker. We know that there's many, many needs on that front with respect to preventive maintenance and renewal. But where we could find additional dollars, we found those dollars in this budget, in a very difficult, tight budget, to increase that funding by 14.6 per cent. It's averaged 10 per cent to the two universities, and I know both university presidents have been very, very thankful for that.

We've allocated \$10.6 million to complete the construction of the Southeast Regional College in Weyburn, Mr. Speaker. And I know that the Minister of Health, the member for Weyburn spoke about this earlier today and how much that particular institution means to that community and to the students in that surrounding area that will be attending that institution.

We've also provided \$4.5 million to finish off our allocation to the Parkland College Trades and Technology Centre in Yorkton. And I know the member for Yorkton is listening in this evening, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Rural and Remote Health, and is appreciative of the monies that have gone to that particular college in Parkland. It's going to provide an

additional 200 seats, Mr. Speaker, for technology and trades training at that institution in Yorkton, contributing to those that we need to fill the labour market demands in our province.

And we provided 7.9 million, almost \$8 million again for the health sciences facility at the University of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, as they continue to build and refit that particular health sciences complex at the University of Saskatchewan, a very important component of the delivery of medical services, not only to the city of Saskatoon but in the medical education and training to the students at the University of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to talk for a minute on the changes to the graduate retention program that we made, and we didn't make those decisions lightly, Mr. Speaker. I want to assure the people of Saskatchewan that what was in existence before the budget day with respect to the graduate retention program is exactly in existence today, Mr. Speaker. The vast majority, the vast majority of students who have accessed the graduate retention program never accessed the refundable component of that program, Mr. Speaker. They only dealt with the non-refundable tax credit.

Now I heard today, I heard today the member for Regina-Elphinstone, I believe it was, in his questions at question period earlier today, Mr. Speaker, and the premise of one of his questions suggested that a single mom graduating from university who had paid \$20,000 or more in tuition would have to earn \$55,000 in that single mom's first job out of university in order to access or to capitalize on the full amount of the graduate retention program non-refundable tax credit, Mr. Speaker. It's just simply not true.

I would like to use stronger language, Mr. Speaker, but I want to give him the benefit of the doubt that maybe he was misinformed by staff. Maybe he didn't quite understand how the refundable tax credit works. We know that they've made a number of mistakes in understanding different components of our budget, Mr. Speaker, but I will correct the record.

A single mom, or any individual for that matter, Mr. Speaker, graduating from university today has to earn about \$36,000 in their first job leaving university to fully access the non-refundable tax credit of \$2,000. They access it in the first four years, \$2,000 a year for the first four years and, for the ensuing three years after that, Mr. Speaker, they're eligible for \$4,000.

So over the course of 10 years, 10 years, Mr. Speaker, the students who graduate from our post-secondary educational institutions who have paid upwards of \$20,000 in tuition will pay virtually little or no provincial income tax over the course of 10 years as they begin their career here in the province of Saskatchewan. We think that's good public policy, Mr. Speaker. He mentioned in his premise to his question earlier today that we had cut this by \$33 million, Mr. Speaker. Nothing could be further from the truth. The expense line item has moved from my ministry and because it's a non-refundable tax credit, now it moves over to the Ministry of Finance as foregone revenue, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think the members over there understand that, certainly not the member from Regina Elphinstone, the critic for

Advanced Education who was asking the questions. And I don't think the Finance critic understands it in order to clarify that for him, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to assure the people of this province, those program changes have nothing to do with the cessation of that program, not allowing them to file their income taxes for the 2014 year, and accessing it completely, Mr. Speaker. The program will continue. It is seven years in length where they can claim their tax credits, carried over to 10 years, Mr. Speaker. It's a huge competitive advantage for our businesses in this province. When a student is looking at going to a career in Ontario or a career here in the province of Saskatchewan, they will pay little to virtually no provincial income tax in the province of Saskatchewan in their first 10 years after graduating university, Mr. Speaker. We want to clear the record up and make sure the members opposite understand that.

The other issue that I'll raise, Mr. Speaker, that I think is important to clarify, is that yes, there was a funding reduction to the University of Saskatchewan this year, Mr. Speaker. We're not going to walk away from this kind of bad news. We're not going to ignore it. Yes, we've been working with the University of Saskatchewan to see if there was a possibility of them partnering with the government in this particularly difficult financial year, Mr. Speaker, to see if they can draw upon some of their savings to help out the province of Saskatchewan in a very difficult financial year.

The University of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is sitting on about \$300 million in savings at their campus, about 200 million of it in what they call restricted funds that's controlled by their board of governors. They can make changes to those dollars if they so choose, but they are in what we call restricted funds. They have about \$100 million in unrestricted funds, Mr. Speaker, that the University of Saskatchewan can access.

Now the people of this province, when the Government of Saskatchewan has access to a rainy day fund, if you will, expect us to access the rainy day fund rather than raise their taxes. Now the opposition, if you listen to the rhetoric of the opposition members on budget day and in some of their questions, they would expect this government, when the University of Saskatchewan is sitting on \$100 million in their savings account, they would rather this government increase taxes on single moms and senior citizens and those on fixed incomes and others in this province to give them an additional fourteen and a half million dollars when they already have \$100 million sitting in their savings account, Mr. Speaker.

We made that difficult decision to go and ask the University of Saskatchewan if they'll partner with us. That's exactly what they did, Mr. Speaker. You'd think by what the NDP rhetoric is over there that we somehow cut the funding to the University of Saskatchewan, never intending to make it whole again, Mr. Speaker, and then it's going to deplete them of everything they have in their savings account. It couldn't be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker.

I'll just close, Mr. Speaker, by talking a little bit about what I've come to I think be disappointed, is probably the strongest term I can use inside the Chamber here, Mr. Speaker, with the lack of debate, the lack of debate between competing ideas in

this Chamber, Mr. Speaker. And I find that that's either out of fear or it's out of lack of planning or it's out of lack of confidence in being able to put forward their ideas so that the people of this province can say, well we want to choose this idea over that idea.

Because what we've done here, Mr. Speaker, we've done all along . . . This Premier, when he was leader of the opposition, put out a document on a growth plan with respect to what he wanted to see the province do, where he wanted to take the province if he ever became premier. He became Premier, Mr. Speaker, and he lived up to that promise. Then he issued a growth plan a couple of years ago, Mr. Speaker, to show the people of this province some objectives that we would lay out to say, here's things we want to accomplish over the next 10, 20, 30 years. They're goals, Mr. Speaker; they're specific goals. And people will judge you on your goals. You may not reach them all the time, but people are happy that you have set goals and you have a plan to achieve those goals, Mr. Speaker.

And so I've been waiting. I've been waiting. We're about a year away from an election, Mr. Speaker. A year from now we'll be campaigning. We'll be campaigning and hopefully at that point in time there'll be competing ideas out there that the people of this province can look at and make a judgment on, Mr. Speaker. Because it is a choice. It is a choice between the vision between this government, this Premier, this party, and the Leader of the Opposition and the NDP Party, Mr. Speaker.

Now the Leader of the Opposition has been leader for I think just over two years. I think March 9th was his anniversary date since he was elected leader of that party. And I congratulate him on that hard-fought campaign with some other members of their party in winning the leadership of the NDP, Mr. Speaker. You would think, over the course of two years, that the Leader of the Opposition might want to lay out a vision, might want to tell the people of this province exactly what it is that he would like to do if he ever became premier. He seeks to be in the highest office in the province, Mr. Speaker. He aspires to be the premier of this province, and yet he won't tell people what it is that he stands for. I find that frustrating, Mr. Speaker, and I know talking to more and more people in my travels around the province, they find it equally frustrating.

So then when they issued their news release, pre-budget news release, Mr. Speaker, I thought . . . This was dated March 16th, a couple of days before the budget came down. I thought, well here's where he's going to lay out some of the things that they're going to want to see with respect to how the province's money should be spent, where the priorities should be, Mr. Speaker, with respect to, as they put it, "Opposition wants budget to re-route spending to priority areas." So you'd think there'd be an awful lot in there with respect to objectives and targets in health care, education, post-secondary education, highways and infrastructure, social services — the priority areas of the people of this province.

[22:15]

So I read this document with great interest, Mr. Speaker. And here's what I've come to truly believe. And I don't want to be unfair to the Leader of the Opposition or members of the opposition caucus, but I've come to truly believe they just don't

fundamentally understand economics, Mr. Speaker. They just don't fundamentally understand how the budget process is developed. Now maybe the member from Lakeview, who's been in cabinet a number of times and sat at the cabinet table — and I don't know if he was at the treasury board table; I assume he was at some point in time, Mr. Speaker — has an understanding how that's done.

But he's being led now by a Leader of the Opposition, a Leader of the Opposition from Saskatoon Massey Place, that doesn't get up in this Chamber and ever ask a question about economics, Mr. Speaker. He never asks a question about the economic activity in this province. He never asks a question about the economic impact of any particular sector in this province, Mr. Speaker. He never gets calls from national media to say, what do you think about what's happening in the oil industry relative to the rest of the country because in Saskatchewan, you produce oil? He never gets asked for his opinion on agricultural matters from the province that has the largest arable land, the largest number of acres of arable land in the entire country, Mr. Speaker. He never gets asked any of those questions on national issues. Our Premier does, Mr. Speaker.

So when I read through their pre-budget release I thought, well there's going to be some interesting information in here with respect to where they want to see post-secondary education go. Here's what they said on post-secondary education, Mr. Speaker, and I quote, "Deliver more education and training opportunities for Saskatchewan people, including First Nations and Métis people. Deliver. I'm going to repeat that, Mr. Speaker, in case you didn't . . . "Deliver more education and training opportunities for Saskatchewan people, including First Nations and Métis people."

He might as well have stood up and said, well can you just do some more? Do what you're doing, but maybe do some more because that's what we would do. We would just do more. He doesn't say how many more training seats he would have at Saskatchewan Polytechnic. He doesn't say the areas of training he would have at Saskatchewan Polytechnic. He doesn't say how much more money they should put into the universities. He doesn't say what he would do with respect to student support services in this province, Mr. Speaker, including their iteration of a graduate retention program. He doesn't say any of that kind of stuff, Mr. Speaker. He just says, well do more.

And then when the Advanced Education critic was asked on budget day, okay, if you don't like the changes to the GRP [graduate retention program], what would you do, the silence was deafening, Mr. Speaker. And he had that blank look on his face, as I said earlier today, and he kind of went, well we wouldn't do that. And reporters said, well what exactly would you do then? Well we wouldn't do that. They have no answer, Mr. Speaker. They have no answer because I've come to realize they have no fundamental understanding of how to go about developing our economy.

The number one economic priority or policy put forth by the Leader of the Opposition and members of the opposition is to buy local the first Saturday of every month, Mr. Speaker, in the province of Saskatchewan. That's the sum total of their economic development policy they put forward so far, is to buy

local every first Saturday of every month, Mr. Speaker. Now who would disagree with that? We have said on this side of the House we would encourage all citizens to buy locally as much as they possibly can, Mr. Speaker, every single day of the week, in their towns and villages and cities here in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. That's the sum total of their economic development policy.

And then I got thinking, well maybe it's just he's playing possum here, Mr. Speaker, and going to hold out until the election campaign because he doesn't want to give up this secret plan that he has — this master plan, as my colleague said — in telling the people of this province what he's going to do. There's some magic he's going to create, and it's going to come out and wow the people like their big calculator back in the 2011 election, Mr. Speaker.

And I realize now that that's not going to be the case. And why? Because the last paragraph of their news release said it all to me, Mr. Speaker. "The Opposition New Democrats . . ." This is written by the Leader of the Opposition. "The Opposition New Democrats strongly oppose any government effort to recoup the small dip in revenue caused by low oil prices . . ."

The small dip in revenue, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about 650 to \$700 million that we had a hole in with respect to this past year's revenues, Mr. Speaker. And what did we have to do as treasury board? We had to find a way to not only deal with that loss of revenue, Mr. Speaker, and not only have to deal with that loss of revenue, but when we have to keep campaign commitments and when we have to keep spending commitments to the people of this province, we have to find ways to ensure we keep those commitments.

You can't just shut down hospitals. Well no you can, because the NDP shut down 52 of them, Mr. Speaker. You can't just close schools. Well no you can, Mr. Speaker, because the NDP closed 176 of them. You can't just rip up contracts to farmers and say we're not going to pay that out, like the gross revenue insurance plan. Well no, in fact you can, Mr. Speaker, because that's what the NDP did. So we as a treasury board, Mr. Speaker, and we as a cabinet and we as a caucus had to make some very difficult decisions when you're faced with a dip in oil revenue to the tune of \$700 million, Mr. Speaker.

So we made some difficult choices. And we're prepared to debate those difficult choices here on the floor of this legislature and take this to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. I've been saying to some of my friends on the other side, and I've said to them, I've said, would you like us to call an election and campaign on this budget, if you think this budget is so bad? And the member from Lakeview got up and spoke eloquently earlier tonight about the fact that he was so disappointed in this budget. If you think this budget is so bad, would you be prepared to go to the people of this province and campaign against this budget and present your plan? There's not one of them over there, Mr. Speaker, that can look me in the eye and answer that question.

Why? Because they don't have a plan, Mr. Speaker. They don't have an alternative to what this budget is to go out there. Every single day they come into this Chamber and they say, we just think you should spend more. Well maybe you're spending too

much. Because you've got record revenues, you spent too much money. But every single time they get up and ask a question they say, well you should spend more. The simple answer to every single one of their dilemmas, Mr. Speaker, when they're looking at a problem in this province, is that you should just spend more.

We on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, made other difficult choices. We made decisions with respect to where we're going to have to pare back some funding. We did things like, as I said earlier, dealing with the University of Saskatchewan and asking them if they would dip into their rainy day fund and help out for one year with respect to some of the funds that they have available, most of which came from the taxpayer in the first place, Mr. Speaker.

So when we sat down, Mr. Speaker, we realized that there are a number of choices available to us as a treasury board and as a cabinet. There's the revenue side and the expenditure side. The provincial budget is not that much more complicated than running a business or running your own household, Mr. Speaker, because of the fact that you only have a limited amount of revenue available to you. Well I suppose you have more than a limited amount if you're prepared to raise taxes. This government chose not to do that, Mr. Speaker. Faced with difficult choices, faced with this little dip in revenue from the oil going down 6 or \$700 million, we chose not to go into the pockets of the people of this province or the businesses of this province, Mr. Speaker, particularly small business, and take more money from them. We made those difficult choices, Mr. Speaker, and we're prepared to take that out to the people of this province and explain to them exactly what it is that we did.

Now faced with the same kinds of choices when the NDP was in government, Mr. Speaker, when the NDP was in government — and we heard them all giving their various speeches here in response to the budget, Mr. Speaker — faced with these kinds of difficult choices themselves, what did we see them do? What did we see them do, Mr. Speaker? They sat at the cabinet table, no different than we did. They sat at the treasury board table and they sat at their caucus table and they had to make some decisions with how they were going to balance the budget. What were they going to do?

And when they made those choices, Mr. Speaker, they didn't go out and consult with the people. They didn't go out and say, well we want to find out from you exactly what you think we ought to do because we're faced with this dip in oil revenue of 6 or \$700 million or whatever the issue they were faced with in that particular time, Mr. Speaker. They chose to raise taxes 17 times. Seventeen times in the course of 16 years, Mr. Speaker. Seventeen times they went to the people and said, well we know you're struggling, we know it's hard out there, but we're going to raise your taxes. We're going to take more money from you. We're going to take more money from you and reduce services to you, particularly in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

They raised income taxes twice. They went after everybody on income taxes, Mr. Speaker — high-income earners, low-income earners, middle-income earners, people on fixed incomes, single parents as they always like to raise in this House. They went after small businesses, Mr. Speaker, and the other

businesses in this province, and raised their taxes four different times during the course of 16 years. These are the choices that they made.

They could've done some of the things that we did. They could've worked even harder to try to find where there's more efficiencies inside the budget, Mr. Speaker, and pare back spending. They chose not to do that.

Then of course there's the education property tax hikes, Mr. Speaker. The education property tax hikes that resulted in revolts, resulted in people actually not paying their taxes because they were fed up with this government not listening to them, to the NDP government not listening to them, and there was a revolt.

And then of course they stopped spending. They stopped spending on infrastructure in this province, Mr. Speaker, again particularly in rural Saskatchewan. They stopped building roads. They stopped building highways. They shut down hospitals — 52 of them, Mr. Speaker, in rural Saskatchewan and the Plains Health Centre here in Regina — probably the worst decision ever made by that particular member over there, Mr. Speaker, and his colleagues at the cabinet table. And he rues the day that they ever made that decision, I'm quite sure.

They shut down schools, 176 schools, Mr. Speaker, nearly one a month for 16 years. And they fired over 600 nurses, drove doctors out of the province, and said to the young people of this province, we don't care if you stay in Saskatchewan. We don't care. Matter of fact I believe one cabinet minister said, well the more that leave, that means there's more left for the rest of us here in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

We made a different choice. We made a different choice to continue to keep taxes low in this province, Mr. Speaker, to not increase taxes. We made a choice to continue to invest in infrastructure, particularly highways, particularly health care facilities, educational facilities including in the post-secondary sector that I'm responsible for, Mr. Speaker.

We've built 1,200 residents' beds in this province at our universities, Mr. Speaker. Over the course of the last 16 years the NDP built 44. So every time they get up and they talk about . . . I know the member from Saskatoon Centre always talks about the housing crisis or the rental vacancies. They don't tell the people of this province that when they had the opportunity to invest in housing and invest in residences for our post-secondary educational students, Mr. Speaker, they built 44 beds over the course of 16 years. We've built 1,200 in our first eight years in office, Mr. Speaker.

So I find it passing strange that the Leader of the Opposition, when he comes into this House, asks a lot of questions about health care. And I think that that's an appropriate area for the Leader of the Opposition to raise questions about health care. And he raises some very serious issues, Mr. Speaker, on a daily basis and ones that the Premier and the Minister of Health and the Minister of Rural and Remote Health take very seriously. And they investigate those cases, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that, where we can, that those kinds of things never ever happen again.

But what I do find rather really strange is that he never comes into this House and asks any questions about agriculture. He's asked the odd question about education. He's never asked a question, to my knowledge since he's been Leader of the Opposition, about the post-secondary educational sector. He's never asked a question about highways and infrastructure. I might be wrong about that, Mr. Speaker, but they never ask any questions about highways and infrastructure anyway. It shows up nowhere in their particular news releases when they're talking about the pre-Throne Speech news release or the pre-budget news release. Nowhere in there do they talk about highways and infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. And they certainly never ask any questions about the economy, as the Minister of the Economy rightly points out.

You would think, Mr. Speaker, when oil has gone from over \$100 a barrel to less than \$50 a barrel during the course of one fiscal year, one fiscal year, you would think that maybe just once the Leader of the Opposition might want to get up and say, here's our contingency plan for what we would do if we were in government faced with the same dilemma that this government's faced with, with the drop in revenues. His answer, Mr. Speaker? Bring back the film tax credit.

He was going to bring back the film tax credit to pay Hollywood producers to come to this province and — to use their numbers — for every dollar the government spends, you get \$44 back in the economy. And we know that that's not exactly correct, Mr. Speaker, because 44 per cent of whatever filmmakers spent was on the procurement of goods and services outside the province of Saskatchewan, so it didn't add a dime to our bottom line here in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. But that's the Leader of the Opposition's sum total. He wants everyone in Saskatchewan to buy locally every first Saturday of every month, Mr. Speaker, and then he's going to bring back the film employment tax credit to revive the economy when we lost \$700 million in oil revenue.

I think that the people of this province, Mr. Speaker, when they look at what this government is doing, what this government is doing with respect to the challenges that we are faced with, the challenges that we are faced with, Mr. Speaker, particularly engaging in Aboriginal post-secondary education and getting them involved in the economy, Mr. Speaker . . . and I'm very proud to say that over 16,000 First Nations and Métis learners are now enrolled at post-secondary educational institutions in this province, Mr. Speaker. In the Leader of the Opposition's own news release, he said that we should do more . . . [inaudible] . . . deliver more education and training opportunities for Saskatchewan people, including First Nations and Métis people, Mr. Speaker.

We increased funding to the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies by 24 per cent year over year. We have increased funding to that institution by 121 per cent since we came to office, Mr. Speaker. Both the president of SIIT and I believe the vice-chief, Bobby Cameron, from FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] were quoted in the newspaper recently, Mr. Speaker, talking about how delighted they were with the increase in funding, by the recognition of this government that if we invest in post-secondary education for First Nations and Métis learners, that they will take full advantage of that and then become fully engaged in the

economy.

And when asked by the media to the Leader of the Opposition, what do you think about that? He said, well they ought to do more. They ought to do more, Mr. Speaker. He doesn't set any particular target as to how much more they ought to do. He just says that everything that you've done is not enough. You ought to do more, Mr. Speaker.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, that given the fact that this particular Leader of the Opposition aspires to the highest office in the land, aspires to be premier of this province, he's got to do more than come in this Chamber every single day and criticize the government for not spending enough. And then someone else gets up and criticizes the government for spending too much, Mr. Speaker.

I think what we've done here with respect to the choices that were available to us relative to the choices that were available to the opposition when they were in government, Mr. Speaker, I think we made the right choices. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the motion by the Minister of Finance for this budget and not supporting the amendment by the opposition. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — It now being after the hour of 10:30, this House stands adjourned to 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:30.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EVENING SITTING

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

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

Ottenbreit	6721
Heppner	6725
Nilson	6727
Docherty	6730
Eagles	6734
Harpauer	6737
Tell	6740
Nilson (point of order)	6743
Cheveldayoff (point of order)	6743
The Speaker (point of order)	6744
Doherty	6744

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Brad Wall
Premier
President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Bill Boyd
Minister of the Economy
Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for The Global
Transportation Hub Authority
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Power Corporation

Hon. Jennifer Campeau
Minister of Central Services
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Transportation Company

Hon. Mark Docherty
Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for the Provincial
Capital Commission

Hon. Kevin Doherty
Minister of Advanced Education
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Telecommunications

Hon. Dustin Duncan
Minister of Health

Hon. Donna Harpauer
Minister of Social Services
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Minister Responsible for Immigration,
Jobs, Skills and Training
Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan
Minister Responsible for Innovation
Minister Responsible for Trade

Hon. Nancy Heppner
Minister of Highways and Infrastructure
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Gaming Corporation

Hon. Ken Krawetz
Deputy Premier
Minister of Finance

Hon. Don McMorris
Minister of Crown Investments
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Government Insurance
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Liquor and Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission
Minister Responsible for the Lean Initiative

Hon. Scott Moe
Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Security Agency
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Corporation

Hon. Don Morgan
Minister of Education
Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan
Workers' Compensation Board

Hon. Greg Ottenbreit
Minister Responsible for Rural and Remote Health

Hon. Jim Reiter
Minister of Government Relations
Minister Responsible for First Nations,
Métis and Northern Affairs
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated

Hon. Lyle Stewart
Minister of Agriculture
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Crop
Insurance Corporation

Hon. Christine Tell
Minister Responsible for Corrections and Policing

Hon. Gordon Wyant
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Minister Responsible for SaskBuilds