



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

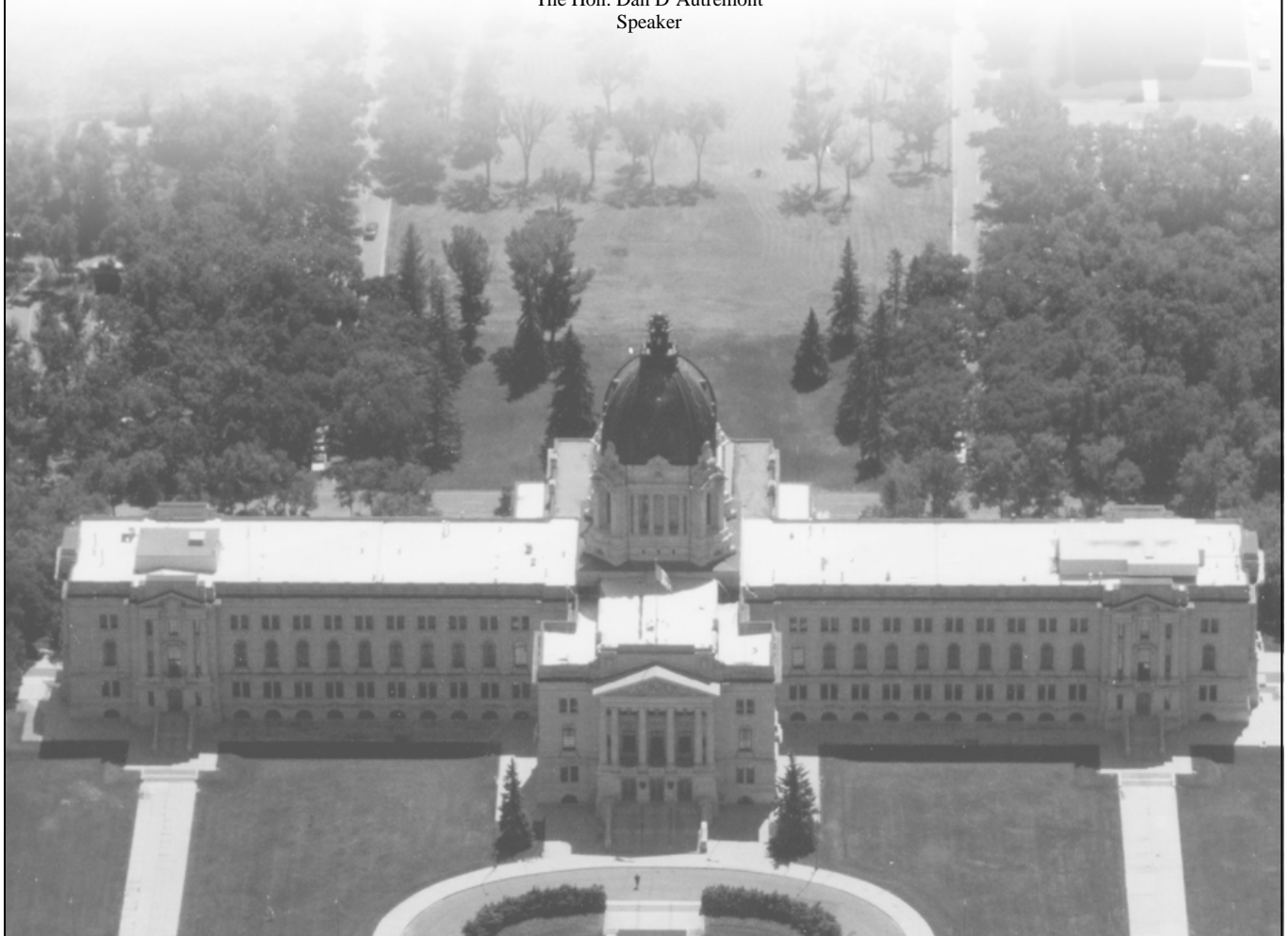
of the

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 met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, seated in the west gallery are 20 grade 5 and 6 students from Punnichy Elementary. They are accompanied today by their teachers, Ms. Andrea Wiens and Ms. Brittany Gent, and their teacher's assistant, Cathy Crowe-Buffalo. Also with them today, Mr. Speaker, is their bus driver, Mr. Cecil Crowe-Buffalo.

I'll be meeting with them after. They're here to observe question period, and I'm sure they'll have a lot of questions. And I would ask all members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Rural and Remote Health.

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, a couple of people I think I may have introduced before, but I'm always happy to introduce them when they're visiting in the Legislative Assembly: formerly of Lanigan, sometimes of Lanigan but more over from Yorkton at this point, Pastor Kevin and Rachelle Sawatsky, LifePoint Church in Lanigan. Currently running the DreamCentre in Yorkton, opened the DreamCentre and a DreamLand for kids, which is a great ministry opportunity providing a lot of activities for inner city and all types of kids throughout Yorkton and the surrounding area, Mr. Speaker.

And aside from being pastors, Rachelle is also an assistant in my office, has been a real blessing coming into that office. The capacity of work that she brings, her expertise is really needed and very commendable. And I'd just ask all members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to introduce two gentlemen seated in the west gallery. One is Bill Stevenson. He is a tireless advocate for people of north central Regina, and he will be our candidate in the 2016, possibly 2015 provincial election in Regina Elphinstone. So I'd like to welcome him to his Legislative Assembly.

And beside him is Joel Sopp, a friend of mine that I've got to know him better over the last couple of months — he moved to Regina by way of Shaunavon — who has interesting stories from the people down in Shaunavon about people that used to sit in this Assembly. And he has very interesting conversations that we are able to have. He's involved in politics and a great supporter and a good friend, and I just want to welcome him to

his Legislative Assembly as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member opposite in welcoming Bill Stevenson and Joel Sopp to their Legislative Assembly. Certainly, Joel Sopp, no stranger to this place, and Bill Stevenson, certainly no stranger to this place either. I'd like to wish them both well, Mr. Speaker, and particularly in the case of Mr. Stevenson, I'd ask him to keep on enjoying the view from the gallery for a right long time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition in support of greater support for education. We know that education is one of the most vital services that government provides to its citizens, but this government has failed to deliver a long-term plan and vision and the necessary resources to prioritize the delivery of educational excellence. We know that this government has failed to develop a real plan to close the Aboriginal education gap, support English as an additional language students, support community schools and their communities and students. And we know we must build the best education system for today and for Saskatchewan's future. I'd like to read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly call on this government to immediately prioritize education by laying out a long-term vision and plan with the necessary resources that provides the best quality education for Saskatchewan, that reflects Saskatchewan's demographic and population changes, that's based on proven educational best practices, that is developed through consultation with the education sector, and that builds strong educational infrastructure to serve students and communities long into the future.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, people signing this petition come from Moose Jaw and Regina. I do so present. Thank you.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again today to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents as it relates to the unsafe conditions created on Dewdney Avenue by that government with their failure to appropriately plan heavy-haul truck traffic, Mr. Speaker. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly call on the provincial government to immediately take action as it relates to the unacceptable danger, disturbance, and infrastructure damage caused by the heavy-haul traffic on Dewdney Avenue west of the city centre, to ensure the safety and

well-being of communities, families, residents, and users; and that those actions and plans should include rerouting the heavy-haul truck traffic, receive provincial funding, and be developed through consultation with the city of Regina, communities, and residents.

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

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

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased today to rise to present a petition in support of safe staffing levels in long-term care. The petitioners point out, Mr. Speaker, that many aspects of long-term care are deteriorating under this government; that this government was the one that removed regulations requiring a minimum standard of care for seniors, which has resulted in neglect; and that chronic understaffing in long-term care facilities results in unacceptable conditions, including unanswered calls for help, infrequent bathing, and a rise in physical violence amongst residents. I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause the government to commit to the creation of safe staffing levels for all valued members of the health care team and to reintroduce actual numbers of staff to match the level of care needs and the number of residents under their care in long-term care facilities.

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

Mr. Speaker, once again there's signatures from a variety of places here in Saskatchewan. Folks today are from Wymark, Rosetown, Moose Jaw, Kindersley, Clavet, Eatonia, Swift Current, Saskatoon, Melfort, and Naicam. I so present.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition for real action on climate change. The people who have signed this want to bring to our attention the following: that Saskatchewan produces the highest greenhouse gas emissions per capita in Canada; and that the Saskatchewan government has failed to tackle climate change, reduce emissions to the province's own targets, or put in a real plan to protect the natural environment; and since 2009 the government has reduced climate change funding by 83 per cent, including another 35 per cent cut in the 2014-15 budget.

In the prayer that reads as follows, they ask:

That the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan enact a real plan and allocate appropriate funding in the provincial budget to tackle climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, helping families transition to energy-efficient homes, and encouraging everyone in the

province to take real action to protect the environment.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by individuals from Swift Current, Moose Jaw, Meyronne, Lloydminster, and Battleford. I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Strong Kids Campaign

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend I had the pleasure of bringing greetings on behalf of the government to the YMCA's [Young Men's Christian Association] Strong Kids Megathon Carnival in Regina. The carnival's purpose is to raise awareness about the dangers of childhood obesity and inactivity. All money that was raised at the event will help more children, teens, and families stay healthy and active at the YMCA. This year's event included many fun activities for the kids such as spin the wheel, fishing, beanbag toss, parachute games, crafts, face painting, and an obstacle course, healthy snacks, and much, much more.

Mr. Speaker, the Strong Kids campaign is very important as we know that kids partaking in sports and activities is vital to maintaining healthy and active lifestyles. Keeping active is important in all stages of life as it can prevent disease and chronic conditions.

Mr. Speaker, the YMCA of Regina is to be commended for its continued commitment to our community. I am particularly impressed with its visions and actions towards building a healthy future for our children and their families. The YMCA of Regina offers accessible, affordable programming to all families within their facilities. Strong communities make strong families.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the YMCA of Regina for putting this event on and bringing awareness of the importance of healthy and active lifestyles for our children. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Remembering Lilly Daniels

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, it's with great sadness that I rise in the Assembly today to note that Lilly Daniels, a respected Elder and all-round extraordinary woman, passed away yesterday at the age of 80. And it is with great humility that I take this moment to publicly honour Kohkom Lilly for a life well lived.

She wasn't a big person, Mr. Speaker, less than five feet tall, and so was given the name of Wapimaskwa Iskweew, White Bear Woman, so she would have a strong animal to guide and protect her. She said that she grew up in the school of hard knocks and her early life was indeed a chronicle of loss, of hardship, and injustice. Perhaps the most extraordinary of all her many achievements is that, despite those early and awful circumstances, she survived and was widely known as a woman

who was gentle, kind, generous, and loving.

After the death of her husband, Alan, Kohkom Lilly said she began to dream of powwow dancers and caused her to found the Rainbow Youth Dancers in 1978. And since then because of her, hundreds if not thousands of young people have learned to dance powwow, and they in turn have kept that circle strong.

Lilly Daniels began her journey as a kid living with her family on a road allowance on the outskirts of Gordon Reserve, and it ended here yesterday in the inner city Regina neighbourhood she's called home since the early 1960s.

In the course of that journey, she showed us how to live a life of humour, generosity, leadership, and compassion. Kohkom Lilly is a woman to be emulated, and she surely can't be replaced. Our condolences go out from this Assembly to the family of Lilly Daniels and her many, many friends. Ēkosi.

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

President of MD Ambulance Retires

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to recognize the outstanding career of Dave Dutchak. On June 17, Dave will retire as president and CEO [chief executive office] of MD Ambulance after 36 years with the company. The creation of MD Ambulance and the beginning of Dave's paramedic career can be tracked back more than half a century.

Dave's sister, brother, and cousin were involved in a car accident just outside of Blaine Lake in 1957. There was no ambulance in Blaine Lake at the time, Mr. Speaker, so Mr. Dutchak's father, Michael, used his army first aid training and loaded up the kids and transported them to the hospital. Shortly afterward Michael started a family ambulance business with a station wagon that he equipped with an army cot and a red light.

Dave quickly became involved with the family business, helping out with the dispatching and washing of the vehicles. He would later move to Prince Albert to help his two brothers run their ambulance service before joining MD Ambulance in Saskatoon as a paramedic in 1979. MD Ambulance Care started serving Saskatoon and district in 1976 with one ambulance serving the local horse racetrack. Today MD Ambulance has 11 vehicles and 180 staff.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Dave Dutchak on his well-earned retirement and thanking MD Ambulance for the vitally important service they provide to the people of our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ending Discrimination With Think Good, Do Good

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday I had the opportunity to attend an event along with the Minister of Education to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, hosted by an interfaith group of

Saskatoon moms called Think Good, Do Good and the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission.

Students from five different elementary schools came together at the University of Saskatchewan's Convocation Hall with community leaders to celebrate our province's diversity and to call for an end to discrimination. In the lead-up to the day, the mothers worked in the classrooms with the students on the three Rs: respect, rights, and responsibilities. After a number of presentations about the importance of welcoming and including those who are different, the elementary students fanned out across the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] campus to hand out Think Good, Do Good pins and spark conversations about racism and intolerance in our society.

Mr. Speaker, in our province we have Jews, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, many others, people who follow Aboriginal spirituality, people who aren't sure about faith, and people who follow no religion at all. Think Good, Do Good's message is that good people have good values, no matter what their religion. We've come a long way when it comes to making sure that everyone in our province feels welcome and included, but there is so much more that needs to be done to stamp out intolerance and discrimination in our society.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking Heather Fenyes, Fatima Coodvadia, and all of the people who worked hard to make this event such a success, and to do their part in spreading the Think Good, Do Good message throughout our province. Thank you.

[13:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Immigration.

Door of Hope Wins Award

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate my friend Unita Esau for winning the Innovator Award from Food Banks Canada as executive director of the Door of Hope in Meadow Lake.

The Door of Hope is a food bank and soup kitchen in Meadow Lake which recently began offering health clinics for their clients. A nurse practitioner comes in once a week, assisted by another health care professional offering flexible services dependent on the clients' needs. Those needs have ranged from addictions issues, diabetes care and advice on nutrition, and those managing chronic conditions.

Mr. Speaker, the Door of Hope's clients have embraced these additional programs, showing that a little help and education can go a long way for some of our most vulnerable people. Unita and those at the Door of Hope received their award for the innovation of having referrals from the clinic to the food bank being custom-tailored to a client. This is done by looking at their individual needs, such as diabetes or a new mother.

People like Unita and all the staff and volunteers at the Door of Hope are truly making a difference in our communities and providing people a hand up. I want to thank Unita Esau and the Door of Hope for the work they do in our community and congratulate them once again for winning this award. Thank

you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Budget Supports First Nations Institutes

Mr. Norris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, although members opposite have all but ignored last week's budget, Saturday's headline in the *Leader-Post* offered an important statement regarding Saskatchewan's balanced budget: "First Nations institutes pleased."

With an additional 24 per cent increase year over year to the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, this means that SIIT has seen a 121 per cent increase in operating funding since 2007. And Riel Bellegarde, SIIT president, is very pleased. On budget day, he said that it "sends an important signal" that the government recognizes the importance that First Nations contributions are helping to meet the current and future labour needs of this province.

Mr. Speaker, this government knows that we cannot be successful if we don't keep engaging our First Nations and Métis students. That commitment helps to explain why we've also increased operating funding to the Dumont Technical Institute by 169 per cent since 2007. And the FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] agrees. On budget day, Second Vice-chief Bobby Cameron noted that, regarding increased funding for SIIT, "The \$2.2 million is going to go a long way in terms of having our students succeed in post-secondary education and the trades."

We believe in keeping Saskatchewan strong, and our partnership with SIIT and others offers real, tangible support for our Aboriginal students. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Inspired by the Team Clark Spirit

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, Clark Froehlich was a grade 8 student at L.P. Miller high school in Nipawin who passed away after a hard-fought battle with Burkitt's leukemia not long after his 13th birthday. Clark was passionate about everything he took part in, and he loved all sports.

While Clark and his family battled, a very unique team was formed in Nipawin. This team was inspired by Clark's battle and organized fundraising events all over Saskatchewan. This fundraising helped the Froehlich family and the children's ward at the Royal University Hospital. In 2014, inspired by the Team Clark story, the under-17 girls' volleyball club in Nipawin, the NVC [Nipawin Volleyball Club] Serve-Ivors hosted a tournament raising \$2,100. These funds were used to purchase a daybed and a fridge for the RUH [Royal University Hospital] pediatric cancer ward. In 2015 the tournament raised \$3,200.

Mr. Speaker, Clark was a natural leader. He was compassionate, had a great sense of humour, and an outstanding work ethic, and a determined personality. His courageous battle inspires those around him. The Serve-Ivors were classmates of Clark's and

have proudly taken on the Team Clark spirit, believing that through sport we can inspire people to be better athletes, competitors, and leaders.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in congratulating Team Clark and the Serve-Ivors for their dedication and for inspiring people from all walks of life. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Maintaining Health Infrastructure

Mr. Broten: — My question is for the Premier. What is the latest cost estimate for repairing our hospitals and care facilities?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the very specific number can be provided to members by the minister here in subsequent questions. I will say in a general response to the Leader of the Opposition's questions that our government has invested an historic level of money in health care capital in the province, including on the maintenance side of things. Mr. Speaker, the health care infrastructure deficit left behind was very significant and so all the work that we would like to see done has not yet been completed.

Mr. Speaker, that's part of the reason why we have budgeted in this particular budget a record amount of infrastructure capital investment, including in health care, not limited to health care but including in health care institutions, Mr. Speaker. This government's going to continue to provide maintenance dollars, new capital building. Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to invest in health care infrastructure in the province.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, sadly it's not surprising that an answer for the figure was not provided by the Premier because it actually very much matches the track record that we see with this government when it comes to being open and transparent about the needs.

We had to fight to get the government to release the report done by Vanderwiell Facility Assessors. The government broke the law by sitting on the VFA [Vanderwiell Facility Assessors] report for eight months. And that report, Mr. Speaker, identified \$2.2 billion of infrastructure needs. But internal material showed that the amount is likely much more than that: "The assessments were based on a visual inspection. No invasive testing was completed, therefore there may be additional repairs required that are not visible."

So the estimate, the estimate was \$2.2 billion, but that was solely on a visual inspection back in 2013. So my question to the Premier: what is the most recent cost estimate for repairing our hospitals and care facilities? What is the number?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is correct. The VFA was prepared, the assessment was done, and then released. I mean I'm not . . . He's talking about laws being broken in the intervening months. It was released publicly.

The difference, Mr. Speaker, between what our government did and what they did when they were in opposition is they prepared, or they had a VFA prepared in terms of an assessment of our health care facilities, and they might release that report but then they provided zero dollars to address the concerns listed in the report. There was no money attendant to the report release. And the Hon. Leader of the Opposition should remember that.

Mr. Speaker, the figure with respect to the assessments completed on about 270 facilities was, and it's been released, at about \$2.2 billion, Mr. Speaker. Over two-thirds of these facilities were constructed in the '60s, '70s, and '80s, Mr. Speaker, where previous governments — not just the New Democrats, to be fair, but previous governments — would have had the chance to do something more than talk about health care capital or assess health care infrastructure. They could have actually done something about it, Mr. Speaker.

On this side of the House, we've worked hard to do something about it. Since 2007, our government has invested over \$1 billion in health care, Mr. Speaker. I can inform members of the House that last year's budget for health care maintenance alone was 23.3 million. This year's budget for health care maintenance alone, only maintenance, 27.8 million, a significant increase, Mr. Speaker, which speaks to the record of the government understanding there is more work to be done.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, they sat on the report for eight months, breaking the freedom of information law, and this is something actually that the commissioner will be ruling on in the very near future.

The need now is well over \$2.2 billion but this government, this government is devoting less than \$28 million to repair our crumbling hospitals and care facilities. That's not even 1.3 per cent of what is needed. At that rate, Mr. Speaker, even if our hospitals and care facilities magically stopped getting worse, at that rate it would take almost 80 years before this government would finally address the existing infrastructure needs in our hospitals and care facilities. That approach, Mr. Speaker, makes no sense. My question to the Premier: what exactly is this government's plan to fix our crumbling hospitals and care facilities?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, what makes no sense is for a previous government that that member is a member of, his party in government, to actually conduct the assessments and then do nothing about them. What makes little sense in terms of maintenance and capital spending is to close facilities in community after community. I guess the NDP theory is you don't actually have to do any maintenance if you close 52 hospitals. I guess the theory is you don't have to fix up the Plains or worry about its state if you close the Plains hospital. I

guess their theory is you don't have to worry about maintenance in long-term care if you close over 1,000 long-term care beds, Mr. Speaker.

But we do things differently on this side of the House. The VFA is out. The infrastructure deficit left behind is very significant. The government however has responded with over \$1 billion in health care capital alone, in fact 1.2 billion in capital funding since 2007 in health care alone. And you know, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member wants to do the math and isn't aware of it, that's a 132 per cent increase over what happened under the NDP.

We know there's more work to be done. That's why, in this budget, this Minister of Finance has tabled plans for record investment in capital in the province, including health care capital, including new long-term care facilities, including new hospitals being completed, Mr. Speaker, and maintenance increased in this particular budget.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, years of record revenue that this government has had at its disposal, and nothing but rhetoric in this Premier's response.

Here's a quote, Mr. Speaker, a quote that I think the Premier should listen to: "The greatest challenge facing Saskatchewan is not the expansion of infrastructure, but rather maintaining and adapting what currently exists." Where is that quote from, Mr. Speaker? Well it's from this government's very own internal documents. It says the greatest challenge is keeping up with maintenance. This is what's prepared for the ministers. They have this information. The Premier knows it.

If that is the greatest challenge, keeping up with maintenance, which is what the Ministry of Health identifies as their biggest challenge, then how is this government's 1.3 per cent, drop-in-the-bucket approach remotely acceptable? Where is this government's plan to fix our crumbling hospitals and care facilities?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, oh what a smoking gun the Hon. Leader of the Opposition has discovered. He's discovered what the government has said publicly over and over again.

He's discovered what the government has said in respect of what was left behind by members opposite in education, which was a complete ignoring of education maintenance, Mr. Speaker, of health care maintenance. They would do the assessments, they'd do the reports, and nothing would get done save of course for closing facilities. That was their capital plan for the province, and closing long-term care beds, Mr. Speaker.

Of course maintenance is important. That's why in this very budget . . . If the member opposite is asking for us to spend more on maintenance and health care capital, duly noted. The budget for increasing maintenance funding and health care capital buildings, capital structures across the province, in this budget now being debated in this Assembly, is an increase of 20 per cent. So the question goes back to the member opposite: if

this is his priority, will they do the right thing and vote for the budget?

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, it is appalling that this government has absolutely no plan and no sound answer on how it is addressing the problems in our care facilities. Their approach of 1.3 per cent addressing the over \$2.2 billion would take 80 years. And all we get is the Premier popping up and patting himself on the back, Mr. Speaker? It is unbelievable.

If this Premier, if he doesn't want to listen to what the Ministry of Health identifies as their biggest challenge, perhaps he'll listen to what other leaders within the health sector have had to say. We can hear what the former CEO of the Saskatoon Health Region had to say. Now before they got rid of her, Maura Davies said this:

It's like when you've got an old house and you haven't had the money or been unable to borrow the money to repair the roof, windows, flooring, mechanical, ventilation systems. It's basic infrastructure that's our biggest priority.

So the Ministry of Health says that the infrastructure needs are the biggest challenge. Senior Health officials say that it is their major, top priority, Mr. Speaker. But this government has \$28 million, 1.3 per cent of what is needed to address it.

And look at this contrast, Mr. Speaker. The Finance minister is talking about millions here. They have \$40 million, they have \$40 million for John Black's consulting fees, but \$28 million to address the infrastructure problems and crumbling buildings. Talk about mixed-up priorities, Mr. Speaker. My question to the Premier: how can he justify that?

[14:00]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition's talking about, on one hand, four-year budgets, and on the other hand, annual budgets.

Mr. Speaker, he wants to talk about what's appalling. What is appalling in this province is the state of health care we found in 2007. What was appalling, Mr. Speaker, was the shortage of nurses left behind by the NDP [New Democratic Party], of 1,000 nurses short in the province of Saskatchewan that was left behind by the members opposite. That's appalling.

What was appalling, Mr. Speaker, was what the NDP left behind in terms of doctors. There was an acute shortage of doctors in rural and urban Saskatchewan. There was an acute shortage of specialists, Mr. Speaker. That was appalling.

The infrastructure deficit in health care left behind by the NDP was appalling. They closed 52 facilities including the Plains hospital, and in long-term care, something the member I know cares about — he asks questions about it every day, and so he should — they closed beds. That's their record. Over 1,000 beds, long-term care beds closed in the province, and the 13 facilities we've replaced were in terrible, terrible condition, Mr.

Speaker. That is what is appalling about the NDP's record.

Now on our side of the House, what we've done is prepared the assessment. We've released the assessment. We've begun historic investments in health care capital, maintenance, and new construction. We know that our job's not done. We know that this is going to take a long time to recover from what was left behind. But if the member . . . Again I point out to the member, this is not patting on the back; this is the fact of the matter. The member's asking about whether or not the government will improve and increase maintenance funding for health care facilities. The answer to the question, in this budget that they'll have a chance to vote on tomorrow, is that the maintenance budget for health care is up 20 per cent, Mr. Speaker. We're not done yet, but that's progress. I'll hope he'll at least admit that and maybe even consider voting for this budget, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, this government has had record revenues. This year they are providing 1.3 per cent of what is needed. My question to the Premier: what is the plan for the rest?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the plan for the rest is that we're going to continue with the capital projects that have started. We're going to avail ourselves of the P3 [public-private partnership] model in the case of Swift Current, in my hometown where a new long-term care facility's being built. We'll do the same thing in North Battleford where this budget keeps the promise to build a new Sask Hospital.

And, Mr. Speaker, if he would check on the budget, I think it's page 24, he'll see that there is a longer term view of the maintenance issue, specifically a budget to increase maintenance funding in health care, Mr. Speaker, starting at 27 million as pointed out, actually \$28 million in this current budget year, moving up to \$47.5 million, Mr. Speaker, in three years.

We are going to continue to make progress, Mr. Speaker. I hope that the Leader of the Opposition would stand up and continue certainly to hold the government accountable on this longer term plan, whether it's enough or whether it isn't. But I hope he might also stand up just once and admit to the people of the province of Saskatchewan that when it comes to health care capital and human resources, his party in government let this province down.

We're going to have to work on this problem together. We're going to have to make the key investments. Well he's chirping from his seat because he never likes this but, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is we are still dealing today with what was left behind by members opposite.

The good news is there are 2,600 more nurses of every designation practising in the province, 400 more doctors, historic investment in capital, Mr. Speaker, continuous improvement under way in the health care system, the shortest wait-lists in the country for surgery, not the longest as we used

to have. And we'll continue to make progress in these areas.

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

Conclusion of Lean Contract

Ms. Chartier: — Can the Minister of Health please tell us how much taxpayers' money is going towards the John Black appreciation tea party on Friday?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Rural and Remote Health.

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to stand in this Assembly and talk about the improvements that have been done through continuous improvement in this province, Mr. Speaker.

We have stated time after time that the total John Black contract in this province has been a total of \$40.5 million, Mr. Speaker. And again restating a fact that we've spoken about many times in this Assembly, \$125 million of identified savings to this point, Mr. Speaker.

That's not including . . . They might want to listen. It's not including patient safety improvements, Mr. Speaker, and other unidentified, uncalculated savings to this point, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to additional space that would have been required in facilities for storage, for other types of service, Mr. Speaker. Quick stocking of rooms, you can't put a specific dollar on, Mr. Speaker, less stocks that are needed because of efficient use of stock and efficient stocking of supplies, Mr. Speaker. But also cases like I will be glad to talk about in the next question.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps this government needs to be reminded of what senior health administrators say about John Black: "Our experience with JBA has been one of lack of respect, tattling on leaders if they question, expecting rigid conformity in a militaristic style, gossiping, and undermining."

This government should be saying good riddance to John Black and tossing out his whole approach to lean. It should not be wasting even more time and more money on John Black events. To the minister: how many other tea parties and appreciation events are taxpayers paying for, and what's the total cost, including John Black's expenses, staff time, travel, cake, and balloons? What's the cost?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Rural and Remote Health.

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, I'll state it again. The member must have heard my last answer, but \$40.5 million is the total cost of the John Black contract. And I guess I'll have to restate again that only a few short days from now, March 31st, Mr. Speaker, is the end of the John Black contract. Mr. Speaker, there are a few unfulfilled contract obligations that are

being finished off at this point, Mr. Speaker, but again their contract ends March 31st.

Mr. Speaker, in following up on my last answer talking about the improvements of lean, a story I love to talk about and specific to when it comes to patient safety, Mr. Speaker, patient services and falls, up at a northern facility talking to some of the lean staff there, the lean leader in particular, Mr. Speaker, who admittedly wasn't overly engaged off the start, but the story she told us, Mr. Speaker, about a senior citizen that had been falling almost daily, Mr. Speaker, and at the time of our visit up there, attributing strictly to the lean processes of staff management, Mr. Speaker, that patient had not fallen once in the previous month.

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

Support for Low-Income Families

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the Finance minister's speech last week, and there wasn't one mention of poverty, even though this government is supposed to be developing an anti-poverty strategy. Instead the budget contained less funding for the rental housing supplement, less funding for the child care parent subsidies, less funding for the Saskatchewan employment supplement, and it decimated the budget for Sask Housing. To the Social Services minister: why are poor people in our province bearing the brunt of this government's financial mismanagement?

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And last night, had the member been listening, I explained that the reduction in the Saskatchewan employment supplement was quite minimal and it won't affect the existing families that are on that supplement.

However because of this government, those very same families, Mr. Speaker, will benefit because this government has increased minimum wage by 28.3 per cent since we formed government, Mr. Speaker. It was this government, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that introduced the child drug program, and that will benefit these very same families. It is this government that introduced the active families benefit, and that will benefit these very same families.

It was this government that eliminated the PST [provincial sales tax] for children's clothes, and that will benefit these very same families. And it's this government that doubled the low-income tax credit. That will benefit these very same families, Mr. Speaker. It is this government that increased the rental supplement that also benefits these very same families, Mr. Speaker. And it is this government that made record-setting tax reduction, personal tax reduction, that also benefits these very same families. So, Mr. Speaker, there is a lot in this budget that will help these low-income families as they transition out of the Saskatchewan employment supplement program.

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

Mr. Forbes: — You know, Mr. Speaker, the employment

supplement is supposed to give a little extra money to low-income, working parents with children. But this government is cutting that supplement for parents whose children are over the age of 12. Peter Gilmer of the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry says, and I quote, “. . . at a time when we are now tied [tied] for the lowest minimum wage in the country, losing that support is going to have a significant impact.” He questions how committed this government is to the anti-poverty strategy, which the minister forgot to mention in that answer, because this kind of cut, and I quote, “doesn’t move us in that direction at all.”

To the minister: does the minister really think that teenagers are cheaper to raise? Why is she cutting this vital support for low-income, working people?

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, the number one cost to raising children, quite frankly, is the child care cost, which a lot of parents have brought to my attention. That is a significant cost to parents, and that is the child age that will be covered, continued to be covered under the Saskatchewan employment supplement.

The Saskatchewan employment supplement, Mr. Speaker, is not a long-term program. It is a transitional type of program. The average time that any family is on that program is seven months, Mr. Speaker, so it isn’t a program that families get on and stay on for long periods of time. So it will be minimal effect.

It was a tough budget. There was choices to be made, Mr. Speaker. We felt that with all of the other programs that we have introduced that will aid those very same families, Mr. Speaker, if they had a choice of losing all of the rest of the programs — and that would be the choice of the NDP because the NDP didn’t implement any of those helps for those families, Mr. Speaker — then that is what we chose to do.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Well, Mr. Speaker, by slashing the employment supplement, this government says it will save about \$1 million. But this government has spent \$3 million on the Premier’s American lobbyist. It has spent \$4 million on travel and accommodations for its \$40 million American lean consultant. It’s handed \$5 million for research grants to the failed American smart meter manufacturer. Yet this government is cutting the employment supplement for low-income, working families, just to save a million bucks. That’s shameful, Mr. Speaker. That’s shameful. To the minister: how can she possibly justify such horribly misplaced priorities?

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, again I can go through the whole list of programs that we have available that will help those very same families, Mr. Speaker. It is a fairly minimal cut, as the member opposite said. It is a small amount that is being reduced and it will affect not all that many families, but it will affect some. We’ll be grandfathering the existing families that are in the program so no one family that’s in the program

will see a reduction. It will however affect the new entrants, Mr. Speaker.

It’s interesting that he mentions about the poverty strategy which our government has embarked on. Even though our poverty levels are not the lowest in the country, we have seen improvements in our poverty levels within this province which is very positive, but we think there’s more work that needs to be done. But we didn’t just talk about it, Mr. Speaker. We put together a very credible panel that is going to undergo consultations, to come forward with recommendations that we can form a strategy around. And do you know what the members opposite did when they had the chance to make those decisions? Nothing.

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

Management of Provincial Finances

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Yesterday the Finance minister was asked what he thinks of Norway having over \$1 trillion in a sovereign wealth fund and that the interest exceeds that of our provincial budget. Here’s what he said: “It’s interesting. I looked at some of the stats of Norway, and Norway actually has a debt as well.” So he stands there, pats himself on the back, and says, oh we’re like Norway, sort of. They have some debt and we have debt too. And by the way, our debt is increasing in massive ways.

Mr. Speaker, that wasn’t the lesson this minister was supposed to take from Norway. Norway has a sovereign wealth fund worth over \$1 trillion. This government doesn’t even have a rainy day fund, and it hasn’t saved a single penny; has presided over boom times, and it has added debt.

Has the Finance minister come up with a better answer overnight? Seriously, what does he think about Norway and its sovereign wealth fund of over \$1 trillion?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, we are supportive of the report that was produced by Peter MacKinnon. The report asks for the establishment of a Saskatchewan futures fund, and that is a fund that will be put in place when certain parameters are reached.

One of the options, Mr. Speaker, one of the options that the member of Rosemont ought to listen to is from the report, and it’s under no. 10, the timeline for establishing the fund.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, and Mr. MacKinnon says this:

Given the priority on debt reduction in the Plan for Growth:

one option could be that non-renewable resource revenues in excess of the cap be committed to

elimination of the debt and thereafter to the Saskatchewan Futures Fund.

Mr. Speaker, a great plan.

[14:15]

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, it's become abundantly clear to the people of Saskatchewan, when it comes to the long-term savings fund for this Premier, Mr. Speaker, he has more positions than the evening class at Yoga Mala, Mr. Speaker.

What Saskatchewan people deserve is a long-lasting benefit for the people of this province. What we recognize in Alberta is Premier Prentice, despite hard fiscal conditions, is actually committing to that long-term heritage fund.

But not this Premier, not this government. This Premier and this government have blown through record revenues as fast as the money comes in. This Premier and this government have drained the rainy day fund despite governing during boom times. This Premier and this government are racking up debt, \$1.5 billion this year alone. And this Premier and this government haven't saved a penny for the future, and they have no plan, no serious plan of doing so.

How can this Premier, how can this Finance minister honestly justify this failure of leadership?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, this is rich. This is a rich line of questioning from members opposite because the other thing they left behind was a big, giant orange credit card, Mr. Speaker. That was operating debt for the province of Saskatchewan unsupported fully by the payments. They left their credit card that was not being retired in any given time. It would just continue forever — the kind of credit card management our parents said we should never undertake, Mr. Speaker. How much was on that big orange credit card? \$6.8 billion in debt, Mr. Speaker. Our position has been . . .

The Speaker: — The member for Regina Rosemont asked the question. Why won't he listen for an answer? Please come to order. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — So, Mr. Speaker, our position's been pretty clear and the position of the Finance minister's been clear as well. Let's pay off that credit card. Some of the borrowing's at 9 per cent. Some of their borrowing that we're paying off is at 9 per cent. So what did we do with some of the money, with some of the record revenues? We reduced the credit card by \$3 billion. We paid off 44 per cent of that big, terrible orange credit card. We inherited that credit card debt that that government passed on to this government.

But, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't stop there. We took some of the other revenues and we doubled infrastructure investment, something the Leader of the Opposition earlier was just asking us to do. That's where some of the money went.

What else did we do with it, Mr. Speaker? We thought that a lot of that money belongs back in the pockets of Saskatchewan people and small businesses, so we cut property tax and we cut income tax and we cut the small-business tax. We've invested billions for the disabled, Mr. Speaker. We've hired more nurses and more doctors, Mr. Speaker. That's where the money went. But first and foremost, before we get to the savings account, we're going to pay off that NDP credit card.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, yesterday evening the Opposition Deputy House Leader raised a point of order concerning the remarks made in debate on the budget motion by the member for Estevan. The Opposition Deputy House Leader stated that certain comments made by the member for Estevan are not accurate and contravene rule 51. To support his point, he asked the Speaker to review the video record of debate on November the 4th, 2013. I have reviewed the comments made by the member for Estevan last evening, especially in connection to remarks made during the address in reply debate on November the 4th, 2013 which I surmise is at the heart of the point of order.

It would appear that the situation I've been asked to consider is based on the interpretation by various members of remarks made both on and off the record. This puts the Speaker in a very difficult position, especially when not all the remarks are on the record. Furthermore, members know that it is impossible for the Speaker to determine the accuracy of comments made in debate, let alone the intent of remarks thrown across the floor.

Through debate members have an opportunity to question and explain comments made in speeches and to say when they feel they have been misquoted or misunderstood. This of course should be done within the bounds of decorum and respectful of one another. I think all the members have honourable intentions, but on occasions we do end up with situations when misunderstandings cause hard feelings. This appears to be a misunderstanding that goes back a considerable time.

As Speaker, I appreciate the sensitivity on both sides of this matter, but I cannot find a breach of order. I encourage members to resolve differences of this type by talking to one another, rather than letting wounds fester. The problem is only exacerbated when hurt feelings seep into debate. This is an example of that.

I also want to strongly remind members about rule 47 with respect to loud private conversations and guffawing. I ask that members conduct themselves in a manner that respects the member who has the floor. I offer this advice for reflection by all members.

In summary, I find that the point of order is not well taken.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

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

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for the Economy.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to enter the debate on the budget and the amendment as well. With respect to the budget, that will go down in the archives of Saskatchewan in a very important period of time, Mr. Speaker. We look forward to that at some point in time.

I'm going to start off the traditional way with offering some thank yous to people that have done a great service to myself over a number of years, Mr. Speaker. You would know that I've had the pleasure of being in this Assembly for a very long time. I have had the pleasure of having the support of the people of Kindersley for a very, very long time and it's greatly appreciated.

I also have a very strong team of people that provide support on a daily basis, whether it's in my constituency with two constituency assistants, Susan Maedel and Sherri Flanagan, who do a tremendous job on my behalf in the constituency, representing the Government of Saskatchewan, I think, in a very, very competent and very, very forthright fashion in that constituency.

I'm also supported as well in the legislature here by a very strong team in my office with Cam Baker, the chief of staff; Lain and Dustin and Elaine, all are great people that I've had the pleasure of working with for a long period of time, Mr. Speaker. And so I'm deeply grateful for the efforts that they provide on an ongoing and daily basis, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to say thank you to my colleagues in the legislature here for the support that they have shown over the number of years throughout my career as well. I also want to offer a thank you to the members of treasury board for the hard work that they do on presenting and developing and putting forward the budget and, as well, to my honourable friend and colleague, the Minister of Finance, for the tremendous job that he does in bringing all of that together and presenting a budget at the end of the day.

The Minister of Finance and I go back a long ways, you know, and he's learned a tremendous amount over the years. I remember from the auspicious start of forgetting to make an amendment to the budget a number of years ago, to now presenting budgets in the legislature. Time after time, archived after archived events in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and I think it's a great tribute to the Minister of Finance. This budget is his last budget. I think it has also set Saskatchewan on a continued positive direction for the people of this province.

The only thing I ever wonder about his judgment on is his choice of hockey teams, Mr. Speaker. He's a diehard Leaf fan, as everyone on this side of the House knows. I guess his loyalty

is admirable; his judgment is a little bit shaky at times, Mr. Speaker. But I always say to him, and I think members of the opposition would probably agree with me, that there's no one more optimistic in Saskatchewan than a Leaf fan, at least prior to Christmas.

Mr. Speaker, but it certainly has been a pleasure to work alongside the Minister of Finance for a long time. I sit right beside him in cabinet and have since our government formed office. We get to have a lot of private conversations as to what we're seeing happening in Saskatchewan. And it is his wisdom and his, I think, very generous advice that he provides to all members of this Assembly from time to time that we all can take a lot of . . . I think we all understand very clearly that it's very, very forthright and given in a manner that is never personal, that's always in a manner of trying to assist in terms of moving the province forward, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank him for that ongoing . . . [inaudible].

Mr. Speaker, long after, long after this budget is archived in Saskatchewan, long after that, and long after other budgets are archived here in the province of Saskatchewan as well, I think, Mr. Speaker, this represents a turning point for Saskatchewan.

You know, the criticism, the criticism of this government has always been that they can manage through the good times; what can they do when things are a little bit tougher? What can they do when things are little bit tougher? Well, Mr. Speaker, I think this budget speaks to that in the many, many ways. When you see a significant loss of revenue like the Government of Saskatchewan saw as a result of a significant and ongoing drop in oil prices, not a short-term blip as the Leader of the Opposition likes to characterize it, but nevertheless a very, very deep and pronounced drop in oil prices here in Saskatchewan, how is the Government of Saskatchewan going to manage?

Mr. Speaker, I think the reviews are coming in from across Saskatchewan. They're coming in from across Western Canada, and I would say well beyond that as well, Canada and North America, where I think people are looking at this. And they're saying that it's amazing that the Government of Saskatchewan could still come forward, under all of those trying circumstances, with a balanced budget, with no tax increases, and yet still maintain a significant amount of spending in terms of infrastructure here in Saskatchewan. And I think that's very, very important, Mr. Speaker, given the very difficult nature of the budget that was presented here just a week ago, Mr. Speaker.

We were all asked as ministers by the Finance minister and by the Premier, all challenged to look for savings within our ministry to try and make sure that we stayed on track as a province because one of the things that we think is extremely important, Mr. Speaker, is maintaining an edge for Saskatchewan, a competitive edge when it comes to seeking investment from around the world to our province. And I dare say as Minister of the Economy, that this budget makes and continues to make my job even easier because of the very, very challenging nature of the budget but because the fact that the Finance minister met those challenges head on. And we continue to see our province driving forward in a very, very strong fashion, Mr. Speaker.

Another balanced budget I think is very, very important. And when companies start looking at . . . And I've had the occasion on many, many times to sit down with companies from around the world. They're looking at making investments in Saskatchewan. They say there's a number of things that they look for. They look for governments that are being responsible, whether it's in terms of resource development, whether it's in terms of infrastructure, whether it's in terms of taxation here in Saskatchewan, whether it's in terms of keeping our young people in the province so that they'll have a quality workforce going forward. It's those kinds of things. They look for political stability, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to all of those kinds of things as well. And they say to me on every occasion that we meet with them, Saskatchewan meets that mark in every way, Mr. Speaker.

It's a dramatic turnaround from what we have seen in the past in this province, Mr. Speaker. You know, it wasn't all that many years ago here in Saskatchewan when we witnessed things by the previous administration that drove people from our province, Mr. Speaker, where they raised taxes 17 times here in Saskatchewan.

[14:30]

And I note today that they're talking about poverty strategies. Well I would like to know from the member opposite that was raising those questions on poverty, how did it help people that were suffering in poverty when you raised the PST three different times, when you raised income taxes? Mr. Speaker, how did it help those people when you were doing all of that? What kind of increases did you provide to income supports during that period of time for those people that you advocate so strongly on behalf of today? You did nothing. You did nothing on their behalf, Mr. Speaker. And that's precisely the reason why there are just a rump of a party left over there, Mr. Speaker, and nine seats.

Now I believe the member's earnest in his comments around this. Absolutely he is. I think he means well, but I think he should also check the record, Mr. Speaker. I think he should check the record of the Social Services minister here in this province, the Finance minister here in this province, and see who has done more for people in need in Saskatchewan. No one in the previous history of this province has done more, and you know it, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Mr. Speaker, arrogant? Mr. Speaker, How? All I ask you is that the members of the legislature and the people of Saskatchewan check the record. The record speaks for itself. It has nothing to do with arrogance. It has everything to do with actually doing the right thing rather than just saying you're going to do the right thing and not doing anything at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker. And that's the record of the members opposite, and they know it.

Today in the legislature, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition gets up and says, what are you going to do about the health care deficit that we have in Saskatchewan in terms of infrastructure? All right, a legitimate question. Legitimate question; everybody would agree with that, Mr. Speaker. That's why we're putting more and more money into health care in terms of infrastructure here in our province.

I guess, I surmise that the continuation of that argument on his behalf would be, do you want us to spend more? Okay. Well that's a legitimate argument. We look forward to debating that over the next number of months as we lead up to the next general election. He wants us to spend more.

But then not more than a few minutes later, the member that's sitting beside him, the deputy leader gets up and says, you should be saving more at the same time. Mr. Speaker, it just doesn't make any sense. And I think the people of Saskatchewan understand that, because the NDP seems to be all over the map. They don't have any general direction that they seem to be going, Mr. Speaker. They don't seem to know what they want to do in terms of advocating on behalf of people here in Saskatchewan. We're waiting and I think everybody in this province is waiting, Mr. Speaker, to find out when they're going to present their plan.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when the Premier was sitting in opposition as leader of the opposition, a significant period of time, I think it was about 18 months prior to the election in 2007, he presented what he saw as the vision for Saskatchewan. And we laid it, he laid it out in very, very distinct terms for everyone to take a look at and judge accordingly. And they did. And they did. They supported the Premier and they supported the Sask Party in the 2007 election and in a resounding fashion, and then re-established it again in 2011, Mr. Speaker.

And I think the reasons why is because they understand one very, very fundamental thing about this government and about this Premier. We do what we say we're going to do, Mr. Speaker. We do what we say we're going to do, whether it's in terms of adding income supports for people that are vulnerable in society, Mr. Speaker, whether it comes to trying to attract business to our province, whether it comes to providing infrastructure in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Those are all of the things that we have said we're going to do. And we'll continue down that path, Mr. Speaker, because we think it's important that the people of Saskatchewan know exactly what our plans for this province are going forward, Mr. Speaker.

And that's why, Mr. Speaker, I think they look at this budget and they say, well we agree with the fact that we need to build infrastructure in Saskatchewan. I think anybody in this province that travels around Saskatchewan understands that, Mr. Speaker. We see hospitals that are, you know, 50 years old, in some cases older than that, and 40 and 30 and 20 years old, Mr. Speaker, that are in need of repair or a replacement. Very much so. And I think we can all point to examples within our constituencies of that, as well as schools, Mr. Speaker, as well as highways.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think we are moving Saskatchewan forward in terms of meeting all of those challenges through the Saskatchewan Builds capital plan, where we see twinning of highways, where we see passing lane projects happening in Saskatchewan, where we see significant interchanges being built at Warman and Martensville. We see the next phase of the Regina bypass being put in place here over the next number of years, Mr. Speaker. These are important developments for the development of our province going forward.

I'm always amazed that when we hear petitions every day, Mr.

Speaker, from the members opposite, the member gets up and says he wants to have no traffic on Dewdney because he doesn't I guess support the fact that they were the ones that initially started the GTH [Global Transportation Hub]. They certainly were the ones that put it in place. We're carrying that on, Mr. Speaker. We think it's good. We're increasing it. We're getting more and more people there all of the time. More and more companies are establishing there all the time, Mr. Speaker, but he doesn't want truck traffic to go there.

I mean, the intermodal facility, the intermodal facility was downtown, Mr. Speaker. It's now out at the GTH west of the city here. They still have some operations down there. Trucks still have to move from downtown out there, and I would be interested in the route that he thinks they should be moving on if he doesn't want to move them on Dewdney. If they don't want to move them on Dewdney, Mr. Speaker, what route does he want them to take?

I've asked him time after time after time to present the map that he wants. What neighbourhood would you prefer they went in? What neighbourhood would you prefer they went in? Which one would you prefer they go in, Mr. Speaker? Because if they're not on one street, they're obviously going to be on another street, Mr. Speaker.

So you know, it's all of those kinds of contradictions by the members opposite that I think people here in Saskatchewan, I think people here in Saskatchewan are picking up, Mr. Speaker. And that's the reason why I think that they are skeptical of the NDP's ability to manage ... [inaudible interjections] ... I didn't hear what he said.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to move Saskatchewan forward. We'll continue to try and make sure that this budget doesn't have and budgets in the future don't have tax increases. We'll control spending here in this province, Mr. Speaker. We will do infrastructure investments, because we think it's very, very important in Saskatchewan. We'll continue to work on job creation here in Saskatchewan as well.

You know, and it's unfortunate. In the news today we see a company that is laying off here in Saskatchewan. And you know, my heart goes out to the families that are in that situation, Mr. Speaker, and we will be doing everything we can as a government to try and ensure that as quickly as possible they're integrated back into the economy here in Saskatchewan.

But I would say to those families, there's some hope out there, Mr. Speaker. There's hope in the very fact that we have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, Mr. Speaker, and as a result of that there should be a good opportunity for them to be relocated into another job or move directly into another job in whichever location they happen to be in, Mr. Speaker. And that's important, I think, Mr. Speaker. We'll be doing everything we can to assist in that.

And at the same time we see a company laying off, we on the other hand see a company like Mosaic making a \$1.7 billion investment here in Saskatchewan. So obviously there'll be some need for people to take up the job challenges that will be, job opportunities that will be there as well here in Saskatchewan. I think we'll be seeing some more significant announcements in

terms of employment opportunities over the next number of weeks, Mr. Speaker, here in Saskatchewan as well. And we are certainly looking forward to that as well.

You know, on saskjobs.ca, there's about 10,000 jobs on that website as of this morning I understand. And so there's a good opportunity for people that are challenged by layoffs these days to be able to find opportunities here in Saskatchewan as well. So we'll be certainly doing everything that we can to assist in that regard, Mr. Speaker, with that going forward. We're encouraged as well that when we're speaking to companies here in Saskatchewan, they are seeing the ... Even though they're seeing revenues drop in Saskatchewan, they're also seeing, and we are seeing continued investment in Saskatchewan. And that's a very, very positive sign for any economy, Mr. Speaker. And I think as a result of balanced budgets, it certainly helps to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, while the members opposite will stand in their place day after day after day and say we should spend more, and then later on in question period they will say we should save more, I think it's those kinds of things that are making people wonder about the ability of the opposition to present themselves as a credible opposition and a credible government-in-waiting, shall we say, Mr. Speaker.

We will, before a very, very short period of time, perhaps as early as this fall, be moving into an election time frame, Mr. Speaker. Depending on what happens with the federal election, we could see a provincial election as early as November of this year. Now I think everybody is kind of suspecting that the federal government will likely go with an election in October sometime, so we'll be likely moving on to the next time frame. And I think that's important because I think it gives the Leader of the Opposition ample time to present a plan for the people of Saskatchewan. Because it's not just simply about opposing what you're doing over there, members of the opposition. It's just simply not about opposing. It's presenting alternatives. What would you do under the circumstance? What would you do in Saskatchewan if you had the opportunity to present the budget, as my honourable friend has presented here just a week ago? What would you have done different?

Well you know, when I listen to the Leader of the Opposition, he says he would spend more. I think he probably is genuine with respect to that, because after all, in the last election he authored the campaign platform for them. There was about \$5 billion worth of spending in that. I assume that's what he would do with respect to the budget here in Saskatchewan if he had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker. So I think that that's what we will be looking forward to seeing from the members opposite, from the Leader of the Opposition, is a big spending budget proposal coming forward from them in the next election campaign.

And then it will be up to the people of Saskatchewan to judge. Do they want a government that believes in fiscal responsibility? Do they want a government that continues to build infrastructure in this province? Do they want a government that continues to seek opportunities for the people of Saskatchewan? Do they want a government that continues to see spending in terms of hospitals, in terms of schools, in terms of highways in Saskatchewan? Or do they want \$5 billion worth of deficits from the members opposite?

Mr. Speaker, I think it will be an interesting campaign when it takes place, Mr. Speaker, because I think those are going to be the parameters of what the next election will be all about, Mr. Speaker. Are you going to continue to try and attract and keep and retain the young people here in Saskatchewan, or are you going to continue to try and drive them out of Saskatchewan as we saw year after year, decade after decade, under the NDP, Mr. Speaker?

I think all of us have had, as members of the legislature, opportunities to attend graduation ceremonies. And I've attended many of them over my years in the legislature, Mr. Speaker, various communities in my constituency, and had the opportunity to meet many, many graduates. And you know, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't all that many years ago, about 10 years ago, every time you talked to young students they were saying they couldn't wait to get out of Saskatchewan. They couldn't wait to seek opportunities elsewhere. Their parents had given them luggage and now off they were going to Calgary or Edmonton or Vancouver or elsewhere to seek those opportunities, Mr. Speaker.

And now it's so incredibly good to see the kind of difference that we see in Saskatchewan these days, Mr. Speaker, where we see young people staying in Saskatchewan, believing that there's opportunity here in Saskatchewan. And time after time after time, they're joining their friends here in Saskatchewan and making opportunities for themselves. And now we're seeing a province that is growing in terms of population, Mr. Speaker, a population that has reached record levels under this Premier, Mr. Speaker. And as a result, we're very, very encouraged by that, Mr. Speaker, to see that kind of development happening in Saskatchewan where the greatest population increase — we should all be very, very thankful of that, Mr. Speaker — the greatest population increase in Saskatchewan has been under this Premier, Mr. Speaker.

That's why we see communities growing in leaps and bounds in Saskatchewan. That's why we see new neighbourhoods popping up all over Saskatchewan. That's why we see housing starts at very high levels, Mr. Speaker, here in Saskatchewan. And it's great for our province, Mr. Speaker.

I think, Mr. Speaker, the choice will be clear: do you want more of what you've seen from this government in terms of moving Saskatchewan forward or do you want to go back to the dark old days of the NDP, Mr. Speaker? And, Mr. Speaker, that's precisely the reason why I will not be supporting the amendment and wholeheartedly supporting this budget.

[14:45]

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

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to be able to stand in this House and support the budget that was brought down by the Finance minister just a week ago today.

There's a few thanks that I would like to express, and mostly to my constituents for the faith that they have put in me as their elected official. I'd like to extend a thank you to my constituency assistants, Judy Hatfield and Rosalie Boots, who

do a fantastic job of handling all the casework that comes in there. Also my family, and our families are very important as we go into this business. And, Mr. Speaker, I think . . . We say a little prayer as we start the proceedings every day but I think we should take a minute to just thank God for the opportunity he has given us with the resources in this province and say his praise as well.

Mr. Speaker, there is optimism in this province. This budget affirms the optimism we have in support of citizens, in support of families and businesses, our seniors, our children, and those with disabilities. This budget is an investment in infrastructure to keep this province moving forward. It is a balanced budget with no tax increases and it will keep Saskatchewan going strong — investing in people, investing in infrastructure, controlling spending, and training for job creation, with no tax increases and being a balanced budget.

Mr. Speaker, there's a great contrast between the Saskatchewan Party government that we see today in this province and the former NDP that was dysfunctional for a long time. You see, government needs to be there to create an atmosphere for growth, an atmosphere that will attract investment and attract people, and people will create products and provide services which in turn support government through taxation while employing programs to assist and look after the people that need their services.

You know, it really isn't a funny business, but I was taken aback when I seen the humorous attempt of the opposition, the member from Rosemont, as he cut out the soles of shoes to make some kind of point with the government. I realize, Mr. Speaker, it was only a pair of shoes, but the very uncaring attitude that he had in destroying something to try and make a point, suffice it was a lack of respect. Like I said, it was only a pair of shoes, but cutting out the soles of shoes really epitomizes what that government did for the people of Saskatchewan for years, just really cutting to the souls of people, keeping the province poor and somewhat misinformed so that they could hold on to power. Well, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't work anymore in this province.

The NDP philosophy is that government tax the people and they invest into businesses and run it by government, virtually discouraging any kind of investment. And that was a story that was very dysfunctional — the programming of the NDP — and cost the taxpayers of Saskatchewan very dearly while private enterprise and private investment moved out of the province. And, Mr. Speaker, as they move out, they take their people with them, their workers. They take their investment, the workers, and their families. So all that moves out of the province, and there's a reluctance to move anything back in.

We look through the history of the socialist thinking that cost taxpayers millions and millions of dollars and forced citizens out of the province. In their 16 years, the NDP increased taxes 17 times trying to justify that ill-thought-out program of taking over a business and establishing industry. Businesses like SaskOil, how can they compete with Exxon and Shell and some of these bigger companies, costing the people thousands of . . . millions of dollars in doing it? Having the land bank so the government can buy the land, how can the private, small farmer compete with the government in that respect?

Mismanagement, waste, over-taxation and misleading principles and, Mr. Speaker, the member from Melville-Saltcoats covered a lot of the investments they made in Uganda and the US [United States] and Australia with the potato business. They even owned a pig farm at one time. Mr. Speaker, the over-taxation and the misleading principles of the NDP were just terrible.

I had occasion . . . And I think the member from Melfort quoted Winston Churchill at one point saying — and I would like to quote him as well — saying, “Socialism is a philosophy of failure, the creed of ignorance, and the gospel of envy. Its inherent virtue is the equal sharing of misery.” I think Margaret Thatcher was a little bit nicer to him and says, “The problem with socialism is that you eventually run out of [spending] other people’s money.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party government has worked hard for the past seven years to see this province in considerable growth in almost every sector, leading the nation in a lot of economic growth and providing for its citizens. And the forecast for Saskatchewan is to keep that economy strong. This government and this budget is presented to keep Saskatchewan strong. It will do that by keeping taxes low, investing in people, investing in infrastructure, controlling operating spending, and creating incentives for new jobs.

Mr. Speaker, this government has delivered the largest tax cuts in Saskatchewan history, which will assist our citizens as well as attract investment into our province. This budget continues building the province and providing care for our citizens with no tax increases. This budget is keeping Saskatchewan strong.

This budget invests in advanced education with \$46.6 million of infrastructure to help ensure Saskatchewan post-secondary institutes continue to meet the challenges of growth and accommodate the needs of students. This is a 43 per cent increase over last year. We’re keeping the graduate retention plan which remains at \$20,000, now a tax credit expanded over 10 years. We have the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship going to post-secondary students that are going into post-secondary education and the advantage grant for education savings for parents helping to save for their children’s education.

To keep Saskatchewan strong, we must continue to invest in infrastructure that will support growth. This budget continues to invest in health facilities like the Moose Jaw Hospital that the NDP refused to consider.

Mr. Speaker, I’m going to move a little bit ahead here and talk a little bit about some of the stuff that is happening in Moose Jaw that this government is instrumental in helping. First and foremost of course is the income tax cuts and the tax cuts in general. The income tax is indexed for saving Saskatchewan people \$10.6 million, and that includes every citizen in Saskatchewan, including the good people in Moose Jaw. We’ve seen lower taxes, lower property tax as well as lower income tax, lower corporate taxes.

We’ve seen great investment in Moose Jaw in social housing. Ninety-six social housing units were announced in 2013, and many families have moved into these units as these units are

completed and will continue to do so as construction is set to be completed this summer.

There are 184 daycare spaces that were established in Moose Jaw since 2007, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to the no tax increase, this budget contains no reduction in the revenue sharing with the municipalities. Municipal sharing has provided an increase of \$8.3 million to provincial municipalities. This year, Moose Jaw will receive \$7.1 million. That’s an increase over last year and more than double the \$2.8 million that was received by the government in 2007. So going from 2.8 to 7.1 in seven years, Mr. Speaker, that was good for our city. Mayor Higgins is very complimentary for the revenue sharing to remain as it is.

Mr. Speaker, I want to spend a few minutes on the hospital, and in doing that, Mr. Speaker, I want to bring the attention of something that was in the newspaper that was a quote from the Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Speaker, in this quote he said, particularly about the member from Moose Jaw North and named me in the statement . . . And the *Times-Herald* actually did quote it in their article. But, Mr. Speaker, it’s another case of the members opposite saying something, and we on this side have to correct them. Mr. Speaker, there was no truth in what he said about the member from Moose Jaw North. In the article, he said that the member from Moose Jaw North does not care about the people in this constituency. That needs to be corrected.

Mr. Speaker, the Moose Jaw Hospital, back in the 1990s, there was a group of people that wanted to build a new hospital. They did the studies. They did the feasible studies and looked at the need, and they came with a plan. At least what they could do, Mr. Speaker, was to have the thing that they had to ask for at least: a simple addition, a new wing put on there. They did all of the studies in that, Mr. Speaker, and when it came down to it, the government of the day, the NDP government, said they couldn’t do it. At that time, Mr. Speaker, Moose Jaw was served by two cabinet ministers of the NDP, two cabinet ministers, and the premier himself was from Moose Jaw. My comments at that time were that we are building a hospital.

I found the . . . Here’s the quote from the *Times-Herald*, and it says, and I quote, “Brotten says his questions received dismissive answers from the Sask. Party and MLA for Moose Jaw North, Warren Michelson, who allegedly ‘heckled him’ and claimed the hyperbaric chamber ‘wasn’t a big deal.’” Mr. Speaker, that needs to be corrected.

I think the Leader of the Opposition should look at the history of the Moose Jaw Hospital and say that their government did not do it. My heckling to him at the time was simply, that we built the hospital. We built it, Mr. Speaker. That government under that premier or the premier at that time wouldn’t even offer a paint job to the Moose Jaw Hospital. But since then, under this government, we’ve improved the hospital facilities by building a hospital in . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member has requested leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you today in the gallery, Mr. Speaker, some community leaders from the great northern village of Pinehouse. We have in the gallery, Mr. Speaker, Mayor Mike Natomagan and councillors, Greg Ross and Conrad Misponus. Also with them is Alex Ross who is the supervisor of operations for Pinehouse Business North; Garrett Schmidt, engineer and advisor for Pinehouse Business North; and Glen McCallum, the head of social development in Pinehouse.

They're in town today for a number of meetings, Mr. Speaker, including one later this afternoon that'll involve the Minister for Rural and Remote Health, the Minister of Education, and myself. I'm looking forward to having a chance to chat with the folks at that meeting and to have a visit afterwards. So, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members of the Assembly to please give them a warm welcome to their Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

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

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

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my comments on the budget speech. The 2015 budget supports the people of Saskatchewan. It really does. It supports Saskatchewan infrastructure. It provides our citizens and encourages investment in our province. Mr. Speaker, this budget supports growth and it's keeping Saskatchewan strong. I will not be supporting the amendment, but I certainly am in favour of the budget. Thank you.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure once again to be able to wade into the budget debate. I believe this is my fifth occasion, Mr. Speaker, and it is always a privilege to provide the opposition's take on the budget and a little bit of analysis from our perspective, Mr. Speaker.

As is customary, I have a few thank yous. Actually I have a birthday wish. It is my oldest daughter Hennessey's 17th

birthday today. This time 17 years ago, I was actually on the cusp of becoming a mom and an activist. It really was the birth of Hennessey that ignited the spark for activism for me. So thank you to Hennessey for that, and I hope that the things that I've done up till now will make things better for Hennessey, for Ophelia, and for all other kids going forward, Mr. Speaker. So happy birthday to Hennessey. I'm sorry that I'm not there for birthday cake tonight, but we will celebrate on Friday night.

As well, I only have about 20 minutes, Mr. Speaker, and as you can see by my desk, I have many, many things to say. I will keep the thank yous short though. I want to thank my constituency assistants Vanessa and Judy who serve the people of Saskatoon Riversdale incredibly well. The staff in our caucus office are amazing. They put in long hours. They work hard and try to really support us to bring the issues forward that people are bringing to us, Mr. Speaker. All the legislative staff, everybody from the cafeteria to the library to the security throughout the building, the legislative staff, the committees branch . . . I've had the pleasure of being the PAC [Public Accounts Committee] Chair now for a year and a half, and I'm grateful for the support the committees branch offers us, Mr. Speaker.

There are no shortage of people to thank. I feel like I'm up at the Academy Awards, Mr. Speaker. As least you won't play the music. At least I don't think you will.

[15:00]

Anyway I also would like to thank my family, Mr. Speaker. I'll keep this part fairly short. There are many people who make this possible for me to be able to serve the people of Saskatoon Riversdale. My mom and dad who I talk about an awful lot in here, 82 years old. They're both 82. They live just down the street from me and provide a huge amount of support to me and to my children. Ophelia walks to Grandma and Grandpa's every day after school, and Hennessey during session will make her way over to Grandma and Grandpa's for supper as well. My sister, Michelle, is a huge support, she and her husband, John. Blair, Ophelia's dad, and Darren, Hennessey's dad, I appreciate all that they do to make sure that our kids are good.

A whole host of people, Mr. Speaker . . . And I'm sure I'm missing someone, but I want to get to the budget debate. So if anybody feels like they're off the list, just read previous budget and Throne speech thank yous. I think that that would probably cover it, Mr. Speaker.

I do have one point that I'd like to address very quickly here. Last night, pertaining to the point of order on which you ruled today, Mr. Speaker, last night there was an opportunity . . . One of the members, the member from Estevan had made some comments pertaining to a previous speech that I had made on November 4th, 2013 about an incredibly sensitive topic in my life, my nephew's passing, Mr. Speaker. And in the member's speech yesterday she said that I had heckled her . . . or had not heckled her. She had said that I stopped my speech and called her out and said that she was . . .

An Hon. Member: — Point of order.

The Speaker: — What is the member's point of order?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe I hear the member opposite commenting on a ruling that the Speaker made earlier today, which of course is not allowed.

The Speaker: — I've been paying attention to what the member has been saying. She has referred to the point of order as the term "point of order," and I wish to allow her to proceed somewhat further. She hasn't questioned the point of order. I want to get an understanding of where she's going with this. The point of order is not well taken. I recognize the member for Saskatoon Riversdale.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I did appreciate . . . I just want to put on the record that there are many things that get said in this House and it's important that what we say is . . . I'm just trying think of a parliamentary term, Mr. Speaker.

My point is, I just would like to point out to the members opposite that they should, before they start clapping like trained seals and say things like despicable, Mr. Speaker . . . I was referred to as despicable last night by the member from Martensville. I was told that I should apologize because the member from Estevan was heckling me, Mr. Speaker, and I didn't, I did not respond. I would advise the members opposite to take a look, to take a look at the November 4th, 2013 . . .

The Speaker: — The point of order was raised last night regarding the comments that were possibly made on November 4th, that were made last night. The ruling has been made. I would ask that the member move on and carry on her debate. I recognize the member for Saskatoon Riversdale.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that I would like to talk about is mental health in this budget speech. And this pertains to the fact that this government, with great fanfare about almost two years ago, announced that they were going to have a review of mental health services in Saskatchewan. It took them a year and a half, Mr. Speaker, to produce a report, which they announced relatively quietly actually this fall, Mr. Speaker, despite the fact that they at some point bragged about the number of people who had participated. Thousands and thousands of people, stakeholders, Mr. Speaker, people who have experienced mental health challenges participated — the government was very proud about the numbers of people who participated in this review.

So this fall we come and see, we have the *Working Together for Change: A 10-Year Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Saskatchewan*, Mr. Speaker. Did you hear the word mental health at all in this provincial budget, Mr. Speaker? Not a single word, total silence on mental health and addictions, Mr. Speaker. So we have a mental health and addictions plan, an action plan with no action, Mr. Speaker. That is reprehensible. This is an issue of life and death for many people.

People in Saskatchewan, one in five people in Saskatchewan are living with mental health challenges, Mr. Speaker. So the number in here, we think about all of us in this Chamber and think of who in our lives is impacted, Mr. Speaker. Not a single thing in the budget. So why, why was there not a single mention of mental health and addictions in this budget, Mr. Speaker, because we sure have a long way to go in this regard. Not a single word. Speaking to stakeholders?

Since that budget, Mr. Speaker, we look at the Saskatoon Health Region; 4.1 per cent of that total budget is on mental health. That is on the low end in Saskatchewan. So the largest health region in Saskatchewan only has the opportunity to spend about 4.1 per cent of its budget on mental health, Mr. Speaker. The national average is about 7 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

We think about housing. That's one of the biggest challenges. There were many recommendations out of the mental health and addictions action plan, Mr. Speaker. There were many, many recommendations out of this action plan. One of them:

5.1 Enhance supportive housing options available in the community and ensure appropriate intensive team-based supports accompany their development.

Mr. Speaker, that goes hand in hand actually with documents from several years ago that this government was part and parcel of putting together, *Charting a New Course for Mental Health's Most Vulnerable, A Provincial Approach to Replace Saskatchewan Hospital and Address Complex Needs Care*. Mr. Speaker, when we talk about complex needs, we're talking about step-down beds, supportive housing beds. It's great that the government is replacing the North Battleford hospital. That is long overdue, but that is only a small fraction of real support for people who have mental health needs.

We need to be able to support people in the community when they leave a facility like the North Battleford hospital, or when they leave a facility like the Dubé Centre, Mr. Speaker. Those are incredibly important things, putting in place supportive housing. So you leave after six weeks, the Dubé Centre, and perhaps you don't have family supports. You end up on the street, Mr. Speaker. Many of, a high percentage of the people who are living on the street in Saskatchewan and across Canada are people who are suffering from mental health and addictions issues, Mr. Speaker.

You would think at a time when you've got champions like Clara Hughes and others who are really trying to raise the issue of mental health and decrease the stigma and have mental health treated like any other illness . . . If I had cancer, Mr. Speaker, people would rally around me, or many other illnesses, physical illnesses that you can see and get behind. But, Mr. Speaker, when someone has mental illness, we completely shut the door on them. There's huge stigma and not the supports. And this government has failed the people of Saskatchewan by not addressing mental health. We have an action plan with no action, and that is completely reprehensible.

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

Mr. Belanger: — I ask for leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member has requested leave to introduce guests.

Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to join my colleague the minister in welcoming the northern guests from the northern community of Pinehouse. I want to welcome of course Mayor Mike, and Conrad Misponas, and of course Greg Ross with his son Alex, and Glen, and their engineer friend. I just want to point out these are very exciting leaders for a very promising, exciting community. And I just wanted to take the opportunity, and I didn't want to interrupt up my colleague because her speech was going so well, but I wanted to take the opportunity before they leave the Assembly to welcome them to their Assembly and hope that their meeting with the government was productive and certainly fruitful. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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.]

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a piece of advice actually that I will pass on from John Black, actually from a piece of wall walk advice. It says, Mr. Speaker, stop admiring the problem and fix it. I think that that speaks volumes to this government's approach to seniors' care here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And actually I would take it a step back. This government isn't only just admiring the problem, they are neglecting to, or unwilling to, admit that we have real issues in our seniors' care homes here, Mr. Speaker, mostly due to short-staffing. We have incredible staff who work in our long-term care facilities here in Saskatchewan, but when you're run off your feet and can't provide proper staffing or proper services to people, it's an incredibly stressful experience, Mr. Speaker.

So the government continues to ignore the core essence of the seniors' care crisis, which is a lack of staff in our long-term care facilities. The government has its own CEO report which it was dragged kicking and screaming to enter into. This time two years ago, Mr. Speaker, the government was saying — despite the fact we were raising these issues and people from the community were raising these issues — they were saying, nothing to see here. They were finally goaded and felt like they finally had to do something. And they embarked upon a CEO tour, Mr. Speaker, which highlighted story after story across the province, in large measure due to understaffing, where call bells were going unanswered, people were left on toilets, continent people were having to go to the washroom in their pants, Mr. Speaker.

So the government has its CEO tour, and then they ask for, they say they've got an Urgent Issues Action Fund. Just a drop-in-the-bucket approach, Mr. Speaker. This government received hundreds of pages of urgent issues from health regions across the province. They got the first iteration and then asked the health regions to scale it back. We can talk about Saskatoon Health Region who identified needing 450 continuing care aids to be able to provide the service in long-term care, Mr. Speaker. They only asked for 38 and they only received 19, Mr. Speaker. That is a far cry from meeting the needs in long-term care.

We can think about Lois Rein yesterday, Margaret Warholm, Art Healey, Irene Hohne; the list gets longer and longer. We have the Ombudsman looking into long-term care, and she's identified that many of the complaints that she's received have to do with short-staffing, Mr. Speaker.

So there are measures in this budget, I think that are positive when it comes to supporting seniors. I think about my own parents who are 82, and home care at some point will be something that I think will be beneficial for them. But I would argue that that's tinkering around the edges. Yes, we need to keep our seniors out of long-term care; long-term care is mostly for the frail elderly in which most people won't be, Mr. Speaker. But the fact of the matter is you still have to staff the long-term care facilities that you have today for those living in them. So you can't say, oh well we're just going to keep people out of long-term care, and then ignore the folks who are in long-term care, Mr. Speaker.

We have staffing ratios, I'm thinking of one centre in rural Saskatchewan, at night, Mr. Speaker, two CCAs [continuing care assistant] for 55 residents, Mr. Speaker. Many occasions you have to do two-person lifts. So how, if there are multiple issues going on for 55 people, do you meet their needs in a timely fashion, Mr. Speaker? During the day when people are up and about and more mobile, 1 to 11 in this particular facility. Those are not unusual staff ratios, Mr. Speaker.

We had some folks from the Premier's own constituency here. Three people, Mr. Speaker, last week, coming to tell us about their concerns around short-staffing. And the minister got up and said, oh well the staffing has increased for this particular model of care. Well it sure as heck better have increased, Mr. Speaker. Those people aren't just CCAs. They're doing the cooking, the cleaning, all the personal care. But families identified that those needs were still not being met, Mr. Speaker. So this government is tinkering around the edges. There are positive things that will support some seniors when it comes to long-term care, but this government, when it comes to the seniors' care crisis in long-term care, could only find \$1 million, Mr. Speaker, which I think is unacceptable.

We can talk a little bit about families, Mr. Speaker. I think about the Saskatchewan employment supplement. And one thing that's tied to the employment supplement that we haven't heard, Mr. Speaker, are the family health benefits. I find it interesting in the budget documents that they actually say the family health benefits are going up this year, despite pulling back to peeling off people from the employment supplement. So the whole idea of the employment supplement, Mr. Speaker, is to provide supports to low-income earners. It was all about addressing that welfare wall, Mr. Speaker, to make it more

productive or more affordable for people to be able to be employed because there was a time where, when you leave social assistance and take a low-paying job, Mr. Speaker, you lose all your benefits. So for many people who have profound health issues, this was a positive program.

[15:15]

The employment supplement isn't necessarily tons of money in people's pockets, but it was a little something. And, Mr. Speaker, I can speak from experience. When I was a single mother in — it's many years now; 14 years, Mr. Speaker — I received the employment supplement. And I can tell you that I counted on that money every month, Mr. Speaker.

But the other piece that's absolutely critical is the family health benefits. I remember two years ago I had a family, she was a day home provider. He was a custodian, I believe, at the school board. He got a small raise, like a \$30-a-month raise, Mr. Speaker, and they'd been bumped off the employment supplement. They had four children, Mr. Speaker. That's because this government hasn't raised the threshold for the employment supplement since 2008. So that's a problem, Mr. Speaker. So they were disappointed about losing the employment supplement, but they were most disappointed about losing the health benefits, the family health benefits. The father was diabetic, Mr. Speaker. The mother had health issues.

And you might want to know that some of the benefits for children are most dental services, eye exams once a year, basic eye glasses, emergency ambulance — so this government is cutting back on ambulance for children, Mr. Speaker — basic medical supplies, 12 chiropractic services per year, and prescription drugs in the Saskatchewan formulary. So that is for children, but for parents or legal guardians, we're covered up to 12 chiropractic services, an eye exam every two years, drug coverage with \$100 semi-annual family deductible, and 35 per cent consumer co-payments.

So, Mr. Speaker, this \$1 million mean-spirited hit has a far greater impact than the \$1 million, Mr. Speaker. So those children, or those parents who have children over 12 will take a financial hit, Mr. Speaker, and these are the lowest earning people in Saskatchewan. These are people making minimum wage, Mr. Speaker, and a little bit more who are already struggling. That is completely unacceptable.

When we talk about families, we can talk a little bit about child care. It was interesting, I heard the Minister for Highways last night heckling. She actually wasn't heckling. She said on her feet, she was talking about the member from Rosemont, saying that the member from Rosemont didn't have all his information correct when there weren't new child care spaces, but where in the heck would we think that, Mr. Speaker? In the minister's own comments, where he says . . . This is from the minister's message, Mr. Speaker: "The 2015-16 budget will see a pause in the expansion of both child care spaces and Pre-K programs, due to the fiscal constraints of this budget."

Mr. Speaker, so for the member from Martensville, she needs to maybe look at some of the information in her own budget document, Mr. Speaker, the fact that this was a broken promise. This government has committed in the last election to 500 new

child care spaces every year for four years, so putting these 500 spaces on hold is a problem unto itself, Mr. Speaker. But there's more with the child care issue, Mr. Speaker. There is much more.

Talking to child cares across Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, they identify that new spaces are important, but the existing spaces need to be funded well, Mr. Speaker. This government has not done that. They've directed money to the front lines which turned out to be, Mr. Speaker, about 6 cents an hour, Mr. Speaker. So that's to support employee wages, but that does nothing to support the increasing operating costs for child cares, Mr. Speaker, for increased rent, increased utility, the opportunity to enhance child care facilities, to paint facilities, Mr. Speaker, all those kinds of things.

As well the minister talks about the number of spaces that are going to be opened at the end of this fiscal year, and I look forward to asking him a bit further in estimates about that because I'm not entirely sure that the number of 14,400 will in fact be open spaces or just committed spaces, Mr. Speaker. So I look forward to digging down a little bit deeper in that. But another issue is around the subsidy, Mr. Speaker. The turning point, the amount that a family can earn before they lose the maximum subsidy, has not changed since 1983, Mr. Speaker. We have people who are earning not much over minimum wage who aren't eligible for the full subsidy, Mr. Speaker. That is not acceptable. I have many more things to cover here, Mr. Speaker, and a limited amount of time, so I look forward to digging down a little bit deeper in child care, but that is an issue where I think the government is letting down people here in Saskatchewan.

We can talk about the changes to the seniors' drug plan. It's interesting, Mr. Speaker. In 2012, in March, you know what the then Health minister also said? This is about sustainability of the program. And they changed the deductible from 15 . . . or the cost of the prescriptions from 15 to \$20. I think this government, Mr. Speaker, is going to make programs sustainable right to their non-existence, is this government's end goal. This government's ability to manage programs, and manage a budget for that matter, is entirely questionable.

I want to talk a little bit about health capital. We talked about that in question period today. It took several freedom of information requests, me asking the minister in estimates some very detailed questions, and then still two months later until we finally got the VFA report.

This government has 1.3 per cent, is spending 1.3 per cent of what is actually needed in infrastructure, health infrastructure maintenance, Mr. Speaker. At this rate, Mr. Speaker, it'll take 80 years for this government to deal with its \$2.2 billion infrastructure deficit.

In the meantime, we've got health care facilities with mesh holding them up from falling down. We've got cancelled surgeries because HVAC [heating, ventilating, and air conditioning] systems aren't working. We've got women delivering babies with no hot water present, Mr. Speaker.

There is no shortage of this government having its priorities all wrong, Mr. Speaker. \$40 million and the tab kept running, Mr.

Speaker, for John Black and the continued approach to his style of lean, Mr. Speaker. There's no shortage of money for consultants, Mr. Speaker. This is about priorities, and this government's priorities are all mixed up. With that, I will be supporting the amendments and will not be supporting the budget speech.

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

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is certainly an honour to enter into the debate on this budget, a budget that required some difficult choices. As the Finance minister had said, that was one of the toughest budgets our government had to face. I believe we came up with some very wise choices, Mr. Speaker.

I understand there's a number of other members that would like to speak this afternoon so I will try and keep my comments fairly brief. I would simply like to acknowledge the good work of my constituency staff and say a thank you to my family for all the years they've supported me in this, enabled me to do this.

As I have said many times before and members would know, we have a couple of granddaughters. That keeps our life interesting. I just thought I would mention that the oldest granddaughter who is in grade 12 is currently in Ottawa on the Forum for Young Canadians. She'll be coming back on Friday and we certainly look forward hearing her experiences. The youngest granddaughter and her grandmother, my wife Marlene, are currently on their way to the local vet clinic to take our old dog who requires stitches. So they're busy, Mr. Speaker. But they seem to manage quite well without me, Mr. Speaker, which is . . . Sometimes I wonder whether perhaps they're managing too well.

As far as constituency issues, Mr. Speaker, in my reply to the Throne Speech I had outlined the challenges that we had in Last Mountain-Touchwood with the mid-summer flooding. And I received my first phone call yesterday from a constituent raising an issue with a flooded municipal road that leads to the dairy farm. So we're working with the . . . There's a highways issue there and we're working with that to hopefully get that resolved, Mr. Speaker.

As I had said, this budget, as many other members have said, with the decline in oil revenues and the impacts that that has had, the price of oil being less than half of what it was a year ago, certainly created some challenges. And so some difficult decisions needed to be made, and they were made, Mr. Speaker, and I believe they were the correct decisions to be made. One of the things that governments in the past have done and this government could have done is simply just said, look we're not . . . We're going to cut back on . . . I'm wondering if those members would like to enter into the debate, Mr. Speaker. I think some already have and they'll have their chance.

As I was going to say, you know, we could have as a government just said, look we're going to just throttle back spending completely and not continue to build the necessary and much needed infrastructure, and put that off and pushed it off into the future and just made do. Well I don't believe that

would have been a wise decision, Mr. Speaker. So as the Minister of Finance said, we're going to continue to build. And I believe that history will show that that was a wise choice.

But having said all of that, there were some difficult decisions. The member opposite raised the seniors' drug plan, and that the eligibility for the seniors' drug plan was some \$80,000 of annual income and we lowered it to \$65,000, Mr. Speaker. The figure that seniors need to look at if they are looking at their tax return is line 236, which is their net income figure. So it's not the gross figure, it's not the gross total income. There are a number of deductions, some of which may apply to seniors, and it's the net income figure.

And I'd like to thank the member from Melville-Saltcoats for getting me a copy of this letter that he received from Sask Health dealing with the seniors' drug plan. I would've used my own, but I'm not quite old enough to get one of those. But seniors, towards the end of the year, get a letter from Sask Health outlining whether they are eligible for the seniors' drug plan or not. And in the letter received in last October, the figure was given of \$80,256 and now that figure is going to be adjusted to about \$65,500.

I guess, Mr. Speaker, you know, if you look at the figures, really a senior with a net income of over \$65,000, you know, should in most cases not have a great deal of difficulty looking after their drug costs because, Mr. Speaker, also seniors get a letter before the end of the year — and I'm looking at one dated November the 1st — which indicates that if seniors have exceptionally high drug costs, there is a special support program that kicks in. So after a certain number of dollars spent on prescription drugs, it is reduced so where they only pay 35 per cent of the total costs. So there are measures in place to help seniors who have exceptionally high drug costs. Over and above that, I believe there's exceptional drugs which seniors and other people can qualify, so it's not all doom and gloom.

One of the other decisions that was made, Mr. Speaker, is there was a change to the eligibility for the active families benefit, the tax credit that families could receive for some of the activities that their children are involved in, whether it be hockey or piano lessons or dance lessons and so on. That program was never income tested in the past, but this year it is going to be income tested.

I think there is a certain amount of logic and good management there. You know, I know of young families or families that have young children involved in many activities who are very fortunate and do very well for themselves. I know families that have income, family incomes of 150 to \$200,000. Well I'm sure those families can manage to keep their children involved.

So now the income testing has been put in place with a figure of \$60,000. Families who don't have an income of \$60,000 will be eligible for the active families benefit this coming year, the same as they've always been, Mr. Speaker.

I think the big item in the budget that has had some discussion in the media and here in this House — there's been much said about it, particularly in the media — is our plan to borrow \$700 million for infrastructure for capital spending.

[15:30]

I was interested to read an article on the editorial page by the *Leader-Post's* political analyst or reporter. And I'll quote from a March 21st article titled, "Sask government can't rely on oil to pay bills." The writer says, and I quote, "The core of what's wrong with the 2015-16 budget is the unprecedented decision to borrow \$700 million, which will help grow debt by \$1.5 billion." Mr. Speaker, I can say that I certainly do not agree with that statement, Mr. Speaker. And I know I've heard members opposite mention that too.

So I look at what other jurisdictions and other provinces that are in Canada are doing, and particularly I looked at British Columbia, Mr. Speaker. They brought their budget down in February of this year. And if you go to page 2 of their budget document under a heading "Capital Spending," and I'll quote from it. It says that "Taxpayer-supported infrastructure spending on hospitals, schools, post-secondary facilities, transit, and roads will total \$10.7 billion over the fiscal plan period, and will be financed by \$7.6 billion in borrowing . . ."

So this is nothing new that we're doing. And, Mr. Speaker, there are other people who are saying — people whose credentials I certainly respect — who are saying that to governments, not only to governments but to businesses, that in view of the historically low interest rates that governments and business should look very seriously at taking advantage and locking in those low interest rates, Mr. Speaker. And one such person is the former governor of the Bank of Canada, Mr. David Dodge, who is currently a senior adviser with the law firm of Bennett Jones. Bennett Jones is a law firm that was founded in the early '20s in Calgary and former Alberta premier Peter Lougheed was a partner in that firm, a very well-respected firm, and David Dodge is certainly a respected individual.

And every so often he will issue, along with some of his people there, will issue some reports. The one that I'm referring to is an economic outlook paper that was issued in June of 2014. And I happened to hear David Dodge being interviewed about that report. And he was asked, why are you recommending governments and businesses to borrow at this point in time? And he started his comments — and I'm going to paraphrase, Mr. Speaker — he started his comments by saying, he says, you need to understand what I'm saying, he said. I'm a fiscal hawk, he said. He said, I do not advocate borrowing for operational, for day-to-day expenses. He says, those absolutely, that is absolutely the wrong way to go. He said, but what I am saying in view of where we are here in history and with historically low interest rates, that businesses and governments should be taking advantage of that and locking in those low interest rates over a long period of time because, Mr. Speaker — and if I can find the quote here I will read it. This is a quote from that interview. He says, he says, and I quote:

. . . in part because governments can go out and borrow money for 30 to 50 years now at extraordinarily low real rates of interest, and the economic value of those investments in infrastructure over time going forward is certainly far greater than the extraordinarily low rate of interest that governments are paying right now.

I think that speaks volumes, Mr. Speaker. And when you hear

people with those kind of credentials saying those kind of things, I think we need to sit up and take notice.

So what does our budget document say? And I'm looking at page 18 of the budget document, and this is where we talk about that borrowing. About the middle of the page on the right-hand column it says, "A key aspect of the borrowing plan is the debt repayment plan." And that is critical, Mr. Speaker. If you're going to borrow money, you'd better figure out how you're going to pay for it.

That's what we are doing, Mr. Speaker. We're setting up a sinking fund where every year 2 per cent of the amount owing will be put into that fund so that when that loan matures, the money will be there to repay it, Mr. Speaker. I think that's wise management. Businesses do it all the time, and we are going to do it. I think that is absolutely the right way to go, Mr. Speaker.

Finally I would just like to talk a bit about the overall budget process. I had the privilege to serve on treasury board this year, working with the Minister of Finance and other treasury board members. The phrase, seeing how sausage is made, comes to mind. It's this long, arduous process. We were very ably helped in that process with the Finance officials: Deputy Minister Clare Isman, Associate Deputy Minister Denise Macza, and their analysts and all their staff. They did a tremendous job in getting the information that we required so that analysis could be done. And they would present their analysis, and treasury board made a recommendation to cabinet, and cabinet finalized the budget.

And all of the whole process, Mr. Speaker, was led by our Finance minister, someone who is the member from Canora-Pelly, who is dedicated, who takes his work very seriously and has the best interests of the people of this province at heart, Mr. Speaker. I can only say that I certainly admired his leadership and fully supported him. We did occasionally, as the process is, we sometimes would have a different opinion on certain issues, but we always . . . and other members. And it was a very rewarding experience, Mr. Speaker. And we arrived at a consensus, and we arrived at this budget which I think history will show is a sound, wise direction for this province.

Mr. Speaker, before I take my seat, I would just like to say a couple more words about the member from Canora-Pelly and tell you about the first time we met. That was back on a stormy winter's evening back in 1999. That's the time when the original eight were getting the Sask Party going and they were out looking for candidates. And prior to that, a few weeks prior to that, there was three seniors from Wynyard drove into our yard one afternoon to have coffee. They were the executive of . . . Sask Party executive of Last Mountain-Touchwood. And they came and talked to Marlene and myself and they said, well would you be interested in buying a membership? And we said, well yes, it's not too much money. I guess we could afford it. We'll buy a membership, okay, and hopefully say that would be the end of it and we wouldn't hear from them for a long time.

Well lo and behold, a couple of weeks, a week or so, maybe not even a week passed and they phoned and said, look, the party would really like . . . We need to have an information meeting and you're part of the constituency, and would you organize that? I said, well we've done some organization with other

activities in our area. We're both, Marlene and myself, we're very involved in community organizations. So I said, I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to look for the smallest hall in the area. I'm going to print some posters — because we'd just got a new computer and a printer and so we could print these posters, and it looked pretty good we thought, you know — and we'll put them up and we're not doing anything else. We'll phone one person; that's the former Speaker of this House, Mr. Tusa. And we thought we'd at least let him know what's happening.

So we did that. Well the day of the . . . The meeting was supposed to take place at 7 o'clock. The day of that meeting was the only blizzard we had that winter and it just . . . I mean, you couldn't see your hand in front of your face all afternoon. But about 6 o'clock it kind of let up, so we thought, well okay. Let's go over to . . . Actually the meeting, the smallest hall in the area was over at Dysart so that's where we had the meeting. So we drove over to Dysart. Well there was five people showed up — myself; my wife, Marlene; the fellow that . . . the senior that unlocked the hall for us; Arnold Tusa; and the member from Canora-Pelly. He drove out, I believe, from Regina, and I apologized to him. I said, look, I thought there might be at least 10 people here. And he said, no that's fine. So we just sat around and visited and had some coffee.

And so I was walking out to his car and he says to me, he said, would you consider letting your name stand for the nomination? And I says, don't be crazy. But you know, going home, we talked about it a bit. And a few phone calls and so on, long story short, here I am representing the people from Last Mountain-Touchwood. So as I said, that was my first meeting with the member and I will always remember that. And I certainly appreciate all the hard work he's done, and I know we're all going to miss him, Mr. Speaker, and I believe the people of the province are going to miss him. But we certainly wish him . . . And he's still going to be here, so we'll have some time to wish him, give him all the best wishes in his retirement.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would say that I won't be supporting the amendment but I will be supporting the motion.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank the people of Thunder Creek for the opportunity of allowing me the honour and the opportunity to come to work every day in this place, this great place where many of my mentors have served before me. The history in this place is special and it is a beautiful building. It's probably the most beautiful legislative building in the country. And it's just a great honour to represent the people of Thunder Creek and have the privilege of coming to work in this place, Mr. Speaker.

This political life can be difficult for families. And I want to talk a little bit about mine, maybe a little bit more than usual. We always mention our families, but you know, sometimes I don't think we give them the credit we should, and I want to take a little more time for that today.

My wife, Linda, just retired at the end of the year and so she has more time to come up with jobs for me to do, and that's great. My daughter Stephanie, who's the oldest of my children, just

turned 40 on Monday, which makes me feel way older than that. And she and her husband, Gabe, live in Ottawa and have three children. My next one, Alison . . . Stephanie was a great basketball player when she was younger. Alison was a great hockey player playing for Team Canada and Cornell University. She lives in Ottawa as well with her husband, Sean, and their daughter. And my son Lee lives on the farm, and he was a fantastic lacrosse player and a good hockey player and still plays hockey — very slowly I might say. He hasn't speeded up much over the years but he's gained about 100 pounds since he was a teenager. But it's still good to watch. It's good hockey. And his wife, Jessie, who stays at home with their beautiful daughter. They make sacrifices for us in this job, Mr. Speaker, and I don't think we always give them the credit that we should.

My dad who . . . I have trouble talking about my family. My dad who just turned 100, 100 years old . . . and I better get this together, because he's watching. I know he will be. And he's a tough old bird; I'll tell you that. The things he's seen in his lifetime, in his 100 years, Mr. Speaker. Horses were the main power on farms when he was born and the main means of transportation. Cars, there were cars around but they were seasonal at best, and most people didn't have them in 1915. But they were coming into prominence and my dad, because of the time he was born, was a great horseman all his life and has a way with horses.

He's seen steam locomotives turn to diesel, and he was way into middle age when the first man landed on the moon. And he's seen the computer age, and he's very sharp, Mr. Speaker. He'll be watching this and critiquing all of our speeches, and he'll have a few things to say to me the next time I visit him. And for his 100th birthday we gave him an iPad mini so he can skype with my grandchildren, his great-grandchildren, and my kids. And of course he can't skype with me, Mr. Speaker, because I don't know how. But he does, and I think that says something about that man. He's been the greatest role model of my life, and I just thank him.

[15:45]

Mr. Speaker, I think about, at budget time, where Saskatchewan has come from in the few short years that I've been coming to this place. And I remember a Saskatchewan where people were leaving and young people didn't even plan on staying here for the most part. They'd plan on going someplace else. The choice was, where? Staying just didn't seem to be an option. You know, jokes were made about the place. Will the last one out shut off the lights? Things of that nature. We made excuses why we liked to live here. Our relatives and friends from other places would say, why do you even stay there? It's a hopeless situation. It'll never amount to anything. Everybody wants to leave. Why don't you?

And so we'd make excuses, but the truth is a number of us stayed because we love the place, you know. And I'm glad we did because it's a different place now. And I remember in 2007 at election time, I remember the way people used to feel about this place. We weren't proud. We weren't proud of the way it was . . . it was. There were no opportunities and people kind of shuffled around and hung their heads and made excuses about staying here. But after election day in November of 2007, you could feel the difference, Mr. Speaker. People walking down

the street would walk more erectly and hold their heads up and they looked happier and more proud, and things started to change right away, Mr. Speaker. And it's because of budgets like this that they did.

And I'm very proud of this budget, Mr. Speaker. And I'm proud to be associated with the Minister of Finance for so long and saddened that he's announced that this is his last budget and he's going to be moving on. I know the Minister of the Economy made a wisecrack about his poor choice in hockey teams, and I have to say I haven't seen the Leafs play for years, but then I only watch playoff games, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is remarkable in the circumstances of what's happening in the oil industry, Mr. Speaker. Revenues are flat. Of course costs continue to escalate for everything. We know that from our own personal lives. And certainly on the scale of a provincial budget, it's even a bigger deal to contain costs. And you know, since 2007 this government has delivered record property tax cuts, record income tax cuts, over \$5 billion in tax relief to Saskatchewan people altogether. And the members ask where the money's gone, Mr. Speaker. That's one of the . . . those are some of the places that the money's gone, to tax relief for every Saskatchewan person.

Mr. Speaker, spending was held to a 1.2 per cent increase from last year: key investments in health and education and social services and assistance while managing operating spending, Mr. Speaker; changes to tax credits to ensure sustainability and manage costs.

Even with the revenue challenges that we are experiencing this year, Mr. Speaker, investments, substantial investments are being made in infrastructure again, a new four-year Saskatchewan Builds capital plan: twinning and passing lane projects on Highways 5, 6, 7, 16, 39; interchange projects at Warman and Martensville; the next phase of the Regina bypass, Mr. Speaker; continued progress on the Swift Current long-term care centre; construction to begin on new schools in Regina, Sacred Heart and Connaught, plus nine joint-use schools around the province; a major renovation at Hague High School and St. Brieux; and the Saskatchewan Hospital at North Battleford of course, Mr. Speaker.

This budget supports employment training and job creation, Mr. Speaker: two new growth tax incentives for job creation and capital investment; increasing training seats for apprenticeship, medical training, and adult basic education.

This budget keeps Saskatchewan strong by investing in people through significant investments in health care including new investments in seniors' care to increase choice and flexibility in care options and to support caregivers, Mr. Speaker; funding to reduce emergency room wait times and improve patient flow; increase supports for K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] students; increase support for people with disabilities and low-income seniors.

Mr. Speaker, I remember, while we're talking about health care, I remember during the time when those members opposite were in charge around this place. I remember that we had the longest wait-lists in Canada. Now, Mr. Speaker, we have the shortest wait-lists for surgeries in Canada. And that's a credit to budgets

like this, balanced budgets, good budgets that provide benefits for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. That's where the money's been going.

This is a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker, with a surplus of \$107 million. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that's all I'll say about the general budget. I know that we're under time constraints because a number of people want to speak, but I'm very proud to be the Minister of Agriculture in this province, Mr. Speaker. Agriculture in this province is our second-largest industry in normal times. Maybe this year it'll be the largest because of the unfortunate temporary downturn in the oil and gas industry, Mr. Speaker.

In any event, it's extremely important to the economy of Saskatchewan and the people of Saskatchewan, all of our standards of living. Crop production: second-largest crop ever this year in the province at 30.7 million tonnes, Mr. Speaker; record crop production the year before at 38.4 million tonnes. We're experiencing strong cattle prices after a long sort of downturn following the discovery of BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy] in 2003. Western livestock price insurance is a new program that we were proud to introduce last year, Mr. Speaker, and it exceeded our enrolment expectations in the first year of the program.

Realized net farm income was 2.46 billion, 30 per cent above the five-year average of 2008 to '12. A record 13.9 billion in exports, ag exports in 2014, Mr. Speaker, our fourth consecutive year of record exports. We lead the nation in ag exports.

Under the NDP in their last year in power, it wasn't \$13.9 billion, Mr. Speaker. It was 6.4, \$6.4 billion only, Mr. Speaker, less than half, less than half. I've woken up the member from Athabasca, Mr. Speaker, and it's always a pleasure to hear from him. He doesn't stand up very often, but he likes to make a lot of noise from his seat.

Mr. Speaker, canola was our top export commodity in 2014 at \$2.5 billion just for canola. Value-added is another area of opportunity in agriculture, Mr. Speaker, and we'll build on our strength as a primary producer and expand that, and continue to expand that.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to brag a little more about agriculture before I get onto the agriculture portion of the budget. We produce here 99 per cent of Canada's chick peas, 95 per cent of Canada's lentils, 86 per cent of Canada's durum wheat, 83 per cent of Canada's flax seed, 70 per cent of Canada's mustard, 60 per cent of Canada's dried peas, 49 per cent of Canada's canola. I think I better move on, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to run of time.

I want to talk, I want to brag some more about agriculture, but this time the agriculture budget. This is a \$362.4 million budget in agriculture, Mr. Speaker, a budget that supports a growing agriculture industry, and it builds on the second-largest crop ever, as I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, at 30.7 million tonnes and record exports of 13.9 billion.

Business risk management programs under this budget are 240 million, Mr. Speaker: AgriStability, 47.1, up 4.4 million from last year; AgriInvest, 38.5 million, up 4.4 million, Mr. Speaker;

crop insurance, 154 million this year which is down 11.1 million because of a strong record of crop production and low payouts from crop insurance. And so that makes the program cheaper and, as a result of that, our coverage is up to \$183 an acre on average across the province, Mr. Speaker, up from \$162 last year, and premiums down, Mr. Speaker, from \$7.47 an acre on average last year to \$7.06 an acre on average across the province this year.

Oats, in the changes to the crop insurance program, Mr. Speaker, we were able to increase the base grade for oats from a 3 CW [Canada Western] to 2 CW, which will put a lot more money in the pockets of oat producers around the province. And we added hemp as an insurable crop, Mr. Speaker. Hemp in the past has been a small acre crop, but two years ago we grew 25,000 acres of hemp in Saskatchewan and this past year over 40,000, Mr. Speaker, so it warrants crop insurance coverage. And we hope that this will allow hemp growers to expand their production even more.

Unseeded acreage coverage changed this year, Mr. Speaker. Four coverage levels available: 50, 70, 85, and \$100 per acre, and the unseeded premium will now be charged on all acres normally seeded.

Agriculture research budget, Mr. Speaker, of \$26.7 million, same as last year, includes \$2 million for the Global Institute for Food Security. Irrigation bridges, 500,000 for that, Mr. Speaker. It's the third year of the program.

Growing Forward 2 strategic initiatives, \$71.2 million, Mr. Speaker, and that includes such programs as agriculture, research, pest control and disease surveillance, rural water infrastructure, farm business management, trade and market development, agriculture awareness, value-added business development. A total Growing Forward 2 commitment of \$388 million over five years remains the same as we've said in the past, Mr. Speaker.

I'm skipping over some pieces of this, Mr. Speaker, because the member from Athabasca is restless and I need to make time for other speakers.

Mr. Speaker, you know, the NDP budget day news release and backgrounder was all doom and gloom as usual. However they got the cuts to ag wrong in their backgrounder. They highlighted the fact that the AgriStability program delivery costs have gone down by \$1.4 million. I don't know if they proofread their news releases or not, Mr. Speaker, but this is good news. There's more money available for the program and less for administration. This is what we were trying to do when the previous Ag minister brought AgriStability back to Saskatchewan in the first place, and we've succeeded in doing it, Mr. Speaker. Since we've taken over the administration of AgriStability and settled that office in Melville, which the members opposite would not even fully fund back in those days when they were in power, we have been able to find efficiencies in administration and save producers millions.

Overall budget of 362.4 is the seventh-largest Ag budget ever. Average budget over the last eight years under this government, Mr. Speaker, is 395 million. Average agricultural budget over the last eight years of the NDP government, Mr. Speaker, 278

million only. Research funding now is 96 per cent higher than under the NDP in the last year of their government.

[16:00]

I'm getting a signal from the House Leader that I'm taking a little too much time, so I think I'll try to wrap up here as quickly as I can.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is about making choices. Let's take a look at the choices that the NDP made when they had budget challenges. They raised taxes 17 times, including the PST three times, income taxes twice, business taxes four times, and that doesn't even count all the education property tax hikes. They stopped investing in infrastructure and closed facilities: 176 schools, closed 1,200 long-term care beds, 52 rural hospitals, and the Plains hospital in Regina, Mr. Speaker. That's how they dealt with tough fiscal times.

This Finance minister, Mr. Speaker, took a different approach. He's delivered a growth budget, a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very proud of it, Mr. Speaker. Accordingly, I will be supporting the budget but not the half-baked amendment from the other side of the floor, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Doke: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before I start, I was hoping there would be more of the opposition in the crowd because I'm going to offer up a little bit of help near the end of my speech. I know I have to cut out a few things, but we'll carry on. And I know that the member from Athabasca is paying attention finally.

Mr. Speaker, the theme of the 2015-16 budget is keeping Saskatchewan strong. This 2015-16 budget is balanced, with a surplus of \$107 million. Overall revenue is 14.28 billion, up just 1.2 per cent from last year. Overall spending is 14.17 billion, also up just 1.2 per cent from last year.

Mr. Speaker, before I continue on, I would like to thank some people. Firstly, Mr. Speaker, a thank you to all ministers and their ministries for their hard work and due diligence on this balanced budget. As a past treasury board member, I know the amount of hours put in to produce this balanced budget, and I thank all treasury board members for their dedication.

Mr. Speaker, to deliver the eighth straight balanced budget comes with great leadership, and this Finance minister is just that — great. Mr. Speaker, this Finance minister puts people first and our great province next. This will be the last budget by this Finance minister as he is retiring. I want to say that it has truly been an honour to work with you, and this province will truly miss you. Your values and credibility will serve us for many years to come. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank my constituency assistants, Cheryl Hume and Maureen Paron, for their dedication to the constituents of Cut Knife-Turtleford and their prompt and effective handling of all files.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's population has hit an all-time

high of 1,132,640 — pardon me, there's going to be two more births here; it'll be 42 — people after growing more than 17,000 people last year. Mr. Speaker, all of this tells us that despite the challenges in the oil sector, our economy is strong and Saskatchewan is strong. This budget is about keeping Saskatchewan strong, and our government will take five key steps to keep Saskatchewan strong.

One, we will keep taxes low. Our government has delivered the largest tax cuts in Saskatchewan's history, and the budget contains no tax increases. Two, we will continue to make record investments in infrastructure. Three, we will control operating spending. Four, we will help the private sector create jobs with new tax incentives for job creation and increased training opportunities for our young people to fill those jobs. And five, we will balance the budget.

Mr. Speaker, the active families benefit, the graduate retention program, research and development tax credit, seniors' drug plan, and Saskatchewan's employment supplement are all being changed to ensure their ongoing sustainability, unlike the previous government who would have cut the programs or raised taxes to maintain them.

Mr. Speaker, as Saskatchewan population grows, so does its infrastructure and capital needs. This budget begins a four-year, \$5.8 billion commitment to the Saskatchewan Builds capital plan to construct and maintain needed infrastructure such as schools, health care facilities, municipal infrastructure, roads, bridges, and highways. Mr. Speaker, within the four-year plan, budget 2015-16 provides more than 1.3 billion for core infrastructure in the 2015-16 budget, the largest infrastructure allocation in Saskatchewan's history and an increase of almost 50 per cent from last year. This investment, Mr. Speaker, is in addition to \$2 billion in capital investment forecast this year by commercial Crown corporations, largely SaskPower, SaskTel, and SaskEnergy.

Mr. Speaker, the 2015-16 capital plan also includes 256.4 million in health care capital commitments, including 129 million to begin site preparation and construction of the Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford and an integrated correctional facility, a potential P3 project as well.

Mr. Speaker, the 2015-16 balanced budget is helping to keep Saskatchewan municipalities strong by providing a record 265.3 million in municipal revenue sharing. That's up 8.3 million or 3.2 per cent from the 2014-15 budget, and up 138 million or 108 per cent from the 2007-08 budget. Mr. Speaker, revenue sharing is based upon a formula of one point of the provincial sales tax. Urban revenue sharing for all cities, towns, villages, and resort villages will total 170.5 million in 2015-16. Revenue for rural municipalities, which includes organized hamlets, will amount to 75 million, and northern municipalities will receive 19.8 million in revenue sharing in the upcoming fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, overall direct provincial support in the budget to municipalities totals 346.2 million. This includes 31.7 million in provincial support to municipal infrastructure through a number of programs, including 23.7 million from the Ministry of Highways, and infrastructure for rural roads through the municipal roads strategy, 7.9 million from the Ministry of Government Relations for support provided under the new

Building Canada Fund and the Saskatchewan infrastructure growth initiative.

Mr. Speaker, the budget also allocates 49.2 million in funding for municipalities from ministries, including grants for libraries, policing, urban parks, and other programs. Mr. Speaker, education property tax mill rates will not increase this year. However with huge demands on infrastructure and capital this will be watched closely.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to touch a little bit on agriculture. It's hard to add any more than what the minister already did, but agriculture in my constituency is a big part, along with the resource revenues. Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about what this budget has for agriculture. The Government of Saskatchewan recognizes the role a thriving, sustainable agricultural industry plays in the province's economy with this year's investment into agriculture program and services. The Ministry of Agriculture 2015-16 budget is \$362.4 million.

Mr. Speaker, the 2015 crop insurance program includes ongoing enhancements, giving producers more choice and flexibility. As well, crop insurance premiums are decreasing for producers while coverage levels on average are increasing to \$183 per acre, up from \$162 in 2014.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk just a little bit on Advanced Education. The 2015 budget for Advanced Education will help keep Saskatchewan strong by investing in post-secondary educational institutions and supports for students. The budget provides 20.2 million in direct support for First Nations and Métis post-secondary education. Mr. Speaker, the budget also provides 46.6 million for infrastructure to help ensure Saskatchewan's post-secondary institutions continue to meet the challenges of growth and accommodate the needs for students. This is a 43 per cent increase over 2014-15, and a 68 per cent increase over 2007. Since 2007-08 the provincial government has provided 477.5 million in capital funding to post-secondary institutions.

Mr. Speaker, the budget provides an additional 2.5 million to fulfill the government's commitment for more medical training seats in three areas. The budget continues to fund 40 additional medical undergrad seats to bring the total to 100, 60 medical residency seats to bring the total to 120, and an additional 20 nurse practitioner seats to bring the total up to 40. This budget also provides continued funding for 690 nursing training seats in the province. The government fulfilled its commitment to increase nursing education training seats by 300 in 2013.

Mr. Speaker, total funding transfers to post-secondary institutions are 708 million in the 2015-16 budget. This includes operating capital and targeted program funding. Operating funding to technical institutes and federated colleges will see an increase of 2 per cent. Operating funding to the University of Regina, affiliated colleges, and regional colleges will increase by 1 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, just a few things under the economy. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of the Economy in 2015-16 budget also includes two new tax incentives for job creation and capital investments. The new manufacturing and processing exporter tax incentive will provide tax credits to eligible corporations that increase

their number of full-time employees, as well as tax credits to eligible companies that increase their number of head office jobs. Mr. Speaker, a second new incentive will provide an income tax rebate to eligible primary steel producers that make a minimum investment of \$100 million in new or expanded productive capacity. As these incentives only apply on new job creation investment, they will not impact existing government revenues.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Economy's 2015-16 budget has enhancements to labour programs, including a \$600,000 increase to adult basic education for a record investment of 25 million, an increase of 62 per cent since 2007-08. The investment will add 200 adult basic education seats for an estimated total program capacity of 8,780 seats, up 2,900 seats from 2007-08.

Mr. Speaker, in addition the province will nominate a record 5,500 immigrants under Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program in 2015, including 775 nominees through a new provincial subcategory linked with the federal express entry system. The new Saskatchewan express entry subcategory was announced in January 2015 and will help attract skilled labour to the province.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan remains committed to students across the province with a total investment of 3.7 billion in education in the 2015-16 budget. Mr. Speaker, the government is continuing to meet the demands of communities throughout the province and through a \$157.5 million investment and a 154.1 million increase for initial construction costs for the nine joint-use schools in Warman, Martensville, Saskatoon, Regina scheduled to open in the fall of 2017.

Mr. Speaker, I have to move on here and I'm going to get to seniors' care. That seems to be the number one issue for the members opposite, so I would like to talk a little bit about that. Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan is investing in seniors' care, major capital projects, and in programs aimed at reducing emergency department wait times. Health care saw a record in total spending of 5.5 billion for the 2015-16 budget.

Mr. Speaker, seniors' care will be improved with an additional 10 million investment in new targeted funding to support seniors living in their own homes as well as improving quality of long-term care. Highlights include 3.5 million to support seniors who wish to remain at home as long as possible by enhancing the Home First/Quick Response program in Regina Qu'Appelle, Saskatoon, Prince Albert Parkland health regions and expanding the program in the Prairie North Health Region to an additional site. This brings the total funding for Home First/Quick Response to \$8 million.

Mr. Speaker, regional health authorities will receive 3.3 billion for operating funding and for targeted initiatives. This is an increase of 55.7 million compared to last year and supports care provided through hospitals, health centres, and long-term care facilities.

Mr. Speaker, through the Ministry of Social Services the province will fulfill its four-year commitment to increase benefits under the seniors' income plan and personal care home

benefit. Mr. Speaker, in 2015-16 a total of 26.5 million will be invested in the seniors' income plan to increase maximum monthly benefits by \$10 per month — \$270 for a single senior and 235 for each member of a senior couple. Approximately 14,000 seniors will benefit from this increase that takes effect in 2015.

[16:15]

Moving on, Mr. Speaker, the government will meet its commitment to increase the monthly income threshold by \$50 to \$2,000 for the personal care home benefit in July 2015. Investment in the personal care home benefit will total 3.7 million in 2015-16. The benefit will be accessed by about 800 seniors and was introduced in 2012 to assist lower income seniors with the cost of living in a personal care home.

Mr. Speaker, this government is reacting to seniors' care in keeping Saskatchewan strong. Mr. Speaker, week in and week out we hear the opposition leader talking how health care is broken. Mr. Speaker, there are thousands of seniors in long-term care, personal care homes, and assisted living facilities that would tell you that that's not true. There are thousands of health care workers that will tell you that that's not true.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition continue to dwell on the misfortunes of some. It appears they cannot think for themselves. They do not have any type of plan or even a single suggestion on how they would improve health care. It is truly unfortunate what has happened to some, but this government and this Health minister has always and will respond to the needs of all Saskatchewan residents. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite just don't get it.

This past weekend my 10-year-old grandson, who plays Atom AA hockey and he's a pretty good hockey player, anyway he had a sleepover. And so we were watching TV. And I've got to tell you, he's a good hockey player. He's got hands like his grandpa and a temper like his grandma, so he's going to go a long way.

Mr. Speaker, we were watching TV and on comes the NDP cartoon featuring the Leader of the NDP. He talks about where did the money go. So my grandson asks me, Grandpa, where did the money go? So, Mr. Speaker, I explained to him what the NDP government did when they were in power and how they closed 176 schools, closed 52 rural hospitals, closed long-term care beds, and further did nothing on highways, and so on. Mr. Speaker, I also explained to him that under the NDP there were no jobs for our kids, and that is why many of his cousins, aunts, and uncles moved away.

Mr. Speaker, I then explained to him what this Saskatchewan Party government has accomplished: record spending on highways and infrastructure, new schools, new hospitals, new long-term care facilities, jobs, wait times the shortest in Canada for surgeries, more doctors, more nurses, just to name a few accomplishments. Mr. Speaker, when I finished I asked my 10-year-old grandson if he understood, and he said, I got it, Grandpa.

Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to ask my grandson if he would

come and meet with the NDP, and maybe he can make them understand where the money has gone and will continue to go the residents of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, my only concern is that if he came, he may drink the NDP Kool-Aid. So on second thought, maybe we'd do that by video conferencing.

Mr. Speaker, our economy is strong. Our people are positive and that, along with the Saskatchewan Party government, will keep Saskatchewan strong. Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that this is a challenging budget, but the good news is Saskatchewan has never been in a better position to meet this challenge. Our economy is more diversified than ever before. More people live here than ever before. Exports are at an all-time high, and business continues to show tremendous confidence in Saskatchewan's future through major capital investments. Our diverse economy in this balanced budget will keep Saskatchewan strong.

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

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

Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour to have an opportunity to offer a few remarks about the current provincial budget. As with other members, I'd like to offer a few well-deserved thank yous.

In the past it's been my pleasure to thank Kyle Leonard, the very capable young man who runs the constituency office so capably; my wonderful wife, Jocelyn who offers her continual love and support; and the good people of Regina South that I have the honour to represent, whose advice and comments have helped me immeasurably over the last eight years.

But I would also like to thank the individuals whose hard work made this provincial budget possible. First of all to our Finance minister, the member from Canora-Pelly, an inspiring, hard-working, and passionate person, a very passionate person, Mr. Speaker, whom I've had the honour of knowing since well before his career in politics and whose integrity has been an example for all of us in this House: certainly to staff here in the legislature who have very capably assisted him in his role; members of the Legislative Assembly who have contributed untold hours working on the treasury board committee that carefully and thoroughly considers each and every budget item line by line and number by number; the dedicated public servants in the Ministry of Finance who provide all the necessary research and examples of precedent and information from other jurisdictions; the enormous number of stakeholders consulted annually by the Minister of Finance and his team and who provide experience and guidance that helps every budget; finally, all the residents of Saskatchewan who through their comments and observations have contributed in a very significant way to the shaping and the forming of this and every provincial budget. Mr. Speaker, all these good people deserve our thanks.

Mr. Speaker, the theme of this year's budget is keeping Saskatchewan strong and, as other members have pointed out, it's built on several key principles. Here they are: keeping taxes low; controlling spending; continued investment in infrastructure; incentives for job creation; investing in people;

achieving these goals within a balanced budget, one of only two in all of Canada. We're very proud of that.

My colleagues have outlined the context for this year's budget, especially the fact that it needed to address a revenue shortfall of some \$700 million due to currently low world prices for oil. They've also noted that our response to this very significant challenge was to control operating expenses, limiting new spending in this area to just 1.2 per cent, and avoiding tax increases all together at the same time.

This of course, Mr. Speaker, is in sharp contrast to the record of the NDP opposite who during their term of office met similar fiscal challenges by raising taxes 17 times, as members on this side have said. In addition, instead of tackling critical infrastructure needs, including the repair and replacement of education and health care facilities and highways, the NDP responded by closing 176 schools, 52 hospitals plus the Plains hospital right here in Regina, and something like 16 long-term care facilities totalling, I think it's 1,200 beds, Mr. Speaker, all across the province, and all but abandoning maintenance of Saskatchewan's highway system, hiking taxes, and slashing services, leaving behind crumbling infrastructure including the nation's worst highways, encouraging skilled tradespeople and trained professionals to move to Alberta, and at the same time saying that was somehow good for Saskatchewan because there would be more for the rest of us who are left behind here.

Mr. Speaker, planning for decline, not planning for growth. This in fact is the legacy of 16 years of NDP government in Saskatchewan. We've chosen a different path because this great province and its people deserve more, so much more.

Here's a brief outline of where we've travelled together since the election of 2007. We've paid down, as we know, \$3 billion of the provincial debt. That's almost half of the principal, and in the process saving nearly \$1 billion in interest payments, \$1 billion that had been reinvested to grow the economy and to improve the standard of life for Saskatchewan residents.

We provided the people of Saskatchewan with unprecedented tax relief, Mr. Speaker, including historic reductions in personal income tax and the education portion of property tax. In all, this amounts to \$5 billion being put back into the pockets of Saskatchewan families to help them meet their priorities, their interests.

And then there's infrastructure. Now, Mr. Speaker, as somebody who made a living in the construction industry for 30 years, I'm particularly interested in this file and very proud of our government's approach to it and what we've accomplished. And as with so many other issues, a little historical perspective may be helpful.

I still remember the 1990s, the dark 1990s here in Saskatchewan when the NDP government of the day simply turned its back on the people of Saskatchewan and walked away from all of its infrastructure responsibilities. I remember the inevitable result. It's something like a third — maybe it was even more — but at least a third of our construction industry's entire workforce was forced to pack up its tools and move to Alberta. And that expertise, all that expertise, Mr. Speaker, all those taxpayers, all those families and their children, our

province's very future, gone.

An Hon. Member: — Money for potatoes.

Mr. Hutchinson: — Money for potatoes indeed, as the member from Wood River notes. It has taken years for Saskatchewan's economy and its population numbers to recover, but Saskatchewan people, ever resilient and optimistic, assisted by their new government where possible, have turned this province around. And a new focus on investment and infrastructure has been a big part of our new success.

Here are some of the key numbers. In its first eight years, our government has invested over \$8 billion in infrastructure. In its last eight years of government, by comparison, the NDP invested less than half that amount, Mr. Speaker.

We've allocated one \$1.25 billion to health care facilities, including 15 new and rebuilt long-term care facilities. Here's the list. LTC [long-term care] facilities have been completed in Watrous, in Shellbrook, Redvers, and Rosetown, Prince Albert, Radville, Tisdale, and Kipling. They're under construction right now as we speak in Biggar, Kerrobert, Maple Creek, and Kelvington, and planning is well under way for others in Meadow Lake, Swift Current, La Ronge, and Saskatoon.

Let's talk about hospitals. The Rawlco mother baby care centre at Regina General Hospital, right here in Regina, is complete now. Construction of the new children's hospital in Saskatoon will be moving forward, thanks to well over \$200 million from the provincial government. The new Moose Jaw regional hospital is under construction.

An Hon. Member: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Hutchinson: — Hear, hear indeed, says the member from Moose Jaw. Enabled by \$80 million in funding from the provincial government, planning is now under way for the new Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford, the renewal of Prince Albert's Victoria Hospital, and a new hospital for Weyburn. And a new integrated facility combining acute and long-term care beds has been announced for Leader, Saskatchewan in the Southwest. Mr. Speaker, that's a pretty good start, pretty good start indeed.

Let's turn our attention for a moment to schools, shall we? Since 2008 our government has approved construction of 40 brand new or replacement schools, 27 major renovation and addition projects, and countless smaller projects such as new roofs and new boilers. The total value of this extremely important investment in our children's future is nearly \$1 billion. Of course, the most recent addition to this list of capital projects is the new nine joint-use schools in Regina, north in Saskatoon and Warman and Martensville. That actually means, Mr. Speaker, 18 brand new facilities in the province's K to 12 school system, built in pairs on nine separate sites, serving students in the Public and Catholic school divisions in these four fast-growing communities.

Right here in Regina, Mr. Speaker, we also have École Monseigneur de Laval That's the high school portion which has been relocated to the former Robert Usher Collegiate. We have Sacred Heart, École Connaught, Seven Stones, Douglas Park,

and Arcola. All of them are community schools; all of them getting brand new facilities right here in Regina. École St. Andrew is getting an addition and renovations, structural repairs. Long-awaited structural repairs have been completed for Campbell Collegiate in the south, and a new facility for Scott Collegiate is under way as well. Mr. Speaker, that's a lot of work.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot more that I could say about highways, but I think I'm running out of time. So I'll conclude my remarks at this point, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, that means that by long-standing tradition, I'm going to reach across the aisle in the true spirit of bipartisanship. I'm reaching right now to the members opposite. I'm asking them to set aside political rhetoric and ideology. I'm asking them to set aside partisan politics. I'm asking them to be guided by common sense and their conscience and to vote for the budget, which I know in their hearts they realize is the right thing to do.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is typically at this time that the member from Biggar, seated somewhere to the left here, usually shakes his head sadly and slowly says, they're not going to do it. They're going to vote against the budget. I just know they will. And, Mr. Speaker, this is the sad part. For eight years in a row, he's been right. And for eight years in a row, I've been wrong. But in the spirit of an old dog trying to learn a new trick, I have come to recognize that he's right. They are going to vote against this budget once again. I finally accept that inevitable fact, Mr. Speaker.

But you know what? I'm okay with it. I'm okay with it for two reasons. Reason number one is there's a whole lot more MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] on this side of the aisle than the other side of the aisle, thanks to the support of the Saskatchewan people. And when it comes to the budget vote, we're going to win, and we're going to provide people of Saskatchewan with a budget that they need and deserve.

The second reason I'm okay with this, Mr. Speaker, is that the people of Saskatchewan will be watching and listening. And when they see the folks on the other side of the aisle, the NDP opposition voting against all the good things in their communities that are contained in this budget, they're going to start thinking about that. And I think we'll see the results of their deliberations, Mr. Speaker, in the following provincial election, and that too is a vote that all the folks on this side of the aisle will be awaiting with great interest. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[16:30]

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand and enter into a debate on the budget. As is tradition, Mr. Speaker, there is a few people that I'd like to thank before I get into my formal remarks.

I'd like to thank my wife to begin with. Normally I leave her till the end, but she's one of the most important people that I have in my constituency back in Saskatoon. She keeps the home fires burning, although she'll phone me from time to time to remind

me that the garbage needs to go out. It's all right to get back to Saskatoon to get that done when it's appropriate. So I want to thank her very much for her love and support that she's given me over my years in public service.

I also like to acknowledge my children. I've got four. Our son Jeremy who's 30, who's going to be graduating from university this year, we're thankful for that because then he can start to make some money and we don't have to support him anymore. Our daughter Kayla, who is in university as well, and her partner Nathan, they are the parents of our only granddaughter, Mia. And as anyone knows who has grandchildren, they are certainly the apple of our eye, and we spend as much time with her as we possibly can.

My daughter Allison is graduating from university this spring in Europe, and she'll be returning home. Hopefully she'll be starting to make an income. And my son Stephen who's just got his interview for medical school. So we have high hopes for Stephen.

I'd also like to thank my constituency staff, especially my constituency assistant, Kelly Merriman. She does a great job of keeping the office running when I'm not there, which is a lot of the time, so I want to thank her specifically. My constituency association, President Doug Shaw, they do a great job of keeping us organized as well and keeping our constituency well staffed and well financed. And I'm happy about that.

I also want to thank my office staff in the Ministry of Justice, Dawn Cherkewich, Jennifer Hartung, Reagan Seidler, and my new chief of staff, Stacey Ferguson, which leads me to just a quick shout-out to my former chief of staff, Mary Donlevy-Konkin. She's moved on to private practice. I want to thank her very much for her friendship and her support for me as minister over the last little while. She spent seven and a half years in government, Mr. Speaker, and I know that I speak for all those who know her, that she was very, very well respected in government. And we are all going to miss her very much.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, just to the constituents of Saskatoon Northwest who provide me the honour of being able to sit here and represent the people of Northwest and the people of Saskatchewan as the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, before speaking to the budget itself, I do want to extend my thanks to my colleagues. I have great respect for each and every one of my colleagues in this legislature on both sides of the House. And I certainly learn something from each one of them every day, so I'm very, very thankful to be able to work with such a great group of people.

And as I said, Mr. Speaker, earlier, it's my great honour to serve the people of Saskatchewan as the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General, and I want to thank specifically our Premier for his faith and confidence in me in allowing me to serve in those important roles.

Mr. Speaker, as we recall, on the day of the Throne Speech last fall our nation's institutions fell under attack by an armed assailant intent on subverting the democratic ethos of this country. Since that time we've seen subsequent incidents in

Paris, Nigeria, the Philippines, Denmark, Tunisia, and elsewhere, as well as threats in our own country to remind us how important it is that we continue to protect our public spaces and our forums of debate.

While there are many occasions in which our caucus and the members opposite will disagree, there certainly exist matters of such gravity and significance that all elected members naturally unite in a common cause. To quote, "And do as adversaries do in law. Strive mightily, but eat and drink as friends." This was the advice of Shakespeare, and in this case it is well taken. Undoubtedly among all causes which unite us, ensuring the ongoing safety and accessibility of this Assembly, its visitors, and its ideals stands among the top.

This legislature is the heart of our democracy and it's a privilege to be in this place every day. It's a monument to the principles of suffrage and civil liberties for which our forebears valiantly fought, and a daily demonstration of representative government of our province's young people. From its chambers, ideals as transformational as medicare and as visionary as human rights laws have emerged and changed the trajectory of our country forever. Therefore I'd like to commend in particular the staff of the Sergeant-at-Arms and members on both sides of the House who serve on the Board of Internal Economy for their continued work to review and improve the safety apparatus of this Assembly. Your diligence allows for the debate we are having today and for this, you all have my thanks.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll turn my attention to the matter at hand, which is the budget debate. In 1965, then premier and provincial treasurer Ross Thatcher said, the provincial budget functions in two capacities. One is a clear indication of the kind of principles the government intends to pursue and two, as the rationale of those promises that a political party makes to its electorate.

While many governments are not in the position to do so, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that this budget achieves both. Last election the Saskatchewan Party set out a vision of our province alongside a detailed breakdown of our commitments. In the platform, which is still available, we envisioned a Saskatchewan with safer communities, where citizens have faster access to quality health care, where people with disabilities have an improved quality of life, a province with improved highways and infrastructure, and a Saskatchewan that is the economic leader in Canada. This budget is both a fulfillment of those commitments and a pledge to keep investing in the future.

A multi-dimensional approach on crime is being pursued, one that includes innovative crime prevention, smart crime suppression and law enforcement, compassionate support for victims, and an effective rehabilitation of offenders. We are working hard to make Saskatchewan a place where everyone can live in safe, vibrant communities, where all have an opportunity to contribute and to benefit from the growth in the economy.

Lately members of this Assembly have posed the question, where did the money go? Let's explore that for a moment, Mr. Speaker. For one, it's being directed into a new transition house

in Melfort, a facility that will provide shelter and support to women and children fleeing violence or abusive circumstances. We were saddened last fall when a fire destroyed the nearly completed building, but our Premier responded immediately, announcing through social media our government was there to build it, and we will be there to rebuild it. As the facility opens and develops its programs this year, our community justice budget includes increased funding of \$210,000 to support the Melfort transition house, a total commitment of up to \$360,000.

But this is one part of our commitment to vulnerable women in the province. Community justice funding is increasing to recognize our commitment to Kate's Place, a residence operated by the Salvation Army that provides a safe and supportive residence for up to 11 women participating in the Regina drug treatment court. This continued support will allow some of the most vulnerable women in society to find employment, return to school, and raise their children in a healthy environment.

It's also important to note for the Assembly that this budget also increases our support for victims of sexual assault. In 2015-16, an additional \$219,000 will be provided to six organizations in the province with a focus on direct support for victims and survivors of sexual assault.

So where else did the money go, Mr. Speaker? It went to expanding police-based victims services which support and provide information to victims of crime. Enhanced funding has led to new victims services in Assiniboia, Canora, Coronach, Creighton, Esterhazy, Kyle, Melville, Moosomin, Pelican Narrows, Wadena, Waskesiu, and Wynyard, and this list will continue to grow. The money went into enhancing the victims compensation program, the largest enhancement of the program since its inception in 1992.

It has gone into expanding video conferencing, both to reduce prisoner transport and increase security and also to allow vulnerable witnesses such as children to testify from outside the courtroom from a location in which they feel more safe. By the end of this year, we will have increased the number of locations with video conferencing technology from six in 2007-08 to over 70. That's where the money's been going, Mr. Speaker. It's a fact that since 2006 and '07, funding for direct services to victims through the Victims' Fund has more than doubled.

At the same time, our province is becoming a safer place. According to the latest figures in 2013, the rate of crime in this province fell 7 per cent, while the measure of crime severity declined by 9 per cent. This marks the 9th time in 10 years that the Saskatchewan crime rate has fallen and the 10th consecutive year that the severity of crime in Saskatchewan has decreased. These are important numbers, Mr. Speaker. While there will always be more work to do, it is an encouraging trend. Our crime rate is now 31 per cent lower than a decade ago. Communities are safer, and our victims are receiving more support. And that's where some of the money is going.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is a reflection of the priorities of this province. One program that deserves special recognition is the Little Tots ASD [autism spectrum disorder] program. Our government will be providing \$550,000 annually to make the Little Tots ASD program permanent in the Saskatoon Health Region. Including the Little Tots program, we are investing

\$7.6 million annually into improving targeted autism services and supports. That's 1,400 per cent increase from the original funding of \$500,000 in 2007, and, Mr. Speaker, that's particularly important to my family.

However we know the health care outcomes depend not only on our financial inputs, but on the effective management of resources. In the 1980s, Canadians were spending roughly \$50 billion each year on health care. That number has now risen to over 200 billion. This is one reason we continue to seek improvements through lean, to ensure our health care investments result in improved health care for the people of this province. To date, lean has been behind more than \$125 million in projected financial benefits. Equally important is improving patient care. As a simple example, in the Saskatoon Cancer Centre, a lean workshop was able to reduce distance for nurses by 26 per cent, freeing up nurses' time to devote to care for children and patients.

We are also looking at innovations on the capital side, which include the use of P3s to deliver health care facilities to Saskatchewan communities more quickly. The Swift Current long-term care centre is one example. Using a P3 to build this new 225-bed centre will save taxpayers more than \$16 million. Overall this budget provides more than \$1.3 billion for core infrastructure in 2015-16 and the largest infrastructure allocation in Saskatchewan's history. And it also includes \$265 million in revenue sharing, the largest ever grant provided to Saskatchewan municipalities and an increase of more than 108 per cent from the 2007-08 budget. As a result, Saskatoon, my home city, will receive just over \$47 million.

Disability programs are also getting a boost. The budget contains \$485 million directed for programming for Saskatchewan people with disabilities, up 39.5 million from last year's budget. The largest component is \$200 million, an increase of 26.8 million or 15.4 per cent over last year for the SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] program. This is the fourth consecutive year the province is increasing SAID benefits.

Mr. Speaker, this is all in context of another balanced budget, which is a remarkable feat. Economic experts from around the country are weighing in on the accomplishment. BMO Economic Research praised our budget, summarizing that "operating spending will be well contained this coming fiscal year while capital expenditures are getting a healthy boost."

TD Economics went further in commending the Finance minister:

... with an ongoing commitment to expenditure management combined with a mix of strong resource diversity ... [the Minister of Finance] leaves Saskatchewan in a good position to record a surplus in fiscal 2015-16 and beyond. As such, Saskatchewan is on track to join a relatively short list of provinces targeting black ink in this year's budget round.

And it is this type of fiscal discipline and foresight that contributes to our growth as a province. Balanced budgets increase trust in our province's finances. As a consequence, we attract more investment, which means more jobs and growth.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, the most interesting part of the budget may not yet be in the funding estimates but on the revenue side. As all Saskatchewan people know, oil prices have fallen dramatically in the past year. This has cost the treasury hundreds of millions of dollars, making tough choices a necessity. Yet the remarkable thing is this: while revenue to the government has taken a significant hit, the province's economy continues to perform. The fact is telling and speaks to how far Saskatchewan economy has advanced.

As everyone familiar with our history will know, this year is not the first time Saskatchewan has borne the vacillating affections of commodity prices. To begin the scene in Saskatchewan's early days, our province was founded amidst a flurry of economic activity. It was in this time that the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* wrote the following, which paints a scene as it appears in 1906:

The spring of three years ago witnessed a spectacle on those prairies to the southwest which will never be forgotten.

That particular spring, the traffic of the incoming settlers was so steady and continuous that it was not an uncommon sight to see an almost unbroken line of wagons and vehicles of all kinds and degrees of richness stringing out in a long snake-like caravan many miles in length. At night round every slough the campfire blazed, while in the stopping houses . . . brave men and women, weary but full of hope, rested their way to the land that promised comfort and prosperity. And today the traveler reaching that point in the trail, reins up involuntarily and looks with amazement at the dozens of cozy farm steadings which dot the wide plain. The change suggests [in the midst of] . . . Arabian Nights for it is as if some wizard had waved a magic wand or breathed an incantation that turned the wilderness into a populous country.

[16:45]

Growth at this time in our province's history was explosive. That period established the face of Saskatoon as we know it. St. Paul's Cathedral, the Avenue Building on 3rd Avenue, Third Avenue United Church, and the opening of the Caswell School have all had their roots.

Mr. Speaker, this is all to say that over the course of the history of this province, we have had economic difficulties with falling commodity prices. But the truth of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that today we have an economy that's well diversified and able to resist the changes in the economics when commodity prices tend to fall in one area.

So, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the history of this province, we are well served by this Finance minister and this budget in this particular year. And with the diversity in our economy, we're able to withstand the fall in the commodity prices simply because of the diversity of that economy, Mr. Speaker.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I'll end my comments. I want to say that I will be supporting the budget and I will not be supporting the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to enter the debate on today's budget.

And before that, Mr. Speaker, I know it's an old story, but I want to share it once again with the Assembly. About a week ago I had a dream, and in that dream I was about to be shot by a firing squad. And next to me was a conservative sitting right next to me or tied up to a stake in this courthouse. And the captain of the firing squad walked over to the conservative and said, before you get shot, what is your last wish? And the conservative fellow said, I want to hear all the speeches from the Sask Party government of how this year's budget is balanced, is what this guy said. So the captain walked over to me and said, before you get shot, what is your last wish? To which I replied, shoot me first. And what's really important, Mr. Speaker, is that they ought to say to people of Saskatchewan all the gobbledygook that they have in relation to this budget.

And before I go to my address, Mr. Speaker, there's two things I want to say. First of all, my granddaughter Mila is watching. I want to say hello to Mila who's in Saskatoon. Her mom said she's watching TV. She wants to see you on TV. And I said to her okay, Mila, you get ready. Your grandpa will be on in five minutes. And Mila is sitting at home watching TV. And what I want to say to Mila is, my girl, you've got to go to school. You have to get educated. You have to learn to work really hard, because as you get older, and you get educated, and you get that great job, you've got a lot of bills to pay, based on this budget. Now Mila's only three years old, Mr. Speaker. She's only three years old. But when she hits 18 or 19 or hopefully even later on in life, after she goes to university, she'll have to start paying some of the debt racked up by this conservative government, Mr. Speaker. We all know. So Mila, don't quit school. Keep working hard because we have a lot of bills to pay as you grow up.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we watched with a lot of interest the first few days before the budget was to be presented, and we sat in our caucus and we spoke about the budget. And all of a sudden we seen the Premier tout the possibility of having the revenue-sharing deal with the municipalities being up for discussion. Well, Mr. Speaker, everybody in the caucus, in the NDP caucus, knew it was not so. We knew it was not so. It was a deflection by the Premier. It was a deflection by the Premier to take away everybody's attention from the real problem with the budget, and that was the incredible debt.

We also knew in the NDP caucus that the other issue that we wanted to see what our Premier was made of, was what is a typical conservative response when they have a difficult crisis in managing the books? What would they do? Would they raise taxes? No, they didn't do that, Mr. Speaker. And they talked about it four or five times during budget day, saying, we're not going to raise taxes. But we knew. We knew in the NDP caucus, what they will do is they will put the province back into debt. And, Mr. Speaker, on two fronts we were right.

Now the third front that we ought to . . . we want to be able to paint a picture for the people of Saskatchewan. Why would he

do this? Why would the Premier and the Minister of Finance's exit out of politics, why would they burden our future generations with debt? Why would they do that, Mr. Speaker? Because they have to get to the next election, the next electoral time frame, Mr. Speaker. So it's better to punt all those problems down the road, because what is paramount to our Premier is not the good management of our finances nor our visionary plans for the province, but to retain power and to be re-elected within the next year or so, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly what his intentions and his plans are with this budget is push all the debt down the road, deflect people's attention with the trial balloons that he's put out before, before, Mr. Speaker, before the budget came through.

We knew that revenue sharing would not be touched, Mr. Speaker. We knew that right from the start, and we saw these things as games that the Premier was playing, Mr. Speaker. And now we look at some of the arguments as well, Mr. Speaker. Their first crisis as a government, their first crisis, they built this in March about this crisis that they're going to have this huge financial problem, Mr. Speaker, and what did they do? They had record revenues. They had record revenue. They didn't touch the thing that they put up as trial balloons. And the people of Saskatchewan are very astute observers of politics, Mr. Speaker.

And I say to the Premier, shame on him today for putting out those trial balloons while deflecting the real challenge with Saskatchewan in 2014-15, and that is the growing debt and the challenges we're going to have with this economy from years on end, Mr. Speaker. We needed a premier that was going to look to the future, do something bold, do something innovative, exciting. Make sure people of Saskatchewan are engaged. We saw none of that, Mr. Speaker, absolutely none of that.

When we asked about the legacy fund, what did we get, Mr. Speaker? We said no. The Government of Saskatchewan said no to the legacy fund. That is gone. What we have, Mr. Speaker, is we have a rainy day fund depleted from \$1.4 billion down to \$200 million, Mr. Speaker. We saw that happen. And we also saw record revenue, Mr. Speaker, record revenue. The NDP could only dream of 80 or \$90 oil, Mr. Speaker. We had 45 . . . The highest I think was \$45 a barrel for oil when we were in power. We had, Mr. Speaker, about an \$8 billion annual operating budget. These guys have over \$14 billion worth of money that they could operate with, Mr. Speaker, and we could only dream, we could only dream about those kinds of revenues as a government.

And what really also gets me, Mr. Speaker, record revenues. They said no to a legacy fund. They said no, we're going to clean out the rainy day fund. We're going to have . . . Even though we've got record revenue, we're also going to have record spending. Record spending in the wrong places. Misplaced priorities, Mr. Speaker. And now we're seeing they're borrowing more money. To the people of Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Party government has cleaned out your savings. They have put you more into debt and, Mr. Speaker, this is all the time when we had record revenues. How does that work? How does this bizarre budget work, Mr. Speaker?

And not to be outdone, not to be outdone, the next move of the

Saskatchewan Party government is we will put in P3s. We will put in P3 agreements where private companies, private companies can build the schools that we need and the highways that we need. And these private companies will not only get the work, Mr. Speaker, but they won't be from Saskatchewan. They'll be from somewhere else, Mr. Speaker. The work is only temporary. And, Mr. Speaker, they're going to control the access to our schools. They're going to be able to charge us interest on some of the facilities that they build and the highways they build, adding more debt. And what's worse, Mr. Speaker, is they also have maintenance contracts that we have to pay. So it's a sweetheart deal for big companies out of Saskatchewan, leaving Saskatchewan families and businesses out of the loop. Now is that fair for the future of the people of Saskatchewan?

And then they also brag about what they have done in the budget. They have sold the Crowns, Mr. Speaker, the Crowns of Information Services Corporation. And they brag about that in their budget. They're using the revenues from that sale to balance the budget. Well on the NDP side we say, what's going to happen now with that one Crown that generated 14 or \$15 million? That takes away from the operating opportunity for future years. Every single year they made money for the people of Saskatchewan.

Look at the liquor store debate, Mr. Speaker, where the Premier gets up one day and says, not a single dime will go towards liquor stores. Well, Mr. Speaker, that investment into government-owned liquor stores and liquor and gaming in general, I think it generates half a billion dollars for schools, for roads, for hospitals, for programs. Now what happens if that money is gone in the future? How are you going to replace revenues from Information Services Corporation and from liquor and gaming revenues if they're all sold off?

Do you think one of the big stores that are going to be given the opportunity to build these liquor outlets are going to come back and say, okay Saskatchewan, here's your share. Here's your share. No, they're taking that money down east, Mr. Speaker. They're taking the money down east, never to be seen nor spent in Saskatchewan ever again, Mr. Speaker.

And then you look at . . . They're still not done with this debt. You look at, the legacy fund is gone. The rainy day fund is depleted. They had record revenue. They had record spending. They've got more debt — 700 million. They've got the P3s that they're going to add on to the future cost of operating government.

Now the municipalities are going into record debt. The universities are going into record debt, Mr. Speaker. All of this debt that's being laid in right, from left to right, to anything that they can get their hands on for now, Mr. Speaker.

And then you look at the most recent example about the potash industry now is being told we're taking some of the revenues from the front end, but you can claim some of the exemptions 15 years from now. They've done it again, Mr. Speaker, taken revenues that should be coming to the province earlier than anticipated, and they're also doing all these changes without consultation to a very important industry called potash.

So all in all, Mr. Speaker, you look at some of the practices of this government and this budget. There is no vision. There is no commitment to the future. And every time the Saskatchewan Party government gets in trouble they start focusing on the NDP. Let's go beat up on the NDP — that's their only strategy, Mr. Speaker. They lack vision. They lack commitment and they lack the leadership necessary to build Saskatchewan while the economy's hot. While revenues are coming in and while we're on this roll, let's give 'er snooze, Bruce. That's the bottom line from our perspective, Mr. Speaker, because we need to start moving right now.

And I also add, to a lot of people that might be listening: taxpayers, taxpayers are going to pay taxes or debt. It doesn't matter. There's only one taxpayer, Mr. Speaker. And by the way that the Saskatchewan Party government's continually putting on debt on future generations, on that grandson, on my granddaughter, Mr. Speaker, they are going to be the future taxpayers. These taxpayers are paying the debt, are paying the debt that's being punted down the highway, that's being punted down the highway by this Finance minister, that Premier, and that Sask Party government. And I say to them, shame. Because you had opportunities today to make a significant difference. You had an opportunity to provide leadership and you chose not to.

And that's why when the minister announced that it was his last budget, I said thank goodness that it is his last budget. Because the bottom line is it lacks vision. It lacks commitment. It lacks proper management, and on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the NDP we want the top-notch schools in the country based on the revenues we have today. We want the best-run hospitals and health care system based on the revenues we have today, Mr. Speaker.

And what we don't want to do, what we don't do is we don't want to saddle future generations with debt, Mr. Speaker, the same, the same practice done in the 1980s under the Devine Conservatives, many of which across the way are part of that. They can't deny that. And it's absolutely amazing and astonishing to me, Mr. Speaker, as I sit here, how grown men and women try and rewrite history. They try and forget about the '80s. They don't want to talk about the '80s. I'll tell you why they don't want to talk about the '80s, because they racked up record debt where Saskatchewan had no choice — either shut our doors and declare bankruptcy or make some very, very tough choices. Very tough choices. And, Mr. Speaker, those tough choices were made alongside the people of Saskatchewan because of the huge debt.

Now today you look at our debt according . . . our Finance critic is watching this very carefully. We went from — what? — \$11 billion debt when we were in government. We were bringing that debt down from the Conservatives of the '80s, down from I think it was 15 or 16 billion down to 11, and it gave the Conservatives an opportunity, Mr. Speaker. Now they're right back up to almost \$20 billion in debt, and I say, shame on them.

Because our future generations are going to pay that debt, because of one simple reason is you lacked the vision, the commitment, and the leadership to make a brand new bold Saskatchewan from this day forward, and this budget is evidence of that, Mr. Speaker. It's evidence of that. Why?

Primarily because the Premier is positioning his re-election and the Saskatchewan Party caucus re-election based on borrowing from future generations. And I say, shame on that particular practice, Mr. Speaker, because the people and the grandchildren and the great grandchildren that are maybe listening today are going to pay that debt, Mr. Speaker.

Now if you look at where they have misspent, Mr. Speaker, the list is fairly long. It is very extensive as to what priorities that this government has put money into, that have been misplaced and do not help the people of Saskatchewan.

The Deputy Speaker: — It now being past 5 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.]

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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
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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
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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Gaming Corporation

Hon. Ken Krawetz
Deputy Premier
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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
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Métis and Northern Affairs
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Hon. Lyle Stewart
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Insurance Corporation

Hon. Christine Tell
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Hon. Gordon Wyant
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