



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

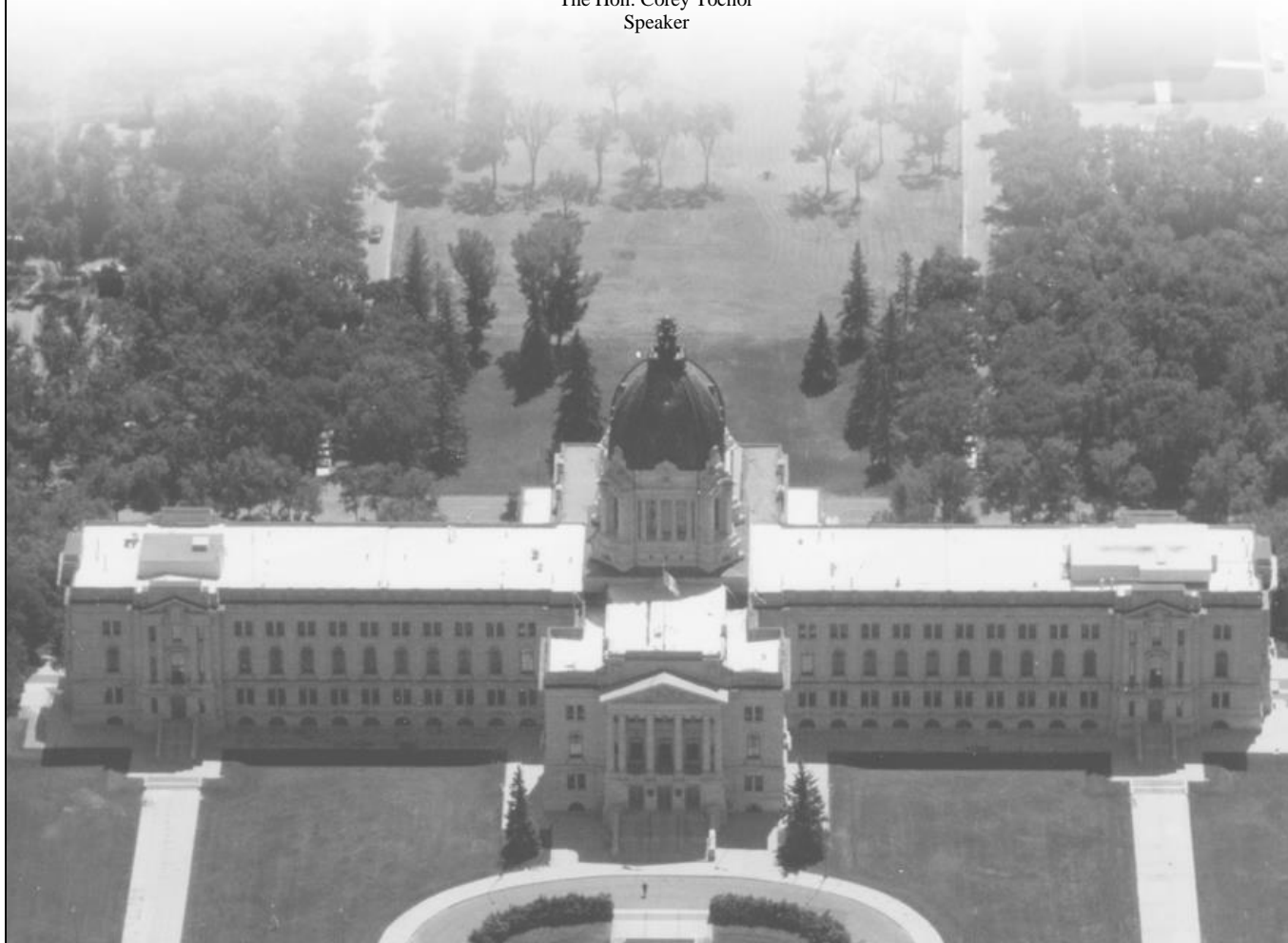
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

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The Hon. Corey Tochor
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
1st Session — 28th Legislature

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Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

Party Standings: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 51; New Democratic Party (NDP) — 10

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[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

The Deputy Speaker: — It now being 7 o'clock, I will call the Assembly to order. Resumption of the debate and reply to the Throne Speech. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Silverspring-Sutherland.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Mr. Buckingham, seconded by Ms. Carr, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Ms. Sproule.]

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and thank you to my team for all of the support, for coming back to listening to me tonight. I was told by a couple of my colleagues that I was speaking a little too quickly this afternoon, so I'll try to slow things down a bit, especially for some of the older people in the crowd here to make sure that they understand what I'm saying.

I'd like to start off by thanking my wife and my kids — Leane, who's been at home, and I thanked her already this afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But I have to thank my family for putting up with me, especially while I'm gone in the campaign, during the four weeks and the 12 months leading up to the campaign that my team and I were out door knocking. I want to thank my family for understanding that it does take a lot to be able to be here with my colleagues, forming the Government of Saskatchewan and hoping to continue to keep moving Saskatchewan forward, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I have to thank my constituency assistants, Michelle and Danielle, who keep things, everything going in the constituency office, especially when I'm out of town, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I would personally really right now like to thank the member from Walsh Acres for all of his supportive, kind words as he's sitting in behind me. I very much appreciate that. As we all know in this Chamber, Mr. Deputy Speaker, his voice carries, so I'm sure whatever he's saying is being picked up on *Hansard*, so I really appreciate that.

One of the things that I think we've been a little bit remiss in saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is we haven't thanked the staff at the Saskatchewan Party office. Patrick Bundrock, who certainly broke ground for me in Saskatoon Sutherland in 2003 running as a candidate, has since taken over as the general manager of our party. Patrick and his staff did a huge effort leading up to the election and during the election in the war room to be able to make sure that we formed government, not just formed government, that we increased our seat count. So to Patrick and his staff, I want to say thank you very much for everything that you've done in the background over the years to be able to move Saskatchewan forward from the background. So again I want to thank Patrick and his staff for that.

I want to thank my door knocking team and my campaign team. They were absolutely outstanding. There was a lot of weird days out there in Saskatoon Silverspring-Sutherland. There was snow. There was rain. There was wind. My team was out there with cleats on their feet sometimes to get through the ice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to be able to go out and door knock five days a week. It was a very difficult time. We were into a new area, Mr. Deputy Speaker, due to the redrawing of the boundaries. There was a new area that I had taken over from the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs, who is now the current member for Saskatoon Willowgrove, and I had to do a lot of new door knocking to introduce myself to the community. But my team was out there helping me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I very much appreciate that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the Speech from the Throne because I've heard a lot of things in question period, and there's only been a couple of question periods, and in some of the maiden speeches from the opposition about things that they aren't quite aware of and the history of what's happened in this Chamber. And I think they're very unaware of what happened prior to 2007; they don't want to talk about their history. So I'm prepared to give them a little bit of a history lesson, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on exactly what has happened when they were in power and what has happened when we formed government over here. And that'll lead up to why we have continued to form government and the people of Saskatchewan have put their faith in us to be able to make sure that we keep Saskatchewan moving in the right direction.

The most important number, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I apologize if this isn't the last current number, but the most important number I think in here is 1.142 million souls living in Saskatchewan right now, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Under the opposition, our population declined.

And you'll get this theme of things going forward with our government and the decline under the NDP [New Democratic Party], everything from doctors to education to infrastructure to going from a basic where they thought we would always be . . . As the former premier said, that we will always be in and out of equalization, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have gone from a have-not province under them, with the worst job creation record, the worst record in the surgical wait-list — record after record of the bad things that they did while they were in Saskatchewan. And then what they do, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . And all the improvements that we've done over here — and yes there is still more work to be done, Mr. Deputy Speaker — but what they fail to notice is, they fail to look at what they did not accomplish. They let things go.

We have everything from the 440 wait-list where people with disabilities were left for years and years and years. And myself and a lot of my colleagues have been able to go to some of these homes that are now being opened that eliminated the 440 wait-list, and we've gone further than that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We keep moving Saskatchewan forward.

The new members over there don't understand that they are answering for the record of the New Democratic Party since its formation. And we are very clear in reminding the general public on what their record is, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We

reminded them during the campaign, which Saskatchewan people gave us an overwhelming majority. We remind them every day because they don't certainly want to talk about that. They want to stand up and criticize everything that we've done. But when they were in power, they did very little. They had very low standards and they always just came underneath that. They would always say, well if we only had this, then we could have done that.

I think it came out today through Minister of the Economy about the SaskPower and how much they pulled out of that Crown corporation just to try to be able to balance their budget. I think it was over 200 per cent, if I remember correctly, one year. I'm not sure how they did that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And then they have the audacity to tell us that we're not doing enough over here. But they don't come up with any suggestions, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They came up with nothing in their plan, certainly nothing in their platform. We didn't hear, I sat in this Chamber for four years, we heard nothing about their plan on what they were going to do. They just thought that they were going to keep speaking and it was the NDP and eventually everybody would come back.

I don't how many times I've heard them stand up here with their borderline arrogant behaviour. The member, the former member from Lakeview, would say, oh don't worry, we're just going to fix this. We're going to fix everything that you guys messed up. That was their attitude that they didn't put the faith in the Saskatchewan people. They didn't believe in the voters. We've heard it time and time again how they blamed the voters for all of their misfortunes. They don't understand. They take no ownership of it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that's, I guess, the test of true leadership. If you make a mistake, you have to own up to that mistake and try to move forward. They haven't owned up to any of their mistakes. They don't want to look at their record behind them, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They just certainly want to start looking forward.

And I can understand why they wouldn't want to look behind them. Pick a ministry, any ministry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we can tell you about how we've increased funding, how we've increased capacity with our doctors within the health region, that we've increased our exports across Saskatchewan, around the world, opened up new markets through STEP [Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership] and other programs, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We could talk about all the things that we've done.

They stand up here and talk about domestic violence, a very important subject, but they don't recognize that we've opened the first women's shelter in, I believe it is 16 years, in Melfort constituency. Nothing heard about that. They didn't open anything in their time while they were in government. It's absolutely shameful. And then they stand up here and criticize us for doing the right thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

They need to start looking backwards on what exactly they did while they were in power. And I'm not just talking about the 16 years before that; I'm talking about their history in this Legislative Assembly and their history in Saskatchewan as far as the NDP — the old, tired dogma of the NDP. They need to answer that.

And I think the new members should be educated by some of their veteran members on exactly what has happened in this Chamber and what some of their former members who are no longer sitting in this Chamber have said about their record. Pat Atkinson — and I believe I'm okay using her name as she's no longer sitting, Mr. Deputy Speaker — has criticized. We've had many, many other NDP MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] and ministers criticize that they could have done more and they didn't. Why didn't they do that? They have a hundred reasons why they're blaming everybody and who . . . all these things that went wrong.

But again back to the original point: they don't take any ownership of what they have done wrong because they really don't believe that they've done anything wrong, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to talk a little bit about some of the other records that they had. Some of the records that they had from 2000 to 2007, worst job creation record in Canada. How do you expect a province to move forward if you cannot create any jobs? So I'm wondering what it was for seven years that was dogging them that they couldn't create jobs in Saskatchewan, that they were creating less and less jobs every year.

Now you flip that around, from 2008 to 2015, we had the lowest unemployment rate in Canada and the second-strongest job creation record in Canada. So what happened there, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Obviously the people of Saskatchewan had no faith in the government up until 2007. There was no creation. There was no passion for Saskatchewan.

When the Sask Party formed government in 2007, the passion in the people across this province was ignited, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was coming in from other provinces. People were saying, oh, well there's Saskatchewan. Why don't we invest in there? They've got the potential. They've got fuel. They've got potash. They've got agriculture. We've got oil and gas. And the most important resource that we have within our provincial borders are our people, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

They had no faith in the people of Saskatchewan. It's very disappointing that they continue to do this.

Now again, here's another thing. And I know the member from Athabasca is talking quite a bit here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But I would like to know, while he was in cabinet, how he raised 21 . . . 21 times he raised the taxes in 16 years. At 16 budgets, 21 tax increases. How does that happen, Mr. Deputy Speaker? They just keep spending money. They kept spending money. They didn't even look at what they were doing.

Bad investments, and I know that the minister from the Economy has his favourite list that he always likes to pull out about all the bad investments. I know the former member from Melville-Saltcoats used to do it as well. And it goes everything from SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company] to all of these bad investments, but yet they never ever took responsibility for that . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, we had bingos, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Imagine that, the government involved in bingos.

One of the other things that they criticize us about is not

mentioning children enough in our Speech from the Throne, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that's very disappointing, considering the record that we have in investments of opening new schools, increasing enrolment in our elementary schools, high schools, and advanced education, our post-secondary institutions.

They closed schools, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's all they did. They didn't have any way of dealing with the problems, so they just simply closed things. Now just imagine if we had those schools that were still active right now, that we had some of those 176 schools that they closed over their 16-year term.

And what did they do? They blamed everybody else. They blamed the government before them. They didn't take any ownership for what they did. They just continued to blame. We take ownership for what we do over here, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — Forgot about rural. Forgot about rural.

Mr. Merriman: — Yes, exactly. And my rural colleagues, as a city boy, my rural colleagues will certainly tell me how they forgot rural Saskatchewan. They had tax revolts. They didn't do any infrastructure investments in Saskatchewan.

The Minister of Government Relations has increased the funding to rural Saskatchewan to give them the ownership to be able to say, okay, we're going to give you 1 per cent of the PST [provincial sales tax]. Here it is. You guys invest it how you see the best.

They never even thought of something like that. That was absolutely beyond them because they couldn't let go of the control of the purse strings, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They wouldn't allow anybody in rural Saskatchewan to make their own decisions. Everything was done out of their cabinet, which was done at a pretty shabby job if I do say, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[19:15]

I want to talk about something that is certainly important to me, is our strategy on disabilities and vulnerable people, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have a fabulous record that is looked at around the world on how to promote and how to work with people with disabilities, not just take them and put them into an institution, but make them part of society, make them inclusive in what we do — include them in the workforce, include them in what is going on.

I'm personally involved with the Special Olympics as a board member, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it makes me very proud to see those Special Olympians who are actually up in Saskatoon as of tomorrow doing their outdoor track meet. And unfortunately because of my duties here, I won't be able to go watch my daughter participate. But the Special Olympics does a great job in promoting people with disabilities. But they don't just do the athletic side of things. They also do the internal character building of all of the individuals to be able to make sure that they have the skill set, the social skills, the emotional skills, the physical skills, the mental mindset to be able to move themselves forward.

And I think that's a very important thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker,

is to move everybody in Saskatchewan — whether you have an intellectual disability, physical disability, or anybody else in Saskatchewan — that's all we want, is the people to be able to move themselves forward and reach their full potential, just like all of us saw in Saskatchewan, all of us that stuck around during those dark 16 years because we saw the potential in Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

When I moved from Toronto in 1988, moving from what is commonly known as the centre of the universe of Canada — Toronto — moving out to Saskatchewan, we saw the potential here. We saw the lifestyle adjustments. We saw that this is going to be a place for the future, a place to raise a family, a place that I'm proud of to raise my family, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to make sure that Saskatchewan lives up to its potential no different than any other province would want for them. Unfortunately the opposition wants the province to live up to what their idea of their potential is, which is way below what we can do here, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to talk a little bit about the new schools. I touched on it before, but the new schools are something that is in contrast — and giving them and continuing them with their history lesson — in contrast with them closing down schools. We've opened schools. We've had huge enrolment, and we've opened nine joint-use schools. And as the former member from Canora-Pelly would say, don't say nine joint-use schools; say 18 schools. So I want to make sure that I say that, for I'm sure Mr. Krawetz is watching this somewhere, wherever he is enjoying retirement.

Well if the member from Athabasca is up next, you might turn it off after that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But I want to understand the huge infrastructure investment that we've put into our schools because, like when we formed government in 2007, we had no idea what the infrastructure deficit of Saskatchewan was within our schools, within our highways, within our hospitals. Everything was minimally funded by the New Democrats. And they have all of their excuses over there as to why they did that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but we have been trying to play catch-up with this. And they criticize us: well you haven't done enough here; you haven't done enough there. But again they don't want to be able to talk about their own record. To be able to build nine joint-use schools . . . And they didn't like the way that we were building it.

When I was out door knocking and when all of my colleagues were out door knocking, all of the people said, we are so glad you're building a school. They didn't talk about the P3 [public-private partnership] model. They asked, are there going to be our teachers there? Yes. Are our students going to be . . . Is it going to be the same as every other school? Yes. Thank God you're building us a school here. That's what we need is, we need a school here and we need it right now.

In my constituency, Evergreen is one of those nine joint-use schools. I know Martensville, Warman, Regina, we've had a huge . . . And that's just the joint-use schools. We've had additional schools that we're building on top of that, one-offs. And I'm not quite sure exactly the number of that. If the Minister of Education would give me some indication of that, I would be very appreciative . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Thank you.

Anyways, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I see my time's kind of wrapping up because I did take a couple of minutes before 5 o'clock. I know the Minister of Finance would like to hear some more, but I'll tell him a little bit later on.

But what I want to talk about just in closing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the confidence that the people of Saskatchewan have in themselves now, that the people of Canada have in Saskatchewan now, and the confidence that the world is having in Saskatchewan is unprecedented in our province since the beginning of the formation of our province.

There was huge opportunity here back in 1905. This was going to be the place to be. This was the biggest Legislative Building that they were going to build in Western Canada, and the reason that they did that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is because of the potential here.

Now unfortunately the tap got turned off as soon as the CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] and the NDP just decided to lower the standards of everybody, keep our population at a minimal, keep the expectations at a minimal. But now that this government has been given the mandate for a third term, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you're going to see really what the potential is.

And yes, we've had some good times within our province, but you'll see how good we are at managing our finances and the opportunities about Saskatchewan into the future, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So again, I will conclude. I will support the Speech from the Throne from the member from Saskatoon Westview and I will not be supporting the amendment. And I wanted to thank everybody for giving me this opportunity to speak today here, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker. As ever, it's good to stand in my place, join debate and try to do some duty, do some justice to the work that the good people of Regina Elphinstone-Centre have set out for me in trying to bring some voice to their different issues, to their hopes and dreams, to the things that they find concerning or in some cases alarming, and to the things that they find important and want spoken about in the Legislative Assembly. So it's always, it's an honour to participate in this process, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it's certainly a humbling thing to join the debate.

I want to acknowledge right off the top that we are here on Treaty 4 territory, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that we need look no further than that beautiful mace runner on the table in terms symbolizing as long as the grass grows, the water flows, and the sun shines, that responsibility that we have to each other here in Treaty 4 territory and indeed throughout the province of Saskatchewan. And I want to say thank you to those that have made this possible.

I'm also reminded, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we're here in this season of reconciliation, in terms of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission having made its final report and

issuing its 94 calls for action not very long ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that there is a big piece of work that need be done by the people of Saskatchewan in terms of responding to those calls for action. And we didn't see that in the Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we look on with interest to see if there will be some action coming in the days ahead.

I want to say thank you, as many have, off the top, Mr. Speaker. It's almost sort of pro forma, but it's where you start so that should be in your first order of business. But I want to say thank you very much to my wife, Theresa, for all the love and support that she gives me. And I want to say a belated happy birthday, happy 82-years-young to my father, Clifford Robert Douglas McCall, who is the head of the clan. I wear the Wilson tartan tie tonight, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which was my maternal grandmother Olive McCall's tartan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And for me and the story of her and my father and different of the things that they got through to make a living, to make a good life for those that came after, for my mom who's passed on, and for us McCall kids is . . . means so much. And when I've got the big occasions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's when I like to break out the Wilson tartan tie. But again it's here as a means to say thank you to family.

I want to say thank you to friends and neighbours in north central Regina and certainly throughout Regina Elphinstone-Centre. It's where I was born and raised, Mr. Speaker, and that's where I've lived, but for a year in Israel and a couple of years in Ottawa. And that's my home; that's where my roots are. And it's where again I have the privilege to stand alongside my neighbours and do this work of trying to represent the good constituency of Regina Elphinstone-Centre in the Legislative Assembly.

We've been through the campaign season of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I want to say a word of thanks and congratulations to my opponents in that contest. And certainly they carried themselves honourably and went about campaigning diligently.

And that leads me to yet another thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that's to my campaign team, and to folks like the Tims and the people that are too many to name, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But as is the case with so many, I was aided by a tremendous group of people that stood with me through all kinds of weather and for whom the success on the election day, Mr. Speaker, was very much a testament to their hard work.

I want to say congratulations to the new members on both sides of the House. I want to congratulate the Sask Party government on their victory, and I'd particularly like to congratulate the Premier on his victory. And I guess, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate him on his choice of tailor because apparently the coattails that guy's got are, you know, world-class in terms of hauling around some of the different issues and in terms of the popularity that that individual continues to enjoy. And I congratulate him for that.

I want to say a word of congratulations to Cam Broten, and wish all the best to Cam and Ruth as they come into this unexpected chapter of their life. But to Cam and Ruth and the girls, I want to thank them for their service, for their sacrifice to the people of Saskatchewan. And put me on record as saying,

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I hope we've not seen the last of Cam Broten in terms of public service in the province of Saskatchewan.

Yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, welcome back. The Deputy Speaker rides again. I'll try not to engage in debate too much, but certainly congratulations to yourself and congratulations to the new Speaker, the member from Eastview. And I also want to say a word of congratulations and thanks to the outgoing Speaker. Certainly, you know, there are few that are more passionate about this House than the member from Cannington, and I want to thank him for his service to this parliamentary tradition that we hold so very dear.

I was interested to see again, if I can skip back to the new members, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that . . . I'm not sure about the House, where this is by the rules, but of course my first name is Warren. I was named for my grandfather on my mother's side. And my middle name is from my grandfather on my father's side, Gordon. But it's interesting to see that we were close there for a while, Mr. Speaker, but I think it's now safe to say that we were forewarned in this House and perhaps forearmed. But a special word of welcome to the member from Melville-Saltcoats and congratulate him on his victory in that particular contest.

To the Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Certainly one of the traditional critiques of throne speeches is that they tend to be kind of light on detail and that the sort of principles that are identified await the budget. And of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this underlines for us as the opposition, as the people that have been entrusted with the job of serving as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, to hold this government to account being one of those first and foremost tasks.

One of the traditional critiques of Throne Speeches is that they tend to be kind of light. The details come in the budget. And I guess that tends to vary a bit when you've got a Throne Speech coming after an election, when you've got a campaign platform to be brought to bear, and maybe a few more details would be forthcoming.

But certainly, Mr. Speaker, one of the great sort of interesting historical, political developments in this province's history is the fact that this is a government that got away without tabling a budget, without providing a full accounting of the financial situation for the people of Saskatchewan and then taking that to the polls. And there has been a bit of hand-wringing and a bit of, you know, details were still coming in and all of that, but usually you've got a budget that is available to the people of Saskatchewan by mid-March.

[19:30]

And we know for a fact that members opposite have been working away in treasury board and in other bodies of that government to come at a budget. So it defied belief, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when that government opposite went to the people and said, we can't come forward with a budget. Here's a political document in terms of what we think the numbers are that hasn't been investigated by the auditor, that hasn't been signed off by the auditor. And you don't have that sort of fuller accounting of where things are at and how that goes to the people, and then

people making a fully informed decision about who they want to be serving as the government in Saskatchewan.

So the fact that they were able to get away with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think is going to stand out. People will look back at this in years to come and say, you know, I don't know if it's the horseshoes or what, but in terms of the way that they were able to get that past the people of Saskatchewan, I think will be borne out in some pretty interesting ways in just the days ahead.

So in the meantime, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're stuck with this task of debating a Throne Speech that is even lighter on details than the campaign that these members have run on, and the fact that we don't have a full financial picture of what's in front of the people of Saskatchewan. And that's coming forward in different ways, Mr. Speaker, in dribs and drabs, and I'm sure we'll get the full load come June 1st.

But even then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you cast your mind back to the last budget, this is a government that presented \$700 million of borrowing as an infrastructure investment or what have you — you know, all fine and good — but characterized it as anything other than what it was, which of course was adding to the debt and deficit load that is carried by the finances in Saskatchewan. They weren't straightforward with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we'll be interested to see how that translates in the financial picture to come.

In terms of the different actions that . . . You know, before the campaign, certainly the protestation was that they'd be supporting the Crown protection Act full, you know, full bore, Mr. Speaker, four-square, and on no lesser Crown than SaskTel, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we saw some discussion of that here today. We've seen the position change from one of full respect for the Crown protection Act and the way that that was brought forward for discussion, in terms of the motion of referral today as regards the Liquor Board stores that this government has . . . you know, fair enough, they were forthright to a certain extent in saying that that's what they wanted to do, went out and got a mandate, and they did it. But when it comes to SaskTel, Mr. Speaker, it's one thing to have a review. It's another then to start making up your position as you go along, as we've seen with the prevarication from the former commitment to the Crown protection Act.

And you know, we've seen the Premier suggest that maybe it could be put to a referendum. Maybe it could be put to some kind of a plebiscite. And you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's not what the Act that they promised — you know, not just in this campaign, but in others as well — to respect, that's not the promise that they made to the people of Saskatchewan. So we'll be watching with great interest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to see how that evolves. And again, as my interim leader was saying today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the greatest risks, if you're doing a risk analysis for a corporation like SaskTel, is the cash-strapped, third-term, right wing, likes-to-privatize kind of government. And we'll be watching very closely to see how that goes and see whether or not they're as good as their word, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which is one of the basic expectations that people have of their government.

On the doorsteps that I was on in the campaign, Mr. Deputy

Speaker, one of the things that I was reminded of when the Throne Speech was delivered in the House, there was a reference to a verse from Matthew but it also referenced another verse that comes from Luke 12:48 where it ends off by stating that to whom much is given, much is expected. And certainly this is a government that has been given a lot. This is a government that's had cash in the bank when they took over in 2007. And on the more forthright moments in this government's career, they've owned up to that. But certainly they've been given another mandate, but when it comes to the budget, again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've got a bit of a blank-cheque situation there.

When I had the privilege of knocking on doors in Elphinstone and talking to constituents, they wanted to see action on things like making sure that you're serving both the economy and the environment. The member from Lakeview made some excellent points about the false dichotomy that this government is trying to promote when it comes to, you know, how you can't serve the economy and the environment at the same time.

I talked to seniors who are having a tougher time making ends meet than has ever been the case before, Mr. Speaker, and seniors that are living in places that that shouldn't be the case, where it's under the aegis of Regina Housing and how that shouldn't be a problem.

I heard concern about, you know, the dealings around the Global Transportation Hub. I heard concern about the way that we have far too much poverty in the midst of plenty, Mr. Speaker. And again going back to the verse referenced in the Throne Speech, to whom much is given, much is expected.

When we have such prosperity in Saskatchewan, how it is alongside that that we're not able to put away for a rainy day? We're not able to eliminate poverty. We're not able to take action on a mental health strategy that now sits on the shelf collecting dust. These are the things that people, they couldn't understand how this goes. They couldn't understand how it is that crime is going back up in the city of Regina, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They couldn't understand how it is that gangs have enjoyed a resurgence in terms of their activity and the terrible impact that they have on so many lives, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and on communities.

They couldn't understand how it is that when we get the latest reporting from Statistics Canada as to the jobs number in the province of Saskatchewan that one in four First Nations people off-reserve are unemployed. That's a devastating number, Mr. Speaker. And that's a devastating day-to-day reality for far too many in this province. But we don't hear about that from this government in this Throne Speech. In fact we hear things that say quite the opposite, Mr. Speaker.

But the facts are that one in four First Nations people off-reserve, and again not even counting what's happening on-reserve, Mr. Speaker, where in too many cases the situation is far worse. Nothing in terms of recognition from this government as to an emergency plan to address that, and that's gone on for far too long, Mr. Speaker. Those are numbers that are going in the wrong direction.

We see too much in terms of, you know, I was in one public

meeting, Mr. Speaker, where we had a bit of a discussion about health care and the way that this government has spent, you know, plenty of millions of dollars on lean in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and at the same time not putting the resources on the front lines in places like our emergency rooms. And the one debate I was at was down the street from the Pasqua Hospital, where of course they were very much over capacity that particular weekend.

And in terms of the actual people's experience as to how these things are working or not, there was cognitive dissonance, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the hype that we'd hear from the Sask Party, and the reality that the people in that room were experiencing when they would go to the emergency room at the Pasqua and the things that are going on there that should not be going on.

On the streets but not in this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, we see the proof of gross domestic products, our economy, the measure of our economy that has shrunk over the last year and the hardship that that places on people's lives. We see concern about, you know, utility bills that continue to go up. And this Friday was no exception, Mr. Speaker, where yet again the people of Saskatchewan are going to be paying the price for Sask Party mismanagement when it comes to SaskPower.

We've seen the growing lines at the food bank, Mr. Speaker. We've seen alarmingly again how that relates to both children and to seniors, people that we should be taking a greater interest in their well-being. But you know, there they show up in the lines of the food banks.

We see a government that — and there's no mention of this in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, and there's certainly, you know, scant mention of the details of this on the campaign trail — but we see where \$3 million was pumped into one technology corporation in Saskatoon. And you see everybody else in the sector say, you know, what about us? You know, where's our shot at this sort of resource? Where's our three million? And how is this not picking winners and losers, Mr. Speaker — something which this government has said that they would never do, and something which was employed as the premise for which this government set about killing the film and video industry in this province, something for, you know . . . We await the utilization report from this government as to what's going to happen with the sound stage.

And you know, we've heard about one of the main responses was, to folks when they're asked the question about what to use the sound stage for, well they say, you know, maybe use it for the film industry. Maybe use it as a sound stage, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And again that's something that I heard a lot about on the streets of Regina Elphinstone-Centre and on the doorsteps of Regina Elphinstone-Centre from far too many people that were on the cutting edge of that industry and then were on the getting-cut edge in terms of losing jobs and having to move out of country.

And again we see this, we see this in the . . . Again I know they don't like Statistics Canada over there, Mr. Speaker. That's sort of the MO [modus operandi]. It's like, you know, it's stick that head in the sand fast enough when you see the Statistics Canada folks coming. But we had another report coming out from

Statistics Canada that showed that the cultural sector in Saskatchewan, which is the pride of so many communities and the pride of so many of us in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and of so many neighbourhoods throughout Saskatchewan, we'd seen that it has not flourished under this government. We'd seen that it is in fact trailing what goes on in most of the rest of the country. And again, Mr. Speaker, they don't like the facts, but there you go.

We'd seen in the campaign a fair amount of concern around the Global Transportation Hub. We'd seen concern around the P3 aspect of so many of the different projects that this government is getting up to, certainly as it relates to the Regina bypass. And we'd seen concern about whether or not there was a true accounting of the tab that the people of Saskatchewan were going to be stuck with, Mr. Speaker, in terms of underwriting these different projects. And again, Mr. Speaker, that's not a big surprise because when it came to delivering a budget, this government couldn't get it done. They could not provide that fundamental information to the people of Saskatchewan. And again I think we're going to see pretty plainly how it is that why they did not want to campaign on the budget will be forthcoming in the days ahead. But that doesn't mean that the people of Saskatchewan didn't deserve that information. Far from it.

We'd seen concern with the growing HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] epidemic, Mr. Speaker, and the way that this government — you know, good on them — they've got a strategy in place for a couple of years at least that wrapped up in December. And again nothing has followed in the train of that. We'd seen a lot of different things from this government, Mr. Speaker, and there are a lot of them . . . The people from Elphinstone, they're a pretty canny bunch, and they had a lot of different things to say about them in the campaign.

Mr. Speaker, in this Assembly I've been given responsibility by our leadership for a number of jobs in terms of working to provide a critique around SaskTel; around the Public Service Commission; around Central Services; around Parks, Culture and Sport, around the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation, around Advanced Education and Employment; Trade, Innovation, and Tourism. And certainly I'm also very glad to serve as an associate critic for indigenous issues on behalf of the official opposition, alongside my great friend and colleague, the member from Cumberland, and our lead critic, the member from Athabasca. And those are jobs that I will seek to do as best I can, as well as do as best I can as the Opposition House Leader, Mr. Speaker.

[19:45]

And in that, I'm sure that folks will be interested to hear that, you know, for whatever misgivings as to how I had about the members opposite campaigned . . . the people made a decision. And in a democracy that's to be respected, and the people, you know, the people were right. They elected the government, and now it's up to them to live up to that trust that has been placed in them, Mr. Speaker. Again that to whom much has been given, much has been expected. Much is expected. But certainly I am thankful for the constituents from Regina Elphinstone-Centre who've once again placed their trust in me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to serve as their representative.

And I guess to wrap up some of the comments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd make a few observations. There's some good things — you know, scant though they were — there were some good things in the Throne Speech. I look forward to seeing what the partnership with the First Nations Power Authority looks like. I look forward to seeing what the uptake is on the reverse mortgage with seniors as regards property tax.

I look forward to seeing how the uptake is on the graduate retention program. And again, Mr. Speaker, there's a bit of sort of running past the truth of what's gone on in terms of that program, Mr. Speaker. Certainly it's been converted to . . . It was much more lucrative previously, and in terms of the change from refundable to non-refundable tax credit, it's going to be very interesting to see how that impacts lives in a way that I would predict will be much different than the help that it had been before.

And it will be very interesting to see how that, you know, back-end resource combined with institutions that have big questions about their budget, you know, we're going to see how this impacts students, Mr. Speaker. We're going to see how this impacts the teachers and the faculty that are doing the work on those institutions.

And we're going to see, I would submit, Mr. Speaker, again the terrible box that these folks get put in, in terms of is it cuts to services or increases to tuition, or both? And we're going to see that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And when that happens, my hope is that, you know, there's not yet another sort of turning of the head away from the folks making this clear to them. Because this has been clearly stated by the institution's leadership themselves for years now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in terms of how they will be impacted by the choices that this government is making or not. And so we'll look forward to see how that goes.

There's some great things happening in Elphinstone-Centre, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And again it's always sort of difficult because you've got, you know, finally action being taken on the replacement of Scott Collegiate and the building out of the North Central shared facility, Māmawēyatitān. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, it only took eight years from the announcement in the 2008 budget — you know, like land speed record kind of action — but we'll take it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We're glad to see the work on Sacred Heart. And you know, that's a school that does a tremendous amount of great work and should have the tools to get the job done of educating those students and to making that better life for our community. We're interested to see the work continue on Connaught. And again in one of the debates that I had the honour of participating in in the campaign, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education didn't answer my question. When you close one school, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and merge it with another one, so you've got two schools closed and you replace it with one, where does that add up into the Sask Party stump speeches, Mr. Deputy Speaker? How do they account for that? Well they account for that by yelling you down, Mr. Deputy Speaker. No surprise there. No surprise there.

Anyway, it's good to be part of the debate here tonight. I guess, you know, to close Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've never laid claim to perfection in this Assembly. And I've certainly never laid

claim to it for my party. I guess what I would hope for is a little more self-awareness or a little more sort of, I don't know, a little less sledgehammer, a little more sort of thoughtfulness as the members opposite get up and say their speeches. Because I asked one of my colleagues how their one speech had gone, and the summary that was given to me was, not surprisingly, that NDP bad, Sask Party good. And you know, again it speaks to the sort of yelling approach that gets taken by some of the members over there.

So I guess my hope is this: that some of the new members, you know, continue to be thoughtful in their approach to public policy — same for some of the older members over there as well — that they don't drink the Kool-Aid from the firehose, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that they certainly don't get into chugging back their own bathwater, you know. Because ultimately that's going to be bad for public policy in Saskatchewan.

We hope to see that the humility that was counselled by the Premier on election night, you know, lasts more than the rush of getting off the stage and that it actually brings itself to bear somewhere in this Chamber, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But to say it again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a privilege, it's an honour to join debate in this place. I try to do my best, and in that I'm thankful for the support that's been given me yet again by the people of Regina Elphinstone-Centre. And in that connection, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the issues that I had a lot of discussions with the folks on the doorstep and through the campaign, I will not be supporting the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, though I will be supporting the amendment. And if that works out then, Mr. Speaker, you know, all bets are off. But with that I conclude my remarks.

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

Ms. Beaudry-Mellor: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd first like to congratulate the hon. member from Cannington, our longest serving MLA, for his service. And I congratulate you on your recent election to Deputy Speaker of this House. I'd also like to recognize that we're on Treaty 4 territory.

I'd like to congratulate all members on both sides for their recent election, and a special thank you to all of you veteran members who I think have gone out of your way to make us newbies feel pretty welcome.

As a discerning person of faith and a member of my neighbourhood Christian church, I want to especially welcome the member from Regina Pasqua, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to learning more about the Muslim community so that we can build the kind of respectful interfaith relationships I frankly think the world needs more of.

Most of the members here in Regina fought hard for our seats, and I'm ever mindful of that. I need to say a very special thank you to all of our volunteers, but especially to the core team who helped get me here and who all hold a very special place in my heart: Bonnie, Norma, Deron, Jennifer, David, Cathe, Dan, and Darin. You guys are the best.

The Sask Party staff, particularly Patrick, Sam, and Kaitlyn,

were indispensable. A local business owner of 30 years, Jim Baton, was an unbelievable source of support, and of course some pretty great pizza. Tim, you're an amazing asset to all of us. Tessa, who door knocked with me in blazing heat, torrential rain, gale-force winds, and bitter cold. My Jeremy, who was invaluable with our data management and candidate management, and finally my campaign manager, Grant, who went through the highs and lows of campaigning with me and was a fierce and loyal defender when I needed someone. These folks have become like family, and I feel blessed to have them in my life.

And of course, I need to thank my husband, Kevin, and my kids, Kayman and Montana, my 14-year-old twins, who are with me always either in person or in my heart or by text. As some of you know, my husband is a sole practitioner with a very busy law practice, and my two kids are highly competitive athletes in multiple sports. We've been able to make our lives work because I've always made career adjustments and sacrifices to be able to be an engaged parent.

When we sat down to talk about running for office, my husband said, honey, it's your turn. I want to thank him for that and know that this adjustment to our family life has been especially challenging for him. I thank him for supporting me regardless. For their part, my kids have always been important players on my team, as I am on theirs. They can work a room better than most of us in here, especially me. And if I may say so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm glad that our family can contribute a party football team player, outside of the member from Gardiner Park, who doesn't actually require a defibrillator on standby during the annual party game.

It is an honour to be able to stand in this room the Premier characterized as august. And I'm deeply humbled by the service of the many men and women in history who have served this province from this place, who have come before me. So many times I've watched this Assembly as an observer and have studied the displays of leadership, policy debate, oration, and sometimes rancour. Much more often than not, I've admired the men and women here for their passionate conviction in what is best for the people and the province of Saskatchewan, even on points where I've disagreed on how to get there. John Maxwell, the noted public speaker, author, and leadership coach has been famously quoted as saying "You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with." I believe I'm in pretty good company then.

I would be remiss not to note that it is a special honour to be the first elected MLA in the brand new constituency of Regina University, as both a woman and as a long-time member of the U of R [University of Regina] political science department, representing the Saskatchewan Party. I admit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's pretty fun to say.

My constituency of Regina University is composed of three neighbourhoods. They are Whitmore Park, Hillsdale, and over the Ring Road, University Park. During the campaign I counted no less than 18 churches that I represent. There are also significant homes for seniors: in particular the Chateau Marian . . . retirement community where I've made many friends, Selo Gardens, Wascana Manor, and Storie Manor.

We also have a number of fantastic locally owned businesses — many, by the way, that are owned by women — such as Cade, Coda; Elizabeth's; Magpies; Stone's Throw Coffee House; Crocus & Ivy; Tumblers Pizza; Havik; Track & Trail; The Cottage Restaurant; and Level 10 Fitness.

While door knocking I met many folks who are newcomers and permanent residents to Saskatchewan from all over the world. While they couldn't vote and often struggled with English, they were so very grateful and appreciative to have someone show up at their door as part of our political process. It was an important reminder not to take these freedoms and responsibilities for granted.

I also had the great fortune, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of meeting and chatting with a wonderful lady, Ms. Rachel Clark, who turned 101 years old in April and still lives in her own home on McNiven. She wanted the Premier to get re-elected for her birthday, and I'm really happy that we were able to oblige. Sharp as a tack and clearly very self-reliant, she told me and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I quote, "I'm not much of a housekeeper anymore, but I don't give a damn what anyone else thinks."

But I think it's safe to call my constituency the education constituency. I represent three high schools, the U of R, SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology], and a dozen or so elementary schools in the public and private systems. Campbell Collegiate is Regina's largest public high school, with over 1,500 students, and which is home to the Ivey national-Case-Competition-winning Campbell Business Club, whose students will be here for the budget. Campbell is also home to a voluntarily initiated student gay-straight alliance. I've always believed, Mr. Speaker, that people are capable of doing the right thing without being forced by government to do so, and this is a great example. I look forward to supporting them in their work to prevent bullying and homophobia and will be participating in and supporting Pride Week here in Regina next month, as I have in previous years.

LeBoldus High School is also part of my constituency. It is part of the separate system, and is home to not only the city, but also the provincial championship football team for the last few consecutive years, as well as the city championship junior and senior basketball teams. And we even have an associate school, the Regina Christian School, which is a faith-based combined elementary and high school. The minister and I are looking forward to attending the opening night of their performance of the *Mary Poppins* musical this Friday.

As most of you know, I'm a policy nerd, and so I'm pretty anxious to get into the work of the Standing Committee on Human Services and the mandate given us in the Throne Speech to examine organ donorship, and I'm also looking forward to working with and learning with my colleagues on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

[20:00]

But most especially, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm really looking forward to continuing to work with young people. This, as everyone here knows, is a passion of mine. I'm excited to welcome one of the interns to work with our team beginning at the end of this month. And I'm hoping to work alongside the

Speaker to guide some long overdue program improvements like terms of reference, for example, with former colleagues at the two universities and also with the member from Saskatoon Centre across the aisle on the advisory committee for the Saskatchewan Legislative Internship Program. I expect that's going to be quite rewarding.

In the words of the Chinese philosopher and the author of the *Tao Te Ching*, Lao Tzu, new beginnings are indeed often disguised as painful endings.

In her very eloquent maiden speech, the member from Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota talked about leaving her mark. I've thought about that a lot as I've written and rewritten this speech, and I've decided to cast my fears aside and do just that.

You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my sister and I were largely raised by my mother on her own because, for the majority of our life, my family dealt with a family member who struggled with serious addiction. This addiction stemmed from surviving childhood abuse at the hands of a trusted authority and the depression and anger which arose from that experience.

As children, we moved 21 times in 18 years, in part to follow the trades which my father was a part of, but also during periods of temporary marital estrangement as a result of the many unchecked mental health issues and their consequences I've identified. We struggled to make ends meet. Moving this often as a child was very hard, but it taught me early on how not only to adapt to isolation from peers, but also how to thrive in spite of it.

My mother worked a full-time job and usually added two more part-time ones on top of that to provide for us, and so my sister and I learned from a very young age to be self-reliant and hard-working. Having come from a strict French Roman Catholic family of 11 kids, my mother was a resourceful woman who knew how to manage with limited means. Thus when things at home with our family member got really bad, she at least had the ability to be able to take us to spend a night or two in our van at the Buffalo Lookout Campground just out of town on the way to White City.

As many of you already know, I have deep empathy for women and their children who simply have no resources to go anywhere other than the shelter, if they are lucky enough to get that far. I am proud to have been sitting as a guest in this legislature when this government made budget investments in emergency shelters for women. I am proud of its work with STOPS to Violence [Saskatchewan Towards Offering Partnership Solutions to Violence], the Who Will You Help campaign, and Bill 144 on the domestic violence Act.

I am proud that Sofia House, which is a second-stage shelter, will be the recipient charity of our event in August. And I'm extremely proud that we have worked with community partners, the federal government, and the city of Melfort to construct a 16-bed shelter there, which should be opening soon. To be clear, it is not a good thing that the need for support services like this endures, but I sure am glad that more women and children fleeing danger have a place to go.

Some of the members opposite are clearly not aware that many

in our party were hit personally by stories like mine last year, with the tragic passing of a long-time colleague who I regrettably never had the chance to know but many I know cared about. I am therefore hopeful that we will continue to engage in meaningful dialogue to continue to address this problem in our province, because there is more work to do and we are indeed humble enough to know it. As we say in the academy, the personal is the political.

Mr. Speaker, my mother taught us to rise above our station by always demonstrating professionalism and basic human decency while putting 150 per cent into every endeavour. I never did get a chance at a track and field scholarship, but I did work hard to get many academic ones throughout my university studies. This, along with working multiple jobs and living on my own, is what got me through nearly three degrees of an otherwise self-funded education.

Some of my graduate and postgraduate work was done while pregnant with twins and later with toddlers who were twins, and at a time in Saskatchewan when jobs were hard to come by. As you can imagine, it was a challenge to persevere, particularly when you consider that Saskatchewan had the lowest ratio of available child care spaces during that time. I'm so thankful that our government recognized that this created an opportunities barrier for families and has invested in increases in child care spaces nearly every year since coming to power in 2007.

I've been a part of the Regina University constituency now for 26 years. My husband and I had our first home on Darke Crescent just off of Kramer Boulevard. And as many of you know, I grew up on the U of R campus where I am a proud graduate of Campion College, a postgrad, an administrator, and a faculty member.

The University of Regina is a very important constituent, my home away from home, and a partner in keeping Saskatchewan moving forward. But I've been struck by some pervasive assumptions about the role of government, the academy, and the people in it. The minister for post-secondary education addressed some of that narrative in question period earlier today. These assumptions were recently challenged in a brave piece written and published by Hill business student Scott Pettigrew in the university's student newspaper, *The Carillon*.

Mr. Speaker, I've shared my very personal story despite my fear of doing so because I think it illustrates something very important about our government. My story is not unique. I suspect many of my colleagues could share many stories of struggles and perseverance. What I hope it demonstrates is similar to what the young Mr. Pettigrew wrote about in the student newspaper, and it is this: we on this side of the House, and our supporters, are not out of touch. We are not entitled. We and Saskatchewan Party voters are not for, and I quote, "racism, violence, etc." as was tweeted and deleted last Thursday by an NDP candidate in the recent election. And we definitely do not have a tin ear when it comes to human issues.

Contrary to what they propagate, the NDP and their supporters on the political left do not have a monopoly over social issues and basic human empathy. Our difference — and it is an important difference — is that we see the way forward not as reducing everyone to the lowest common denominator, but by

creating a culture that aspires to inspire and celebrate excellence through an environment that works to build opportunities for people to realize their potential. That is why we have the SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] program and why we amended the Human Rights Code to protect rights for transgendered people in Saskatchewan.

It is no accident that we are seeing more athletes, musicians, artists, and businesses from this province compete and succeed on the world stage than ever before. It is because we encourage them to believe that they can do it, and so they do. We believe in human potential. This does not make us uncaring. But we cannot be all things to all people.

Our job is to create the best possible environment for people to thrive by finding the best and most efficient ways to invest and manage our resources to build a competitive economy and to make targeted investments where they make sense to give people a hand up. That is why we forged a new partnership with the First Nations Power Authority to develop 40 megawatts of clean energy generated from solar power and flare gas. We want to continue to build on a diversified energy portfolio and we want to create jobs and skills training people for our Aboriginal people to succeed and to thrive. I look forward to more of these kinds of partnerships and this kind of thinking.

Mr. Speaker, for a long time my best and my brightest students asked me to write reference letters for them to go elsewhere, to graduate schools or jobs, before this government got elected, because they wanted to go where the opportunities were and those weren't here. Do you know why? Because for a long time we were okay with mediocrity. We were okay with equalization payments. We were okay with the lack of a competitive environment because then everybody is special. And when everybody is special, no one is. I remember when people were embarrassed to say they were from here, and they felt the need to downplay success stories, something which was also noted by the member from Saskatoon University earlier. This culture of mediocrity led to youth out-migration, closed schools and hospitals, a stagnated economy, and a virtual invisibility on the national stage for decades, let alone the global one.

I get fired up about this, Mr. Speaker, because for me the great irony of the absolute rhetoric, particularly around education, by some of the members opposite and some of their supporters over the recent campaign is that they see themselves as the great vanguards of education and its students, even though it has been a while since any of them actually taught.

Everyone who's actually read Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky, and who knows a bit of history about the Bolsheviks and the proletariat intelligentsia knows what happened to the vanguard party. Their self-righteous belief that no one outside of their strictest adherence to their ideology could possibly have viable solutions to social issues, let alone care about them, led them to campaigns of fearmongering and paranoia that quickly replaced the Tsarist dictatorship with Stalin's. Because of the lack of humility and open-mindedness, the vanguard party eventually fell into obscurity because they lost touch with the very everyday people they purported to champion.

While the members opposite pontificate about how we don't care, they should really ask themselves why ordinary

Saskatchewan people have kept them reduced to a 10-person caucus.

In my experience, Mr. Speaker, students actually do not rattle off NDP campaign talking points when you run into them. That must be a shock. But these steadfast blinders are maybe the reason why op-eds, like the young Mr. Pettigrew's in the student newspaper, or the fact that the Saskatchewan Party won the poll on campus, is viewed as an anomaly, an accident. Talk about false consciousness.

The hard, cold fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that by denying jobs and opportunities for nearly two decades by upholding a culture of mediocrity, our most promising students and some of our brightest academic minds were driven straight out of this province. It caused the closure of schools. People were not better off.

It is not a coincidence that our government has pushed for jobs, scholarships, and innovation and that the U of R had a record enrolment this fall of just over 14,000 students. About 14 per cent of those was young people from the global community who want to come here.

Over half of our graduates are women who are likely to contribute to the one-third of female entrepreneurs starting up local businesses, creating jobs, and competing with the best. And while I commend the members opposite for reaching gender parity, I feel the need today to use this opportunity to challenge some pretty tired, old narratives, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We do not need to be victims. We need a government that creates a culture where we celebrate and inspire excellence and optimism, new heights to reach and hope for, and then gets out of the way so we can rise to the Saskatchewan occasion and compete with the best of the best.

And so yes, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to support the Speech from the Throne without amendments. Let's put our minds to work to find innovative ways to give people access to MRIs and CT scans that often leave anxious families waiting, not knowing what to do to care for their loved ones. Yes, let's continue to use and explore new partnerships to build schools, hospitals, and long-term care facilities for the record population who call this place home. Let the liquor stores compete. And let's look at how the patent box might be the first of a series of steps in building a knowledge economy that our schools, our universities, and our technical institutes can feed into.

Last Monday, my parents and my kids sat in this room and saw me being sworn in. My father, who'd never set foot in a legislature before, sat right back there alongside my mother. They've been married for over 40 years, through some very serious ups and downs. My mom retired after 28 years as a public servant. My dad retired his small construction company after having strapped on the tools and gotten up on a scaffold for 30 years. They worked hard. They persevered. They committed. They believed it could be better. Those issues that plagued our family for most of our life and the deep hurts that led to it finally got some attention. And so I was able to see my parents teary-eyed with pride, with the grandchildren they adore at their side, see me begin to make my mark.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan's best days are still ahead

of us, and I for one can't wait to get going.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Bonk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank my colleagues for their warm welcome into this distinguished body. It is truly humbling to be here representing the good people of Moosomin constituency. I thank them for selecting me to represent them in this twenty-eighth sitting of the Saskatchewan legislature.

Before I begin the main thrust of my address, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a few acknowledgements to those who have helped me on my journey to get here. Again the electors of Moosomin constituency are high on that list as they saw fit to support me and allow me to have a four-year lease on this seat. I truly appreciate their support and pledge to represent them to the best of my ability.

[20:15]

And I'll always be grateful to the volunteers who helped me get nominated and ultimately elected to this House. I would like to say a special thank you to Jeff Baran, my campaign manager, for making everything run smoothly and look effortless. I would like to thank my campaign Chair, Cam Taylor, for his wise counsel; my campaign team, Stephen Scriver, Tim Taylor, Jay Malo, Tatum Duryba, Tim Hovedestad, and Robert and Kimberley Taylor for their enthusiasm and willingness to help.

There are so many others who volunteered on the campaign with their hard work and sacrifice. I regret I can't mention them all individually today but I want them to know truly how much I appreciate their efforts. We became a formidable team. Everything was done on time and with precision.

Mr. Speaker, please allow me to acknowledge my predecessor, good friend, and mentor, Mr. Don Toth, who gave this House and this province 30 years of distinguished and selfless service. The citizens of Moosomin constituency always felt the high regard he held for them. Don was a man who wouldn't miss an opportunity to visit his constituents anywhere, any time, and he was a wonderful example to all of us of the importance of having strong principles, integrity, and putting family first.

He is one of the most ethical men I have ever met and we would all do well to follow in his example. He has my deep respect and the deep respect of the Moosomin constituency. I thank Don for his knowledge that he so kindly shares with me. I thank him for his support, and we thank him for his part in the formation of the Saskatchewan Party. My family and I wish Don and his wife, Lois, many years of good health and much time spent with his beloved grandchildren.

But my deepest and most affectionate gratitude goes to my family. As a good portion of my business has been conducted abroad, my wife, Candace, my daughter Emma, and I have had to make some sacrifices but have gotten used to making the most of the time we've had together. And as I move into this next phase of my life and me taking on the responsibility of being an MLA, I'm grateful we'll be at least in the same time zone.

Candace has been unwavering in her support and is a constant source of encouragement to me. Her kindness and her empathy have taught me to always look deeper, to feel deeper, that everyone has their own unique set of circumstances and challenges. I look to her for her insight, for her compassion, and her honesty. I could never thank her enough for all that she has taught me.

I want to also thank my daughter Emma for her absolute optimism. This year Emma was elected as her school president, and she's quick to remind me that she's the first elected official in our house. During the recent provincial election, she door knocked with Candace and I, not only in our constituency but in seven others as well. She was fully committed and it would be difficult for anyone to have outworked her. She is the perfect example of the new Saskatchewan, a 12-year-old entrepreneur with three businesses. Her favourite thing to say to everything is, I'll try. I love her curiosity and her thirst for knowledge. I'm very proud of her.

Of course I have to acknowledge a profound debt of gratitude to my parents. My father and mother, Lorne and Diane, instilled a solid work ethic into my siblings and me. The reality of growing up on a farm is that there's chores, then school, then chores again. My parents never argued the fact that we needed to have hobbies, sports, and other interests, and we had plenty of those, but after the work was done, my parents made sure to expose us to different languages, cultures, arts, and take us to as many events as possible. I thank them to this day for instilling in me a keen interest and deep curiosity about the world in which we live.

I remember as a young boy having an early interest in politics and one day asking my father to explain the difference between left and right. He made it very simple. He said that those on the left wanted the government to have more control in our lives and those on the right wanted the government to have less. I've never forgotten that lesson. And that lesson's been starkly confirmed as I've had the opportunity to live and work in many countries around the world, and I've seen first hand the very different results of both of those political philosophies.

Mr. Speaker, please indulge me in borrowing a line from my favourite play, *The Importance of Being Ernest*, by Oscar Wilde: "On an occasion of this kind, it becomes more than a moral duty to speak one's mind. It becomes a pleasure." And it is indeed a pleasure to enter into the Throne Speech debate about the three pillars. And the three pillars of the Throne Speech and our government's plan to keep Saskatchewan strong mirror the very reasons why I decided to enter politics: to keep our economy strong, to keep our finances strong, and keep our position in Canada strong by always standing up for Saskatchewan's interests.

Mr. Speaker, we live in an ever-globalized world and if there's one thing I can attest to, the world wants what Saskatchewan has to offer. Mr. Speaker, look at my home constituency of Moosomin. In fact, the name of our constituency is a bit of a misnomer. Although we do take in Moosomin, a thriving town and largest centre in our constituency, we also include much more. From Wolseley, Carry the Kettle Nakota, and Francis in the west to the Manitoba border in the east, from the beautiful Qu'Appelle Valley in the north to the Moose Mountains in the

south, we have a diverse and varied landscape.

Our constituency is a microcosm of the Saskatchewan economy. We have oil. We have potash. We have agriculture. We have world-class manufacturing. And one thing that all these sectors have in common is that they rely heavily on exports. I've had the good fortune to promote Saskatchewan know-how, technology, and products around the world. And the Saskatchewan Party government has made this job so much easier and continues to find ways to facilitate the process. Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor stated clearly in the Throne Speech how our government can accomplish this, and that is by working with Saskatchewan exporters to open and expand new markets for Saskatchewan products around the world.

As I was campaigning in the Moosomin constituency, an old friend, a financial planner, was concerned that his 15-year-old daughter had no interest in the political process or at least didn't see how it affected her. He asked me if there was any way I could explain it to her.

I knew that the most important thing in this young lady's world was her horse, so I asked her, I said, you love your horse, don't you? She agreed, and I said, you know that farm machinery manufacturer down the road? Well he employs a lot of people in this town, a lot of people that go to your father with help with their finances. Well one day that manufacturer looks over his books. He sees that the export tariffs he has to pay and the red tape he has to endure in getting those machines exported to other countries, it's not going to be that good of a year. He sees the only way he can survive is to reluctantly lay off a few employees, and some of those employees will be clients of your father. And they might not need a financial planner, will they? And your father says to you, well it hasn't been that good of a year. We might have to cut back on some expenses. And what if one of those expenses is your horse?

Mr. Speaker, after calming her down and assuring her that this was just an analogy and her horse was fine, she got it. And our government gets it. They get it by making sure that we support people with initiative and ideas, that we make sure that these people won't be held back by an unreasonable tax burden or trade barriers or red tape that ties their hands. This is how we get Saskatchewan products, technology, and know-how to a world that sorely needs it. Because yes, the world wants what Saskatchewan has to offer.

And much of this is being done at the grassroots level. I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, when you give someone from Saskatchewan a challenge, they'll come up with an idea because after, and all they need after that is an opportunity to realize it. And why not add some encouragement to this kind of innovation with a tax incentive? And this is why our Saskatchewan Party government has come up with the patent box incentive. For the first time in North America, a government, this government, has come up, will offer an advantageous tax rate for the commercialization of patents and intellectual property.

And from this will come jobs, an increased tax base, and more opportunity to get Saskatchewan products and ideas to the world because, as you know, the world wants what Saskatchewan has to offer. We have the know-how. We have the technology and we have the products the world is looking

for, but we need to get them to market. This is why our government, starting this year and for the next three years, will fix more highways through a \$70 million surge in highway repair and maintenance. This is part of the new highways 2020 plan to invest \$2.7 billion in highways and transportation capital over the next four years. It is why our government stood up for farmers, ensured they had access to railcars to move their grain.

By standing up for our province's interests, this is how our government keeps Saskatchewan strong. It boggles the mind to think of those years that this province languished under the NDP when there was little encouragement to think outside of the box, when we were too meek to even think about promoting Saskatchewan products and ideas to the world. Do you remember when, and I quote from a *StarPhoenix* editorial, "the NDP government considered the entire Asian region to hold little positive impact on this province or its economy"? I'll repeat that, Mr. Speaker. "The NDP government considered the entire Asian region to hold little positive impact on this province or its economy."

But, Mr. Speaker, we know that since 2007 the Saskatchewan Party government has aggressively marketed Saskatchewan exports throughout the world. And as a result, since 2007 Saskatchewan exports have increased by 65 per cent. This includes 45 per cent increase to Japan, 218 per cent increase to India, 297 per cent increase to China. In 2015 alone, these countries exported more than \$4.8 billion . . . or we exported more than \$4.8 billion. Now there's some positive impact.

In a world that's looking for energy security and food security, Saskatchewan has a lot to offer. This is our business. This is what we do best. This is why our government stands up for Saskatchewan and strongly supports trade agreements such as CETA [comprehensive economic and trade agreement] and TPP [Trans-Pacific Partnership]. Saskatchewan exported more than 25 billion in goods to the 11 TPP countries in 2014. This represents about 71 per cent of Saskatchewan's total international exports.

To highlight just how important this is to our economy, about one in five or 20 per cent of the jobs in Saskatchewan depend directly on international exports. Lowering taxes, cutting red tape, rewarding innovation, aggressive marketing — this has led to 32.6 billion in exports in 2015. A good example of how effective and practical this government's plan has been are the results we are now seeing in agri-food exports. In 2015 we reached nearly \$15.3 billion, surpassing our growth plan target of 15 billion in exports by 2020. Saskatchewan remains the top agricultural exporting province in Canada. Reaching this growth plan five years ahead of schedule speaks to the incredible efforts of our farmers, ranchers, and agribusinesses, and is further proof that the world wants what Saskatchewan has to offer.

The Saskatchewan Party government has been a strong advocate for our energy and pipeline sector, supporting projects like Energy East. This is another example of how our government stands up for the interests of Saskatchewan, and I am so proud to stand with them.

Projects like Energy East hold huge importance for the

Moosomin constituency and our province. Our government also has a strong commitment to develop green energy. We have pledged to produce 50 per cent of our power from renewable sources by 2030. To that end, we have forged a new partnership with the First Nations Power Authority that will see the development of 40 megawatts of clean energy generated from solar and flare gas.

The Boundary dam carbon capture facility in Estevan can capture 1 million tonnes of CO₂ a year, convert it to liquid, and store it deep underground. It would be the equivalent of taking a quarter of a million cars off the road. The world is watching Saskatchewan closely to learn how they too can produce environmentally sustainable clean coal power. This is world-leading, homegrown Saskatchewan technology.

Saskatchewan is already a leader in carbon sequestration with the advent of minimal-till or zero-till technology, much of it pioneered and developed right here in Saskatchewan. And with the planned grazing and extensive management systems that are being used and constantly improved, our farmers and ranchers have greatly increased the organic matter of the soil, increased water infiltration, recharged the water and nutrient cycles, and are pulling huge amounts of carbon out of the atmosphere and storing it in the ground for centuries to come.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan farmers and ranchers are world leaders in this area, and have moved far past sustainable agriculture and are now practising regenerative agriculture. This technology and know-how is in high demand globally, and proves once again the world wants what Saskatchewan has to offer.

Mr. Speaker, this government also has a proven record of prudent fiscal management. Our province has the second lowest GDP [gross domestic product], debt-to-GDP ratio in Canada. It has the security of a AAA credit rating. It has the competitive advantage of a stable royalty regime. These factors in Saskatchewan's strong and diversified economy continue to attract new investment to this province. This is how our government will keep our economy strong. This is how we'll keep our province's finances strong, and this is how we will strengthen Saskatchewan's position in Canada and, yes, the world.

Mr. Speaker, we've heard the numbers and the statistics, and the fact is that since 2007 we have new schools, better schools, more teachers, more support staff. We have new hospitals like the one in Moosomin or the new integrated health care facility in Kipling. We have more doctors, more nurses, more long-term care beds. We have 138,000 more people living and working here and, among these, 58,000 post-secondary graduates who could stay and work and build a life in Saskatchewan because of our government's graduate retention program. And now these recipients will be allowed to use up to \$10,000 of their GRP [graduate retention program] benefits towards the down payment of their first home right here in Saskatchewan.

[20:30]

Mr. Speaker, we will help our seniors, the ones who built this province, remain in their homes longer by allowing seniors with household incomes under \$70,000 to defer the education

portion of their property taxes. And this year, we will be able to make record infrastructure investments by ministries and Crowns of \$3.6 billion.

Our government's plan will keep our economy strong. It'll keep our finances strong, and it'll keep our position in Canada and the world strong. And this is how we maintain and improve the services we all rely on.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I would like to read a passage from the Throne Speech itself: on April 4th this government was re-elected on a campaign that made few specific promises, but instead made one significant commitment — to keep Saskatchewan strong. In a world that wants what Saskatchewan has to offer, this Throne Speech delivers just that, to keep Saskatchewan strong.

Mr. Speaker, it is indeed with great pleasure that I offer my full support to the motion put forward by my colleague, the member from Saskatoon Westview, in supporting the Speech from the Throne. Thank you.

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

Mr. Phillips: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Congratulations first of all to yourself on being elected Deputy Speaker once again. Look forward to the next four years and a little bit under partially your Chair.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a few weeks ago I did a Q & A [question and answer] with the local newspaper the *Melfort Journal*, and one of the questions was who, living or dead, would you most like to have a beer with. And my answer was Sir Winston Churchill. He's always fascinated me. He's been somebody . . . To me, he's an inspiring person. He's an inspiring leader that took Great Britain through its darkest hours and a truly great man. And when I'm speaking, I often use a quote or two from the former prime minister, and one of my favourites I used a lot recently during the campaign. "We contend that for a nation to try to tax . . . [its way] into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle." Seems to me we're seeing that in various constituencies around the country.

However, Mr. Speaker, there is one more obscure quote that I feel is very appropriate today, very appropriate for myself, when Winston Churchill said, "My most brilliant achievement was my ability to be able to persuade my wife to marry me." This applies to me every day. My wife April is my rock. She's my guiding light and very well may be the reason that I'm here today. I would like to thank her very much for all that she is, all that she does, and thank her for being so strong when she is by my side.

I would also like to thank the best campaign team in the province. Let me prove this to you. I'm going to name them, then I'll prove this.

An Hon. Member: — Because they got you elected.

Mr. Phillips: — And there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, goes the punchline. Chairman, Doug Terry; business manager, Zach Moskal; office manager, Peggy Gordon; assistant office

manager, Debbie Perkins; chairman of volunteers and cookies, especially the coconut ones, Darlene Campbell; sign crew, Bob McPherson, Tim Hoenmans and Raeanne Renouf; and transportation chairman, Dustin Friesen.

Mr. Speaker, when all is said and done there were some 200 volunteers involved in our election campaign including community chairpersons and organizers, e-day personnel, drivers and telephone people, office helpers, and there's an assortment of other campaign . . . other positions required to run an effective campaign. I will not name each and every one of them today but I do appreciate all of them.

Mr. Speaker, I called them the best campaign team in the province and I hold this up as proof. They got me elected. The Minister of Highways already may have mentioned that just a couple of minutes ago, but I would be amiss if I didn't thank Linsey Thornton, the New Democratic candidate for his hard work during the campaign.

I would also like to thank 100 per cent of the voters in the Melfort constituency for showing up to make this democracy work. As with everyone else in this great legislature, I only wish that every eligible voter would accept voting as a privilege and an obligation.

Mr. Speaker, the Melfort constituency office opened in the same location in the Melfort Mall on April 11th, and I'm very pleased to report that Peggy Gordon and Debbie Perkins are back as my constituency assistants. They are a great team that work very hard to help the constituents with their individual problems, and my appreciation for all that they do especially during the periods that I am here in Regina.

I have no doubt that last year's economic problems are going to continue in the short term. The resource revenues for the government will continue to be lower than normal for the next year or two, and that leaves the Government of Saskatchewan in a position where choices have to be made. We as a government could raise taxes. But as Winston Churchill said, ". . . for a nation to try to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle." The harm it would do to this economy would not be worth it.

Or we could cut programs, stop infrastructure projects, and shut down the province as a former government chose to do when they were the Government of Saskatchewan. And this government and the people of Saskatchewan and the Crown corporations of Saskatchewan are still paying off the infrastructure deficit that that decision caused. No, the answer is to control expenditures but also to continue to build Saskatchewan's economy, continue to keep Saskatchewan strong. We recognize that a short-term deficit can be repaid as the province revenues return to normal. This is what was shown in the Throne Speech and this is what, is the path that the people of Saskatchewan chose on April 4th.

The member from Athabasca, who I almost always mention in my speech, pointed out in his speech last week over 60 per cent of the Saskatchewan voters got it wrong. The opposition does not have to change. No, sir. The people of Saskatchewan have to change. Mr. Speaker, as a member of the government I like his arrogant way of thinking.

Mr. Speaker, when I was on the campaign trail there was one particular story that really touched me and was a true Saskatchewan story. It's about a couple from the small community of Spalding and they farmed just outside the community. And back in 1998, Mr. Speaker, Ken and Kathy Johnson were having trouble on the farm. They were having trouble with revenue and making things work as so many farmers do. And they decided maybe he should go and work off the farm for awhile but he didn't really want to do that. And so they looked at a cash crop that might work, take a small area of the farm and put in a crop called borage. Borage is a crop that was very seldom heard of in that time. And they grew it, and they grew it very well, and apparently it was a little difficult to harvest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but they got through it. And they ended up and they had this bin full of seed, but the question was, who would buy the seed? And nobody around, because it was a new crop, would buy borage.

So they decided that what they had to do was they crushed it. So they took it to a crusher and they crushed their crop of borage on a small piece of land. They got it back and it was one barrel of oil that they had back.

Now the problem was who was going to buy the oil for it, because there was no national market or hardly an international market at that time. So they looked up on the Internet. They found 135 companies throughout the world that may buy this product. So they sent out — remember, 1998 — they sent out 135 faxes to these companies. They got eight or nine faxes back expressing interest in this, and they picked out one and they sold their one barrel of oil to a company. And I asked them, so how much did you get for that? Was it worthwhile? And Ken said it was around 8 to \$9,000.

But it was a start, and the next year they grew a little bit more and a little bit more and then they finally decided that rather than having people crush it for, they would buy a building and they would crush it themselves. And so they did that, and when I was out there in March, I was out in their plant. Their plant is now crushing hemp seed; it's crushing borage; it's crushing flaxseed, crushing sesame seeds, and employed six, seven people. It runs at times . . . During a hemp run, they will be running 24 hours a day.

They have this plant, and there in the plant was probably maybe 40, 50 barrels of oil ready to be shipped plus semis that are ready to go. This is from that one barrel of oil and this is from a need of just having to do a little bit better.

And now this company is exporting right around the world. It's quite amazing. With the help of STEP, the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership, they have markets now in Germany. They have markets in Taiwan. They have markets in India, in China, in the Philippines. It's growing all the time from this plant in Spalding, Saskatchewan. It's a Saskatchewan success story. It's one that I'll continue to tell because to me that's what Saskatchewan is all about, and I wish them continued success and I know by talking to them, they will have that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been up in the House a few times before, and I like to talk about industry in my constituency. In Melfort we've got Dwayne Enterprises. We have M & K Welding in St. Brieux. We've got, of course, Bourgault

Industries, Bourgault Tillage Tools. We have Dry Air, Assie. We have Doepker's in Annaheim. In St. Gregor we have Michel Industries. In Englefeld we have Schulte Industries; Watson, FPS [Failure Prevention Services] and Sapphire Water. We have amazing industries in there. And I haven't mentioned BHP, which is in the Melfort constituency, no matter what the member from Arm River says.

And I talk about those today because I'm excited about the future . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . You may have the potash; we've got the hole.

So I'm excited about the future. I'm excited about the patent box that's introduced in this Throne Speech. You look at some of the names I've mentioned like Bourgault Industries and Tillage Tools and Dry Air. And where did they come from? You know, Bourgault Industries running six, 700 people there. Where did it come from? It came from a patent. It came from people like the Johnsons who had an idea and they carried the idea and built on it. And what the province of Saskatchewan, what this government is doing, is to saying that's how we build, not only to expand Bourgault Industries and Tillage Tools and Schultes and Doepkers and FPS, but to actually start the next generation moving forward so that in two years or three years I can be standing up here talking about more people like Northern Nutraceuticals, which is Ken and Kathy Johnson's company. So I'm excited about that and I'm excited about the opportunities that that will bring.

But I would like to take a few minutes, and it's been talked about tonight, but the fact that Saskatchewan has always had great people. And that's what sustained this province between 1944 and 2006, is the great, innovative people of Saskatchewan. They were born and bred from the agricultural background in so many ways, people who could fix anything. Because it was harvest, you know, give a person a roll of haywire and a pair of pliers and he'll fix the machine; then after the harvest was done, they would build a new part and put it in. And that's the type of innovation that this province was built on.

[20:45]

But you take those 63 years. Saskatchewan's population grew from 832,000 to 953,000 in 63 years. That's an increase of fourteen and a half per cent in 63 years. Canada's population, Mr. Deputy Speaker, exploded from 12 million people to 31 million people — two and a half times — and we had an increase of 14.5 per cent.

Saskatchewan was governed by the CCF-NDP [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation-New Democratic Party] for all of those years with the exception of 16. The last time that they were in power, from 1991 to 2006, we actually dropped 3.5 per cent. I'll tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the experiment with social democratic government has failed. It has failed for you; it has failed for me; it has failed for the innovative, hard-working people of this province.

Now you know, we could sit back and say, well does a government really make a difference? Well since 2007 Saskatchewan has been the second-fastest-growing province in Canada. We've grown 132,000 people in this province in the past eight years. Now if you take the . . . what were the

numbers, 832 and 953? That's about 120,000 people over 63 years, and we've grown 132 in the past eight years. The population of Canada has increased 13.5 per cent. The population of Saskatchewan has increased 18.5 per cent, and that's very important, and it's more important because of who these people are.

Yes, we have immigration from other provinces, in-migration from other provinces, and we have immigration from around the world, and we accept these people with open arms and they make us better. But the big difference, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is our kids. That's the difference. You see, our kids have always done great things. They have just done them someplace else.

I remember graduating from Kinistino quite a while ago. I remember that — it's funny how your memory sharpens up with age — and walking out to Highway No. 3 which ran through the town, and saying goodbye to all my friends from the grade 12 class who were lined up, thumbs out, heading west to Alberta ready to do great things somewhere else. I also think about my wife, April's, mother's family, a family of 13 kids that grew up in their loving home in a great community, St. Brieux, Saskatchewan. But in order to find suitable employment, 12 of the 13 left the province and did great things someplace else. Now our kids are staying right here with us.

We have increased the student support by 350 per cent since 2007. The Sask Advantage Scholarship contributes \$500 to each graduate's tuition, towards their tuition for four years of university. And as the revenues improve, we'll see that increasing to \$750 towards their tuition in university or polytech. Then after they graduate, and if . . . No, no, not if. And when they build their future in Saskatchewan, we have the graduate retention program that refunds 100 per cent of their tuition in tax credit up to \$20,000. In the next term, in this term, it can be used ahead to buy a house to deepen those roots in Saskatchewan. We have 58,000 students on this program today, 58,000 of our young people building Saskatchewan's future, building their future, building their children's future, and building our future.

And yet today we still see the negativity of the NDP government across the way. Even this morning they were talking about the carbon capture program, the world's first and largest carbon capture project on a coal-fired power plant, designed and built in Saskatchewan by Saskatchewan people. Yes, it's had glitches. It's a world's first. And when the switch went on, it wasn't perfect. Imagine that happening. They can't understand it. I'm very, very proud of the Boundary dam CCS project, the world's leading technology right here in Estevan. And what does the NDP say about that? Boondoggle, they yell. That woke you up, didn't it? They still don't get it. They just will not get it. They don't get it today, not tomorrow. They will never get it.

And just before I shut down, I want to talk a little bit about one of my pet peeves. And one of my pet peeves is the critic . . .

An Hon. Member: — From Cumberland.

Mr. Phillips: — No, actually not. It's the member from Nutana, and pointing out all the time that Saskatchewan has the highest per capita environmental pollution. Welcome to Saskatchewan.

Has she ever visited this province? Look at Saskatchewan on a map sometime. Our population is spread all over the province. It goes from one end to the other. It's not like Ontario, where something like 85, 90 per cent of Ontario is even south of Estevan. It's not like Alberta where it's all kind of concentrated because they have those big piles of rocks. No, welcome to Saskatchewan. We have prairie. We have cold weather. Have you noticed? It goes down to 40 below here. Really, it goes down to 40 below. I'm going to keep my house warm. It's going to take me a little more natural gas to do that. It's going to take me a little more gasoline to drive to the community that's 50 miles away. We're not all packed into one small area in Saskatchewan.

You know, the member talks like she's never been to Saskatchewan. And has she ever noticed those fields out there that grows, what was it, \$15.3 billion of exports? But they drive around in big four-wheel drive tractors burning up all kinds of energy. Can you imagine one farmer burning up thousands of gallons of . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, cattle methane. Yes, there's some of that in this building. But you know, it's almost like she's never been to Saskatchewan. Because that's what we are. And yes, we can do better, and we will do better as we move along.

But I'm pretty sure that the farmers don't throw gas out the back. They burn it as efficiently as they can in order to feed the world. We don't drive Priuses. I don't even know if I like the word. I know. Forty below, you're out on your farm. You're driving to town. The wind's blowing. The snow's 2 feet deep, and you're driving a Prius. No, thank you. We're not that way. I don't know why we keep hearing about it, but we're not that way.

I have got that off my chest, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thank you for your time, and I will be supporting the motion on the floor and the Throne Speech. Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to start by congratulating you on your position of Deputy Speaker.

This is an exciting time for all of us in the House, and I'd like to start by extending some thank yous to my campaign team. Everyone here has extolled the virtues of their campaign team, feeling that each and every one of them have had the best team, but in fact I think the whole Saskatchewan Party had the best team.

I had an absolutely incredible campaign team that worked so hard to ensure that Regina Rochdale stayed in the Saskatchewan Party column. I had a new campaign manager, Enyinnah Okere who was just fabulous. He was there day in, day out, making sure that everything came together. And my data and GOTV [get out the vote] manager was Andrea Smotra, who just made sure that all the boxes were ticked and all the work was done.

And then we also had a volunteer Chair, Donna Rybchuk. Donna is absolutely fabulous in her ability to convince people that they're going to come out, they're going to volunteer and

have a good time. And in fact they did.

We had a great volunteer team of managers. We had Paula Steckler. We had Michelle Grunerud and Lex Ewen. Those, along with other volunteers, made sure that we covered the constituency numerous times.

Our sign Chair was my husband, Terry Ross, and his brother Robert Ross. And so they made sure that we had people phoning, emailing, Facebooking, and asking for signs like we've never had before. It was wonderful to have that kind of buy-in from the constituents of Regina Rochdale.

And then we had Judy Langford. Judy made sure that every day she cooked a homemade meal for our campaign team. So all of our volunteers felt special because she made sure they were fed appropriately.

Now some people said, it's only a 28-day campaign, and how fast was that. But in reality it was a four-year campaign. In fact, I should probably say it's been an eight-year campaign because we haven't stopped campaigning in our constituency since I was first elected in 2007.

We've had hundreds of volunteers come out and give us a hand. We appreciate the time and energy that they have dedicated. But it was also a really good learning experience for so many of them because a lot of them were brand new to politics and they came out saying, you know, I'm not sure if I know all the ins and outs of politics. But in fact it was a really good opportunity for them to become engaged and realize that all the work that they did, the contributions that they made were . . . made a big difference.

I would be remiss if I didn't thank some of the, I would call them the party builders who retired this past election. We had June Draude, Bob Bjornerud, Ken Krawetz, and Don Toth. Now those stellar MLAs have been replaced by new MLAs. In fact we've got quite a few new MLAs on this side of the House. And listening to their maiden speeches to the Speech from the Throne, I think we can all be very proud of our new MLAs. They have stood up and made some of the most incredible and passionate speeches that I think we've ever heard in this House.

I mean we all know Bob Bjornerud. Bob Bjornerud had the ability to have each and every one of us sitting at the edge of our seats, appreciating his ability to either answers in question period or to make a speech. He had this whole place enthralled.

But you know, we have so many of our new MLAs are going to have that same kind of ability to make sure that when they stand up and speak, that people listen. People in Saskatchewan listen. And I'm so proud and so pleased because I think we have the right mix on this side of the House. Now we have a substantial amount on this side of the House, but that's because, that's because the people of Saskatchewan heard our message and they liked what they heard.

[21:00]

I'd also like to say that when we were out door knocking in Regina Rochdale, the design of my constituency is quite different. It's a completely urban constituency, so I do miss my

rural aspect. But however, one of the things . . . A lot of people that live in Regina still are very connected to the country and appreciate all the hard work that our rural folks do for us.

But one of the things I heard loud and clear, and I think probably each and every one of us heard it when we were out door knocking in this past campaign, was how proud we are of our Premier and how proud we are that he's standing up for Saskatchewan. I think each and every one of us can say that we . . . You know, we talk about him being the most popular Premier in the country, but in fact this is all based on his ability to connect with people. But one of the things that, like I said, we can be very proud of is that he is strong leadership but he's a humble man, and there is nothing more valuable than a leader who has those kind of attributes. I think we can all be very pleased with that.

I'd also like to thank my constituency assistant, Kelly Zazula. After the election night, Kelly just rolled up her sleeves and got back to work, making sure that the big pile of mail was answered, emails were answered, and phone calls were returned, because people in Saskatchewan, especially in Regina Rochdale, were pleased that I was re-elected, but also they needed to make sure that their files were being looked after. So she has done an absolutely incredible job.

And I would be remiss if I didn't thank Larry Aitken. He's the general manager, the district manager for Boston Pizza. On election night, our campaign office was pretty small and we had hundreds of volunteers. And we thought, how are we going to be able to muster them at the end when they all bring back their information? Larry was very kind to offer us the lounge part of Boston Pizza on Rochdale. And so on election night, guess what? Every TV in that bar was turned to the election. And there was a couple of tables in there that weren't part of our group, and you could tell this is the first time they've ever sat in a lounge and realized there wasn't a hockey game on, there wasn't a baseball game on. There was . . . it was politics. So it was kind of fun to see those, the people saying, hey, this is a little different.

But we really do thank Larry for being able to accommodate us because we were between a rock and a hard place in Regina Rochdale, finding a facility large enough to be able to accommodate our whole campaign team and all the volunteers.

Regina Rochdale is an absolutely incredible area in the northwest sector of the city. It is growing leaps and bounds. I mean, Lumsden is just on the horizon for us. But also to the commercial, the commercial area has, there isn't any space for lease. So because of that, it was a challenge having a substantial size of a campaign office. So we, you know, all make do. So one of the things in Saskatchewan we can all be proud of is that we don't sit around and whine or anything. We just get the job done.

In regards to the Throne Speech, on page 8, I think that this is just so indicative of what we heard on the doors. And I'd like to read this portion:

STANDING UP FOR SASKATCHEWAN

My government believes in a strong Saskatchewan within a

strong and united Canada.

But it is troubling that today, there are some in this county who, given the opportunity, would shut down major parts of Saskatchewan's economy and put thousands of hard-working Saskatchewan people out of work, all in the name of some misguided dogma that has no basis in reality.

There are those who are not comfortable with and even oppose much of what we produce in Saskatchewan and how we produce it — oil and gas, coal and uranium, livestock and grains.

They would prefer that those sectors did not exist and that the thousands of jobs in those sectors . . . [do] not exist.

They look at those jobs like they are somehow harming the country and the world.

To those people, my government has a message.

You are wrong.

You could not be more wrong.

Saskatchewan feeds Canada and the world.

Saskatchewan supplies energy to Canada and to the world.

What we do here makes Canada a better place.

What we do here makes the world a better place.

My government will take every occasion to stand up for this province, to defend those [whose] vital sectors, and to stand up for every one of those jobs.

That's what we have in our province. That's what we have with the Premier who stands up proudly for Saskatchewan.

One of the things we can . . . You know, we have the opposition, the NDP in the opposition. They stand there and they wring their hands, and some of them in fact have even signed on or agree with the Leap Manifesto. I think Rex Murphy . . . I love Rex Murphy. Rex Murphy makes my Thursday. He's got a way with words. He's not the prettiest man, but my goodness that guy's got a way with words. And what Rex said about . . . He said it best. He said that Leap Manifesto is like leaping off a cliff, and that's what we have in the opposition. They'll stand there; they're wringing their hands.

You know what's on this side of the House? This side of the House, the Saskatchewan Party government, we believe that in fact what you do is you don't stand there wringing your hands. You take those two hands, you roll up your sleeves, and you get the job done. And that's what this Speech from the Throne does. It lays out a blueprint for us to get the job done. And with that, I will be supporting the Speech from the Throne. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — I recognize the

Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To join in on a little bit of a comment to the Throne Speech and maybe what's in it, what wasn't in it. But before I start out of course, I want to take an opportunity to thank, you know, those that did the good work and made the effort to get out and vote and cast their vote for who they wanted to represent them.

And you know, when I think about this, there's teams out there. And everyone has teams, and everyone thinks they have the best team, and that's good. I think we all feel the same way. We have the best team.

Before I start out I just want to again acknowledge those that were re-elected, those new ones that were elected, and those that have made their maiden seat. I just want to welcome you to the Legislative Assembly on both sides of the House. Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know we're on Treaty 4 territory, and I just want to acknowledge that as well as many others may acknowledge that. I think it's important to acknowledge our First Nations and the treaty land that we, you know . . . We are a part of this province and honour that in the way it is.

Now having said that, I want to thank of course my family, my wife, kids, seventeen grandkids. I had them all door knocking, so it kind of helps when you have the kids out there doing it, what they can today, wearing T-shirts and just, you know, being happy and doing the good thing.

You know, none of us get here, I think, by accident. There's a lot of work that goes on, by all candidates and all political parties, do the work that they do to get re-elected. It is an honour to be re-elected, and I've said that, to serve the people of Cumberland constituency, to be a voice, to raise the issues. But also government, you know, has a job and a role to do.

But having said that, my team that worked hard, dedicated. You know, I think about my campaign manager, Marty, Devon, you know. There's so many that are out there doing the good work — door knocking, putting up signs — whether I think about Jordan. There were so many that did the good work — whether you get advice from the leaders, whether you get advice from our seniors that are in our community, our elders — you get advice and direction.

At the end of the day the campaigns are, you know, are fought hard. People put their name forward. But at the end of the day the people of this province decided the Sask Party would be the government, and I respect that. I wish it was differently. It's the way it is, and we'll deal with what it is. We'll be the official opposition. And being a member of the official opposition, it is an honour. It's an honour to serve the House and do the good work that needs to be done, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But having said that, you know, those individuals, as you go along and you hear the challenges when you're door knocking, there are many challenges people are facing. And I'm going to go into some of those challenges that they're facing that I was hoping would be in the Throne Speech. It's a vision, and government's going to give a vision of where it's going to go. And you know, you're hoping that there was quite a bit and would have been quite a bit in the Throne Speech, especially

from the North and the seat that Cumberland . . . I was hoping, you know.

And when I think about that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about the issues, you know, I've never had an opportunity to have the Premier and many ministers visit the Cumberland constituency as much as they did during the campaign. And it was good to see them door knocking, talking to people, hearing the true issues that are facing northern people, the challenges. And I'm going to get into those challenges. I was hoping that when they were door knocking and having those conversations with the individuals and those leaders and community members that are struggling and having issues, that the government would've said in this document, the Throne Speech, we're going to make sure that we address Saskatchewan needs by this Throne Speech. And I'll get into what's not in it and why and where, you know, where I'll be going and where will my support be.

So having said that, you know, we're going to talk a little bit about what wasn't in the Throne Speech, the issues facing many northern people, the people in my constituency. You know, we talk about keeping Saskatchewan strong and, you know, we want our province to continue doing well. We want our business people to do well. We want our citizens to do well. We want our youth to do well. Doesn't matter where they go. We want to work together.

And sometimes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we may disagree, and that's okay. We may disagree, but I hope . . . And I've heard some of the members opposite and some of my colleagues say it's the right thing to do sometimes; you need to work together. And you know, you can have your way of thinking of things and we'll say back and forth. You have the little bit of the . . . I guess you drink the Kool-Aid. You believe that, and that's fine. Those debates go on, and the back and forth, I understand that's part of the process.

But I think sometimes it's time for seriousness. It's time to talk about the issues that face many residents, not only in the province, but in the Cumberland constituency that I've been honoured to represent. I think about our seniors, the challenges they are facing. I think about long-term care. The need is overwhelming. We've known that.

We keep hearing about there's more work to be done. Well I'm hoping this government, come budget day, will deal with some of the issues they heard while they were there, the Premier and the ministers were there door knocking, talking to citizens. Like I said, we'll truly meaningfully take some of those concerns that they heard. Doesn't matter who those individuals, you know, elected or chose to support. It's saying it's the right thing to do. And I talked about that, doing the right thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it is important to do the right thing.

But I think about some of the challenges that we'll be facing. The cost of living, we look at the cost of living and some of the challenges that many families are facing. And some may say, you know, the economy is doing great in certain sectors, but I know back home, some of the residents that I represent have lost their jobs to layoffs due to slowdown.

But at the end of the day, you know, you hear a government that talks about everything's going good and everything's good.

And I understand that; they want to say that and they're keeping, I think the comment, keeping Saskatchewan strong. Well you go talk to some of the families and those people who have lost their jobs and see how they feel about that. That's fine to say that, but then you have to have the meaningful conversation after and the meaningful budget and, we're hoping, that vision.

And so maybe a lot of those answers that people are having or wondering about what's going to happen with them, with their jobs, with affordability, maybe it's going to materialize come June 1st in the budget. And I hope it does, you know, for those citizens that have raised the concerns, whether they've been done through petitions, whether they are municipal leaders, First Nations, Métis leaders, that they have raised their concerns. School divisions and the challenges that they're facing, I hope the government is meaningful, that it's going to address those issues.

[21:15]

You know, we talk about a government that had — and we've said this many times in the House — record revenue. They've had year after year of record revenue. Well when the tough times come, there was no money put away. They've spent everything and now, you know, you look at the Crowns; you look at the . . . And it'll be up to the people to decide. I understand that. I'll say what I need to say and those individuals will say what they will say and government at the end of the day will say what it wants to say. And they will spin it how they want to spin it and that's fine. That's the process that we go through and that's what we're given, and we'll deal with that. Saskatchewan people are strong. They're committed. And they will, we will get through this. We have no choice.

But you know, when you think about the affordability, and I've talked about some of the power bills that some of our seniors and some of the citizens are getting in the North. Their power bills are more than their rent. When that is starting to be the issue, why is the government not looking at that meaningful to say, are there problems? What exactly is it? Is there things we can do better to deal with some of our seniors, some of our northern residents? And I'm hoping and I was hoping in this Throne Speech, like I said, that there would be that vision, that they were moving along, that they're going to address some of the needs of our seniors, and long-term care. And there's so many. The list goes on about affordability, about challenges when, you know, families, young families are trying.

You look at the poverty and you look at those challenges many families are facing. You look at the numbers, and I've heard my colleagues talk about this on this side of the House, the numbers in the food bank going up. People are struggling. It's struggling and I see the good work that many local food bank organizations are doing. I know in La Ronge and in the community, you know, in Air Ronge where I come from, the good work that the food bank is doing because of the struggling. And they're having . . . The usage is going up, going up, and it's young families. It's kids, more and more are the ones suffering.

So hopefully, you know, at the end of the day we can sit here and we can go back and forth about the seriousness of what's

going on. And I hope that the budget has vision and I was hoping there'd be more vision to deal with that. And all I can do is go back home and tell people, let's hope this government has heard the issues, has heard the challenges that you as families, that citizens are facing and will address it.

But it's pretty hard to address it when you had years of record revenue and you've put nothing away for the tough times. And everyone knows you have to do that. I mean, you know, I think about the challenges that many do. That's a way of budgeting. This government has gone through everything, spent everything. And some of the priorities, you know, when you think about it that this government has chose to support. And I think my colleague from Lumsden centre talked about \$3 million for a project, picking winners and losers. And you know, it's decisions like that that a government makes where you could do more, helping individuals.

You know, we think about the wildfire management concerns that were raised on the doors while people were door knocking, and we're talking about serious issues. Government needs to respond now to wildfire management, and people are concerned. They are. They are very concerned and they want some action. And they want to see this government . . . Very little mentioned again. So we'll see where that goes. People would love the money reinstated that's been cut from the wildfire management budget that's constantly, you know . . . So let's just hope the government looks at that and deals with that. The leadership, the community members, those citizens that are concerned have raised that, so the government can't say they don't know about that issue.

You know, I think about mental health and addictions and I think about the suicides. If there's ever been an opportunity for a government to say, okay, once and for all we need to address this. Let's put the past behind, back and forth, and the heckling and the bickering, back and forth. Let's be serious about this.

When you go to a community to support a family because they lost a loved one because of suicide, because of mental health, addictions, those issues that are facing them, you know, you can say you'll do all you can. And you try to console them as a citizen, as a friend, as a community member, as a leader. You try to do that. But what they're going through, and then you find out some of the details, you know, and you hear people saying they need supports. They need mental health. They need addiction services. You look at the poverty and you look at the troubles that families are facing.

And sometimes when . . . I had a mother who said to me, Doyle, I'm trying to reach out. I'm trying to get help for my daughter. We need help. But you know, unfortunately when I say that we need help because we're an isolated community, there's not. I'd have to drive her to Saskatoon, P.A. [Prince Albert]. You've got to take her somewhere. They don't have the resources to get there.

So unless the services come in and they have the supports in the community, they are left there. So is there more work to do? Does this Throne Speech address that? A vision of the government? I don't believe it does. But we'll see, come June 1st. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe the government has heard the issues and maybe they'll respond to that.

You know, when you think about poverty in general . . . And I've talked about that, the rate going up and where we're going, and I talked about the food banks, and it's those issues. And I talked about affordability. I talk about power bills. And we look at the power bills. Again this government has just now, after an election, asking for power rate increases, you know, over 10 per cent in the next six months. Like I mean, people . . . And then they say, you know, oh well, we're cutting taxes and everything's going great, everything, the economy, and keeping Saskatchewan strong. Well there's many families out there that are struggling right now to pay their power bills. They're unemployed. They're struggling. Putting 10 per cent more on their bills.

And I talked about previous, the seniors, their power bills are more than their rent. So when you see those challenges, you're just adding more and more stress to those families, to the seniors, to community members, where a government that said they would do better. They were going to take care of Saskatchewan citizens. That's what they asked.

You've got as big a majority as you could ever want. You can pretty well do anything. You can deal with these things. We can even work together. We can even work together to address some of these issues. We talk about that. You know, we talk about . . . And we've been asking. I did it in a previous session and I know my colleague that asked for the apology for the Sixties Scoop from the Premier. Said he would do it, I believe, last summer. We've been waiting. We're asking when is it? They've got to work through it. Well let's just hope that that's done. I was hoping that would have been here. Let's deal with it. But we'll see where that goes. That's one area.

I know my colleagues have talked about the TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission] recommendations, the 94 of them. Let's see. We need to work together. As a province, as a people, we have to come together to work together, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We'll see where this government is. And we'll see as those leaders and as those survivors, those families ask for government support, we'll see what this provincial government does. And will they respond? Because you see very little mentioned in First Nations and Métis people in this document, a Throne Speech, a vision, when we're supposed to be, you know, moving together, working together. You know, very little, very little in there.

Now you know, I talked about while we were hearing stuff on the doorsteps. And whether it's myself or the members opposite that were doing some door knocking, I'm hearing issues. I'm hoping they're genuine. They know the issues now and I hope they will address some of those.

We talk about education. We have left our boards of education unsure. They're not quite sure what to figure out. They're feeling this way, that way, so I could see where my colleague today talked about that. And being that she's a past, you know, sat as a board of education member, as well as myself as a board of education member, they've got a pretty important job and a huge challenge. And we hear that. And we'll see, come June 1st, exactly where they're going to be. So many people don't know.

But maybe we thought by, you know, this Throne Speech

would have had that vision, but we don't see it. Everything's kind of quiet and secretive. And we'll see at the end of the day. We've been saying that. They say no, it's not. We'll see where it all goes.

We talk about individuals and we talk about those with disabilities. And there is more work to be done. And I keep hearing that, more work to be done. That's a theme. More work to be done. But it's fine. You can have a cop-out and say there's more work to be done. But you need to start addressing the serious issues. And it's time I think at the end of the day. And yes, you've done some good work in some areas. You know, I'll give you credit where credit is due. It's not always negative. You've ran some programs that are working, and that's good.

But we'll go back to the vision that you talk about. You know, you talk about some of the communities, and I do say this, that the leaders in some of the communities when we look at roads, infrastructure, the challenges that municipalities on our northern roads . . . But it's not just in the North. Highways are . . . [inaudible] . . . and then you hear the government talking about putting \$70 million into highways over I believe it's four years. And that's going to fix what the problems are? It's not going to. People know that. You talk to people out there, and my colleagues . . . And you know, you guys had to have those conversations. You know that that's part of it. You know, and I talked a little bit about picking winners and losers, and at the end of the day you're picking winners and losers and that's frustrating to many people. They want to have an opportunity so they're wondering why.

You know, and I think about some of the highways when I was talking about that, whether it's Highway 123 to Cumberland House, whether we, you know, we had the highway through Pelican Narrows to Southend, the roads, the 102. We have many challenges, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Those community members are saying, yes, those leaders. People are getting frustrated and angry. They buy new vehicles. They want an opportunity. They want to buy a new vehicle, but the wear and tear that their vehicles are getting on . . . And I think about, you know, there's different ones. It's the transport companies. I think about the ambulance. We have La Ronge ambulance, EMS [emergency medical services] that go out doing the great job they do trying to get into communities. Some of the wear and tear on the vehicles that they have to endure. And I think about the businessman in La Ronge, you know, what he goes through and his vehicles go through. You know, there needs to be something done and it needs to be addressed. I don't see that, and I'm hoping that the government will sit down and have that conversation and hopefully will address some of those issues that, whether it's a business person, whether it's individuals that are feeling those challenges, I'm hoping they will deal with that.

Now we talk about a government's cuts and the government say there are no cuts, you know, to the public sector. We'll see where we're going. Privatization agenda that they say doesn't exist, we heard that today by the Premier. It's just something . . . It doesn't exist. What I find really, really funny and interesting is, you know, this government says oh no, no. We would never, we would never do any of that.

You know, we talk about and I've listened to lots of the

government MLAs, members opposite, and their response. And you know, they love talking about CCF, the NDP. They did it all. They were terrible and it's all their fault, everything. Everything's their fault. You know, that's they would like you to believe, to drink the Kool-Aid, but the reality is they don't want to talk about the '80s. They don't want to talk about Conservatives. Oh, we're not Conservatives. Yes, you are. It is your party. You changed the name and then you think you don't have to claim that. But the people of this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are very smart, very wise, and you don't pull the wool over their eyes. They don't. We know that, you know it, but you can sit there and spin it the way you want, and that's fine.

But having said that, I know at the end of the day, this vision statement that this government said they would have, there isn't much in it to address many of the issues I talked about. And I haven't had the opportunity to talk about every issue that was based on the doorstep that we heard about. And I know my colleagues will share the challenges that are being faced. But this government has to do a better job. You have to be serious. You have to listen to the people.

At the end of the day, yes, we can and we can talk about that. You have your side and we can do the heckling and the back and forth and that's fine and dandy, but let's be clear. When our Saskatchewan citizens elect a government, we all respect that, and I've said that you are the government. The people have decided that. Please, I ask you, hear the issues and the concerns that are out there. Don't play the politics. There is no need for it. There is a time for it, and a place. You've got your mandate. Now I just want to be very clear, be very clear on this: sometimes do the right thing and deal with the issues.

The members over there, I can hear you. You can heckle all you want and say what you want. I understand that. We all do it and it's part of the process, but I hope when the issue is facing whether it's suicide, whether it's addictions, mental health, whether it's the roads, the conditions, housing, seniors dealing with long-term care, leaders saying things have to change, we have many people in the North are getting tired of it. And I think the member from Athabasca talked about that. The leaders are getting tired and the people are getting tired. They want some action. So more needs to be done.

We have to have a meaningful partnership with First Nations and Métis. We have to actually mention them, mention them in this vision statement. Be bold, if that's what you're saying. But I don't see that. I'm hoping at the end of the day, you know, we put in an amendment and I know my colleagues will have more to say on this, and there is more challenges. But this government, yes, you can give yourselves a pat on the back and just say you got elected again and all that stuff, and that's great. You're the government.

[21:30]

But now, you know, this last thing I want to share with them. And I think you've had eight years, and I've said this, of record revenue. You've spent everything. There's no money left. You've drained the Crowns. And that is a shame that you didn't put anything away for our young kids. Instead you borrowed money and you say, oh well that's to do infrastructure or, you know, we have to do that to keep the economy strong. Whatever

your excuse is at the end of the day, it's a mortgage and it's debt that our Saskatchewan children, my grandchildren, your children, and your grandchildren will have to pay. Spend it, and over eight years you spent it.

But you know, you've got another four years. You've got four years now to clean up your own mess that you've created. You created a mess and you get to clean it up now. And yes, you can laugh and think it's funny. Members over there may think that's funny, but you're going to get an opportunity to clean up the mess that you created. You won't be able to blame the NDP, oh, the NDP. But you'll probably try to do that anyway.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the end of the day, the good people of this province are going to ask, and I know they do, the government to do the right thing, to take care of our province and take care of all of the province, not pick, choose winners and not pick areas where they want to take care of. It's important, and I think the people of this province and our children deserve nothing but that, the respect. So hopefully at the end of the day, government will hear the issues and, you know, like I said, very little vision for the issues I talked about and I think my colleagues have shared, and we'll go back and forth. So at this point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will not be supporting the Throne Speech but will be supporting the amendment. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — I recognize the member from Yorkton.

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Chair of Committees. It's a pleasure to join this debate tonight in regard to our Throne Speech for this session of 2016.

Of course it's customary, Mr. Chair of Committees, but I think that it's something that's very needed to be done, is thanking those people that are significant, that help us not only to be here, to get here, to represent our communities, but also that support us every day back at home. And of course that's our families, Mr. Chair.

So of course the first one I must, I must thank would be my wife, Leone, back home in Yorkton. And you know, it doesn't matter whether it's our business dealings or whether it's supporting some of the needs back at home or the family or our charity work, Mr. Deputy Chair. It would be impossible without a strong support back home, and regardless if we're male members or female members, having that strong spousal support back home is so very, very important.

So I firstly want to acknowledge my wife, Leone, and say that I just couldn't do this job without her strong support and her prayers every day, Mr. Chair. And of course, children back home are very supportive, always have their dad's back which is always an encouragement, and so I want to acknowledge them as well. My daughter Rayanne and my son-in-law Austin, great young people that actually saw the opportunity back home in Saskatchewan and moved back here after spending some years in Ottawa, and building their life here which includes our new granddaughter, Wynnslet, who at this time last year would've only been only a couple of months old. And she's just been a true joy and having her nearby is just really, really special.

Right now they're building a new home around Yorkton, so they're spending a lot of time at our house. So I'm pretty blessed some mornings to be able to see her in the morning. She's maybe awake when grandpa's up and getting dressed. So it usually takes me an extra half hour to get out of the house because she wants to have breakfast with grandpa. So we enjoy a lot of time early in the morning, Mr. Chair.

And of course, the community for their confidence and trust to allow me to serve them in this majestic place. As you know, we just celebrated the unveiling of the new dome here and more scaffolding is coming down by the day. So it's going to be really interesting to see that fully uncovered in its true splendour and glory that it would've shown back over 100 years ago when it was first put up there.

You know, speaking about my community, Mr. Chair, it's very interesting some of the comments I get from time to time, especially serving in the position that I do, and that is Minister of Rural and Remote Health. And they understand the challenges that we have, any human service has, when you're dealing with human issues, and there's quite often emotion wrapped up in some of these issues, and of course there's issues to be dealt with from time to time. And they'll ask, how do you do it? Like how do you keep up with the job? And, Mr. Speaker, it is because of that support we have. It's about the staff that we have around us. It's about the colleagues. It's about the leadership we have in this House and in the Premier and that makes it all easier at times, Mr. Chair.

But when it comes to the issues around the community, I found that the community is very understanding. I've committed to them and it serves I think members here well. I know it served me well that I'll commit to them, that I'll bring their issues forward. I might not always agree with them, but I'll bring their issues forward. And I can't guarantee we're going to win every one, but I can guarantee I'm going to advocate for you and do the best job we can. And more often than not, Mr. Chair, that does, it serves my constituents well, and again I tell them we might not win them all but we'll show up for the challenge and the fight. And we do that every day.

And that includes my staff back in Yorkton, Mr. Chair. Lauretta's been with me for coming on nine years. She served with the former member from Melville-Saltcoats for 12 previous to that, so a very experienced constituency assistant in the province and very capable at keeping things, keeping things in check back in the constituency and representing the constituents very well when I'm not there.

As well as a fairly recent addition to our constituency staff, Rachele Sawatsky who is involved in the community in many, many different ways, still involved somewhat in her previous community in Lanigan, but also very much in Yorkton, partially with the Dream Centre, a Pentecostal Assembly of Canada project there that's inner-city youth, family . . . family and youth centre that really does do amazing work in our community. And I'm very blessed to have both of those ladies working in the office and representing so well, and representing the issues that the constituents come forward, so very aptly, Mr. Chair.

With that as well, the Regina staff that I'm blessed to have here.

I've had a few different chiefs of staff. All of them seem to come back and visit from time to time, so I don't think it's me. But a very capable staff I've had. And of course the staff I have now is just I think second to none. The work ethic they have, the commitment they have to not only running the office but serving the people of this province, can't go unmentioned. So I'm just so appreciative of the staff in the office here in Regina as well.

We know we just came through a campaign and some constituencies were a little bit harder fought than others. We had a very successful campaign. I think we were close, about 73 per cent plurality so I think we picked up a little bit from even the last time.

But you know, Mr. Chair, what I would like to say in regard to the election was, you know, locally, we got a little bit of criticism, mainly from the media, saying, you know, nobody's putting in an effort and, you know, there's not really much of a contest. But you know, Mr. Chair, I did take some of those people that would say things like that to task in saying, you know, if you actually pay attention to what's going on here, the team that we've assembled for Yorkton — the Sask Party team we assembled — the signage we've committed to, we never turned down an event, we never turned down a meeting, door knocked faithfully every day, multiple different community events and meetings, and everything that came our way, we made a strong commitment to do the best job we could.

And, Mr. Chair, I know it's the same as my colleagues have in the House. It's the same demands that our Premier and Deputy Premier put on us is to do the best job you can every day. And we do that. And I think, if you look around this floor, that's why we have 51 members on this side of the House — 50 on this side of the House plus the Speaker, Mr. Chair, is that because of that work ethic, because of that hard work.

And again I challenge some of those community members back home that, if you actually pay attention, you'll notice that we never put in any less effort than I did in 2007 when we first won this seat from the NDP. And we put in just as much effort in '11. And, Mr. Chair, we definitely put in just as much effort this time. So I want to acknowledge my campaign team for all the hard work that they did and all the strong support that they did provide as well.

Of course I touched on some of my colleagues here, the Premier, the Deputy Premier, cabinet, all the colleagues around on this side of the floor, Mr. Chair — a really good, strong group of people. And you know, I think it's maybe a bit of an anomaly when you see a caucus this large but to still have the camaraderie, the family mentality, the friendship that members do have on this side of the floor, the Sask Party team on the government side. It is one, I think, one reason why we do have a strong government, we do have a strong caucus is because we do have that strong leadership but very much a friendly and family attitude that supports each other on this side of the House.

The member I get to work with every day, the Minister of Health, the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy, I really appreciated his comments today, but I would turn the tables on him. I'm truly blessed to be able to work with him alongside

him, and although he's probably, I don't know, 15 years younger than me, I would count him as a mentor. His leadership, his work ethic, his dedication to his job is second to none, Mr. Chair. And this province has been well served with Health ministers, of course only two to this point: the first one, our now Deputy Premier serving for around five years; and our current Health minister serving for pretty well four. And I think that's why we do have a strong record when it comes to health, because we have the continuity. We have that knowledge base. We have that work commitment that does provide a lot of successes for the people of this province. And I'll touch on those, I think, in a little bit.

Of course the colleagues on this side of the floor as well, I talked about how much of a family we are and a friendly group we are, and it really does make it a lot easier to do this job and work every day. And of course, I don't know if it's been mentioned tonight here yet, but the caucus office . . . although I don't spend as much time in there as I used to, the support the caucus office has for all the members on the government side is truly commendable, and I do want to acknowledge and show appreciation to them in my remarks tonight.

Of course congratulations has been all around the floor. I want to congratulate, of course, you on your appointment, the Deputy Speaker on his appointment, our new Speaker on his appointment. I again also acknowledge the member from Cannington on his years of service in that chair; as well as the former Speaker, the member from Moosomin that was referred to here tonight as well, the former member from Moosomin, Don Toth, who served as our Speaker for our first four years, but also I would count as one of my best friends and mentors since I did come to this place. His influence — and again his mentorship, for me anyway — will be truly missed, and I do really appreciate all the input and all the impact he's had on this Assembly in his almost 30 years of service to the people of this province.

As well as the former member from Canora-Pelly, Ken Krawetz, another mentor I would count that is a large part why I'm here. So I think members on this side could either criticize him for that or give him credit for that, but a large part why I did come to this Assembly and decide to run was because of Ken Krawetz and his leadership.

Of course thank you to all the even unsuccessful candidates that ran, put their name forward. We know it's a big deal to put your name out in the public to run for political office, and I want to thank them for their . . . Of course I want to acknowledge our members on this side of the floor as well, the newly elected members and the re-elected members for their success in the last election, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know, a lot of members on this side of the floor were able to share some stories, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and there's one story I was able to share at our candidate's forum in Yorkton that I think I'm going to . . . It's not too long of a story but it acknowledges somebody I never thanked was my parents. My dad passed away now a couple years ago, again a very strong influence in my life; my mom, very hard-working.

But one thing I've noticed is, you know, especially when, in my situation anyway, you grow up in a community and you've been

there your whole life, but you attain some level of success in business and in the community, and people tend to forget where you came from, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But I'd really like to acknowledge the work ethic and the commitment and the sacrifice that my parents put in to not only building, helping build this province but into our family.

For example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my dad, he came out of the navy. He served seven years in the navy in the '50s. He came out and met my mom. Shortly after they got married, he got a job as a milkman, kind of a contract run. Got a job at Dominion Bridge, which was a union job. And the thing that really frustrated him is he just wanted to provide for his family, but you know, they ended up going on strike. He tried to cross the picket lines to provide for his family, to provide a better life for his family. And what he experienced in that work environment didn't sit well with him, so he decided to get into private business on his own. So he ventured through a partnership, he ventured into the waste disposal business. He started the year I was born, in 1963, and continued to build that company. But you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it wasn't easy back then. In fact, my mom, who worked very hard, she took on full-time jobs but putting money back into the company to cover wages.

And you know, what I took from that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that, you know, putting something back into a company, very often taking home combined . . . taking home less money than a lot of the employees working for their company, but trying to build a better life for their family, putting investment, and blood, sweat, and tears into a business to build a better life but also to provide employment opportunities for people in the community. And you know, years after they did achieve some success and, fast-forward into about 1990, took over the company and ended up building up a bit more, Mr. Speaker.

[21:45]

But I remember back, you know, vaguely I remember back in those days where the casino now sits in Yorkton was when my dad was trying to build his company, be entrepreneurial, actually taking on a second job or second business in managing a trailer court there. And remembering back to that house we lived in in that trailer court, it was actually ended up being a chicken coop just out of town — the manager, my dad, and mom supporting them and living in probably the worst housing opportunity on that trailer court. But still working hard doing that, investing money back into our company to build it up and again provide for the employees, provide for our family, and help drive the economy.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about my constituency. It's changed a little bit over the years. Now it's become quite an urban, a city-type constituency. Mostly the rural is gone. I have a little bit on the west side. Again most of it's just within the city limits. But still, you know, it's a strong constituency, a lot of support. And I'm very honoured to have the two new members that surround my constituency, the member from Melville-Saltcoats and the member from Canora-Pelly, and I'm looking forward to working with them.

A strong community made up of very diverse economic background. We have a lot of potash influence because of the mines being nearby. A lot of the employees from the mines live

in Yorkton. It's helped it become a very strong retail centre where we were formerly years back more of a commercial and a manufacturing centre. That has become quite strong, but again our agricultural ties have really strengthened our economy. So now we're very diverse, reflective I think of a lot of the province, how diverse the province has become, where we're agriculture, manufacturing, retail centre, and drawing from all areas around, even into Manitoba, which really builds a strong and diverse economy for our area.

And you know, very strong support for each other in a community like that. We find Yorkton's large enough to have all the amenities you'd want. Some very large stores that would be seen in populations of 40 and 50,000, but because of our trading area, we have some significant retail opportunities. But still having that small-town attitude where most people know each other, and if there's somebody that has a need, there's somebody there to step up and help them out with that need. And I'm really appreciative of the constituency and very honoured to serve Yorkton the last eight and a half years, and I look forward to years in the future.

Before I go too much further, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to acknowledge, as well, some of the struggles that we've seen around our neighbouring provinces — example Fort McMurray and how they're coming together and how the province, our province, and neighbouring provinces are supporting them. Of course, in our home territory, La Loche . . . I happened to have the opportunity to be up at La Loche only three days before the tragic events, and you know, I was really impressed with the community and their resilience and their wish to just build a really strong and healthy community. And then having that setback was really, I know, a struggle for them, and the whole province's hearts and prayers go out to that community. But I'll look forward to continually working with them to find a place of healing and success, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Even locally, just recently we had a very major fire in Yorkton. Parkland Greenhouse was totally lost. And so just in recognition of that, I just want to send our prayers to everybody in the province that might be suffering some sort of hardship or difficulty, but really want to acknowledge that.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to touch on the implications in the Throne Speech when it comes to my constituency. You know, I've heard the members opposite criticize how there's not really much there but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's a lot in this document.

If we look at the history of the Saskatchewan Party, what we've been able to accomplish with the help of the communities in Saskatchewan, the strong will of the people of the province, this is just a reflection of the ongoing work that we have done and we're going to continue to do.

Again I heard the member from Moosomin refer to our pillars of course — keep our economy strong, finances strong, and keep Saskatchewan's position in Canada strong by always standing up for Saskatchewan's interests — and I think at the tail end of this Throne Speech, you do see that. And I'm very proud of our Premier and our cabinet ministers and our caucus members at how we do stand for Saskatchewan values and will continue to stand for Saskatchewan values. And I think the

numbers in the House truly do reflect that people recognize that this is the party that will stand for our province and help to foster an environment to continue opportunities for people.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look at the Throne Speech, we'll notice that one of the first headlines in here is keeping our promises. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is one thing I know I'm very proud of that the Premier is very adamant about — say what you're going to do and do what you said you will. And you know, without fail I think we've come through virtually every commitment we made. I know in 2007, the Premier's document, 100 promises for the next 100 years, virtually all of those fulfilled. Promises from 2011 for the most part fulfilled or begun work on. And we look in this document, continue . . . [inaudible].

When we look at infrastructure investment, I know the Minister of Highways is very dedicated to her portfolio. And we hear criticism across the floor about the \$70 million investment, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have to recognize, though, the \$70 million is for repair and maintenance tied in to our 2.7 billion, a record investment in infrastructure targeting \$70 million to that much needed infrastructure, repair, and maintenance. So it's not 70 million investment. It's part of a \$2.7 billion investment over the next four years.

Of course our continued investments . . . And I know we get criticism across the floor about our different models of putting this infrastructure in place, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but when we look at what has been delivered in this province — 18 schools that likely wouldn't have been built in the timelines they were without the innovative approach of the Sask Party government, hospitals including a children's hospital under construction, the Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford, the new mental health facility that is under way that is going to serve all the people of this province including, you know, to some extent constituents of Yorkton, record construction of long-term care facilities — I think I would say that.

We came into a place where we found long-term care facilities falling apart and, you know, recognizing that needed to be addressed fairly shortly, so we identified 13 off the start. Twelve of those projects are either completed or under way. One is still in the planning stages and then two other additional facilities through alternative partnerships, of course the Swift Current one and the one in Saskatoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that are serving seniors now and into the future.

When we look at our investments in infrastructure included in our Crown corporations, we know that all the Crown corporations, specifically SaskPower, is in a terrible deficit position when it came to their infrastructure. We hear stories. I've got friends still working for SaskPower, have told stories about 20 years ago going through rural Saskatchewan painting Xs on power poles and then, you know, previously, shortly before 2007, having to put the Xs back on because they were faded. The power poles weren't replaced, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But we see the action on this part of the government: \$1 billion a year investment back in SaskPower, investments like BD3 [Boundary dam 3], innovative approaches to cleaning up our coal, and ensuring that those plants are going to serve our province into the future, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I think it's investments well made and highly successful, especially when you look at outside investment like BHP Billiton where, you know, a mining company, but investing in carbon capture investment in technology, \$20 million investment in there. I think that private enterprise and investment wouldn't be coming if they didn't see the promise, if we didn't see the successes of that project. We wouldn't see the interest from all over the world in BD3, other countries looking at what's happening here and how they can better serve their countries by cleaning up their coal. So what's happening here on a small scale, I can only see great things for the whole world really when it comes to cleaning up the environment in that technology that was of course spearheaded here.

The growth of our province is unprecedented. I know the members across, the previous members would ridicule our goal of, you know, 1 per cent growth, growing at the national average, and very happy to report as I think many members are very aware that we have outpaced that by a huge margin — 15 per cent growth over the last 10 years, whereas we look under the NDP, Mr. Deputy Speaker, under their last 10 years a drop of 24,000 people. So we're seeing great strides there in growing our province, and in large part that's because our young people are finding opportunities to be able to stay here, which includes again my daughter and son-in-law and my older daughter who graduated her nursing degree a year ago and is practising in our province, in fact in our home of Yorkton.

Innovative things. We talk about innovation, but innovative new ideas like the tax incentive for the patent box tax incentive that would encourage investment here in the province. And you know, I was really encouraged by that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, through the election. We're hearing stories from outside of Saskatchewan where the first time ever proposed in North America, this incentive in Saskatchewan. I think two other jurisdictions in Europe had tried it and found success with it. But how much interest was generated in the province just after that one announcement, I'm looking forward to what that's going to bring to our province and, you know, quite likely, Yorkton being a bit of a manufacturing hub as well with major arteries running through it, what that might mean for our home.

You know, a lot of different incentives and proposals, like the home-based food regulations that we have proposed where it gives an economic opportunity to somebody to start a business, a growth opportunity, they might start it in their home, stay in their home as a home-based business, but we see a lot of those, when they have that start, that they actually build into very strong and vibrant businesses. And you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was quite troubled through the election when I heard the comments of the previous leader of the opposition calling this idea half-baked. And we see from Moose Jaw, the Queen of Caramels, how this is going to affect her business and other businesses around. I know there's a successful business in Indian Head-Milestone that will probably benefit from this as well. And really looking forward to how that's going to generate strong economy.

You know, we go down the list: reducing red tape, which we've been continually trying to do; expanding our export markets; telling the Saskatchewan story, which has served our agriculture-based businesses very well. I know the canola-based businesses around Yorkton are very well served by the

expanded markets. Our pulse crops, all the different crops, the diverse crops that we grow in our province now and how these markets are expanded into Asian Rim, to European, to Indian, and even farther, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it's in no small part due to the work and telling the Saskatchewan story the Premier and our cabinet ministers have been able to do around the world.

When I look at investing in skills training, labour market needs, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just have to think about the Trades and Technology Centre in Yorkton. Although it's up and running and it's not new news, it all fits into this. It fits into our Throne Speech because that's all part of it, something that's been done. But we can talk about it and build on it and recognize what it's going to serve in the future.

I would be remiss if I didn't refer to what I know has been referred to in the past as megaprojects. And I know governments love megaprojects. We have to recognize agriculture and the hard work of the Minister of Agriculture, the work that he puts into that portfolio, that seeding and harvest are two megaprojects that happen every single year. And barring . . . We're very appreciative and very supportive of all our other manufacturing and other industries, recognizing that's the backbone of our province. And Yorkton area, east central part of the province is a hub of canola growth and very huge other diverse crops, and recognizing how strong that makes our economy in east central Saskatchewan, also our whole province.

Our continued work with New West Partnership that served our province very well, and I know now it's very encouraging to hear the new Manitoba government's going to engage. Alberta still seems engaged. BC's [British Columbia] engaged. So looking at how the West has become a powerhouse economically and in no small part due to the work of our Premier, and the New West Partnership, is something that we can point to as well and again mentioned in the Throne Speech.

I'm not going into detail on these other significant investments but, you know, significant investment after investment, whether it's up in Carrot River, whether it's around the province down in the oil field through Crescent Point; Husky Energy, billion investment; helium facilities; enhanced oil recovery; more mining, brand new mining operations coming to the province; again BHP Billiton's investment in the BD3 project; technology; new housing development here in Regina, \$75 million development.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it just, it goes on and on. And even we recognize that we're in a bit of a slowdown in our economy, but it just points to the resilience and the strength of our economy that we continue to see investment in Saskatchewan where years past we'd see zero investment. We'd see investment leave. We'd see people leave. We'd see our children leave. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that just isn't happening anymore.

You know, a lot of these investments I spoke about, they don't impact Yorkton and my constituency directly, but there are so many other local Yorkton companies, too many to list, that are such strong contributors to our economy and employment that, you know, I have to at least give them a brief mention.

You know, programs that we put in place, we can point to 58,000 students that are engaged in the graduate retention program that likely wouldn't be here if it wasn't for initiatives like the graduate retention program — highly successful. But I'm very, very happy and really encouraged by the feedback that I've gotten by the change that we're going to do, allowing students that can take \$10,000 of their unused portion of the GRP and put it towards their first home. So not only do they have the opportunity to stay here, work, and get some of that investment or that money back, unused portion they can actually use to start not only their business life and their work life but their home life with the purchase of their first new home. So that's really encouraging.

[22:00]

When I look at the line underneath the Throne Speech, better quality of life, that speaks to the human services which I'm involved in to a large extent. And I really like to read the outside sources, especially when they're, you know, maybe partisan or definitely unbiased sources.

And when we look through the many successes that we've had in health care, recognizing as the member from Cumberland was referring to, more work to do. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you'll never hear us stop saying that because I think, you know, no criticism intended, that was the fault of the NDP. They'd get something sort of done and they'd stop. They wouldn't carry through, so then the wheels would come off the cart. You'd have people that are waiting for disability, waiting for all kinds of different supports that just weren't there.

We'd see a lack of investment, a lack of revenue sharing to municipalities. We'd see a lack of investment in the Crown corporations, lack of investment in infrastructure, lack of investment in health and education infrastructure, and the list goes on. In fact we'd see such a slowdown or a pullback in investment that we'd actually see losses, whether it was losses in medical training seats or not training enough doctors, not training enough nurses, getting to the point of actually closing facilities. Whether it's education and losing 400 or 600 teachers that ended up losing work through the years of the NDP, when 176 schools were closed, or whether it's the losses in jobs, 173 doctors, 455 nurses when we lost 52 hospitals. We lost a major tertiary centre in the Plains. We lost 19 long-term care facilities and the professionals that went with those.

And then we have to play catch-up. So we've committed to a host of different opportunities when it comes to training and recruitment and retention of these professionals, whether it's the SIPPA program, the Saskatchewan international physician practice assessment program, teamed with Saskdocs that serves rural Saskatchewan very well — 180-some-odd new SIPPA doctors in the province. Eighty-seven per cent of those are serving in rural areas, where the expansion of nurse practitioners doubled the number of practising nurse practitioners in our province, 75 per cent of those serving rural centres, 650 new doctors in total.

A lot of those are grads from the University of Saskatchewan through the added new seats there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that are graduating now 100 doctors able to sit in those seats. Tied to that, 120 resident physicians spread throughout the province,

along with some of those medical seats that are spread throughout the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But I may get into some of those a little bit in depth in a few more minutes.

The reference I was referring to a little bit earlier was of course the former NDP Finance minister Janice MacKinnon, when she recognized the work of this government when it comes to surgical wait-lists and the reduction in surgical wait-lists. You know, again more work to do, but we have gone, as the Minister of Health pointed out earlier today, from the longest wait-list in the country under the NDP to the shortest wait-list under the Saskatchewan Party. And all the barking across the floor will not do any good against the comments of the former NDP Finance minister who definitely acknowledges that, as do sources from outside our province.

Now when we look at innovative programs like the private-pay MRI, two-for-one, private-pay MRI, where somebody can private pay for an MRI in the province where formerly they'd go to Calgary or Minot or who knows where else they'd go, they can access that service as others have in the past right in the province but also pay for one more on the public system. So we see a shortening of the wait-lists on the MRI list because of that innovative solution, and now committing to expand that to CT scans to investigate how that's going to help us in the future when it comes diagnostic imaging wait-lists.

Now something that I've come to get a lot more familiar with is remote presence technology. Up to this point, you know, a lot of what we would recognize as remote presence technology would be Telehealth. And I remember my first experience with Telehealth was actually in Yorkton. It was the first Telehealth suite outside of a major centre in Yorkton for the heart and stroke initiative. And I thought, you know, this would be cool if this was actually available in more centres around the province.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can say in the 30-some-odd tours I've taken around the province, multiple facility tours, the meetings with different boards and different community leaders around the province, virtually every facility I toured had the Telehealth suite in it, whether it's for training, whether it's for patient consultation, but bringing those medical services to the patients instead of having them travel to see a specialist, to see a medical professional elsewhere, to see how that has enhanced rural and remote health in this province is something that is really recognizable.

But to also see where the work of Dr. Ivar Mendez from Saskatoon, one of the most worldly recognized people in remote presence technology, where he's gone with the nurse robot, with the doc-in-a-box, and some of the things he's talked to us about that probably aren't public yet so I won't refer to them, but how that's going to enhance medical treatment and trauma treatment and health care in rural and remote parts of the province through the hard work that he's done. So our government continuing that investment with the \$500,000 investment in furthering innovative remote presence technology through his work is something I'm very, very encouraged by.

Another thing that really strikes close to home for me anyway is our initiative when it comes to organ donor engagement. And you know, when our family was going through our cancer journey with my son, there was something we realized pretty

quickly: the value of the need for blood products. So in pretty short order, we all became blood donors. Shortly after, a few years after that we had a young friend that was going through cancer treatment. He needed a bone marrow transplant, so we engaged, did a bit of a drive to engage more people with bone marrow registry and had quite a bit of success. I found out that I may be getting a bit old. They really want to target the 18- to 25-year-olds, so anybody that happens to be listening tonight, if you're in that age group, university, I would strongly encourage you to look at not only blood donation but bone marrow donation.

And now something that we've been very involved with is organ donation that, you know, it's not really hard to do. Some people, for personal reasons or maybe your religious reasons, wouldn't want to do that. But it's something that's so important that, as the Canadian Blood Services would say, you have it in you to give. You have it in you to save a life, and I would strongly encourage people to consider that. But I'm really looking forward to what our Human Services Committee's going to come back with in that regard.

You know, another thing, Mr. Speaker, when I start getting into the better quality of life, what we've been talking about with *The Saskatchewan Employment Act* and then expanding leave, palliative leave to 28 weeks. And that's something I realized I was pretty lucky in the job I have that, you know, with the use of technology I could actually . . . My dad, I was pretty much his major caregiver for his last couple of months and his last month in palliative care, and having that opportunity, that flexibility to be able to do that with my technology and constituency staff, to be able to look after him. But so many families don't have that opportunity. And expanding the family leave to 28 weeks per year to give them that opportunity to spend those last days in support of their palliative family members is something I'm very proud that we're pursuing, and I think very needed as well.

And when we get further into health and we start looking at some of the commitments we've made in our Throne Speech, the \$7.5 million a year savings in administration, redirecting to front line, specifically to long-term care, whether it's RNs [registered nurse], LPNs [licensed practical nurse], continuing care aids, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a commitment that we made, you know, many times, that we're going to continue to pursue better care in our long-term care facilities. And again realizing there's more work to do, there's a lot of needs out there, but really encouraged by the successes that we have had, recognizing some of the places that we need to do more work and focusing on those to make sure we get to a point of having the best quality care, not only in acute and other care but also long-term care in the province.

Just briefly, when we come to finances, Mr. Deputy Speaker, looking at how strong our province is and recognizing, looking within our borders we are having some challenges. But on the world stage, on the national stage, seeing that we still have the second-lowest GDP in Canada is something that . . . the second-lowest GDP ratio in Canada is something that's fairly recognizable. A strong financial position there and recognize the independent rating agencies when we retain our AAA credit rating, which serves us not only in economic recognition but also when it comes to finance rates that we have to pay. It gives

us a very attractive rate.

Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I referred to standing up, our government and our party standing up for the interests of the people of our province and our province. And again, very proud of our Premier on every occasion standing up and defending our interests in this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, you know, when I look at the conclusion of this Throne Speech, referring to Matthew 5:14, I thought that was quite ingenious actually, referring to the shining city on a hill and the dome, and that was very good. But you know, reflecting on the Premier's comments when we were doing the dome unveiling, the vision that our first premier had for this province, the vision he had for this building and the requirements that he had, for it to be able to look around not only towards the city at the time but around the whole province in every direction because he recognized that this was going to be a symbol of growth and hope, you know, it's just so great to see our province, although again recognizing we are still facing some challenges, to see where we've come in Canada and to recognize our leadership through our Premier and our province, the leadership that we show in the country and how it's been recognized, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know, just to quote one of the last paragraphs in the Throne Speech, "Let our new shining dome remind us of where we have been, where we are headed and that Saskatchewan should always be a beacon of hope whose best days are still ahead," Mr. Deputy Speaker. I don't think anybody could say it any better than that.

So I know my time is coming to an end here, and I don't have to worry about the heckling across the floor. Our own members give it to us enough. I'll have more opportunities I think standing in this Assembly in the coming days to reflect on our record, our health record when it comes to the Throne Speech and where we plan to go and what we've done, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So I think I'll just leave that at that. Over the next couple of days again, probably answering some questions I'll be able to refer to a lot of our successes and our record.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the main motion brought forward by the newly elected member from Saskatoon Westview. I will not be supporting the amendment, and I wish to adjourn debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Minister of Rural and Remote Health has moved to adjourn debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the Government Deputy House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would move that this House do now adjourn.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Government Deputy House Leader has moved that this House does now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — That's carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:12.]

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