



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

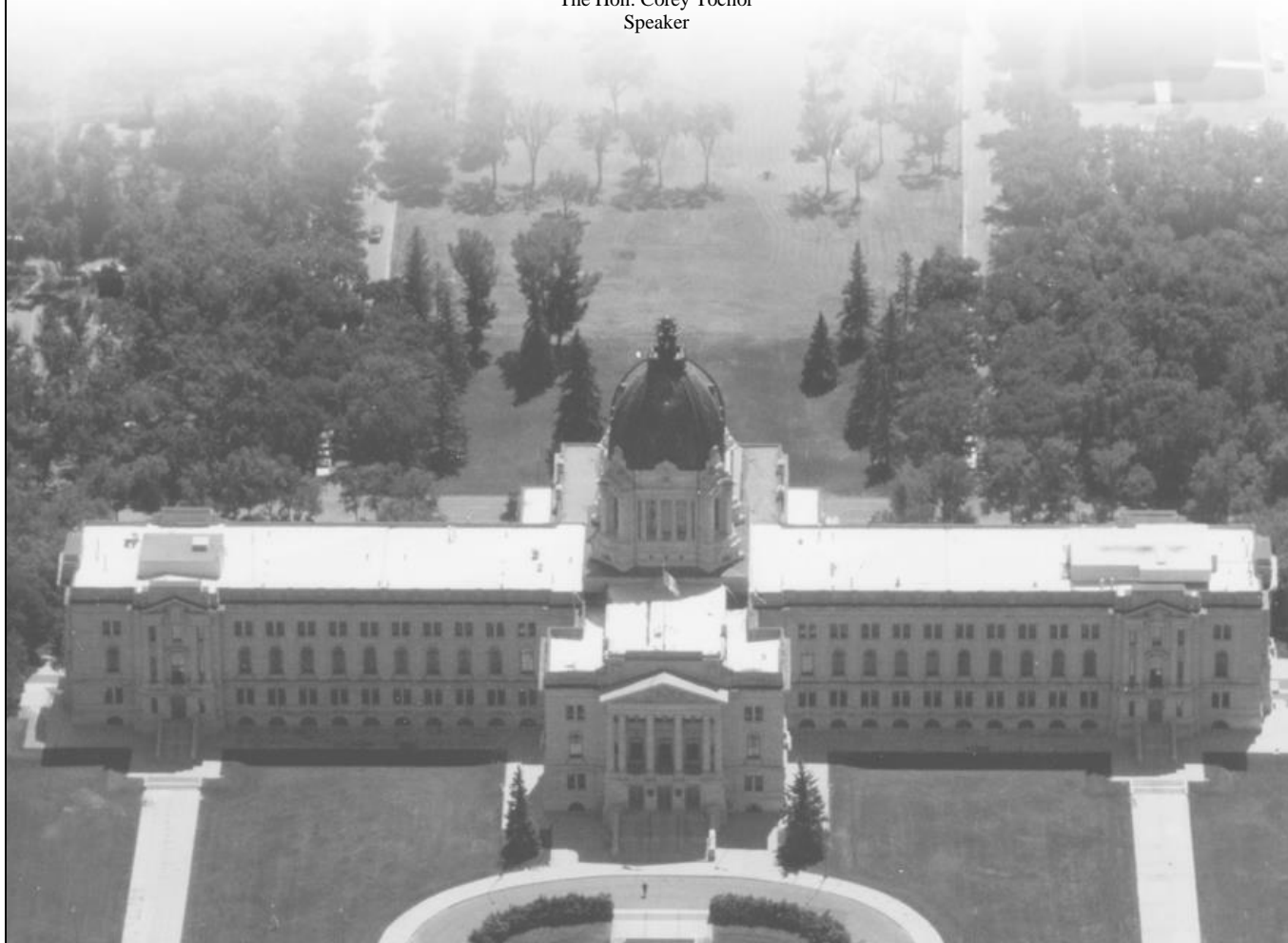
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Corey Tochor
Speaker



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

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

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[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

The Speaker: — It now being 7 o'clock, I call the Assembly to order. We'll continue on with special orders, budget debate. I recognize the member from Melfort.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

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

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

Mr. Phillips: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand in the House tonight to show my support for the 2016-2017 budget "Keep Saskatchewan Strong." And when we talk about keeping Saskatchewan strong, we talk about our economy, where it's technology and research and food and fuel, fertilizer, manufacturing. We have what the world wants, what the world needs.

An Hon. Member: — Sounds like a song.

Mr. Phillips: — It's not a song, and you don't want me to sing it. But we are no longer, we are no longer a wee province. We are taking our rightful place as an economic leader in Canada. After eight years of strong growth, most of the time we've been in the top three in job growth. We've been in the top three in economic growth, in the lowest unemployment rate, and in population growth, Mr. Speaker, welcoming over 140,000 new residents to our province.

And this budget does contain a \$434 million deficit. But that's actually, as much as anything, that's good news because it's controllable. Because next year we will have the opportunity to balance that budget, unlike some provinces, say to the left of us in Alberta where they're looking at . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, it used to be left on both sides, but to the west of us in Alberta where they're looking at balancing the budget in 2024. In Manitoba they're looking at balancing the budget sometime late in their second term. What does that mean when you talk about 2024 and some imaginary figure way down the line? It's a whole lot different when you talk about something that's controllable, when you're looking at doing it next year. And we did it without raising taxes, and we did it with controlled spending and investing in people and investing in infrastructure, all to keep Saskatchewan's economy strong.

You know, we talk a lot about keeping Saskatchewan's economy strong, and sometimes I hear my people around me, my constituents say, but why? Why do you always talk about that? Why is it so important to you? Economy is the start of the story. People is why it matters.

Mr. Speaker, it hasn't been very long, three years I believe, since you and your wife were expecting your first child. And I remember quite a few years ago, my wife and I expecting our first child. And the most important government program for you at that moment is health care. You remember your doctor's appointments. Is everything okay this month? You know, how's it going? Is baby healthy? You remember the ultrasound when you see your baby for the very first time. Yes, you know, it's what you care about at that time. And the day of the delivery, that moment.

An Hon. Member: — Oh yes, I remember.

Mr. Phillips: — Yes, you remember. Yes, the ladies maybe remember more than some of us. But that's what matters to those people, is health care. That's why it's important that we have 600 more doctors practising in this province. That's why it's important that we have 3,000 more nurses of all designations practising in Saskatchewan.

That's why it's important in this year's budget that we have \$7.5 million being taken from health care administration and put back into the front-line people. Because health care is important, and that's why the economy is so important. And when we're talking about health care we're also talking about building hospitals, not closing them. We're talking about a new hospital, children's hospital, in Saskatoon. We're talking about a new Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford. We're talking about a new hospital in Humboldt and new medical facilities dotted in Maple Creek, in Kipling, all around the province.

We haven't got a record of closing 50 hospitals — 52 to be precise. And I don't know with this little one when the appropriate time to start thinking about their education when they enter university, but I know it's really early. And for that the Saskatchewan government, our government, has added to the registered . . .

An Hon. Member: — SAGES [Saskatchewan advantage grant for education savings].

Mr. Phillips: — I know, no. Not SAGES. RESP, the registered education savings plan. But thanks for your help.

But if you put \$1,000 into that program, we'll put \$100 to top that up. If you put \$1,000 in next year, we'll put another \$100 in, and we'll do that right up until that child enters university or polytech. You know, and if you go up to, I think it goes up to, I know it goes up to \$2500. Two hundred and fifty dollars when you can afford to do that. That's new. That's what the economy brings you.

And as your child gets a little older, of course health care, child care is important. And we hear about it from the other side, they've been pretty quiet lately actually about child care. I used to hear it a lot and I often wondered why. In 16 years they put in 2,856 child care spots — 2,856, an average of about 160 a year. We do 600 a year. We've put in 5,000, and with this budget, finishing up the 18 schools, we'll bring it up another 810. And maybe we will hear more about it, but we shouldn't hear about it from the party that had such a dismal record on it.

But as that child grows and goes into school and preschool, where we've increased opportunity for preschool . . . And we've added 40 new schools in Saskatchewan, opened or under construction today.

We put in 614 new teachers for that child, 614. Over 200 more student support teachers in the school; that's over 800 total. This year we'll have a 7.8 per cent increase in the budget, bringing the total budget for education up to \$2.2 billion, the highest amount ever, Mr. Speaker.

And when we're talking about young children, I remember the days that my family and the days that I took my kids to the parks in Saskatchewan. And the parks, through the 16 years from 1991 to 2007, were almost embarrassingly neglected. They were just, you know . . . And you could see it. In 1991 there was some quality to it, and as the years went on of course there was no maintenance, no budget for it, no improvement.

We have added funding to the provincial parks to the tune of 249 per cent funding increase to the provincial parks, 2,100 new electrical spaces in the provincial park system. And last year we had an increase in park visits of 860,000 people. How many families, how many of those young kids went to our parks last year?

Now we look at this child as he graduates high school, and we again . . . I hate to go back. No I don't; I really like to go back, actually. But when we go back, we see things like the tuition increase at the University of Regina during the NDP [New Democratic Party] years, 145 per cent. They were the lucky ones. The tuition increase at the University of Saskatchewan was 175 per cent, Mr. Speaker. And just to really make it all make sense, in SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] they had a 338 per cent increase in tuition. And there was no backup programs to help with that at all.

Now when a student graduates from high school, they have the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship that gives them \$500 each year for up to four years in university or in polytech. This will go up to \$750 as our finances allow us to move it up.

And what I like the best about what has happened is probably the graduate retention program, a program that we have 63,000 of our young people, 63,000 young people that are taking advantage of a tax forgiveness of up to \$20,000 for their tuition for staying in Saskatchewan because we show them that we want those young people in Saskatchewan. That's a little bit different than what they wanted. They said they didn't care. They said, and I quote, there is more for the rest of us when people leave the province. That is one very poor quote for leadership in our province.

And new this year in the budget we will have \$10,000 per student that they can take from this program and make a down payment on their new home. Now that's a good idea because what that does, Mr. Speaker, is it sets the roots even firmer in Saskatchewan. And now we can be talking about their kids.

Mr. Speaker, with this year's budget we're going to put \$475 million into the universities in Saskatchewan, \$156 million into polytechs, SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of

Technologies], and the Gabriel Dumont Institute. We will also spend \$29 million on regional colleges around the province.

Now when we're talking about this person, now a young person, if he or she has a disability, you know, that's a challenge, and it's a challenge that the government can't fix. But the government can help. The government can have, and we have a SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] program that has funded over \$700 million since it was introduced and has served more than 14,000 disabled residents of our province — 14,000. And, Mr. Speaker, since this government was elected, we have put \$2.7 billion into making Saskatchewan the best place in Canada to live with disabilities.

And when you're a young family or you graduate university and you're just starting out, of course the first thing you need coming out of university is a job. And in the first seven years of this — and granted, this last year has been tougher — but in the first seven years this government was creating one job every hour, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. We were creating 60,000 new jobs in Saskatchewan. That's what these young people need when they come out of university, is a job.

And then I don't know if you remember, Mr. Speaker, but remember your first paycheque? You get your first job, and you got your first paycheque. You can figure out, I worked 40 hours a week and I was getting \$15 an hour. My paycheque's \$600. No it isn't . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No, no, I think 35 cents an hour. But I had a time lapse. I was talking to Mr. Speaker.

[19:15]

So it's \$600, and you get a paycheque and it's only \$475. And then the realism of the world hits you. You have to pay taxes. And, Mr. Speaker, if you're in Manitoba say and that happened, you would be paying about \$3,600 a year in provincial taxes. If you were in Saskatchewan, that same family of four with an income of \$50,000 would have tax relief of 100 per cent. This year in 2016 they pay zero income tax. Mr. Speaker, that's \$300 a month when you need it the most, when your income is supposed to be for looking after your families.

But there's more taxes than that, Mr. Speaker. There's also education taxes. And education taxes, this party, this government has delivered the largest education tax cut in the history of the province, and we have held that, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, we also talk about municipal taxes. Now that hasn't got a lot to do with us, but when you think about it, when we have municipal revenue sharing that has gone up from \$127 million, Mr. Speaker, to \$271 million, that makes a difference. And I was playing with some figures on the weekend and just wondered what that meant to that family of four living in Melfort, Saskatchewan because I happen to know those figures. It makes a difference of about 120, \$121 per person per year. That's \$484 each year that the municipal government gets to either . . . extra, more than what they were getting from the previous government, that will either cut their taxes down or it will increase their quality of life and the services that their community are able to . . . Almost \$500 a year.

Mr. Speaker, when you're a young family, you do worry about safety. You worry about highway safety when you're travelling, and you worry about your good highways when doing that. And that's where the highway budget comes in. But you also worry about the what-ifs. What if there's an accident? And, Mr. Speaker, one of the things we don't talk about very much is the fact that the former government wouldn't even talk about a STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society] ambulance program in Saskatchewan, and this government helped to bring that in. And I say helped to bring it in because I want to give credit to my predecessor, the former MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] from Melfort and the former Finance minister, Rod Gantefer, and his wife, Carole Gantefer, who had an amazing, a huge role in bringing STARS to Saskatchewan.

You know, and just for the heck of it, I want to talk about climate change. How about that? I want to talk about, I want to brag about climate change. Let's look at the record before 2007. We had a government that could not grow this province. They actually in 16 years lost about just a little bit of population. They had the worst economic growth record in Canada. And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, their greenhouse gases went up 70 per cent, 70 per cent.

Our record, we have had the second strongest economic growth in the country. We have added 140,000 people. Our GDP [gross domestic product] has gone up 24 per cent, and our greenhouse gases has gone down 12 per cent. How can that be? We have the little . . . Anyway. And that's not including, that's up to 2013, so that doesn't include Estevan's pride and joy, not only the member from Estevan, but Boundary dam 3 that will take 800 000 tonnes of greenhouse gases out of our atmosphere. We have world class technology that they wish would never have been built. It's created by Saskatchewan people and is there for the people of the planet Earth and will be used across the planet.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to run through this last part very, very fast. But I do want to talk about senior citizens because senior citizens is some place that I'm going to give the NDP credit, and that should quiet the House down. I'm giving the NDP credit because back in 1991-92 they came out with the seniors' income plan, the SIP program, and they funded it. This is for seniors who need the help the most, people who are on the Guaranteed Income Supplement from the federal government. They came out with it in '91-92 and it was \$90. And up to '95 they raised it to \$90. And in 2000 they raised it to \$90. And in 2005 it was still \$90. And why? Because they can't build an economy, Mr. Speaker. In our first term, this government's first term, we raised it from \$90 to \$180; in the second term from 180 to \$270. That's why you need an economy that is growing and strong.

We're building new senior housing units, as opposed to closing 1,200. We have replaced those 1,200. It is great to hear that Swift Current is opening, last week I guess, last Friday they had the opening — 210 more spots for our seniors. And we're continuing to build those, Mr. Speaker.

And I do want to mention the Saskatchewan drug plan. And we have been increasing the Saskatchewan drug plan, adding to it at about a rate of \$10 million each year. This year we increased it by \$15 million, Mr. Speaker, and we've included new cancer

drugs into it, not only for seniors, but for other people right across the gamut. And I think, you know, as we talked about earlier today, that we all have been touched with cancer. And I think that is devastating enough to have cancer without having to have a bill of \$1,200 or \$2,500 extra on top to add more pressure to it. So I'm very proud of that. And even though we are still covering 70 per cent of the prescription costs, the drug plan is going up from \$20 per prescription to 25. That is the reasoning. Tough decision, but one that for the safety of the program, it had to be done.

And then we also have the safety net in place underneath that, Mr. Speaker, that if it costs you more than 3.4 per cent of your income, it is capped at that. Mr. Speaker, that's why the strong economy is important. That's why it's important to keep Saskatchewan strong, and that's why it's important to the people of this province, Mr. Speaker. And for that reason and so many more, I will be supporting the budget motion and I will be voting against the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Kaeding: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to join in the budget debate. I'd like to provide a local perspective really as to how this budget has been perceived and accepted by the very people of this great province who have placed us in the position of managing the contributions to the management of this province.

Mr. Speaker, joining with me in the Assembly on budget day was the mayor of Melville, Walter Streelasky, and his city manager, Kayla Hauser; the mayor of the town of Langenburg, Don Fogg, and his young preteen granddaughter, Maysen Zawada, who the member of Kelvington-Wadena had a great chat with; and Don Taylor, the reeve of the RM [rural municipality] of Saltcoats. They were in attendance to observe all the effort that went into the preparation and presentation of the budget, but also to hear this government's plan on keeping their Saskatchewan strong. Mr. Speaker, they were not disappointed.

Mr. Speaker, first off, my guests, constituents, and I would like to thank the Minister of Finance for his excellent job in navigating us through some rough water. And as Mayor Fogg's young granddaughter said to me, that looked pretty hard. We visited in the rotunda after adjournment, and their comments to me were, thanks for continuing to support the RMs, the towns, and the cities of this great province. What they're referring to was the increase of \$56.7 million or the 16.2 per cent increase in municipal revenue-sharing that they now have access to over last year's budget. This is unconditional funding that is going towards helping them continue their infrastructure works, whether it's water treatment facilities, paving streets, maintaining parks and recreational facilities. Projects like these are absolutely necessary to ensure that their residents have the best services available to them and their families.

The mayors' thoughts are summed up in a press release that SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] had come up with: "Urban governments in Saskatchewan appreciate the provincial government's support for our cities, towns, villages, and northern communities in today's budget . . .

Mr. Speaker, after the post-budget scums, I met with some farmer friends of mine to discuss the budget and to celebrate the completion of this province's largest annual financial undertaking, seeding 2016. Every year this province's agriculture producers invest billions of dollars in cash to plant 33 million acres to annual crops. Agriculture is a major pillar in this province's economy, but does have inherent risk — too hot, too cold, too wet, too dry. And, Mr. Speaker, sometimes that happens on the same day. This government recognizes a high level of producer risk and has continued to show significant support. Once again it's proven in this year's budget with an increase of 7.5 per cent in ag spending for a total of \$389.8 million.

They are continuing to fund business risk management programs such as crop insurance, AgriStability, AgriInvest, and actually increasing this funding by 14.6 million. But this government also recognizes the need for agriculture to continue to build and grow for the future. And it continues to increase funding for ag research and supporting significant agriculture events such as Canada's Farm Progress Show, 4-H Saskatchewan, and Agriculture in the Classroom.

Although the opposition may have concerns with the selling of Crown farm land, my producers all indicated that their provincial government should not be in the farm land ownership business. The opposition tried this in the past. It was called the land bank and that really didn't work out too well for anyone.

Mr. Speaker, I really enjoyed my steak supper and refreshments with the group of very positive ag producers who appreciate what this government has done and continues to do to support this valuable industry.

Mr. Speaker, the morning after the budget I was on my way to my constituency to join in the celebration of a new project which I'll discuss in a moment. But during my drive down the No. 1 Highway I had to slow down for a few construction projects along the way. My first stretch I got to watch some of the estimated 8,200 construction workers required to build the new Regina bypass. In my two short months driving this stretch of the No. 1 Highway, I really have to marvel at the transformation of the prairie landscape to provide a state-of-the-art bypass designed to improve the safety of my . . . and 24,000 other daily commuters along that stretch of highway.

Mr. Speaker, further along the No. 1 Highway, I was again cautioned to slow down to watch more work and renewal being undertaken on our Saskatchewan highways. In fact this government is investing record values into our provincial roads and infrastructures, a budget of \$1.15 billion in fact, which includes 355 million for capital construction. And we will see improvements to over 1300 kilometres of provincial highways, a lot of which my constituents are going to benefit.

Mr. Speaker, investing in our highways does not only provide for results today, but it is building this province to take advantage for the future. Ray Orb, president of SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], commented, and I quote, "The funding commitments made to highways and infrastructure, and the agriculture sector demonstrates that the Government of Saskatchewan

understands the importance that highways and agriculture play in supporting the province's economy." Mr. Speaker, this government gets it, but there's a lot more that we've yet to do.

[19:30]

Mr. Speaker, as I was travelling down the No. 1 East, enjoying the sights of another great, green Saskatchewan spring, I drove past road signs directing me past Treaty 4 First Nations of Sakimay, Cowessess, Ochapowace, and Kahkewistahaw. And it reminded me of the commitments that this government has made toward First Nations and Métis funding. This budget provides approximately 211.9 million or an increase of 1.7 per cent to targeted funding to our First Nations and Métis organizations. This government is continuing their strong level of funding support to the amount of \$156 million to Saskatchewan Polytechnic, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, and the Gabriel Dumont Institute.

This government has a plan, the Saskatchewan plan for growth. We want to ensure that Saskatchewan leads the country in reducing the disparity between First Nations and Métis students and their non-Aboriginal peers, reducing that rate by 50 per cent in the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] system. But there is still so much yet to do, and we will get it done.

As I continued to drive north through the beautiful Qu'Appelle Valley, albeit a little worse for wear after the tent caterpillar infestation, but in true Saskatchewan spirit, the leaves will come back just like our beloved Saskatchewan Roughriders, better and stronger than before. Sorry, I digress. As I drove on, I took a couple of calls — hands free of course — from some local businessmen in Esterhazy. And they wanted to comment on the budget. They, like so many of our small businesspeople in Saskatchewan, wanted to express their support for this budget developed under difficult times.

In the heart of potash country the businesses of Melville-Saltcoats understand the resource sector fluctuations more than anyone. Our conversations went something like this. Tyler Metz from Saskpro Machine Works quoted, "I appreciate that this government tightened their own belts so that I don't have to add another hole in my belt."

From another contractor in the constituency, "You know, in tough times we really have to distinguish between our wants and our needs." And I know talking to our constituents throughout the election campaign, they were voting for a fiscally responsible government that continues to understand the needs of this province and will not put us in a risk down the road as it appears so many jurisdictions throughout North America are doing to their taxpayers.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business indicated that this government deserves credit for limiting its annual overall government spending to 2 per cent. They appreciate that this government resisted the temptation to increase taxes to cover their resource revenue shortfall.

What other province in Canada has a plan to bring back balanced budgets in short order? Obviously this is reflected in the AAA credit rating that this province still enjoys. AAA credit ratings reflect this province's fiscal discipline and sustained low

debt levels, which underscores prudent financial management practices. The benefits of maintaining a good credit rating results in lower borrowing costs, saving our taxpayers money.

I also had one businessman tell me that, you know what? Good businesspeople know that keeping money in the bank when it's paying 1 per cent interest really is a dumb idea when you have loans costing you 3 per cent. That is why your government paid down general operating debt by over \$2.7 billion, nearly 40 per cent since 2007, to save close to \$1 billion in interest payments. Well that billion dollars is going to help fund a few new schools, new care homes, and probably pave some more highways.

Mr. Speaker, the other day the opposition was discussing the relationship between food dependency and deficit budgets. Well this government had the willpower to quit their dependency on deficit budgets and return to a balanced budget in 2018. What analogy could we use to describe the opposition's addiction to tax increases, Mr. Speaker? This government will return to a balanced budget in two years. This contrasted the record of the NDP. During their time in government they increased taxes over 21 times, and I'm afraid that really that shows the NDP has some significant dependency issues that require some long-term treatment. And that treatment really might be keeping them over there for a few more elections.

Mr. Speaker, this government has reduced taxes over the last 10 years, putting over \$6 billion back into the hands of Saskatchewan taxpayers, whether as individuals or businesses, and this has resulted in Saskatchewan having one of the lowest personal and business tax burdens in Canada. And that money goes back into the business; it starts new businesses or buys consumer goods, which keeps this Saskatchewan economy going.

Mr. Speaker, my destination last Thursday was to help open the new Esterhazy outdoor walking trail that was the vision of a few Esterhazy townspeople, with the help of Mosaic Company and a couple of local businesses, Noble Construction and Shop Easy Foods, and a group of very enthusiastic students.

Mr. Speaker, this government has a vision, a vision that we can do things better. The promised transformational change process is going to scrutinize all aspects of government services and determine if we are delivering them in the most efficient, effective, and sustainable way. We're not going to be able to accomplish this alone, and we're going to need to engage our partners and our stakeholders throughout the process. The Premier indicated both the revenue side and the expense side will be scrutinized to find the most sustainable balance between them.

Later in the day I was getting my oil changed at one of the local car dealerships, Merit Ford, and our discussion certainly ended up on discussing the budget, but my concern for him was, really, how is business? Because of the multi-billion-dollar investment in our area by both Mosaic potash and PCS [Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Inc.] Rocanville, we really have weathered the economic storm. Both of these companies have made significant investments in this province once the economic climate changed in 2007, and the province is once again open for business.

This government this year will invest more than 3.5 billion for infrastructure, the largest single-year capital investment in this province's history. Nearly 1.8 billion will be invested by Saskatchewan's commercial Crown corporations — SaskEnergy, SaskPower, SaskTel — and that's going into distribution, transmission and generation infrastructure, and communications networks.

We must steadily be building for growth in this province. Commodity cycles are just that, commodity cycles. They have tops. They have bottoms. They go up. They go down. While the financing is affordable, now is the time to invest in infrastructure improvements which have been neglected for decades before us, and we can support the new enterprises that are still yet to come.

Saskatchewan's strong and diversified economy continues to attract new investment, with new announcements in the last few weeks and including this morning looking at Raging River. But it also includes the opening of Edgewood Forest Products in Carrot River, Crescent Point committing to major capital expenditures in our province, Husky Energy, Weil Group, K+S Legacy mine, BHP Billiton investing in a carbon capture and storage knowledge centre, Revera retirement complex. Each of these businesses can see opportunity by investing in Saskatchewan. This budget, Mr. Speaker, we are indeed open for business and there are more businesses that are yet to come.

Always a believer that I really must head off the problems at the pass, I thought I was best to visit a couple of pharmacies in Esterhazy to determine how the news went over in regards to the increase in the children's and seniors' drug plan. The only issue was, in true Saskatchewan fashion, their concern at not being able to invest in their prescription costs, you know, ahead of time before the price went up. But their customers understood that health care costs in this province are enormous. In order to try and remain sustainable, costs will go up. Adding 15 new cancer drugs and funding for current hepatitis treatments are going to come at a cost.

Stopping in at the pharmacies in Langenburg and Melville, same stories were told. In fact seniors were very appreciative that their low-income support programs remained intact and their financial security would still be protected. And in typical glass-half-full philosophy they said, well you know what? At least our programs are better than the other guys next door.

Mr. Speaker, my last stop of the day was at our old farm that was now Sorgard Seeds. Graham Sorgard is the new owner. He's formerly from Alberta and has transformed our 6,500 acre seed farm into a 30,000 acre seed farm. Thursday night they were just attempting to finish #plant16. This year they have planted 12,000 acres of herbicide-tolerant genetically engineered canola — 12,000 acres of it. This is a crop that has become a significant cash commodity for thousands of Saskatchewan producers planted on 10.4 million acres in Saskatchewan worth over \$2.6 billion per year . . .

An Hon. Member: — What was that hashtag?

Mr. Kaeding: — Plant16, and it's done. It's in the bag.

Canola is a crop that has its origins and development right here

at NRC [National Research Council] and Ag Canada in Saskatoon. Genetically engineered canola has provided Graham and producers like him throughout Western Canada an opportunity to achieve both higher yields and lowering their pesticide load on the environment. Genetically engineered canola provides the opportunity for growers to plant utilizing direct seeding technology while reducing the environmental footprint, storing carbon, and improving soil structure that all contributes to this province's environmental sustainability.

While our government sees the values in GECs [genetically engineered crops], the NDP have been silent on this issue. While members of their caucus are endorsing nonsense doctrine like the Leap Manifesto, they seem to be ignoring the science and benefits behind genetically engineered crops that are grown by thousands of Saskatchewan farmers. At the same time Graham planted, as part of his rotation, 4,000 acres of field peas that were developed at the University of Saskatchewan Crop Development Centre. He planted wheat that was bred resistant to insects such as wheat midge and sawfly. That was developed at our University of Saskatchewan Crop Development Centre and at Ag Canada stations across Western Canada.

These varieties were produced by public institutions, distributed by farmer-owned seed companies, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is an industry that is thriving. It has choices of private and public, and it contributes significantly to this economy — \$15.1 billion to this economy, Mr. Speaker, in 2015.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan producers are the leader in lentil, pea, durum, and canola seed exports. Livestock sales in Saskatchewan, which includes feathers, hogs, and milk, totalled just over \$3 billion for sales in 2015, Mr. Speaker. This is an industry that is not going to take a leap backwards as the opposition would like us to. This is an industry that I guarantee will put up one heck of a fight if they're going to be challenged.

Mr. Speaker, this government continues to support producers like Graham and the thousands of others in the province who make a living in agriculture. When it comes to agriculture research, this government has designated \$26.8 million to the ag research, providing capital to the Livestock and Forage Centre of Excellence at the University of Saskatchewan and to the International Trade Centre at Evraz Place.

Mr. Speaker, this government continues to pledge to stand up for producers on major issues in Canada such as transportation and freight rate issues, and internationally, whether opening up new markets through STEP [Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership] or reducing trade barriers through various international trade agreements such as the TPP [Trans-Pacific Partnership] and CETA [Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement].

Mr. Speaker, I ended up the day, Thursday, with my regular phone call from my son Matthew. He lives in Ottawa and he was just driving home from his baseball game. The conversation went something like this: Dad, it's the end of the month. Do you know how much it costs out here? Mr. Speaker, I do know how much it costs to live in Ontario, but I also know what it costs to live here in Saskatchewan. With the budget outlined, even with a couple of utility increases, Saskatchewan remains one of the most affordable places to live and work in

Canada. Regina ranks as having the lowest or second lowest overall combined taxes and utilities of 10 major Canadian cities surveyed. With the tax structure currently in place, a family earning \$50,000 pays under \$720 in provincial tax, and that is one of the lowest provincial tax rates in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, quality of life cannot be measured just in monetary values. We must also look at services available in health care. Saskatchewan currently enjoys one of the lowest surgical wait times in Canada, a significant departure from a decade ago. Part of this reason is this government's willingness to allow private surgeries and medical analysis.

More outside-the-box thinking resulted in this government launching the innovative remote presence technology pilot project to deliver health care in Pelican Narrows. This government is fulfilling its commitment to provide an additional \$500,000 a year to expand their innovative technology to other remote communities. But, Mr. Speaker, we know there's a lot more that we need to do, but our government is on the right track to do it. Oh by the way, Mr. Speaker, my son went three for four at the plate that night.

Mr. Speaker, Thursday was a good day. It was a good day talking to the citizens and businesses of this great province who know that this government is committed to improving their life and their children's lives. Mr. Speaker, Friday was an even better day. I was on hand for the official ribbon cutting of the brand new Esterhazy group home. Five residents have been given a new opportunity to be a part of the community and, despite their intellectual disabilities, this new home has given them the chance to gain a sense of purpose and allows them to interact with others. This is another demonstration of this government's investment in programs for children, youth, and families of people who are experiencing disabilities, and people needing income assistance and housing.

The social services 2016-17 budget is now \$1.052 billion, a 5.1 per cent increase from the last fiscal year. This investment will allow the ministry to continue its work on child welfare transformation. And as a result of the Saskatchewan poverty reduction strategy, Social Services is doing a redesign of its income assistance programs to simplify administration, improve client service, and support transitions to independence and participation in the economic and social life of this province. We know we have a lot more work to do.

[19:45]

Mr. Speaker, later on Friday afternoon I took part in a consultation meeting with a group of health care professionals. Consultations are a part of this government's promise to its citizens to make them a part of the transformation process. Consultation is a part of this government's promise to be informed, so it is capable of defending our business and industries from issues and challenges that we may face from within and outside the country.

Mr. Speaker, to end Friday evening, we attended a retirement party for a good friend of ours, Gayle Daum, a registered nurse who has served Sunrise Health Region for over 30 years. And as you would expect, over cocktails and Nanaimo bars I heard a lot of ideas about how to make health care better, and it's our

government who listens and takes action.

Mr. Speaker, these health professionals appreciated this government's effort in supporting capital investments and health spending. They appreciated the \$20 million increase this government has invested in the Saskatchewan surgical wait initiative to help ensure that we retain the shortest wait times in the country. They appreciated the initiatives this government has placed on doctor retention, adding 650 more, and an increase in the number of nurses by 3,200 in the province over the last 10 years. But they did admit, they admitted that what is going on now is not likely sustainable going into the future. And as Dr. Dennis Kendel, CEO [chief executive officer] of the Saskatchewan Medical Association, used in a blog he wrote: "... transformational ... [challenge] is needed in our system to optimize public benefit from the public resources allocated to health and healthcare." There may not be a need for increased public funding of health services, but there is a need for wiser utilization of the available resources.

Mr. Speaker, to end my weekend, I was on hand at the Melville Horizon Credit Union Centre to welcome this year's Telus Walk to Cure Diabetes. I didn't need to be there to motivate this fantastic group of individuals. They were already highly motivated to raise the profile and funds needed to treat and find a cure for type 1 diabetes. Their enthusiasm was contagious, and you felt compelled to find a way to make things better.

Mr. Speaker, I had a very good weekend, a very good weekend with the constituents of Melville-Saltcoats because they believe in their abilities and the abilities of this government to keep Saskatchewan strong. Mr. Speaker, these 50 members that sit among us over here are highly motivated to find ways to make the lives of all residents of Saskatchewan better. They are highly motivated to keep Saskatchewan on track of being first and best in all the positive aspects of the economy and growth in all sectors. They are highly motivated to overcome the negativity of those who believe that change is wrong and ill-advised at this time. To quote Winston Churchill, "A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty." Mr. Speaker, this is now a province of optimists that believe that the times will be better and, Mr. Speaker, that time starts now.

For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I support the budget moved by Minister of Finance and seconded by the member of Regina University with no amendments.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As always it's a privilege and a pleasure to rise to enter the debate, this time on the 2016-17 budget speech.

I'd like to start by pointing out that we have a budget that's about three months later than usual, Mr. Speaker. And the reality is there was no need, no need to leave people on pins and needles, organizations and individuals who were counting on a budget in prompt fashion. We can talk about Manitoba, who had an election after Saskatchewan, actually a couple of weeks after Saskatchewan, and managed to produce a budget before Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And that was a brand new

government, not a government who was entering a new term, Mr. Speaker. That was a brand new government, Mr. Speaker.

So it's funny how a brand new government can manage to get a budget together where a third-term government cannot manage to do that. But the reason is, there was no good reason this budget could not have been presented, and the reality is, there's so much in this budget that we didn't hear from members talk about during the election. There was no mention about cuts to urban parks. There was no mention about closing the Buffalo Narrows correctional facility, which is 18 jobs and removing the opportunity for better rehabilitation, having people connected to their community, Mr. Speaker.

There was no talk in the budget about increases to prescription drugs. So there was absolutely no good reason for this budget not to be presented. But you know what? My colleague from Nutana put it well last week. I have a lot of respect for my colleague from Nutana. I think she's a very wise woman.

She says:

... this government didn't want people to know how badly they've squandered their [near] decade-long ride through high commodity prices and, through sheer luck, some of the best economic ... [times] in our history as a province.

Mr. Speaker, I think that that's the reason why we didn't see a budget pre-election or in the last couple of months, Mr. Speaker.

I think the government's theme for this particular budget is interesting to me, keep Saskatchewan strong. I need to provide a little context for you, Mr. Speaker. Right now we have almost 10,000 fewer jobs year over year than we did. Bankruptcies are on the rise and wages are declining. I was asked by a reporter on budget day what message this ... [inaudible interjection] ... Mr. Speaker, they're heckling on the other side about doom and gloom. This is reality, Mr. Speaker, that there are almost 10,000 fewer jobs year over year. If that's doom and gloom, if reality is doom and gloom, Mr. Speaker, then we're in big trouble here.

I was asked by a reporter on budget day what message this budget sends. Well I think the message the government is trying to send — or spin might be a better way of putting it — is very different than the one that will be transmitted by the realities and cuts of this budget and the reality Saskatchewan people face today who are struggling with the rising cost of living, difficulties accessing health services like ERs [emergency room] and specialists, challenges with their kids' education and access to child care, and loss of jobs, Mr. Speaker.

This government should have been focused on keeping Saskatchewan strong all along. Instead they ran the resource revenue ride until it crashed, without apparently a single thought to the possibility of low oil prices. They had an opportunity to ensure that when some of our natural resources dropped in prices, as natural resources tend to do, Mr. Speaker, the ebb and flow ... People in Saskatchewan have to pay the price for their mismanagement.

For example, I'm going to talk about this, Mr. Speaker. They could have, they could have reintroduced the film tax credit, for

example, something they cut four years ago, something they cut four years ago, Mr. Speaker. Or they could have just continued to do it all along, but instead four years ago they produced a mean-spirited and short-sighted cut instead of helping foster the film industry here in Saskatchewan that was already doing quite well except for an economic turnaround and a high Canadian dollar, Mr. Speaker. Instead they chose to kill the film tax credit.

So we can look to provinces, Mr. Speaker, like BC [British Columbia] and Ontario. We can look to provinces like BC and Ontario — any of them actually, really — Manitoba, Alberta, Mr. Speaker, who recognize the value of the sector and see how they are booming, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you only need to stand on a street in downtown Vancouver for 15 minutes before you see a film crew working, Mr. Speaker. I still hear from expats from Saskatchewan who are both sad and angry about having to leave their homes here in Saskatchewan. But they are busy. This government broke up families, Mr. Speaker. They are so busy. These individuals are very sad to not be here in Saskatchewan, but these individuals are busy at work in places like Ontario and BC, Mr. Speaker, and are contributing to those economies, Mr. Speaker, when they could be contributing to ours. When oil is low, film could be one of the things we can rely on, Mr. Speaker.

I mention, Mr. Speaker, that there's almost 10,000 fewer jobs year over year. That, Mr. Speaker, includes a 25 per cent unemployment rate of First Nations people. That's an 8 per cent increase over last year. That doesn't even touch on-reserve employment or unemployment, Mr. Speaker. That's off-reserve unemployment of First Nations people, Mr. Speaker.

I want to point to a February 2016 *National Post* story where Doug Elliott of the *Sask Trends Monitor* points out that the population is growing faster than job growth. The number of unemployed people in February hits an all-time high here in Saskatchewan — 36,600 people, Mr. Speaker.

In that same story in the *National Post* the then minister — I can't mention his name, minister . . . I'm drawing a blank — the member from Meadow Lake, Mr. Speaker. The member from Meadow Lake pointed out that this government is working to improve the labour market by investing its supports and training for new and current employees. So that's what the member for Meadow Lake says in February, Mr. Speaker.

So let's fast-forward a few months later to our budget with our still-constrained economic climate. There was not a mention in the budget of getting people back to work and creating jobs. In fact, in these very key areas there were cuts to apprenticeship, to youth and adult skills training, and to adult basic education. There were even cuts, Mr. Speaker, to economic development, trade, and exports. I heard the Finance Minister on Thursday morning on CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] talk about transformative change. He commented that this isn't part of the need because resource revenues fluctuate, Mr. Speaker. Well oh my goodness, the Sask Party government has just figured this out now that resource revenues fluctuate? They should have been planning for this possibility all along by diversifying our economy, investing in green jobs and culture just to name a few, and ensuring that all citizens have the

support they need to get the education and training they need to be successful, Mr. Speaker.

Another thing they should be doing, or should have been doing all along, this government in record revenues. Mr. Speaker, let's put this in context — about \$16 billion more a year than the previous administration ever had. This government should have been thinking about the long term. How about a sovereign wealth fund? Look at Norway with \$1 trillion they've put away for that time when our natural resources either ebb and flow or run out, Mr. Speaker. Not only have they not thought about the long term, there was a short-term fiscal stabilization fund of which they were very proud, which they have now squeezed every penny dry in the most prosperous of times here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, in the most prosperous of times.

So not only have they not saved for the long term, they've not saved for a short-term rainy day, and they've spent all that money. But this is a government that's in the midst of their fifth deficit, Mr. Speaker. This is not me saying this, this is the auditor of Saskatchewan, this is the auditor of Saskatchewan. Despite their spin and their bravado, just because, Mr. Speaker, you say something is true, that doesn't make it true. But I think the members opposite think if you say it enough times, it must be true.

The reality is they've run five deficits. In 2010, the auditor points out the GRF [General Revenue Fund] deficit was 409 million; in 2011, 13 million; 2012, there was more boasting, but the deficit was 105 million. And now we have deficits in 2016 and 2017. And you know, it's interesting. I've heard the Premier heckle. Actually he responded in question period — not tonight, Mr. Speaker, I saw you look towards the Premier — on budget day when there were questions asked, the Premier actually answered by, when we talked about deficits and financial mismanagement, the Premier said, those lines didn't work for you in the election.

Well you know what, Mr. Speaker? Work or not, that is the cold hard reality of this government, five deficits in the sunniest of economic times. And we will keep saying it, Mr. Speaker, because it is the truth. This government's debt has been climbing on a summary basis, which includes all the business of government, since 2009 and by the end of this year will be over \$14 billion. That's an increase of over 80 per cent in just five years, Mr. Speaker. So the economic record of this government in times of prosperity is not a proud one, Mr. Speaker. And I wish I could tell you that services are great and people feel like they have what they need, but that's far from the truth either, Mr. Speaker.

So when I think back to that question from the reporter about what is the message of this government, or what message does this budget send, I think the theme of this budget really is that people will feel . . . The message that will be transmitted to people is that this is a deficit budget, a budget that adds debt, but it's offset by little but mean and painful cuts, and will bump the hard choices on to third parties like health regions and school boards, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to talk a little bit about some of those mean-spirited cuts of this budget because that's exactly what they are. They're small cuts but they have a real impact in the lives of people who

are affected by them. I want to say to the members opposite, for all of those members who clapped when this Minister of Finance announced on budget day the cut to the Saskatchewan employment supplement, I'd like to tell them a little bit about what this means to those 11,000 or so families, plus those other families last year who were taken off the employment supplement, those with children 13 and over, Mr. Speaker, and then this year those who had been on the program, had been grandfathered in, and were removed.

[20:00]

So those 11,000 or so families, what does that mean, Mr. Speaker? Well for those who maybe weren't around in the day, the employment supplement was designed to help low-income working families stay working. There's something called the welfare wall, Mr. Speaker, where you need to make it be able to pay to be employed rather than being on social assistance. And believe me, you don't get rich on social assistance. That's not a nice and a happy life, Mr. Speaker. But when you're a low-income worker, you don't have some of the benefits that you might have on social assistance, so sometimes people who have high medical costs, those kind of things, or child care costs feel sort of trapped by social assistance. So the whole point of the employment supplement was (a) to provide a top-up to those who worked hard.

So the way it works, Mr. Speaker, the more money you earn, the higher the supplement becomes, Mr. Speaker, which is a very beneficial thing. There's a huge incentive for people who are making minimum wage and supporting a family to work harder and earn more. But the second piece of this that's really important, if you're eligible for the employment supplement, you were also eligible for family health benefits, Mr. Speaker.

And again, why is this important? Well because people who work at many low-wage jobs don't have a union. They don't have the advantage of a collective agreement or an employer who knows and understands the importance of benefits, Mr. Speaker. So you go from social assistance to a low-income job and you lose your prescription drugs, you lose your glasses, you lose dental care, those kinds of things. So the employment supplement provided you family health benefits which includes, if you've got a child under 13 now — it used to be for anyone who had children under 18 — most dental services, an eye exam once a year and basic eyeglasses, emergency ambulance — and we know here, Mr. Speaker, how much ambulance fees are — prescription drugs, and up to 12 chiropractic services. And for their parents it provides up to 12 chiropractic treatments, eye exams every two years, and some drug coverage, Mr. Speaker. So this government has ripped some of the most vulnerable families off a really important support program, Mr. Speaker.

This is what the minister said on budget day: "Removing this provision focuses the program on those with highest need, and combined with projected lower utilization, the province is forecast to save \$2.5 million . . ." Mr. Speaker, a few things. I'd like to encourage members opposite to watch the video archive. This is where they clapped. Saving \$2.5 million on the backs of 1,100 Saskatchewan families is something members opposite clapped for. If that isn't mean, I don't know what is, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps they just didn't understand the ramifications

of their cut, but I can tell you that is a big cut to those families, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to make two other points about this, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the minister's spin about the highest need, I have a child in both those cohorts, Mr. Speaker, under 13 and under 18. I'd have to say that my teenager costs me a heck of a lot more than my eight-year-old does currently. Teenagers are expensive. So for the minister to say that those with the highest need are those under 13, I think we could take a straw poll and we could find out that teenagers are probably far more expensive than young kids, Mr. Speaker.

Another point, decreased utilization. The minister talked about decreased utilization. That's because they haven't changed the threshold since I think about 2009, at which point you're eligible for it. So the reality is wages have gone up, but not by very much. I had a family, Mr. Speaker, who I've talked about in this House before who . . . He was a caretaker and she had a family day home. He got a marginal raise — I think it was 25 bucks a month — and the family was removed from the employment supplement. This was a few years ago and, you know, the employment supplement itself wasn't huge for them but the family health benefits were. So these cuts really matter, Mr. Speaker.

I think another mean-spirited change, the increase to drug costs for seniors. I'm sure we all went back to our constituencies and heard good and bad. From the members opposite, you'd only think that people were just absolutely tickled with this budget. I'd challenge any of them to have the guts to get up and say yes, I heard from a few seniors who said, this is going to hurt me. Because I can tell you I heard from seniors over the weekend, on Friday in my office and on Saturday at an event, about the \$5 increase.

And the reality . . . So I'm thinking about a woman I talked to on Friday who lives in low-income housing in Riversdale on 20th Street, Mr. Speaker. She earns about \$1,200, \$1,180 a month with her CPP [Canada Pension Plan] and OAS [Old Age Security], and she pays about \$800 in rent, Mr. Speaker. So she has about \$400 a month to live on. So an increase for her medications at \$5 a pop matters, Mr. Speaker, and her comment to me: I'm lucky I live where I do, which is a low-income housing place, or I'd be using the food bank, Mr. Speaker.

I'd also like to talk a little bit about the context of a drug program. In 2007 when this government came to power, there was a universal drug plan for all seniors, and saw seniors paying no more than \$15 per prescription. Now in 2016, over the course of this government's time in office, over this government's time in office with record resource revenues, Mr. Speaker, we've seen . . . In the first place it was no longer a universal program. Then over the course of these years, Mr. Speaker, they chose to raise drug rates by \$5 to \$20 to . . . You know what to do, Mr. Speaker? To make it more sustainable. I think that's the rhetoric we hear again today from some of the . . . We heard it from the minister and we hear it from these members about making it more sustainable. They increased the rate in this budget by \$5 more to make it more sustainable, so \$10 in the past few years. And as well, this government last year ripped a whole bunch more seniors off the drug plan, making it more difficult.

And I want to take a quick peek at a study, actually, specific to pharmacare. So we get further and further away from pharmacare here in Saskatchewan, and with these kinds of drug increases we're not getting closer to having a pharmacare program. We're getting farther away, Mr. Speaker. So if we look at a study by Dr. Steve Morgan at UBC [University of British Columbia], from *Pharmacare 2020*, I'd like to quote:

Equitable access to medically necessary prescription drugs does not require that every drug be covered for every use. It requires that all patients [be able to] . . . access, without barriers, to medicines selected with due regard to public health relevance, evidence on efficacy and safety, and comparative cost-effectiveness. This is not achieved through drug programs for select populations or the protection of all people against only "catastrophic" costs.

Even small patient charges — this is the point they should pay close attention to, Mr. Speaker — even small patient charges can deter patients from all income levels from filling necessary prescriptions, particularly preventative treatments that must be taken regularly to manage asymptomatic chronic diseases, Mr. Speaker. That's from *Pharmacare 2020* by Dr. Steve Morgan.

The reality is when people don't take their medications, they get more ill. And what happens when people get more ill, Mr. Speaker, they show up in our emergency rooms. They show up at their doctors' offices. They are sicker and cost the system more, Mr. Speaker. There is all kinds of evidence that says supporting people in their drug costs pays not only in people's health, but in saving our province and our country money, Mr. Speaker. That is well documented.

I just have a couple of things more to say, Mr. Speaker. I know when I get started I find that I have more to say than I thought that I could imagine, Mr. Speaker. I think it's important to put just a couple of things on the records, things that weren't in this budget. There was, second year in a row, not a single word about mental health, Mr. Speaker, despite the fact this government, just a few months prior to the last budget, released with great fanfare a mental health and addictions action plan.

Just an article from a few days ago, Mr. Speaker, the headline, "We're all burning out here." Mental health and addictions is a bit of a catastrophe, Mr. Speaker. Dave Nelson . . . I want to read a quote here. Dave Nelson, the associate executive director of the Saskatchewan division of the Canadian Mental Health Association, has this to say:

Action on the action plan has been very slow.

When this report came out and they didn't target any resources for mental health — that was prior to the downfall in oil. Now, with a very tough budget, I'd be delighted if they put some money in mental health, but I [don't] . . . Unless they do that, they're smiling and saying that mental health is a priority, but they're not really prioritizing it [at all, Mr. Speaker].

And I can tell you from first-hand experience, that is a reality. The Dubé Centre in Saskatoon, our acute psychiatric hospital, is in overcapacity every day, Mr. Speaker. I hear from families who have loved ones who've showed up at RUH [Royal

University Hospital] in Saskatoon who get turned away. I heard from a mother who told me about her daughter being discouraged from Five Hills, calling an intake worker and being told, being asked if she had private health care or private insurance, Mr. Speaker, instead of being able to access a counsellor. So this young girl got the courage up to call and ask for help. She was told, well tap into something else, Mr. Speaker. Mental health and addictions is a huge challenge but it's I think a great opportunity not only for people's well-being but again for the finances of our province.

Not a word about the poverty reduction strategy. Again if we think about transformative change, you think about where you could spend money to save money, Mr. Speaker. Providing people's dignity and a good quality of life could go a long way to making our health care system more sustainable, Mr. Speaker. I represent a constituency where people are more ill because of where we live, because people live in poverty, Mr. Speaker. And the reality is we're sicker in Saskatoon Riversdale because of poverty. And that is just not fair, Mr. Speaker.

Infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, just briefly I want to talk about health care infrastructure. I think it's important to point out that a couple of years ago there was a \$2.2 billion health care infrastructure deficit. The government has allocated \$14.1 million for three facilities, Mr. Speaker: RUH, Pasqua, and the General for important infrastructure programs, Mr. Speaker, as the minister would say. The need for those three hospitals two years ago, which was a conservative estimate, was \$675 million, Mr. Speaker.

I want to read a couple of headlines about RUH: "No power, no computer, no hot water at hospital." "Surgeries cancelled at Royal University Hospital for a second day." Mr. Speaker, this is a drop in the bucket. And you would hope that all our health care facilities had functioning electrical systems and heating systems, Mr. Speaker.

P3s [public-private partnership]. I just want to read a quick quote into the record, and I'm just getting ready to wrap up here. I could talk about surgical waits, Mr. Speaker, that this government has said are creeping up. I'd hardly say tripling in a year is creeping up, Mr. Speaker. When we talk about P3s, Mr. Speaker, this government, one of the things they like to do . . . The Meadows, Mr. Speaker . . . I wonder what the Finance minister is heckling about, Mr. Speaker. There's lots of things that seem to really bother him, Mr. Speaker. The Meadows . . . The one thing this government likes to talk about P3s is being on time and on budget.

I would point them to the School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary, volume 9, issue 12, "The Theory and Evidence Concerning Public-Private Partnerships in Canada and Elsewhere."

I'd like to read just a little bit of the summary:

In fact, the clearest advantage that PPPs offers is to politicians who are able to transfer to private partners the risks of miscalculated construction costs and revenue projections (as with a toll road, for example). For taxpayers, the deals can often work out worse than if the government had simply pursued a fixed price design . . .

Public Sector Alternative arrangement.

Mr. Speaker:

Advocates of PPPs would argue that one clear benefit . . . [they] do offer the public is an impressive record of bringing in projects on time and on budget. It is true that the inflexibility of contracts and the financial risk transferred to the private partners have a powerful effect in keeping projects on track. However, the yardsticks by which the on-time and on-budget criteria are measured are typically flawed. The “start dates” of PPPs are marked after the conclusion of a lengthy negotiation and project-planning process between a government and a private consortium, making project completions seem more efficient than they really are. Meanwhile, the estimated cost of a project has a tendency to increase during the preliminary process. In other words, the delay and cost inflation that so often characterize traditional PSAs are not magically eliminated in a PPP: they just tend to occur prior to the first shovel breaking ground, rather than incrementally over the course of the project’s construction.

So, Mr. Speaker, that’s on PPP, P3s, Mr. Speaker. I have much more to say, but I know that I have many colleagues on both sides of the House who want to weigh in to the debate. I cannot in good conscience support the motion, and I will be supporting the amendment. Thank you.

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

Mr. Bradshaw: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it’s a pleasure to be able to stand here this evening and talk about our budget. Now as everybody here knows, I’m not a very eloquent speaker. I’m not nearly like my seatmate here from Kelvington-Wadena, or the previous speaker from Saltcoats. I just kind of get up there and babble away and try and run things as smoothly as I can possibly do.

But, Mr. Speaker, I guess to start out with, I will have a few thanks to say to some of our people. I’ll tell you why. These people are a little different. I’m not talking about my family at home or things like that, although I thank them a lot. But I’m talking about our treasury board, Mr. Speaker, our treasury board who did a fantastic job of going through all of this, all of the ministries who, in trying times, were forced to take a hard look at their budgets. And of course, our Minister of Finance, who did an absolutely fantastic job running on \$1 billion shortfall, still managed to put together a very decent budget for the people of Saskatchewan. And I think everybody owes our finance minister a round of applause.

[Applause]

[20:15]

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, I’ll tell you, I thought . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Mr. Speaker, I thought it was actually such a good budget that I guess, right after he had done it, I gave him a slice of peach pie and called it a peachy budget. So you know, I was actually trying to suck up a little bit too, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, we have to start, you know. I was just listening to Saskatoon Riversdale member who was just up and talking about it, and she figures that all we would have to do to fix the budget in Saskatchewan is restore the film tax credit and everything would just be 100 per cent. Saskatchewan would be booming again. Well, Mr. Speaker, I don’t think . . . I think it’s a little more complex than that.

You know, Mr. Speaker, as I listened to her, it was actually kind of funny. I’ll just bring this up because she was just up speaking and she was talking about health. She was talking about seniors’ drug plan. And I question, I question, Mr. Speaker, when the NDP was in before, where was their seniors’ drug plan? Oh that’s right, they didn’t have one. They didn’t have one at all. You just went and paid full price. Isn’t that amazing? But you know, they’re going to criticize, they’re going to criticize our government for making a very slight increase.

Then to top it all off, then she starts talking about health. I can remember, Mr. Speaker, when I was first elected, when I was first elected in 2007 and the NDP had kind of disappeared, we used to get calls at least three times a day into our office on health. And, Mr. Speaker, now we get maybe a call a week on health into our office. And there’s a reason for that because that one hospital, which they were probably getting ready to close, only had four physicians left. Now, Mr. Speaker, now there are 12 physicians sitting in the Nipawin Hospital. That’s one thing we have done, is we have improved health tremendously over what was under the NDP government.

You take a look at our record. A record \$5.17 billion investment in health this year, Mr. Speaker. This is light years ahead of the NDP. That was a government that had the longest surgical wait times in all of Canada. We’ve now got them down to the shortest, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, these are just a few odds and ends. Like I mean, I just couldn’t resist it just because the member from Saskatoon Riversdale happened to be speaking quite a bit on health, so I couldn’t help but bring it up. But I was kind of like the member from Saltcoats. He was talking, he had a real good weekend.

An Hon. Member: — Same hairstyle.

Mr. Bradshaw: — Yes, he’s got a good hairstyle too, Mr. Speaker. I really enjoy his hairstyle. But, Mr. Speaker, he was talking about going around cutting ribbons and openings. You know, we’ve had the same thing sitting up in our area. We have people who believe in our products.

He actually brought up about Edgewood Forest Products, Mr. Speaker, putting a \$25 million expansion in Carrot River only just a few . . . Well they restarted the plant, the mill in Carrot River in 2012, put in a \$25 million expansion. It was great. The Minister of Economy was up there for the ribbon cutting along with myself and the Premier. These are people who are willing to come into Saskatchewan and invest. Do you know when that plant was closed down? That was under the NDP. You know, but boy, if we just put that film tax credit back in there, this province would be booming.

Mr. Speaker, there’s been quite a few other ribbon cutting ceremonies up in our area. I was to Newmarket Place over in

Tisdale, the senior citizens' home that we opened up, you know, putting up new beds for seniors. We pretty well had to go out and start building these new ones because the NDP shut 1,200 of them down, Mr. Speaker. That was another one where it was a good day to go out there and cut ribbons.

Another one was going over to cutting the ribbon at the Hudson Bay school, the new school in Hudson Bay.

An Hon. Member: — A wonderful school.

Mr. Bradshaw: — Yes, a great school in Hudson Bay. Shortly after that they had a brand new one in Porcupine Plain, that was opened up. Mr. Speaker, this is a government that's committed to building infrastructure, not tearing it apart, not closing the hospitals such as what the NDP did, not closing the schools as what the NDP did.

Mr. Speaker, these are all good things that are happening. And even during tight budgetary times, Mr. Speaker, this government is not going to back away on building infrastructure for the people of this fine province.

Mr. Speaker, speaking of education, I want to talk about education. I think our education is doing quite well. First off we have more people that are staying in this province, so of course we have to build schools. That's far better than under the old way with the NDP where they shipped everybody out.

Actually our daughter just went through university, became a school teacher. Actually I think she's in her third year of teaching now. Mr. Speaker, had she gone through university here in Saskatchewan and become a teacher, and if we still had an NDP government, she probably wouldn't have a job here in Saskatchewan teaching because they had a tendency to get rid of teachers. They had a tendency to close schools. We have 750 more teachers working in Saskatchewan now than what was under the NDP.

We are doing great in this province, not as good as I would like, but we're doing great. And you know, we've got this commodity downturn. These commodities are going to turn around. They're going to come back, and then we want to be ready for it to help out our people in this province when they do. We are not going to do what the NDP did. We are not going to shut down our infrastructure. We're going to have highways. We're going to have schools, and we're going to have hospitals for the people of this fine province of ours.

Mr. Speaker, we could talk about various different things. We can talk about agriculture. You know, Carrot River Valley is well known as probably one of the better agriculture districts within this province . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well now just a minute, I might have a couple of other people here that disagree with me on that. But, Mr. Speaker, we have a great agriculture area, great innovative farmers.

And remember, Mr. Speaker, when the NDP never used to fund crop insurance? Do you remember, Mr. Speaker, when they used to say, the education portion on farm land, yes, they were going to take that off? And they said it, well, quite a few times. I think Tommy Douglas said it one time. Lorne Calvert said it one time, and quite a few of them said it. But you know what

they did? They never acted on it, Mr. Speaker.

It took this government to act on it. And you know, we're putting this money into agriculture to keep our farmers there because this is a multi-billion-dollar industry. Under the NDP, under the NDP, they would not even look at trade over in Asia. They didn't think that that was very important. That was just, you know, why should we go and try and deal with them? Let's just keep the Wheat Board, and everybody should grow wheat and sell it through the government. That was their idea under the NDP.

Well, Mr. Speaker, since this government has been in power, that has changed. I know that our minister has been over to India quite a few times. Now we're finding all of our lentils, our peas, we have a lot of these crops that are going over there, Mr. Speaker. This is making money for the good people of Saskatchewan, for the good farmers, the hard-working farmers in this province that are very innovative, as was mentioned by the member from Saltcoats, on having the new varieties of crops coming up. And people are going out there, and they're marketing them. And you know what? They're making money at it because they are not constrained under the Canadian Wheat Board.

Now, Mr. Speaker, some of the other things that are still coming out within this budget that are great things is our revenue sharing with our various communities, with our cities, our towns, our villages, and our rural municipalities. Remember back in the dark days when the NDP was there and, you know, people in our RMs had to go begging to the NDP to get a grant for a bridge or get this or get that because the NDP would never give them, the NDP would never give them any money?

And I've just got just a few of our RMs in here that I would like to bring up and see some of the increases here. In 2007-2008, the RM of Hudson Bay received \$262,000. It's now up to \$318,000. RM of Bjorkdale, \$239,000; it's up to 370. RM of Tisdale: 130,000, up to 263,000. The RM of Arborfield: 116,000, up to 252,000. RM of Connaught: 131,000, up to 297,000. The RM of Moose Range: 247,000 to \$431,000; RM of Nipawin: 216,000 to 391.

Mr. Speaker, these are just RMs in the constituency where I'm at. This is great money for these people. It keeps them having to go on bended knee to a government to try and get money. This is money that they can get out from the government that is guaranteed to be there and it helps out their budgeting.

Mr. Speaker, we could also talk about our small towns. You take the little town where I was born, Arborfield. It went from 35,000 to \$76,000, Mr. Speaker. Carrot River, Carrot River went from 98,000 to 231,000. We could go through this all the way through here and we see our cities, our towns, are being advantaged by having this.

And, Mr. Speaker, all the NDP can sit there and think about is the Leap Manifesto. I just had to bring up the Leap Manifesto, Mr. Speaker. You know, what a leap of faith and backwards thinking. They actually want to stop . . . Here we have our agriculture, a multi-billion-dollar industry and they say, I don't think we should have trade. Here we have our oil industry who's struggling right now. They don't want any pipelines.

[Inaudible] . . . we have a potash industry. Well no, that's trade too, so I think we should cancel that out. No, we're all going to go . . . We're all going to rub two sticks together to make a fire and live out in the bush. It might get a little chilly in the wintertime but, Mr. Speaker, that's okay. It's a good idea because it was brought up by a great socialist philosophy, and that I just really, really question, Mr. Speaker.

And speaking of that, I just got a little, little something here to read to you, if I can find it here in amongst my papers. Now, Mr. Speaker, actually this is a quote, Mr. Speaker. It's been hanging down in our office. But it reminds me the socialist philosophy, and it's a quote. I'm going to quote from Dr. Adrian Rogers, and it was done back in 1931 and it says:

You cannot legislate the poor into freedom by legislating the wealthy out of freedom. What one person receives without working for, another person must work for without receiving. The government cannot give to anybody anything that the government does not first take from . . . [someone] else. When half of the people get the idea that they do not have to work because the other half is going to take care of them, and when the other half gets the idea that it does no good to work because somebody else is going to get what they worked for, that my dear friend, is about the end of any nation. You cannot multiply wealth by dividing it.

[20:30]

Now, Mr. Speaker, that was what, under the NDP, that's what they wanted to do with our province. They wanted to basically shut it down. And that's what you would have ended up with in the Leap Manifesto that I'm not going to say every member over there signed on to, but we do know that some did. And anyway . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And the member over there is saying he doesn't know what I'm talking about. Well I guess I . . . Hey, I'm just reading what's reported, so . . .

Now, Mr. Speaker, but I think we should take a look at our budget on the revenue sharing. I just have a few numbers here from some of our things that we've done within the constituency of Carrot River Valley. Now you talk . . . With this revenue sharing, which is kept intact by this Finance minister and this government, Tisdale revenues went up from \$304,000 to 731 in this past, since 2007 until now. Nipawin went from 414,000 to 980,000 in revenue sharing. Revenue sharing for Hudson Bay went from 169,000 in 2007 to 347,000. Mr. Speaker, this is responsible government. This is letting our other, smaller governments, our governments that are around the province, all of our communities . . . This gives them fair recognition for what they do and they don't have to go begging, cup in hand, to the provincial government all the time to get money.

Then you look at the education, because this was brought up too at different times. You know, we've had an increase of . . . The North East School Division has increased 19.4 per cent from 2007. We have Advanced Education, which is another one. You know, this government has built a new building in Nipawin, Cumberland community college, which I'm a great believer in. And that came out of advanced education over the years, where you're seeing more and more of that. The Kelsey Trail Health

Region, 50.1 per cent increase since 2007. Mr. Speaker, this is why I don't have people calling our office anymore because our health system is doing far better than it did under the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, we can go on and on with all these various different things. The highways, like, I mean . . . Let's face it, the highways in Saskatchewan under the previous administration were a joke, an absolute joke. And, Mr. Speaker, the member from Athabasca sits there and he claims that we're never doing anything for the highways up in northern Saskatchewan. In this budget they are up 100 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, this is what's keeping this province going. And, I guess, speaking of northern Saskatchewan because that is brought up by the member of Cumberland and the member from Athabasca every now and then . . . well every now and then? Basically every day. Let's just take a look at some of the numbers they have gotten in revenue sharing. Creighton, \$252,000 to \$1,247,000. Excuse me — \$452,000. I said that wrong, sorry. La Ronge, 634,000 to 1,719,000; Air Ronge, 322,000 to \$978,000; Beauval, \$382,000 to 764,000; Buffalo Narrows — now the member would just stop your complaining about Buffalo Narrows — 541,000 to \$1,222,000 in revenue sharing. Mr. Speaker, this is Cumberland House. We have the member from Cumberland over there, went from 495,000 to \$882,000.

Mr. Speaker, when you start looking at all these things that have happened here within this province within the past eight years we've been in, the way the province has moved forward even under trying times, we are actually moving the province forward.

Now we're going to be looking at more ways . . . and I can't even explain it as well. Actually, the best person explaining transformational change was actually my seatmate, the member from Kelvington-Wadena who went through the whole process and explained transformational change. And, Mr. Speaker, this is something that this government is going to be working on to see how we can improve this province even better than it already is.

So in closing, Mr. Speaker, what I want to do is, again I want to thank our Finance minister. I want to thank the ministries for all the work that they have done. And I will definitely be supporting the budget and I will not be supporting the amendment.

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

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A pleasure once again to stand up and give my reply to yet another budget. I'm triply privileged and honoured, Mr. Deputy Speaker, privileged and honoured to serve the great people of Lumsden-Morse, privileged and honoured as the Minister of Agriculture to serve the farmers and ranchers and agribusinesses of this great province, and privileged and honoured, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to be able to speak in this beautiful place. Never a day goes by that I don't think about how privileged we all are to come to work here.

Before I go much farther, at the end of my remarks, I will

obviously be supporting this budget. But before I move on, I want to thank and congratulate our Minister of Finance, our treasury board members, and the deputy minister of Finance and her great officials. I know that months and months of work have gone into preparing this budget and it's been a gruelling task. It hasn't been easy.

And you know, before I move into the Agriculture budget which I'll obviously want to talk about, I want to take a minute to speak about the overall provincial budget. And I think it's fair to say, and trite, that low natural resource prices are not what any of us had hoped for, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's caused challenges for many people in our province and certainly challenges for those that I mentioned in preparing this provincial budget.

However, if our government has done our work — which we have — and with strategic investments and infrastructure and so on, and sound economic policies, we will weather this storm. And while the low commodity prices have definitely caused a challenge when it comes to the provincial budget, our economy remains diversified and resilient. Let me assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have the capacity to manage these difficult times. This budget is our government's commitment to keep Saskatchewan strong.

Each year our government develops the province's fiscal plan and budget with careful attention to all areas of revenues and expenses. And while historically we have been very good at managing expenses, this year we are beginning to take a closer look at how we generate revenue. This budget is about controlling what we can control and setting things up to balance the budget for next year. And we will have honoured our commitment of no tax increases in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

Now more than ever, a strong agriculture industry is important. And, Mr. Speaker, while some tough decisions had to be made, we will continue to invest where we need to to provide better quality of life and better services for the people of Saskatchewan. With this budget, we will keep agriculture strong to keep Saskatchewan strong.

Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Agriculture I want to spend quite a bit of time talking about the agriculture portion of this budget. The Ministry of Agriculture's budget for 2016-17 is \$389.8 million, a 7.5 per cent increase over last year. The increase comes from an additional \$14.6 million to fully fund business risk management programs. We are honouring our commitments and are offering the same programs as we have over the past eight years. And while the ministry will experience some expense reductions from a decrease in amortization costs and some operational savings, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there will be no impact on programming, customer service, or staffing.

This year we are budgeting \$254.6 million to fully fund business risk management programs which include crop insurance, AgriStability, AgriInvest, and western livestock price insurance. These are all cost shared 60/40 between federal and provincial governments.

The crop insurance budget for 2016 is \$166 million. On average coverage levels are increasing to a record \$216 per acre, Mr.

Deputy Speaker, up from \$183 per acre in 2015. The improved coverage is a result of better forecasted crop prices and increased long-term yields. Due to an increase in coverage the premium per acre is going up slightly to an average of \$7.84 per acre from \$7.06 in 2015.

Our government understands that crop insurance is a major part of farmers' risk protection. Since 2008, when our government first reviewed the crop insurance program, we have been focused on making continual improvements to ensure it remains relevant and effective for producers.

In the theme of continuous improvement, more enhancements have been introduced for the crop insurance program. The insurable area for fava beans has expanded to include the entire province and insurable yields have increased, reflecting increased production. Insurance for Khorasan wheat has improved as producers can now receive individual coverage for their farms. Previously coverage for this crop was based on area averages, and in response to the experience growers have gained with camelina, an establishment benefit value of \$30 per acre has been added.

Also in response to industry feedback, we have made improvements to our forage insurance offering. This year producers will have higher forage coverage, as insured prices have risen more than 30 per cent and forage establishment coverage has increased from 55 to \$70 per acre and the cap on the forage insurance variable and in-season price option has been removed. This will allow for an increase in the market price of forage to be reflected in the claim payments of producers who seek these options. Forage insurance proved effective in 2015 as substantial payments were made to producers following a spring frost and dry conditions. Beyond business risk management programs, our government is also once again committing \$71.2 million through Growing Forward into strategic initiatives.

For the most part, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will continue with the same programming and support as previous years including \$26.8 million for agricultural research and innovation. We will also continue to provide programming for water infrastructure, value-added agribusinesses, and to support environmental practices on farms. We're also once again providing \$4.2 million in industry grants, which is the same as last year, for things such as 4-H, Ag in the Classroom, Agribition, Farm Progress Show, to name just a few.

One other item we announced in this year's budget is a change to the agricultural Crown land sale program. As a government, we have been upfront from the start about our thoughts on government owning farm land. Our interest is only in administering land that has a higher public good from an ecological, environmental, heritage, or economic perspective. We are not interested in owning land that will be better held in the hands of producers, those who could realize the benefits of ownership. And that is why we introduced the original agricultural Crown land sale program in 2008 and why we rolled out a similar program in November of last year, the 2015 agricultural Crown land sale program.

[20:45]

Through these programs we have sold more than 540,000 acres of Crown land. Our government will continue to focus on the sale of Crown land that has no further public benefit. The ministry expects to generate \$148 million in net earnings from land sales during 2016-17. This is an ambitious goal but one our government has been working toward for the past seven years. Owning farm land is not a business the government needs to be in. We are actively encouraging the sale of Crown land to current leaseholders and we will continue to do so throughout this year.

We will also be discounting the 2015 agricultural Crown land sale program . . . discontinuing that is, the Crown land sale program one year early. The program, which offers purchase incentives on the sale of eligible Crown land, will end on December 31st, 2016. We will not be offering the final year of the program and that means there will be no more incentive to purchase Crown land that is currently leased after the end of this year. However the 30 per cent rental premium will stay in effect for 2017, and any cultivated or previously cultivated land that is eligible for sale that has not been purchased will continue to be subject to rental premium increases in upcoming years. So I would encourage farmers and ranchers that lease eligible Crown land to purchase it sooner rather than later.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP has quite a history. You know, in the 1940s when they came to government in this province — I think it was 1944 — they had a doc they called the *Regina Manifesto*. The *Regina Manifesto*, unbelievably in North America, called for an end to capitalism and sadly, Mr. Speaker, the *Regina Manifesto* was still on their website up until I think a year or two ago.

You know, they became government in 1944 and they did the things then that they did when they were last in government. They invested taxpayers' money in ill-conceived investments, and I use those terms to be generous. You know, I'm not aware of all of the investments that they made in the '40s and '50s, Mr. Speaker, but I know of a couple and here's a couple of my favourites, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

One of the investments was a cardboard box factory. I think that one actually did make some cardboard boxes but then it went broke, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as all NDP investments always have, always likely will. But my all-time favourite, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of their investments back in that era, was the shoe factory. They made shoes — not Birkenstocks either, Mr. Speaker. Well they had a shoe factory. I can't say they actually ever did make a shoe — never saw anybody that wore one or even admitted they saw them — but they had a factory that went broke and lost a whole lot of taxpayers' money, Mr. Speaker.

In about 1957 there was a famous debate in Mossbank between Tommy Douglas and Ross Thatcher where they debated this kind of foolishness that we're talking about that started in the 1940s and ended in 2007, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The shoe factory was a big one of course but, you know, there have been all sorts of other crazy NDP investments over the years.

In the 1970s, the Blakeney government presided over a commodities boom unlike one we've ever seen up until the present. It was huge. I mean when you compare the cost of

production in agriculture and mining and oil and gas, the profits were very substantial in those days, certainly higher than anything we've seen recently. And you know, what did they do with the money that they generated in the 1970s? Did they build infrastructure? Did they put it into health and education and social services? No, no, no, they didn't. They spent it principally on two things, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They spent it on the land bank.

The land bank, that was a sweetheart. They purchased farm land at above market value, substantially above in lots of cases, driving up the price of farm land — in a time when there was a commodities boom, don't forget — and farm land prices were already going north. They did that, and in so doing . . . And of course when they purchased this land then they turned it over either to the families they bought it from or other qualified NDP families generally. And by doing this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they kept, you know, young farmers like I was in those days and I bet you were, Mr. Deputy Speaker, out of the landowning business. They drove the price of land. The land bank land was not available to farmers like myself. You had to have NDP credentials, and I didn't, I'm happy to say. And so that's how they spent some of the money, Mr. Speaker.

But the most ridiculous waste of the profits from that boom in the 1970s was their purchase of potash mines. These were not new investments to the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. These were potash mines we already had. And not only did they buy these potash mines but after they bought them, the government-owned potash mines couldn't break even because they were so well managed. And so the taxpayers of Saskatchewan not only had to buy half the potash industry at a cost of billions and forgo the profits and taxes and royalties that they'd been paying, but they also had to subsidize the operation of those potash mines that they had purchased. Mr. Speaker, that is how the NDP, through their series of budgets in the '70s, handled the wealth that was generated in that commodity and resource boom in the 1970s.

Mr. Speaker, there's a long list of failed NDP investments from the '90s and up until 2007. You know, I think of Channel Lake; Guyana, South America; NST Chicago; Persona Inc. from Newfoundland; Retx.com, an Atlanta dot-com company, Mr. Speaker; tappedinto.com out of Nashville; Clickabid, their Internet auction business; Soft Tracks Enterprises; Navigata, a BC telecom; Craig Wireless, a Manitoba Internet company; Coachman Insurance, an Ontario insurance company, Mr. Deputy Speaker; Agdealer, farm equipment Internet site; SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company]; mega bingo. They lost \$8 million playing bingo, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Austar Communications out of Australia. They bought Minds Eye Entertainment, their money-losing movie company. Business Watch International and Clinicare. The total losses out of those investments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were \$303.42 million. And then there was a list of 20 agriculture investments that they wrote off, all of them. Wrote them off. None of them made money, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They blew the money.

And you know, Saskatchewan was the first jurisdiction in North America to elect a socialist government in 1944. We were the North American socialist experiment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a failed socialist experiment that cost our province 65 years of

progress. Decades of our best and brightest young people left. We saw our infrastructure deteriorate. We saw 52 hospitals closed, 176 schools closed. But did they learn anything from any of that? No, they didn't. And in this year, 2016, they've endorsed the Leap Manifesto. They're big over there on manifestos, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This one though is a document that would end modern agriculture and resource extraction. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's what we do in Saskatchewan. We practise modern agriculture and we extract resources.

So, Mr. Speaker, you know, people need to know, people need to know about this and that's why I'm happy to stand in this beautiful place and explain it. They haven't learned anything, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they would do it all over again. And that's why the voters of this province won't ever likely elect them again as the government.

And you know what they do, Mr. Deputy Speaker, every day? Almost every day they stand up in here and they complain that they would have liked to have done the good things that we did as government, but they didn't have any money. Well they tried . . . They blame the federal government and the previous provincial government and they blame us and they blame everybody else they could think of. They blame the circumstances. They blame everybody but themselves because they spent the money, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I better probably get back to the budget. And in closing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the budget is a clear demonstration of our government's commitment to our economy and our social institutions and, from my perspective as Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Speaker, to our farmers and ranchers and agribusinesses. We recognize agriculture's role as a resilient and stable contributor to Saskatchewan's economy.

With the growth plan as our guide, we have been building and strengthening our industry with the goal of making Saskatchewan a global agricultural leader. Our government's commitment to agriculture is unwavering. We have delivered the eight largest agricultural budgets in history and continue to offer business risk management programs that help farmers and ranchers to be innovative and to expand their operations. And we're on the right track. Our industry has met some of our growth plan targets already and are well on our way to reaching the remainder.

In 2015 alone, we set a record for agricultural exports, brought in the second largest harvest in Saskatchewan's history, and hit an all-time high for realized net farm income. The strength and profitability of our industry is evident. The net farm income for Saskatchewan is expected to reach record levels again, and the growing strength in the cattle and hog industry, along with strong crop sales, will continue to sustain the agricultural economy and I'm confident that we will continue to see success. We have hard-working and dedicated farmers, ranchers, and agribusinesses, and as a government we will remain committed to working with them to ensure success. Together we will keep Saskatchewan strong, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and accordingly I will be supporting the budget and not the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina

. . . from Moose Jaw North.

Mr. Michelson: — Moose Jaw North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, for such a fine rendition of agriculture in our province and what has been done.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start out too by acknowledging the work of our Finance minister and the good work that he's done. This is a fair budget. It realizes the needs of our citizens and understands the current income challenges that this province is currently facing. And, Mr. Speaker, our Finance minister did a great job, along with his staff and the public employees in the ministry that have worked for a long time to bring this budget to the public. And like I said, it is a fair budget and deserves a lot of credit.

[21:00]

I also want to acknowledge the hard-working people of the province in every sector because it is a strong province. It's a diverse province in farming and education, construction, mining, research, forestry, ranching, and many other sectors that they . . . The people of this province love this province. They have a great pride in it and work very hard to see that this province continues to strengthen and be strong.

Mr. Speaker, a \$14 billion budget, and that's a large amount when we think of operating the province. But when it comes to putting a budget together, it's a best guess at a point in time, and taking all the information we can get at one particular time, putting it together and coming out and making a best guess on where we would be with the income and with the expenses that we incur.

So we appreciate the understanding of the people of Saskatchewan that understand that at this point in time a small deficit budget is probably the best thing for the province, as we look at this best guess in time. And we did the same thing last year when we did the budgeting, the best guess in time. But who could have predicted the fall in the resource commodities of \$1 billion? It was so unpredictable, and of course it was uncontrollable at that time to see what was coming down. And it ended up in what it is today, that we have oil prices that have reached a bottom. And fortunately the oil prices are showing significant gains, little by little, so we're hoping that that will come back to assist us in our future of the province.

The potash also is low, but what you've got to realize in the province of Saskatchewan with the great asset of potash that we have . . . And you think of the great mines of the world that are in the industry of potash, and to think that their best experts can see that potash is what is in the future and the huge optimism that the industry has. When I think of K+S industry that is building a brand new mine, the first mine in somewhere around 60 years . . . BHP Billiton also has a new mine in construction near LeRoy. We also look at the massive investment that Mosaic has paid in putting their investment into potash mines that are currently in Saskatchewan. In the news today Yancoal is also considering a mine and all that goes with it.

The world is watching Saskatchewan. They're watching for leadership. They're looking for leadership, and they understand

the food supply. And Saskatchewan has what they need, and now a big part of that is the agricultural products and of course potash for agricultural nourishment around the world. So potash will be strong, and the \$434 million deficit is something that we will accept at this time for the betterment of the province in the long term by investing in people and infrastructure and keeping the province moving forward.

There are three choices we can make when we look at the situation of a deficit. And the first one of course is we could raise taxes, which the NDP did for many years. In fact they raised them 21 times in 16 years. But when you raise taxes, Mr. Speaker, people lose confidence. If you put up the PST [provincial sales tax], they stop spending. They lose their confidence, and the same with the corporations. If you increase corporate taxes, which we have lowered to attract investment, if you increase that, you stop that traction for investment in the province and obviously it hurts the economy. It also could lead to the stop of investment and possible layoffs and higher unemployment. So raising taxes is really a very poor option. That's what the NDP did in their tenure. That's something that we don't want to do because we want to keep this province strong and the economy strong.

We could also cut programs, but when you think of cutting programs you start thinking of health care, which is very much needed. In fact under the NDP, as has been pointed out several times, we had the longest wait-list in Canada and we've got it down to the shortest wait-list. We know we've got a ways to go. There's always lots to do, especially in health care, but that's just one area that we don't want to cut programs in to save money and stop the deficit.

We've come up with new cancer drugs that have been brought into and have been added to the formulary, so that again if you cut programs, do you cut those and not include them? That's really not the right thing to do.

When we think of education, our children of course are our future and need all the investment we can put into education. So we can't cut school, education or school spending to save taxes and stop the deficit.

The other way we could do it obviously besides raising taxes or cutting programs is to face the deficit, and that's what this government has chosen to do. That's what the Finance minister said on budget day, and it really is the right thing. For \$434 million on a \$14 billion budget, it's a plan for and a planned for balancing the budget in the next fiscal year. It was a tough choice but it was the right choice, and I believe that the people of Saskatchewan understand it. At least all the people that I've talked to from my contacts, not only in my constituency but other contacts that I have talked to in the last six days, also agreed that it was the right choice, and Saskatchewan needs it.

We've come a long way. We've built a strong economy, a provincial economy, and we want to keep moving forward. We want to improve health care and we have done so with hospitals, with senior care homes, with daycares. We have more doctors and more nurses working in the province and everywhere than any time in the past.

Highways and transportation are very important to our economy

because we have to transport our goods to ports for exporting and importing. So transportation and highways is important. Education, as I said, is important, and job creation, keeping our children here, attracting investment with lower taxes and creating opportunities and, above all, a positive attitude for this great province to keep it moving forward. So there are no tax increases, which sends a message of confidence to consumers and to business, an investment for the province, investing in strong government programs.

Mr. Speaker, education is a top priority for this government. We have increased education by 7.8 per cent or \$2.2 billion, including over 390 million for capital investments, the finishing of 18 joint-use schools, the preventative maintenance, building repairs. We're creating the creation of child care spaces, over 800 new child care spaces; increasing support for students with intensive needs, students in vulnerable circumstances, and English as a second language programs. That's what's keeping Saskatchewan strong, those kind of investments and those kind of programs.

In health, a record of \$5.17 billion, a 1.1 increase in health. Now since 2007 we have increased the health budget in Saskatchewan by over 15 per cent . . . by over 50 per cent. Health infrastructure, like new hospitals in Saskatoon and in North Battleford. My colleague from Moose Jaw Wakamow mentioned the new hospital in Moose Jaw in my constituency, which was promised by the former government but never delivered. The new hospital includes an MRI [magnetic resonance imaging], the first MRI in rural Saskatchewan outside the major centres, a CT [computerized tomography] scan, the hyperbaric chamber, all part of the better services that we can provide for the people of Moose Jaw, the Five Hills Health Region, and certainly help the waiting list for the people of Saskatchewan throughout. So our waiting times have been reduced and we will continue to do that with a \$20 million increase to help shorten surgical wait times and reduce wait times for surgery and diagnostic services, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there's a lot to be said about this budget. The Saskatchewan Cancer Agency will see an increase of \$9.8 million to substantially increase the funding to help pay for an additional 15 new cancer drugs that were approved last year.

Mr. Speaker, we've talked to you about some of the services that are provided for the people of Saskatchewan. Social services will have a 5 per cent increase for programs for children, for youth and families, people experiencing disabilities, and people needing income assistance in housing. \$3.4 million will address the emerging needs for those with intellectual disabilities and support the transition of individuals from Valley View Centre in Moose Jaw as homes and programs become available. And, Mr. Speaker, that movement has already started and there's a number of these homes in my constituency. And I know that there has been some concern by the neighbourhoods where they are but I can assure you on visiting a few of them that the people there are very well maintained, very well looked after. And the residents that move into these are doing much better without having a room of 50 people in a bedroom or multiple people in showers. So the people are enjoying their new life in these homes and it's good for them. It's good for Moose Jaw. It's good for the neighbourhoods.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at highways and infrastructure, there's a continued need to grow the highway infrastructure, and with the biggest investment ever, \$1.15 billion. The need to move products is important for Saskatchewan. Being landlocked, that's how we get our product to market. And as you know, Saskatchewan is in fact an exporting province so this year the budget will present a three-year, 70 million surge to fix more highways including overpasses and highway improvement.

Mr. Speaker, I want to spend a few minutes on this idea of a hidden budget that the NDP have been talking about and saying for some time. And really, I've asked them on several occasions, what are they talking about and I never get a straight answer. But when you think of the election and think of the province of Saskatchewan, there really were two major parties that could form a government. And one of us, one of the parties, the Saskatchewan Party obviously had a positive record and a plan, an open, honest government to grow and to take care of the people.

The other side . . . Well they say that they were prepared to form government but really, Mr. Speaker, there's no indication of that. They too had a record, and it was a record of decline, a record of cuts, a record of closures and mismanagement. And the Minister of Agriculture went through some of the investments and I just want to mention a couple of them, notably the Big Sky farm that lost \$26 million; Navigata Communications, another \$90 million; and of course the famous SPUDCO, their infamous SPUDCO potato company that lost \$35 million.

And I won't go on the list because it does go on and on. But there was over \$329 million of people's money, of Saskatchewan taxpayers' money, that got lost by bad NDP investments, lost ventures, inefficient planning, underperformance, and being unprepared.

So they talked about this hidden budget. And as we went through the election they mentioned the hidden budget, and it was even talked about tonight by the members opposite. But, Mr. Speaker, if they were a party actually ready to and willing to form government, wouldn't they have had a plan of how they would have looked at the income? Where was their operation ledger? Where was their unexplained income going to be spent? Where was the programs to balance their proposed budget? How high was their taxes going to be raised? How high was the PST going to be put up, because that's what they do. How much income tax would be increased, and how much property tax would also go in? How much would the corporate tax go up? These were the things that they would have in their budget. They're saying ours was hidden, but they didn't have a plan at all. All they had was a plan to spend money, but nothing that would substantiate where the money was going to come from or how they were going to put it together.

I wonder how many schools they would have closed. Would it be perhaps another 176? Or how many hospitals they might have wanted to close, as they did in the past with the doctors leaving and the nurses leaving? That was their record, Mr. Speaker. And how many highways wouldn't have been built or maintained? How many businesses would have been closed or shut down, and how many people would have again moved out

of the province? That would have been their budget. They talk about our hidden budget. That was the plan that they . . . That was their record. And their plan would be similar to that because they didn't have a plan to put forward, even though they're saying that we had some kind of a hidden budget. Well, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are much, much more astute than that. They could see this, and that's why the election was what the election was.

[21:15]

Mr. Speaker, they had no plan and they had no leadership. They continue to live in the past with outdated ideas and make up assumptions that are simply not true. And we see that everyday in question period, where a number of preambles on the questions that they ask in question period have to be corrected because they can't even work out a proper question with the facts that are correct in going forward.

That party has no basis for governing, for no growth, and no budget for the economy. And the people of Saskatchewan realize that and understand the new path of the economic development. And there is a better life for Saskatchewan citizens. The new governance is to grow the economy, including keeping our youth in the province and having people return to the province that have moved away. The new path is to attract investment, assist the needs of people, and grow our strong economy.

Well, Mr. Speaker, our budget does just that. The budget is well thought; it's a well-planned document to keep Saskatchewan strong. Accepting the current year deficit, with a target to balance in 2017-2018, is a good plan. It maintains maintaining a high credit rating.

Mr. Speaker, there are no tax increases. There is controlling of the spending. We're investing in people and investing in infrastructure. And, Mr. Speaker, we're keeping Saskatchewan strong. Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the amendment, but I certainly will be supporting the budget that was brought down last week. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to join in the response to budget speeches this evening, and I'm happy to put a few comments on the record.

And first, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is something that made me look at the future of the province very heavily today. My wife and I were able to see our first ultrasound of our third baby coming in December. So when you go through some of these special occasions in your life, it takes you a minute to step back, and you want to look back at some of the choices you made in your life, obviously. And I think as a politician we should, I think as a politician we should review choices we make all the time. That's what part of this budget's about.

But first of all, first of all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to say hi to my wife and a couple of family members watching tonight. I had time to listen to the member from Saskatoon Riversdale's speech a little bit, and she went on a theme about

mean-spiritedness and the mean-spiritedness on this side. And I think she may misread our emotions and our feelings a little bit, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're not mean-spirited on this side of the House. We're just a little upset, and I'll give you a bit of family history why I'm a little bit upset about some of the things that happened in the past.

I'm upset because my one sister lives in Halifax because she saw no choices to get employment in Saskatchewan. I'm upset because my other sister lives in Minneapolis and I don't get to see them very often. That's why I'm upset. I'm not mean-spirited, I'm upset because usually the only time I get to see some of my loved ones is Christmas every three or four years, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

That's one of the reasons she may be misreading on this side of the House, some emotions that I would say are . . . And the upsetness comes from the fact that we always knew Saskatchewan could be better. Saskatchewan's potential, I believe, we feel was never lived up to for a long, long time.

I think upon review some of the choices that were made . . . The member from Lumsden-Morse went over it much better than I can because he was there for the Thatcher-Douglas speech debate, I believe, in Mossbank. Actually I think he was there for that debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I don't know if he was there in the 1940s when they made the land bank decision, but I believe he was there for the Thatcher-Douglas debate. And that's history; that's one of the hallmarks of Saskatchewan. That was one of the greatest debates in Saskatchewan history about the debate of ideas, which I think this legislature should be in.

I believe the member from Douglas Park agrees with me; the debate's about ideas. And I think when you bring emotions into this debate, which they should be, they should be directed for the right reasons. And I think the emotions on this side of the House are to keep Saskatchewan strong, to ensure that Saskatchewan, our province, lives up to its potential.

To be able to say to our kids, and to my two-and-some kids, that when you graduate from high school, there are some great post-secondary institutions. There are great institutions that you can go to and seek higher education. And then after you're done choosing your higher education, there are opportunities for you to work and live in this province, so that you don't have to just come home at Christmas every couple of years, so your families can have family suppers every Sunday and get together and talk about your week, I think that's what we are focused on on this side of the House. We're focused on maintaining opportunities for our young people and for people all across the province.

I know the member from Melville-Saltcoats gave a great speech tonight and talked about all the different businesses and all the different constituents he was able to go and travel around and meet in his constituency right after the budget and talk about it. And we had some of those same opportunities in Regina.

I believe we had some people that did have some questions about the budget in our office, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're not going to sit here and say there wasn't hard choices that needed to be made. There was hard choices that we had to make as a government. And I commend the treasury board, the members

of the treasury board that work tirelessly after the election to make sure that there was a good budget to present, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I commend the Minister of Finance. He did a lot of work, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in ensuring that he could present a budget that the people of Saskatchewan knew was fair, honest, and invested in their priorities.

We also talked with . . . They talk about the campaign and they say, you never campaigned on this. You never campaigned on a budget that would be a deficit. You never campaigned on making cuts. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's not completely true. When I campaigned in Regina Walsh Acres, I campaigned and I made three commitments. I said, we're going to have a deficit budget, '16-17. We're going to get back into the black in '17-18. I'm going to put your priorities first. To my constituents, we said, we're going to put our priorities first. We're going to say we're going to invest in people. We're going to invest in infrastructure, and we're going to continue to build this province.

So the budget that was presented by our Finance minister, the member from Regina Northeast, we put 74 per cent of our budget into health, education, and social services. I don't think that anyone can go into their constituency and knock on a door and say, we're going to present a budget that puts 74 per cent of your money, your taxpayers' dollars — because it's their money, it's not the government's money — into health, education, and social services, there wouldn't be a person, I believe, in Saskatchewan that would think that's a bad idea, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So we did campaign on that as well.

And we also campaigned and we said, we have a revenue problem, but that shouldn't be your problem as a taxpayer. So I went to doors in Walsh Acres and we campaigned on no new taxes. We kept every one of those promises in this budget; I want to thank the Finance minister very much for that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, listen to a few of the comments made by the member from Saskatoon Riversdale: she did bring up that seniors pay \$5 more for drugs, children pay \$5 more for drugs. She talked about thresholds, and it's not a universal program anymore.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, she didn't go into the numbers unfortunately, which I'm going to do for her. It's \$66,000 at threshold; two people can make \$66,000 in a household before they don't qualify for the \$25 drug program. So if my math is correct — and the member from Douglas Park may be able to help — that's \$132,000 for a senior couple living, after they're 65, that wouldn't be qualified for that program. So you can make up to \$131,000 in a household before you don't qualify. I don't know about you guys, but I believe my parents don't make that much money, I'm pretty sure, when they're retired. So I think that's a fair bit of money you can make before you don't qualify for that program. So it's \$66,000 a person in a household before that.

So I believe that when budgets are tighter, these are some of the choices you have to make. And talking with constituents, I know that some of the Walsh Acres constituents didn't qualify after we made those changes, but they said, we understand sometimes you have to make choices. We understand the fact that when you're going to make some difficult decisions. We

understand that those decisions have to be made so that you can have a sustainable program.

Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we talk about transformational changes, also we talk about it so that we can have sustainable programs, a sustainable health care program, sustainable programs in social services because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know in the next couple of years that revenues are tighter, and when revenues are tighter you have to make tough decisions.

I think the members opposite . . . And I'm not going to call them mean-spirited because I think what their problem is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that they still are fighting a campaign from 1999 or, as the member from Lumsden-Morse said, maybe 1957. They keep on bringing up old ideas, old ideas that people just aren't understanding anymore. And you talk about the *Regina Manifesto* and the Communist Manifesto and the Leap Manifesto, and I'm not going to go through all that because I was able to talk about that in my speech, reply from the throne. But I think the member from Kindersley said it correctly, maybe they should just stay away from manifestos for a while. Maybe this isn't the best idea for them, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

A few more things I'd like to talk about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a budget that I'm going to definitely be supporting. And some of the general highlights of this budget were very well taken by the public. I had conversations with quite a few people. Mr. Hopkins from the Regina Chamber of Commerce, he was quite happy that there was no new taxes. Marilyn Braun-Pollon from the Canadian federation of taxpayers, also quite happy that there's no new taxes. We campaigned on that and that's a commitment we made.

Budget 2016-17 continues the government's support of early education and child care across the province. As part of joint-use school projects, 810 new child care spaces will be developed in Saskatoon, Regina, Warman, and Martensville. This budget includes funding of \$1.6 million for nearly 200 previously approved child care spaces. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's something that's quite important to me, and quite important to a lot of young families in Saskatchewan now, is that they have the opportunities for child care spaces, and they have the opportunity for their children to have some place to go when they have to go back to work, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Budget '16-17 also maintains strong investment in post-secondary students in education to keep Saskatchewan strong. Saskatchewan's post-secondary institutions continue to receive strong support, including 475 million for the University of Saskatchewan and Regina and their affiliated and federated colleges; 156 million for the Saskatchewan Polytechnic, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, and the Gabriel Dumont Institute; and 29 million for Saskatchewan's regional colleges.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's another point of contention that I have with our members opposite is talking about the funding for secondary education, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and talking about that our funding just hasn't kept up with the rate of growth. That's something where, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not completely sure is a factually correct comment, and I just want to put out a few numbers on the record regarding secondary

education.

Regina board of education, their operating increase since 2007 is 40.62 per cent and enrolment growth is 8.2 per cent. Total operating funding is \$221.1 million. I think that's keeping up with the growth that we've seen in our schools, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Regina Catholic School Division operating increase since '07 is 39.73 per cent and enrolment growth of 14.2 per cent. Mr. Deputy Speaker, these show our commitments to secondary education.

So the total operating funding for Regina Catholic school is \$107.5 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I know the member opposite from Douglas Park is interested because she knows these numbers. But I think she would agree that the numbers I just read are correct, I believe. And she's thinking about it, but she's got a bit of a smile so I think she knows that the numbers are pretty close to being right.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I would like to put on record is how we've shown our support for secondary education. We've shown it through our actions. We've shown it through our commitment to funding. We've shown our commitment to infrastructure funding, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we want our children to be able to have the best possible education so that they can succeed in whatever future endeavour they choose.

I know that going out and talking with students . . . I've been able to talk in a few schools in the Regina Walsh Acres constituency. And talking with students, I know that they're so much smarter now, students are, than we were. They have so much more information right at their fingertips. They know more about world events than probably half the adults I know. And it's amazing.

[21:30]

Even my son Nickson, he's three years old and he knows how to run an iPad. He knows how to go on YouTube and look at videos. I'm not even sure I really knew how to turn on a computer until I was in grade 8 or 9, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I think to be able to say to students that your future is, you can make it whatever you want, our commitment to funding is allowing more and more students to reach for the stars and be able to reach for every career choice they want, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I think as a growing province, the province that wants to keep its young people in here at home, we need to continue that investment. And this budget does that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it's a budget where you had to make tough choices, but we put education, health, and social services first, and Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's exactly, exactly what we campaigned on.

I just want to talk about a few of the headlines that we . . . going back looking at some of the headlines. We have great staff in this building, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They're great staff and they do some wonderful research and helps us prepare speeches. And it's this day in history headlines. In June 1st, 2005, "Politicians should get back to watching the spending." That's an interesting headline that I think is as relevant now as it was back then. I'm not sure they controlled their spending. This is a quote from that headline:

The auditor went on to state that at issue was the security of payments, about 550 in total, for meeting rooms, equipment rentals, catering, professional services, training, travel, and translation services. Of those payments, 200 of them resulted in losses of \$260,000 and further, 350 payments that have cost the taxpayers another \$240,000.

I think that as elected officials it's incumbent on us to make sure that we safeguard each and every dollar we get from taxpayers. And it's their money, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so we have to ensure that we treat their money with the utmost respect. As I say, and has been said for a long, long time, governments never raised a dollar. Governments never made a dollar. The government only takes dollars from people that had to work hard and make their money, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

June 2, 2003: "Government's too secretive." 2003, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who was in government then? Hmm.

2004: "Government loses \$2.2 million on hogs." How do you lose \$2.2 million on hogs, Mr. Deputy Speaker? So it's an article by James Wood. "The NDP government expects to lose all of the \$2.2 million it invested in Saskatchewan Wheat Pool's money-losing hog subsidiary in what the Saskatchewan Party calls yet another failed NDP business gamble." Those captains of industry over there.

Mr. Speaker, June 3, 2003: "SLGA paid for tracking system but then backed out of a deal." This is a funny one. "Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority paid a Regina company nearly \$300,000 to develop a system to track the sale of bingo cards but backed out of the deal with nothing to show for the \$300,000." I think the member from Saskatoon Centre could let me know who the SLGA minister was in '03. I wonder who made that decision.

2005: "SaskPower's earned every ounce of suspicion." This is 2005. "The NDP campaign promise was after all that we would have the lowest utility . . ." This is one of their campaign promises from 2016 too. Weird. Recycling, at least they got recycling right with their policies. ". . . lowest utility rates in the land, not subsidized utility rates in fact. Atkinson initially said her NDP government wouldn't provide general revenue fund subsidies to make up the difference." Broken promise . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . broken promise, member from Yorkton.

June 4, 2003: "Crown's books not as open as they should be:"

Crown Corporations need to give more disclosure on who receives money from them and the amount they receive. Crown corporations represent about 40 per cent of all government spending, yet they disclose less information than the rest of government, said Fred Wendel, highlighting one of the findings in his '03 auditor's report.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm reading some of these to show that I know a lot of times the members on the opposite side say that we go way too far back in the past, in the history. Why go back to the '50s and '60s? Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they've made lots of mistakes in their last term in government from 2000 or 2003-2007 that we can go back and talk about them for a little bit.

2004: "Sask audit shows a problem." 2005: "Senior waits two days in the hospital." 2003: "Crowns told to be more open." Oh this is a good one. 2006: "Rural health centres face doctor shortages, emergency services threatened." '06: "Doctor shortages force ER closures."

An Hon. Member: — No.

Mr. Steinley: — It's true, member from Estevan, it's true. '03: "Bad highways put MLAs mouths in gear." This is an interesting one. 2006: "Mystery why Sask people continue to support the NDP." Well at least that was ended with, Mr. Deputy Speaker. June 9th, 2003: "Government given a rough ride over state of highways." And the member from Moose Jaw would like this. June 10th, 2004: "SPUDCO countersuit will continue with government."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's a long list of issues that has faced governments throughout Saskatchewan's history. And I read some of those because we're facing some of the same issues the members opposite faced, and I think they'll realize that there's always going to be some issues. And the member from Yorkton does a fantastic job with the Rural and Remote Health. One of the problems is trying to recruit doctors to rural and remote Saskatchewan. I think it's an issue that governments face all over North America. It's not a Saskatchewan-specific issue.

But this side of the House will continue to work hard and keep its word and try and ensure that there's the best possible services in all of our centres across Saskatchewan. Because I believe that throughout our campaign . . . And I'll go back to what I said on the doorsteps to Saskatchewan people and to the people of Regina Walsh Acres, is that we'll commit to not raising taxes. We'll commit to putting the people of Saskatchewan's interests first. And we'll commit to investing in what you want us to invest in, which is health care, education, and social services.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's a lot more I'd like to say about this budget, and there's some things that I think we'll be able to debate in the little bit future in some private members' motions. There's a lot of information in the budget, and there's conversations that we're going to have with constituents, all of our constituents, and talk about what we believe is some of the good things in the budget and some low points in the budget. Because I'm not scared to have those conversations with our constituents in Walsh Acres because I think they deserve to know why some of the decisions had to be made, and that was based on sustainability. Programs have to be sustainable.

And one of the things I'm looking most forward to is having the conversations with the constituents about transformational change. Because I think that's one of the best parts of this budget we're going to talk about because we're going to review all the programs in government . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And the member from Nutana laughs, says well why haven't you been doing that for the last eight years? Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have, just because there should be a continuous review in programs, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I think if you're not doing that as a government, you're not doing what you should for the people of Saskatchewan and for the taxpayers, because programs do need to change and programs do need to be looked at so that they ensure they're getting the best money,

the best programs for their money, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And when I go on the doorsteps and I talk to people, I also ask them, what would you like to see from your government? What are some changes you'd like to see? Because as a representative, listening to your constituents and bringing their ideas forward I think is your most important job, and I believe everyone in this Chamber feels the same way.

So I'm looking forward to talking with the people of Regina Walsh Acres after this budget, bringing forward their ideas for some changes that our government can do better. And I believe we can always do better; I think there's always more work to be done, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're looking forward to doing a lot of that work this summer, and looking forward to trying to bring forward some changes and making sure that Saskatchewan continues to stay strong. So for the reasons that I've outlined and for the reasons that the minister has done a fantastic job, I'll be supporting our budget and not the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise tonight and join in the debate on the budget. Mr. Speaker, it's going on to 10 o'clock on a Monday night. It's getting late, and in fact it's so late the NHL [National Hockey League] hockey game is over, Mr. Speaker. And I originally thought I was going to be speaking tomorrow afternoon. Mr. Speaker, just in case you're not aware, Pittsburgh won 3 to 1.

I thought I was going to be speaking tomorrow afternoon, Mr. Speaker, but the Whip, the member from Saskatoon Silverspring-Sutherland, informed me earlier that I'd be speaking tonight. I think he did that, Mr. Speaker, because well frankly he's a little bit grumpy, not just about the hockey game but, Mr. Speaker, he's a little bit upset with me personally. I have to tell you what happened.

A couple of weeks ago, him and I were chatting and he mentioned . . . He was talking about his wife, Leane — who I know well, great lady — owns a business in Saskatoon called Durand's shoes. I just bought a pair there recently myself, Mr. Speaker. He was telling me that she's a big fan of plants, and he also mentioned that she loves popcorn. And I told him that I'd been in a greenhouse lately and I saw a plant — not making this up, Mr. Speaker, it's true — a plant called the popcorn plant. If you rub the leaves really firmly and you smell it, it smells like fresh-popped popcorn. And the Whip said, I wish I had known that. He said, I'd have got one for my wife; she would have loved it. So the following weekend — last weekend, or the weekend before this past one — I was thinking, you know, I should be nice. I was leaving Rosetown to come back to . . .

An Hon. Member: — Just to get it on the record.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Yes, I am trying to get the fact on record that I'm nice. Thanks for that.

So before I left Rosetown, I went to the greenhouse and I picked up one of those plants. I brought it to Regina and I gave it to the Whip to give to Leane. So he took it home, and I got a

very nice text from her thanking me for it. She was delighted with the plant. And then, Mr. Speaker, I get a text from him this weekend that says, and I quote, "Apparently the popcorn plant grows up to seven feet tall. We had to go buy a pot for it. It cost me 30 bucks. You're the best." So, Mr. Speaker, he's grumpy, well because he's cheap. He's got really nice shoes, but he's cheap.

So that's why I'm speaking tonight, Mr. Speaker. As a number of colleagues have done, I have a number of people I want to thank tonight. I'm also going to talk a little bit about the constituency of Rosetown-Elrose and the good people who've given me the privilege of serving them in the House. I'm also going to talk a little bit about the Ministry of Government Relations budget, the ministry that I have the privilege of serving as minister for, and also the budget as a whole and the great job done by our Finance minister, Mr. Speaker.

On that note, on the topic of the Minister of Finance, it was just a great experience for me over the past year. I served as his Vice-Chair on treasury board, along with the Minister of Advanced Education; the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure; the Minister of Immigration, Job Skills and Training; the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood; and the member from Lloydminster. We served on treasury board. And, as I said, Mr. Speaker, it was a great experience under the leadership of the Minister of Finance.

So now for the thank yous. I want to take an opportunity to start with . . . I haven't had an opportunity since the election campaign to thank a number of people. I'm going to start with my campaign team. I'm going to start with my campaign manager and good friend — and yes, Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the member from Regina University says, I do have friends — my good friend and campaign manager, Jim Angus.

Jim's an amazing guy. Mr. Speaker, this month of June marks the 10th anniversary of Jim being the recipient of a liver transplant. He was in Edmonton. I remember it well; I remember going to visit him. I remember watching hockey games with him. Edmonton was in the Stanley Cup finals that year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, against I think it was Carolina. I remember watching hockey in the evenings with him, and it's just been amazing what's happened. In a very life-threatening situation, he now is fine. He's had some health challenges over the past 10 years, but he's doing great.

I talked to him today, Mr. Speaker. He was my campaign manager. He was door knocking with me, doing everything a campaign manager would do. He is enjoying his family. He's enjoying his grandchildren, and he's enjoying his life, Mr. Speaker, because of an organ donor. I want to talk about that and what our government's doing for organ donations in a few minutes as well, Mr. Speaker.

But first onto other members of the campaign team, Kelly McFaull. Kelly was our guy in charge of election signs. He looked after all the highway signs along with a great deal of help from Travis Boyd and Garry Nisbet, and I want to thank them for all their work as well. But Kelly was also our go-to guy in so many things. When we were setting up our campaign office, he did a ton of work there. He's one of those guys, not only if you ask him to help he's there, but he's looking for ways

to help without even being asked, Mr. Speaker, and I certainly appreciate that.

I also want to acknowledge a gentleman who's been so supportive over the years. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Darryl Senecal had serious knee surgery last year and this year was out I don't know how many days door knocking with me. He played me out, Mr. Speaker. He's done that every election that I've been involved in and I can't say enough about how much help and support he's been.

And speaking of door knocking, I have to tell you about just an incredible friendship, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Doug and Polly Orth have been great family friends for many, many years. They've been involved in all three election campaigns I've been in. They door knock come rain or shine. They've just been tremendous and I'll always appreciate that.

[21:45]

I also want to mention Kathie Parry and her partner, Don Campbell. Kathie coordinated our campaign office. She helped with door knocking and numerous other things. And Don, amongst many things he helped with, he did all the audiovisual stuff for us in the campaign office.

And speaking of that campaign office, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we couldn't have handled that without volunteers like Donna Ogg, Bobbie Crossman, Carmelina Spadaforda, Joan Henderson, and Myrna Macdonald. And I certainly appreciate all that they did.

And I also need to mention my business manager for the last three elections, Jim Turner. It gives me great peace of mind when you don't have to worry about that part of the campaign. With Jim things are always done properly and on time, and I appreciate that very much.

Speaking of being punctual and doing things quickly, Mr. Speaker, I also have to acknowledge Rick Jackson. He is from Rosetown and he looked after the lawn signs in Rosetown. It was within a couple days after the writ dropped. There was lawn signs all over town. He was constantly putting them up whenever anyone would ask and within, I think, 48 hours pretty much after the election, they were all down and taken care of. Just did a great job this election campaign as he did the last one as well.

I also want to mention our constituency president, Ian McPhadden. Since I've started in politics, Ian's always been there to help, whether it's with an election campaign or during an off year, meetings, events, whatever the case may be.

And I also just want to take a minute and mention some people who have been so important to me right from the start. Larry Burechailo and Marj Sutherland have been tremendous sources of support through a nomination in 2006 and elections in 2007 and 2011. Now since then, Mr. Speaker, they've become snowbirds and so they couldn't be as involved in this election, but they still actually came back early to help out, and I certainly appreciate that. And speaking of snowbirds, Norm and Bev Collins also came back early to help out with the election. Norm's been a huge help over the years going back also to the 2006 nomination and through every campaign, and I just can't

thank him enough.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's always that risk when you start thanking people, you're going to miss some, and I know I have. I know there's been so many people that have helped with campaigns and helped along the way, and I certainly apologize to them. There's all the folks on the constituency executive and people who have contributed in so many ways and I certainly, from the bottom of my heart, I want to thank them.

And now on to family. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as all the members here know, politics can take a toll on family. They put up with a lot, not the least of which is all the time that we have to spend away because of the work we do. My mother, Elizabeth Reiter, is a never-ending source of support. She's been doing scrapbooks for me on my political career — pictures and news stories — and it's just been fantastic. I appreciate that very much.

My brother Ken, my sister-in-law Debbie, and my nephews, Jeremy and Justin. Jeremy and Justin now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, live on the Saskatchewan side of the Alberta border. Mr. Speaker, it's great to have them back in Saskatchewan like so many other people are doing. And slowly but surely, because they had been living in Alberta, slowly I'm weaning them off of the Edmonton Eskimos, and they're going to become diehard Rider fans, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I promise you that. Also my sister Laura Schwab and her husband Eldon.

My brother Ken and my sister Laura played a big part in this election campaign for me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They were out a number of days. They came to Rosetown. They helped me door knock and it was just great having them there. We spent a bunch of time together, did a lot of campaigning, but just had a lot of fun together and I appreciate all that help they gave me. It was a lot of fun doing it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, and my wife, Bonnie. As I mentioned earlier, politics can take its toll on families and that of course is most dramatic, I guess, on spouses, our spouses and partners, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it's the dark side of politics that those who have been the most supportive are the ones who are sometimes targeted with unfair comments or with drive-by smears. And for that I apologize, and I want to say thank you for all your support.

But of course, Mr. Speaker, the bright side of politics usually outweighs the dark side. And we've all been given a tremendous privilege and opportunity to make a difference in our great province, to have an influence and an opportunity to help make our province grow and to keep Saskatchewan strong.

I also want to thank some staff, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My constituency assistant, Kathie Parry, who I mentioned earlier. And the staff in this building, in the Minister of Government Relations office, the position I currently am privileged to hold: our admins, Cheryl Verhelst and Lauren Jelinski, who are always cheerful and helpful when people call or come to our office; ministerial assistant, Jeremy Brick, who has weird taste in music but that's because he doesn't like mine. But he's a great employee who is enthusiastic and always eager to pitch in, and I know was a great help in the campaign for the member from Regina University.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, also ministerial assistant, Shannon Andrews, who although she cheats in football pools, she is always bubbly and cheery and has a great work ethic and it's a pleasure to have her in the office. And speaking of great work ethics, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my chief of staff, Angela Currie, you'll never find a harder worker, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because of Ange, I never have to worry. She worries enough for both of us about everything, and everybody here who knows her would agree with that. She's been a great chief, and I can't express my appreciation to her enough.

Now for the constituency of Rosetown-Elrose. With the redrawing of the boundaries, I no longer represent several communities: the community of Eston, of Outlook, Doddsland, Plenty. Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank those communities for how well they treated me. It was such a privilege to represent them. I've made some great friends that'll last a lifetime. And I just want to put on the permanent record how much that privilege has meant to me.

I now have the opportunity to represent the communities of Delisle, Vanscoy, Perdue. They're included in the new area, and I'm meeting new people there all the time. And I have to thank them for the great reception that I was given during the election campaign. They were just fantastic. I had a great door knocking in the new area of the constituency.

And of course now I need to also thank the area of the constituency that I've represented all along including the community where I live, the community of Rosetown. Those people have just been tremendous, been so supportive, and I will always be indebted for that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I mentioned that I wanted to talk a little bit more about what our government's doing on the organ donor front. It was mentioned in the Throne Speech and I have a news release in front of me. It was released on May the 19th when the Minister of Health tabled a motion that asked the Standing Committee on Human Services to review Saskatchewan's current approach to organ and tissue donation and recommend ways to improve the rate of donation.

Mr. Speaker, this will be bipartisan, and I am so looking forward to . . . At times in this House, as we all know, it gets too partisan. This is a very important issue, and I think we all welcome the input from all the members on both sides of the House on this. You know, we're waiting to hear how they're going to determine how they go about some of their work. But as I mentioned earlier, I've a very good friend who is a recipient of an organ donation and that's the reason he's with us today and living a full and happy life. And I think there's just so much more potential of what we can do for that.

We have an abysmally low rate of organ donors in this province, and I think it's just simply a matter of hearing people out, doing what we can to encourage people through education, and maybe doing some things better on the government side that we can do that encouragement, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So I just . . . This is such an important topic to so many people who have had their lives touched by this that I look forward to the good work that the committee is going to do on this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the Government Relations budget,

there's a number of things in that budget, of course, that I'm very proud of. I have a municipal background. That's what I did for a career before I entered politics. And there's, you know, as all the members are aware, there's many things. There's record infrastructure investment we're going to be doing through a number of programs, several of them involving the federal government, the Building Canada Fund.

But probably sort of the cornerstone, if you will, of the Government Relations budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is municipal revenue-sharing, \$271.6 million in revenue-sharing this year. It's a record amount. It's because of the one . . . It's tied to one point on the PST.

So I just want to put this in some context for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like to talk about what's happened since we were given the opportunity to form government in 2007 and '08 for municipal revenue-sharing in comparison to some other standards that we could use. In that period of time, from 2007-08 to 2015-16, Mr. Deputy Speaker, again for the context, the consumer price index, the cost of living if you will, increased by 17 per cent. At that same time in that same time frame, kindergarten to grade 12 education increased by 30 per cent, substantially more than the cost of living, substantially more than the consumer price index. That was 17; education funding was increased by 30 per cent. Advanced Education, universities and polytechnic, in that same time frame from '07-08 to '15-16, it increased by 46 per cent, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Health, no more core service to provincial governments than health care. The amount that we fund the regional health authorities in that same time frame, it went up by 53 per cent, dramatically more than the consumer price index. And yet in that same time frame . . . In fact I'll just stretch it out just a little bit further, Mr. Deputy Speaker, including in this current budget. Municipal revenue sharing has increased, while the consumer price index was at 17 per cent, municipal revenue sharing increased by 113 per cent, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could give a number of examples for different municipalities on how much they increased, but I think the member from Carrot River Valley covered a lot of them in his constituency. A number of members covered ones around the province.

So instead I think what I'll do, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is I just want to hit some highlights from news releases on budget day that SUMA, the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association and SARM, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, some of the things that they said in their news releases about this budget. It says:

SUMA Appreciates Municipal Funding Programs in 2016-17 Budget.

Urban governments in Saskatchewan appreciate the provincial government's support for our cities, towns, villages, and northern communities in today's budget, says the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association . . .

"Urban municipalities understand the difficulties that come with preparing a budget with limited resources," said

SUMA President Debra Button. “We appreciate the recognition of municipalities today, through direct funding such as revenue sharing and shared funding such as the New Building Canada Fund.”

With the revenue sharing remaining as one point of the PST based on revenues from two years ago, municipalities will see \$271 million, and funding remains steady for items such as policing, libraries, community rinks, the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency, and the Urban Highway Connector Program.

“This funding from the provincial government allows our cities, towns, villages, and northern municipalities to make the most of our property taxes,” says Button. “It’s a relief to know that as engines of economic growth, we can focus on putting that money into the services and infrastructure our communities need and our residents expect.

That’s from SUMA, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now from SARM, same day, on budget day it says . . . that news release says:

The Government of Saskatchewan has released the 2016-17 Provincial Budget. Even in the midst of an economic downturn due to the decrease of revenues from the oil, gas and potash industries, the Province has continued to invest in areas that will support economic growth and development in rural Saskatchewan.

First and foremost, SARM is very pleased that the Government of Saskatchewan’s commitment to maintaining the municipal revenue sharing has remained strong. “Municipalities rely on revenue sharing dollars to deliver services to residents, local business owners, and industry in rural Saskatchewan,” said SARM president Ray Orb.

. . . [RMs] will also benefit from the [\$16 million] . . . commitment to assist them with local road and bridge maintenance and construction projects through the Municipal Roads for the Economy Program . . . “While SARM requested a reinstatement of . . .”

It goes on, Mr. Speaker. It’s fairly lengthy. They make comments about agriculture as well, and then they wrap up saying:

Rural Saskatchewan will also benefit from [the budget’s] . . . increased funding commitment for rural physician recruitment and the Government’s decision not to increase education property tax. These commitments are appreciated by SARM and will help to support the quality of life in rural Saskatchewan.

[22:00]

On that note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just need to deviate for a minute on the issue on education property tax. You heard earlier today the member from Wood River talked about a couple of municipal items that are very near and dear to his heart because of his background as president of SARM. He talked also about

revenue sharing. Mr. Deputy Speaker. He also talked about education property tax and how important it was to him personally and also to all the members in SARM.

I think back to before I was in politics, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what a contentious issue the level of education property tax was. There was tax revolts as my friend, the Minister of Social Services, mentioned. There was a . . . [inaudible] . . . rally at the legislature. It was a huge, huge issue. Mr. Deputy Speaker, at that time I was on the SARM board as president of the Rural Municipal Administrators Association and I remember at every single SARM convention — the main convention in March or the mid-term convention in the fall — it was always the number one issue. It was always the bone of contention.

In fact I remember one of the . . . I don’t remember the year offhand, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I could check that for you. But I remember then Premier Calvert in his address to the SARM delegates, knowing how contentious it was, had said when it came to education tax on property, and I quote, he said, “The status quo is not on.” And then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, well we were all excited. We thought something’s finally going to happen. We couldn’t wait to see what happened.

Twelve months later, it was the SARM convention again, and what had changed? Nothing. Premier Calvert at that time again announced the status quo was not on. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, nothing changed again. So you can imagine how pleased and proud I was to be part of a government that in 2009 made a dramatic change to how education is funding in this province and finally rectified a long-standing problem with education property tax, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You still see that today. You saw that when the member from Wood River spoke about it. It came up at the last SARM convention when I spoke. The people there are still incredibly pleased at the changes that this government made, and you can see it in SARM’s news release from this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So on to some other issues. Some of the things that my ministry, the Ministry of Government Relations and the Minister Responsible for First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs . . . You know, it’s kind of funny, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The person who sarcastically was clapping, I guess thought I was talking too long, was the Minister of Rural and Remote Health, who I think probably has set records — well with the exception of a couple of members on the opposite side of the House — for really long speeches, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So on the topic of First Nation and Métis programming, Mr. Deputy Speaker, some good news all around there. In a tight, austere budget, this budget allocates \$211.9 million in program funding targeted primarily for First Nations and Métis organizations and individuals. That’s an increase of three and a half million dollars, or 1.7 per cent from the funding in last year’s budget.

And there’s a number of highlights in that budget as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There’s \$30.8 million in funding for targeted activities on and off reserve, such as training for jobs and on-reserve adult basic education under the Ministry of the Economy. There’s \$5.1 million in ongoing funding for initiatives that respond to the joint task force in improving education and employment outcomes for First Nations and

Métis people from the Ministry of Education. And the list goes on, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And on the topic, you know, of First Nations and the North, in fact the member from Athabasca I think today in the House had raised some northern issues and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, was questioning some things that, whether the government has done for the North. And of course, it's cross-ministry and cross-Crown. One of the responsibilities I have is Minister Responsible for SaskTel. And, Mr. Speaker, I have in my hand a number of news releases that have come out in just the last few months, all pertaining directly to the North. Mr. Speaker, just for example, a little while ago, last summer there was a news release that talked about high-speed Internet that's now available in a number of communities across the North. It says:

The households to be connected in northern Saskatchewan under today's announcement are in the following communities and surrounding areas: [and listen to this, Mr. Deputy Speaker] Bear Creek, Black Lake, Brabant Lake, Dillon, Canoe Narrows, Clearwater River Dene Nation, Dore Lake . . . Fond-du-Lac, Grandmother's Bay, Jans Bay, Missinipe.

It goes on and on, Mr. Deputy Speaker: Sled Lake, Stanley Mission, Stony Rapids, Sucker River — I'm skipping some of them, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I don't want to sound like the members opposite when they do the petitions — Waterhen Lake, Wollaston Lake. There's a number of those, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I also have from June 1st, just a few days ago, Mr. Speaker, there was an announcement on SaskTel investing \$2.1 million in wireless enhancements. There's an announcement on "SaskTel increases capacity by up to 100% in 7 more resort communities," the communities of Cochin, Sarnia Beach Lake, Wakaw Lake, Waskesiu, Mr. Speaker. SaskTel's doing an announcement on capital investment. "SaskTel continues to expand High Speed Internet access in rural Saskatchewan," Mr. Speaker. So it's the rural and remote areas of the province if you will, Mr. Deputy Speaker, continue to be served.

"SaskTel enhances high speed Internet in Northeastern Saskatchewan," and the news releases go on and on. "New SaskTel Wireless Service launches in two northern communities." That was in December, the announcement for Stony Rapids and Black Lake. "SaskTel extends 4G service to Canoe Lake Cree First Nation and Jans Bay." And also "SaskTel Wireless Service launches in two northern communities." That was last September for Wollaston Lake and Fond-du-Lac First Nations. So, Mr. Speaker, in that area of the province certainly things have been happening.

Mr. Speaker, I also have the privilege of serving as Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy. And I just want to talk a little bit about the team over there and the great job that they've been doing. I've just been working on a message that will be in the annual report that will be released soon, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I'm just going to hit a few highlights out of that.

It talks about over the past eight years how our government has worked to create the Saskatchewan advantage and the role that

SaskEnergy has helped to play in that. Just an example of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker: it says SaskEnergy's success in these areas has supported the overall strength of our province's energy sector which continues to attract billions of dollars in new investment. For example, in early 2016, Husky Energy celebrated the opening of its Edam East heavy oil thermal facility, located near the village of Edam. This natural gas fuel plant is the first of three heavy oil thermal projects Husky will bring online this year, with the projects expected to create 500 construction jobs and 90 permanent positions.

Along with other large-scale infrastructure investment across Saskatchewan, these expansion projects indicate that our diversified, resilient economy is well equipped to weather the economic uncertainty and continue to create opportunity for Saskatchewan families. Mr. Speaker, I just have to acknowledge SaskEnergy president, Doug Kelln, and his team over there for the great job they've been doing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I begin to wind up, just across the board, the budget as a whole, Mr. Deputy Speaker, no tax increases. We're controlling spending. We're still investing in people. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're continuing to invest in infrastructure to keep Saskatchewan strong.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, so you know, it makes you wonder what leaders across the province are saying about that. And I just want to just fairly quickly mention some comments, some quotes from some of our municipal leaders that came on budget day. "First and foremost, SARM is pleased that the Government of Saskatchewan's commitment to maintaining the municipal revenue sharing has remained strong." That was from SARM.

From Debra Button, the mayor of Weyburn and president of SUMA, she says, "We're pleased today the government lived up to the commitment for that one point of the PST for revenue sharing." Also from SUMA, it says, "Urban governments in Saskatchewan appreciate the provincial government's support for our cities, towns, villages, and northern communities in today's budget . . ."

From Mayor Don Atchison from Saskatoon, this is a quote out of *The StarPhoenix* on June the 1st:

. . . Atchison said he is pleased the Saskatchewan Party government is sticking to its formula to pass along 20 per cent of provincial sales tax . . . to municipalities.

"I think it was good news for the citizens of Saskatoon," Atchison said. "They said they wouldn't touch (the formula). [And] they didn't touch it."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one more:

Municipal officials agreed that, as Regina Mayor Michael Fougere put it, cities came out "unscathed" and could even look on the budget positively "given the environment."

Communities, both urban and rural, will see record revenue sharing and hiked funding for municipal infrastructure.

That was out of the Regina *Leader-Post*, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think I'm going to probably wrap up right now. I just want to reiterate what I had said earlier, that I was very pleased to serve with the Minister of Finance and treasury board, working on this year's budget along with all our colleagues in caucus, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a budget that I'm very proud of, I think all my colleagues are proud of. It's a budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that even in tough economic times is going to help to keep Saskatchewan strong.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will not be supporting the amendment, but I'm very proud to be supporting the original motion. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You know, we saw lots of headlines last week but there was one that really lit it up on the west side of Saskatoon, one that really lit it up. And that was, "Sinners spared but seniors, poor hurt by province's cuts." My office was hopping on Friday afternoon by the comments made by the Minister of Social Services. I've never seen action like that in my office on a Friday afternoon. That minister really got things going.

They wanted to know what is going on in Social Services. What's happening to SAP [Saskatchewan assistance plan], what's happening to TEA [transitional employment allowance], and what is this stacking? What is stacking all about? You know, they wanted to know. And these are . . . You know, I've got to tell you, this was really something to see. They were hopping mad, you know. And it's not just because, you know, as they would say, a levelling of programs or that type of thing, but people on the west side of Saskatoon, and I think right across this province, are having a hard time making ends meet, and they were hoping this budget would provide some relief. And instead they're paying more for their drugs and now they're finding out about this new plan in Social Services about stacking.

What is stacking all about? You know, you've got all this terminology that's being thrown our way and you know, the government side says they don't like being called mean, but it sure sounds like mean. If it walks like a duck and it quacks like a duck, maybe it is a duck and maybe it is just plain mean. Maybe it is just plain mean.

But I've got to tell you, it really lit it up. And really, it just speaks volumes, volumes about the tone of this government and how they're out of touch. Here we have a budget three months late. Why couldn't they have delivered this in February? Busy season? You know, it's like they all of a sudden discovered that the price of oil had gone down. But by their own documents, their own documents, the price of oil went below 50 bucks late in 2014, early 2015. It's been a year and a half that we've been going through this, and there's nothing new that's coming out of that over there on that government side, that government side.

So why did we have to wait so long for this budget to find out that they're going to charge more for seniors and families for their drugs? That's what they needed to wait for? This is a big question out there. Here we are in June, the dog days, we're all

waiting for summer holidays. Now the budget finally, finally comes out and here we are short of ideas except for SkipTheDishes. That's one thing that's maybe interesting.

But I've got to tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I often hear — I've just got to put this on the record — I often hear this, and this is something that the government will often brag about: there's \$600 billion worth of tax savings, but they can never really fully explain it. They . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Six hundred million is it? Six hundred million? Here we go, okay now they're going to get some more facts on the record, 600 million of tax savings. But they can never really, really explain what it is, what it really is. I misspoke in there, I apologize. I'll put that on the record, I'll put that on the record right away, or else I'll have their crack team of fact checkers out and I'll hear all about it tomorrow. I'll hear all about it tomorrow. I misspoke. But anyway, I really want to know more about it.

[22:15]

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to get serious for a minute. I want to just talk a little bit about what the member before me, the Minister for Government Relations, was talking about. He was talking a bit about what they've done for First Nations and Indigenous peoples, and we do have to say that there's been programs. But we are deeply concerned about a couple of programs that have been cut. The Buffalo Narrows Community Correctional Centre has been cut, and that savings will be about \$1 million. We also see that the Aboriginal court workers program will be cut, that will save \$4 million. So \$5 million right there. But the minister did talk about an increase of \$3 million, so if you do the math there, there's \$2 million still of a shortfall.

And you know, I really have to say that, you know, we hear, and especially with the last year . . . I want to be very, very serious about this. I want to talk about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the 94 calls of action that has happened, or not happened. And we did not hear the minister talk about that. He did talk about many of the initiatives that might have or not fallen into those categories. But we know that is something we need to take very seriously.

And as the critic for human rights, I do want to say that we're watching very carefully about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the calls of action. So I really do want to challenge the minister to make sure. We've not heard about this in the Throne Speech. We have not heard about this in the budget speech, and we have not heard about this from the minister in his past comments. Even though . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Now he's shouting out we should ask questions.

I think that in the spirit of this — and he did talk about bipartisanship — we are looking for more work on this. And so I do want to raise this as an issue that we are looking for, we are looking for attention to this. There is 94 calls of action. Some 30-some, maybe half of them are related to the provincial responsibility. And so we are looking for attention to that, and I hope he can address that in estimates. I think that will be very, very important.

As I was saying that we are disappointed though, as we've just

shown, that they've talked about, the minister talked about a \$3 million increase, a \$3 million increase in spending in Aboriginal Affairs. But we can see that they've cut \$5 million through the Aboriginal court worker and the Buffalo Narrows Community Correctional Centre closing early. So this is a real problem here, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I do want to as well say, that as my role as human rights, that I am going to be watching . . . And we haven't got these figures broken out, but I know the Human Rights Commission is dealing with even more concerns being brought forward, and they're dealing with it on a limited budget, a limited budget. We don't know whether they got more money or less money. But you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the best day for the government on a budget is the budget day when everything seems to be holding together. And now we're finding out some of the cracks, some of things that aren't working as well, and we really hope that they have funded and supported the Human Rights Commission.

Mr. Speaker, as well we're going to be looking at housing to see what's happening in housing. We hope that there is sufficient funds in the programs that they've announced. Especially, I know people who are living on limited means will be looking for rental repair and home repair. I think that's very, very important that it's adequate and it doesn't run out halfway through the year. Too often that's been the case.

Mr. Speaker, often I'll do this every day: I will stand in this House and I will present a petition. And I know that the members opposite are a little alarmed, a little concerned about the number of petitions I hold in my hand. But I will hand in one page at a time, one page at a time until this is fixed.

This again, you know, when they say they're not mean-spirited, but here is something that clearly is mean-spirited — \$225,000, I think, is the cut. And yet this government made this announcement back in February . . . Or actually, I think it was, actually I heard it was in December that the actual cut was made, and the announcement was made or shared with the organizations. So here we have a program that really benefits all of us. Now it affects some 17 different language groups, including Cree, including Cree, including indigenous languages. And I think this is one that really the government should take back and take another look at it. It's not really that expensive. And it's one that really serves so well right across, right across the province. And not only in Regina and Saskatoon, but also in the smaller communities: Prince Albert and Moose Jaw, and throughout the province.

And I think when we look back and we recognize in fact that we are all immigrants, except for the indigenous folks, that this is something that makes our province a wonderful thing. And I think that, particularly when you consider that the fact that this program was announced and developed in '91 when the government of the day was facing all sorts of other pressures, but felt the value of the immigrant community and the newcomers really was important enough that we established heritage languages, and that that was an important program in Saskatchewan. So I think this is an important area that I would really call on the government to reconsider, to reconsider and do the right thing.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's one other area I want to talk about before we finish for the day. You know, the folks on the opposite side like to talk about the Saskatchewan Income Plan, and we think that's a good program. And one of the members talked about how it was developed in '91. Actually it was developed in the '70s by Allan Blakeney. And we've had this debate many times in the House since government's taken over, the fact that it hadn't been increased since '91 and there were many tough choices that this side, the NDP, had to make. And unfortunately, that was one that we look back at and we regret and we think we could have done better. It should have been increased but the pressures of the time forced other decisions.

But the interesting thing of . . . I would like to, you know, remind the other side that when they took over that program in 2007, there was some 18,000 recipients. I think it was up to 18,000 for SIP, or not, for . . . Yes, it was Saskatchewan Income Plan, the senior plan — 18,000. And now I believe it's down to about 15,000. It's about 15,000 now. I believe it's at 15,000. The written questions I got last week were 15,000. Okay. And that's what the current minister and the past minister . . . The incomes are higher so they're doing better and that is somewhat fair enough.

But I do want to say this. I'm glad that we can have this debate right now. But as Labour critic, I do want to urge the Finance minister, and I know the Finance critic will be doing the same thing . . . The Finance minister, we know, will be attending meetings about the CPP in late June — Canadian pension plan, CPP.

And we really encourage the minister to join in with other provinces, the federal government, to really look at increasing the contributions to CPP because we know there are too many seniors, or not the seniors, but workers who are not making contributions to saving plans and really aren't putting away enough. And a voluntary savings plan isn't good enough because we see there's too many pressures. And we know that in Saskatchewan, where we see people not putting away enough for their retirement. So we need to really enhance the Canadian pension plan, and I really urge the Minister of Finance to take a good, long, hard look at that because we would really think that's the thing to do to make the Canadian pension plan the pension plan of choice, so that people do put money aside through their work so they can have a retirement plan.

As we know and we see, and maybe that's right that the seniors are moving out of that poverty level and that's good. But still we have those people who are making a little bit more and they're just not making ends meet. And so to the Minister of Finance, I really do urge you to really consider that. It's been on the agenda I know for many years now, I know we've urged the former minister to consider that initiative. And we now know, with the Liberal federal government and several other provinces coming on side, that really this is the time to do the big change.

And so with that, I'll just leave it at that and we may have questions. Oh I have more to say in terms . . . I'm just . . . CPP, I'm leaving at that. But I don't want to go on too much longer.

I do want to say in terms of labour — and I am leery. I'm watching the clock here — two things, two things: occupational health and safety. And I know both sides of the House, we

always say that we want to do more for that.

But we had a golden opportunity. Workers' Comp had some \$240 million in surplus earnings and they're trying to decide, and they may have decided already this week. I hope not. But even a small portion of that, if that was kept back to help out in terms of occupational health and safety, would go a long way. And I'm disappointed to see that OHS [occupational health and safety] was at \$8.4 million and it's been floating around that.

Now we know OHS is funded through Workers' Comp. It doesn't come through the general, what used to be called the General Revenue Fund. It's not funded through taxes or royalties or anything. OHS is funded by WCB [Workers' Compensation Board]. So that money could've paid a little bit more. Even one or two or five million more could have gone a long, long way. And we haven't seen the committee of review that's out there yet, and we know that there's big issues like PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] is out there and we should be taking a look at that.

And I would really urge the government to urge WCB just to hold on to that 240 million, make sure we make the right decision. And so I want to urge the government to do the right thing on that. We have a golden opportunity with \$240 million, what we could do with just a small part of that, even \$10 or \$20 million of that, not the whole thing, not the whole thing.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we wrap up for the evening, I do want to say and I do want to apologize to the House for misspeaking about the \$600 billion. We'll have a good laugh at that. Nobody gave me a hard time about my tie tonight.

An Hon. Member: — I did.

Mr. Forbes: — Oh okay, so there you go. But I do . . . 600 million, not 600 billion. So anyways.

But I am concerned about the other shoe dropping with transformational, the initiative that's happening. We're seeing today, we heard about the RICs [regional intersectoral committee] coordinators being cut. It's obviously a wrong direction there. We heard about the urban parks being cut last week. That's a wrong direction there. We're hearing about Meewasin and Wascana here being on the table. That's just not the right way to go. So we're worried about the other shoe, what that really means for the people of Saskatchewan. And for that reason, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be voting for the amendment. I think that's a reasonable way forward, and I cannot at all vote for the main motion. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — Being near 10:30, the time of adjournment, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:30.]

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