



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

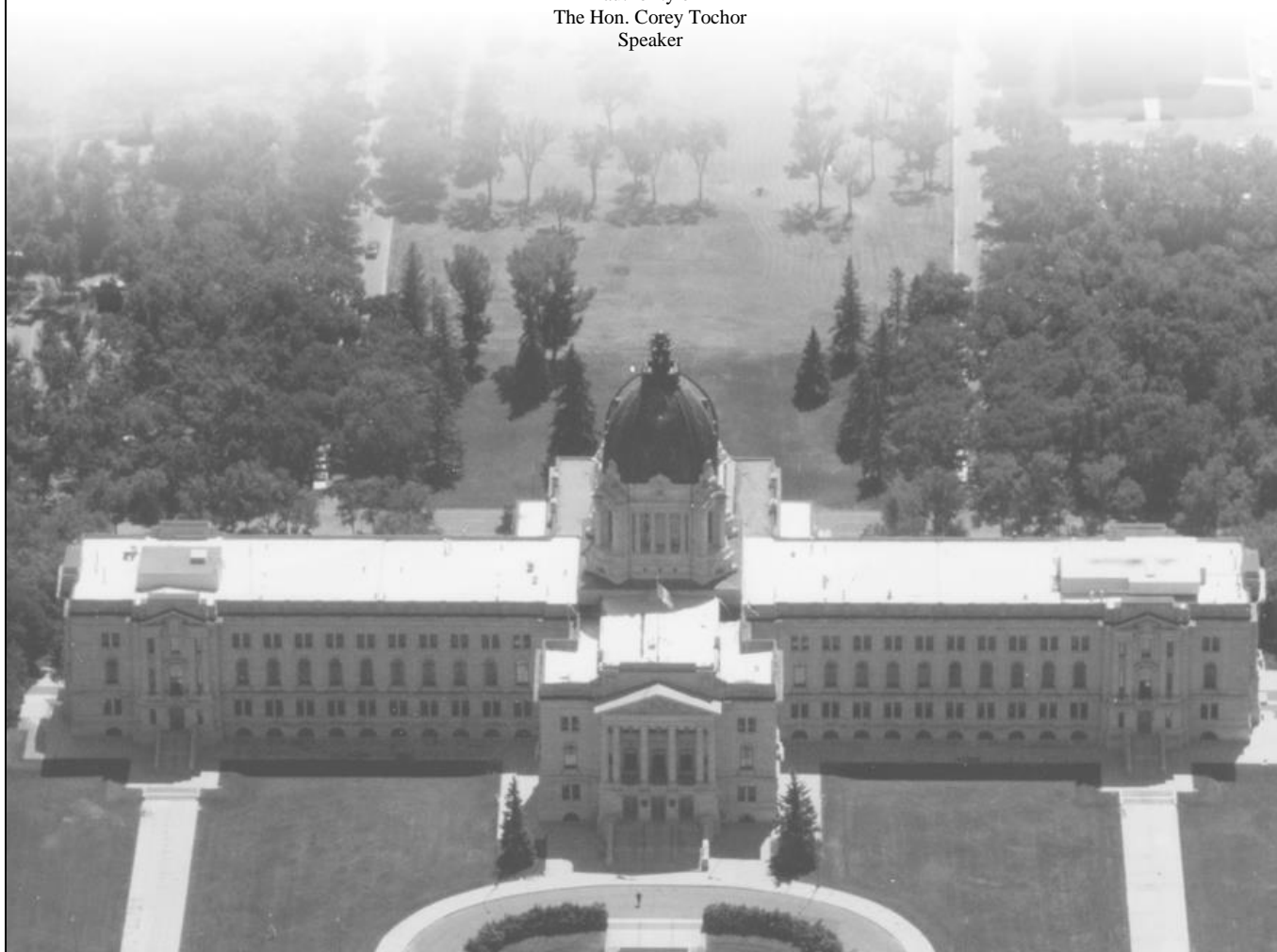
of the

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

Speaker — Hon. Corey Tochor

Premier — Hon. Brad Wall

Leader of the Opposition — Trent Wotherspoon

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Beck, Carla — Regina Lakeview (NDP)

Belanger, Buckley — Athabasca (NDP)

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Wotherspoon, Trent — Regina Rosemont (NDP)

Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)

Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

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

Clerks-at-the-Table

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Before introduction of guests I will be tabling the 2016 report volume 1 to be laid before the Legislative Assembly, in accordance with the provisions of section 14(1) of *The Provincial Auditor's Act*, to be tabled today, June 7th, 2016.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, it's an honour to introduce some grade 5 students from the great city of Swift Current from the mostly new, the relatively new École Centennial. They're all waving. Mr. Speaker, this is a great new facility in Swift Current made possible by excellent staff and a great group of students. And today joining us are 43 grade 5 students. They're accompanied by their teachers: Ms. Kellie Garland and Ms. Sarah Demeis. Also with the group are chaperones Jennifer Klassen, Bryce Coates, Kristin Carlson, Jennifer Skazyk, Kerry Lind, Mike Jarvis, Raeanne Kalenchuck, Gerald Johnston, and Amanda Schamber. Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of the Assembly to join with me in welcoming these students to their Legislative Assembly today.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to stand up in my place and recognize a special guest that is visiting the Assembly, a good, dear friend, Carl Swenson, Mr. Speaker. Carl is here watching the Assembly today. And just to point out as well that he's a lawyer by trade, but he's also a very gifted poker player; so if he's able to play poker to the extent that he has shown a number of people throughout the western part of Canada, he's also going to be a great lawyer, Mr. Speaker, based on his skill set. So I would ask all members to welcome Mr. Swenson to his Legislative Building today.

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

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand in my place today and introduce three great members and constituents from Yorkton to their Legislative Assembly. The first is Sherry MacDonald. She's employed by the Chamber of Commerce in Yorkton, very well known in the community and very active in the community, and a good friend and neighbour. In fact I think I could probably throw a rock from my backyard and hit her house if I had a good arm. With her today is her son, Colin, also from Yorkton, and her daughter, Kirsten MacDonald, who I will speak more about in members' statements very shortly, Mr. Speaker. So I'd ask all members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave for an extended introduction.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sitting in your gallery, I've got a couple of guests to introduce. To you and through you, it's my pleasure to introduce a special guest to the Legislative Assembly today. Seated in the gallery is Neil Fisher. Neil is the 2016 Saskatchewaner. Where are you, Neil? There we go. See, you wandered right around the clock. Awesome.

Saskatchewaner promotes the best of the living, working, and playing in Saskatchewan. The program is a partnership between the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport; Economy; and Agriculture; as well as Tourism Saskatchewan.

Neil is the first ever Saskatchewaner who was born and raised in a different province. Neil grew up in Coquitlam, BC [British Columbia] but has called Saskatchewan home for the past two years. Neil is an accomplished photographer and videographer. His photography has been featured on the covers of the *National Post* and the *Vancouver Sun*. He has had work published in *National Geographic's* children's magazine, *Nat Geo Explorer*. The Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History used a photo of his in an exhibit focusing on bioluminescence.

Through the mediums of photography, written blogs, video, and social media, the Saskatchewaner promotes our province from different places and perspectives. So far this year, Neil braved the elements, attending the world's largest snowball fight in Saskatoon, tried polar bear dipping at the Fort Qu'Appelle Winter Festival. I hope Neil hit some of the Saskatoon MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly]. He took in the first-ever Rush professional lacrosse game, the Saskatchewan Book Awards, and Saskatchewan Fashion Week.

Beyond the stories of some of Saskatchewan's great people, events, and careers, Neil has taken beautiful photography of Saskatchewan's landscape and living skies, visiting landmarks like Castle Butte, Jones Peak, the Great Sandhills, Grasslands National Park, and more.

Mr. Speaker, Neil is creating interesting content and stunning photography that are furthering the scope of success in the Saskatchewaner program and showcasing many of Saskatchewan's amazing people, careers, events, and its natural beauty. Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in welcoming Neil to his Legislative Assembly.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, seated in your gallery is Wendy Theines. Wendy is from Shaunavon, has just been hired as program manager for artsVest Saskatchewan. Mr.

Speaker, for some of those new members who might not know, artsVest Saskatchewan is a terrific program managed by the nationally renowned arts and culture funding organization, Business for the Arts, which trains and mentors arts and culture organizations on how to approach businesses to create mutually beneficial partnerships that support culture while at the same time making good business sense.

Since artsVest Saskatchewan began in 2011, the government has invested \$1 million, and that was matched by Canadian Heritage. This in turn has leveraged more than \$4.3 million in private sector sponsorships and resulted in more than \$5.39 million to Saskatchewan's arts and culture economy.

Mr. Speaker, Wendy has been involved in the non-profit and the cultural sector for more than 20 years as an employee and volunteer at local and provincial levels. Business for the Arts feels they are very fortunate to have found Wendy. She joins the artsVest program from the Grand Coteau Heritage & Cultural Centre in Shaunavon. She served as executive director for six years. She lives in Shaunavon with her husband and their two teenage children.

Wendy is currently in Regina with artsVest mentorship program manager Rebecca Harrison from Toronto to present their mentoring sessions, and Ms. Harrison is with the participants now. Wendy will return there to continue for the afternoon sessions right after this. I'm sure Saskatchewan cultural organizations are looking forward to getting to know you and work with you in the artsVest program. Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming Wendy to her Legislative Assembly and wishing her all the best in her new post.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming these two important individuals to their Legislative Assembly, certainly Neil Fisher with the Saskatchewaner program. It's a bit of a dream job, and certainly seeing all the many delights of Saskatchewan — not just through the eyes of Saskatchewan people, but someone who's come here — will lend new perspective to the many sights and delights to be encountered. Certainly we wish him many continued great adventures in the Saskatchewaner program, and I will keep following along on Instagram and throughout different media.

As well I'd like to welcome Wendy Thienes from the artsVest program. And certainly Shaunavon is a town with a rich heritage, a rich cultural scene, and her grounding in that community, Mr. Speaker, speaks well of the work that she'll bring to artsVest. So, Wendy, best of luck with all of that. We look for the great work to come, building on your roots coming out of Shaunavon.

But again, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming these two very important individuals to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moosomin.

Mr. Bonk: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, I'd like to welcome Tim Taylor and his son Landon. Tim is a good friend

of mine and one of the people who volunteered extensively on the last election campaign. Mr. Speaker, I have more to share about Tim's — I can't call him Tim; this is Mr. Taylor in our house — I have more to share about his accomplishments in a member's statement shortly, but I ask all members to welcome Tim and Landon to their legislature.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to present a petition to improve PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] coverage for Saskatchewan workers. Mr. Speaker, I have close to 500 petitions and there are more coming in every day, and I will continue to table one every day until this government does something about this.

The petitioners are pointing out that post-traumatic stress disorder can severely impact the lives of Saskatchewan workers, that the delay in PTSD, Mr. Speaker, is harmful to both the individual and the system as a whole, Mr. Speaker. They're calling on the government to make PTSD a presumptive illness to ensure that people get the prompt service that they deserve, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to read the prayer. We, in the prayer . . . I'm so glad to hear the government is interested in listening:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause the Saskatchewan government to make the necessary changes to ensure that if Saskatchewan workers are exposed to traumatic events on the job and are then diagnosed with PTSD, it is presumed to be caused by the worker's employment, and the worker will subsequently be covered under workers' compensation and receive the same benefits as other workers with work-related injuries.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens of Saskatoon and Prince Albert. I so submit.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition in support of heritage languages here in Saskatchewan. We know that after 25 years, the Government of Saskatchewan is discontinuing all support for heritage language learning here in Saskatchewan.

Since 1991, heritage language schools have depended on this modest funding from the Ministry of Education to help sustain their programs. And as a result of the announcement made by the Ministry of Education, many of these non-profit heritage language schools will be faced with a difficult decision of whether they can continue to operate.

We know it's increasingly important to work towards improving access to indigenous languages, many of which are endangered. Heritage language programs provide support not

only for immigrants, refugees, and their descendants, but also for Aboriginal peoples and all Canadians who recognize the benefits of learning additional languages.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly call on this government to reconsider this decision and restore funding for heritage language schools in Saskatchewan heritage schools.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition today are from the city of Saskatoon. Thank you.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Yorkton Resident is Miss Teenage Saskatchewan

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to stand and talk about the 2016 Miss Teenage Saskatchewan winner. Kirsten MacDonald, from my hometown of Yorkton, competed and won the pageant in Saskatoon last month. Kirsten and 17 other girls competed for this much sought after title, and she will represent our province with distinction at the Miss Teen Canada Pageant in Toronto this July.

Mr. Speaker, not only is Kirsten a beautiful young woman, she has a heart to match. She has raised over \$2,000 for Cardiac Kids for the Saskatchewan pageant. And she also goes to Toronto and will raise funds for the international charity, Free the Children. From my personal experience, I know she has volunteered extensively on the local level. In fact she has helped out at many Yorkton and area cancer program fundraising events over the past couple of months with Brayden Ottenbreit Close Cuts for Cancer.

Kirsten takes the job of representing her city and province very seriously. She has embraced this, and I have no doubt that she will have a great shot at becoming Miss Teen Canada. Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating Miss Teen Saskatchewan, Kirsten MacDonald, on her victory and wish her all the best in Toronto in July. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[13:45]

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

Prince Albert Pride Week

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Saturday, June 4, I was pleased to take part in Pride festivities held in Prince Albert. The Pride parade started at the Prince Albert Court

House and made its way to Kinsmen Park, where speeches were made and several activities took place. There were more people in attendance this year than ever before, no doubt due to increasing awareness of the need for equality and fairness to the LGBTQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning] community.

Prince Albert had many events throughout the city this week in celebration of Pride Week, including the flag raising ceremony at city hall, a fundraising steak supper at Smitty's restaurant, a poetry reading at Rock Trout Cafe, a Pride art night at the Mann Art Gallery, a rainbow prom at the East End community centre, and a diversity church service at Wesley United Church. The organizers of each event were very pleased with the turnout and are excited that Pride Week events continue to grow each year in Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker, we must continue to work together to ensure that everyone in Saskatchewan is treated with dignity and respect and that everybody enjoys basic human rights.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join with me in congratulating the organizers and community leaders who made Pride Week in Prince Albert such a success and acknowledge their contribution in the fight for equality and respect.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moosomin.

Saskatchewan Resident is One of Canada's Outstanding Principals

Mr. Bonk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to stand in this Assembly today and talk about a good friend of mine and one of Canada's Outstanding Principals. As I referenced in my welcome, Tim Taylor is one of the people who helped get me elected, but he is also a pillar in his community.

Mr. Speaker, school principals fulfill a dual role as both educators and administrators, and this is especially the case in small communities where principals are leaders in their communities. Tim has been principal of the Dr. Isman Elementary School in Wolseley for almost 26 years and is celebrating his 41st year as a teacher.

Mr. Speaker, Tim was honoured this year for his outstanding contribution to his school and community by being one of two recipients from Saskatchewan and one of 40 principals from across Canada who were awarded the distinction of Canada's Outstanding Principals.

The Learning Partnership is a national organization that focuses on excellence in our education system and sponsors this yearly event. This group of principals was honoured at a gala in Toronto in February, where their commitment to excellence in education was showcased.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of this Assembly to congratulate Tim on being awarded one of Canada's Outstanding Principals. Thank you.

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

Remembering Firefighters Victor Budz and Dennis Guenter

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May 31st marks 36 years since Saskatoon firefighters Victor Budz and Dennis Guenter lost their lives battling the Queen's Hotel fire in Saskatoon. To mark this sombre occasion and to recognize these brave men, Downtown Saskatoon and the Saskatoon Professional Fire Fighters, IAFF [International Association of Fire Fighters] 80 held a ceremony to honour them and to unveil a plaque at the Scotiabank Theatre where the hotel once stood.

We heard that 46-year-old Vic Budz had been on the job for 17 years and in that time had never missed one day of duty. He was an accomplished musician, a great neighbour, a good worker. He was a husband, father, son, and a friend to many people. We heard that Dennis Guenter was only 29, having worked for the fire service for less than two years. He was a superb athlete, a dedicated father, a great husband, and a choice friend with high moral integrity.

MC [master of ceremonies] Jim Brayshaw painted a picture of that day that started out as simply a fire in progress. Jim said, there's never anything mundane about a fire, but this was not thought of as an extraordinarily dangerous one. Circumstances made it otherwise. When all was said and done, on engine 11's arrival at the scene there were four firefighters, but it returned that day to 1 hall with only two. Vic and Dennis gave their lives fighting to protect lives and property in Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend much gratitude to these two men and to all firefighters for their willingness to put themselves in harm's way for the rest of us, and to say thank you to downtown Saskatoon and IAFF 80 for ensuring we all know this important story. Thank you.

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

Brothers Receive Honorary Degrees

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the accomplishments of a constituent and a very good friend of mine, Gavin Semple. Last week Gavin Semple and his brother Jack were both honoured by the University of Regina with honorary degrees. Gavin, who is the chairman and co-owner of Brandt group of companies, received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree. Jack, who is a talented guitar player, singer, and songwriter, received an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree.

Mr. Speaker, the Semples say they owe much of their success to their late father, John, who taught his six children about the importance and the value of hard work. In 1972 Gavin took an entry-level job at Brandt to supplement his family farm income. Within five years he worked his way up to becoming a general manager and part owner. Eventually he became the sole owner, a role he now is transitioning to his son Shaun.

When 10-year-old Jack wanted to start playing guitar, he had to earn the money to buy one. After chopping wood and feeding cows for a couple of months, he got his first guitar.

Mr. Speaker, Gavin and Jack are an example of how setting goals and working hard to achieve them can result in great success. I ask all members to join me in congratulating Gavin and Jack Semple on receiving these honorary degrees. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Heart Garden Opens

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday I had the pleasure of attending Palliser Heights School in Moose Jaw to celebrate the opening of their Heart Garden. The Heart Garden was modelled after the Heart Garden in Ottawa, which was created at the closing ceremonies of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Mr. Speaker, the Heart Garden holds many purposes. It beautifies a space adjacent to the school, is a teaching space where students can learn outside. They can learn about plants, but most importantly it is a space where students can engage in meaningful activities that are related to reconciliation and acknowledge the legacy of the residential school system.

Mr. Speaker, every student at Palliser Heights School participated in the Project of the Heart, creating a tile of memory for students who attended residential schools. The tiles created a beautiful mosaic which was also unveiled at the opening of the Heart Garden. Mr. Speaker, the opening was a special day, with students from Empire Community School and William Grayson School also in attendance. Three residential school survivors were in attendance. The Empire School drumming group played while students walked the Path of Hearts into the garden where the mosaic plaque was unveiled. It was a meaningful ceremony identifying a regretful past.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating the staff and the students of Palliser Heights School for their dedication to reconciliation. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Group Home Opens in Esterhazy

Mr. Kaeding: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On June 3rd I had the pleasure of attending the grand opening ceremony for a new group home in Esterhazy which offers support to individuals with disabilities. This beautiful new facility includes an in-home day program and a sensory room. The sensory room in particular is very innovative as it is used to stimulate a person's senses and has been shown to help with treatments. Mr. Speaker, these supports, along with the work of the fantastic caregivers at this home, will allow the five residents to be included in the Esterhazy community while meeting their unique needs.

It is important that all people have the right supports in place to allow them to lead fulfilling lives. We believe that inclusion is at the heart of community living and care for individuals experiencing disability. That is why our government has contributed \$400,000 plus a mortgage of over \$800,000 to this

project.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to making our province the best place in Canada for those living with disabilities. Through our province's disability strategy, we are working to improve services for these individuals. We are grateful to have partners like the Langenburg & District Activity Centre who do incredible work each and every day supporting individuals living with intellectual disabilities.

Together we will make Saskatchewan a more inclusive and supportive province for all people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Government's Fiscal Management

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, back in 2008 this Premier seemed like a very different person. Despite being left with a surplus and a rainy day fund, a couple billion dollars, he waxed on about his so-called growth and financial security Act. He said it would toughen balanced budget legislation and prescribe debt reduction. He said his government would reduce the debt of the province and legislate that his government and all governments would forever balance the budget.

Well, Mr. Speaker, even forever isn't safe from Sask Party cuts. The Sask Party broke their own law, so they're throwing it out. Incredibly they have simultaneously cut deep and ballooned the debt. No question, times are tougher these days. But during the boom, they squandered the wealth. During their time, they had tens of billions of dollars of extra revenue, and now it and then some is all gone.

So, Mr. Speaker, for the Premier: what happened? What changed? And how, with all this spending, are we still seeing deep cuts for Saskatchewan people and families?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, those dollars are not gone. Those dollars are now represented by \$2.7 billion paid off on the operational debt of the province of Saskatchewan, the credit card we inherited from previous governments. Those dollars are represented in \$6 billion worth of tax reductions for Saskatchewan families, for farmers, and for businesses — \$6 billion in tax reductions. You see, we on this side of the House think those dollars that belonged to taxpayers in the first place should be returned to those taxpayers when the opportunity presents itself, Mr. Speaker.

Where else did the money go? \$8 billion in infrastructure investment in this province to build new schools, to build hospitals, new long-term care facilities, record investments in highways, Mr. Speaker, a children's hospital, finally a replacement hospital up in North Battleford. That's where those dollars went.

And as for the legislation, Mr. Speaker, for years after that '08 election, that member as the Finance critic would call on this government to move to summary financial budgeting. Well *The*

Growth and Financial Security Act was based on the old NDP [New Democratic Party] approach of a general revenue fund budget and a summary budget and so, Mr. Speaker, the legislation has outlived its usefulness. It's no longer reflective of summary budgeting. Mr. Speaker, we've gone to summary budgeting just as members opposite wanted us to do and the new legislation to replace the one he's referencing will reflect that fact.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the auditor didn't say repeal and scrap the legislation. She said fix it, and you're not following it, Mr. Speaker. From a government that wasted billions of dollars on project that's been mismanaged after project that's been mismanaged.

Well you know close to a decade ago he was a lot more poetic. Quoting an African proverb he said, it doesn't matter if you're a lion or a gazelle. When the sun comes up, you'd better start running. Well, Mr. Speaker, problem is he ran the wrong way. They've increased debt to over \$14 billion, to record highs, up from over \$7.9 billion since 2009, referenced in his own budget book. He should read that. And the rainy day fund which was supposed to be here for tougher times has been incredibly drained — \$1.4 billion drained, gone — by that government before, of course, oil price fell.

You know, they hid the facts. Now he's playing shell games. He's using fuzzy math that just doesn't add up and he's denying reality. Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party's cuts have real consequences to real people. So will the Premier admit that he overspent, wasting billions on mismanaged projects in good times and now it's Saskatchewan people that are left to pay the price?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure who's writing the questions over there for the Leader of the Opposition. Maybe it's one of the individuals they've recruited from Thomas Mulcair's office in Ottawa to work now here in the province of Saskatchewan. But he should proofread his questions before he raises them in the House because, Mr. Speaker, I don't think the people of the province of Saskatchewan think \$6 billion in tax reduction is a waste of money. And I don't think the people of Saskatchewan believe that building hospitals and schools and spending \$8 billion in infrastructure investment — an area of neglect left by members opposite — I don't think Saskatchewan taxpayers think that is a waste of money.

And I don't think Saskatchewan taxpayers agree with the NDP that taking \$2.7 billion of revenue from a growing economy and paying off the operating debt, paying off the credit card of the province of Saskatchewan that we inherited from those members opposite and governments previous, and governments previous — I don't think they think that's a waste of money.

And, Mr. Speaker, we just had an election campaign in this province where these things were debated. What was on full display for the voters in this province was the record of this side of the House in terms of what we've done with the growing economy, and the record of members opposite who presided

over decades of people leaving this province, who presided over infrastructure deficit the likes of which we've never seen before and we will not see in the future, Mr. Speaker, because we are taking steps to address those things now in Saskatchewan.

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

Management of Health Care System

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, let's get back to the facts. Crucial to a strong health care system are of course physicians. So we asked the government how many salaried doctors we had in 2014-15, a simple question. They said the information would "... be available from the Canadian Institute of Health Information in September of 2016." A bit of an eyebrow-raising response. So we asked for the number of physicians for 2015-16. They replied with, that information will be available from the Canadian Institute of Health Information in September 2017.

[14:00]

Mr. Speaker, we need to wait a year and a half to know how many physicians there are? And this government pawns their responsibility off to a national organization? Does the government really not have this information? How can they justify not sharing this information even if it's legally required? And how can they seriously talk about transformational change in the health care system if they can't even collect simple information?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the risk of pre-empting the Government Whip, who is going to be tabling those answers in about 18 minutes, Mr. Speaker, the latest numbers I have are 2,375 physicians in the province. Mr. Speaker, in 2007 it was 1,742 overall. That's the physician numbers. If the member opposite is looking for the more detailed information, again 17 minutes and 54 seconds she'll have the answer.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, seniors' care is one place where that transformational change is really needed. A recent study demonstrated that taking seniors off antipsychotic drugs could not only save the health care system millions of dollars but also prevent thousands of falls. Inappropriate use of antipsychotic drugs in long-term care is 4 per cent higher in Saskatchewan than the national average. Mr. Speaker, one in three dementia patients is on an antipsychotic despite having no diagnosis requiring the drug.

There have been some improvements in one Regina facility but still no action in the rest of the province. The Ombudsman has made many recommendations to improve seniors' care and again they were implemented in only one facility. The rest of the province is still waiting.

Is this what we will see with antipsychotic drugs — the

government will boast about one centre and fail the rest of the province? When will Saskatchewan seniors get the care and the dignity that they deserve?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. Mr. Speaker, I want to first thank the member for recognizing the work that has been done already in early days in terms of reducing the amount of psychiatric medication that seniors in our care are prescribed, even without a diagnosis, Mr. Speaker. We are committed to reducing that number.

Mr. Speaker, I would say that the work that the member has indicated in seeing some reductions in those numbers, Mr. Speaker, is the work of quality improvement. We've used lean principles, Mr. Speaker, which I know the member opposite has a difference of opinion in terms of those tools that we've used, but it has been successfully applied in an early sense, Mr. Speaker.

And so what our work is to do is to work with our regional health authorities to look to see what has worked in the facilities that we have implemented that and then implement it across the province, Mr. Speaker. And I know that our senior leadership team throughout the entire province is certainly very committed to that.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, they're not taking action on chemical restraints, so what about physical restraints? The national average for restraint use in long-term care is 8.7 per cent. Mr. Speaker, there are Saskatchewan health regions where the rates are as high as 29 per cent — 29 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Almost one in every three long-term care residents is restrained. Some of our most vulnerable citizens are literally being shackled. How is that okay? What an awful experience, Mr. Speaker. And I can hear them over there mumbling about shackling.

Mr. Speaker, that is what happens in some of our long-term care facilities. We know that Saskatchewan has no minimum care standards, and we hear time and time again that long-term care is understaffed. Well, Mr. Speaker, these are the consequences. These are the consequences of a lack of standards, of underfunding, and of understaffing in long-term care. Our mothers and fathers, our grandmothers and grandfathers are being shackled to their beds or wheelchairs because there aren't enough staff. To the minister: how is this okay?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the member for her question. Mr. Speaker, this is something that I know that we have as a ministry and as a government, and our partners and the regional health authorities and the affiliates, take these issues very seriously. But I do want to correct the premise of the member's question. We do have standards when it comes to long-term care, Mr. Speaker, in this province and that all of our facilities, whether they be

government owned and operated or operated by affiliates or profit or non-profit organizations, are required to follow the standards, Mr. Speaker.

I will also mention to the member — and I know that she knows this very well, although she missed it from the premise of her question — that this government has each and every year made a commitment to adding additional staff into long-term care to the point, Mr. Speaker, where we are nearly 800 full-time equivalent workers higher than we were under the members opposite for roughly the same number of residents, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we've also made a commitment that we want to see a reduction in administration, and that in turn will go directly into front-line care in long-term care, Mr. Speaker. So we are working our way to address these issues that she has mentioned.

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

Support for Education

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We continue to see that it is the old and the young that face the consequences of this government's poor decisions. Yesterday education professionals protested in P.A. [Prince Albert] after the Saskatchewan Rivers school board cut 11,000 hours of staff time. That is 11,000 hours that our kids will no longer receive.

Mr. Speaker, we know that school boards are in a tough position. We know for many boards this budget will mean fewer teaching assistants and increased class sizes. Last week we heard the Education minister say that school boards need to find savings, but at what cost? We have heard about graduation rates and reading levels that are lagging terribly behind. Gone are the days when the Sask Party would talk about improving graduation rates, about improving math and literacy. Gone are the days that they would talk about investing more in learning. Now schools are struggling to put teachers in front of classrooms.

The minister may think it's okay to make lofty goals and not reach them. When will the minister finally give students the support that they need?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, with respect to the members opposite, it appears that we have a growing pattern from that side of the House of starting off the preambles of their question with erroneous information. So, Mr. Speaker, I want to correct the member opposite. Yesterday the member opposite said, and I quote:

The Education Minister says that it's the teachers who need to start looking for more savings. He said that the school divisions should "sit down with a blank piece of paper" and then listed off . . . things that they could do without.

Mr. Speaker, I need to set the record straight. In the scrum on

June 2nd, I stated, and once again I quote:

The challenge that I would say to all the school divisions is sit down with a blank sheet of paper and say, 'How many things we can share with another school division? Can we do [with] a common set of payroll? Can we [go] do things where . . . [there are] common buying. How many superintendents do we really need? Can we have the principals do more of the management, more of the administration?'

Mr. Speaker, nowhere did I say the teachers need to start looking for savings. Nowhere did I list things the divisions could do without. We know that the members opposite have a very long history of misquoting members. So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give the member opposite the opportunity right now to stand and correct what she said yesterday.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, yet again not a lot of responsibility taken by the minister.

Continuing on with more folks who are faced with the consequences of this government's mismanagement, yet again last week 10 employees from the regional intersectoral committees were cut by the Ministry of Education. These RIC committees, which have demonstrated considerable success, brought together school divisions, health regions, First Nations and Métis groups to work on poverty reduction, affordable housing, and early childhood development. In February these committees helped to develop the government's poverty reduction strategy. Since then, no action has been taken. That poverty reduction strategy has seen no action and no funding put towards it.

We heard the Minister of Social Services say we need to put more actionables into those strategies and actually get the work done. When the government says actionables, do they really mean cuts? Mr. Speaker, how are these cuts justifiable when the Minister of Social Services herself says that action is needed?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, it is the intention of this government to sit down with its partners, the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation], the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association], SASBO [Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials] leads and try and make sure that we have the most effective and the most efficient way of ensuring that front-line resources remain committed to our classrooms, remain committed to our students, so that we can see the continuing improvement in their reading scores, in their math scores, and in their graduation rates.

Mr. Speaker, under the NDP there was no willingness to set a target. We've set targets and when we meet those targets, Mr. Speaker, it is our intention to sit down with our partners and look at raising those targets so that we can continue to have the excellence that we strive for in this province because our students and our teachers deserve nothing less.

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

Children in Provincial Care

Ms. Rancourt: — Mr. Speaker, speaking of facts that contradict what the government claims, at the end of April the Minister of Social Services was asked about the number of kids in care and she said, “We are one of the few provinces, if not the only province, that has brought down the number of . . . [kids in] care.” Mr. Speaker, not only did the number of kids in care in Saskatchewan last year go up, not down, we saw other provinces — Alberta for example — actually bring down the numbers of kids in care.

So the Sask Party’s record on this is certainly not sitting on the imaginary pedestal that the minister has created. And, Mr. Speaker, that fact was clearly written in the report the minister was referring to. Did the minister read the report before speaking to it? How can the people of Saskatchewan trust she is taking this issue seriously if she doesn’t even care enough to read the report she is given?

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Certainly, Mr. Speaker, and if the member opposite would have read the whole transcript from that interview she also would have seen that I referenced that the children were coming up, the number of children coming into care was coming up. We are watching it very closely. So I did acknowledge that the number of children coming into care was increasing.

Again, the NDP are taking just certain words out of a quote and using it out of context, Mr. Speaker, not including the entire interview. We had plateaued the numbers and brought them down in around 2012 and the interview, it was expressed that we are recognizing the numbers are coming up.

In the Children’s Advocate’s report he was talking about the accelerating apprehensions, Mr. Speaker. Again in that same interview I explained that apprehensions does not equate necessarily into children coming into care.

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the minister for acknowledging that the kids in care is increasing because we all know that the kids in care have increased. We also know that the Children’s Advocate is very concerned about how the government deals with kids in care, some of the most vulnerable in our society.

Mr. Speaker, today again we see that this government is failing kids in care. The auditor reported that the information reported into the Linkin system about the care providers of children is not always complete. The auditor stresses that could “. . . impact the safety of those children.” Mr. Speaker, social workers don’t have all the information they need about the people looking after these kids. We have to do better for these kids.

To the minister: why are we not keeping proper information about the people looking after these children?

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I found it very special that a member from that side of the House is even bringing up the Linkin system. When the NDP were in power, they promised an electronic system to track children in our province, and they did absolutely nothing, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we could track a library book better in our province than we could our own children. It was just a paper file system and as families moved, quite frankly the paper didn’t necessarily move with them, Mr. Speaker.

We now have a Linkin system, and it’s due to this government, Mr. Speaker. We have increased the budget for child and protection, Mr. Speaker, by over 200 per cent from what the NDP . . . So that was our commitment to children in care, unlike the NDP who absolutely promised but did nothing. There was 21 children in one foster family home when the NDP were in power. And if she wants to read the Children’s Advocate report, she needs to read *A Breach of Trust* and she’ll see what legacy we inherited when they were government.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

[14:15]

Mental Health Services for the North

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, they had eight years and over \$100 billion to figure it out, so stop blaming the NDP and start providing your own leadership.

Mr. Speaker, we all remember the tragic events that occurred in La Loche on January 22nd. It’s a reminder that we must do better when it comes to mental health services in northern Saskatchewan. We’ll continue still to hold the Prime Minister and his promises to account, but here in Saskatchewan we need some leadership from this government and a willingness to put the right supports in place so we don’t see the same kind of tragedy happen again.

Mr. Speaker, we’ve heard about how only one psychiatrist is serving the North, and she is paying out of pocket to fly to La Loche and other northern communities. How is that acceptable, Mr. Speaker? The people of La Loche need more consistent and permanent support. These are good people, Mr. Speaker, that deserve support.

So to the minister or to the Premier: will they do the right thing? Will they fulfill their obligations to the people of La Loche and northern Saskatchewan to ensure that they get the supports that they desperately need?

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

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, this government is definitely listening to the people of the North including La Loche. In fact, Mr. Speaker, only a few days prior to the tragic events of only a few months ago, I travelled up north to

personally visit with four communities up there, especially with La Loche. We heard a lot of what the community had to talk about, and they had some really good suggestions which were actually acted upon fairly quickly, that are coming to completion. We also heard some of the challenges that they do have when it comes to mental health and supports when it comes to health in the North, Mr. Speaker.

And I can report again, the members across, they use information that's either outdated or factually incorrect, Mr. Speaker. In fact when it comes to psychiatric supports of the North, specifically around the La Loche area, there is in fact two psychiatrists serving that area as well as one that is accessible through Telehealth, through remote presence technology, Mr. Speaker. So this government is paying attention. We're committed to supporting our friends and neighbours in the North.

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

Crime Prevention and Correctional Facilities

Ms. Sarauer: — Today the auditor reported that the Ministry of Justice did not have effective processes to lead the building partnerships to reduce crime initiative. This initiative involves the Ministry of Justice, the Hub, and the COR [centre of responsibility] programs. Certainly these programs are important, considering that our crime rate is over double that of the national average.

But this government is failing. They failed on intersectoral work and poverty reduction, and they're failing on crime prevention. The auditor highlighted that this government needs to provide more support and the necessary tools to these programs because right now they aren't.

The Minister for Corrections and Policing often brags about these programs, but now we find that her government is not doing what they need in order for these programs to run effectively. How can the Minister of Corrections and Policing rely on these programs to bring down crime rates if the government is not giving them the support they need?

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

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Mr. Speaker, we are committed to the building partnerships to reduce crime initiative and of course welcome the auditor's recommendation for improvement.

We underwent a cross-ministry program review on this initiative last year, and many of the same recommendations have come out of the review. We have undertaken a further review, Mr. Speaker, of the initiative and in particular the COR model which is the analysis model, and how to best support it from the provincial perspective.

This work continues and, we expect, once finalized will help to meet many of the recommendations made by the Provincial Auditor, Mr. Speaker. We are committed to demand reductions in our system, in our communities, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to use research and analysis and defined outcomes to

measure our success. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, we seem to have a hard time getting straight answers from the government today, including the Minister of Corrections and Policing. First, she said last week, "As of today, there are no offenders in gymnasiums." When I asked about it in yesterday's question period, Mr. Speaker, she didn't answer the question. Later, she suddenly recalled in her budget speech that her government converted "a gym into a 32-bed dormitory in Regina Correctional Centre." But there's more, Mr. Speaker. When asked about the closure of the Buffalo Narrows correctional centre, she said, "We have opened a facility which is very, very close to . . . reopened a facility called Besnard which is very, very close to Buffalo Narrows."

Mr. Speaker, Besnard is 248 kilometres from Buffalo Narrows on a gravel road. How is that very, very close? Why won't this minister just tell the truth to the people of Saskatchewan when asked about the issues in her own ministry?

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

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the gymnasium that the members opposite refer to was converted to a dormitory. It probably would be about six or seven years ago, Mr. Speaker. It is no longer a gymnasium. It was converted to provide for more bed space for the inmates.

Mr. Speaker, this government has added over 380 adult bed spaces and invested over \$60 million in our correctional facilities since 2007. We've added 200 new jobs in Prince Albert for the newly opened, I guess it's Prince Albert Correctional Centre.

From 1998 to 2003 the NDP overcrowding within their youth facilities, what did they do? Well they put youth in Prince Albert Correctional Centre, the north Sask unit. Mr. Speaker, we are not doing that and that's the legacy of the members opposite.

From 1996 to 2006 crime in Saskatchewan increased by 17 per cent while the national crime rate dropped by 11 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's one thing we know for sure and that is if we continue to do the same thing over and over again, we will get the same results, and that is more and more people in our correctional system, Mr. Speaker. We are putting a lot of money and effort into demand reduction so that we can reduce the numbers of people in our correctional facilities. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 59 through 64.

The Speaker: — The Whip has tabled questions no. 59 to 64.

Ms. Sproule.]

Why is the member on his feet? I recognize the member from Saskatoon University.

Mr. Olauson: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave for an introduction.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the member from Saskatoon University.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Olauson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I'd like to introduce Monica Gordon, sitting in the west gallery. Give a wave. Okay, sorry. Monica works at Ag-West Bio which is Saskatchewan's bioscience industry association that works with investors to help bring research to market. It's a terrific Saskatoon university company, Mr. Speaker, doing great things in our province. After session the folks from Ag-West Bio will be holding a reception for all of us MLAs and I'm looking forward to that. Monica was also a tireless member of our campaign team. She accomplished all of the tasks that we asked of her and she accomplished them very quickly and efficiently. I want to thank her for her endless help on our campaign and for all she does at Ag-West Bio. Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you and all members welcome Monica to her Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I request leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I'd like to briefly join with the member opposite and recognize and to thank and welcome to their Assembly the leadership from Ag-West Bio. We're looking forward to meeting with them later here today. We're looking forward to the reception, and we're thankful for their efforts within our province throughout the year. So I ask all members to join with me in welcoming these folks to their Assembly.

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's always a privilege to enter into the debate in this Chamber. This is one of the first times I've had the opportunity to stand in this place and speak on kind of the viewpoints that I have after coming off the last election. I know for many years I stood down in between the member from Humboldt and the member from Regina Northeast. In fact I think the carpet may be worn out in that spot. I was glad that it was replaced with the green carpet because there was a hole in the red carpet, Mr. Speaker.

But it is an opportunity, my first opportunity to stand in this place and respond to the budget. I did not respond to the Speech from the Throne but I certainly had an opportunity to listen to many of the new members which, first of all, congratulate all the members for being elected and re-elected. Many of the same faces from years gone by but also many new faces on both sides of the aisle. Definitely a number of . . . I believe 14 new faces on this side, and I'm amazed at the composure and the great delivery of speeches, whether it was a Speech from the Throne and now the budget speech, and how they've got a grasp of what the government is trying to do and the direction that the government is trying to go.

I also would commend the members on the opposite side, even though I don't know if they have quite as good of a grasp on the direction, which direction this government is going. But, Mr. Speaker, it is great to see new faces in this place. It's extremely important that there are new faces in this place and new ideas, Mr. Speaker, and certainly the election allows that to happen.

I have a number of thank yous, as everyone would do after a general election. It happens once every four or four and a half years where you get to come into this place and thank the people that allowed you to be re-elected. In my case, I can't believe it's a fifth time, way too many times. Since '99 it's my fifth election. And I heard many that spoke here over the last couple of days, whether it's the reply to the budget or the reply to the Speech from the Throne, saying that you just can't do it yourself. So many of the occupations that we take on or the directions that we take on in life are because of our choice. And we work hard to make those successful, and we're kind of individuals often and the successes are quite often derived from our own personal effort. But many have said in this House, and I would agree completely, that when you enter politics it is a different animal, it's a different beast in that you really rely on a lot of people around you to help you be re-elected or elected in the first situation.

And for some that go through a nomination race, that starts early, to have a team around you to win that nomination race. And in many situations and especially, I would say, on this side of the House, that nomination race was probably the toughest race that you've had over the last year. Winning the nomination for a Sask Party constituency, and especially in a rural constituency but even contested constituencies in the cities, would be the toughest race. And congratulate those, all of those that had entered their name, put their name forward for a nomination, and especially for those that were successful.

I'm no different. Even after five elections, although maybe the crowd isn't quite as large around you, you soon realize when you have a constituency, whether it's urban or rural, there's a lot of area to cover. You can't do it yourself and you tend to rely on a number of people if you're to be successful. I too am the same. I had a great campaign team and I want to thank John Saltasuk as my campaign manager, who works in this building, also is from Gray, within my constituency. He did a great job. I've had, as I said, the opportunity to run in five elections. He's been the first victim to actually be my campaign manager twice. I usually have a campaign manager once and then they're gone and I have to find someone new. But John has been gracious enough to accept that role over the last two elections and is a large reason why I get to stand here today and talk on behalf of the people of Indian Head-Milestone.

Also working with John there was really two other people that were instrumental. Nicole Entner-McCullough who is my constituency assistant. For the four years or eight years leading up to this past election, was the office manager and really makes sure that I'm going in the right direction, handled so many calls through the eight years within that office, but more importantly, through the 27 days of this campaign, ran our office that was located in Pilot Butte, and I do need to thank her.

As well as Dwaine Entner who is my business manager. Although John has been the first person that has been my . . . only person that's repeated as far as my campaign manager, Dwaine Entner has been my business manager for I believe four of the five elections that I've been involved in and has done a very good job. You know that if you're going to get reimbursed for an expense that you may have put out, that expense would have to be legitimate because he watches those books like a hawk and those dollars like a hawk. So those are the three main people.

I had many others, of course, that helped. Bill Missal, who has been there since 1999, probably my main fellow to go around door knocking or go from community to community. Many others that helped during this election, Phil . . . And I'm not going to go through all of them or their last names, but Carson, Jordyn who's in this building of course as a summer student, Jamie, and many others within the constituency that have contributed to my success.

[14:30]

One other thing I do want to briefly touch on is this was an interesting election because of course there was redistribution since the 2011 election, and there has been some change in the boundaries in pretty much all of the constituencies, mine not being any different. And so I want to say that to the member from Lumsden-Morse, I believe it is, he was the beneficiary of some of the best territory I had. Avonlea and Rouleau and Wilcox and Briercrest, anything south of Regina on the west side of No. 6 highway went into that constituency. Also the member from Moosomin received some prime territory around the Francis area. I certainly miss those areas and had the opportunity to represent, well Francis for the 16 years that I'd been elected and Avonlea and Rouleau areas for the 12 years previous since the previous redistribution.

But I had the opportunity to pick up some prime real estate

from my good friend, Regina Wascana Plains MLA. Pilot Butte is in my constituency. We were able to have our campaign office in Pilot Butte. We did a lot of door knocking in Pilot Butte, and I would say that again we were able to win every poll in that community, in large part to the work that was done previously by the member from Regina Wascana Plains was certainly a benefit and very, very fortunate.

I also want to just briefly touch on family. You don't get here by yourself and family is extremely important, not only for every member I'm sure in this House, myself as well. Cindy is still a registered nurse working at the General, probably working a little bit more than she wants, looking forward to retirement — not too soon, I hope, but relatively soon. So she is still minding that, and we're finding it a little different. Of course our house is pretty empty. We have two sons and they seem to be . . . Well I'll tell the story. When I was door knocking . . . It didn't take long when I was door knocking in communities and especially in new areas, I'd walk up to a door and I would knock on the door and I'd say what my name was and I'm representing the Sask Party. They really could care less about policy. They could really care less about platform. All they were really worried about how was Mark's femur, how is Mark doing. And that was the first question.

I knew that name recognition was very important in politics, that last name recognition is very important. I didn't realize first name recognition was even more important. I think if you could have had Mark on the ballot, he would have done even much better than myself. But both boys are doing well. They both have broken legs. Mark broke his femur in LA [Los Angeles] in a competition, and a month later Craig broke his right leg, his tib and fib, and they're both healing well, walking and recovering and will probably be on the snow this summer somewhere in the world and are doing well. It was nice to have Mark home for the election again. People would tend to watch the results come in but, more importantly, wanted to talk to him as far as what his plans were in the future, not what his dad's plans were. Anyway that's the thank yous, and again we don't get here by ourselves. We get here on the backs of many others, and I'm no different and very fortunate.

I had the opportunity to listen to the replies from the Speech from the Throne and now the replies to the budget, and it shocks me. I guess it doesn't shock me. I've had the opportunity over sixteen and a half years to listen to it. And I remember the first couple of times when I was in here listening to the reply to the Speech from the Throne when we sat on the other side of the aisle, and even today, yesterday, last night, and through the whole course of my being in this House, how you could have a Speech from the Throne, for example, and have two diametrically opposed positions that come from that very same speech or how you could listen to a budget speech which the Minister of Finance delivered last week and have two absolutely . . . [inaudible] . . . as far as what the opposition has to say and what the government has to say on the same speech.

The only benefit that I would say that is certainly nice now, and perhaps when we were in opposition it was a little different because the numbers were closer, we get to listen to five speeches that are positive regarding the Speech from the Throne or the budget compared to one from the opposition. So that is the only benefit when you listen to what the opposition has

to say.

I want to touch on, in the time that I have, a little bit of what I've heard from the opposition, and then I want to touch on what I've heard from this side, and especially the Minister of Finance.

But I have been quite I guess not surprised. The new tactic of the opposition is to say that we've been in power for a decade and, you know, don't . . .

An Hon. Member: — Nearly a decade.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Nearly a decade. Eight and a half years is nearly a decade, I guess, to the opposition. It will soon be a decade. In fact I think there's a very good chance that their seats in the opposition may last for another decade, Mr. Speaker, or even nearly a decade, if that's their new tactic.

And I remember sitting on that opposite side and how at times it could be a little frustrating because quite frankly you're pretty much only negative. You only oppose. I've heard very seldom a positive word come from that opposition for eight years, eight and a half years — nearly a decade. Now I wouldn't want to tell the opposition how to do their business because quite frankly I think they're doing a very good job of opposition. That's why they have 10 members, Mr. Speaker, and I wouldn't want to suggest they change their tactics whatsoever. I think they're doing a very good job.

They're very negative. They opposed pretty much everything that's happened in this province for the last eight and a half — nearly a decade, Mr. Speaker. They've opposed pretty much any of the initiatives that we've had in health care, any of the initiatives that we've had in Highways, any of the initiatives that we've have through Social Services, through Education, they've opposed pretty much every one of those. And I would continue to say, keep doing the fine job that you're doing because, Mr. Speaker, it's fitting those members very, very well.

Last night I was supposed to be in the House, and thank you to the Whip for allowing me to not be here. I was just not feeling well so I was at home. And you know, last night on TV there was the Blue Jays playing that didn't do so well against the Detroit Tigers. My Pittsburgh Penguins happened to win, which was really good, Mr. Speaker. I was pretty happy about that. But what really depressed me is I found myself going over to the legislature channel. Can you believe that? I was watching the legislature channel when there is a hockey game on and a baseball game on. I couldn't believe it, quite frankly. I had a headache after watching, Mr. Speaker.

But I have to talk about the one speech that I heard. Many from this side were very, very solid, but one speech, and it just struck me, and I guess maybe that's what kind of drew me to watching for a while longer, was the member from Riversdale. She was speaking and she said last night, she was talking about how terrible things are in the province and how terrible the health care delivery has been, and really not a positive thing within the whole speech. And she was commenting on our members and how we have reinforced, you know, the messages that were delivered by the Minister of Finance and many other of the

speeches.

And she said, and I just found that so strikingly interesting, she said, just because — meaning us as government — just because you say it over and over and over again doesn't mean it's true.

And you know, I found that really interesting because her speech was the same speech she has given over and over and over again in eight years of opposition. Now just because she said it over and over again for the past eight years does not make it truth. But I don't want to tell the opposition what to do, because again I think they're doing a very good job, and I would suggest that they continue to use those speeches over and over again.

Mr. Speaker, I found it really curiously interesting today that the member would stand on her feet and actually talk a little bit about seniors' care because, you know, for eight years we heard that seniors' care was in . . . well pretty much anything, any subject that the opposition talked about, it's either a crisis or a scandal.

You know, I remember the temporary Leader of the Opposition talking about the smart meters and how the Saskatchewan Party bolted exploding meters to people's houses. Talk about hyperbole. Now I continue to say, continue to do what you're doing because it's working well, but bolting exploding meters to people's homes was how they described the smart meters.

I remember case after case . . . And I will tell you that long-term care needs to improve in this province. Most everyone would. My mother is in long-term care. I've been in a facility in Moose Jaw every week for the last year, year and a half, at least once a week, and at times the care could be better.

But day in and day out leading to the election, long-term care was in crisis. It was a crisis in long-term care throughout this province. And I'm not saying that there aren't situations that they brought forward that were absolutely legitimate. And as a government we are embarrassed; we need to do better and we need to strive to do better. And the Minister of Health talked about it today.

But how could it be in crisis for a year or two or three years leading up to an election? We have an election on April the 4th, and today was the first day they've asked a question on long-term care. If it was a crisis for a year or two, and we've been in the House, and that's the first question on long-term care, you've got to question yourself: is anything that they say, is there any credibility in most every issue that they raise?

I remember the Leader of the Opposition now talking about IPAC [International Performance Assessment Centre for geologic storage of CO₂] and how it was such a scandal. It was scandalous. And then it was dropped like a cold potato, like a hot potato, Mr. Speaker. They just don't follow through because the hyperbole from the opposition side . . . I mean there is, you know, and I'm not going to . . . Well maybe I am going to pick on a member or two. A member that would be new in this House that would ask a question and say, there was a drill to evacuate a school, a practice drill because the school was going to fall down around. Absolutely wrong, Mr. Speaker. They come in day in and day out with hyperbole.

And what happens — and again I don't want to tell the opposition what to do because they're doing very, very well in opposition and what they're doing — but when every issue that you raise is a crisis, and every issue that you raise is a scandal, guess what people start to think of the opposition's issues that they raise? It's, quite frankly, no credibility.

And that's what people have, I believe, come to see in the opposition, that every issue is overcooked, is over exaggerated, Mr. Speaker, to try and make the point. And what happens is the general public, quite frankly, have dismissed the opposition for any credibility because, Mr. Speaker, it goes over issue to issue. And I had a whole number of them here — whether it's smart meters, whether it's lean, whether it's long-term care, Mr. Speaker — I could go on and on just on the issues that the opposition raise day in and day out in this House, Mr. Speaker.

But that's not, that's not why I'm here. I want to talk a little bit about the budget, Mr. Speaker, and I want to commend the Minister of Finance on a great job of delivering the budget last week. I've had the opportunity to be on the government side now for eight and a half years, and I really would say, just from my perspective, budget speeches' successes and the delivery of a budget and how the response is towards the budget in large part is due to what's in the budget. But even in larger part is the credibility of the minister that delivers that budget, Mr. Speaker.

We have been very well served on this side of the House, whether it was minister Gantefoer for the first number of budgets, minister Krawetz over the last number of budgets, and now this new Finance minister, the member from Regina Northeast, in the delivery of this budget. The credibility, Mr. Speaker, has not dropped. In fact, not that it's gone up, but it's been at a very, very high level each and every budget. And that not only comes because of the credibility of the Minister of Finance, but also the credibility of the members that sit on treasury board.

I have been fortunate enough not to be named to treasury board, Mr. Speaker, in the eight and a half years, because I understand the amount of hours that are put in day in and day out by members on treasury board, and what a great job that those members do. They're not easy decisions, but it is truly a team that is delivered by the Minister of Finance that really brings those decisions across the line.

Mr. Speaker, I would say, you know, it's interesting again listening to the opposition. They'll find fault, and that's what opposition does as far as the budget speech. What they'll identify is where cuts are, and we should never make those cuts, as well as then each and every day come into the House and expect more and more spending. You can't have more and more spending and reject any cuts that were made. It is just not, Mr. Speaker, financially viable. And so there has to be some tough decisions, and those decisions were made, whether it's in the Ministry of Health, for example.

I remember the last time that the senior drug plan was raised from \$15 to 20. It was not an easy decision, and there were seniors that were not happy at that point. And, Mr. Speaker, we've had to adjust that again. Opposition would say that's just absolutely unfair and it shouldn't be happening, as well as then,

don't ever look at where some of the expenses are but continue to add. And I think it was \$5 billion worth of platform commitments that they made in the last general election. I don't know how they ever expected to ever balance a budget under commitments like that.

I do have to say though that I don't think there's a member on this side that is happy or satisfied that as a government that we're in a deficit position. Absolutely no one on this side would be. They shouldn't be. There is no way that we should accept the fact that going into the deficit is an okay position to be in. The Minister of Finance, treasury board ministries have done everything that they could to get this as close to balance. And it's not balanced, absolutely not, when you have a hole in revenue of \$1 billion, Mr. Speaker. There is few governments that could bring that into balance within this particular budget year.

[14:45]

But you have the . . . And the people have the commitment of this government that it will be brought into balance as soon as possible, preferably next fiscal year, Mr. Speaker. That is extremely important because I am no political historian, but I can tell you through the '80s, running deficits was the status quo. Running deficits on all parties — whether it was the NDP in Ontario, whether it was Conservatives here in Saskatchewan, whether it was the Liberal Party, Mr. Speaker, in provincial politics, whether it was the Conservative Party federally. Now we have a Liberal Party federally, we have provincial parties, Mr. Speaker, that are saying it's okay to run deficits. It is not okay to run a deficit budget, Mr. Speaker.

The members opposite continue to want us to spend, spend, spend, you know. And I guess that's again the role of the opposition but, from a government's perspective, being in a deficit position is not acceptable. We have done everything in our power to get that as close to balance as we possibly can in one fiscal year and into balance next fiscal year, Mr. Speaker. Because I can tell you that, you know, overspending may appease — whether it's in education, whether it's in health care, social services — may appease for the short term. But there comes a day where that has to be paid back, where there has to be a reckoning, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we're working as hard as we can to control spending.

A 2 per cent increase in spending, Mr. Speaker — I believe it's 2.3 within the health regions — is very, very tough to manage, absolutely. Now it would be easy to continue to increase set spending into the 5, and 6, and 7 per cent range. It isn't sustainable, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we need to do everything in our power to make sure that this budget gets into balance as soon as possible. You know, a plan to balance a budget by saying we're going to balance it in eight years is not a plan. It's not a plan at all, Mr. Speaker. That's why you need to be disciplined. That's why if you look at the four pillars of this budget, you'll see that everything that we've talked about in this budget is to work towards being in balance over the next fiscal year.

Having said that, you continue to need to invest in your infrastructure. Record investments with an infrastructure — whether it's highways, whether it's building schools, whether

it's hospitals, Mr. Speaker — are crucial for the long-term viability of the province. Having said that, year over year, operational costs need to be brought into check, and that's what this government is doing. Investments into infrastructure is a different thing, Mr. Speaker, and every government across Canada is looking at that as an investment within the future. But operational deficits are not acceptable, even though the opposition would certainly have us go into a deeper deficit by the spending that they are wanting to see happen.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at what the opposition did when they had the opportunity, when they were short of revenue, what was the first thing that the opposition — that the NDP; I shouldn't call them the opposition — what the NDP party would do the first time that they were in any sort of issue as far as revenue, they'd raise taxes. And I forget exactly how many times they raised the taxes . . .

An Hon. Member: — 21.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Ah, it's coming back to me — 21 times they raised taxes, Mr. Speaker, in this province and had no problem doing it, had no problem doing it.

In fact I remember one of their Finance ministers right after a provincial election talked about . . . You know, they like to say that the budget, we should have released it before. Harry Van Mulligen, remember for those that had been in here a while ago, Van Mulligen, he went through an election. And as soon as the election was over, they went through a budget right after the provincial election, and what did they do? They raised the PST [provincial sales tax]. And what was Harry Van Mulligen's response in the media? It just wouldn't have been popular to talk about it during the election campaign even though they raised the taxes 21 times.

Mr. Speaker, this budget has no tax increases. This is not the time to raise taxes. Having said that, you know, we'll have to have a look into the future. We have held the education portion of property tax at a level rate for about seven years, Mr. Speaker. It has a significant impact on property prices and on the ag community as well as overall within the province.

We've controlled spending. I've touched on that. You know, the Minister of Health would say he would just dream of a budget increase like the former Health minister. I don't know what you're talking about, quite frankly. Dream of an increase . . . Mr. Speaker, but I as the minister, former Minister of Highways, would dream of having a \$5 billion budget. Wow, that's an amazing amount of money. But controlled spending is extremely important. Investing in people, investing in infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, you've seen that in spades. I'm not going to get into number over number because so many of my colleagues up and down these government benches — and it's a long ways up and down this government bench, Mr. Speaker — have done a very good job of identifying where the increases are compared to what we used to see under the former government.

Mr. Speaker, save it to say that we've only been a newly elected government for the last number of months and the budget was brought in, Mr. Speaker. People in Saskatchewan, through the campaign, knew times were tough. They didn't expect lavish

spending. They certainly were hoping that there weren't tax increases, but I don't know if we would have surprised too many if there would have been a tax increase. Mr. Speaker, people in this province are extremely intelligent and know where the finances of this province would be, Mr. Speaker.

And I don't believe, Mr. Speaker, in what the opposition says that anything was hid from the general public. Absolutely not. They had a very good idea of where this province was and chose one party to navigate our province through the drop in revenues through renewable resources, that drop and also then controlling the spending relative to the finances of the province. And I think that's why you saw . . . Well I would say that the government had a large part to do with it and past record of a government of eight years — nearly a decade, to the opposition.

And also the leadership of our Premier, Mr. Speaker. No one has more credibility across this province or across Canada than the Premier of Saskatchewan, and his leadership I think came through in spades, Mr. Speaker. And I don't know if . . . I think we could quite easily do a poll on this side that we're all very, very thankful that we went into and through the election with the leadership of our Premier, Mr. Speaker.

It'll be interesting to see what happens into the future with the opposition. They have a strong leader there right now, whether he lasts. That chair has been a bit of an ejection chair out of this Chamber, Mr. Speaker. And I would say that if he would like to stay in this House, I would move over one to the left or one to the right or, you know, if you wanted to come on over to this side, Mr. Speaker. You know, actually there's no room in the inn on this side, Mr. Speaker, but I'm sure we could find a spot over there for him.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I have taken more than my 20 minutes. I want to say that I am very impressed and will be supporting the budget. I cannot support the amendment, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the vote at the end of the budget process because, Mr. Speaker, I believe what the budget has is what the people want.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota.

Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The budget brought down by the Minister of Finance last week has, not surprisingly, generated much discussion and debate. Those discussions extend of course to our respective constituencies, and over the weekend I met and chatted with a number of Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota residents at barbecues and coffees and the like.

One conversation stays in my mind. Discussing the budget, a constituent told me he felt real concern, as he put it, about the state of things all around us. Think about it, he said. Next door in Alberta — so long our more affluent, successful brother — there are changing fortunes, great upheaval. Then there's go-for-broke Ontario. A runaway deficit culture also in Ottawa. Even south of the border there's unprecedented fractiousness, uncertainty of outcome. My friend said he was truly worried, but at least, he said, it was a relief to live in Saskatchewan on what he called an island of sanity.

An island of sanity, Mr. Speaker, despite unprecedented drops in oil and potash prices that have led to a \$968 million drop in resource revenue. Last year there were also disastrous forest fires up north that of course had to be financially reckoned with, no question, and thank goodness weren't even more devastating. As a result, yes there have had to be some sacrifices in this budget: realignments, some tough decisions. Yet due to the wise stewardship of this government and of the Minister of Finance, an island of sanity we remain — no mean feat. For one, no new taxes, which is a singular achievement considering the current economic climate. And despite this climate, there have been decisions to invest in the things that matter to the people of this province: long-term, tangible, real things such as schools and hospitals.

There are increases to the Ministry of Agriculture's funding by 7.5 per cent; \$27 million too for crucial agricultural research to support improvements in productivity and to enhance exports.

The highways budget tops \$1 billion and includes a three million, seventy million dollar surge to fix highways across the province. As part of \$128 million in municipal infrastructure, 10 million will be put toward the Saskatoon north commuter parkway bridge.

In and adjoining my constituency of Stonebridge-Dakota, work continues on twinning Highway 16 between Saskatoon and Clavet, a crucial commuter and commercial connector. Passing lanes have been announced in this budget for Highway 15 between Saskatoon and Humboldt, and repaving Highway 11 south of Dundurn, which is great news. As well, pre-budget, our government with its partners, the city of Saskatoon and the federal government, announced a new overpass on Boychuk Drive and Highway 16 — another exciting, necessary investment.

And of course, work continues on the joint-use school in Stonebridge. I got to tour it recently. It looks amazing as work continues on the other — on budget and on time — 18 joint-use schools across the province to keep things moving, to keep Saskatchewan strong, an island of sanity.

Surely, Mr. Speaker, the guiding rule of any government in tough times, in any times, is first and foremost, *primum non nocere*, to do no harm. Caution, the responsible husbanding of finances, are often discredited as no can do — thin gruel, boring. There's always pressure to spend or tax up a storm. I remember in the years following the crisis of 2008, the late federal Finance minister Jim Flaherty was mocked for saying that he wanted to remain cautious, to stay the course, that the economy was still too volatile for radical shakeup. He was borne out.

To do no harm is the only honourable course, and in 2016 we need only look around us for the effects of the opposite. In BC, industry and wealth creation have in too many quarters borne . . . become the enemy, while pipeline and liquid natural gas projects have to go through so many consultative impediments, companies may simply give up and start to look elsewhere. In many cases, they already have.

The BC *Carbon Tax Act* meanwhile was much heralded at its inception, but interestingly it's not going so well. What could

go wrong when the original designers assumed the tax would simply keep rising far above the current \$30 per tonne to closer to \$300 per tonne by 2050? The problem is, not only have emissions started to inch up, but the majority of British Columbians quite simply don't want to pay any more. According to recent findings by Innovative Research and others, they oppose a higher tax, and these include a great number of the BC Premier's own liberal voters.

Unsurprisingly for the majority of Canadians right now, jobs and economic growth are the top concern. Sound familiar? Those are the top concerns here in Saskatchewan too. Next door in Alberta the government recently posted a \$10 billion deficit. Meanwhile its brand new Bill 20 is taxing the purchase of all fossil fuels, including gas and natural gas. As one commentator put it, raising the price of everything for Albertans comes at the worst possible time. And the 100-megatonne limit on carbon emissions is still to come. Do no harm, Mr. Speaker?

In Manitoba, a \$934 million deficit with no plans to balance for eight years. In Ontario, dysfunctional Ontario: utility rates sky high; a sweeping latest green plan that will severely impact manufacturing, let alone the average Ontarian; again, slipping credit ratings, more debt per capita than even California. The list goes on. Or Newfoundland where the money simply appears to have dried up, so why not just double the price of gas? And of course the federal government, shifting deficit forecasts, massive spending announcements that seem to emerge, then morph by the day.

[15:00]

Clearly none of these jurisdictions has heard of the Laffer curve — Mr. Speaker, no laughing matter — the very simple economic theory that increasing tax rates in all forms beyond a certain point will simply be counterproductive, not only for people and for their motivation to work and make work and spend but for governments to raise further tax revenue. There is a point beyond which you simply cannot go.

Following the onset of the terrible forest fires in Fort McMurray last month, we all recall how the markets, even the media, got a bit skittish about oil companies having to curb or in some cases cease production altogether around Fort Mac. When were things going to get back on tap, they asked. There were the oil execs meeting with the Alberta Premier, honourably reassuring her and fellow Canadians that the resource that fuels our schools and roads and hospitals was going to be back on tap as soon as possible, producing millions of dollars for our economy every day.

Which got me to thinking. I've read only one book by Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead*. A friend of mine in university urged me to read it. But it suddenly came back to me how, as I recall, the key captains of industry just up and disappear one day. In effect, they go on strike. The economy, fictional but not unrecognizable, has simply become unworkable, so regulated and counter to what they want to do and achieve and build, that they simply quit. What if the oil and resource executives in Alberta and in this province ever did the same, I thought. Not that we ever want that but, if they did, maybe then finally, not only the radical proponents of the Leap Manifesto but just the casual haters of the oil sands, of any industry, they might

finally, finally realize that it really is the economy, stupid.

And you have to wonder, has there ever been a time when the one major solution to wealth creation — responsibly produced of course always, and what should always be subject to scrutiny and transparency — has there ever been a time when that one solution is so treated with contempt, as with pipelines for example, that it becomes the public enemy?

Only here in Saskatchewan, on this island of sanity, has there been one official voice, that of our Premier, echoed by not only our government but by the people across this province in favour of this great fueler of all our livelihoods, arguably of our way of life. I've always thought a bobble-head of the Premier sitting atop a pipeline, holding a little Canadian flag would sell like hotcakes. Maybe next fundraising cycle.

What could we accomplish if we work together as one country to build the pipelines we need? It is the height of disingenuousness for our colleagues across the aisle to talk about not having built any, when we simply can't without partners. That's one problem with being an island. We're landlocked. We need help. We need co-operation. We need to treat this issue, and for our federal counterparts to treat this issue, as the single greatest economic unifier of our country today — a modern-day trans-Canada railway or Trans-Canada Highway. It should be whatever it takes for the peace, order, and good government of this country.

Of course that's not the only challenge to good government or governance facing us today, Mr. Speaker. There has come to be an enervation, a languor, a lack of vigour, a loss of common sense in the running of many public bodies and administrations in so many areas. I've heard it again and again at the door, how so many have gone outsourcing crazy. Too many school divisions, health regions, civic administrations, post-secondary institutions can't take a step without hiring someone from the outside for what should be in-house administrative decisions, spending at times millions of dollars on risk assessments for example, for the most predictable of risks. What could go wrong in a school gym, in an ER [emergency room]? Get six or seven or ten teachers, nurses, and doctors, parents, ordinary citizens together around a table, and you could figure it out and move on.

Last I heard the Conservative British government scrapped outside consultants and saved millions. Where they can, public administration should do the same. Take the leap. Take the risk. Our parents and grandparents and great-grandparents were builders and visionaries of projects long before all the managers came along and the missions and the visions and a hundred strategies for every one course of action. And they did just fine, often much better.

I know they wouldn't approve of all the travel to far-flung conferences by managers of this or that, often with spouses in tow to dovetail on a personal holiday when many would have difficulty answering two simple questions when they got home. One: specifically how did that conference, for example, help the organization as a whole? And most of all, how did it help students or patients or the people of this province? I believe these are questions that every superintendent, health region manager, city planner should be obliged to answer on the public

record. After all they are stewards too — stewards of public money.

Maybe it's also time to bring in question period in all public bodies which the public can tune in to watch so that there's more heckling. It's healthy to have to think on your feet sometimes. The fact that we've become so closed, so tending toward in camera this and closed committee that, isn't good for democracy. It's definitely not good for shedding light on public spending decisions.

Quite simply, Mr. Speaker, it is time for a philosophical shift in how we regard the entitlement to spend. That's a big part to my mind of what we are calling transformational change. We've got to get back to trusting our instincts; to being spending and tax ombudsman, all of us, and asking the three or four people we know that personally have basic common sense — mother, spouse, best friend, colleague — would you spend \$1 million on that? Would you hire another manager or send three people to that conference?

We've got to be compassionate and not be afraid to be about promoting that spirit of austerity in the way we run things. Wear it like a badge of honour so that we can focus on the front line, the people on the ground, whoever they are. It's the backroom boys, the managers, the risk assessors who so often suck the energy out of a place.

Quite simply, Mr. Speaker, we must never forget the immortal words of Huey Lewis and the News, "It's hip to be square." It's hip to be cautious when it comes to saving public money.

As we all know the big Brexit vote in the UK [United Kingdom] is coming up in a couple of weeks. Polls are close. If only the framers of the European Union had asked their closest common sense acquaintances a few key questions such as, is it wise to have two EU [European Union] capitals? Do we want to try to dismantle national tax structures, immigration structures, policing, and aim to create a united states of Europe run by bureaucrats? Is that a good idea? Good public spending.

When this is all over — because I believe the dissolution of the EU in its current form will occur and I predict the Brits will vote with Boris Johnson to leave — the dollar figures, the waste, what has been poured into bureaucracy since the formation of that union as it moved away from what it should be and should have been, which is a standard trade union, to some kind of grand plan governed predominantly by non-elected bureaucrats who went on a lot of conferences, when we learn what it all costs we will never recover from the shock. Those Eurocrats should be the ones trying to recruit our Premier.

Last Thursday, Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to attend the University of Saskatchewan convocation — always moving affairs. It always gets me when a young man or young woman crosses the stage and someone yells out, I love you, or as happened on Thursday from someone's dad, way to go, pumpkin. These were hard-working, committed students who were graduating on Thursday from vet med and nursing and dentistry. One woman, I noticed, had her little daughter with her, a young mother with a young child getting a dentistry degree. Way to go. And one wishes them so well. We all wish

them so well.

The Dean of Dentistry introduced the young woman, Stefani Shnier, who won the award for outstanding achievement in dentistry. And he said, look at that radiant smile. Still, it hasn't been much in evidence these past four years, more like a clenched jaw because Stefani was always working so hard. Meanwhile, he said, Stefani will be happy to return to her hobbies because for the last four years her hobbies have been studying. Doesn't that say it all? That's the spirit. And that's the reality of grit and determination and achieving success. Your fellow classmates know it. The entire row of dentistry students stood up for you.

We hope, Stefani, you will find a job here, a future here, that you won't leave as so many did in the past, that you can raise a family here and enjoy success and a fair tax structure. That your government will not become overly bureaucratized and watch its spending, and, when it does spend, that it will spend on the things that will make your everyday life better, and better for your children. Because we want to have you and we will work to keep you and to do no harm. That's what we aim for and that was the aim of the Minister of Finance's budget that was brought down last Wednesday.

I am proud to support the budget without amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Pasqua.

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to be able to stand and enter into debate on the budget motion set before us. This budget is very rational and it is going to make sure that the government makes a decision that reflects the value of Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, with the delay in the provincial election for six months because of federal election announced to be held on October 19, 2015, government knew March is the budget month, which ended up in the writ period. We did not hide the budget, not at all, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Finance and the Premier have been very transparent throughout the entire process.

Mr. Speaker, let us have a brief look on the contemporary economic challenges in Canadian economy where Saskatchewan resource revenue were reduced by more than \$1 billion. Mr. Speaker, this has had a huge impact on both the Saskatchewan economy and the government's revenue. But the Saskatchewan economy is strong and is already starting to rebound.

In order to ensure that Saskatchewan government is able to provide the service to the people of this province need and invest in needed infrastructure, the Minister of Finance announced that there will be small deficit of \$434 million. Government has been working for a better life in Saskatchewan, better life for families, better life after graduation, better life for small and big businesses, farmers, and all people in Saskatchewan. We kept Saskatchewan people informed about our financial situation and will continue to do so.

Mr. Speaker, we value taxpayers' money and decided not to

raise taxes and negatively affect the economy. This contrasts the NDP who seems to want to spend way more but they say that we are spending too much. They are not making any sense, but we know their record. Mr. Speaker, their record is raising taxes 21 times in 16 years. Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind this House that during the election, the NDP campaign platform, which they have claimed was fully costed, actually had \$595 million in un-costed promises. Mr. Speaker, while we respect taxpayers' money, it is obvious that NDP do not.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to keeping taxes low and more money in the hands of taxpayers. The NDP have a different mentality. Mr. Speaker, here is what former NDP Finance minister Harry Van Mulligen said, and I quote:

Why don't parties want to talk about tax hikes during elections? Well I don't know. I suspect that anyone who talks about tax hikes is not likely to be very popular during the course of an election campaign.

This budget contains no tax hikes, Mr. Speaker. Our government, the other way around. We have paid down debt and lowered the stifling taxes from previous NDP governments. Since 2007 nearly \$6 billion in tax reductions, and the money went back where it belongs — to families, individuals, homeowners, businesses, and farmers. Mr. Speaker, our government made Saskatchewan one of the lowest personal and business tax burdens in Canada, according to the recent Conference Board of Canada report.

Saskatchewan's 2016-2017 budget will keep Saskatchewan strong by controlling operational spending and investing in people and infrastructure. To emphasize again, this year the budget contains no tax increases and no new taxes, Mr. Speaker.

[15:15]

Mr. Speaker, to review, the budget forecasts total revenue of \$14.02 billion and total expenses of 14.46 billion for a projected deficit of about \$434 million in 2016-17. This is a manageable deficit and includes record investments in our province.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about keeping Saskatchewan strong, many objectives pop up in mind. It is one serious job. I was sitting at home the other day and my son asked me one question, Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with the House. He asked me, "Dad, what would you think the number one priority when you say keep Saskatchewan strong?" I asked him, "What would you think the number one priority should be?" He said, "I think health and education." I asked, "Which one is the number one? You told me two." He said both were, in the opinion, number one. Mr. Speaker, we take both number ones seriously and we will keep that way.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to build communities and nations for Saskatchewan's future, our students from schools and from universities have many rights. And here is the NDP, close 176 schools and make classrooms crowded. And, Mr. Speaker, where did the staff and the teachers go? Here was thousands of jobs lost.

Here is our government budget, the 2016-2017 budget: continue

to keep Saskatchewan strong by investing \$2.2 billion in pre-K to grade 12 [pre-kindergarten to grade 12]. The operational funding to the school divisions in 2016-2017 is \$1.8 billion, an increase of \$16.6 million over the last year to support pre-K to grade 12 education and overall average increases of 34 per cent in school division operation funding since 2007 and 2008.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Education's total capital funding allocation for 2016-17 is 391.4 million, which is the largest budgetary capital allocation for school in our province's history. Mr. Speaker, \$310.5 million for the joint-use schools project including \$293.536 million to continue construction on the 18 new elementary schools, nine joint sites.

Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign in Regina Pasqua constituency, I have seen many happy faces. People have a good level of . . . on this government. While now there will be another new school in Harbour Landing in 2017, it is not only one school, Mr. Speaker. They've got one hockey rink beside it and a couple of basketball courts as well.

Mr. Speaker, it will close to 1,000 students admitting in this school. That will reduce the number of students per class from Ethel Milliken School, Dr. Perry School, Deshayes Catholic School, and Grant Road School. So we are working on crowded classes created by NDP by closing 176 schools.

Mr. Speaker, when schools are built closer to homes, kids spend more time with parents which is a quality time for both parents and for kids — more time to play hockey or football. Mr. Speaker, we are investing \$41.9 million in advanced major capital projects already under way, \$33.4 million, a 24 per cent increase for schools, Mr. Speaker, \$4.6 million for emergent funding and 1 million to support facility assessments.

Mr. Speaker, I am not only talking about pre-K to grade 12 education but also advanced education. The 2016-17 budget will maintain strong investment in our province's post-secondary institutions and students. Over the past nine years the province has invested more than 7.3 billion in post-secondary education. Operating grants to the province's post-secondary institutions this year are virtually unchanged. Saskatchewan post-secondary schools continue to receive strong support, including 475 million for the universities of Saskatchewan and Regina and their affiliated and federated colleges, 156 million for Saskatchewan Polytechnic, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, and Gabriel Dumont Institute, and 29 million for Saskatchewan's regional colleges.

The government's strong commitment to students is also reflected in the range of programs aimed at helping them save and pay for the schools. Advanced Education's budget provides more than 53 million in direct support to students, including 32.5 million for the Student Aid Fund to provide students grants, bursaries, and loans; 14.3 million for scholarships including the Saskatchewan advantage scholarship; and 6.5 for the Saskatchewan advantage grant for education savings. This budget provides nearly 26 million in capital for advanced education and training with an estimate of 170 million to be provided to this sector over the next four years. This year the province will continue to provide 23.6 million to post-secondary schools for preventative maintenance and

renewal.

Mr. Speaker, as my kids look for post-secondary institutions to attend in these upcoming years, because of our government we have great options right here in our province. We also need to point out that advanced education is better off under the government, as when the NDP were in power they only increased funding for post-secondary institutions by just 20 per cent over 16 years, an average increase of just over 1 per cent per year. Mr. Speaker, that is a big contrast to our government investment of 7.3 billion in post-secondary education since 2007, a 59 per cent increase over nine years. When you include the graduation retention program, low taxes, and great services across government, it is obvious why over 85,000 people have moved to Saskatchewan since we formed government and our graduates no longer have to look for work elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, I had experience speaking to a few doctors during the campaign and here was the one question I used to ask from health officials. After lengthy discussions, I asked that, do you think this government needs to improve the health system? Well I do not get any answer. Then I made it easier for them: well would you think that the government is doing wrong? They said, the government is doing everything right and we are happy with the government. Mr. Speaker, it is not only the doctor officials I spoke. It was the IT [information technology] people and the businessmen. There, everyone was satisfied what the government is doing and we will keep it this way.

Mr. Speaker, I often ask constituents how they feel about our health care system. They're also happy with that. They say that they are impressed with it and, although there is still lots of work to do, they think we are going in the right direction. Mr. Speaker, health was a priority in our budget.

With the record investment, along with a commitment to make sure we are providing great value for the taxpayers, the health budget will be \$5.17 billion invested in health infrastructure, improving access to care, reducing wait times for surgery and diagnostic service for Saskatchewan people. The 2016-17 health budget is an increase of \$57.4 million over 2015-2016. There has now been a 50 per cent increase in the health budget since 2007.

A special commissioner will be appointed to recommend options for fewer health regions, for more effective and efficient delivery of province-wide service. The name of the commissioner will be announced in the coming days and is a part of the transformational change initiative.

Mr. Speaker, regional health authorities will receive 3.4 billion for operating funding, an increase of 2.3 per cent over funding provided to regional health authorities last year and 56 per cent increase since 2007, including 20 million in additional funding to reduce surgical wait times. The demand for surgery continued to rise in Saskatchewan with an estimated 3 per cent more surgery needed in 2016-17 compared to 2015-2016 surgical funding in 2016 and '17.

The Saskatchewan Cancer Agency is also receiving more than \$167 million in funding in this budget, and that's up \$9.8 million from the last year. The substantial increase in funding will help pay for the addition of 15 new cancer drugs that were

approved last year since 2007.

The health budget includes \$500,000 to fulfill the government campaign commitment to expand its robotic telemedical for northern communities. This project allows health care professionals to connect with the patients remotely and provide real-time assessment diagnoses and patient managements.

The budget is also reducing regional health authorities' administration expenses by 7.5 million, and that will be reinvesting funding into the front-line staff in long-term care homes. This is equal to 5 per cent reduction in general administration costs to be determined as a part of RHA [regional health authority] budget finalizing in the coming months.

The capital investment total is 71.4 million in 2016-2017, including a 25 per cent increase, to a total of \$34.7 million for capital maintenance across the province. Capital funding is also being provided for the power plant upgrade at Saskatoon Royal University Hospital, electrical renewal project in the Regina General and Pasqua Hospital, and completion of construction at the Kelvington integrated care facility.

Mr. Speaker, the people of my constituency applaud the government for these investments. And although the NDP seems to talk a lot about health, they never seem to offer any solution. While they talk we have been making the changes required to keep the Saskatchewan health care system strong.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good budget, and it keeps our election promises and keeps moving Saskatchewan forward.

I would like to thank the Minister of Finance for the hard work in creating the budget and the Premier for his continued leadership in our province. Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the budget moved by Minister of Finance, seconded by the member from Regina University, and will not supporting any amendment in it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for recognizing me to enter into this debate on our budget here that was tabled in this Assembly here by our illustrious Finance minister just a few short days ago.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to maybe get something on the record right away in the event that I might not remember it at the end. But I will be supporting this budget that was tabled the other day, Mr. Speaker, and I will not be supporting any of the amendments that were made.

As is customary too, Mr. Speaker, I would like to just acknowledge a few people that work with me each and every day, whether it be in the constituency of Rosthern-Shellbrook, in our constituency office there. We have Ms. Sally Fitch, Mr. Speaker, that you know answers the phone and talks to all of those individuals that call our office with different concerns and questions, Mr. Speaker, and she treats each and every one of them in a fair and courteous manner. And I want to thank her for the effort and the smile that she brings to work each and

every day.

[15:30]

Mr. Speaker, also in our office of . . . We have our office in the Minister of Advanced Education's office here in this building, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank our staff that work so very hard to keep me in the appropriate place and the place that I'm supposed to be going, Mr. Speaker, with more often than not the right set of notes in front of me, and briefing notes and information. And I want to thank each of them in our office right here. We have Michelle and Jane in the front of the office. I want to thank them for keeping me organized, Mr. Speaker.

We have Megan and Kris, our ministerial assistants in the office of Advanced Education, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank them for their efforts. Gary Hutchings, my chief of staff, Mr. Speaker. And our summer student, our summer student Molly Waldman, who I am sure is wondering what kind of an office environment she has landed herself in. But we have a lot of fun up there, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank them for the effort that they bring to work each and every day.

And last but not least, Mr. Speaker . . . I've got a couple left, but my family, Mr. Speaker. And as members in this Assembly know, this is not a single . . . You do not serve in this Assembly alone, Mr. Speaker. You serve on behalf of the constituents in your constituency. But you serve because your family will allow you. They allow you the time and they make sacrifices as well. I think they're sacrifices. They might think it's quite nice to have me away some days. Mr. Speaker, nonetheless each of us, our families, I think it's fair to say, make some degree of sacrifice so that we may serve on the behalf of our constituency and the province and this Assembly to bring the views forward for people across the province. So I do want to thank my wife, Krista, my daughter Taryn, and my son Carter for that.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, the constituents of Rosthern-Shellbrook. As we know, our boundaries changed this last election. My boundaries were no different in the constituency of Rosthern-Shellbrook. We expanded into the community of Glaslyn, the RM [rural municipality] of Parkdale, Mr. Speaker, down to the First Nation communities of Saulteaux and Moosomin in around Cochin area, Mr. Speaker. And we're now about three hours, just over three hours from corner to corner in our constituency. We're consisting now, and I'm just going off memory, I think five towns. We'd be up to 12 villages now, Mr. Speaker, five First Nations, and 15, 16, 17 rural municipalities that we service in that area, Mr. Speaker, and we represent, I represent in this Assembly on their behalf, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to thank each and every one that I run across through our municipal meetings, through our travels throughout that constituency for the input that they provide me. And sometimes they feel like maybe they're, you know, providing negative input or positive input, but the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, is that I represent their views down here in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and I thank them for taking the time to guide me with the concerns that come from our area, Mr. Speaker, up along the forest fringe in the constituency of Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the budget that was tabled here the other day, I think it was important and I thought it was quite special actually, to have three previous Finance ministers in the room when that budget was tabled, Mr. Speaker. I thought it was indicative of not just the importance of any budget, Mr. Speaker, but maybe indicative of the importance of this budget when you have about \$968 million missing on the revenue side, Mr. Speaker, due to some of the natural resource challenges that we've had over the course of the last number of months, Mr. Speaker, and looking into the future.

And I think it was important to acknowledge the work that my treasury board colleagues had done along with the Finance minister, Mr. Speaker, led by the Finance minister in many cases, on doing what we can to close that revenue gap, Mr. Speaker, and the consultation that we had with our entire caucus, Mr. Speaker, as the budget comes together. It just doesn't come together by one or two people, Mr. Speaker. It comes together by an entire governing entity, Mr. Speaker, and this budget was no exception. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank each and every member of the Saskatchewan Party caucus for their input on what I think is a very important budget as we move into the days and months ahead.

Mr. Speaker, we have, as we've said, a situation where we have some challenging fiscal times here in the province, Mr. Speaker. And it's important I think for each of us, Mr. Speaker, in our areas and around the province to have a look in the mirror at the programs that we offer as a government on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We invest, and that's what governments do is invest the people of Saskatchewan's dollars, Mr. Speaker, back into their communities, back into the services that are available to families, Mr. Speaker, available to communities right across this province. And this is an opportunity I think for all of us to represent our constituencies and their interests, Mr. Speaker, as we go through this process with largely less revenue this year than what we've had in previous years.

Mr. Speaker, and with respect to the budget and with respect to the challenges that we had on the revenue side of the budget, I think it's important to remember, Mr. Speaker, that in this budget there was no tax increases that were present in the budget, Mr. Speaker. That was a commitment that was made in the election, and it's a commitment that was kept upon the releasing of this budget. Mr. Speaker, this budget continued to control spending to ensure that we are able to be sustainable into the future with the programs that are viewed as being core, Mr. Speaker, to the people of Saskatchewan.

And it continues to invest in people, Mr. Speaker, and that's no more notable than in the files such as Health, Mr. Speaker, the file that I'm responsible for, in Advanced Education, with our post-secondary partners across the province of Saskatchewan. And it continues to invest in infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, which has been an important cornerstone of this government, Mr. Speaker, with \$8 billion invested in infrastructure over the last eight and a half years, Mr. Speaker. And that continues with investment in infrastructure in this budget that was tabled here by this Finance minister just last week.

With respect to infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, I think it's incumbent on us to ... investment, I guess, in people and

infrastructure, but to look no further than the investments that have been made with respect to health care, Mr. Speaker. And that's very relevant in the constituency of Rosthern-Shellbrook. There's been investments in infrastructure made in the community where I live with one of the 13 long-term care facilities up and running there, Mr. Speaker.

There's been investments in people made, Mr. Speaker, and medical professionals. And some of the 650 more doctors that we have working across the province of Saskatchewan are working in the constituency of Rosthern-Shellbrook. Mr. Speaker, we have nurse practitioners that were not present a decade ago that are now commonplace in many of the rural communities across Rosthern-Shellbrook, Mr. Speaker, the constituency of Rosthern-Shellbrook, as well as nurse practitioners that are present in communities across the province of Saskatchewan. And I think it's incumbent to mention that our health care and how we deliver health care, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is changing.

Mr. Speaker, in our constituency we have a couple of health regions that cover areas across the broad and vast area of Rosthern-Shellbrook, the first being the Saskatoon Health Region, Mr. Speaker, and the second being the Prince Albert Parkland Health Region. And to a lesser degree, we would have the health region out of North Battleford into the RM of Parkdale and in that area, Mr. Speaker. But we have the Saskatoon Health Region, Mr. Speaker, which has experienced since 2007 with its operating grants, Mr. Speaker, an increase of just over 68 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I think that is indicative of this government's commitment to investing in people and investing in communities, investing in things like the surgery wait time initiative, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we can take jurisdictions such as Saskatchewan, that was noted for having some of the longest surgery wait times in the Dominion of Canada, to some of the some of the shortest surgery wait times in our nation, Mr. Speaker. That's through investments like we have in the Saskatoon Health Region, the \$28 million that we invested in the surgery wait time initiative, Mr. Speaker, but also through increases in operating investments to our health regions like the Saskatoon Health Region of 68 per cent, the P.A. Parkland Health Region, Mr. Speaker, an increase of over 74 per cent in that same time period. Mr. Speaker, these are significant increases that affect just not the community of Prince Albert, but communities in the surrounding area, communities like Shellbrook, Blaine Lake, Spiritwood, Mr. Speaker, communities in the constituency of Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Saskatchewan economy and in particular with respect to what I call the spinal cord of our Saskatchewan economy, Mr. Speaker, is agriculture. And agriculture is the main economic driver, I think, in many parts of the province of Saskatchewan, but in particular in the constituency of Rosthern-Shellbrook. And in many cases, Mr. Speaker, we talk about exports and we're at a record export level now with agriculture at 15.3 billion tonnes. But much of that export, Mr. Speaker, is due to producing more, to increase the agronomics as the member from Melville-Saltcoats talked about, increase genetic varieties that farmers are able to utilize through research that has happened right here, Mr. Speaker, at the College of Agriculture at the University of Saskatchewan,

Mr. Speaker, and research that has been leap-frogged off of in the industry.

But, Mr. Speaker, there's also increases in value of our exports coming through value-added production, if you will. And one of the unsung heroes here in the province of Saskatchewan is what we do with some of the canola we grow, Mr. Speaker. And if you go back a number of years, there wasn't very many acres of canola grown. Now it's substantial, and it's a staple crop here in the province of Saskatchewan. It's a dominant crop where I live up along the forest fringe. But, Mr. Speaker, last year we grew just under 9 million tonnes of canola, 8.8 million tonnes of canola. Mr. Speaker, 1.3 million tonnes of that canola was crushed into oil right here in the province of Saskatchewan. It was crushed in communities like Nipawin, like Clavet, like Yorkton, and communities such as Lloydminster, Mr. Speaker, and that canola oil was transformed into \$1.4 billion worth of exports right here in the province of Saskatchewan. It created jobs. It created exports, Mr. Speaker. And it's a real success story of agriculture in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, as we export our products, we need an avenue to get those products to market, whether it be rail, Mr. Speaker, whether it be our highways across the province. And this budget here the other day brought us record investment in highways of \$1.15 billion, Mr. Speaker. In the constituency of Rosthern-Shellbrook, there's a number of items in that budget that directly affect us, or indirectly, Mr. Speaker. Overpasses at Warman and Martensville, Mr. Speaker, most of our constituency goes to Saskatoon through one of those routes.

We have a major highway, over \$13 million worth of work happening to Highway 3, Mr. Speaker, in the Holbein and Crutwell area along with some channelling and some turning lanes, acceleration lanes at the busy intersection of 55 and 3, a much-needed project, Mr. Speaker, and one that we're very, very happy to see in this budget.

Another high point, Mr. Speaker, and I'll get no argument from the member from Biggar-Sask Valley on the work, on the improvements that are going to be done to Highway 340 as it goes between Hafford and Radisson, I believe, is where it dumps out onto the 16. It's a major commuter highway for individuals living in that area, Mr. Speaker, and it's going to see some much-needed investments. It's one of our famous thin membrane surface highways in the province of Saskatchewan and, Mr. Speaker, it's going to see some much-needed attention this year. And that, Mr. Speaker, is part of our \$30 million investment in our \$70 million campaign commitment in highway surge funding.

Mr. Speaker, 376 is a gravel highway coming out of the Mayfair, Rabbit Lake area. And that's an area, Mr. Speaker, with another TMS [thin membrane surface] highway where we'll use the gravel highways, if you will, to bring the export products out, the cattle into the PFRA [Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration] pasture in that area, as well as the agricultural grain and whatnot that's grown in that area. A pretty broad area to get it out to market. Mr. Speaker, that as well is going to see some much-needed investment in surge funding, in some of the surge funding that was committed to by this government, Mr. Speaker.

There's been significant investment in years past. And I can think of some of the work that was done to Highway 3, Mr. Speaker, in years past — necessary work. I can think of some of the work that was done and paid for by this government to the bridge in Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker, the Diefenbaker bridge in Prince Albert with almost \$5 million invested just a few years ago, Mr. Speaker. Another in excess, I believe, of \$1 million in this current year, Mr. Speaker, doing some work to that. I think of Highway 11 between Saskatoon and Prince Albert, the highway that allows those exports to come out of Prince Albert to the southern markets, Mr. Speaker, and that investment.

Mr. Speaker, I can't help but think of an evening that I spent with the member from P.A. Carlton and the member from Sask Rivers, Mr. Speaker, the member from Batoche during the campaign when we had the opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to debate some relevant issues in Prince Albert and in that particular area. And, Mr. Speaker, I remember the members opposite and their previous leader that is not here now but, Mr. Speaker, where he'd come up into the community of Prince Albert a number of times, a number of times to announce the fact that they're going to build a brand new bridge in Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker. I think maybe four times. I may be mistaken, but I think he was there four times to announce that project. Am I right?

[15:45]

And, Mr. Speaker, in the later days of the campaign, all parties are required to come out with a document, Mr. Speaker, that explains how they're going to do what they say they're going to do. Well, Mr. Speaker, that document had come out and it was missing a number of items, one of them being a road to Wollaston Lake, but another one, Mr. Speaker, it was missing, was how they were precisely going to pay for another bridge crossing in the community of Prince Albert. So without having a proper document, Mr. Speaker, that explained how they were going to pay for what they say they were going to do, Mr. Speaker, one of the candidates that evening in that discussion — I believe it was one of the opposition candidates for Saskatchewan Rivers if I'm not mistaken — explained that probably the casino in Prince Albert could pay for that bridge, Mr. Speaker.

So I think it's incumbent, Mr. Speaker, to explain that the name of that bridge is not the casino bridge. It's the John Diefenbaker bridge, Mr. Speaker, and it's this government that continues to invest in the repairs, the necessary repairs to that bridge, Mr. Speaker. It's been this government that is committed to a funding method that we use with other communities, Mr. Speaker, in the construction of a new bridge, Mr. Speaker. It's been this government that has invested and invested heavily in Prince Albert and the region around Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker, in the Pineview Terrace, Mr. Speaker, and the highways that I had mentioned. Not to mention, Mr. Speaker, has invested in the present bridge that is there and the necessary repairs to that bridge as it is a gateway to the North. Mr. Speaker . . .

An Hon. Member: — Casino money.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Casino money, yes.

Mr. Speaker, I'd be remiss if I didn't enter a couple of

comments with respect to municipal revenue sharing. As I said, we deal with a number of municipalities across the constituency of Rosthern-Shellbrook, and like my friend from Carrot River, I want to definitely enter in a couple of comments on some of our communities and what's happened with their municipal revenue sharing.

We have, Mr. Speaker, the community of Spiritwood since 2007 is up 124 per cent. Mr. Speaker, we have the community of Hafford, up 141 per cent in their municipal revenue sharing since 2007. Blaine Lake's 138 per cent; Rosthern, 146 per cent; the community of Shellbrook, 164 per cent increase. Mr. Speaker, some of the cities in and around the area that are important to our constituency with people that are working in the cities, living in the rural areas, North Battleford, up 162 per cent, Mr. Speaker; Saskatoon, up 173 per cent; and Prince Albert, up 156 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to this, and I've talked about some of the highways investments and some of the other investments in those communities, but in Rosthern-Shellbrook, in addition to over doubling the municipal revenue sharing by time and a half in many cases, Mr. Speaker, we've invested in water plants in Spiritwood. We've invested in sewage treatment plants in the communities of Medstead and Shellbrook, Mr. Speaker. We've invested in a fire hall at Rosthern. We've invested enormously in a community rink affordability grant, Mr. Speaker, most notably in the community of Rosthern.

Mr. Speaker, while doing that, we've taken an education budget, K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education budget, from just less than \$1 billion to now over \$2 billion, Mr. Speaker.

I would be remiss if I did not mention my previous seatmate from Canora-Pelly that I got to sit with in the last session previous to the election, Mr. Speaker. Each and every day in here, him and the previous member from Regina Lakeview would exchange in a debate — a one-sided debate albeit, Mr. Speaker — and I'll never forget, I'll never forget these words, Mr. Speaker: there's been \$1 billion invested in schools, 40 new schools, 25 renovation projects. Mr. Speaker, I can't hear out of this ear but I do remember that and I think it speaks, Mr. Speaker, to the importance of K to 12 education to this government, Mr. Speaker, with that type of investment and a number of schools under construction as we speak.

A couple of quick comments with regards to the file that I am responsible for, Mr. Speaker, and a file that I greatly enjoy working in. \$7.3 billion, Mr. Speaker, that's the amount that has been invested in post-secondary education since 2007 by the Saskatchewan Party government. Mr. Speaker, that's a 59 per cent increase over the record previous. Mr. Speaker, our operating investment with our universities is up 53 per cent. Mr. Speaker, we are pleased in this budget to maintain that level of operating funding to our post-secondary partners, Mr. Speaker.

We are pleased to maintain our student supports to each of those students that attend our post-secondary institutions, Mr. Speaker, student supports that are up some 350 per cent since 2007. Things like the Saskatchewan advantage grant for education savings, Mr. Speaker, that allow families to invest in their children's education as soon as they show up actually. Mr.

Speaker, things like the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship which is \$500 to each and every student that attends post-secondary or undergrad degrees, Mr. Speaker, for four years. The graduate retention program, the \$20,000 tax incentive, Mr. Speaker, was enhanced — our first campaign promise that's kept — enhanced with the first home program, Mr. Speaker, allowing \$10,000 of that tax incentive to be utilized by those people that choose to stay in a community in Saskatchewan and start their careers here. They'll have \$10,000 available to purchase their first home.

Mr. Speaker, this is a commitment of this government when it comes to post-secondary education, almost half a billion dollars in investment in capital across the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, at our post-secondary institutions: investments at the Academic Health Sciences Building; the international vaccine centre; the Weyburn campus, Mr. Speaker; the Trades and Technology Centre out in Yorkton of which I was to the grand opening just under a year ago; the integrated science lab, Mr. Speaker; at St. Peter's College; the Saskatchewan Energy Training Institute at Estevan, Mr. Speaker. There's been numerous renovation and additions at our regional colleges, Mr. Speaker.

We've completed a Research and Innovation Centre at the U of R [University of Regina]. There's a Faculty of Sciences upgrade, Mr. Speaker, and the list goes on and on and on. Almost \$100 million in preventative maintenance renewal at the University of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, almost \$38 million at the U of R, Mr. Speaker, and almost \$13 million at Sask Poly.

Mr. Speaker, in closing . . . I could go on a little while longer, but in closing, Mr. Speaker, I do want to talk about where we're going as a government in the post-secondary education sector, Mr. Speaker, and the conversations that we have with our post-secondary partners, whether it be a regional college, Mr. Speaker, whether it be one of our technical institutes, Mr. Speaker, or our universities. But we want to sit down and ask questions, Mr. Speaker, and collaborate with our partners in the post-secondary system. And these are questions that we often ask now, but, Mr. Speaker, we're going to intensify our efforts in asking those questions around things like accessibility, accessibility to our institutions on the student's behalf, Mr. Speaker, and on our community's behalf. The responsiveness, Mr. Speaker, we want to talk with our institutions about the responsiveness that we have to our communities, to our economy, our responsiveness to not just Saskatchewan but the nation as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, we need to talk about the sustainability of our institutions so that what we have now we can enjoy now and into the future, Mr. Speaker, for our children and our grandchildren. and, Mr. Speaker, the accountability of our institutions, the accountability to those that are investing through tuition in their education, but also accountability, Mr. Speaker, to members of Saskatchewan that invest, and they invest heavily in post-secondary education in the province of Saskatchewan, and all the while, Mr. Speaker, retaining the quality of education that we have come to expect and receive from our post-secondary education system.

And we saw four members that were receiving a scholarship here yesterday, Mr. Speaker, to further their studies at the

University of Saskatchewan in the College of Ag and Bioresources. And that story can be told many, many times over, Mr. Speaker, the quality education that they're going to receive from that institution.

So in closing, Mr. Speaker — I got about seven minutes in there — that I would like to indicate that I will be supporting this budget that was put forward here last week by our Finance minister, Mr. Speaker. I will not be supporting the amendment. And I look forward to the next number of days and months ahead, Mr. Speaker, in the province of Saskatchewan. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to respond to the budget presented by the Minister of Finance. I was very disappointed with this budget, Mr. Speaker. I understand as a province we are dealing with reduced resource revenues, but it is wrong for this government to place the burden of their financial mismanagement on the backs of the citizens of this province.

In fact this government explains the deficit budget on the fact that resource revenue has decreased, but how did they explain having five deficit budgets in the eight years they have served? And this was while they had a resource boom, record revenues, and proceeded to spend all the rainy day funds.

Mr. Speaker, once again this budget has very little for residents in Prince Albert. In fact I would call this budget a bad news budget for Prince Albert. I was hoping for more and actually was expecting more, since during the election campaign the Saskatchewan Party gave the impression that they were going to start making Prince Albert a priority. But this budget makes it evident that Prince Albert is still not their priority.

There was no mention of this government putting money towards expansion or rebuilding of Victoria Hospital even though it is well known that Victoria Hospital can no longer meet the needs of the city, surrounding communities, and northern communities. Whatever happened to the \$2 million spent to begin planning for the renewal of Victoria Hospital in 2014? Where's the plan? What is going on? There was no money set aside in the 2015 budget and none in this budget. The residents of Prince Albert deserve some answers and some action from this government.

Also, Mr. Speaker, there was no mention about a second bridge for Prince Albert. Prince Albert is the gateway to the North, Mr. Speaker, and the northern part of our province is rich in tourism, mining, forestry, agriculture, and many other industries. Residents have concerns about safety since trucks carrying dangerous goods go through the city and pass residential areas to cross the bridge, and if there was an accident it could have extreme consequences. Also when there is construction on the bridge, it can cause extreme wait times. Just this spring is no exception with people waiting up to 45 minutes to cross the bridge on weekday peak times, and just this past May long weekend some people waited almost two hours to get across the bridge. What if there was an emergency? When is this government going to take the concerns of Prince Albert

residents seriously?

Mr. Speaker, when northern Saskatchewan is doing well Prince Albert benefits, and this budget ignored the issues of the people in the North and did not provide any real support. The closing of Buffalo Narrows correctional centre will have a major impact on that community and is a huge blow for the North and job security in the North. It is no surprise that unemployment is extremely high in the North. So instead of investing on job creation, this government chooses to create more unemployment. These families invest in the businesses in the community, and if they choose to stay in the community, they will have very limited job opportunities.

Direct mention of the city of Prince Albert was only discussed twice in this budget. There was a mention about revenue sharing and then a mention of the cuts to the park funding which will eat up most of the increase of the revenue. Cuts to the Pehonan Park will be devastating to Prince Albert. Mr. Speaker, just two weeks ago in my maiden speech, I was describing Prince Albert Northcote and how it stretched along the riverbank and included city parks. Well, Mr. Speaker, Pehonan Park is entirely in Prince Albert Northcote. It includes the riverbank which historically was the gathering place for First Nations and Métis people and is still a gathering place for residents in the community. The riverbank in Prince Albert is very beautiful and community members were working on a plan to do more development alongside the riverbank in hopes to encourage tourism and more residents using downtown businesses. With cuts to this funding, what will happen to the plan?

Pehonan Park also includes the well-known Little Red River Park just outside the hustle and bustle of the city. Little Red River Park is a beautiful park which is used by children and families for get-togethers, special occasions, picnics, playgrounds, hiking, walking, and biking trails, downhill and cross-country skiing, and sledding. It is a park used all year round and is a great location for all people to gather but also for families in Prince Albert that have limited budgets. This funding helped with operating and capital costs, but now all the costs will be placed on the backs of the residents of Prince Albert.

Cuts to parks impacted five small cities that can't afford more cuts from this government. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to tell you a little bit more about the four other parks that are facing cuts by this government. According to the Tourism Saskatchewan website, Battlefords River Valley is:

Rich in natural and cultural history, . . . [which] provides visitors with a vast panoramic view of the parkland. . . . [is] a popular hiking and cross-country skiing area with over 130 different trees, shrubs and wildflowers, and an abundance of wildlife. Recently extended North Shore Trail offers 15 kilometres of scenic hiking, skiing, [and] mountain biking.

According to the city of Swift Current website the Chinook Parkway:

. . . provides over 20 kilometres of hard-surface trail alongside the Swift Current Creek to bike, roller blade, or

walk on. This wheelchair accessible trail is full of wildlife ranging from meadowlarks and beavers to muskrats and deer.

[16:00]

According to the Wakamow Valley website, Wakamow Valley is a park for all seasons with 20 kilometres of great trails, walking and hiking paths, park grounds, playgrounds, picnic areas, cycling, canoeing, and kayaking.

According to the city of Weyburn website the Tatagwa Parkway is 180 acres along the Souris River. It is an urban conservation park that has walking and biking trails, picnic tables, and park benches.

Now, Mr. Speaker, doesn't these parks seem amazing and such gems to have in cities for residents and tourists to use? These parks help beautify cities, promote tourism, and provide residents safe places to get exercise. Since this government has made a decision to scrap the active families benefit, isn't it important for them to ensure that everyone has access to options for healthy activities?

Mr. Speaker, I understand that tough decisions need to be made when times are tough, but budgets are all about priorities. And this government has clearly shown that they have messed-up priorities when they make a decision to raise prescription costs for children and seniors. When they say that they will earn \$9 million a year by increasing prescription medication, what they mean is that families and seniors will be paying for this government's financial mismanagement. Sick children and seniors should not have to pay for the government's mistakes. Some seniors are already making tough decisions due to the increased costs of living. While canvassing, I met many seniors that had to decide which medication to buy because they can't afford all the medication prescribed to them. Now this government is asking them to pay more.

Seniors have also been asking to have a seniors' advocate or a minister responsible for seniors' issues so that they have someone to consult with when issues arise. This government needs to consider having an advocate for seniors.

I was happy to see that this government was going to invest in reducing surgical wait times, but what is the long-term plan? This government has been underfunding health for far too long and if investments are not provided with secure, stable funding, then surgical wait times will continue to be a problem.

Mr. Speaker, this government has also underfunded education which has resulted in cuts to staff, cuts to staff in schools, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when my daughter was in her early years of school, she struggled with learning concepts. A concerned teacher made a referral to have her tested, and it was discovered that she had a memory issue. So with extra help from an educational assistant, my daughter learned how to manage and graduate high school with honours. Mr. Speaker, my worry is that, with cuts to staff, will students slip through the cracks? Will they get the extra support they need for them to be successful?

Not long after the Minister of Finance announced the 2016

budget, the Minister of Education started making announcements of cuts, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Education cut funding to 10 positions on the regional intersectoral committees. Mr. Speaker, the regional intersectoral committee works on a variety of different issues including working on poverty reduction, affordable housing, and early childhood development. These workers address gaps and barriers to services for marginalized populations. There were many more cuts to families, Mr. Speaker, and these cuts affect the most vulnerable people in our communities that need more support not less.

Mr. Speaker, this government talks about having more people working in the province but yet has decided to cut the employment supplement to families that have children over the age of 13. The supplement helps the recipients with the costs of raising a family and transitioning from social assistance into the labour force. Children don't get any cheaper to raise once they become teenagers; indeed, the reverse is likely true as their food and clothing costs rise. Therefore it makes no sense to have the cut-off age for this supplement at 13 years.

Also the loss of the employment supplement includes the loss of health benefits. The majority of families who qualify for the employment supplement do not have benefits from their employer. Successful applicants for the employment supplement also receive basic health benefits to offset these costs. The 2,400 families impacted by being cut from this program will also lose their health benefits. These families do not have extra money to spend on glasses or dental work and, if they do need these services, they often have to decide between paying bills or groceries.

If we want families to stay employed we need to provide them the support they need to stay employed or else there will be no incentive. When the Minister of Finance announced these cuts, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite clapped, Mr. Speaker. They clapped when they heard 2,400 low-income families, many being single-parent homes, will have less money to spend on their children's needs. They clapped when they heard 2,400 families would go without health benefits. This, Mr. Speaker, this is a clear example of how the Sask Party government treats the most vulnerable in our community.

Mr. Speaker, prior to being elected to represent the people in Prince Albert Northcote, I was employed as a mental health and addiction services worker. I promised my co-workers that I would advocate for mental health services because mental health clients have been ignored for far too long. Mr. Speaker, I was upset that this budget did not address more funding for mental health services, especially for Prince Albert and northern communities.

Mr. Speaker, I think members here are familiar to the unfortunate incident that happened in La Loche just a few months ago. Political leaders attended in the community and left residents under the impression that mental health services would be a priority to help community members deal with trauma related with the incident, but also because La Loche, like many other northern communities, has a high number of suicides. These communities need stable funding and permanent positions placed in the community. Having workers coming in and out of the community and asking clients to retell

their story is at times more traumatic. Mr. Speaker, suicide is a preventable death, and we need to do a better job at helping address the underlying issues that lead people to be in those hopeless situations.

And I can't help but feel frustrated when I see millions of dollars spent on mismanaged projects like the Regina bypass. And don't get me wrong, Mr. Speaker. I am a huge Roughrider fan and long-time season ticket holder and regularly make trips from Prince Albert to Regina for home games. But seeing millions of dollars spent on a new stadium, when I have seen first-hand ceilings leaking in Victoria Hospital, this really makes me question this Sask Party government's priorities.

Talking about misplaced priorities, Mr. Speaker, the cuts to low-income families, children, and seniors seem to be the contrary to this government's plan to address poverty, the mental health and addiction action plan, and recommendations from the Children's Advocate. I did not see any extra funds invested for poverty reduction, mental health and addictions, and recommendations from the Children's Advocate. This government spends a lot of money investing into developing these plans, but they need to follow through with them.

The Children's Advocate, Bob Pringle, talked about the struggles of the foster care system. Kids in care are increasing and the availability of foster care homes is decreasing. The Ministry of Social Services needs to create a formal recruitment and retention plan for foster homes. The ministry also needs to provide supports for existing foster families and work with other ministries to make sure appropriate services are available for children in care that have a range of issues.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately there are far too many Aboriginal children in care, and as a government we need to work harder to provide support for families. The Truth and Reconciliation calls of action have many practical suggestions on helping reduce Aboriginal youth in care. Are these calls of actions being put in place? Is this government committed to reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care and, if so, what are they doing and what programs are you committing to?

More cuts are being implemented to community-based organizations, and the budget indicates that this government plans to cut 24 full-time jobs in the department of Social Services. How are these cuts helping the families most in need? In tough times, how can the government justify cuts to these important agencies?

Mr. Speaker, since this government took office, the enrolment on social assistance programs has been increasing. Food banks are struggling with the increase of people needing support, and almost half of the users of the food bank are children. How can this be? How can this be when we've seen such a strong economy in our province in the past eight years? Despite 9,000 fewer jobs today than a year ago, this Sask Party budget has cut job creation and training programs. These cuts include apprenticeship programs, job skills training, adult basic education, and literacy programs.

This government wants individuals requiring social assistance that are physically able to work to be enrolled in the transitional employment allowance program. Most people prefer to be

working, but how is this government planning on making employment possible or successful if they are not addressing the high unemployment rates, child care subsidies, and the cuts to the programs already mentioned? If this government does not invest in these programs, they are setting people up for failure, which isn't positive for the worker or the workplace.

So, Mr. Speaker, obviously this budget is hurting families and seniors here in Saskatchewan, and this is only the start. The list of broken promises continue to grow with this government, whether it's the active family benefit being cut or seniors and children paying more for prescriptions. Mr. Speaker, this government has failed to deliver opportunities to young people, fairness and affordability for families, and dignity and security for seniors.

Mr. Speaker, I do not agree with this government making seniors and families pay for their mistakes. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment.

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — I recognize the member from Biggar-Sask Valley.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you very much, Mr. deputy of Chairs. It's a great pleasure to be speaking to the budget. I'd just like to recognize a few people and thank a few people too before I get into the bulk of the speech.

First, I'd like to thank my constituent assistant, Janet, who staffs the office in Biggar. She does a wonderful job. She's been with me for the last four years. In the future we plan on opening another office, probably in Hepburn, where she'll travel one day a week out to Hepburn because the constituency of Biggar-Sask Valley has gotten quite large, and we feel it necessary to service that part of the constituency as well. Also I'd like just to say hi to Janet's daughters: Jessica and Jade and Madison. As government caucus Chair, I think I should also thank the caucus staff: John, the chief of staff and all of the staff that work with him. They do an outstanding job.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, we need to recognize the Premier and all the dedicated leadership that he provides to our government and to our caucus, and also the Finance minister who has done an outstanding job, works very long hours, and has had a lot of help of course with the civil service naturally, his staff in the Finance ministry.

But the work also is done by caucus who brings forward the issues that they see at the doorstep or in their constituency office and also, you know, the ministries that bring forward all the information that is relevant to making a budget. And of course treasury board who work very, very long hours working on the budget with the Minister of Finance and cabinet, and of course the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about transformational change, and transformational change will keep our province moving in the right direction, providing funding for core services for the citizens of Saskatchewan. So that's an important theme to remember as we move forward in the future.

Yes, we are running a deficit, as much as we did not want to run a deficit. But when you lose nearly \$1 billion in revenue

through dropping oil prices and royalties from the mining sector, and mainly the potash, it was really very difficult to balance the budget this year.

[16:15]

But we will be balancing the budget next year, and it's very important that we do for a number of reasons. Just take the example of the provinces around us — Alberta, Manitoba's new government, Ontario, other provinces, and the federal government — who are running deficits. And as I said, you know, sometimes it's necessary to run a deficit. But the difficulty that those provinces and the federal government have, there's no end in sight. When will they have a balanced budget?

And the credit rating agencies notice this. And they recognize Saskatchewan, our government, that we have a plan in place; that yes, we're running a deficit this year, but next year it will be balanced. And that goes a long way to keeping Saskatchewan strong.

What do we mean by keeping Saskatchewan strong? Well it was very prominent in the last election campaign. Keeping Saskatchewan strong means no new taxes, controlling spending, investing in people, investing in infrastructure. And I think it's worthy to read into the record in my presentation what that means.

So no new taxes means, since 2007, nearly \$6 billion in tax reductions to families, individuals, homeowners, businesses, and farmers. We're among the lowest personal and business tax burdens in Canada, according to a recent Conference Board of Canada report. Our government is controlling spending: a modest expense growth of 2 per cent from last year. Regional health authorities reduced administration expense by \$7.5 million to reinvest in front-line staff and long-term care facilities; changes to programs and services to ensure sustainability and manage costs; beginning a government-wide exercise — a transformational change, as I just mentioned — to ensure high-quality public services delivery in the most effective and efficient way.

It's interesting. I was at a conference and I spoke to, not a member from the Manitoba government but a bureaucrat that was there, concerning energy. And I spoke to him about the recent budget that was brought down. His comment was, it was the cost of health care that had exploded in Manitoba. I believe he said it was over 10 per cent year-over-year increases in the cost of health care. Well there's no government that's going to be able to withstand those kind of increases in costs.

And I think, you know, that's what our government has been really keeping the health costs under control as much as possible. And you know, part of our discussion in transformational change is obviously in the areas where we spend the most money — health care, education, and those areas that we have to continue supporting people that need it, need the care, need the supports — but we also must recognize that we must keep spending under control.

The other item under keeping Saskatchewan strong is investing in people, additional funding to reduce wait times for surgery and diagnostic services, continued investments to support

seniors at home or in long-term care. These are things that people talked and were raised during the election campaign. And we've responded: funding to cover the 15 drugs added to the formulary for cancer treatment; increased support for people with disabilities, for K to 12 classrooms; 199 previously approved child care spaces will be available; and funding for the new first home program to assist eligible students with the down payment for their first homes. So it's important that we look at keeping spending under control but we also look after people's needs.

Now personally why is it important to keep Saskatchewan strong? Well just look at my own particular case, our family and friends. It's important to keep Saskatchewan strong and keep investment in this province, and jobs. You know, my children and grandchildren live . . . you know, keep them working and prospering in Saskatchewan. My wife, Cindy, is an educational assistant. She met this young lady in the school system, and her name was Desiree. And right now Desiree Hinse and Reno Poitras and their baby Zane, who happen to live with us now, have their struggles and continue to work through them. But Des is working locally, and the family is getting back on their feet.

My daughter Lacey and her partner, Nick, and his daughter Surayya, they just recently purchased a house in Regina, and they're expecting their first child in early July. Also my daughter Alex who is working on getting her degree in social services out of the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] in Saskatoon, and my son Marshall works in the service sector in Saskatoon, so that's the reason why I want Saskatchewan strong. And that's my personal reasons why I want a future for my children and grandchildren to live and work in Saskatchewan, and not like what had happened in the past years under the NDP when the young people left Saskatchewan, mainly for Alberta but around the world, to find jobs because there were no jobs and no future working in Saskatchewan.

I think it's important that I read into the record some of the initiatives that our government has brought to Biggar-Sask Valley, not only in this budget but in the past years. Under revenue sharing, the town of Biggar, revenue sharing increased from just over \$208,000 in 2007 to just under \$500,000 in 2016-17, 139 per cent increase. And I can assure you the town of Biggar has used that money wisely. It's gone into infrastructure. Infrastructure's such an important thing to keep up, and they've done a good job of spending money every year. And that additional money that our government has given to the municipalities has really helped keep their water and sewer and treatment plants and streets up to a high level.

The village of Borden, Saskatchewan in 2007 received just about \$25,000, and in this budget just over \$58,000, 136 per cent increase. The town of Langham in 2007 received \$115,000 and in this past budget 157 per cent increase of nearly \$300,000.

A lot was talked about and brought up during the election about education, and particularly Prairie Spirit School Division. And again this needs to be put into the record. Operating increase for Prairie Spirit School Division has been 33.3 per cent since 2007, while their enrolment has only gone up only 3.5 per cent. Total operating funding is \$105.5 million. We've been there for

Prairie Spirit School Division and the school divisions around this province.

Sun West School Division, which part of my constituency is in, operating increase since 2007 is 26.1 per cent, enrolment growth of 6.4 per cent; total operating funding is \$55.4 million.

Other investments in Biggar in 2008: Biggar & District Daycare Project, \$368,000. That's where little baby Zane goes to daycare and it's so important to have daycare in the communities around the province when parents are working or they're single parents.

Borden 2010, Borden School, a roof project of \$200,000. Total pre-K to 12 school capital allocated since 2007, \$1.5 million. Seventy childcare spaces since 2007.

Under the health care, Saskatoon Health Region has had a 68.6 per cent increase since 2007-2008, a total operating funding of \$1 billion, year-over-year increases of 4.7 per cent to the Saskatoon Health Region. The Heartland Health Region has had 47 per cent increase since 2007-08, total operating funding of \$94.6 million and year-over-year increase of 2.9 per cent.

In the Biggar & District Health Centre, there was an addition to the Biggar hospital, replacing the 60-bed Biggar Diamond Lodge nursing home. The project's scope included 54 long-term care beds with a total shareable cost for the project of \$22.9 million. The provincial share was \$18.3 million. The balance, which made up the \$22.9 million, came from the communities in and around Biggar. 2015 as I had said, the Biggar Diamond Lodge replacement, \$18.3 million. And there has been a 43 per cent increase to Heartland Health Region since 2007 in the town of Biggar. In Langham, a 61 per cent increase in funding too, from the Saskatoon Health Region since 2007.

Other initiatives in the constituency, Radisson swimming pool reconstruction, \$110,000 in 2008. Under Parks, Culture and Sport, Langham Community Hall got an update of \$68,000 in 2008. Social Services, 2014, rental construction initiative and corporate income tax rebate, which CPP Developments Inc. added 24 units, \$142,000.

Now under highways, the budget of 2016, just over \$15 million including repaving on Highway 12 south of Hepburn; a grade and pave on Highway 305, Highway 12 to Dalmeny; median preservation, Highway 16 near Maymont; spot improvements to Highways 340 and 376. And as my colleague from Rosthern-Shellbrook, we share that thin membrane from Radisson to Hafford, Highway 340, it's going to be greatly appreciated to speed up the improvements on that highway. And of course 376 which runs from Asquith to Maymont. And so that's part of the surge money that's been allocated in the budget.

In the Biggar area, Highway 4 grade raise south of Biggar, \$1.4 million; Highway 14 bridge replacement for Eagle Creek, and \$1.9 million for mill and fill repair on Highway 14. In the Langham area on Highway 16, repaving west of Langham, eastbound lanes; \$400,000 on the Borden bridge slope stabilization work, and constituency wide, 2015-16, total spending of \$13.1 million; repaving Highway 16 west of Langham, \$3.3 million; grade and pave Highway 305 from

Highway 12 junction to Dalmeny, 8.3 million; engineered seal west of Denholm, \$1.3 million.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the tax record of the Saskatchewan Party, again this budget contains no tax increases. Since 2007 nearly \$6 billion in tax reductions to families, individuals, homeowners, businesses, and farmers, among the lowest personal business tax burdens in Canada according to the recent Conference Board of Canada report.

Now under the NDP, the NDP government raised taxes 21 times during their 16 years in power, including raising the PST four times and the gas twice, a gas tax twice, raised the PST after the 2003 election after saying they wouldn't. And a quote:

Why don't parties want to talk about tax hikes during an election? I don't know. I suspect that anyone who talks about tax hikes is not likely to be very popular during the course of an election [year] . . .

That was said by former NDP Finance minister, Harry Van Mulligen, January 14th, 2014.

Well, Mr. Speaker, again just some province-wide numbers concerning the education budget. This budget continues to keep Saskatchewan strong by investing \$2.169 billion in pre-K to 12 education system. The operating funding to school divisions in 2016 and '17 is \$1.89 billion, an increase of 16.6 million over last year to support pre-kindergarten to grade 12 education and an overall average increase of 34 per cent in school division operating funding since 2007-2008.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have been there for health care, education, and infrastructure. You know, there's an ongoing list that I could read into the debate here today concerning the work done on highways. But I think I spoke to most of what was done. Really, the main ones for the constituency is the surge money that's going to go into 376 and 340. The people out there will very much appreciate that added investment in those thin membrane highways and they will certainly . . . I will be talking to them in the coming days and months about the investment in their area.

[16:30]

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to say that I will be supporting this budget and I will not be supporting the amendment brought by the NDP. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to enter into the debate regarding the budget speech. This was a difficult budget for the government this year. But I believe that while it's a tough budget, it's a fair budget.

Yes, not everyone got what they wanted, which is normally the case with every budget — not everybody gets what they want. But when you're in opposition, you can promise everything that everybody wants because there's no responsibility incumbent on the members of the opposition.

That's right, the former member for Esterhazy . . .

An Hon. Member: — Saltcoats.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Saltcoats-Melville, that's right. And his quote certainly applies to today's members of the opposition. It's not what we would have hoped for, for a budget. We would have hoped to have been able to have flossy candy for everyone, but the budget did not allow that, Mr. Speaker. When you are in a situation where the price of oil has dropped by over 50 per cent, the price of potash has dropped dramatically, the price of uranium has dropped . . . Only in the agricultural field, Mr. Speaker, has the economy been relatively stable.

Part of what you would have heard from my colleagues already is this budget is about transformational change, and indeed it is. However we see one institution in the province where there is no change and that is amongst the NDP opposition, Mr. Speaker. Their rhetoric and their tune is similar to what it was throughout the 1980s. It has been that way since 2007. And, Mr. Speaker, it was even that way in the time when they were in government. I remember them making the accusations that the former Conservative Party that was in government at the time was going to close every hospital in the Wood River constituency. There had been no plans to do so. However, when the NDP formed government in the '90s, they closed four of the five hospitals in the Wood River constituency. So what we see from the opposition, Mr. Speaker, is no change.

Well revenues are dropping. Expenses do not, Mr. Speaker; they continue to rise and go up on a regular basis.

And in fact over the past year, based on the supplementary budgetary appropriation, there were a number of ministries into which new funding was provided. A total of 184 million additional dollars were provided to the ministries above what had been budgeted for: \$44 million for Government Relations which deals with municipal and First Nations, Mr. Speaker; \$34 million that went in to the social service area, Mr. Speaker; and an additional \$80 million to the Environment to fight the forest fires, Mr. Speaker, something that while we budget for some of it, no one could have predicted the amount of costs related to the forest fires in Saskatchewan in 2015-16 budget year. The fact is we almost ended up in the situation where La Ronge had to be evacuated. Luckily that did not happen, but there were those people who were evacuated for their own safety out of the smoke, Mr. Speaker, and that is reflected in part of the costs for social services.

We have seen in this budget, Mr. Speaker, an increase to health of \$233 million, a 1.6 per cent increase, and yet in listening to the members opposite, that is nowhere near what they would have put in. In fact the Finance critic demanded that 6 per cent be added to the budget. Well what does that mean? How much money are we talking about at a 6 per cent increase in health? That would have meant \$632 million increase or almost \$400 million difference, Mr. Speaker. If you look at the budget, you will see that there was only an increase in spending of \$336 million. Included in that was a 41 FTE [full time equivalent] increase. So if you take the NDP's proposal, just on health, to increase that budget, you would now be looking at 800-plus million-dollar deficit.

But the members opposite have not only been concerned just about Health, but every other ministry as well. They have demanded increases for urban parks. They have demanded increases for education. Across the . . . Child tax credits. Everything that government touches, they have been demanding an increase for. So how much under the NDP's proposal would be the actual deficit? One billion, 1.2 billion, 1.5 billion? Because they never give those numbers, Mr. Speaker. They have lots of condemnation, but no information, Mr. Speaker.

So if they were even of the mind to roll that deficit that they would have provided back a bit, would they be like the former Finance minister Harry Van Mulligen, and implement a 9 per cent sales tax to pay that down? That would certainly be of benefit to those communities that live along any of our borders because they would no longer have any shoppers in those communities as they go outside of the province, as has happened in the past. Or would they be raising the price of the fuel tax, doubling it perhaps? Now that would have a significant financial increase, but it would also have a very dramatic, negative impact on our economy.

While they have lots of condemnation and demands, they provide no solutions, Mr. Speaker. They simply are like the child standing at the bottom of the stairs, demanding more, more, more, and having no concerns either where the cost comes from or their . . . [inaudible] . . . Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when I look over the budgets, I look at the health one and, as I said, they are proposing a \$630 million increase in that budget, in a budget that is already over \$5 billion. And I think if you talk to most economists across the country, they will admit that health is not sustainable at these growth rates.

It doesn't matter whether you're talking to someone from Saskatchewan, you're talking to someone from Ontario, British Columbia, or any place else across Canada, the increases in health care are not sustainable for provincial budgets unless the provinces want to do away with all of the other things that the provinces provide. And I don't think any one of us in this Chamber or any one of us across the province want government to be solely funding education without providing any support to any of the other government services. Education, social services, highways, agriculture — whatever it may be, Mr. Speaker, we all want to maintain those services in a realistic manner, in an affordable way, Mr. Speaker. And for those who have missed the yellow tabs, you can see that they're still here.

I look over the regional health services, Mr. Speaker, that affect each and every one of our constituencies. Sun Country Regional Health received an increase of \$4 million. That's a significant increase, Mr. Speaker, and services are being maintained in the Sun Country region, which is part of the area I represent.

But I think there is a more significant number here which affects each and every one of us across the province, and that's the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency which received a \$10 million increase. You know that is a benefit and function of the province of Saskatchewan that we are maintaining and we are recognizing that importance to the citizens, to the individuals, Mr. Speaker, in our province.

And I'd like to note that every one of the regional health

services received an increase this year, Mr. Speaker.

Now one of my favourite departments is Highways because we have lots of highways in Cannington. And the highways budget increased by \$306 million, Mr. Speaker — \$306 million. I remember the first budget from the NDP government while I was sitting in this House was less than \$200 million. I believe the total budget that year was 160 million. And our roads over that next period of time certainly showed that lack of investment by the government opposite. And now they're demanding that we increase and increase. The budget this year, the appropriation this year is \$1.47 billion. That is almost 10 times as much as it was the first budget that I was in this House, Mr. Speaker.

And I know that the members opposite think that they have been here in opposition for a decade or more, Mr. Speaker. Well it's been a decade — if it is, it's actually eight and a half years, but using NDP calculus — a decade that they have seen benefit after benefit given to the people of Saskatchewan: better highways, better schools, better health care.

You know, I mentioned earlier the closure of four out of five hospitals in the Wood River constituency. This happened across the province. Regina lost one of its three tertiary care hospitals. Now they closed it because it had asbestos, but they opened it again as a SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] college. So they couldn't afford to take the asbestos out for health, but they can afford to take it out for education.

I think it was more what the reporters used to like to have the terminology used "Roy's rural revenge" because the Plains hospital was a hospital that was utilized more by rural residents. It was easily accessible by rural residents, much more so than the General Hospital, and the Plains hospital actually had parking. You could even park there. And a helipad, absolutely. But it no longer exists as a health care facility. It is now an educational facility because they couldn't afford to take the asbestos out for health.

[16:45]

So we have significant construction across the province for highways and infrastructure. The municipal side of our governance is still receiving their 1 per cent of the PST, which is a significant increase in what was provided previously. They have been able to build their needed roads, their needed grids. They can afford to put in bridges and culverts as needed, Mr. Speaker. And even more important than that is the knowledge that that funding continues based on one point of the PST. It's not funded at the whim of the government that could raise it or lower it, as the case may be, as was the case in the past under the former administration.

We have seen the proposals by the Minister of Highways on the new surge, \$70 million worth of investment in highways over the next four years. Each one of us, I am sure, hopes that some of that money will come to our constituencies to improve the roads in our area. I certainly hope that will be the case. But I know that each dollar of that 70 million will be spent in a place that needs it appropriately, that is in difficulty and needs to have those roads upgraded to maintain the economy of

Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, the last point I want to make on this is agriculture and property taxation. Under this government, we saw a significant reduction in property taxes for agriculture, for residential, and some drop for the commercial operations. Those monies go to supplement the money provided by the grant to the municipalities from the 1 per cent of the PST.

And there was always a request by agriculture to reduce that tax burden, especially the education portion of the tax. Tommy Douglas said it was unfair, the taxation levels that were applied to agriculture when he was premier. Those NDP premiers after that point also agreed that that taxation level was unfair. And the fact is the last NDP premier in this province, Lorne Calvert, said it's unfair, and the status quo is not on.

Well not one of those members, in roughly 47, 48 years of the 64 years of government from 1944 until we formed government in 2007, reduced that tax. They all promised it. They all talked about it. They all said it was unfair that the status quo was not on, but not one of them made a change in it.

When we formed government, we made that change. We reduced the tax levels on agriculture. We reduced the education tax level on residential property. And we reduced the taxation, education taxation, on business. This budget, Mr. Speaker, is also one without tax increases. The people of this province, Mr. Speaker, know how to utilize their own money and they need to have the opportunity to keep it in their pocket and spend it appropriately for their family and their business. And government should interfere the least amount possible. I know across the other way, that's not their philosophy.

We see what's happening across the country, Mr. Speaker. Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, the Maritimes are running huge deficits. This government as well is running a deficit — \$434 million. But this government, unlike the others, has a plan to get out of deficit next year. Those other provinces have not put forward any plan whatsoever to reduce that deficit or get rid of that deficit in any kind of reasonable time period. 2024 is not a reasonable time period. Even the federal government is running huge billion-dollar deficit with no plan to reduce it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is the only province with a plan to eliminate their deficit. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the motion presented by the Minister of Finance. I will not be supporting the opposition's amendment. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Arm River.

Mr. Brkich: — [Inaudible] . . . to enter into the budget debate. I didn't enter into the Throne Speech debate. There just wasn't enough. So I want to say to the new members that the speeches were very excellent, very good. I remember my first one in '99 wasn't half as good as the many ones that I've heard here, and I was very, very impressed.

I also want to . . . I don't know if my CAs [constituency assistant] are watching. It's getting close to 5 o'clock but, you know, they've been with me since, almost since '99. One of them for sure — Donna has been, and Lavonne's been there for

10 years. And they've did excellent jobs as my CAs. If they're listening, it's one of the reasons I still keep getting elected every year. They do the work and I get to come up here and just make speeches.

But as we talk about the budget, this was . . . I've been here for many years, not as many as the member that just spoke before me, but this is one of the more difficult budgets that I've seen, that we've worked on. But it shows to the character of government. We were faced with some choices. You can either run a small deficit with a plan to get out, or you could just automatically raise taxes, fees, put people out of work, you know, affect the economy in Saskatchewan that is a little bit on the fragile side considering the oil industry, the hits that have been there.

You look at what's happened with both the provinces next door. You know, I've got some friends and relatives in Alberta and they're suffering. There is a lot . . . Unemployment is up. The food bank use is up. There's a lot of vehicles being sold. There's houses even being sold now, you know, so we did not want to do anything that would affect the economy and try to keep as many people working as we possibly can. And when you raise taxes you're going to affect that, whether it's businesses having to lay off some people, or just an added cost to people that are just wondering from day to day if they're going to have a job, if they're affected in with the oil industry. Even the mining industry, as we move along too, it's gone through a slight little bit of a price decrease, so you know they're not spending as much as they would if the potash prices were higher.

So like I say, with this budget there were some difficult decisions. But still when we were door knocking, what I heard on the door, this budget reflects a lot of that. It reflects that people said, don't raise taxes. You know, if you have to run a deficit, you run one for one year or two years with a plan to get out. They understand that we're working with close to \$1 billion less in revenue. That's a big hit to any treasury, and still only to run a small deficit compared to what the rest of the country is doing, I would say, speaks to the diversity that we have in this province that have picked up some of the decline in our natural resources.

I mean, we've been lucky; ag is doing quite well. I can remember when I first got elected, agriculture was struggling. Grain prices were low. We had . . . 2000, 2001 I think were very dry years. Cattle prices were very good for about a year or two and then BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy] hit, and that hit the cattle industry very, very hard. And my constituency being an agricultural constituency, cattle and grain, it was a big hit. I remember we were in opposition and we had a lot of calls, a lot of worried people, especially when the border was closed for a few months to all kinds of beef. And then it finally opened up to certain cuts and that got the markets slowly coming back, but it took years and years and years to recover from that.

And I'm glad that, you know, that the cattle industry and the grain industry is doing well, being that my constituency is basically that. I have some mining on the edge, no oil. So we basically go strictly on ag. When it suffers my phone rings a lot.

Right now the only time . . . I get still some calls on highways

in the spring. That's always been an issue, but we are putting money into it which we always have and always increase the budget. I mean in Arm River right now that's probably one of the bigger concerns that I heard when I was door knocking, was highways.

My constituency is seeing I think \$36 million being spent in it this year on construction which is . . . a lot of it is on No. 11, but it also deals with work on Highway 42 which was started last year on the highway by Dilke, which needed some work. There's work being done on that. There's continuing work on No. 15 by Semans, and also a little bit of grade work still being done on 15 by Kenaston. And also I believe, you know, then your maintenance on 19 and 44. Them highways always need some attention.

But you know the residents, when you're going around, I mean they understand. At least they can see that you're spending more every year and they can see some things being done. On Highway 15 we've made that a wide-load corridor and we're doing work on it. And they've seen that we're . . . All through the '90s and the years we were in opposition there was no major work done on any of our highways in my constituency. All that was done was basically just barely filling potholes. And you know, that reflected in the vote and the change in government in 2007. Even in '99 when I first ran, that was a very big issue was highways.

And also health care is always an issue in rural Saskatchewan when it comes there. And you know we increased, every year we've increased the budget. I know since we were first elected we've increased it dramatically. This year not as much, but over the years there's been major increases to health care. I mean I can look back on Watrous long-term care facility. That was one of the first ones that was built when we were first elected and I know Watrous had been asking for that for 12 years I think. They had already had their money in place for at least eight years and waiting every year for the government to commit. So that was one of the first things we did when we formed government was build 13 long-term care facilities. And you know that shows a commitment to rural Saskatchewan which also shows in the number of seats that are still going on our side compared to their side.

You know even this budget, even as difficult as it is, I still when I go back home hear lots of positive remarks about our government and what we're doing and what we're trying to do. As long as they can see that you're trying to work within your means . . . Because one of the things they don't want is the runaway spending that, you know, is happening in other provinces and runaway budgets where basically you're going to carry that debt for 10, 15, 20 years.

I mean you look at what we've did with debt. Through our good years we paid down the general revenue by almost \$4 billion. That was pretty substantial to be able to do that in a short period of time. So people know that when the revenues come — and they will on the oil industry when they come back — you know we will be investing more in education, more in health, more in highways and also on debt reduction.

Those are the key issues that people look at as what they expect from their government and their budget. I know that there was a

few hits on it, but you know that's part of being government. I can remember when they ran . . .

The Speaker: — It being 5 p.m., this Assembly stands recessed until tonight at 7 p.m.

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker.....	351
------------------	-----

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Wall.....	351
Belanger.....	351
Ottenbreit.....	351
Docherty.....	351
McCall.....	352
Bonk.....	352
Olauson.....	360
Wotherspoon.....	360

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Chartier.....	352
Forbes.....	352

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Yorkton Resident is Miss Teenage Saskatchewan	
Ottenbreit.....	353
Prince Albert Pride Week	
Rancourt.....	353
Saskatchewan Resident is One of Canada's Outstanding Principals	
Bonk.....	353
Remembering Firefighters Victor Budz and Dennis Guenter	
Chartier.....	354
Brothers Receive Honorary Degrees	
Ross.....	354
Heart Garden Opens	
Michelson.....	354
Group Home Opens in Esterhazy	
Kaeding.....	354

QUESTION PERIOD

Government's Fiscal Management	
Wotherspoon.....	355
Wall.....	355
Management of Health Care System	
Chartier.....	356
Duncan.....	356
Support for Education	
Beck.....	357
Morgan.....	357
Children in Provincial Care	
Rancourt.....	358
Harpauer.....	358
Mental Health Services for the North	
Belanger.....	358
Ottenbreit.....	358
Crime Prevention and Correctional Facilities	
Sarauer.....	359
Tell.....	359

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Merriman.....	359
---------------	-----

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

McMorris.....	360
Eyre.....	364
Fiaz.....	367
Moe.....	369
Rancourt.....	373
Weekes.....	375
D'Autremont.....	377
Brkich.....	379

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