



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

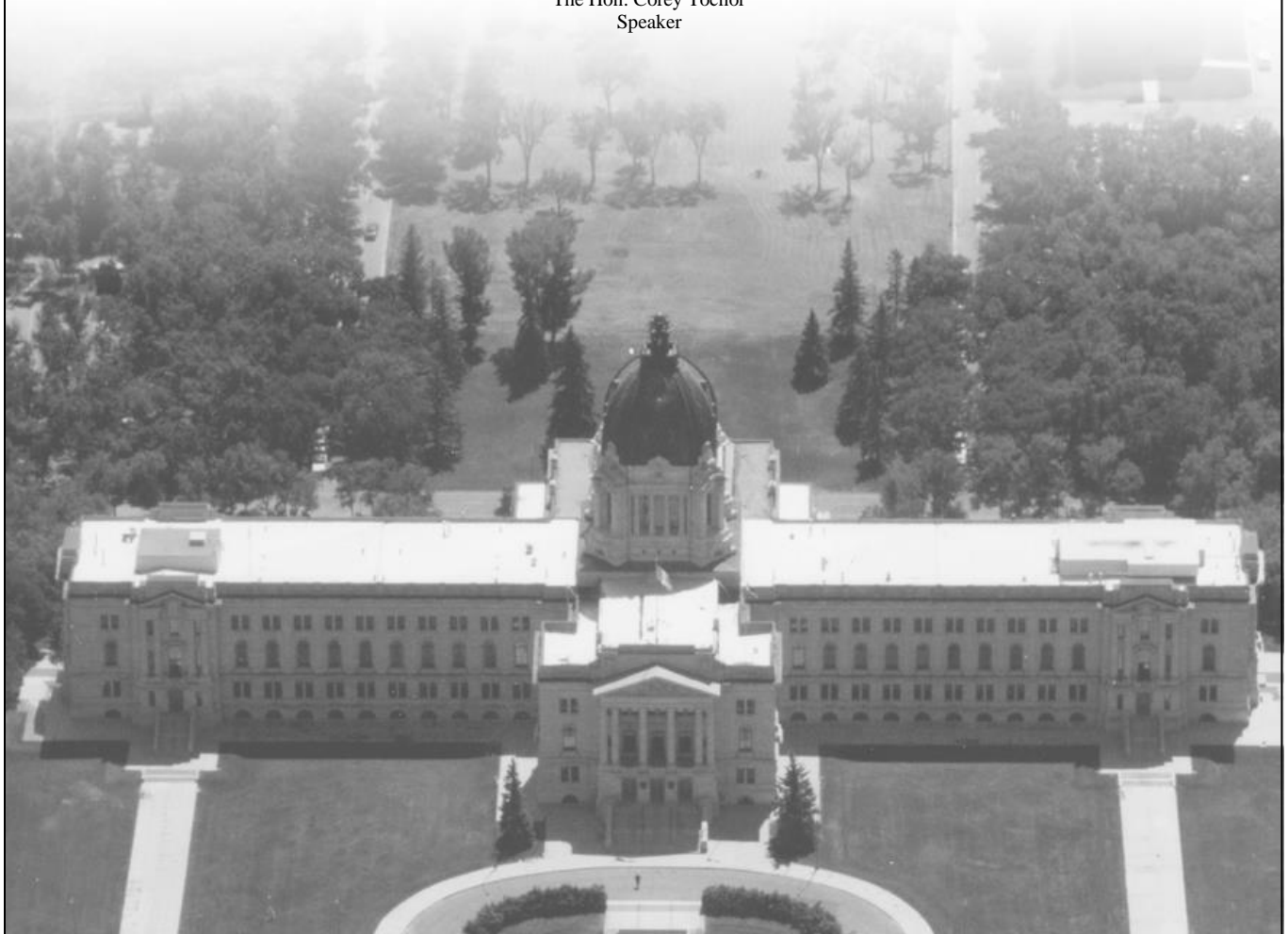
of the

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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Wilson, Hon. Nadine — Saskatchewan Rivers (SP)

Wotherspoon, Trent — Regina Rosemont (NDP)

Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)

Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

Party Standings: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 50; New Democratic Party (NDP) — 11

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all members of the House, seated in the west gallery is my youngest son. Last but not least most definitely, Ryan — and he'll bug me quite a bit about this — he's the only one of my three boys that don't carry anything other than my last name. But he has both his grandfathers' names, so it's actually Ryan Peter Robert Lawrence, where everybody else has a chunk of my name in there. So to you and to all members, I'd like everyone to welcome Ryan to his House.

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

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And to you and through you and to all members of this Assembly, I'd like to introduce some guests in your gallery. We have some members here from the company Johnson Controls. We have Vince Russell, Randy Taylor, Chris Oyka, and Hassaan Khan. Vince, Chris, and Randy all reside in Saskatchewan and they have a combined 70 years of work experience in our province. A little known fact about Johnson Controls, their first project was actually in this very building in 1912 where they worked on the systems in this building. It's a little chilly in here, so they may have to come back pretty soon.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to say that Johnson Controls has grown. They employ over 160 employees across the province and have six offices, and I'd like to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member opposite in welcoming these individuals from Johnson Controls to their Legislative Assembly. Certainly it's a company with a good name, Mr. Speaker, for good work. And I can only think, you know, Mr. Speaker, it's too bad that they weren't doing the smart meter program; perhaps that would have gone better. But you know, the mind races, Mr. Speaker. But I'd certainly like to join with the member opposite in welcoming these individuals to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Kaeding: — Thank you. To you and through you and all members of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce a constituent seated in the west gallery, George Haas. And George, I believe, is well known to many members here, as George has held numerous positions on the provincial Sask Party executive, including president.

George and his wife, Esther, have also played a very important role in the Melville-Saltcoats constituency association, and George has played a big role also in the Hudson Bay Route Association. And I've known George for a number of years, all the time during my farming, as he ran a custom spray business and custom combining business.

I consider George and Esther to be good friends, so I would like all members to welcome George to his Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Dennis: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all the Assembly, I'd like to introduce a constituent of mine from Kamsack, and he grew up in Canora, Dereck Wolkowski. He's a businessman in Canora and Kamsack. And I'd like to say I hope I don't have to support his business for a while, as he owns a funeral home in Canora, in Canora and Kamsack. So he's been a great businessman and supporter for our area, and I'd like all members to welcome him to his Assembly.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to welcome two of our friends from down Highway No. 1 to the west of us, from Moose Jaw, two active community members from Moose Jaw. We have with us today Corey Atkinson and Mandy Canning, both people who are well involved in their community and advocates within the health care system. Corey was the candidate for us, of course, in the last provincial election, in Moose Jaw North. And they're here today to watch the goings-on in this Assembly. And I would invite all members to join with me to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Biggar-Sask Valley.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to stand in my place today to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan on behalf of the citizens of Saskatchewan who are concerned with the threat to our economy and the unaffordable increases to the cost of living which will result from the federal government's decision to impose a carbon tax on the province of Saskatchewan. The prayer reads:

To cause the government to take the necessary steps and actions to stop the federal government from imposing a carbon tax on the province.

This is signed by the good citizens of Denholm, Saskatchewan. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition. The people who signed this petition are opposed to the Sask Party's plan to scrap and sell off the Saskatchewan

Transportation Company. They would like us all to know that STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] provides a vital service to many seniors, workers, and families throughout the province; and that by scrapping STC out of the blue without asking permission of the owners, the Saskatchewan people, the Sask Party is sending a clear message, a clear signal, about how little they care about protecting our Crowns like SaskTel; and that SaskTel helps drive the economy with its parcel service that serves farms and other businesses. Mr. Speaker, I will read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan immediately stop the plan to scrap and sell off Saskatchewan Transportation Company, and to resume transportation services to the people of Saskatchewan.

It is signed and supported by many good people of this province. I so present.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition opposed to Bill 40, and a potential 49 per cent Crown corporation sell-off. The people who have signed this petition want to bring to our attention the following: that the Sask Party's Bill 40 creates a new definition for privatization that allows the government to wind down, dissolve, or sell up to 49 per cent of the shares of a Crown corporation without holding a referendum; that in 2015-16 alone, Saskatchewan's Crown corporations returned \$297.2 million in dividends to pay for schools, roads, and hospitals. Those dividends should go to the people of Saskatchewan, not private investors. And we know, Mr. Speaker, they provided over \$3 billion worth of dividends in the last 10 years. Our Crown corporations employ thousands of Saskatchewan people across the province.

Under section 149 of the *Income Tax Act* of Canada, Crown corporations are exempt from corporate income tax, provided not less than 90 per cent of the shares are held by a government or province. The Sask Party's proposal would allow up to 49 per cent of a Crown to be sold without being considered privatized. This short-sighted legislation risks sending millions of Crown dividends to Ottawa rather than to the people of Saskatchewan. The prayer reads as follows:

They respectfully request the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately stop the passage of Bill 40, *The Interpretation Amendment Act* and start protecting jobs and our Crown corporations instead of selling them off to pay for Sask Party mismanagement.

The people who have signed this petition are from the city of Saskatoon. I so submit.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition concerning pay equity here in Saskatchewan. And the undersigned residents of Saskatchewan want to bring to our attention the following: that the citizens of this province believe

in an economy powered by transparency, accountability, security, and equity; and that all women should be paid equitably; and that women are powerful drivers of economic growth and their economic empowerment benefits us all.

That the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives found that in Saskatoon in 2016, women earned on average 63 cents for every dollar that a man makes, and in Regina, women earned on average 73 cents for every dollar a man makes. According to the most recent StatsCan data, the national gender wage gap for full-time workers is 72 cents for every dollar a man makes.

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 eliminate the wage gap between women and men across all sectors where the Government of Saskatchewan has jurisdiction, provide a framework under which this can be done within the term of this Assembly, and that the Saskatchewan government call upon workplaces within Saskatchewan within the private sector to eliminate the wage gap between women and men.

Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition come from the city of Saskatoon and Regina. I do so present. Thank you.

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present to you a petition to increase the funding to Prince Albert mobile crisis. Mr. Speaker, Prince Albert mobile crisis unit has had to close its doors during daytime hours, resulting in a loss of resources to people in distress. And, Mr. Speaker, with the recent cuts to community-based organizations such as the parent mentoring program and many more, we know that there's going to be a lot more crisis intervention that's going to be needed and this service is going to be very valuable. And we also know that the severe cuts to municipalities, they're going to have limited resources to be able to help with the funding for mobile crisis.

The daytime closure of Prince Albert mobile crisis has put stress on Prince Albert Police Service, Victoria Hospital, and other agencies who may not be trained and/or qualified to provide counselling and intervention services to clients. Mr. Speaker, there's people across the province that are concerned about this and they are actively signing petitions here. So I'm going to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Saskatchewan Party government to increase funding to Prince Albert mobile crisis unit so they may once again offer 24-hour emergency crisis service.

Mr. Speaker, individuals signing this particular petition come from the communities of Canora, Regina, and Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition regarding child care in the province. Those who have signed this petition wish to draw our attention to the following: to the fact that across Saskatchewan, licensed non-profit child care centres are taxed inconsistently; and to the fact that many of our licensed non-profit child care centres pay commercial property tax, and this is not something that is done in Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, BC [British Columbia], and New Brunswick.

Child care is essential to the economy, yet most centres struggle to balance their budget. This issue threatens both the number of child care spaces as well as the quality of care. Quality child care has an enormous positive impact on a child's future outcomes and yields high rates of economic return. Child care centres are institutions of early learning and childhood development, and it is appropriate that they have the same tax treatment as schools.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan recognize that licensed non-profit child care centres provide programs that are foundational to a healthy society by including them in *The Education Act* and exempt all licensed non-profit child care centres from property tax through changes to the appropriate legislation.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions have been signed by people all over this province. The one I submit today has signatures from Craven, Zehner, and Regina. I do so submit.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition to ensure job security for victims of domestic violence. Saskatchewan has the dubious distinction of having the highest rate of domestic violence by intimate partners amongst all Canadian provinces.

One in three Canadian workers have experienced domestic violence, and for many the violence follows them to work. Employers lose \$77.9 million annually due to the direct and indirect impacts of domestic violence. Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has already enacted such legislation and Ontario is on its way to enacting legislation that ensures job security for victims of domestic violence. I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan enact legislation that requires all employers to provide a minimum of five paid workdays and a minimum of 17 weeks unpaid work leave with the assurance of job security upon return for all victims of domestic abuse in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we've tabled a private member's bill on our side that calls for the enactment of this provision along with two other important provisions to protect victims of domestic violence. We're hopeful that the government will take that on.

The individuals signing this petition come from Kamsack, Stockholm, and Langenburg. I do so submit.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

[13:45]

Saskatchewan Epilepsy Program Holds Purple Day Fundraiser

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past Saturday, March 26th, marked Purple Day. Founded in 2008 by then nine-year-old Cassidy Megan of Nova Scotia, Purple Day is an international grassroots effort dedicated to increasing awareness about epilepsy worldwide. On this date annually, people in countries around the globe are invited to wear purple and host events in support of epilepsy awareness.

In 2012 the Government of Canada declared Purple Day in official recognition of epilepsy. Cassidy travels across Canada and around the world raising awareness of epilepsy. Mr. Speaker, this past Saturday, Cassidy was the guest of honour at the Western Development Museum when the Saskatchewan epilepsy program held a fundraiser in conjunction with Purple Day to increase epilepsy awareness, to raise money for new equipment to treat patient epilepsy seizures, and to celebrate the 10-year program.

Mr. Speaker, 50 million people have epilepsy worldwide. There are more than 300,000 Canadians living with epilepsy, and it is estimated that 1 in 100 people have epilepsy, and in 50 per cent of cases the cause is unknown.

And so I ask all members to join me in recognizing Purple Day and in commending the Saskatchewan epilepsy program for the work they do to ensure people with epilepsy here have access to the best available treatment; to educate and support people with epilepsy, their families, the public, schools, employers, and other health professionals; and to ensure people with epilepsy in Saskatchewan have access to epilepsy surgery and other available therapies. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melfort.

Melfort Archers' Success at National Tournament

Mr. Phillips: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm happy to recognize the 75 archers from the Melfort archery program who competed in the National Archery in the Schools tournament in Edmonton. The team claimed two golds and a fifth-place finish at the tournament, and many athletes from the team finished with personal bests on the weekend.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize our gold medal winners: Kristina Therres, who was the top elementary female archer, and Sacha Libke, who was the top of the middle years team. They both were awarded with the prestigious one-of-a-kind gold Mathews Genesis bow for their outstanding performances. Mr. Speaker, both athletes are very grateful for their coaches' guidance and their hometown crowd, which was made up by

200 people from Melfort and surrounding areas who travelled to Edmonton to cheer on the athletes.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in congratulating the athletes from the Melfort archery club in a successful national tournament and all the best in their future events. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Gender Diversity Awareness Week

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize Gender Diversity Awareness Week. This week, observed throughout our province, is an opportunity to inspire, inform, and educate society about the challenges faced by members of the sex- and gender-diverse community and to celebrate the diversity of gender with all people here in Saskatchewan. Although the steps forward we have seen in the past few years are significant, there is still much to do. Health and mental health services are especially critical for our gender-diverse community and cannot be neglected.

One area New Democrats are currently championing is to ensure supports for those fleeing domestic violence, including addressing housing and workplace supports. This threat affects us all, but perhaps even more it affects those who are gender diverse and face discrimination that forces them to suffer alone in silence.

Mr. Speaker, we watch with great concerns over the steps backward that are taking place in the United States of America today, whether it's the Miami nightclub tragedy or the federal rulings on washrooms, and we do not want to see the same happen here in Saskatchewan. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in celebrating Gender Awareness Week and in thanking groups like TransSask Services, the Trans Umbrella Foundation, Moose Jaw Pride, and many other organizations across Saskatchewan for making Gender Awareness Week so successful. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Saulteaux First Nation Opens Youth Recreational and Cultural Centre

Mr. Doke: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Saulteaux First Nation has opened the doors to its brand new state-of-the-art youth centre. The grand opening brought the entire community down to experience and take part in many of the activities and services this centre will provide.

The youth recreational centre has a fitness area, ping pong tables, computer lounge, and even a popcorn machine that will provide snacks for all the movies that will be watched with the brand new projector.

Mr. Speaker, this centre is for the entire community. Many elders have been spending time with the younger generations, giving them the opportunity to listen and learn about their community and culture. This investment is priceless, providing

joy and happiness to all generations and a positive and healthy space for all.

Construction began last October by local builders who were ecstatic about the dream of a centre being turned into a reality. The equipment installed into this centre will benefit the youth for their entire lives, with programs to help see them seek new opportunities as well as create and distribute job resumé.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating the Saulteaux community on a much needed grand opening of their youth recreation centre. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Silverspring-Sutherland.

Successful Men's Hockey Season for the University of Saskatchewan Huskies

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to stand before you today to congratulate the University of Saskatchewan Huskies men's ice hockey team for reaching the U Cup [University Cup] finals. Although they came up short against the University of New Brunswick in their final, their efforts made us very proud.

The trip to the finals was no small task. The team boasted a 21-5-2 record in the Canada West conference, under the leadership of Coach Dave Adolph. In his 24th season, Coach Adolph guided the team to the first place regular season finish, and was named the 2016-17 Canada West and U Sports Coach of the Year during the weekend ceremonies.

The awards did not stop there. U of S [University of Saskatchewan] goalie Jordan Cooke was named Canada West and the university sport top goalie for the second consecutive year.

Mr. Speaker, there is much more to this team's season than just wins and losses. Every member of the team has worked hard to achieve a common goal. The life skills of planning, preparation, practice, hard work, sacrifice, and discipline are inherent in one's involvement in sports, particularly at this level. Clearly this group of young men are well on their way to being positive role models and strong members of our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in congratulating the University of Saskatchewan Huskies on their success this season. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Completion of Two New Schools in Regina

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand today to highlight our government's commitment to our education system, with the completion of two new schools in my constituency of Regina Rochdale.

Regina Public's Plainsview and Regina Catholic St. Nicholas are the two new schools in Rosewood Park. They are both wonderful state-of-the-art facilities and will be home to over

800 students and 90 child care centre spaces when they open this September.

Mr. Speaker, northwest Regina is growing. It's full of young families and young children who will benefit from the addition of these two new schools and additional child care spaces. This new joint-use school will benefit the community as a whole with increased access to fitness facilities and a community resource centre. These facilities will be available to the public after regular school hours, and they will be the pillar in our community.

I am proud of our government's record when it comes to education. Even in these tough economic times, our record is one of opening 40 new schools, including 21 this year, along with 25 major renovations. Mr. Speaker, this contrasts with the NDP [New Democratic Party] record. When in tough times, what did they do? They closed schools at an unprecedented rate of 176 schools.

Our government is meeting the challenge and will continue to make sure that Saskatchewan is a great place to live, work, and raise a family. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood.

Investment and Innovation in Saskatchewan

Ms. Lambert: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, we often talk about how Saskatchewan is a great place to live, work, and invest. However, these are not just words. It is the reality, and last week we saw another example of this.

Mr. Speaker, last Friday the Brandt group announced that they were acquiring the Mitsubishi-Hitachi plant in Saskatoon's north end. This plant was winding down operations but was seen as a tremendous facility that would allow Brandt to grow as a company. Further, Mr. Speaker, Brandt plans to use this new facility to produce equipment needed for green energy like wind power turbines.

Mr. Speaker, this announcement, along with other news like the Grain Millers' investment of \$100 million in Yorkton and the presidential approval of the Keystone XL pipeline, is good news for Saskatchewan. Entrepreneurs are creating jobs and opportunity in the province, and this government will support them in creating the conditions for them to succeed. We are excited to see investment and innovation that will keep Saskatchewan as one of the most competitive places in this world to invest.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members to join me in thanking Brandt for their continued investment in our province. Thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Auditor's Report and Details of Land Transactions

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party's budget breaks promise after promise after promise. It picks the pockets

of people, hurts small businesses, hurts families, and it attacks the most vulnerable, all while handing out giveaways to corporations, the wealthy, and well connected.

Mr. Speaker, stepping on those in need while helping out their well-heeled friends is nothing new for the Sask Party. Remember, they orchestrated a scandal that saw nuns and taxpayers get ripped off while two Sask Party supporters made \$11 million.

Since the Premier has so far refused to answer the serious questions on this floor of the Assembly, will he today at least tell us why he thinks that \$11 million is better being spent handed over to Sask Party supporters instead of supporting Saskatchewan people by keeping his word and keeping STC open and serving Saskatchewan?

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well of course, Mr. Speaker, we know that the auditor looked into the matter being referenced by the member opposite. We know the auditor had full authority to look into all elements of the transaction referenced. We know the auditor went through literally thousands of documents and talked to all of those to whom she wished to talk to during this process. She made 10 recommendations, Mr. Speaker. We accept those recommendations. We're implementing or have implemented those recommendations.

And I would just quote the auditor, as she said on a provincial open-line show:

... in any audit, as auditors we're always looking for red flags, and because this is a land transaction, we did look for conflicts of interest. And we didn't find evidence of conflict of interest or indications of fraud or wrongdoing in the course of the work, so there were no red flags there.

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

Services Provided by Saskatchewan Transportation Company

Mr. Wotherspoon: — You know it's, in case the Premier's wondering, it's answers like that that have left Saskatchewan people wondering and realizing that the Sask Party have forgotten who they're working for, Mr. Speaker.

You know, upon release of the budget, 224 STC workers found out that their jobs were cut, and people across the province had to scramble to arrange transportation, including for medical appointments and business needs, because the bus service they depend on had been callously cut. Mr. Speaker, this is a massive broken promise. It was a surprise to everyone, including the very proud workers at STC.

You know, the Sask Party keeps saying that they're not privatizing it. They say that this isn't a sell-off. So then what are their plans with all STC's assets, their buses, their equipment? What are their plans with the \$27 million bus depot here in Regina? Why won't the Premier come clean on his costly scheme?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the budget contained a number of very difficult decisions, difficult measures that we've undertaken, Mr. Speaker, to get this province back to a balanced budget within three years. As far as I can tell, in terms of provinces that are facing deficits, we're the only one to lay out a very specific and short-term plan to get to balance, Mr. Speaker. That requires some difficult decisions, and one of them is looking at the core services of government, Mr. Speaker.

In the context of costs we have to ask ourselves, is it the appropriate thing for us to invest between 80 to \$100 million over the next five years to subsidize the money-losing bus company? Is it appropriate for us to see the per-passenger subsidy go from about \$30 to over \$90 per-passenger subsidy from the taxpayers for that service, Mr. Speaker? And so, notwithstanding the fact that those people that have worked at STC over the years have done an excellent job, have been good public servants, and notwithstanding the fact that this was a difficult decision, we have made this choice, Mr. Speaker. We think it's more important to take that 80 to \$100 million and focus on core activities of government in health care, education, social services, and infrastructure.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — And by supposition, sticking \$11 million of taxpayers' money in the hands of two Sask Party supporters is core business of government? Hey, come on, Mr. Speaker. And there is no answer to the question. Either they're selling the assets, which would make it a sell-off, or they're just letting everything rot, Mr. Speaker. They're either breaking the Crown protection Act or they're throwing money away. Either way, that Premier's not keeping his word.

[14:00]

The Finance minister admitted last week that they really hadn't thought this through. Well no kidding, Mr. Speaker. You know, he was up on Friday last week scrambling and saying that he was going to make up some new plan maybe for issues specific to Prince Albert. Why not think about those things before scrapping STC? And, Mr. Speaker, very importantly, 1,200 people last year bought passes to use the STC to access medical services. That ridership is up, those accessing medical services. What's the Premier's answer to them?

And, Mr. Speaker, farmers and small businesses all across Saskatchewan use STC every day, their parcel service, Mr. Speaker. With all the ways that the Sask Party is hurting small businesses with their budget, are they going to have some sort of special plan as well for businesses and farms across Saskatchewan? To the Premier: why not just keep his word and keep STC open, serving Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would point out to the members opposite and members on this side of the House that there are programs within government from the Ministry of Health, and I think the

Ministry of Social Services as well, that support those who need to have transportation support for different sorts of appointments they have, especially in the North.

Mr. Speaker, I hear the question from the member about freight. I can share with members of the House that when governments in the past or our government have discontinued lines, Mr. Speaker, that often there have been alternatives that have stepped forward to provide freight service in rural Saskatchewan. I think there's an expectation that should happen again. And, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting because I'm hearing what the member says. The member's saying, at any cost, you should continue to operate this service.

I think that's . . . Well if that's not the case then, if that's not the case . . . The Leader of the Opposition just shook his head and said, no that's not the case. If that's not the case, at what level of subsidy do you make that decision? Because it's gone from \$30 a passenger to \$90 a passenger. And so, regardless of how much that subsidy increases — and we know it'll increase by \$100 million over five years if we don't do something — at what point does he think you discontinue the service? Because, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . well now he's just talking from his seat about the government's management.

When they were in office, they shut down lines. They shut down STC lines. Why did they do that? They must have looked at those lines and said, at this cost it's just not economic; it just doesn't represent the priorities of our NDP government. Mr. Speaker, granted this goes much further, but the same logic's at play. And so I would ask him to take to his feet again and explain how it's okay for the NDP to discontinue lines, obviously driven by cost, and it's not okay for any other government to consider similar measures.

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

Government's Fiscal Management

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, that Premier claims that he wants to stimulate the economy and create jobs, but this budget is nothing short of an attack on job creators. The vast majority of new jobs are created by small businesses, but all of the hard-working entrepreneurs in our province got in this budget were tax hikes to themselves and to their customers.

The increase in expansion to PST [provincial sales tax] picks winners and losers in the economy. Restaurants Canada says that this budget will cost their industry \$140 million in lost sales. \$140 million out of small and medium-sized businesses is not growth, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party's budget won't stimulate the economy; it'll shutter business doors and throw Saskatchewan people out of work. How can the Premier justify providing a massive tax break to corporations, the wealthy and the well connected, and penalize the hard-working job creators of this province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So now we're seeing the lines of attack, Mr. Speaker, with respect to this budget. First of all they don't like the spending reductions.

They don't like government reducing any spending across any aspect of government, whether it's in our core services or areas deemed not to be our core services.

Now they stand up and they don't like any of the tax changes here, Mr. Speaker. I would remind the hon. member that those restaurants are going to benefit from a corporate tax reduction, Mr. Speaker, as of July 1st of this year and July 1st in 2019, Mr. Speaker.

So this, well anything over \$500,000 is . . . See this is the difficulty, Mr. Speaker. Anything up to \$500,000 in taxable income is a small business at that rate, anything over and above that . . . All they seem to think about are massive, large corporations, Mr. Speaker. A business in this province who makes \$600,000 is a corporation that pays corporate income tax, Mr. Speaker. Those restaurants the hon. member is talking about is going to benefit from that.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're going to have a good debate about this because the fact of the matter remains. We've got a \$1.2 billion hole in our budget from resource revenues being down. We have broadened the tax base, moved it from tax on productivity and income to tax on consumption. Mr. Mintz, a well-known economist in Canada, Mr. Speaker, seems to think we're on the right track.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, maybe if they knew anything about creating jobs over there, they wouldn't have already doubled the number of Saskatchewan people looking for work — 40,000 people, Mr. Speaker. The fact is this budget is hurting job creators and Saskatchewan families.

Families are already paying \$120 more just to keep the lights on. Now in this budget it ensures that the average family will pay an extra \$400 in taxes each year. This budget says that it “. . . eliminates a number of PST exemptions that no longer serve their purpose and are not fair to all taxpayers.” Mr. Speaker, those exemptions helped families and these new taxes disproportionately hurt low-income households and families with kids. It has gotten 6 per cent more expensive to put clothes on your kids, and they're even taxing diapers. Mr. Speaker, this budget stinks. How can the minister justify pushing the burden of this government's mismanagement, scandal, and waste onto the backs of families?

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — The audacity of the members opposite to talk about job creation. They had the worst record in Canada on job creation, Mr. Speaker. Last, 10 out of 10 — that's their record over there, Mr. Speaker. What's our record on this side of the House? Sixty thousand jobs created over the course of the last nine years, Mr. Speaker, the second-best job creation record in the entire country.

Just last month, Mr. Speaker, we saw the job numbers: 8,600 jobs created month over month, the fourth-best month in history, Mr. Speaker, for this province. We've seen our population at an all-time high. Just last Friday, two separate

announcements, Mr. Speaker, major investments being made into this province by miller grain and by Brandt, creating hundreds of more jobs here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Their record, last in Canada; our record, the best in Canada.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Operation of Wascana Centre Authority

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, they can keep congratulating themselves all they like, but the 40,000 people that are looking for work right now aren't going to take any comfort from the brag party that the minister's throwing for himself there right now.

Mr. Speaker, last spring at this time we were out on the election trail, and of course you'll remember where we saw the Sask Party talk about what a great idea it'd be to raise the PST on restaurant meals, you know. Actually no, that didn't happen on the campaign trail, Mr. Speaker. You'll remember when they talked about completely neutering school boards, Mr. Speaker. Well no, they didn't talk about that on the campaign trail. And you'll also remember, Mr. Speaker, when they talked about raising municipal taxes, Mr. Speaker. No, they didn't talk about that on the trail.

And something else they didn't talk about on the trail, Mr. Speaker, is Wascana Centre. Now as with other organizations, Mr. Speaker, when they don't like what's happening in that organization, they have a move to try and take it over. And we see that in this budget, Mr. Speaker, where the Sask Party wants to take a 55-year-old partnership that has worked for the jewel in the crown of the Queen City and take it over, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister for the Provincial Capital Commission point out to me where they get the mandate from in their campaign platform?

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

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A comprehensive review was undertaken by Wascana Centre Authority, involving well over 3,000 respondents to determine the overall vision for Wascana Centre. The review recommended a new governance model for the WCA [Wascana Centre Authority] which involves the Government of Saskatchewan assuming responsibility for Wascana Centre. This will help provide stable funding, a consistent approach to infrastructure investments, and a comprehensive plan to maintain the centre, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Funding for Meewasin Valley Authority

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, Wascana Centre is not the only treasured green space facing the Finance minister's axe. Later today the Parks minister will stand to introduce cuts . . . introduce a bill to cut the statutory funding to the Meewasin Valley Authority. He'll be standing to introduce cuts, but he won't be standing for the good of Saskatoon — nearly half a million dollars cut, those costs downloaded to the city of Saskatoon, to the University of Saskatchewan, who have

already been hit pretty hard by this budget.

The Meewasin Valley is central to our city, central to the life of our city, to our economy, to preserving our natural environment. And we just had a by-election in Saskatoon Meewasin. I listened on hundreds of doorsteps. I met with the Sask Party candidate who promised to fight to preserve funding for the MVA [Meewasin Valley Authority]. I never once heard anyone say, hey let's cut that thing. I certainly never heard the Sask Party say they were planning to cut it. That was a month ago. They knew this was happening. How do you justify this cut, and why did you keep it secret from the people of Saskatoon?

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, to the member for the question. Certainly very pleased to talk about the Meewasin Valley Authority on the floor of this legislature. Since 2008 that organization has received about \$8.2 million from this government. As members opposite know, or should know, many difficult decisions had to be made. Negotiations had to take place, and we had to make some difficult decisions. Yes, we did, Mr. Speaker.

I had an opportunity to meet with Mayor Clark, to meet with the president of the university, to also have discussions with CEO [chief executive officer] Lloyd Isaak. At the end of the day, Meewasin's funding was cut by 28 per cent. But more importantly, we agreed to work together to look towards the future and to be creative in the way that we use taxpayers' money, Mr. Speaker.

What we indicated as a government was that everything was on the table. We challenged groups to work with us. The groups that I fore-mentioned have taken on that challenge. I look forward to working with them as we move forward for the betterment of the people of Saskatoon and Saskatchewan.

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

Financial Support for Municipalities

Ms. Rancourt: — Mr. Speaker, it doesn't sound like the minister is getting the message: stop cutting Meewasin Valley Authority and keep your hands off of Wascana Park. And, Mr. Speaker, they should also keep their hands off slapping our municipalities in other ways too.

They're downloading \$36 million onto municipalities by cutting grants in lieu of taxes at SaskPower and SaskEnergy. And because municipalities can't run deficits, the Sask Party is forcing even more tax hikes with their budget.

Why is the minister forcing municipalities to pick up the tab for the last decade of Sask Party mismanagement, scandal, and waste?

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, just to be clear, we're not taxing the municipalities. We don't have that authority. But however, there were very, very difficult decisions that had to be made in this budget. And we were very clear with all our third party partners in every sector that we were going to all work together and share in the pain of bringing our budget to balance, and bring it to balance we will, Mr. Speaker.

There has been no sector that has received more support from this government than our municipal partners. Municipal revenue sharing has more than doubled from this government, and for the cities of Regina and Saskatoon it has been two and a half times as much as it used to be under the previous administration which, if the members opposite forget, the previous administration were NDP, Mr. Speaker.

Since we formed government, almost \$2 billion has flowed through that program to our municipal partners. Mr. Speaker, when we spoke with SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] and SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], the Premier was very clear time and time again. Everything was on the table including grants in lieu.

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Mr. Speaker, they're the ones that got us in this financial mess. They are responsible. If the minister won't take my word for it, maybe she'll listen to Saskatchewan's mayors. Regina Mayor Michael Fougere said, "That is significant downloading to our city." The Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association said, "Our members are outraged, and so are we." Saskatoon city councillor and former Conservative candidate, Randy Donauer, said, "This is a transfer of a tax burden from one level of government to another because they can."

These municipal leaders are rightly and understandably outraged over the government's short-sighted and irresponsible decision to cut a vital source of funding for urban communities. Will the minister do the right thing and stop these cuts, or will she keep plowing ahead with her plan for fewer services and higher taxes?

[14:15]

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, the cities that the member opposite was just talking about, quite frankly, have pretty significant reserves. And, Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't call transferring almost \$2 billion to our municipal partners downloading. I'd actually call it uploading, Mr. Speaker. And I don't think they want to go back to the revenue-sharing formula that was under the NDP. Oh, but there was no formula. They had to guess from year to year what else the NDP would cut when they were in power, Mr. Speaker.

On top of the record municipal revenue sharing, Mr. Speaker, this government has made record infrastructure investments in our major communities around this province. Mr. Speaker, the

revenue sharing to Saskatoon and Regina alone have each increased by over two and a half times, Mr. Speaker. But we know this is a challenging budget, Mr. Speaker. We know we all have responsibility to help us bring the government back to balance.

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

Funding for Libraries and Education

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More shirking of responsibility and more downloading of cost. Now we know that the Sask Party don't find libraries all that important. The minister has made that very clear. But if after years of zero per cent funding increases and struggling to maintain basic services, and despite the number of library users increasing every year, our libraries only expected enough funding from this government to be able to just get by. But this budget made devastating cuts to libraries, eliminating more than 50 per cent of their funding.

Mr. Speaker, this decision has put many of our libraries into crisis mode. They were given no warning about these massive cuts. Cuts to services are inevitable, and some libraries may even be forced to close their doors. Mr. Speaker, our libraries are a hub for community programming, and they encourage and instill the love of literacy in our children all across the province. My question is this: how can the minister justify this terrible cut?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in our province we have one library for every 4,000 citizens. We have small towns that have a municipal library in a municipal building. A few blocks away, we have a school library. We need to look at what kind of efficiencies, what kind of co-location can exist. We want to work with our libraries to adjust how they can deliver services within the available funding levels. Our focus is on supporting things like electronic resources, interlibrary loans, CommunityNet.

Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to work with our libraries. We believe in literacy. We believe in education. We want to support our students. We want to support the citizens of our province. But, Mr. Speaker, sometimes we have to recognize that the needs have changed. And, Mr. Speaker, we want to continue to work with them to make sure that we're able to continue the best possible service we can in our province.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, believing in them and supporting them are two very different things. And I would suggest that it is well past time that that minister, and perhaps some of his colleagues, step foot into a library and maybe into a classroom while they're at it.

Mr. Speaker, it's not just libraries that are facing funding cuts from that minister. Millions, millions were cut from education, and all school divisions all across this province are being forced

to make deep cuts.

The cuts to schools in Swift Current alone total nearly \$6 million, with the school division saying that, quote, everything is on the table, when it comes to the cuts that they are going to have to make.

Mr. Speaker, education property taxes are going up and funding to education is going down. Why is the education tax money not going to school divisions and directly to our kids' classrooms? And how can this minister justify using the money meant for our kids' classrooms to pay off the debt created by this government's mismanagement, scandal, and waste?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talked about libraries. And I want to just mention a few things about libraries. Since 2007, the items checked out of our libraries in our province has dropped by 1.6 million items. The number of library cards has dropped by 175,000. Over 90 Saskatchewan rural communities with a library also have a library in their school.

We believe that there's opportunities to combine resources in those communities. For example, if you drive between Martensville and Langham, a distance of 35 kilometres, you will pass five libraries, all within 15 minutes of Saskatoon. If you drive from Indian Head to Regina, you'll pass four libraries.

Mr. Speaker, the percentage of provincial funding that went to Regina's library was 2.75, 3 per cent in Saskatoon. We'll work with the municipalities. We believe in the citizens. We don't believe in what the members opposite are trying to do.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 48 — *The Education Property Tax Act*

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 48, *The Education Property Tax Act* be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — I believe I heard the minister introduce Bill No. 48. It has been moved that Bill 48 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 49 — *The Education Property Tax Consequential Amendment Act, 2017/Loi de 2017 portant modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Education Property Tax Act*

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 49, *The Education Property Tax Consequential Amendment Act, 2017* be now introduced and read for the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Government Relations that Bill No. 49 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be read a second time? I recognize the minister.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 50 — *The Provincial Capital Commission Act*

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

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 50, *The Provincial Capital Commission Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Central Services that Bill No. 50, *The Provincial Capital Commission Act* be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be read a second time? I recognize the minister.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 51 — *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Repeal Act*

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

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 51, *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Repeal Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure that Bill No. 51, *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Repeal Act* be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First reading of this bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Marit: — The bill will be read at the next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Yes, next sitting.

Bill No. 52 — *The Meewasin Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2017*

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 52, *The Meewasin Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2017* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport that Bill 52, *The Meewasin Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2017* be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the

answers to questions 280 to 283.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has tabled the responses to questions 280 to 283.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Martensville-Warman.

Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to be able to stand in my place and respond to the budget that was released last week. But, Mr. Speaker, there's something that I want to do first.

Those of us who have served in government, regardless of which side of the House we currently sit on, Mr. Speaker, understand the dedication and expertise that our amazing public service brings to their jobs, and it allows us to do our jobs.

I had the honour of working with Nithi Govindasamy, who is the deputy minister of Highways. He was formerly an associate deputy minister of Agriculture. But, Mr. Speaker, he has 40 years of public service under his belt and will be retiring next week.

And I wanted to take this opportunity quite publicly to thank Nithi for his many, many years of dedication, Mr. Speaker, not just to our province but to Alberta as well, and to thank his wife for her patience and letting Nithi do what he does. He works so very hard, probably harder than most of us would like him to, and I know that he's looking forward to having some downtime.

He's worn many hats while working in different governments, Mr. Speaker, but I know his favourite one is being a grandpa. And I'm so looking forward to Nithi having an opportunity to spend more time with his grandson.

So I would ask all of my colleagues, quite honestly, to thank Nithi if you see him in the halls — he's only got a few days left — but to thank him for his service as well, Mr. Speaker. He deserves our gratitude and thanks.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk about some of the highlights of the budget, specifically how they pertain to my constituency. I got to the office this morning and got a text from my constituency assistant, Whitney, to let me know that there is being dirt moved at the Warman interchange site on Highway 11, and I'm pretty excited about that.

And there's just over \$26 million in this budget to go towards the construction of overpasses at both Warman and

Martensville. And as you know, Mr. Speaker, those two communities are about the fastest growing in the entire country, and the traffic on Highway 11 and Highway 12 is growing every day. So those interchanges are very important and there's money in this budget for that.

I did a statement last week, Mr. Speaker, about schools that are going to be opening both in Warman and Martensville. Over the course of the last few years . . . And I realize the boundaries have changed a little bit but there was some major improvements in other communities. But, Mr. Speaker, there was a middle years school in Warman in 2009, major renovations to the Martensville High School in 2010, and these four new schools that are going to be opening this fall. Every time I'm back in the riding, I drive past them just to check on progress. I am looking forward to the ribbon cuttings this fall. Our schools are very crowded as these communities are growing and I'm pleased that these schools are going to be opening.

Mr. Speaker, I did highlight some of the work that's being done on the interchanges, but, Mr. Speaker, I have to say the difference between now and when I was first elected on the roads in my constituency . . . It was actually just about three weeks ago was my 10-year anniversary of being sworn in as an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly]. And, Mr. Speaker, in the months leading up to that event, I drove all over the constituency during the nomination process to talk to folks and then obviously during the by-election. And at the time I had a little Neon — you can judge me for that car choice if you want — but I had a little Neon, which probably makes the situation feel even worse. But I remember driving out to communities like Hepburn and Dalmeny, and you're driving from side to side just to avoid all the potholes. The roads were atrocious. They were falling apart.

I remember shortly after arriving in this Chamber in opposition, the member for Athabasca was the Highways minister at the time and I wrote him a letter and I invited him to come out to my riding and drive these roads because I thought it was important for him to understand what my communities were facing. Those communities were growing very quickly at that time as well. Well he denied my request; he didn't come out.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to say that in the years since the NDP started sitting over there and we were sitting over here, that there's been major, major projects, Mr. Speaker. You have to go drive around the riding now and it's like night and day. It's hard to believe it's even the same place. Major renovations — the relocation of 305 between Warman and Martensville, the upgrading and resurfacing of 305 between Martensville and Dalmeny, a complete reconstruction of the Dalmeny access road, 684, which was treacherous before, Mr. Speaker; and then of course the interchanges.

[14:30]

So I'm very proud of the work that our government has been doing in my community, and I know that it came up again today about revenue sharing. And I have to say, Mr. Speaker, I know the minister responsible highlighted some of the increases to other communities, but in Martensville between 2007 and this year's budget, Martensville's revenue sharing increased by

259 per cent. And in Warman, Mr. Speaker, their increase in revenue sharing since 2007 when the NDP were in government is 327 per cent, Mr. Speaker. These are astronomical increases for these communities, and I think our dedication to these communities is well known.

Mr. Speaker, we know that during the budget there was a number of different tax changes that were implemented, and I know I was back home in my riding this last weekend and people tend to have heard only one side of the story. So they understand the PST has increased to realize some additional revenues for us. But what they didn't understand, Mr. Speaker, is that for the lowest income earners that the low-income tax credit has also been increased. They didn't know that their income taxes were being reduced, so I quite enjoyed having conversations with folks at home to explain to them the entire story, because that isn't always what is relayed. I know people talk amongst themselves and sometimes the bad-news part of a budget is what people talk about, not necessarily the good-news stuff, Mr. Speaker.

And there is good news in this, because even with these tax changes there is still considerably less tax being paid by Saskatchewan families now than in 2007. That's taking into account the PST increase, Mr. Speaker. And the one thing that we won't find in here on the tax side is a carbon tax, Mr. Speaker. I think we've been very clear that that is not something that we are going to be entertaining and, you know, all the advice from the NDP in Alberta aside, I think we'll continue to make our own decisions and not go down the path that they are going down, Mr. Speaker, which is massive deficits and having a carbon tax imposed on their jurisdiction.

This is truly a made-in-Saskatchewan plan, Mr. Speaker, and it is a plan. It is a plan to get back to balance within three years, and within that mandate, while there are some tax increases, we are also lowering taxes as I said, with reductions to personal income tax and to corporate tax.

And I found it interesting during question period when we were talking about . . . There was a question about restaurants and that they would be paying less corporate tax. The Finance critic and the Leader of the Opposition, they seem to think just because it's called a corporation that it's some big, huge multinational. Well, Mr. Speaker, I was just talking to my seatmate. Just about every farmer that he knows in this province is incorporated, which means they pay corporate tax. Restaurants for the most part I would imagine would be incorporated, which means they make corporate income tax payments, Mr. Speaker. So I don't know. Maybe the member from Athabasca, who likes to tell us what to do, can help out his seatmate and explain to them what an incorporated business is and who pays corporate tax in this province, Mr. Speaker. Because he seems to be wholly unaware of the implications of that . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Probably. I'm sure there's probably some incorporated businesses over there. Considering they have contracts with government, I would imagine they might be incorporated as well.

Mr. Speaker, there was a very interesting article that was out the day after our budget, written by Jack Mintz who's the President's Fellow at the University of Calgary school of public policy. And I started highlighting it, and I almost need to read

the whole thing because I ended up highlighting almost all of it. But, Mr. Speaker, I will read just a portion of it. Considering that the federal budget and our budget came down in the same day, he did a comparison between the two, and I will quote part of this article. It begins, and I quote:

Two very different budgets on the same day. There has been lots of talk about the federal one. Saskatchewan's budget was much less noticed. The Saskatchewan one deserves more credit.

The federal budget has no plan to balance the books in the foreseeable future. The Saskatchewan budget will balance the books within three years, even though it has faced plummeting resource prices since 2014.

The federal budget focuses on growth through a plethora of government spending programs. The Saskatchewan budget uses tax reform and spending restraint to improve competitiveness.

The federal approach is based on a philosophy that government should direct the private sector. Saskatchewan looks [at ways] to reduce barriers to growth by getting the government out of the way.

Mr. Speaker, the article goes on to say, and I quote:

The feds could learn something from Saskatchewan.

There, the big theme is shifting taxes from income to consumption — and improving competitiveness.

Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say:

Overall, these changes go in the right direction to improve competitiveness . . .

To balance the books in three years, Saskatchewan keeps the lid on spending, including public sector compensation. Infrastructure spending will sharply rise as well as increased support for low-income households as an offset to the sales tax increases.

And it ends, Mr. Speaker, by saying this:

Saskatchewan's budget is a dream for fiscally prudent voters: it keeps spending down, starts balancing the books, and shifts taxation to less distortionary revenue sources.

And, Mr. Speaker, if my colleagues, and even the members opposite, if they haven't read this article, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to them that they do. It's very well written. And I have to say I agree with a lot of what's in there.

Mr. Speaker, we understand, and we heard that again through question period today, that there's difficult choices to be made in this budget year. I was on treasury board for seven years. There's difficult decisions made every year, but this year was quite a bit different.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would like to read a quote into the record. It says, and I quote:

Now, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately as a result of this need to reduce expenditures, we also had to reduce staff and . . . [that is] not an easy decision to make . . . But in order to govern effectively, we had to have responsible finances and not to back down from these difficult choices.

Guess who said that, Mr. Speaker? The NDP member for Saskatoon Centre, when he was a minister in the NDP government after bringing down a difficult budget.

Mr. Speaker, they know in their hearts that there was difficult decisions to be made, but in true fashion for the NDP, they sit there and oppose without offering up any single alternative. They like to tell us what we shouldn't be doing, but they don't say what they would do instead, Mr. Speaker.

They don't want any of the tax changes to occur. They want to put back all of the spending that was reduced out of this budget. They stand up and still refer to things that happened in the last budget, want that money put back as well, Mr. Speaker. Well there's a \$1.2 billion revenue hole in our budget, and how would they propose to fill it? All I've heard so far, Mr. Speaker, from their Finance critic . . . And you would think being a Finance critic she'd be better at math than this, but apparently she's not. Her only solution that I've heard so far is to get rid of a few MLAs and then cut back on some cabinet pay. Well last time I checked, that doesn't add up to \$1.2 billion.

So what would they do? They want to be a government-in-waiting, which means they have to look to the future and explain to the people of this province what their plan is. Their only plan, Mr. Speaker, is to take some mythical time machine back to 2007 and tell people what they wouldn't have done.

Well, Mr. Speaker, those things are done, and I would say, Mr. Speaker, to the benefit of the people of this province, whether it's Boundary dam, keeps the coal industry alive and well in this province, Mr. Speaker, something that apparently the members opposite would like to shut down and put those people out of work. So it keeps people employed.

The bypass, for whatever reason they're against that, even though the Leader of the Opposition stood in this House every day for years presenting petitions about getting truck traffic off of Dewdney Avenue. Mr. Speaker, this bypass actually does that. I haven't heard him on his feet in a very long time about this.

And I'm going to go back to my opening comments about staff in the ministry. I was able to go to Nithi's retirement function on Thursday, and obviously, as I had been the minister before, I've got relationships with the folks that work there. And I talked to quite a few of the men and women who are working on the bypass, Mr. Speaker, because obviously there are folks in the ministry still involved in this.

And the one thing I heard over and over and over again is how incredibly discouraged they are by the comments from primarily the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, because not only do they know that he sat in on a technical briefing that we offered through Highways; they were the ones in that technical briefing giving the Leader of the Opposition

information. So when he comes into this House and says this project ballooned from \$400 million to 1.2, he knows that to be not correct. He has been told that over and over again, and not by politicians. He's been told that by the fine men and women in our public service, and apparently chooses not to believe them. And that is disgraceful and shameful to those people who work every day for our province. He is well aware, Mr. Speaker, that that \$400 million project was tiny in comparison to the project that is in place now.

While they're beaking from their chairs, maybe we could offer them another technical briefing on this, and maybe this time they'll pay attention instead of having prewritten a press release before the meeting even took place because they didn't want to listen to the answers. They didn't want the facts. They didn't want the truth because they had their own little story to tell, Mr. Speaker, a story that is not correct, and they know that.

So, Mr. Speaker, they can't go back and say that these things will be undone. You can't undo these things. So as a government in waiting, today, 2017, March, what would they do? How would they fill a \$1.2 billion hole? They deserve to tell all of us, Mr. Speaker.

We'll be going back to an election in a few years and they would probably have a plan there. Because, Mr. Speaker, in the absence of a plan today, the only information that we have on hand is their election platform from 2016, just conveniently off their website, I believe. I happen to have a copy. So that's the only plan that we have.

Well even in that plan, Mr. Speaker, they couldn't even get it right when they tried to do it right because I have a list of 18 promises during the election campaign that were never funded in this document, a billion-dollar hole in their own election platform. I don't think we want any . . . Nobody in this province wants the NDP in charge of math or finances or budgeting because they can't get it right during the campaign, let alone real-life budgeting when you're actually making decisions for the people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

And I'll go through some of these promises that they made but didn't fund them, Mr. Speaker, including the P.A. [Prince Albert] bridge. And they said that they were going to fund it through the urban highway connector program, which is about \$4 million a year, and still somehow get a \$150 million project built in four years with a \$4 million-a-year budget. Again, Mr. Speaker, NDP math. Nobody wants them on this side of the House making those kinds of decisions, Mr. Speaker.

They, in the midst of a campaign, promised an all-weather road to Wollaston, Mr. Speaker, not funded in their budget. A whole long list of them, 17. I can table it if they forgot what they did in the last campaign.

But, Mr. Speaker, we know, and I think the people of this province know that you need to have a plan. People expect a government to tell the people of this province what we're going to be doing going forward. That's what we did in this budget, Mr. Speaker, a three-year plan to get us back to balance. And I'm pretty . . . Mr. Speaker, so far the only thing that we've heard from them is more. As I said at the beginning of my remarks, they want all the tax changes to be undone. They want

all the spending to go back in place, Mr. Speaker. Just simply saying more is not a plan.

And, Mr. Speaker, our record is pretty solid on funding to important things in this province. When it comes to building schools, they say they need more schools built. Well how many and where? Our record is clear; it's over 40 schools that we've built across this province in the last nine years including five in my own constituency. On education, they say they need more funding. Fair enough. Happy to have the conversation, but how much more? They won't say. They won't put a dollar figure to it, Mr. Speaker.

They say we need to spend more on seniors. We've increased funding for front-line nurses across this province, Mr. Speaker. We increased the senior income plan, something that the NDP didn't do over the course of 16 years. So they say, more. Again more is not a plan. How much more do they want to spend? You know, put a number down so we can have a conversation.

More in health care. Well the member from Nutana, their Finance critic who we've already I think established isn't very good at math, said 6 per cent each and every year. Well does that still stand or do they want more on top of that? We don't know, Mr. Speaker, because they won't say.

I have to say that last week the member for Athabasca — and I'm quoting this, Mr. Speaker — during a question in question period said, and I quote, "I made that last part up . . ." That was on March 22nd. And I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that was one of the most honest comments that I've heard in all of my years in politics, particularly in this building having to deal with the NDP. So I applaud him for that. Sadly it was ridiculous and honest all at the same time. I'm not sure. He's been here long enough. I don't know why he'd say that out loud, but at least we know what's in his heart, Mr. Speaker, and that's encouraging.

Mr. Speaker, I do find it interesting. I want to point out when we talk about them not having a plan, not a whole lot of ideas going forward, the one proposal that they have brought forward is to ban corporate and union donations. I thought that was interesting, which means that we'd all be funded by just individual donations. So I had some time this weekend, and I'm a bit of a geek and a past researcher, so I went back through every NDP candidate's election return, every single one.

An Hon. Member: — All of them?

Ms. Heppner: — All of them. And so if we're supposed to be funded purely on individual donations, Mr. Speaker, the member for P.A. Northcote, individual donations during the campaign, zero. The member for Athabasca, individual donations during the campaign, zero, but had 11 cents from corporations. So I don't quite know how that works out. Maybe that's all they think of him. There's a whole series of them, Mr. Speaker, where they have zero individual donations.

[14:45]

So I'm kind of almost rethinking my position on this because I don't know how they'd run a campaign. Oh, the member for Regina Rosemont, the interim leader of the NDP, 1 per cent of total donations came from people, Mr. Speaker, individual

donations. And there's a whole series where they got 15, 11 cents for corporations. I don't . . . Again I don't know how that works.

And the member for Saskatoon Centre, I applaud him. He did much better than most of his colleagues, 5 per cent in individual donations. But 15 per cent of that 5 per cent came from himself, so he still has some work to do on that front, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I said when I stood up today that it was an honour to stand up and speak to our budget. And coming from the perspective of my constituency, I am very pleased. My communities, their resource, or their revenue sharing is something that they've never seen before. I applaud the government for keeping that in place, for the infrastructure investment into my communities in the constituency of Martensville-Warman is unprecedented. I don't know that the folks there have ever seen infrastructure dollars go into that riding like they have in the last nine years, Mr. Speaker. And so I thank my government for their understanding that these growing communities need that infrastructure investment, whether it's schools or highways, the things that were important to the folks that I talk to when I go home, Mr. Speaker.

And you know, we're sitting here for a few more weeks and then we'll have a summer break. We'll have some time on our hands. And I would just encourage the NDP . . . I know the former member for Regina Lakeview took off with his giant Suburban so they're going to have to find another place to have their caucus meeting. But maybe they can get together and actually formulate a plan, Mr. Speaker. Instead of looking backwards, look forwards, Mr. Speaker, and present something to the people of Saskatchewan. I don't know. Maybe the people of Saskatchewan will like it, but they don't have the chance to make that decision, Mr. Speaker, because they've seen nothing from the members opposite.

I will not be supporting the amendment put forward by the member from Nutana. I will be supporting my government and this budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured today to stand and reply to the budget speech and support the budget speech. But before I get started on that, I'm going to take a few minutes to thank the folks at home that allow me to be here.

First and foremost, of course, is my wonderful spouse, Marjorie, who happens to be working today, running the store that she runs in Moose Jaw. And I don't if she'll have time because the store, its productivity in the last couple of months has gone through the roof. And she was saying with the increases in tobacco tax that it'll probably get busy because she helps people stop smoking. So that was good for her store. And without her support, I wouldn't be able to do this job. And I'm sure that's with most of us, with all of us with a spouse or a significant other at home. We wouldn't be able to do this job to the extent that we can without the support of our spouses at home. So I just want to give her my heartfelt thanks and her thanks for supporting. She gives me enough support at home that if I go to an event and my wife doesn't come with me,

Marjorie isn't with me, people don't say, Greg, how are you doing? They say, Greg, where's Marj? So that is how important she is to me back home. She's my right hand and she's there, so I just need to thank her for all that support.

I also want to thank my CA [constituency assistant] back in Moose Jaw. I've got Trina Nicolson working in the office back there. And as all of us have constituency assistants back in our ridings and in our offices, the work that they do and the work that she does is exemplary. She helps me look good back at home. She gets the answers for the folks . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, and that's definitely not easy, helping me look good back home. She gets me the answers I need, and we follow up with the majority of our constituents when I get home. Thursday and Friday I make a point of returning those calls to constituents, even on those constituents that we don't always have good news for. They're always surprised when I give them a call, and it's not necessarily good news. We still work for them and try and do the best work that government can do for them.

I also want to reach out to my mom and dad. They are unwavering supporters of the Sask Party. They've been there from the word go. My dad still occasionally shakes his head and goes, I'm not sure how you got there, but you're doing a great job. And all of us with our parents back home, I know they are fully supportive of us on both sides of the House. Even if they don't have the same view as us, their parents support them as well. So a huge thanks to Mom and Dad, Bob and Rose. Mom's retired finally, and Dad isn't retired yet, but they tell me they're going to take a holiday again this year, so that's good. They get some time off.

And then there's my boys. I've got my three boys, all three of them still in the province, all three of them working in the province. I introduced Ryan earlier today. He works for a company out in Moose Jaw called Provincial Airways. Not only is he a pilot, he's a AME, aircraft maintenance engineer. So not only can he fly the plane; if something breaks he gets to fix the plane he's flying. Hopefully not in that order, but he gets to do that as well.

And I've got two boys working here in Regina. I've got Dylan and Geoffrey here in Regina working. Dylan works for a company called Duke Sewer. They take care of apartments and homes across town doing the cleanout. Geoff is working on a loading dock doing shipping and stuff like that, so it's good for him. And he's got a fight coming up in Edmonton in about a week and a half. So he's going to . . .

An Hon. Member: — Organized?

Mr. Lawrence: — Yes, an organized fight. He does MMA [mixed martial arts]. So he does the MMA and into the Brazilian jiu-jitsu. So he's got a fight coming up. So the best of luck for that next weekend in Edmonton.

And then there's my grandkids. I've got three wonderful grandkids. I've got Jordison who is the oldest. He's about three and a half now and he is just a going concern, talks a lot. And he isn't to the questioning stage yet, but if he's going to be like his dad he's going to ask why, why? Why did you this? Why is the sky blue?

And then we've got Jaxton, his little brother, his younger brother, who is doing his best to try and keep up with a brother that's a year older or just under a year older. And Jaxton is right there, right alongside him trying to keep up, and you can see that sibling rivalry that my boys have is alive and well in them.

And then there's my wonderful granddaughter. So my wife finally got another female in the family that, you know, she can help spread her love over because she raised boys. And just about all of our foster kids except for one were boys, so she hasn't had that daughter to help raise. So with my granddaughter there . . . But she does have a wonderful daughter-in-law.

So it's great that I have my family. They're all working here in the province. In spite of tough times, they work here in our province and they didn't have to leave.

And this is where I want to go a little bit with my budget speech. So we'll get to that because when I graduated from high school, I didn't have a lot of my friends stick around. They left the province, and they left the province in droves. And when we point this out to the opposition, they're like, oh, we were just ready to turn a corner. If we just had that one more year, just one more year, one more year, it would have been a different story. But let's take a look at that first.

So forward, right now, the population grew by over 130,000 since 2006. Saskatchewan is now the second-fastest-growing province in Canada. And what was the comparison for when the members opposite were in? Population dropped by 22,000 people from 1996 to 2006. So that's saying we lost Estevan and Weyburn — out of province, gone. But we grew by 130,000 people. So that's either 10 Estevans, 10 Weyburns, and a Moose Jaw thrown in. So that's what we've grown in the last 10 years.

Job creation, it was mentioned during QP [question period] today. What was the NDP record in Canada? From 2000 to 2007 they had the worst, the worst job creation record in Canada, and it was just half the national rate of job growth. What is ours? Now yes, we say there's more work to be done. Ours is the second-best job creation record in Canada: from 2000 to 2016, nearly doubled the national rate of job growth. So is there more work to be done? You betcha there is. We need to be number one, and we'll keep working with the people of Saskatchewan to get us there.

And we had some great announcements. Saskatoon has a new manufacturing facility coming in with Brandt, and then we have more farm stuff coming in. You know we take a look at Moose Jaw, my home city. They started . . . if there wasn't potential for growth do you think Moose Jaw would have really created a brand new industrial park? No. If there was no potential for growth, they wouldn't have done that. So even my home city, Moose Jaw, is now taking a look at bringing industry to Moose Jaw. Instead of, you know, planning for the last person leaving shutting off the lights, they're preparing for growth right there in our home city.

Taxes. Now I've have had lots of conversations over the last week, half a week, on taxes, and some very, very interesting discussions on that, we'll say. Saskatchewan still has the lowest PST of any province with PST. And what was it under the

NDP? Well, geez, they raised taxes 21 times in 16 years, including raising the PST four times and the gas tax twice. So there is definitely a difference in comparison. And how does that affect families because, you know, my kids are still here, and young families here in the province . . . So right now we'll take a look at my oldest boy, a single person with under \$40,000 income, will still pay \$749 less than in 2007 under the previous government. So dollar for dollar, that's a 20 per cent reduction, and that's with the PST increase. That's with the PST increase.

A family of four — so there we have Dylan — a family of four . . . No. No, see he makes a little more money than that. But a family of four with a 50,000 income will still pay \$2,366 less than in 2007 — a 77 per cent reduction, 77 per cent reduction. Now if you talk to those folks on the other side, they only talk about giving the wealthiest and the top 1 per cent and our corporations a tax break. Well a family of four making \$50,000 a year isn't what we're talking about. They have a 77 per cent reduction. That's huge.

Now a family of four with 75,000 income will pay \$1,876 less than in 2007 — a 31 per cent reduction. And a family of four with a \$100,000 income will pay \$1,951 less than in 2007 — a 20 per cent reduction.

So when you take a look at what we've done compared to what the opposition did when they were in power, it's a huge difference, you know. I don't know about most folks, but if you talk to my kids, would almost \$2,000 in their pocket at the end of the year make a huge difference in their monthly budget? Yes, huge. Huge.

And back to more. So the NDP claim to fame is health care. That's what they run on. So what was their record from 2001 to 2006? Saskatchewan lost 450 nurses and 173 doctors from 2001 to 2006. Lost.

An Hon. Member: — Why?

Mr. Lawrence: — Well it probably had something to do with the amount of hospitals they closed, but we'll talk about that too. They also had the longest surgical wait times in Canada. Now if you close 52 hospitals, which is what they did, you're going to have to lay off nurses and fire doctors. And you know, that's what they did: 450 and 173.

[15:00]

So take a look at ours: 750 more doctors and over 3,000 more nurses of all kinds. We've pointed this out over and over and over again. They always say, it's not enough. So what's enough? What's the plan? Where do you draw the line? How many more do we hire? You know, we have among the shortest surgical wait times in Canada. And we've doubled investments in hospital projects, including the children's hospital in Saskatoon, the brand new hospital in Moose Jaw, and the one in North Battleford.

And let's talk about the hospital in Moose Jaw. So you know, nobody thinks Moose Jaw is rural Saskatchewan, unless you live in Regina, and then it's rural Saskatchewan. But our government, because it's not just centred in Regina or

Saskatoon, thought we're building a brand new hospital. What would a new hospital need? An MRI [magnetic resonance imaging]. Moose Jaw got the first MRI outside of Regina or Saskatoon in our brand new hospital.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Lawrence: — Hear, hear. Thank you. Yes. That was astounding that, you know, that actually an MRI will work outside the cities of Regina and Saskatoon. If you take a look at the way that the NDP thought about it, anything outside of Regina and Saskatoon really didn't count, including closing the Plains Hospital which was built for rural Saskatchewan, for those rural Saskatchewan people: easy access, easy to get out, to get there from anywhere in Saskatchewan right off Ring Road. What did they do? They closed it. Shut her down. Okay.

Seniors. So what have we done for the seniors? We've opened 15 new long-term care facilities for seniors. What did they do? They closed 1,200 beds, 1,200 beds. So they talked about wait lists, moving people out of the cities. What would have those 1,200 beds done? You know, maybe they would have alleviated some of the stress that's on the system right now.

What did they do for the seniors' income plan, the seniors' income plan benefit? Those that cared so much for those that need the most help? For 16 years, 16 years, what was their increase? Zero. Absolutely nothing. Zero. Nothing. What did we do? Well we tripled it. The seniors' income benefit plan tripled from \$90 a month to \$270 a month. Those are to help our most vulnerable seniors. And you know, you talk to them, they're very thankful for it.

And you know, when you point that out that this is what we're doing, this is what we've done compared to what the NDP did when they were in government, some people have a very short memory. Other people have very long memories. So you know, you just . . . We have to take the time to compare what we're doing now compared to what it was like languishing under the NDP.

So all my kids are graduated school. They all graduated school in the province, and luckily they didn't have a school closure. However not so many kids in Moose Jaw were that lucky. A couple of the schools that the NDP did close were in our fine city of Moose Jaw. They closed over 176, or they closed 176 schools. So that's a school a month; a school a month they closed. They thought it was a good idea. That's their idea of keeping classroom sizes smaller, is close the schools and tell their parents to go get a job in Alberta or Manitoba or wherever it was. So they closed the school. From 2000 to 2007 . . . So if you're closing schools, what do you think that does to our teachers' numbers? Well it dropped by over 400. You know, they underfunded K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education, leading to significant education property taxes and tax revolts, huge tax revolts.

There were RMs [rural municipalities] across the province that just, you know . . . And I have a friend that moved to Alberta to go to university, and last summer, last summer, amazingly, they had combines rolling down the streets of Edmonton going to the legislature. And people in Edmonton were dumbfounded, and they said, how is this happening? And they said, well we have

an NDP government; get used to it. Right? Because that's what they did. That's what happened here. You know, I remember protests that were here that, you know, lots of farmers showed up at.

So, oh back to schools. I got sidetracked there. So what have we done? We built 40 brand new or replacement schools and 25 major school renovations. So because of that, what do we have? We have 754 more teachers, 754, and 164 more student support teachers. We've increased K to 12 funding by 32 per cent since 2007, compared to an enrolment growth of 10 per cent. So yes, our schools have grown. Yes, we say that. So they've grown by 10 per cent, but we've increased funding by triple that — 32 per cent.

Post-secondary, we've increased operating and capital funding for post-secondary institutions by 40 per cent over 10 years. What happened under the NDP? Well, they increased funding for post-secondary institutions by just 20 per cent over 16 years, just over 1 per cent per year.

Child care spaces. Okay, this was great — this was part of the file I worked on when I was Legislative Secretary for Social Services — 6,500 new child care spaces in 10 years. That's 650 new spaces per year. Now what did the NDP do? Oh, 2,856 new child care spaces in 16 years. Fewer than 180 per year? Really, 650 compared to 180? That seems significant. That's more than triple, if I can remember my math. Yes, that's better than triple.

Municipalities, over doubled revenue-sharing funding to municipalities, from 127 million in 2007 to 258 million in '17-18. What did the NDP do? They cut nearly 500 million out of the municipal revenue sharing — 500 million during their time in office. Wow, that's significant.

So as we continue going . . . Our budget is called *Meeting the Challenge*, and you know, we do have a challenge. Everybody on this side realizes we have a challenge. Since 2014-15 resource revenue sharing has declined by over \$1.3 billion, so that means tax revenue is down by hundreds of millions due to the resource sector slowdown.

I still have family back at home in Estevan that work in the oil field, and you know, they've adjusted. My cousin who runs a trucking company had to adjust his rates from what he was getting paid . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well you're the only one left over there so . . . He was getting paid at this level and had to cut it significantly, I think he said, something like a third, to get his revenue . . . to keep working. And he was able to keep the majority of his employees working, but because they had to cut their prices by a third, well his employees took the hit.

And I remember back in the late '80s, early '90s when I was in the oil field, and the oil hit the tank and . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I should go back? Well you know, I enjoyed the oil field but I'm getting a little long in the tooth and I didn't enjoy working out in the cold like those hardworking oil field workers do. And you know, we intend no disrespect to those oil workers out there. We will fully support fighting that carbon tax that the federal government wants to bring in, and we will fight the Leap Manifesto that some of your members openly support. And then you want to throw our oil field workers under the bus, like under the bus on supporting the Leap Manifesto. You want

no more, no more oil pipelines. None. And you want to go down there so . . .

You know, there's a reason that my colleague from Estevan won with an overwhelming majority in that town, because they know what the NDP has done to the oil industry in the past. Just take a look to the west and see what's going on there.

So being I'm nearing the end of my time, because we want . . . I want to keep going because there is so much when you compare what the opposition did when they were in government compared to what we did. You know, yes, there was an infrastructure deficit. You talk about, where's the money gone? Well 40 new schools. New hospitals. New highways across the province.

You want to take a look . . . like you bring up the GTH [Global Transportation Hub] in here every day, and you take a look at the scope of that project, what it was before with a couple of overpasses and now, you know, the safety and the concerns of the safety for those people on the east side of town. You know, you guys . . . The cost overruns that you guys talk about that aren't real. That is two different projects you're talking about. Two different projects. So you talk to the people on the east side of Regina and see if they think any one of those overpasses should be cut out, any one of them. What's the price of a life? You guys sit there and giggle about it but, you know, those people fought long and hard to get those overpasses over there.

So I want . . . You know, this was a tough budget. It was. And we've said that. We had the minister out in Moose Jaw this morning, and a tough budget, so not . . . There are positive budget reactions out there. I want to quote the Saskatchewan Stock Growers. What did they say? "Budget supports agriculture." Of course it supports agriculture. Christa Dao from Global News on Twitter, and I quote: "Re: #skpoli education, school boards will not be amalgamated. #saskSSBA Shawn Davidson said glad provinces listened to school and teachers." Okay, SARM: "SARM applauds provincial government commitment to revenue sharing." Another one: "Thank you Minister [Reiter, Jim Reiter] . . . for including SK boys in #HPV vax program . . . This will prevent cancer & save lives."

So with that, Mr. Speaker, there is positive reaction out there. It is not doom and gloom. That's the difference between the NDP and us. We have a plan. And this is the first time that, you know, we as a government have sat down and we have not a one-year budget but a three-year budget. And we have a plan to get out of deficit. Not like some of the provinces across the country or even the federal government where they've decided to take and punt that football down the line and not bring it back.

You cannot, you cannot build this province and not spend money. It's easy to build a rainy day fund like they did when they don't invest in infrastructure. You know, when their highways . . . Their idea of fixing the highways was, go fix it yourself. You know, working at two different Crowns under these people, I know what they put into the infrastructure in our Crown corporations, and it was sad.

Yes, it's going to take a long time to bring it back and if we . . . We have some aggressive targets. We're looking at 50 per cent

renewables for our SaskPower and this is going to take infrastructure dollars. They forget that we need infrastructure dollars. We actually have to spend money to put the infrastructure in place to help the province grow.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that, I will not be supporting the member's opposite motion and I will be supporting the budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Michelson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stop for a few minutes and take a few minutes to recognize the budget that was presented last Wednesday. I want to commend the Minister of Finance for bringing in the budget and also for coming out to Moose Jaw this morning and presenting it to a group of business leaders and citizens in Moose Jaw and explaining some of the issues.

Mr. Speaker, it is a challenging budget. We all recognize that. We knew this was coming and this is why we did what we did over the past year with the transformational change, saying everything is on the table. I think the citizens of Saskatchewan understood that.

And this is where we're moving forward, Mr. Speaker. It's not easy, but we have a plan to control and reduce government spending. We're modernizing and expanding the tax system, ensuring the economy remains strong, investing in priority areas, and returning to . . . a plan to return to budget in three years.

[15:15]

You know, Mr. Speaker, even with the expansion of the PST this year, every Saskatchewan taxpayer at every level of income is still paying far less tax than in 2007 under the NDP. That's important to remember. Since the privilege of forming government in 2007, this province has grown in almost every sector and grown substantially.

When we look at the sector of agriculture, Saskatchewan has almost half of the arable land in Saskatchewan. And we've seen crops, the yields improve and the varieties improve in pulse crops, and we see the opportunity for processing, and we notice that in Moose Jaw in the new industrial park for agricultural processing business which is advancing along. The Agrocrop head office is going to be moved from Vancouver to Moose Jaw. It's part of the Saskatchewan initiative, part of the Saskatchewan advantage of looking at head offices to move into a province that is aggressive and looking forward to building.

When we look at forestry, the sector of forestry, two-thirds of our province is covered with forestry. We have good opportunities in that industry. When we look at mining and resources with the coal, the oil, the gas, uranium, potash, and the new K+S mine that's coming on stream probably this year, and BPH mine as well. So Saskatchewan's expanding in that sector.

We all know the advantage and the expansion of tourism that keeps our province moving forward, the upgrades and the

expansion in all of our provincial parks. Mr. Speaker, all of this, it is a great province. We've known for years it's a great province.

But with all its greatness and with this growth, we need to have responsibility, and, Mr. Speaker, that's how I would describe this budget: a responsible reaction to the people of the province for growth and fiscal challenges that now exist with this. You know, over the past 10 years we've seen tremendous growth. Our population is now 1,158,000-plus. Currently we have the third lowest unemployment rate. For many years we had the lowest unemployment rate, but we're still underneath the national average on unemployment.

Manufacturing. The manufacturing centre of excellence is being set up in Saskatoon because our manufacturing's an important sector in this province. We realize that and we've seen some growth.

Retail sales are up. The average weekly salaries in the province are the highest in the nation. So you can see Saskatchewan is strong. The economy is strong, and in spite of the challenges, the fiscal challenge before us. That is why this document, the 2017-2018 budget, is so vitally important and is a responsible reaction to the growth and the fiscal challenges that we are facing.

Mr. Speaker, our Saskatchewan Party government came to power and inherited a billion-dollar infrastructure deficit. It was a declining province. People were moving out of Saskatchewan, with the worst job creation record in Canada. We saw 176 schools close, and that was mentioned earlier, 176. That's one a month in their 16-year duration. Fifty-four hospitals were closed with doctors and nurses fired. All this, Mr. Speaker, is important to remember.

But to go back to the NDP record, Saskatchewan was a have-not province with the worst job creation record in Canada. People were leaving the province, and the NDP government of the day was closing schools, closing hospitals, and raising taxes. That's right, raising taxes. Twenty times over 16 years when they were in government, taxes were raised.

And if that wasn't bad enough, Mr. Speaker, they made bad, bad investment. They have a bad investment record. Millions of dollars of bad investments like SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company], the fiasco over the potato industry. And not only in this province but Navigata, a BC, a BC phone company, and Austar, Australian communication company; Coachman Insurance, an Ontario company, if you please; tappedinto.com, a Nashville dot-com company; NST Chicago, a Midwestern US [United States] fibre optics company. These are all investments they made not in Saskatchewan but around the world that they lost money on, millions of dollars.

Mr. Speaker, that's the NDP record. That's a record that we have to keep reminding the people of Saskatchewan, because we never want to go back there. The NDP's strategy for the province was decline, with people moving out of the province, businesses struggling and closing, and despair. As far as agriculture was concerned, Mr. Speaker, the NDP had all but forgotten agriculture. In fact in Moose Jaw the Saskatchewan

Party . . . [inaudible] . . . opened an expanded agricultural office while the NDP didn't even have a sign on the building when they were in power.

Well after the privilege of forming government in 2007, we started the humongous task of overcoming an infrastructure deficit, building roads and highways, fixing schools, constructing schools, and correcting long-overdue seniors support. The member from Wakamow mentioned the seniors' income plan. It wasn't increased in 16 years of NDP government; 16 years and not a dime went into the seniors . . . to increasing the seniors' pension plan. Well, Mr. Speaker, our government has tripled the seniors' income plan in our past 10 years of office.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party government started building hospitals and building and repairing schools, building care homes and child care spaces, and we paid down debt. We lowered taxes, started attracting investment, creating employment opportunities, and growing our population, establishing a strong economy. It is a strong economy that grows the province, Mr. Speaker, led by reasonable government for the people of the province.

Over the past 10 years Saskatchewan has vastly improved in almost every sector. However, no one could have predicted the turnaround in resource revenue, no one. Not even the best forecasters in the world could have predicted that the price of oil would have gone from over \$100 a barrel to somewhere around the \$30-a-barrel cost.

Our province relies on resource revenue to assist in the growth, provide for government programs. The drop in resource revenue led to the deficit that we ended up this year with. And, Mr. Speaker, of course this is a challenge. It presents a challenge. And it wasn't the spending on the new schools or the hospitals or infrastructure. Those are sound investments right across the province, but it was a revenue challenge with a deep decline in resource revenue, a loss of income that no one could have planned for. Mr. Speaker, I compare it very much to a hail storm in agricultural, something totally out of the control of the producer and totally eliminates their year's income.

I remember growing up on a farm near Lipton, Saskatchewan. My dad had returned from the services in the World War II and began farming. It was a struggle, and after voting four years to support our country, he and mom started a farm. During those early years, mom and dad, William and Irene Michelson, worked hard to build a home on a farm from an abandoned log structure. They worked hard to make a business with their mixed farm of cattle and grain. Dad had to clear some of the land with axes and horses, and mom always had a huge garden to supply the family with a year of vegetables and potatoes to feed their growing family in those early times.

Mr. Speaker, I can recall one particular year, a day and, would hail hit the farm? The hail completely wiped out the crop that year. The storm smashed all the crops completely. And as a young kid, you look at your parents for some kind of support when you feel this fear coming on, and I remember turning and seeing my mother praying, with tears in her eyes, as the wind blew the tree leaves across the yard. You could hear the hail hitting the house and the upstairs windows breaking. Mr.

Speaker, we lost the entire crop that year. You know, it's a scar in my memory that I can still remember very vividly years later.

Fortunately today in agriculture, there is crop insurance, but Dad had no crop insurance that year. It was early August, but in anticipation of a good crop, Dad had purchased a brand new New Holland baler and a side-delivery rake that hadn't been delivered yet, equipment that he knew he needed but now, without a crop, could ill afford to buy. He talked about it years later, knowing that he could ill afford it, but realized in the long term needed to make these investments to maintain the strength of his farming operation and continue to grow his farm.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's much like the situation we're finding ourselves in today, an income loss that no one could have predicted. Resource revenue from an industry that slowed right down, and much like that hailstorm, revenue that we relied upon to support and operate the family farm was eliminated. Mr. Speaker, that day our family income was reduced by a lot more than three and a half per cent.

You know, I've talked to some businesspeople and some constituents in Moose Jaw over the weekend. Several of them are finding that there is a strain on the income, that their income is lower, and one constituent in particular was saying his income will be about 20 per cent loss because of the economic turndown over the past two years. Yet they realize that it's not the fault of the government. They've had to change some of their lifestyle and caution their spending and address this to the new reality.

As a responsible government, as a transparent government, we realize the task before us and accept the challenge. Through the budget process we have developed a plan to move forward, supporting the strong economy, providing the services that are expected from government like health care and education, social programs and infrastructure. This will be done by moving away from the dependence on resource revenue. It will be done to move toward a stable source, a consumption-tax-based system that continues with programs and support provided by government, ensuring that our economy stays strong.

We know resource revenue is volatile. We realize that we need to get away from traditional revenue resources and diversify the tax base in order to provide the services that government is expected to provide. To do that, some hard choices are made. But, Mr. Speaker, that's leadership. That's looking forward to move forward. This is a plan, moving forward with a strong economy, investing in priority areas, and planning to return to a balanced budget in three years.

I commend many organizations that have taken steps to find efficiencies. There are several of them and one in particular I wanted to highlight because they had talked to me about some of the efficiencies they have found. Prairie South School Division is one of these organizations that made adjustments through innovation and leadership with programs, efficiencies and staff efficiencies, program efficiencies, infrastructure renewal, and they're saving millions of dollars doing it.

You know, our government has come a long way in 10 years with the wise use of resource revenue from all sources. The Saskatchewan Party government has built a strong economy

which in turn builds a strong province. The new hospital in Moose Jaw is a prime example, the new children's hospital in Saskatoon and the provincial hospital replacement in North Battleford, 750 more doctors, and 3,000 more nurses. Mr. Speaker, there are 40 new schools, 18 care homes. And we've lowered property taxes and lowered income taxes while maintaining revenue sharing with municipalities, and now adding 889 child care spaces. We've done this, Mr. Speaker, with good investments, good planning, and established a AAA credit rating.

[15:30]

So even with the expansion of the PST this year, every Saskatchewan taxpayer at every level of income is still paying far less in taxes than in 2007 under the NDP. We're meeting the challenge by controlling and reducing spending, by modernizing and expanding the tax base, ensuring the economy remains strong, investing in priority areas, and planning to return to a balanced budget in three years.

Saskatchewan has faced an economic slowdown over the past two years. However, economic indicators show that Saskatchewan's economy is poised to rebound. Just some of those indicators are: 1,900 jobs were added in the first two months of this year; international exports are up by 15.6 per cent in January; 11 per cent increase in manufacturing, 5.1 per cent in wholesale trade, and over 6 per cent increase in new car sales. Retail sales were up by 6.3 per cent in January. This is very positive, Mr. Speaker, and very encouraging.

Yet we see the opposition members negatively chirping in the province about the status of our province: boondoggles, fiascos, scandals, job killing, waste. That's all the kind of the language they use. But, Mr. Speaker, they're not thinking positively. They're not looking at the facts or listening to the facts.

Mr. Speaker, our government has done very well in the last 10 years. Even their petitions are on spending, spending, spending, more money with no plan of where that money may come from. But, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan economy is strong. Growth is predicted at point eight per cent forecast for 2017. Unemployment rate is expected to remain about 6.2 per cent during 2017, with a plan to get back to a balanced budget in three years.

We relied on revenue that isn't there anymore, Mr. Speaker. And no one can blame us for taking the path that we took, but the path has changed and the revenue isn't there anymore. But a new path will be created, a path that is diversified with less reliance on resource revenue.

We understand change isn't easy, but it is necessary. Yes, there are some difficulties in facing this deficit, but our plan we have, we can do it. We will control and reduce government spending. We are modernizing, expanding tax systems. We're ensuring the economy remains strong, and we're investing in priority areas. And yes, the plan to come back to a balanced budget in three years.

You know, I respect the input from our constituents in Moose Jaw North and those from across the province. And I commend the Minister of Finance and his ministry for the hours and the

days and the weeks spent in resourcing, studying, consulting, deliberating, developing, and presenting the 2017-18 budget that was received just last Wednesday.

The budget helps address the fiscal challenge caused by the decline in resource revenue that made up 19 per cent of the provincial revenue and now only represents, comes up at 9 per cent. Yet we are meeting the challenge. This budget is meeting the challenge, Mr. Speaker. I reject the amendment made from the opposition, and I support the government budget in its entirety, as presented. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Campeau: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise today in this House to speak about the budget. I first want to talk about my family. My family's changed in the last six months. I've welcomed two new members of my family: now my 10-year-old niece — it's her birthday today; happy birthday, Madison — and my soon to be nine-year-old nephew, whose birthday's on Sunday. So planning their birthday parties has been a little bit different since my daughter is 23 years old, and definitely it's a challenge. I think I was looking forward to grandchildren but definitely it's been a welcome challenge.

These kids have enriched my life quite immensely, Mr. Speaker. But also, I don't know how people my age do it. I have friends that are just now having children, and I've had an adult daughter for quite a few years. And these kids are pretty independent, but still chasing them around is . . . I'm tired, Mr. Speaker. I am. Well yes, I'm tired. But definitely I think, you know, these kids, they've had a lot of challenges in their life. And definitely they don't realize that they enrich my life, how much they enrich my life as well. So that as well, and then having to put some marriage plans on hold to accommodate the kids, which is fine. I'm sure Duron will wait. He has waited all these years; he'll wait some more. It's okay.

And definitely my daughter . . . Talking about my daughter and she just recently came back from South Africa. She was out there for a while in Swaziland and in Mozambique. So she's had some really good experiences and . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Next time. And next time apparently I'm invited so his family can present. So there's something big coming with that, and I'm looking forward to that trip when it does happen. So again I'm going to say, I can't wait to have grandchildren . . .

An Hon. Member: — Are we invited?

Ms. Campeau: — If you want to take the trip.

And also I want to mention my CA, Allison Wyant. She's been my CA since last summer, and she's done a good job in my office. And I also want to just mention my executive. I haven't had a chance to really speak since the election last year, and I just want to talk about the hard work they did, and definitely the members of my team who ensured that I would be sitting here again and very happy to be back.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as always, I want to thank the treasury board members and all the time and energy that they put in to

develop the budget, as well as the Finance and the ministry officials, the long hours and the difficult decisions that they had to make in order to get this budget ready. I know all the months, the many months, and even pretty much almost a year, it takes to get the budget ready, so I just want to thank them.

So I realize, and I'll be the first to admit it, this is a very difficult budget. It's a difficult pill to swallow. And I don't know who said this, but I am known for always having quotes: sometimes you have to step up so you don't fall back. And I believe that. I really believe that the officials really did their jobs in terms of having to make those difficult decisions, and stepping up and being the ones to have to deliver, you know, the difficult news.

But I just want to talk about the resilience of Saskatchewan people. Just recently I've had a death in my family where my uncle passed last week. And he was the last surviving family member from my dad's immediate family, and just how resilient that family was in terms of living in the bush and living on the trapline, pretty much living in a big, white tent in the summertime and living in a cabin in the bush, and how active he was. He was still looking after a trapline up until a few years ago which was pretty, quite large, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So the resilience of Saskatchewan people, and then having to deal with this difficult budget and how we are approaching it in terms of having a plan and having a three-year plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it is difficult.

And I have some articles here, one in particular from *Macleans*, March 24th, 2017. "Saskatchewan swallows the fiscal pill Alberta refuses: Through restraint and strategic tax hikes, Saskatchewan shows how to get off the royalty rollercoaster." So I just want to quote a few things. So:

On Wednesday, the government of Saskatchewan presented a budget offering what one might call a middle ground. That is, they will solve their budget problem with both revenue and spending measures (in fairness . . .

Saskatchewan's plan

On the spending side, the government is lowering public-sector employee compensation by . . . [5.5] per cent, largely through the use of mandatory days off.

And our office will have . . . My CA will have nine furloughed days this year, Mr. Speaker.

So I just want to talk about the economic efficiency that's in this article, Mr. Speaker. So:

Sometimes this is a feature (e.g., carbon taxes) but most other times it's a bug. Taxes on income discourage employment and taxes on capital discourage investment. These effects can have large costs as recent research from economists Bev Dahlby and Ergete Ferede demonstrates.

Sorry, I'm having trouble reading this because I don't have my bifocals, Mr. Speaker. I could probably borrow yours.

They find Saskatchewan's PST costs its economy \$1.41 for

each \$1 raised, and personal income taxes cost the provincial economy \$2.38 — a substantially higher economic burden, for the same revenue raised by the government.

Worse still, the researchers found corporate taxes in Saskatchewan are so distortionary that lowering the corporate income tax . . . may actually increase government revenue. That is, the corporate tax rate may be on the . . .

Sorry, I'm not even going to try read the rest. I can't see the words.

So, Mr. Speaker, some facts about taxes. After the 2017-18 budget, Saskatchewan still has the lowest PST rate of any province with a provincial sales tax. A family of four in Saskatchewan pays no income tax on their first 50,495 of income, the highest tax-free threshold in Canada. And as a result of this budget, Saskatchewan individuals and families will pay among the lowest income taxes in Canada ranging from the lowest to the third lowest for most, depending on the level of income. Even with the PST increase, every Saskatchewan resident at every level of income will be paying significantly less in income tax and PST combined than they did in 2017 under the NDP.

So I mentioned my daughter, and I know the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow mentioned his son. A single person with 40,000 income will still pay 749 less than in 2007, a 20 per cent reduction. I'm not going to say . . . My daughter doesn't make that much. She's just starting out, but she's still in a good place.

A family of four with 50,000 income will still pay 2,366 less than in 2007, a 77 per cent reduction. And a family of four with 75,000 income will still pay 1,886 less than in 2007, a 31 per cent reduction, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A family of four with 100,000 income will still pay 1,951 less than in 2007, a 20 per cent reduction.

[15:45]

I have, and I've spoken about this before in the Assembly, my brothers are in, they work on pipelines, Mr. Speaker. I have a brother and his wife, they're both pipeline insulators, as well as uncles who have worked in the pipeline industry for years, and other brothers who have worked in the oil and gas sector, a welder. So with the changes in the economy regarding oil prices and the slowdown of the oil industry, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to say that even though a few of them have had to go way up north to find work, Mr. Speaker, they still live here in Saskatchewan. This is home.

So when the tax changes announced in this budget are fully implemented, Saskatchewan will have the lowest corporate tax rate, the lowest taxes on manufacturing and processing, and nation-leading research and development incentives which is important because they're affected by . . . You know, the oil and gas sector is affected by this, and giving our province a tremendous advantage in attracting new investment, jobs, and opportunities in Saskatchewan.

So when this budget is fully implemented, Saskatchewan will

be the only province in Canada with no carbon tax of any kind. And my family in particular know the detriments of . . . the effects of the carbon tax and how it affects the oil and gas sector, Mr. Speaker.

Also you know, going back to family, it seems like people in my generation, they're looking after aging parents and also while looking after children, and in my case also looking after extended family. So the nuclear family isn't something that's pretty common anymore, Mr. Speaker. Families look very different nowadays. And maybe in the past, you know, there was some responsibility of aging parents, as well as when you had family members that ended up with another family member, their children being raised by another family member, Mr. Speaker.

Regardless of the situation, daycare becomes top of mind, not something that I haven't thought about for a while, but there will be 15,200 child care spaces in September, which is a 62 per cent increase since 2007, Mr. Speaker. And it's the top of mind of a lot of my friends who are just having babies and as well have toddlers and are now getting . . . Some of them are starting preschool, Mr. Speaker, so daycare is very important.

So I just kind of wanted to go over a couple of things that are in the budget. So for Advanced Education . . . Mr. Speaker, before I was elected in 2011 I was a Ph.D. [Doctor of Philosophy] student at the U of S. So any time any kind of Advanced Education issue comes up, I'm quite interested.

So in this budget we continue:

. . . to invest in post-secondary students while controlling costs to help meet the financial challenge facing the province.

[Mr. Speaker] high school graduates from Saskatchewan will continue to receive \$500 per year in direct tuition relief through the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship. Post-secondary students will continue to get their tuition costs back after graduation through the Graduate Retention Program [Mr. Speaker], which provides up to \$20,000 in income tax credits to graduates who live and work in Saskatchewan.

In addition, targeted funding is being redirected from the University of Saskatchewan's base operating budget to the College of Medicine.

Mr. Speaker, we just had an announcement here a couple of weeks ago about the increase of indigenous students in our College of Medicine.

The College of Medicine will receive a total of \$69.0 million to support accreditation and sustainability . . .

Students will also benefit from over \$46.0 million in key financial supports: \$26.0 million for the Student Aid Fund to provide student grants and loans; \$12.0 million for scholarships, including the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship; and \$8.0 million for the Saskatchewan Advantage Grant for Education Savings [Mr. Speaker] . . .

Over the past decade, the province has invested \$8.3 billion in post-secondary institutions and student supports. The budget continues to provide strong support for Saskatchewan's post-secondary institutions, with \$649 million in operating and capital funding, which is 40 per cent more than in 2007-08 [Mr. Speaker].

I also want to talk about the Saskatchewan research and development tax credit. So it's basically helping technology start-ups to small- and medium-sized enterprises as they work towards the commercialization of their research and development efforts.

Mr. Speaker, when I did my M.B.A. [Master of Business Administration], I focused on biotechnology. So this will definitely help some of the people that I know in terms of going the route of commercialization for their research. Typically that can take up to maybe seven years, which is quite time intensive. But definitely this will help.

So the:

tax credit is being reformed to make it more responsive to the needs of province's technology start-ups and SMEs.

A new refundable to 10 per cent R&D tax credit is being introduced in respect of the first \$1.0 million in annual qualifying expenditures incurred in Saskatchewan by an eligible small business.

The existing 10 per cent non-refundable R&D tax credit remains in place, but to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the program, the total of refundable and non-refundable R&D tax credits that may be claimed by a corporation will be limited to \$1.0 million per year.

So I talked a little bit about the oil and gas industry already when I was talking about my family working in it, but also I just want to get on the record again what our government is doing. This budget, it'll see a significant enhancement to the regulatory oversight of the oil and gas industry:

The petroleum and natural gas division of the Ministry of Economy, which is the . . . regulator of oil and gas activities, will receive an additional \$1.4 million and 13 full-time equivalent positions in the 2017-18 budget [Mr. Deputy Speaker].

So the funding will be allocated to the following initiatives: \$600,000 in start-up funding for multi-year pipeline regulation, and an enhancement program to strengthen Saskatchewan's approach to pipeline regulation; 500,000 increase in core funding to increase the number of field inspectors in the ministry's field offices in Estevan, Swift Current, Kindersley, and Lloydminster; and \$250,000 in funding to expand the technical capacity of the ministry to support the Government of Saskatchewan's climate change commitments related to the upstream oil and gas industry, Mr. Speaker.

I just kind of want to kind of highlight what I've been doing in the last few months. Since September, I've been travelling quite a bit. I've been on the road quite a bit visiting schools, had 23 meetings with education and visiting schools and

administrators, as well as board members, and having conversations.

And I think my most favourite thing out of this, being an elected person, has been the consultation processes that I've been a part of since being elected in 2011, which has been quite a bit. I've put a lot of miles on my truck, and the vehicle before that, on travelling, and it's definitely nice to get out and meet the people in the communities. I think my visit to the North was quite enjoyable as usual. I found a relative in Cumberland, which was interesting, Mr. Speaker. And so I kind of wrapped that up and then did some travelling with the Crown committee. And then now I'm here. So it would be nice this summer to get some time at home.

But I wanted to tell a story about . . . Just wanted to make a comment about the bypass. I was raised in a residential school, and I went for eight years up by Lestock, the Muskowekwan Residential School, Mr. Speaker, which you're quite familiar with. It's not far from where you live. So you know, along with losing some . . . You know, I'm a passive Saulteaux speaker. I'm not fluent, but I've grown up around the language and as a result, I've kind of lost it.

So one of the things that I lost was, I don't know how to make really good bannock. So I go out to Saulteaux Junction on Pinkie Road to pick some up because they sell it. So when I go out there, I always see the bypass trucks, and they're getting gas and they're lined up. And I've asked the gas jockey, you know, is the bypass keeping you pretty busy? And he said, yes. So I think it's important to remember the offshoots of the bypass contracts as well as how that affects other local vendors. And it doesn't have to be the direct pipeline, Mr. Speaker. So even if it's just them getting gas from Saulteaux Junction, I think it's quite significant, and we need to remember that, Mr. Speaker.

So with that, I will not be supporting the amendment from the member of Saskatoon Nutana, and I will be supporting my government.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Kelvington-Wadena.

Mr. Nerlien: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'll begin my comments with a quick thank you to my family, my wife Giselle, and my siblings who have been incredibly supportive over the last year. And we've gained some new political fans, I think. I believe they're even watching this afternoon.

I also want to thank my constituents, not only for allowing me to serve them in the House, but also for their feedback and ongoing comments that they make throughout the year and the reinforcement that they provide for our government, but also their positive thoughts, their positive encouragement, and their ideas on the kinds of things that we can and should be doing as a government. So I want to thank my constituents for their engagement.

Mr. Speaker, I will, at the conclusion of my comments, be supporting the motion by the Minister of Finance, seconded by the member for Moosomin, and rejecting the amendment put forward by the Finance critic, the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Mr. Speaker, a mentor once provided me with the words of wisdom that I share with you today. He said, "Small minds discuss people. Average minds discuss things. And great minds discuss ideas." Mr. Speaker, I've always considered that an aspirational statement. An idea is a concept developed by the mind, or is a conception of what is desirable and ought to be. Alternatively, it is defined as a formulated thought or opinion.

Especially in this House, we should aspire to be of great mind. Our debates should be about ideas that respond to the needs and desires of our citizens in the present moment and, by definition, formulating a plan for those ideas that finds the appropriate balance between expectations and abilities.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately it is far too easy to regress to hyperbole and spin. The subjective and objective expiration of ideals is far too often lost to the 30-second sound bite. Mr. Speaker, we live in a world where the depth of engagement in rational thought is predefined by the postulations of self-declared experts, better known as talking heads. The reality is that it takes time, substantiation of facts, and thoughtful process to debate effectively and, frankly, to be a good and learned citizen.

Mr. Speaker, we are in a time of great change, and change is difficult. Habits, behaviours, entitlements, structural inefficiencies, and expectations become entrenched and comfortable. Months, years, and sometimes decades of structural patterns give us a sense that we are safe from the world around us because of that security blanket of conformity. Recognizing and facing change and responding to it will most certainly foster a sense of fear, a feeling of lack of control of one's circumstances, and a period of adjustment.

It is completely understandable to recognize and appreciate that it is our very nature to resist change. Mr. Speaker, a common misstated Chinese definition of "crisis" is the meeting of danger and opportunity. More accurately, the definition refers to reaching a critical point.

[16:00]

Mr. Speaker, arguably the Minister of Finance in this budget plan has laid out the case for a significant change in how services for the people of Saskatchewan must be reflective of modern realities, while appreciating that the volatility of non-renewable resource revenues could not continue to provide the stability necessary to meet these challenges.

Lost in the minutiae of the budget — and this is a complex budget plan — is the fact that this is a broad and bold step to change how the people of Saskatchewan will pay for the services they expect from their government. We are fully aware that there will be individual circumstances that will be particularly challenged as they make the adjustments to the new realities outlined in the budget. We are particularly mindful of the contribution of those who will lose their jobs as a result of the structural reorganizations undertaken. As in all things, we also know that some will see these changes as opportunities and will rise to the challenge accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, if I may, I feel the need to address some of the duplicity espoused in this House by opposition members and

outside this House by their surrogates. Mr. Speaker, the party opposite believes that money grows on trees. Day in and day out they come before us demanding more money for everything under the sun. At the same time they are opposed to debt, opposed to investment in capital structure, opposed to a tax plan, opposed to smaller government, opposed to investment in the provincial infrastructure designed to facilitate growth, opposed to open engagement with public sector unions, opposed to public-private partnerships, opposed to innovation rather than a carbon tax.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition in our form of government is responsible for challenging the policies of the government and producing different policies where appropriate. Unfortunately ours is bereft of creative thought. Mr. Speaker, to enable articulation of positions, I feel a need to explain some fundamental business facts that might help members opposite to better frame their positions so we can attain the aforementioned debate of ideas.

Mr. Speaker, the discussion about Crowns is both valid and egregious at the same time. On one hand, it is entirely valid to debate the role of Crown corporations in the delivery of services. On the other hand, it is egregious to cloud their ability to effectively deliver services in the long term with arbitrary limitations.

However in order to have a meaningful debate, one must understand some pretty fundamental business principles. First, to succeed in business one must be fully responsive to one's customers and, in fact, anticipating with some degree of accuracy the direction of consumers into the future.

Second, there is no such thing as status quo in successful businesses. As we have seen, our Crowns, which are unique in Canada, must grow, expand where necessary, and retract where required to be responsive to changes in consumer demand and behaviour.

Third, despite members' opposite position that money grows on trees, there are really only three ways to grow a business: first, reinvest dividends, reinvest profits; second, shareholder injection of capital; or third, debt. Determining the optimal structure means identifying the right mixture of capital and debt that provides needed funds in the most cost-effective way. In other words, it is important to weigh the cost of capital versus the cost of debt.

If we rely entirely on the reinvestment of profits, we cannot on occasion meet growth challenges. If we rely entirely on government as the sole shareholder, there will be a requirement to make choices. For example, do we deliver more health care, or do we invest in SaskPower? If we utilize only debt, we create a built-in, cost-benefit analysis requirement that might not recognize the public good. Debt carries with it a cost, and we must be ever mindful that while the cost of debt is low today, history tells us that it could change radically, and we must measure the use of debt accordingly. Finding that balance is always the task of good governance, and measuring debt to GDP [gross domestic product] is an effective tool in recognizing one element of the cost of growth.

Let me outline an example in real terms. SaskTel is seen by

some of the people of Saskatchewan as a staple, a utility in the traditional sense of the word. The reality is that SaskTel is a technology company and must compete in a dynamic, fast-paced, evolutionary industry. Imagine for a moment the change in the past 10 years in how we communicate, how we get information, how we watch sports or movies. Now imagine what changes might occur over the next 10 years. Should we not be investing prudently in rejuvenation of the infrastructure and software to support the change in technology? Might there be circumstances where a strategic partnership to grow and expand services might make sense? Should we prepare for the range of circumstances that might evolve for the benefit of its consumers?

Let's consider another example. Members opposite would argue vociferously for a transition to cleaner energy, and yet they rail daily against technology that is now being widely used around the world in various forms. We continue to make investments toward the technological solutions to global emission concerns, in part at a cost that may entail certain debt levels. Again they oppose these real solutions to real problems.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Regina bypass, the largest infrastructure project in Saskatchewan's history, to compare the original scope and cost of the project from 2009 to today is quite simply ludicrous. The numerous studies, proposals, and evolution of the project are all fully available on the Internet. In fact if one looks closely, the earliest plans before the government were in the range of \$120 million which only spoke to the Pinky Road portion.

Again members opposite continue to impugn other members in this House and members of the public, never once with any sense of decency, respect, or defensibility. Mr. Speaker, I refer to my earlier remarks in that members opposite cannot begin to imagine that a private citizen might actually make a profit through risk and speculation.

Mr. Speaker, in my banking days I witnessed first-hand the activities of land speculation. It is a high-risk, high-reward business, and those who participate fully understand that on any given transaction an error in acquisition or an error in timing can have devastating consequences, while at the same time taking the risks can have a huge upside. That is the business they are in, and they fully understand the risk-reward equation.

Members opposite forever criticize the debt levels of our government. In fact it's particularly interesting that the Finance critic opposite was talking about a sea of red ink at precisely the same time as CTV [Canadian Television Network Ltd.] Edmonton was proclaiming Saskatchewan's status as having the lowest debt-to-GDP in the country.

Let me ask them the question: given the choices to face growth, given the choices to face innovation, would they rather the prudent use of debt, the prudent injection of shareholder capital? Or would they prefer less health care or education as we refuse the dividends from the Crowns so they can be reinvested over time to respond to the consumer's needs, albeit much slower and much less competitive than current practice?

I think we know the answer based on their philosophical history. Where we see opportunity, they see danger. Where we

see reward, they see risk. Where we see enthusiasm, they see doubt. Where we see engagement, they see surrender. Where we see winners, they see losers. Mr. Speaker, it must be truly depressing to forever walk around with a proverbial cloud over one's head. Where the glass is seen as half full, to see it as half empty. Where there rises an entrepreneur, they only see danger.

To understand our fundamental differences to our approach to the economy, the history of the money-grows-on-trees party opposite is best described in a couple of examples. First, the co-operative commonwealth principles of the pre-merger CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] party reads, and I quote:

A community freed from the domination of irresponsible financial and economic power, in which all social means of production and distribution including land, are socially owned and controlled either by voluntarily organized groups of producers and consumers, or — in the case of the major public services and utilities and such productive and distributive enterprises as can be conducted most efficiently when owned in common — by public corporations responsible to the people's elected representatives.

Mr. Speaker, in the past, communities were built 7 or 8 miles apart because that was as far as you could reasonably ride a horse or take a wagon full of goods and return home the same day. Mr. Speaker, the aforementioned philosophy may well have been arguably appropriate at the time, but could you make that same argument today in this new, dynamic, global environment that we deal with?

Mr. Speaker, even Tommy Douglas, nearing the end of his term in Saskatchewan, realized that the government of the day could not fully respond to the need to develop industry and sought private investment to participate in the mining economy in particular. Of course as history would tell us, the money-grows-on-trees party opposite couldn't possibly allow anyone to be too successful, so Mr. Blakeney undertook a process to nationalize the very industries that were beginning to build Saskatchewan. Even today members opposite belong to a party whose constitution still uses the phrase, in section 1.3:

The purpose of the Party shall be to promote through political action and other appropriate means the establishment of a co-operative commonwealth [I refer to my description earlier] in which the principle regulating production and exchange will be the supplying of human needs and not the making of profits.

The profound lack of understanding that profit is what drives reinvestment, what contributes to personal gratification of the entrepreneurial spirit, what creates opportunity is truly troubling.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to address some specifics in the budget plan laid out by the Minister of Finance last week. Mr. Speaker, this budget plan is another step by our government in ensuring long-term, stable core services for the people of Saskatchewan. It is absolutely correct to infer that there will be some pain in the process. We fully appreciate that the broad application of revenue sources is a fundamental shift from overreliance on

resource revenue.

It's also important to note that some of the characterization of new taxes are in fact removal of exemptions that have been in place for a number of years. Let us not forget that the tax system is a fluid mechanism to which adjustments are made to respond to the state of the economy on any given year. All governments, including those of the members opposite, have made the necessary adjustments to expand and contract certain elements of the tax base.

Mr. Speaker, there is no more resilient an entrepreneur than the farmers of Saskatchewan. Despite the vagaries of price, of weather, of markets, our Saskatchewan agriculture community will face the challenges head on and will succeed, as evidenced by their outstanding performance as an industry over the past few years.

We appreciate and value the services of our public sector employees. Across the public sector, dedicated employees go to work every day and provide safe, reliable, and responsible services to our taxpayers. At the same time, when we go to the constituency doorsteps many of the folks we talk to will tell us about opportunities for improvement.

Mr. Speaker, our responsibility is to the taxpayers of the province of Saskatchewan, and our focus must be on the value and delivery of core services to the customers of government services. We can never be complacent about good value in service delivery.

[16:15]

Our neighbours to the west and in Ontario have chosen to increase public sector spending, and their cost of government is spiralling out of control. Their idea is bigger government intervention in the economy.

We respect and encourage the active role of public sector participation in meeting the budget challenge. At the same time, we strongly encourage and support the financial health and growth of agriculture, small businesses, large businesses, and opportunities for innovation and job creation.

Mr. Speaker, we must look to the future with new and innovative ideas and ideals. Mr. Speaker, not long ago a job was almost entirely a physical task. Today and into the future, the consequences of change will forever alter our reliance on traditional job descriptions and job grades and traditional hierarchies based on longevity. Mr. Speaker, today's job market demands a fluid, highly motivated, eager-to-learn, and dynamic, enthusiastic employee able to make a contribution to a project or goal and then able to move on to the next opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, as we evolve to meet the challenges of the day, let's make the bold move forward and redefine the public sector workplace together. Let's find the next generation of public sector engagement. Let's part ways with old definitions of jobs and move into a new reality of results-based task management, outcomes grounded in expectations, team structures that evolve for the challenges faced.

Mr. Speaker, in summary, our economic model for the province

is changing. So too are the expectations of taxpayers. Working together, we can keep Saskatchewan strong and meet the challenges facing us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — Before I recognize the next speaker, I would ask members of the Assembly to, if they are having conversations across the way, they may want to take it behind the bar. I think it's incumbent upon members to at least show respect to the member that has the floor.

I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand and speak to this budget. But before I start that, I want to talk about the people that support me in my private life and in my constituency. And, Mr. Speaker, I have to start with my wife Linda. She's supported my hopes and dreams for over 46 years now, and I'd have to admit that that probably hasn't always been easy. I want to recognize . . . But she's always been there, and always supportive, and together we've been a great team. I want to talk about my . . .

Mr. Speaker, I should not have opened this can of worms. My children and grandchildren: Stephanie and her husband Gabe, and their children, Stewart and Jack, living in Ottawa now, very successful, but they've never forgotten where they come from. My daughter Alison and her daughter Liberty, also in Ottawa, very successful again. But you know, if circumstances would permit with their family lives and their spouse's situations, and one thing and another, the thing they'd like to do most is come back here. My son Lee and his wife Jessica. Lee is the CEO of the family corporation, Stewart Ag. And their daughter Josie and their son Sam, who just had his first birthday on Friday. They live on the farm in a house that they built not far from our own, and it's a constant joy having them there.

Mr. Speaker, we all rely on the family. I think I'm blessed to have mine. And you know, I know how much we all rely on them. And you know, I can't say enough about the support that they give me. Without them, I couldn't have done this. I started doing this when I was still farming full-time, and that would not have been possible without family. And they've supported me all along the way.

The constituents of Lumsden-Morse, Mr. Speaker, are among the most down-to-earth, hard-working, salt-of-the-earth people that you could ever find anywhere on this planet. I'm convinced of that. They don't complain a lot. They don't ask for much. They just expect us to be honest and forthright, and maybe a little right of centre would be good. They're a great support group on their own, you know, in their own, Mr. Speaker, and I thank them. They've supported me now through five elections with ever-increasing margins of victory. And I consider it a great honour, not only to come to work in this place, Mr. Speaker, but to represent them.

Mr. Speaker, this has not been an easy budget. And my hat's off to the Minister of Finance and treasury board and cabinet and caucus and Finance officials and everyone who had, you know, had a hand in this. And it's been our most difficult budget to date as a government. And you know, I recognize, and we all I think recognize here, that some very difficult decisions had to be made.

And you know, the opposition likes to make the point that we've squandered the wealth of the province and our spending is out of control, and then in the next breath they say that we should have spent more on everything.

And, Mr. Speaker, what happened, as everybody in this province knows, that's actually paying attention and is reasonable and sensible about it, is that three years running we've had a 1 billion to 1.2 billion shortfall in revenues from resources. And, Mr. Speaker, it's very difficult to budget around that.

I mean we could be criticized for the bypass around Regina, all the schools we've built — I don't know how many we've built, but a lot — the hospitals, the children's hospital in Saskatoon, the psychiatric facility in North Battleford, Mr. Speaker. We could be criticized for the thousands of kilometres of highways that we've built and rebuilt. We could be criticized for many more teachers than were working in this province when the NDP were in power. We could be criticized for spending money on 700 more doctors. We could be criticized for spending money on 2,000 more nurses.

We could be criticized for anything in this place, Mr. Speaker. But the real people out in Lumsden-Morse and other great constituencies like it — if there are any more near like Lumsden-Morse, which I doubt — they understand. They understand what this is all about. And they understand that those members opposite can't blow hot and cold. Either we squandered the wealth of the province and overspent, or else we haven't spent enough. Which is it? What would they, I wonder, Mr. Speaker, have us not done? I think they'd be hard pressed to come up with that answer.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk specifically about the agriculture budget. It's a budget that, like the budget of every other ministry, was subject to having every line item put on the table and examined very closely. And I'm proud to say, Mr. Speaker, and on behalf of the entire government, that I think we've come to a good balance.

Our agriculture budget continues to support a strong agriculture industry in this province. We continue to fully fund programs like crop insurance, with the highest coverage in history in this budget, Mr. Speaker; AgriStability; AgriInvest; wildlife compensation program; livestock price insurance, Mr. Speaker. These programs are all fully funded. Ag research is as much a priority as it ever has been, Mr. Speaker, with the same funding as in the previous budget, Mr. Speaker, at \$26.8 million. And we still continue to provide programming for water infrastructure, value-added agribusinesses, and environmental practices on farms.

Our funding for industry organizations and events stays the same at \$4.2 million, Mr. Speaker. And that funding supports organizations like 4-H, like Ag in the Classroom, like Canadian Western Agribition, like CropSphere, like the Canadian Centre for Health and Safety in Agriculture, the Prairie Diagnostic Services, to name a few, Mr. Speaker.

It wasn't easy. Every industry, every sector of the population was asked to give a little in this budget because it hasn't been easy. And there was no other way that we could get to a balance

in three years if we didn't make some changes. I mean it's the definition of insanity to continue to do what you've been doing and expect different results. And nobody on this side of the House thought that we could do that. And so there have been some changes. There have been some things that haven't been easy. The fuel tax, Mr. Speaker, there's been a reduction to the rebate, the rebate on the farm fuel. The rebate has been eliminated on gasoline, Mr. Speaker, and it's been reduced by 20 per cent on diesel.

The PST has been added to insurance premiums, Mr. Speaker. There's no denying that that's a big bill for many producers. It is, and it's something they take seriously. It's something we all, on this side of this great Assembly, all take seriously. And you know, as big a cost as that can be, we've heard, you know, we've heard some questions about it, but our producers are pretty stoic in recognizing, number one, the problem; and number two, that they have to be part of the solution. Now nobody likes it. Nobody wants to pay. Who in this room, wants to pay more taxes, Mr. Speaker? Nobody. Nobody anywhere does. But they're more accepting than one would expect. And you know, that goes to the nature of our farmers and ranchers in this province, Mr. Speaker. They know it's not all about them. They know that they have to give too when there's a need to give, and they're doing that.

Mr. Speaker, I have some quotes from leaders in the agriculture industry from budget day, and I think I'd like to quote them. Levi Wood, a Saskatchewan farmer and president of the Western Wheat Growers Association, said this. He said, on budget day, he said:

"Here in Regina today, the Wheat Growers are pleased to see the Government of Saskatchewan continuing to ensure a competitive farming and agriculture industry remain in the province," said Wood. "That includes competitive tax rates and continuing to oppose a federal carbon tax on the province, which will hurt the profitability of farming and our whole agriculture sector. On the tax changes on farm fuel, they're in place because fuel taxes are for funding roads, while farm equipment is overwhelmingly driven in fields, not highways, so we trust that money will make its way back into infrastructure."

[16:30]

SARM, a news release said:

Funding for the Provincial Rat Eradication Program and the Beaver Control Program, administered by SARM, remains consistent. The programs are receiving \$1.4 million and \$500,000 respectively. SARM appreciates that the Government of Saskatchewan continues to recognize the importance of agriculture and has allocated \$388.6 million to Agriculture, including \$ 125,000 for the Agricultural Health and Safety Network.

The Ag Manufacturers of Canada, Leah Olson, president, tweeted this. She said, Saskatchewan budget good for ag equipment manufacturers: CIT, corporate income tax, decreasing. Revenue diversified. Refundable R & D [research and development] tax credit and Sask commercial incentive.

Headlines: "Farmers take new fuel taxes in stride," says *Regina Leader-Post*, March 23, 2017.

Mr. Speaker, overall ag budget, Ian Boxall, vice-president of Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, said:

"I think it was tough and it was tough on everybody, but there are some positives in . . . [here and] I think everything in the budget is manageable for producers," he said. "I think farmers are willing to do their part to help the province get through these tough times."

Removal of fuel tax: Dale Heenan, grain farmer from south of Regina said:

"We can live with that because we realize that they're probably correct. That part's fair, I can't complain much on that. We've had a break for a while," he said.

Todd Lewis, president of the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, sees the changes to the fuel tax exemption are part of what producers need to do to help the province through these . . . [tough] times. [He said] "I don't think it was unexpected. I think farmers and ranchers have recognized that there was going to be changes in it and I think the changes are something that most people were expecting and I think it's manageable."

Ray Orb, president of SARM, said:

So gasoline has a more minor effect. It still has an effect but I think because the ag sector is really strong right now that we'll weather the storm and obviously we're going to try to do our part to help the province balance the budget over the next three years to keep the economy rolling.

Todd Lewis also said this. Todd Lewis is the new president of APAS [Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan]. He said, "Give credit where credit is due. The Ag department and Minister Stewart have done a good job of continuing research."

Ian Boxall from APAS as well also said that, "I was happy to see the province left the money in research for agriculture. I think that's important."

Aaron Ivey, a cattle producer from Ituna, Saskatchewan, one that Mr. Speaker will know personally, said:

"I think the template is out there that we can do co-operative type pastures quite effectively, and (our pasture [and he said his pasture] was) one of the first ones that transitioned," he said. "There was probably a lot more growing pains and hiccups in that just because there wasn't a template [then] or there wasn't any examples to go around. We were kind of breaking ground on it. But I don't think it's going to be an issue at all.

These are the kind of comments that we've received from the industry, Mr. Speaker. They recognize that they're going to have to do their share to help with this budget, but they're stoic about it.

You know, I'd like to talk for a few minutes if I could . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Okay, glad to hear that — if I could on some of Saskatchewan Party initiatives in agriculture, Mr. Speaker, things like the International Trade Centre here in Regina, a \$22 million investment; Livestock and Forage Centre of Excellence, \$10 million, Mr. Speaker; the Food Centre in Saskatoon, Growing Forward 2 program for \$13 million, Mr. Speaker. Western Livestock Price Insurance Program that we started in 2014 and has been a great success and is greatly appreciated by the industry.

Crop insurance coverage this year, an all-time high, Mr. Speaker, \$217 an acre on average across the province and a crop insurance budget, provincial part of the budget, that is — it's shared with the federal government and producers — but the provincial budget for crop insurance is \$172.2 million this year.

The \$217 an acre coverage now compares to \$86 under the last year that the NDP was in power, Mr. Speaker — more than 100 per cent, quite a lot more than 100 per cent difference. Increased unseeded acreage benefit with options of \$50, \$70, 85, or \$100 an acre available versus only the \$50 option under the NDP. Committing to fully fund fed-prov programs upfront — the NDP always refused to do this, meaning late processing of Saskatchewan claims. Increased irrigation capacity, Mr. Speaker; programs to increase market access for our products. Mr. Speaker, that's one thing that has really been successful under this government. We all in agriculture remember times when we couldn't sell what we produced and that is a problem that, you know, allowing for slowdowns in rail service and things of that nature, just doesn't happen anymore. Mr. Speaker, we've developed markets for our products and expanding markets that will stand us in good stead into the future.

Farm and ranch water infrastructure program was a widely used and greatly successful program; compensation for livestock killed or injured by predators, we do that now, Mr. Speaker. The NDP always refused to do that. One hundred per cent wildlife damage compensation under our government. It was 80 per cent maximum under the NDP. Increased agricultural research funding by 96.3 per cent over what the NDP did as recently as 2007; a beaver control program, not available under the NDP; 10 new extension offices. The NDP closed 31 rural offices. We've introduced eight of the largest budgets, ag budgets, in Saskatchewan history from '29 to '16.

AgriStability administration moved to the province of Saskatchewan where we employ Saskatchewan people to do that and get much better results than we used to when the federal government looked after it, and much faster results. The NDP would not do that. Increased funding for a rat control program by 159 per cent since 2007, Mr. Speaker; and the largest education reduction in Saskatchewan history; record revenue sharing. All of these things, Mr. Speaker, keep agriculture strong and keep Saskatchewan strong.

You know, ag exports in 2016 from Saskatchewan agriculture were \$14 billion. That's our exports just from the ag sector, and that's down from the previous year which was a record of \$15.3 billion. But in 2016, 2016 was a difficult production year. I think I can say that, generally speaking. Province-wide there was serious issues, but our producers . . . And partly because of

the money that this government has spent in research, and of course our producers being early adopters of technology, that's the second-largest crop in Saskatchewan history under very difficult circumstances, Mr. Speaker.

Canola seed was the top export commodity in 2016 at 2.9 billion. Saskatchewan exports nearly 22 per cent of Canada's total agri-food exports of 62.5 billion. The top three export destinations include United States, China, and India. And I mentioned the 15.3 billion record exports in 2015. Under the NDP in their last year of power, it was 6.4 billion, Mr. Speaker. That is a remarkable difference.

Crop production, the second-largest crop ever at 35.6 million tonnes, 10 per cent above the 10-year average. The growth plan goal of 36.6 million tonnes which many, including members opposite and some agricultural pundits, said could never be met. When we announced that, two years later we met it, and we've met it again.

Mr. Speaker, realized net farm income in 2015 was 4.15 billion, 73 per cent above the five-year average.

Trade agreements benefit Saskatchewan producers, Mr. Speaker. The comprehensive economic trade agreement with the European Union, Canada-Korea free trade agreement. We had and still have, to some extent, some hope for the TPP, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, Mr. Speaker, which the Trump administration in the United States is trying to kill, but there's a renewed effort among other countries to revive talks on that. And I hope that our federal government will be interested and engaged in that.

Mr. Speaker, western livestock price insurance is a recent program that we've introduced, and 64 per cent of producers that purchased the calf option through livestock price insurance received a payment in 2015. Mr. Speaker, this is a program that's not subsidized in any way. Producers' premiums pay the whole cost of this, and it's a program that's working very well.

Mr. Speaker, I think I'd better save a little time for somebody else. Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No, I insist. I actually insist.

I want to talk about some of the . . . You know I think I've said a lot about agriculture. I think I've covered the basics.

But the NDP, the opposition, Mr. Speaker, are always talking about us squandering money. We're squandering money on schools and hospitals and the Regina bypass and, you know, things of that nature, Mr. Speaker — squandering it, throwing it away.

Here's what they did, Mr. Speaker. They lost \$15 million in Channel Lake. That was a Saskatchewan Power natural gas subsidiary. They lost \$2 million in Guyana, a South American power company. I wonder what possible advantage that could have provided for Saskatchewan, even in the unlikely and deeply remote event that it ever could have been successful.

They lost \$16 million in NST Chicago, a US Midwest fibre optics company. They lost \$9.4 million in Persona Inc., a Newfoundland cable company. Mr. Speaker, it boggles the

mind to think these expenditures are better uses of money than the infrastructure that we've built in this province, Mr. Speaker, that they criticize us for every single day.

They lost \$24.7 million in Retx.com — that was an Atlanta-based, Atlanta, Georgia-based dot-com. I'm sure every Saskatchewan resident was proud to know that they spent 24.7 million of their hard-earned dollars in Atlanta, Georgia. I bet that gives them all a warm feeling, Mr. Speaker.

They lost \$6.7 million in tappedinto.com from Nashville, Tennessee. They lost \$3 million in Clickabid.com, a failed Internet auction business. Mr. Speaker, they were questioning me on our online auction sales of farm land the other day. If this hadn't been such a colossal failure, maybe we could have used that platform, Mr. Speaker.

They lost \$5.6 million in Soft Tracks Enterprises, a wireless electronic payment company. They lost 90 — that's nine, zero — point eight million in Navigata Communications in British Columbia. They lost \$10 million in Craig Wireless in Manitoba. They lost \$17.2 million in Coachman Insurance in Ontario. They lost \$8.9 million in Ag Dealer, a farm equipment Internet site. They lost 35 million in SPUDCO. We all know about SPUDCO.

[16:45]

They lost 8 million in mega bingo, the failed NDP bingo scheme. Can you imagine failing at bingo? Only those members opposite could ever accomplish that, Mr. Speaker. I've worked a thousand bingos to raise money for hockey teams and one thing and another and we never lost any money. They lost 40 million on Austar Communications in Australia. They lost \$6.5 million in Minds Eye Entertainment, a money-losing movie company. They lost 2.42 in Business Watch International, a pawn shop money loser. They lost \$2.2 million in Clinicare, medical-billing software.

Mr. Speaker, I think I've made my point. This budget is a good budget, Mr. Speaker, and I support it. I will be supporting this budget, Mr. Speaker. And I think I better sit down. I think there's another hon. member that's itching to get on his feet, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, it's . . . You know, I just want to say ditto and sit down, and he stole my speech. I don't know why you let him go ahead of me . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes.

You know, first I just want to thank . . . I've been here for, just like the member that spoke before me, this is my fifth election. I want to, you know, thank my family for all their support. They don't like to be named by name but they've been with me from the start, you know, 100 per cent support. You know that I wouldn't be here without any of the family support I've had, you know.

And the people that've worked in my office. You know, Donna and Lavonne have been there for seems like . . . Well Donna,

we've been there for 20 years, going on 20 years, or 17 now. It'll be 20 for sure, maybe, God hoping, maybe 24. Lavonne's been with me eight, nine years at least. You know, they do all the heavy lifting in the office while I'm up here. But I want to thank them, my business manager, all the people that help me.

My executive's been with me since the start in '99. A lot of them are starting to say, when are you going to start thinking about retiring? Maybe we'd like to maybe not run another election. But they've been with me from right from the start and still behind us and behind this party and this government for, you know, for all we did and for all we did for this province.

And I'm glad to have served them years to see how much this province changed. I mean that's why I ran, to turn this around. We seen how tough things were in the '90s, you know, and also going back to as far as '80s, the heavy debt that was put on this. People still talk about it. The opposition talks about that constantly. We don't want to go down that road. And the people in Arm River don't want to go down that road, like the Minister of Ag had talked about. I mean his constituents, same as mine. They're hard-working farmers, ranchers, businessmen, union workers, casual labourers, restaurant workers, whatever. Every kind of a job, you know, covers from one end to the other in my constituency. They don't want to go down the heavy debt road.

I mean you're right. Nobody likes to pay extra, a little extra on taxes. But you know what? I was home this weekend and I talked to a lot of people. And you know what? They understand that, you know, the hurt was spread over a bit. And if there's money back again, we'll be spending it on facilities, which we have been. Built, when we had money, built 13 brand new . . . [inaudible] . . . facilities, built schools, built highways. They know that the children's hospital, they know that money will be . . . You know they're grateful for that, when we had some money that we went down that route. We didn't sit on . . .

The members opposite will say, well we gave you all this money. Well why didn't you spend it then? I remember a long-term care facility in Watrous. You know, the roof leaked for eight years there. You know, never fixed it. Every year they'd say, we need to get this fixed. We need a new facility. And we have our share. They never stepped up. So when we came into government, we stepped up. That's where the money went: to help this province, to grow it.

And it's still one of the best. Right now we're one of the best provinces, I'd say, in the Dominion right now. And probably when it comes to, for job security and for people wanting to move here, I'd say we're number one. This province is still growing. You know, we . . .

I want to touch a little bit about . . . Before I get into too far, there was a few things I want to touch about. First of all, I want to congratulate what President Trump has done for the pipeline. I mean, I've been on the SARL [State Agriculture and Rural Leaders], which is state rural agriculture leadership, probably for, I've been going there for 10 years. And we'd always bring that up, the state level, state representatives, and most of them agreed that it needed to go forward. Yet President Obama always managed to, even though he said he liked pipelines, always managed to hold it back. I'm believing that Trump will get this pipeline moving. It'll help Saskatchewan. It'll provide

jobs.

I'm hoping that our Prime Minister will get behind it. He says he is. I'll take him at his word on that. There's still some things I don't like what our Prime Minister's doing but, you know, the 30 million that he's gave now extra to Alberta, from what I understand, for their oil and gas sector, and has left us out, you know. And I'm thinking he's probably left it out because we won't sign on the carbon tax. And for a federal government to do something like that I think is pretty petty.

And I'm guessing that's why he's did that, because he did that with the health money. You know, the provinces all wanted to stay together and to get more money because health care is growing in every province. That's the biggest part of their budget, you know. And what did he did? He eventually, he cut every province. But he kind of peeled them off one at a time. Well we had to eventually sign or you wouldn't get the money. We'd have been short three and a half billion dollars, you know, when it came from the feds. So I'm not very impressed.

And then he's . . . And with that I also want to just quickly mention the carbon tax end of it which, if he pushes that through, and I think he's going to try, we're going to fight it as much as we can. I still hear that door to door to door. They do not want to pay a carbon tax. You know, this will . . . Our province is just starting to come back, and this will send it back and hurt a lot of businesses, you know, going all the way from ag all the way to the oil and gas sector which is just starting . . . still struggling hugely as we move forward.

You know, the member before me, you know, talked about, yes this is, you know, it's a tough budget. I've been here for a lot of them, and I've seen the government, or the NDP when they were in government. You know, 2004, they raised PST that year. I was here in opposition, you know, and I don't remember Van Mulligen going around saying, yes we're going to raise it in the next election. I mean, nobody wants to raise taxes.

That's something, when I was on treasury board, that you look at the very last thing. So that decision is made very close to budget day because that's a decision that, once you keep looking, we can either run two things. We're either going to run massive debt, massive debt, which the people of Saskatchewan don't want. They don't want to go down that road of massive debt and kicking the can down the road. So we had to make some changes.

And people, you know, they, in the long run . . . I was surprised when I was out and about in the constituency, what people were saying. They were saying it's, you know, it had to be done. And you've spread the hurt around, and you've also yet though are still trying to help where you can as we move forward.

You know, like there's a few members opposite that, you know, were here at that particular time. But you know, what gets me is the ones that weren't. They're the ones that are doing the most yelling. And I'll talk about their interim leader, you know, who gets up every day and just attacks and attacks and attacks on jobs cut.

Well in 2004, you know, the NDP government at that time eliminated 500 government jobs, you know. There was changes

were made to health delivery, which included facility closures, conversions, as well as reduction in long-term care beds. The budget eliminated the farm rebate for retail gasoline purchase. It included changes to the fuel tax exemption. There was cuts to agriculture support programs, putting together 31 rural service centres into nine. Northern environmental offices were also closed. And all those cuts were hard on rural and also hard on North.

But you know, the member for — and I remember actually the time he got up and spoke — the member from Saskatoon Centre, he was the Environment critic at the time. His reply in his budget was, you know, when the NDP:

Now, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately as a result of this need to reduce expenditures, we also had to reduce staff and this was not an easy decision to make . . .

But in order to govern effectively, we had to have responsible finances and not to back down from the difficult . . . [situations].

You know, and I respect that member for that. I respect the members that were there that served in government when I was in opposition, because I'm in government and I've been on treasury board, and there's no easy decision. There's no easy decision when it comes to cutting a job or a service. But you have to do a balance of what's best for the province as a whole. And those are the things that, as we move forward, that we're doing as a government.

So when the members that haven't been through that on the other side get up, and they're the ones that do the most banging on their desks and saying, well why have you cut this, and why have you raised this tax, and why are you doing that, yet in the same breath be asking, you need to spend more money here and you need to spend more money there.

Well, Mr. Speaker, those two don't work in conjunction. We seen that in the '80s. We're providing a responsible government. And I think as we move forward, and the people are . . . they'll see that. I mean, there's a few that won't, but the majority of the people that I talked to say they respect tough decisions. But they also respect something else that I haven't seen from this government . . . that I've seen from this government, I haven't seen from the opposition, is a plan.

And, you know, I'll give one piece of advice, and it'll only be one, to the member from Meewasin and probably Regina, maybe the member from Regina Douglas Park. If you're planning on running for leadership, the last two leaders, they lost their seat. Now things usually run in threes, so I would maybe throw the interim leader under the bus and then come back. But if you come back, either one of you new ones, even the member from Elphinstone becomes the leader, have a plan because that's what the people respect: a plan, a long-range plan.

I seen that even as much as me and Calvert didn't see eye to eye, the premier, but I respect him for that because he always had some kind of a plan. Romanow always had some kind. I haven't seen that from your interim leader. I didn't see that from Broten, and I didn't see that from Lingenfelter. And I'll

tell you what: the people, that's what they want nowadays, at least want to set a plan. They want to see something forward.

And that's what we, working together with this budget, is a three-year plan of how to keep working to keep this province growing because nobody wants to go back to where the young kids were leaving, population was dropping, and we didn't have money for services. Because that's what the most important thing of running a province is, to provide them services. And I'll tell you what. We didn't close . . . no hospital closures. There was no health facilities . . . There was no schools closed.

Yes, there might be a few hits here and there. You know, the STC bus in the rural constituencies, well, will hurt a little bit, but I've seen it decline. I can remember when I was in opposition, the NDP government at the time cut routes. They cut, I forget how many towns that time. I don't have it right in front of me, but I remember . . . [inaudible] . . . They even realized at that time that the bus service wasn't going to go on forever.

And we've tried everything we could and the employees tried everything they could to keep that service rolling and to try to make some kind of money, but it's just, just a change of the times. I've had a lot of towns where I talked to people, and yes, one person used it once a month. It's hard to roll a bus in there every day for that person, to collect them once a month. And I know that person; it'll be a hardship on them. I understand that.

But we've also increased, you know, money to low incomes through tax credits and various things to try to help people as we move forward. We've also, you know, cut personal income tax as we raised the PST. Tried to offset some of this because we realize that with the plan that we can't rely on heavy . . . high-priced oil and gas revenues and potash. They may come back. They may not for a long time.

There's governments right now, and one of them's to the west of us, is relying on that. They're saying that, you know, we're going to run 10 billion the last two years. And you know what? Maybe oil will hit \$100 a barrel. Maybe it'll hit 150, but if it doesn't, that province is going to be in big trouble. It's going to be Saskatchewan the way it was in the '90s, and nobody here wants that.

You know, I could go on like the member in front of me did about the losses. I was there in opposition. Every government makes mistakes. But I'll tell you what. In opposition you've made a lot more than we ever did. I'll tell the opposition that. But we have made a couple; there's no, there's no denying that. People understand that. But I'll tell you what. When you were in government, you made, the opposition, the NDP made a lot of them, and a lot of them were very costly. I'm not going to go down the list like the member did. He's already put them out there. But for anybody that's listening right now to this speech, you know that no government is perfect.

But I'll tell you what. I'm proud of the record that this government has run and how it's turned this province around and how we're still adding jobs, how we're still adding . . . people coming, and how we're still, how we've increased 800 nurses.

The Deputy Speaker: — It now being 5 o'clock, this House stands recessed until 7 p.m.

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

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