



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

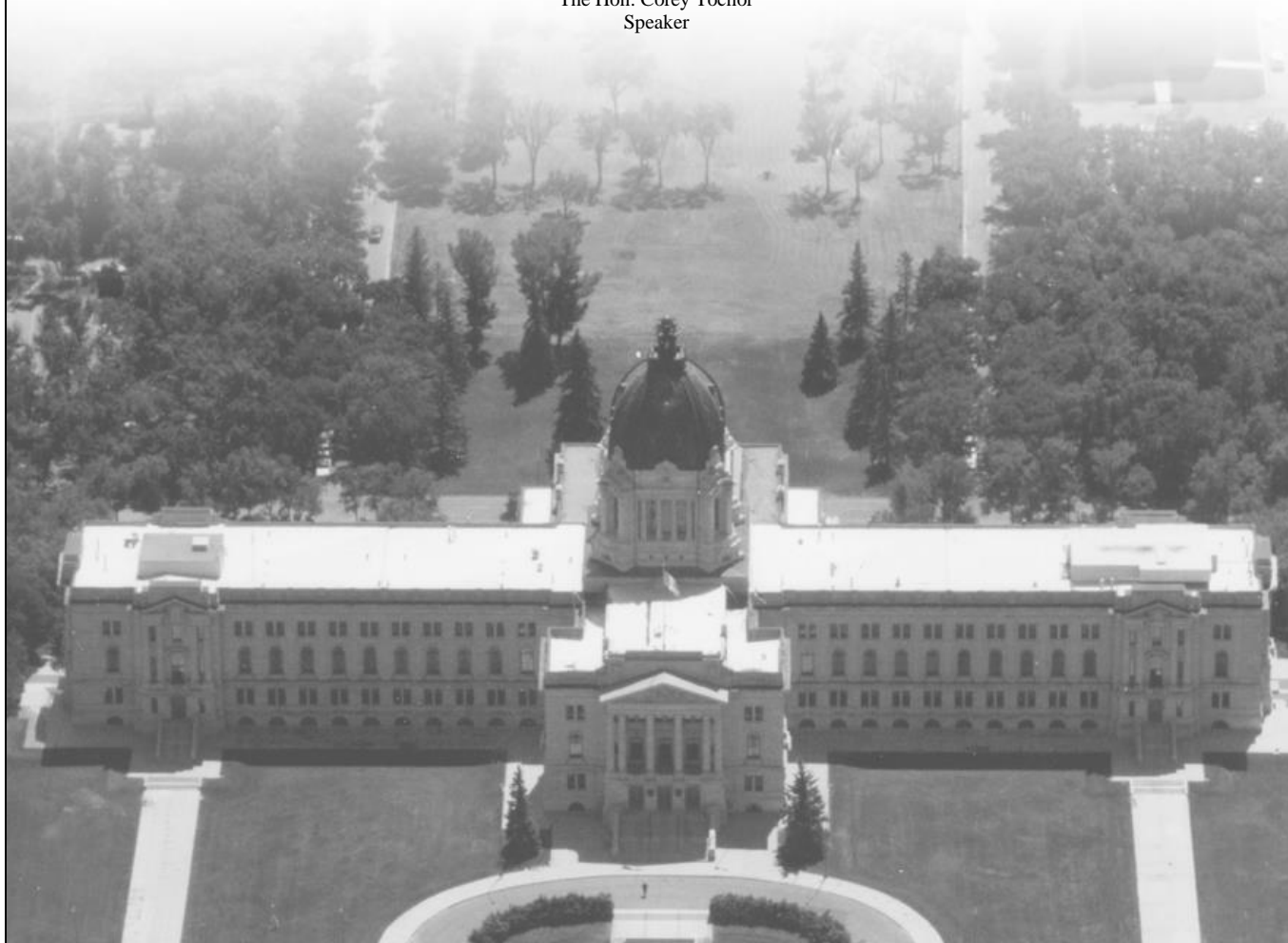
of the

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

Beaudry-Mellor, Hon. Tina — Regina University (SP)

Beck, Carla — Regina Lakeview (NDP)

Belanger, Buckley — Athabasca (NDP)

Bonk, Steven — Moosomin (SP)

Boyd, Bill — Kindersley (SP)

Bradshaw, Fred — Carrot River Valley (SP)

Brkich, Greg — Arm River (SP)

Buckingham, David — Saskatoon Westview (SP)

Campeau, Jennifer — Saskatoon Fairview (SP)

Carr, Lori — Estevan (SP)

Chartier, Danielle — Saskatoon Riversdale (NDP)

Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken — Saskatoon Willowgrove (SP)

Cox, Herb — The Battlefords (SP)

D'Autremont, Dan — Cannington (SP)

Dennis, Terry — Canora-Pelly (SP)

Docherty, Mark — Regina Coronation Park (SP)

Doherty, Hon. Kevin — Regina Northeast (SP)

Doke, Larry — Cut Knife-Turtleford (SP)

Duncan, Hon. Dustin — Weyburn-Big Muddy (SP)

Eyre, Hon. Bronwyn — Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota (SP)

Fiaz, Muhammad — Regina Pasqua (SP)

Forbes, David — Saskatoon Centre (NDP)

Hargrave, Hon. Joe — Prince Albert Carlton (SP)

Harpauer, Hon. Donna — Humboldt-Watrous (SP)

Harrison, Hon. Jeremy — Meadow Lake (SP)

Hart, Glen — Last Mountain-Touchwood (SP)

Heppner, Nancy — Martensville-Warman (SP)

Kaeding, Warren — Melville-Saltcoats (SP)

Kirsch, Delbert — Batoche (SP)

Lambert, Lisa — Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood (SP)

Lawrence, Greg — Moose Jaw Wakamow (SP)

Makowsky, Gene — Regina Gardiner Park (SP)

Marit, Hon. David — Wood River (SP)

McCall, Warren — Regina Elphinstone-Centre (NDP)

McMorris, Don — Indian Head-Milestone (SP)

Meili, Ryan — Saskatoon Meewasin (NDP)

Merriman, Hon. Paul — Saskatoon Silverspring-Sutherland (SP)

Michelson, Warren — Moose Jaw North (SP)

Moe, Hon. Scott — Rosthern-Shellbrook (SP)

Morgan, Hon. Don — Saskatoon Southeast (SP)

Nerlien, Hugh — Kelvington-Wadena (SP)

Olauson, Eric — Saskatoon University (SP)

Ottenbreit, Hon. Greg — Yorkton (SP)

Phillips, Kevin — Melfort (SP)

Rancourt, Nicole — Prince Albert Northcote (NDP)

Reiter, Hon. Jim — Rosetown-Elrose (SP)

Ross, Laura — Regina Rochdale (SP)

Sarauer, Nicole — Regina Douglas Park (NDP)

Sproule, Cathy — Saskatoon Nutana (NDP)

Steele, Doug — Cypress Hills (SP)

Steinley, Warren — Regina Walsh Acres (SP)

Stewart, Hon. Lyle — Lumsden-Morse (SP)

Tell, Hon. Christine — Regina Wascana Plains (SP)

Tochor, Hon. Corey — Saskatoon Eastview (SP)

Vermette, Doyle — Cumberland (NDP)

Wall, Hon. Brad — Swift Current (SP)

Weekes, Randy — Biggar-Sask Valley (SP)

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

Clerks-at-the-Table

Clerk — Gregory A. Putz

Law Clerk & Parliamentary Counsel — Kenneth S. Ring, Q.C.

Principal Clerk — Iris Lang

Clerk Assistant — Kathy Burianyak

Sergeant-at-Arms — Terry Quinn

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the
Legislative Assembly are available
within hours after each sitting.

<http://www.legassembly.sk.ca/legislative-business/legislative-calendar>

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

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

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to my fellow members, I would like to introduce some guests in our Legislative Assembly here today. Joining us are representatives from the Ministry of Central Services who just last night were awarded the city of Regina's 2017 Municipal Heritage Award for Restoration of the Legislative Building dome.

The award recognizes those who have demonstrated commitment to conserve Regina's built heritage and history. The legislative dome project was chosen for restoring this iconic landmark to its original 1912 state while protecting its heritage value. You've heard about the 22,000 pounds of new stone meticulously carved and installed, and you've seen the shining reflection from the new copper cladding.

Today I'd like to introduce to you some of the people responsible for pulling together this project. From Central Services, we have Harlan Kennedy, executive director, project management. Harlan, just give us a wave. Not up there? Okay. Oh, there you are. Here I am looking over here. Thanks, Harlan. Yasir Elawad, director of project management; Jackie Hall, project coordinator; and Jeff Tochor, building operator. Although he couldn't be here today, I would like acknowledge Steve Bata, building manager for the Legislative Building for all his work on this project. Also joining us today is Michael Toews, project manager.

I'd also like to recognize PCL Construction Management, who led the restoration and were responsible for nominating the dome project for the award. With us today we have Sean Hamelin, PCL district manager; Darryl Abstreiter — you guys are all over the place — superintendent and site supervisor; Chris Brooks, PCL project manager. Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to receive this heritage award. Countless tradespeople, artisans, project managers, planners, and more can take great pride in this achievement. I invite all members to join me in welcoming our guests to their Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to join quickly with the minister in welcoming these very

important individuals from Central Services and through the broader construction community, from PCL and beyond, Mr. Speaker, to their Legislative Assembly. And certainly this is the kind of piece of work that you can, you know, you can point to for the rest of your life, Mr. Speaker, and show off to your children, your grandchildren, your great-grandchildren, and say that I was part of that job, and to look on that work with pride.

That that great work was joined with a Municipal Heritage Award certainly makes sense because this is such a gift from the people of Saskatchewan, this building, and the work that was done certainly added to that gift, Mr. Speaker. To all these individuals, and certainly to Jeff Tochor as the interface for us and somebody we see day to day, we want to say again congratulations and great work.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I note in our galleries today, in both yours and the west gallery, we have municipal leaders that have joined us today.

Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly, someone who's no stranger to the Assembly itself, the newly elected president of SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association], Gordon Barnhart. He's joined by the executive director for SUMA, Laurent Mougeot. We want to wish them a warm welcome to their Assembly.

I also note in your gallery Carmen Sterling, who I think is a vice-president at the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities. Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to join me in welcoming these local municipal leaders to their Legislative Assembly today.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to join with the Premier and welcome these municipal leaders, both rural and urban, to our Assembly here today. Certainly Dr. Gordon Barnhart is someone that's served our province with distinction for his entire life, Mr. Speaker, and his new role as president of SUMA is an important one, where he'll continue to serve our province. Of course we know him through his service as Lieutenant Governor. We know him through his service as president of the University of Saskatchewan, and many would know him through his service on the floor of this Assembly, and also in Ottawa, serving as Clerk to the Senate as well.

It's also my pleasure to welcome and thank for his service, Laurent Mougeot, the executive director of SUMA here today, representing and serving our cities and towns across Saskatchewan. And certainly this is someone who understands how cities and towns operate as well, serving as a city manager in Prince Albert with distinction for some period of time. So I join with the Premier, and ask all members to provide a great big thanks to these municipal leaders that have joined us here today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to make an extended introduction.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce a large group of very dedicated volunteers, Saskatchewan agriculture's crop reporters. From seeding to harvest, the network of crop reporters provides valuable information that many people and institutions rely on, both locally and internationally. Having accurate and timely crop reports available each week allows international traders to better predict market trends. Local producers are able to plan and evaluate each crop season to make the best business decisions, and these business decisions are crucial to strengthening our economy.

This information is collected each week by a small army of dedicated volunteers. Each year we celebrate those volunteers who have offered their time for 25, 30, and 35 years. By my calculations, the group we are honouring today has collectively contributed to a remarkable 13,050 crop reports.

I want to recognize and thank each of the volunteer crop reporters here today. As I announce their names, I ask that each crop reporter and spouse give us a wave to be recognized by the legislature.

First, the 25-year service people include Warren and Claudia Volke of the RM [rural municipality] of Happy Valley; Grant and Marilyn Hale, RM of Brock; Paul and Virginia Tysdale, RM of Baildon; Wes Black, RM of Porcupine. Two 25-year reporters that could not be with us today are Tim Clifford, RM of Victory; and Lloyd Tyler, RM of Fertile Valley.

The 30 years of service, we have Bette and Dennis Reiss of the RM of Francis; Brian and Jeanette Becker, RM of Calder; Dale and Donna Meier, RM of Progress; Harry and Eileen McCarriston, RM of Connaught; Val and Gaylord Muller of the RM of Frenchman Butte; Walter and Linda Sullivan, RM of Milton, who I don't think were able to attend today.

Thirty-five year service, Mr. Speaker: Ed Datchko, RM of Ituna Bon Accord; Jim Hornford, RM of Elfros; and Allan and Marion Hardy, RM of Wolseley.

Thank you, everyone. I ask all members to join me in thanking these volunteer crop reporters for their service and dedication to agriculture and to Saskatchewan, and welcome them to their legislature.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and join with the minister in welcoming this year's crop of crop reporters, the long service awards. I couldn't resist the pun. And really the idea that you do this as a volunteer

for 35 years, 25 years, 20 years, 15 years, that's an incredible commitment to your province and to your industry and to agriculture in Saskatchewan. So I think it's very fitting that we get to greet you when you come in to the legislature every year, having reached these milestones.

But you folks that hit the 35, you just don't look old enough to be doing it for 35 years, so good on you for that as well. Mr. Speaker, I think on behalf of the official opposition, we want to join with the minister and the government to thank these people for their service, for their volunteerism, and to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. While I was on my feet previously, I didn't recognize a former constituent who's joined us in the west gallery, together with his wife. He now lives in Regina. His name is Andy Schmidt, and he's with his wife, Emma, today. Mr. Speaker, Andy's from Swift Current. His parents were our good friends. They were both entrepreneurs in the community. And, Mr. Speaker, they're good friends as well, so I want to acknowledge Andy and his wife, Emma, in the gallery today.

And while I'm on my feet, we should also introduce a former member of this place. Mr. Speaker, the former member for Cypress Hills and the first elected member for the Saskatchewan Party, Wayne Elhard has joined us. I can see him, Mr. Speaker.

I note that, I think it was just today the Government of Manitoba has made an announcement in respect of Mr. Elhard. They have asked him to help them with their surgical wait times reduction initiative. And, Mr. Speaker, we think he might be well qualified, having been a part of a wait reduction, wait time reduction initiative on this side of the House that has proven to be reasonably successful. So we wish him well on that work, Mr. Speaker, and I ask all members to join me in welcoming Andy and Emma and Wayne to their Legislative Assembly today.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to just briefly join with the Premier in welcoming Mr. Wayne Elhard to his Legislative Assembly. It's interesting, I don't know if the windmill he's got up there is going to run on water or not, Mr. Speaker, but we'll see how that works out through the question period. But certainly we'd like to, on behalf of the official opposition, say a word of welcome to Mr. Elhard to your Legislative Assembly.

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

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislative Assembly, seated in your gallery, Monique Goffinet Miller. Mr. Speaker, Monique is a board member of the Canadian Women Voters Congress, and I had the opportunity to meet with Monique as my role as incoming Chair of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, Canadian region.

Monique is organizing a campaign school for this year in Regina, in October 6th, 7th, and 8th, and she's undertaking this as her role as the Canadian Women Voters Congress. Now their vision is a better society through increased participation and influence of women in political and community leadership. So, Mr. Speaker, please welcome Monique to her Legislative Assembly.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member opposite in welcoming Monique to her Legislative Assembly. Monique is, as I have mentioned previously, is rather new to Regina and to the constituency of Regina Lakeview — but I think I've had opportunity to introduce her at least a couple of times before — and is someone who is keenly interested in the work of this place, and particularly the role of women in politics. And we do feel very supported by the work that you are doing and are excited by the campaign school that you have organized.

She really hit the floor running in this province, Mr. Speaker, and very pleased to welcome her both to the constituency and to her Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I would also like to introduce two guests that are with us today. In my gallery at the top row, we have Zach Broughton, my brother-in-law. Give a wave. Zach is down in Regina to witness today's session, and I just want to thank him for all the help that he does back in Saskatoon, helping with Jacob and James while I'm down here. I think Zach's been on the ice more with Jacob than I've been on the ice with Jacob. So thank you, Zach, for your help.

[13:45]

Also with Zach today is Scott Hoffman, is a colleague of Zach's. They both work at Mosaic. I had a chance to have lunch with them earlier today and learned some interesting things, such as he actually lives . . . his representative is the member from Eastview — which I didn't know — and he's down here to make sure he's doing a good job, I hope; and that he's a self-proclaimed political geek, which I confirmed to him that most members here are political geeks; and today was a little bit . . . as he put it, paradise, coming down to the building. So I welcome both of them to their Assembly, and please welcome them to the proceedings today.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition. The people who have signed this petition are opposed to the Sask Party's plan to scrap and sell off 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 sign about how little they care about protecting our Crowns like SaskTel; and that STC helps

drive the economy with its parcel service that serves farms and other businesses. Mr. Speaker, I'll 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 supported and signed by many good people of this province. I so present.

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

Ms. Lambert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to present a petition from citizens who are opposed to the federal government's decision to impose a carbon tax on the province of Saskatchewan. I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause the Government of Saskatchewan to take the necessary steps to stop the federal government from imposing a carbon tax on the province.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens of Saskatoon, Creelman, Borden, and Fillmore. I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to stand in my place to present a petition that will help the cities of our province, as opposed to hurting them, and this particular petition is around a second bridge for Prince Albert; and that the need for a second bridge for Prince Albert has never been clearer than it is today. Prince Albert and communities north of Prince Albert and the businesses that send people and products through Prince Albert require a solution. So in answering a call from the member from Prince Albert Northcote for someone to help her in these petitions and to lobby for a second bridge for Prince Albert, I'm proud to stand in my place and to present the petition that reads as follows:

Respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan ask that the Sask Party government stop stalling, hiding behind rhetoric and refusing to listen to the people calling for action, and begin immediately to plan and then quickly commence the construction of a second bridge for Prince Albert using federal and provincial dollars.

And as we say day after day, Mr. Speaker, in this Assembly as we present page after page, I'm very proud to stand in my place to present yet another page that have been signed by people primarily from Prince Albert, and I so present.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition opposed to Bill 40 and a potential 49 per cent

Crown corporation sell-off. The people who signed the 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 the Saskatchewan Crown corporations returned \$297.2 million in dividends to pay for schools, roads, and hospitals. And as we know, over the last decade, Mr. Speaker, that is actually over \$3 billion. These dividends should go to the people of Saskatchewan, not investors.

Our Crown corporations employ thousands of Saskatchewan people across the province. And 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. So this short-sighted legislation risks sending millions of dollars in Crown dividends to Ottawa rather than the people of Saskatchewan.

I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan 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.

Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed this petition today are from the city of Regina. I so submit.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to present a petition regarding 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.

And we know 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 that 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 this term of this Assembly, and that Saskatchewan government call upon workplaces within Saskatchewan

within the private sector to eliminate the wage gap between women and men.

Mr. Speaker, people signing this petition come from the city of Regina and Moose Jaw. 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. Prince Albert mobile crisis unit has had to close its doors during daytime hours, resulting in a loss of resource to people in distress. Mr. Speaker, the daytime closure of Prince Albert mobile has put stress on Prince Albert Police Service. And we know with the increase of crime in Prince Albert, we need our police services on the streets protecting citizens in our community. And they try their best to deal with people who are dealing with serious mental health issues, but they're not trained to provide that work and it does take them off the streets for hours while they're trying to find services for these individuals. And we know that the intervention workers from Prince Albert mobile crisis are the best workers to provide those services for these individuals. So I'll read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

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, this issue is really important to many people across this province and this particular petition is signed by individuals from Regina and Debden. 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 library funding in the province. Those who have signed the petition wish to draw our attention to the following: whereas the Saskatchewan government has cut funding for regional libraries in half or by 3.5 million and eliminated funding for libraries in Regina and Saskatchewan, and this drastic funding cut will have a devastating impact on libraries, especially regional libraries and the many people who depend on them; whereas libraries are a vital part of communities across Saskatchewan and the services that they provide enrich the lives of many, the drastic cuts imposed on libraries will lead to branch closures, program cuts, and reduction in hours, and will hurt the many people who use library services and the hard-working and dedicated public servants who work in the libraries.

Whereas libraries are more than just about borrowing books: meeting rooms are used by community groups; library staff host educational programming and clubs, and publicly accessible computer terminals that are essential to many. There are services for seniors, children, employment support, language and reading groups, citizen test preparation, and help for newcomers to build their resumé's. And whereas these cuts will have disproportionate impact on rural communities where

libraries are vital community spaces, potential closures or reductions in services will severely impact our communities. I'll read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

Therefore in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan renew its commitment to the invaluable programming, educational opportunities, and public spaces our libraries provide across this province and restore the 4.8 million for funding for public libraries that was cut in the 2017-2018 budget.

Mr. Speaker, those signing this petition today reside in 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 rates of domestic violence by intimate partners amongst all Canadian provinces. One in three Canadian workers have experienced domestic violence, and for many of them the violence follows them to work.

Victims of domestic abuse should not be further victimized at work, Mr. Speaker, and employers lose \$77.9 million annually due to the direct and indirect impacts of domestic violence. 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.

Individuals signing this petition today come from Assiniboia, Moose Jaw, Shaunavon, and Central Butte. I do so submit.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Gender Diversity Awareness Week

Mr. Docherty: — Yesterday I was honoured to bring greetings, along with the member from Regina Douglas Park and the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow, to the celebration of Gender Diversity Awareness Week, and take part in the flag raising yesterday morning and afternoon.

TransSask Support Services are so important to our growing and diverse society, and the courage and continued efforts are being felt all over Saskatchewan.

Raising awareness to this week will only lead to more understanding, acceptance, and support for those who identify

as binary and transgender. Mr. Speaker, this week serves as a reminder that we must continue our efforts to promote equality for all, as there is no place for discrimination in our province.

There were flag raisings all around Saskatchewan to commemorate past and present supporters who are fighting every day to have the same equality, respect, and opportunity as everyone else in our society.

I would like to thank the TransSask Support Services and Moose Jaw Pride for giving me and my colleagues the opportunity to take part in Gender Diversity Awareness Week. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members, please join me in continuing to stand up for the rights of all transgender and binary people in our Saskatchewan. Thank you.

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

Prince Albert Students Compete at Model United Nations Assembly

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Thursday, March 24th, students from Prince Albert and area competed in the Prince Albert Rotary Club's model UN [United Nations] assembly. Mr. Speaker, teams were each assigned a country to represent and were judged on their representation, their decorum during the assembly, the quality of their research in support of their views, and their speaking and debate abilities.

Two motions were debated. One motion sought to establish a new world economic order where developed countries would do more to assist developing nations. The second motion dealt with the improvement of treatment of Indigenous people.

St. Mary High School, representing Russia, was selected as the top delegation and will now compete at the Model United Nations Assembly in Winnipeg this May. The delegation from St. Mary was made up of Matthew Buglass and Lucas Mitchell.

The model UN Assembly was sponsored by the Prince Albert Rotary Club, which was also a sponsor of the winning team's trip to Winnipeg. The national model UN Assembly in Winnipeg is sponsored by the Rotary Club of Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join with me in thanking the model UN staff advisor, Dennis Ogrodnick; Rotary Club representative at the competition, Morley Harrison; and all the teams who competed on Thursday for their hard work; and in congratulating Matthew Buglass and Lucas Mitchell on their win and offering our best wishes to them in the next level of competition. Thank you.

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

[14:00]

Humanity First Launches Nationwide Campaign

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to stand in this House today to bring awareness to a nationwide campaign launched by Humanity First Canada which is intended to create awareness and alleviate hunger in Canada.

Humanity First Canada has been providing food hampers to needy families and students on a monthly basis, making sure that food is delivered to families in a discreet and respectful manner throughout Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we value the important work done by Humanity First Canada and thank its chairman, Dr. Aslam Daud. We also value the good work done by food banks across Canada and right here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking the volunteers and donors at Humanity First that are helping this worthwhile campaign. Thank you very much.

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

Empowering Immigrant Women Workshop

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday I attended a workshop at Queen's House Retreat in Saskatoon entitled Empowering Immigrant Women - A Journey of Inspiration and Success. The Saskatoon Open Door Society sponsored the event with funding provided by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, along with Senator Lillian Dyck and city councillors Mairin Loewen and Hilary Gough. I was honoured to bring greetings to participants.

Early in the day, four participants from around the globe shared stories of their arrival in Canada. Mr. Speaker, this group of women understands that when women do well by finding safe homes to raise their families, receiving quality education, and finding jobs, our communities are strengthened and improved. When women do well, we all benefit.

The event was also a celebration of multiculturalism in Saskatchewan. Participants were invited to attend the workshop wearing their traditional dress, and after lunch several participants entertained the group with an array of cultural dance, song, visual storytelling, and a multicultural fashion show. It truly highlighted the unique and diverse nature of women in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I ask members to join me in congratulating the Saskatoon Open Door Society for organizing this remarkable event that showcased the value brought to us by newcomer women from around the world, women who come to build safer, better lives while enriching the economic and cultural fabric of our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

New Grain-Handling Facilities in Saskatchewan

Mr. Kaeding: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's been an ongoing series of good news stories about significant investments in Saskatchewan's economy. Mr. Speaker, this morning G3 Canada announced that it will construct two primary new grain-handling facilities in Saskatchewan. One elevator will be located just outside of Melville in my constituency and will have 34 000 tonnes of storage. The other facility will be located just west of Saskatoon and will have

storage for over 42 000 tonnes.

Karl Gerrand, G3's CEO [chief executive officer] had this to say about the announcement: "These two new locations are being constructed with the same state-of-the-art truck delivery and rail-shipping features as our other new facilities, which are key components of G3's excellent customer service offering."

Mr. Speaker, this will provide more options for our producers to access global markets. This investment will also create construction jobs and provide opportunities for people in these communities for years to come. With investments such as this, Grain Millers' investment in Yorkton, and Brandt investing in Saskatoon, as well as many key economic indicators we have seen, they show that we are trending in the right direction, and we can be confident that our economy is on the right track.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask members to join me in welcoming G3 to these two Saskatchewan communities, and we look forward to seeing these elevators' operation for the 2018 harvest. Thank you.

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

Local Businessman Receives Business for Peace Award

Hon. Ms. Beaudry-Mellor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour and pleasure to talk about Murad Al-Katib, the president and CEO of AGT Foods, a company and a leader that we have talked about in this Assembly many times. In 2001 Murad founded Saskcan Pulse Trading out of his basement in Regina, and it now has become one of the largest pulse processing companies in the world.

Recently Murad was honoured with the Business for Peace Award, Mr. Speaker, an award given to business people who are contributing to economic growth while leaving their mark on society in a way that goes beyond profits. Each year, winners are selected by a committee of Nobel Peace Prize winners and is given to individuals who are positively changing the face of business.

Murad, a son of Turkish immigrants himself, helped feed millions of Syrians in the midst of the refugee crisis and has made a significant contribution to the development of sustainable agriculture. Under Murad's leadership, AGT has been a major partner with the United Nations World Food Programme and the international committee of the Red Cross. AGT estimates that their supplies to UN [United Nations] WFP [World Food Programme] and ICRC [international committee of the Red Cross] feed more than 4 million people.

In an interview with the *StarPhoenix* this morning, Murad was asked, "What was your reaction when you learned that you'd been given this award?" And he said, and I quote:

You never set out in your life to do these things to be recognized for them. You do them because you're actually passionate about the causes. It's an opportunity to stand up in front of a large group of business leaders and use the work you're doing as a call to action, to say, "You know what? Entrepreneurs and business people have an

opportunity to contribute to the problems that are in society today.”

Mr. Speaker, I think that says it all. I would ask all members to join me in congratulating Murad on this prestigious award, a first in Saskatchewan.

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

New Schools in Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to highlight our government's commitment to education with the soon-to-be-complete two new schools in my constituency, on time and on budget, Mr. Speaker: St. Kateri Tekakwitha, Saskatoon Catholic; and Chief Whitecap, Saskatoon Public. And with John Lake School nearby, this brings the historical chapter and partnership full circle. Both schools will be beautiful facilities and home to over 1,250 students and offer 90 child care centre spaces when they open in September.

Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota has seen amazing growth over the past several years, with Stonebridge alone growing from 4,000 people in 2011 to over 10,000 in 2016. This new neighbourhood is full of young families and young children who will benefit from increased access to child care and K to 8 [kindergarten to grade 8] schooling. The schools surrounding Stonebridge will also see great benefits such as smaller classroom sizes and less pressure on resources.

This new joint-use school will also benefit the community as a whole, with increased access to a fitness centre and a community resource centre. These facilities will be available to the public after regular school hours, providing a real pillar for this growing community.

I am proud of our government's record when it comes to education, and 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. There's still work to be done but we will continue to meet the challenge to keep Saskatchewan strong. Thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Regina Bypass Project and Financial Support for Municipalities

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, day after day I ask the Premier to come clean about their GTH [Global Transportation Hub] scandal. We want to know why taxpayers and landowners, including nuns, got ripped off while two Sask Party supporters earned, or received, \$11 million. But day after day the Premier sits in his chair, spins around, has the appointed minister stand up and spout nonsense — or, if he takes to his feet, he apologizes for not providing an answer.

Mr. Speaker, it's the same with the bypass: \$2 billion gone on a project that was supposed to cost \$400 million. Now they're

trying to hide, of course, behind a contract with this private foreign corporation. That foreign corporation from France and beyond has rights, they say, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, how can the Premier be so defensive of those contracts, saying they need to be good to their word, while out of the blue they ripped up agreements with, and tore back millions from, our municipalities, not being true to their word with our cities and towns?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, once again, it's important that we correct the record after that member takes to his feet. Whenever the interim leader of the NDP [New Democratic Party] speaks in this place we have to clarify, Mr. Speaker. Once again he characterized the bypass as a \$400 million project whose costs have increased. He knows that's not true. He knows that estimate — the \$400 million estimate — was when the scale of the project was much, much smaller. Well, he shakes his head. He knows that's the truth.

And in consultation with the communities surrounding Regina, and the City of Regina, Mr. Speaker, that project took on the significance of a perimeter road. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, it truly is a bypass, and it's on time and it's on budget. And I want to point out again for members opposite that there are, of the 130-plus companies that are involved in the project, 90 of them are from the province of Saskatchewan. Ninety of them have their headquarters here; 8,000-plus jobs being created for Saskatchewan people on the bypass that, each and every day, he opposes, he criticizes in this House.

And by the way, his question at the end, I think, was on revenue sharing, and it's certainly a valid discussion and debate to have. It's important to note for the citizens of Regina that that bypass represents the largest single infrastructure investment in the province's history, right here in the capital city of Regina, Mr. Speaker. We're proud of the work we've done with our municipal partners, Mr. Speaker. We'll get into more details in a moment, but I can share with members opposite that municipal revenue sharing in Saskatchewan since the days of the members opposite being in office, municipal revenue sharing has doubled, Mr. Speaker. And in the case of our largest centres, it's up two and a half times what it was, Mr. Speaker. And I look forward to subsequent questions.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — You know, Mr. Speaker, watching the cabinet and the caucus applaud that non-answer is disappointing once again, but it's what we're growing accustomed to day after day. You know, they're the ones that are protecting the \$11 million, that agreement that they handed to the two Sask Party supporters. And they're the ones that are refusing to open up the \$2 billion bypass contract with this foreign corporation with incredible mismanagement by the Sask Party, Mr. Speaker. The Premier speaks about some creep in scope. It certainly never doubled, Mr. Speaker. Even if it hadn't . . . Even if it had, \$2 billion is outrageous.

You know, meanwhile, that Premier and along with him all the members opposite have broken faith with Saskatchewan people

and thrown out agreements with our cities and towns. Mr. Speaker, they're changing the law so they can rip tens of millions of dollars that are needed away from our cities and towns.

Mr. Speaker, former Conservative candidate and current Saskatoon city councillor Randy Donauer said, "This is a transfer of a tax burden from one level of government . . ." It's certainly that, Mr. Speaker.

To the Premier: why is the Sask Party defending their wealthy supporters, foreign corporations, while punishing Saskatchewan people by ripping millions of dollars away from our cities and towns?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, since our government was elected in 2007 and our first budget 2007-2008, the cumulative inflation since then has been 18 per cent. The increase in operating for K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] has been 31 per cent; the increase in operating for universities and Sask Poly, 45 per cent; the increase in operating dollars for our health authorities, 59 per cent.

But the clearest winner in terms of this government's investments has been the municipal sector because their funding is up 103 per cent, Mr. Speaker. And there are no strings attached to that money. They can use it for operating. They can use it for capital. And in this budget, a very difficult budget, that revenue-sharing agreement was preserved, Mr. Speaker.

There have been some decisions with respect to grants-in-lieu. I know that representatives of our cities will be meeting with the ministers responsible, I think tomorrow, to further discuss the matter. But, Mr. Speaker, when the member quotes the councillor from Saskatoon, he should know that in 2007, when those folks had the chance to do more than talk, they were receiving . . . Saskatoon received from the NDP \$17.8 million in revenue sharing, and they were sitting on a mountain of money, about a half billion dollars. That's what they gave to the people of Saskatoon. This year . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well, Mr. Speaker, they don't want to hear the answer. They received 17 million from the NDP. And, Mr. Speaker, in this budget year from our government, Saskatoon will receive \$46 million. That's an increase of 161 per cent.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, we're asking them to accept part of the challenge we all face, a \$10 million reduction in grant-in-lieu. That leaves Saskatoon, net to the good, \$36 million.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I missed that in the SUMA speech that the Premier gave just a couple months ago here. You know, and he doesn't have to take my word for it; he could ask the president of SUMA, Dr. Gordon Barnhart, who's here today. Or we could read the quote of Yorkton Mayor Bob Maloney who said, "Just to pass along what's been dumped on our plate would need a 10 per cent increase in taxes." Ten per cent increase. Mr. Speaker, let's be clear: those tax hikes are Sask Party tax hikes. Cities and towns aren't happy. North Battleford Mayor Ryan Bater said ". . . outrage is putting it

lightly. We were absolutely blindsided by this budget."

[14:15]

The Moose Jaw city manager Matt Noble said, "total blindsided." Regina's mayor, Michael Fougere, said that this came "out of nowhere." Mr. Speaker, even former Sask Party candidate and current city councillor Bob Hawkins said this budget comes like . . . Well, you know, I'm not sure I can finish this quote without getting tossed from here, Mr. Speaker.

To the Premier again: why is the Sask Party attacking our communities and attacking Saskatchewan families, breaking his promises, and hiking taxes while he has giveaways for the wealthy and well connected? Why didn't he at least have the decency, the decency to come clean with our cities and towns?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if the Leader of the Opposition was at the SUMA meeting where I spoke . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well he says he was. If he was there, he would know . . . If he was there, he would know I expressly mentioned as a part of the list of things on the table, grants-in-lieu.

Well he's smiling. Mr. Speaker, we see this time and time again where the member opposite will stand up and characterize something, including commitments I made on taxes — that was his tack last week — and he's proven to be wrong, Mr. Speaker.

In the case of SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], the speech to SARM, we also indicated at SARM specifically that grants-in-lieu would be on the table. Well it was in the speech, Mr. Speaker.

Moreover I think we were pretty clear at both SUMA and SARM that we had a \$1.2 billion revenue challenge. And so, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the fact that this side of the House has doubled municipal revenue sharing, Mr. Speaker — for our two largest centres, it has gone up by two and a half times, Mr. Speaker, since we formed government — notwithstanding that, we've asked them to share in the challenge of the budget in terms of grants-in-lieu. They'll all be still net to the positive. They'll all be significant, more support from our government than there ever was from the NDP, and that doesn't count the infrastructure dollars in Saskatoon, 125 million alone, and when you count the stadium in Regina, 127 million.

Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to work towards a meaningful partnership with the municipal sector that's more than just speeches and words, that's actually informed by a record of more dollars on a revenue-sharing basis and more dollars on a capital basis.

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

Government's Fiscal Management

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, they keep acting like they just landed in government yesterday: oh golly, somebody really

messed up these books. Mr. Speaker, they've been here for a decade. Mr. Speaker, oil prices, oil prices have always been and always are volatile, especially when they were at well over \$100 a barrel. But they are the ones who blew it, and it's families who they are forcing to pay the price.

On November 8th, 2011 when they expanded the PST [provincial sales tax] exemption for children's clothes, the Sask Party press release headline read, "First promise kept." The Premier himself said they made the announcement to "... make life a little more affordable for Saskatchewan families ...". Well, Mr. Speaker, they are breaking that promise now and making life less affordable for Saskatchewan families.

I'm hoping for a straight answer that doesn't blame a magical being or the volatility of oil prices as if that's something new, Mr. Speaker. Will this minister cancel their plans to hike taxes for necessities like children's clothes, shoes, and diapers?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do acknowledge that it's difficult with respect to any time you're making changes to your tax base in the province. It's difficult any time you're making changes to your tax base in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. When you're moving from taxing income and productivity to a consumption-based tax, there's going to be some difficulties, which is why, which is why we increased the Saskatchewan low-income tax credit by 41 per cent in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

Now I listened to the opposition critic's question yesterday, and I wanted to make sure I went back and checked with officials because she indicated yesterday in her question that we were taxing diapers, Mr. Speaker. We are not taxing diapers in this province with respect to the provincial sales tax. It is equivalent to the incontinence products in the province of Saskatchewan, and feminine hygiene products. I went back with officials today to make sure that we're not taxing diapers in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

Now with respect to children's clothing, with respect to children's clothing, Mr. Speaker, here we have a classic case. The Leader of the Opposition yesterday was railing on the government with respect to spending decreases in the province. The Finance critic gets up and talks about revenue changes in the province. Last week the Leader of the Opposition said he doesn't like debt or deficits, Mr. Speaker. That's the NDP math. A \$1.2 billion hole, they don't want to see any reductions in spending. Matter of fact, they want to see increases. They don't want to see any changes in revenue, Mr. Speaker, no changes from taxing productivity and income to consumption taxes. And they don't like any debt, Mr. Speaker. It simply doesn't add up from the NDP side.

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

Ownership of Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, they're railroading taxpayers with a billion dollar PST tax grab, and they're derailing shortlines with their desperate sell-off of the Grain Car

Corporation. For years producers have been able to count on the cars of the Grain Car Corporation to get their grain to market, and they've been able to rely on the grants from the profits of the Grain Car Corporation to help shortlines stay on track and move grain to the mainlines.

But just like the STC, ISC [Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan], and 49 per cent of all the other Crowns, this government is chugging along at full steam to privatize everything, and they're spiking these grants.

Mr. Speaker, this program ensures rail safety; it saves our highways, and is not only self-funding but actually makes money. So, Mr. Speaker, what possible justification is there to scrap this program? And what is the minister's plan going forward to support shortlines and maintain grain movement capacity?

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

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for the question. This is something that we looked at. We had a great discussion with the shortline association back in November on the discussion about this. We have proposed that the shortlines will have first opportunity to buy the rail cars.

The main thing here, Mr. Speaker, is the rail cars will be used by Saskatchewan farmers in the province of Saskatchewan. They'll move Saskatchewan grain to port and to market. This is a good news story for rural Saskatchewan and the shortline association in this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Saskatchewan Transportation Company Assets and Services

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, like the rest of our Crowns, STC belongs to Saskatchewan people, but the Sask Party seems to have forgotten. They've pretending like they aren't selling it off, that they're not privatizing it. But, Mr. Speaker, we've heard them promise before not to privatize. We know they'll do anything to sell off much of our Crowns as they can.

So what exactly is their plan for STC? What is their plan for the equipment and the buses and the new depot in Regina? Mr. Speaker, what are they doing and what is their plan to do with the assets?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Crown Investments.

Hon. Mr. Hargrave: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for the question. Mr. Speaker, the good staff at STC have tried many different options to reduce costs and to increase revenues at STC, Mr. Speaker, but to no avail, Mr. Speaker. Route discontinuations have been implemented, as did the NDP do that. Route frequencies has decreased, as did the NDP. We've tried different advertising, different marketing, and that didn't work, Mr. Speaker. Ridership continued to decline, Mr. Speaker. So ridership has declined by 35 per cent

since 2012, and 18,000 people in just the last year, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, now the wind-down of STC will transpire over the next several months, Mr. Speaker, and those assets . . . We've engaged KPMG, Mr. Speaker, to deal with those assets. And once the wind-down is complete and we're finalized with it, KPMG will dispose of the assets of STC.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, 1,200 people rely on STC to travel regularly to medical appointments. But, Mr. Speaker, when asked about that, the member from Prince Albert Carlton said that there are all kinds of communities that “. . . have people with cancer that have to make it into the city for treatments and they found other options without much problem.” Mr. Speaker, yes, he actually said that.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'd rather listen to someone who knows what's going on. Philip Racette says, “I'm lucky. I'm in the middle of almost daily cancer treatments. As of right now, STC and the Cancer Agency are a huge support in terms of my survival, but what will happen to other people across Saskatchewan as the Sask Party moves to sell off STC?”

Can the Minister of Health please tell us in what consultations was he involved, and what concrete plan does he have to ensure that the patients who rely on STC to get to care are not abandoned by the Sask Party sell-off?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this wasn't an issue that we took lightly. You heard that on the preceding answer from the minister in charge of CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan]. We take this very seriously in health care, Mr. Speaker. There are programs in place for low-income people, for people in the North and remote areas to be able to travel for medical appointments, Mr. Speaker. Other areas of health care also rely on STC at the moment. Canadian Blood Services does, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to read a statement from Canadian Blood Services. It says:

Canadian Blood Services is aware of the province of Saskatchewan's recent announcement regarding the Saskatchewan Transportation Company and is developing plans to make changes to the organization's operations. Canadian Blood Services will continue to ensure that hospitals and patients have access to the blood and blood products they need.

Mr. Speaker, again we take this matter very seriously. We're going to make sure that people get to appointments and that appropriate medical supplies are there as needed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, for my constituents in the North and those in the South — rural and urban, it doesn't

matter — that answer just isn't good enough. Mr. Speaker, they are scrapping a service that thousands of people rely on and they are refusing to answer even the simplest questions. Mr. Speaker, it's starting to seem like they really don't have a plan — no plan to deal with the patients, no plan to serve the riders, and no plan to deliver the blood samples or the tractor parts.

Mr. Speaker, do they know it's not too late? They can admit that they didn't think of the consequences, Mr. Speaker. Will they do the right thing and save STC?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Crown Investments.

Hon. Mr. Hargrave: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank the member opposite for that question. Mr. Speaker, yes, plans have been put in place to handle blood services, to transport people through this next interim period before the wind-down is complete, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we also know, Mr. Speaker, that in other areas where service has been discontinued that other enterprises, non-profit organizations, service clubs, people, friends, and neighbours . . . Just like people do in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, they help out their friends and neighbours, Mr. Speaker. And we expect that to continue to happen in the routes that are still being serviced by STC, just like the routes that have not been serviced, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, that is what's happening and the wind-down will continue with STC.

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

Funding for Libraries

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that the Education minister thinks that the government should get out of the “library business.” We know he thinks that our towns and cities don't need libraries anymore because people have computers and they can just google it. And he's implied that people should go hang out at Starbucks or somewhere where, “other than where we're not paying.”

Mr. Speaker, the minister doesn't get it. Libraries mean so much more to our communities than books alone. Our libraries are community hubs. They provide programming and build literacy skills in children and in fact in adults. They provide English as an additional language programming and have resources that help connect newcomers to jobs. Mr. Speaker, after years of underfunding, they've already been struggling to provide these services. But, Mr. Speaker, our libraries were completely blindsided by these cuts that threaten their very future. How can the minister claim to believe in literacy, education, and community while he's making these massive cuts to our public libraries?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, difficult decisions had to be made in order to meet the fiscal challenges that we're facing. Mr. Speaker, I have a quote that I want to read: “It's inevitable that they're going to have shortfalls when commodity prices are what they are.” That's a quote from the Finance critic on

November 16th, 2016 in the *Leader-Post*.

Mr. Speaker, we value and respect the people that use our libraries, the people that work in our libraries. We want to work with the libraries to adjust how they deliver their services within the available funding levels and reflecting where our society is going and with the availability of technology. Our focus is on supporting things like electronic resources, interlibrary loans, CommunityNet. It's our hope that local libraries will work with their municipalities and school divisions to find new ways of delivering services.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that in rural areas there's often a library in a municipal building, a library in a school, and a library down the road. We want to look at the best utilization of those services and look to see whether there can be savings that are found.

[14:30]

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

Provincial Sales Tax Exemptions

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A few minutes ago the Minister of Finance indicated that he believes that diapers are not part of the exemption . . . or are still part of the exemption for the PST, provincial sales tax. Now I have an information notice bulletin here from the Government of Saskatchewan Ministry of Finance dated March 22nd, 2017, and it says, "PST now applies to all sizes of clothing and footwear and includes items such as . . ." And it lists a whole bunch of things but it says, "Diapers, cloth and disposable." So I want to raise this with the minister right now because obviously his ministry is saying something different than him. My question to him is, who can we believe?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — As I said to the hon. member, I listened to her question yesterday very carefully, and when she mentioned diapers, Mr. Speaker, I went back to my deputy minister to clarify. I was under the impression that diapers were considered equivalent to the incontinence products that we already have tax exempt in this province, Mr. Speaker, as well as feminine hygiene products. Now I understand that there was diapers included on a bulletin that went out. I've discussed it with my deputy minister. We are not taxing diapers in this province, Mr. Speaker.

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

Funding for Post-Secondary Students

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, we can all agree that the economy is struggling, and that's on the Sask Party and their failure to plan.

It's not the fault of Saskatchewan students, that's for sure. Not the fault of Saskatchewan students trying to prepare for the future. They've saved up. They want to be in school. But the

Sask Party's long since blown through their savings. Now they want to get into everyone else's savings, and they want to leave everyone with a legacy of debt.

Mr. Speaker, universities are an economic engine in this province. The University of Saskatchewan alone returns over \$1,500 per person per year to the provincial economy. Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party may be out of gas, but why do they want to cut the engine on our recovery? Why, why do you want to put the brakes on improving our economy?

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

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To be sure, there were some difficult choices in this budget. But it is important to remember the broader context, Mr. Speaker, that overall funding for post-secondary education and student supports is still 52 per cent higher than it was 10 years ago, Mr. Speaker — 8.3 billion we've invested, over 4 billion to our two universities. In fact, operating funding to those two universities has gone up over the last decade by 45 per cent, nearly twice the increase in the cost of living.

And, Mr. Speaker, we can't forget the student supports that are in place now, unchanged by this budget, that were not in place 10 years ago: \$137 million this year in loan scholarships, bursaries, and grants. That includes the universal Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship and the graduate retention program, the GRP, Mr. Speaker, a program that has been called free tuition. In fact, support programs in Saskatchewan are so generous, one expert wrote ". . . literally everyone ends up receiving more in subsidy than they pay in tuition." That's important context, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 53 — *The Provincial Health Authority Act*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 53, *The Provincial Health Authority Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Health that Bill No. 53, *The Provincial Health Authority 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. Mr. Reiter: — Next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 54 — *The Provincial Health Authority Consequential Amendment Act, 2017/Loi de 2017 portant modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Provincial Health Authority Act*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 54, *The Provincial Health Authority Consequential Amendment Act, 2017* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Health that Bill No. 54, *The Provincial Health Authority Consequential Amendment Act* be now introduced and read the 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. Mr. Reiter: — Next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 55 — *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Economy — Audit Assessments) Amendment Act, 2017*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 55, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Economy — Audit Assessments) Amendment Act, 2017* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Energy and Resources that Bill No. 55 be now introduced and read the 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. Mr. Duncan: — Next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 56 — *The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2017*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Energy and

Resources.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 56, *The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2017* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Energy and Resources that Bill No. 56, *The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2017* be now introduced and read the 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. Mr. Duncan: — Next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. 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 Canora-Pelly.

[Applause]

Mr. Dennis: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not hard to get a clap out of you guys. Thank you very much. It's an honour and a privilege here to rise in the Assembly to support the Minister of Finance and the 2017-18 budget.

First of all, I'd like to thank a few of my family and constituents before I get going, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to tell a little bit about my family. I'm married to my wife, Lorri, for 32 years. She's a nurse practitioner and she works in Canora area. I'm sure we've been married happily . . . I'm sure she's been happily married with me for a few years.

Also I have three lovely kids: my daughter, Jasmine, 29, she works for Walker Projects in Regina; and my son-in-law, Shane, who works for SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] in Regina. And then I have my one and only grandson, Lewis. He's 18 months old. He loves playing ball, and he loves wrestling with his big grandpa.

Then I have my daughter, Jade. She's 26. She's got a social work degree, and she works at the corrections centre in Regina. She's been working there for the last two years. And she loves playing hockey and everything, and she's involved and plays in the senior men's rec hockey league.

And then I have my son — he's 24 — Carson. He's living in Melville for the last four years, and he's working at the golf course. After getting his turf management degree in Olds, Alberta, he decided to move back to Saskatchewan. So I'd like to really thank my wife and my kids for the past year, and just my support throughout life. They've been taking good care of me and making sure that I behave.

I'd also like to thank my CA [constituency assistant], Carol Sleeva, and all my constituents in Canora who helped and supported me, not only through this year being elected but through the year of campaigning and everything. And I really appreciate them, and I try and get out to the constituents as much as I can.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to thank my colleagues around here and our staff for all their help during the past year. It's been great to get their support the first year because it's been a great learning curve, and it's nice to have all my friends here.

Mr. Speaker, the 2017-18 budget is well thought out and a plan to get back to the balance within three years. And for that I applaud the Finance minister and his team, along with the Premier and our government, for all their hard work. Mr. Premier, this budget was one of the toughest under the current government. Over the last three years of soft commodities, our government has almost half of the . . . resource revenues of 2.5 billion have shrunken.

Mr. Speaker, over the last 10 years this government has continued to grow. This has been part of the growth plan, while the government has lowered taxes, paid down the debt. Now however, as you see, we must make adjustments due to the low commodities in order to keep the province growing and strong. We must take action to rebalance our spending and revenues to reflect the new reality. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to stand up today not only to support this budget, to talk about, a little bit about the records of events that have happened over the last 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, health care is undoubtedly one of our most important areas and largest investments in our province. Saskatchewan will invest \$5.2 billion this year, an increase of \$38.6 million from the 2016-17 budget, and more than 51 per cent since 2007. This budget includes \$3.4 billion to the regional health authorities, an increase of 1.2 per cent from last year and 57.9 per cent since 2007. It includes \$12 million to address the capacity pressures and emergency wait times in Regina and Saskatoon. It'll also fund \$24.4 million to address service pressures and operating costs. Mr. Speaker, we will also provide \$750,000 to the HPV [human papilloma virus] vaccination program for boys, expanding this program.

It will make capital investments of 83.7 million to continue its commitment to the new children's hospital in Saskatchewan. There will be \$6.7 million dedicated to the Leader integrated facility, and \$3.5 million to fund the electrical projects in the Regina General and Pasqua hospitals. The Saskatchewan

Cancer Agency will receive more than \$170 million, an increase of funding by 3.3 million, to provide treatment for patients.

Mr. Speaker, there's some tough decisions on some of the programs that were deferred to '18-19, like the funding for autism. The province will phase out or reduce some of the programs, although it will in most cases cover low-income individuals. Special home care fees will increase for some residents. Approximately 50 per cent of the residents will continue to pay the monthly minimum fees. The province will continue to subsidize 83 per cent of overall long-term care.

Mr. Speaker, over the last 10 years, the Sask Party record is 750 more doctors, the shortest wait times in Canada. We've doubled the investments in hospital projects, in the new children's hospital in Saskatoon and new major hospitals in Moose Jaw and North Battleford. We've opened up 15 long-term care facilities for seniors and tripled the seniors' income from \$90 to 270.

And under the NDP record, what did they do? They lost 450 nurses and 173 doctors from 2001 to 2006. Saskatchewan had the longest wait times in Canada during that time. They closed 52 hospitals and 1,200 long-term care beds. They had zero increase to the seniors' income plan for 16 years.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that education, including advanced education, is our second-largest budget expense at 3.6 billion. Our K to 12 overall budget for '17-18 is just over \$2 billion, a decrease of 6.7 per cent. Most of this decrease, \$262 million, is required to construct 18 new schools in Regina, Saskatoon, Warman, and Martensville, which will be completed this fall, Mr. Speaker.

There is \$119 million for capital projects; 43.2 to preserve maintenance, an increase of 13.7 per cent; 21.8 million to complete four capital projects, three in Regina: the Sacred Heart, École Connaught, and Scott Collegiate; and a major expansion and renovation to St. Brieux School; 2 million in design funding for two new projects in Rosthern and Weyburn; and \$2.8 million to purchase seven new relocatable units; 40.3 million to complete 18 joint-use schools; \$1 million for the school facility audits; and \$55.8 million for 889 care spaces in the new schools in Regina, Saskatoon, Warman, and Martensville. This brings the total of new spaces of more than 6,000 over the last 10 years. There is \$3.5 million funding for the northern regional libraries.

[14:45]

Mr. Speaker, this government listened to the people and will continue keeping elected school boards. There will be no major school division boundary changes. We will continue to keep our focus on the education sector strategic plan, which will help develop our kids. We will work with improving engagement with the First Nations and Métis residents.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to invest in post-secondary students. High school grads of Saskatchewan will receive \$500 per year in relief throughout the Saskatchewan advantage program. Post-secondary students will continue to get their tuition costs back through the graduate retention program, up to \$20,000 if they live and work in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the College of Medicine will receive \$69 million to support accreditation and sustainability; \$26 million for Student Aid Fund to provide student grants; \$12 million for scholarships; and \$8 million for the Saskatchewan advantage grant for education.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to tell you a little about our education record over the last 10 years. We built 40 new schools and 25 major new renovations, 750 more teachers and 164 more student support teachers. We did an increase in funding to K to 12 by 32 per cent since 2007, and enrolment is up 10 per cent. We increased the operating and capital funding for post-secondary over 40 per cent in 10 years. Under the NDP, they closed 176 schools, and from 2000 to 2007 they dropped 400 teachers and underfunded K to 12, leading to property tax and increased tax revolts.

Mr. Speaker, agriculture is one of our leading industries in our economy today. Our budget of 388.6 million will continue to keep the industry strong. 71.2 million will again be provided for strategic initiatives under the federal-provincial Growing Forward 2 agreement. 26.8 million will be invested in research, and 172.2 million will be earmarked for crop insurance premiums and programs delivered.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that Sask ag exports are up 186 per cent over the last decade. In 2016 ag exports were over \$14 billion to 147 countries. In 2006 Sask ag exports under the NDP were 4.9 billion. Saskatchewan exported \$1.5 billion of canola in 2016, up 524 per cent since 2007. Last year there were 13 countries that received more than \$200 million in Sask ag food exports. Saskatchewan has \$4.5 billion in agriculture value-added industry.

Mr. Speaker, we have a diverse group of companies and investors investing in our resources. The total exploration and expenditures in the mining industry over the last 10 years is over \$30 billion. The uranium industry has invested \$4.8 billion, which includes 2.6 to Cigar Lake, the second largest in the world. K+S has committed 4.1 billion to the Legacy solution potash near Bethune. BHP Billiton has committed 3.8 billion to develop Jansen Lake project and others. The oil and gas industry invested \$4.4 billion in Saskatchewan in 2015, an 83 per cent increase over the last decade.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's business and trade has really exploded over the last 10 years. Our retail trade has grown by 61 per cent, the highest by anyone in Canada. Saskatchewan manufacturing sales have grown by 44 per cent, while the rest of Canada has averaged 1.5 per cent. Saskatchewan food manufacturing subsector is up 84 per cent, and the whole . . . Sask wholesale trade has grown by 90 per cent while the rest of Canada has only grown by 37 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial government will continue to improve the Sask advantage and improve in investment and create jobs. In 2017, capital investment is forecasted as 14.5 billion. Mr. Speaker, CIT, our corporate income tax, will be reduced by half a per cent in 2017 and 2019, which will continue to keep the lowest tax rate on manufacturing processes in Canada. This will give us a chance to attract new businesses, investments, and create new jobs in our province.

We will also continue to offer programs and tax credits to attract businesses and jobs to our province. Some of them are the innovative patent box, the Sask research and development tax credit, and the oil investment incentives, and there are many others. Mr. Speaker, growth in agriculture and economy will continue to help our province flourish.

Population has grown by more than 130,000 since 2006. Saskatchewan is the second-fastest growing province in Canada with a population of 1,155,393. And from 1996 to 2006 under the NDP, the population dropped by 22,000 people. Shame. We have created the second-best job creation in Canada from 2007 to 2016. And from 2000 to 2007 under the NDP, they had the worst job creation in Canada. Shame again.

Mr. Speaker, in order to keep our province growing and our economy strong, Saskatchewan has the lowest PST in the country. A family of four have no tax on their first \$50,000 of income, the highest threshold in Canada. Under the NDP, what did they do? They raised the tax 21 times in 16 years, including PST four times and raising the gas tax twice. Shame again.

We will continue to build and spend the money on highways and infrastructure which will help our province keep it strong. The \$1.1 billion that will be spent on the highways and infrastructure budget will continue to see major projects and 990 kilometres of provincial highways across Saskatchewan. This year's budget includes \$343 million to start or continue construction around the province. As well, 500 million to the Regina bypass.

Highlights include continued work on the new overpasses at Warman and Martensville, twinning of the Highway 7 between Saskatoon and Delisle, twinning of the Highway 39 between Estevan and Bienfait and two sets of passing lanes on Highway 5 between Saskatoon and Humboldt, future twinning and passing lanes on Highway 6 and 39 between Estevan and Regina and passing lanes on Highway 4 and north of North Battleford and Highway 7 of Rosetown to the Alberta border. There will also be 150 kilometres of highways and upgrades to Highway 4 south of Cadillac, Highway 51 of Kelfield, Highway 80 north of Esterhazy, and Highway 322 of Siltou. We're investing more than \$53 million to build, operate, and maintain highways and airports in northern Saskatchewan. Thirty major bridge rehabilitations and replacements will also be done this year.

Mr. Speaker, social services continue to grow, and we will continue to service our most vulnerable people. We will increase 6.9 per cent, or \$73 million. We will bring the total budget to 1.125 billion, the second largest in Social Services' history. This budget will go to children and family programs that will increase by 13.4 million to 256.3 million. Disability programs will see an increase of 2.3 million. An overall increase of 67.2 million will be for income assistance programs; 25 million for the transitional employment allowance; an increase of 15.9 for the Saskatchewan assured income for disability, the SAID program; 10.5 million for the Saskatchewan assistance program; and 14 million for the Saskatchewan rental housing. Funding will also be increased for the Saskatchewan employment supplement and personal care home benefit and seniors' income plan.

Mr. Speaker, this year's budget has a plan, and this is the government that has a plan to get it back to balance within three years. This is unlike anyone else in the country. Diversity is the key to our province's success, and we need to switch on relying on resources, and balance it to taxation on consumption.

Mr. Speaker, our province has the lowest per capita debt in the country. Families have one of the lowest taxes in Canada, and Saskatchewan will not have a carbon tax. And gone are the days of people leaving, and we are now a have province. Mr. Speaker, in closing, I did not make any of this up, and I will be supporting the budget and not the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Lambert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise and speak to the budget. Many thanks are in order before I begin my remarks. As many members have stated in this House, we spend time away from our families in order to undertake our duties as MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly], so that is where I shall start.

My husband Jim and I have been married for 35 years this summer. We have three daughters together. He has been by my side through all my endeavours — over 30 years in the media, three decades of volunteering in my community, and my time as a school board trustee. He was a big part of my election campaign and he continues to clear the path so I am able to focus on my new role. Words cannot express my gratitude to him for his support.

Amy, our oldest daughter, is married to Karl and is the mother of Gianna, Isabella, and Lukas, three of our grandchildren. She is currently on maternity leave from her auditor position with Canada Revenue Agency and is a chartered professional accountant. Our middle daughter, Monique, and her husband Aaron are first-time parents of baby Sebastian who was born last November. Monique is a lawyer and has spent the last couple of years as a litigator with the city of Saskatoon. Janelle, our youngest, is working in Saskatoon after completing a master of public administration. Mr. Speaker, we are so pleased to welcome two grandsons, born two months apart, after a string of daughters and granddaughters.

I would not be standing here today if it were not for the voters of Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood. As I stated in a recent constituency newsletter, my goal is to represent and serve my constituents to the best of my ability, and it is a great honour to bring their voice to the legislature.

I would like to recognize the efforts of my constituency assistant, James Hawkes. There is a steep learning curve to the position and he is juggling the varied duties well. I would also like to thank my constituency association — all new volunteers but one. They support my work as an MLA.

Now to the matter at hand, the budget. Mr. Speaker, do you remember the movie *A League of Their Own*? The movie is about two sisters who join the first female professional baseball league and deal with a growing rivalry. It's one of my favourites. Jimmy the ball coach is played by Tom Hanks, and

Geena Davis plays the team's talented backcatcher, Dottie. There's a scene between Jimmy and Dottie when Dottie quits the team right before the world series. When Jimmy presses her for the reason why, she says, it just got too hard. He responds with, if it wasn't hard, everyone would do it. That's how I feel about our budget, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan is facing a challenge right now, but we are not the only province in the country in this position. Far from it.

The Fraser Institute wrote an article on budget day comparing Saskatchewan to our neighbouring province to the west. The institute looked at the two vastly different fiscal paths of our two provinces, and I quote:

Both Alberta and Saskatchewan are energy-rich jurisdictions that have fallen on hard times in recent years when commodity prices fell . . .

And yet in their recent budgets, the two governments took very different approaches to dealing with the challenges they now face. One particularly important difference is that while Premier Notley's government in Alberta has continued down the path of significant spending growth, Saskatchewan's budget signals that their government is taking the need for spending restraint much more seriously.

. . . Saskatchewan's budget lays out a generally realistic quick path to balance and future generations in Saskatchewan will benefit from the reduced debt accumulation that will result.

. . . the budget released this week shows that Saskatchewan's government understands that persistent deficits and ever-growing debt are problems that require a disciplined response on the spending side of the ledger.

[15:00]

The *National Post* stated, and I quote:

If anyone doubted that Saskatchewan and neighbouring Alberta have become two different countries, Wednesday should [have] put an end to it. While Alberta's New Democratic Party has firmly committed itself to heavy borrowing and a ballooning debt, Wall and Doherty have wedded themselves just as firmly to austerity.

So, Mr. Speaker, we see that other governments are continuing to run deficits indefinitely. Other governments have decided not to make the tough choices, but not us, not here in Saskatchewan. We will not postpone the day of reckoning and visit this challenge upon the heads of our children. As the Finance minister has outlined, we will face our responsibility squarely and meet the challenge by taking a number of significant measures, some difficult yet necessary measures, to get back to balance in three years. If it wasn't hard, Mr. Speaker, everyone would do it.

How do we find ourselves facing such a challenge, you ask? As the Premier explained in his pre-budget address, despite our more diversified economy, we still have an overreliance on non-renewal resource revenues, and those resource revenues dropped by over a billion dollars in the 2014-15 budget year

and they have stayed that way. Mr. Speaker, that's three straight years of a dramatic decrease to resource revenue forecast over \$1.3 billion per year, namely oil and potash prices. No one expected that.

The resource sector slowdown led to a corporate tax revenue going down by hundreds of millions, depleting reserves and the rainy day fund. But as a government, we will face the facts and take responsibility for our role in the matter. And as a government we will responsibly move forward by rebalancing our spending and our revenues to deal with this new reality.

These tough choices mean controlling and reducing government spending. These tough choices mean restructuring the tax base to reduce our reliance on resource revenues. These tough choices mean there's a shift away from the reliance on the volatility of resource revenue and a shift towards consumption taxes. I have heard economist after economist talk about this being the best model moving forward. That is how we will face our responsibility as government, however the NDP disagrees with this choice but presents no alternative.

How are we going to do this, Mr. Speaker? Let's start with controlling and reducing government spending. We started with ourselves, Mr. Speaker. As of April 1st the Premier, cabinet ministers, and all MLAs will be taking a 3.5 per cent pay cut. We will take the lead and model what we are asking of others, our government employees both in scope and out of scope. The fact is the government spends about \$7 billion per year on public sector compensation, so reducing government spending on compensation by 3.5 per cent needs to be part of the plan.

Transformational change, Mr. Speaker, is to provide the best possible services to the people of this province at the lowest possible cost to taxpayers. Just like a business looks to address inefficiencies in its operations, we have addressed inefficiencies within government. Transformational change means moving us in a more efficient, more effective, and responsible provincial economy. If it wasn't hard, Mr. Speaker, everyone would do it.

One of these transformational changes has been the consolidation of 12 regional health authorities into one. With a health budget of 5.6 billion, it is anticipated that there will be between 10 and \$20 million in savings through reduced administration and increased efficiency starting next year. This health budget has increased 53 per cent since 2007, and this government is committed to improving front-line health care.

Long-term care homes will see fees increase for some residents based on income, but approximately 50 per cent of the residents will see no change and will continue to pay the minimum monthly fee. That is reassuring for the good work that is done at Stensrud Lodge, a long-term care facility in my constituency.

Although some services previously provided by the government will be phased out, such as the hearing aid plan, one needs to remember that coverage for low-income residents will continue to be provided by government. Even with these tough decisions being made, this province will still remain stronger than it was under previous NDP governments.

A difficult decision was made to end the subsidy and wind down STC, the only publicly owned provincial bus company in

the country. Ridership had declined dramatically, costs continued to escalate, and the per-passenger subsidy of \$94 per passenger was no longer sustainable. Only two of the 27 routes are profitable, and ridership has declined by approximately 77 per cent since 1980. Despite concerted efforts of this government to reverse the trend, the results continued to look bleak.

Another transformational change initiative involves the winding down of executive air. Since 2007 when this government took office, use of executive air is down by 73 per cent. My, what a difference from the days of the NDP. It is expected that the decision could save up to 1 million per year.

Now we will look at measures in this budget to modernize and expand the tax base. The provincial sales tax is being raised by one point from 5 to 6 per cent, and a number of PST exemptions are being eliminated to meet the current financial challenge we are facing. For example PST will now be applied to children's clothing, restaurant meals, and snack foods. It will not be applied to diapers, Mr. Speaker. Even with the PST increase, Saskatchewan will have the lowest PST in the country among provinces with the PST.

Good news for those in this province who buy used cars: the PST exemption for used cars will continue; however the value of a trade-in will no longer be deductible in determining the PST on the purchase of a new vehicle.

Municipal revenue sharing maintains the formula based on one point of the PST. This revenue sharing is more than a 103 per cent increase since this government came to power 10 years ago.

This budget adjusts the education property tax mill rates in order to fund 40 per cent of the cost of K to 12 education. In recent years the education property taxes remained unchanged while education costs have continued to increase. The share of education costs funded by the education property tax has been approximately 35 per cent in recent years. This budget restores the 60/40 balance that this government committed to.

Mr. Speaker, in November of 2016 our Education minister appointed Dan Perrins to lead work on a kindergarten to grade 12 educational governance review. Following the release of the Perrins report, Minister Morgan appointed a six-person advisory panel to lead consultations with the education sector and the public on the governance options presented in the Perrins report. This panel met with more than 45 stakeholder groups and received more than 3,800 online submissions from residents of the province. There was strong public support during the consultations for publicly elected local trustees.

As a former trustee with the Greater Saskatoon Catholic Board of Education for 13 years, I was pleased with this government's decision to accept the final report from the panel on education governance renewal. School boards will remain publicly elected in this province and there will be no major school division boundary changes.

We look forward to the 18 new joint-use schools opening in the fall of this year, including the eight new schools in Saskatoon. The major renovations at Holy Cross High School and École St.

Matthew Elementary School in my constituency are complete. I would remind you, Mr. Speaker, this Saskatchewan Party government has built 40 new or replacement schools and has funded 25 major school renovations. This contrasts with the NDP who closed 176 schools. There are over 750 more teachers employed in this province, while under the NDP from 2000 to 2007 the number of teachers dropped by 400. Those are the facts.

I applaud this government's commitment to continue to support Saskatchewan's most vulnerable people, Mr. Speaker. There is an increase of 73 million, or 6.9 per cent, to the budget of Social Services. The ministry's budget increases to 1.125 billion, the largest ever for Social Services in our province's history. The budget for child and family programs will increase by 13.4 million and disability programs will see an increase of 2.3 million. The NDP claim to be the champions of those most in need in our province, yet in the 16 years when they had the chance, they failed to deliver.

Mr. Speaker, you have heard often the three priority areas of health, education, and social services. They make up nearly three-quarters of the total expense of government, or a combined 10.6 billion in this budget. But it bears repeating: this budget continues to invest in the programs and services that are valued by the people of Saskatchewan.

Now to the third area of focus in this budget, keeping the economy of Saskatchewan strong. All three personal income tax rates will be reduced by a half point in 2017 and another half point in 2019, and will save Saskatchewan taxpayers over \$82 million in this budget year alone. Even with the PST increase in this budget, every resident of this province at every level of income will be paying significantly less in income tax and PST combined than they did in 2007 when the NDP were in power. Economists recommend this approach as income taxes have a greater negative affect on the economy than consumption taxes.

People of this province will pay among the lowest income taxes in the country. They will keep more of their hard-earned money in their own pockets. Our government in the last 10 years has delivered the largest tax reductions in Saskatchewan's history.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance also introduced reductions in the corporate income tax rates, a half point this year and another half point in July of 2019. When fully implemented, the corporate tax rate will move from 12 per cent to 11 per cent, making Saskatchewan's corporate tax rate and the taxes on manufacturing and processing the lowest in Canada. It will help us to continue to attract new investment, new jobs, and new opportunities to this province. Saskatchewan remains the second lowest in the country for cost of living in all categories.

Let us not forget that when this budget is fully implemented, Saskatchewan will be the only province in Canada with no carbon tax of any kind. As the country's greatest exporter per capita, a carbon tax will drive costs up, competitiveness down, and lead to job losses. We stand firmly opposed to the federal government's carbon tax plan.

My constituency of Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood is said to be the oldest postal code in Canada in the area around Market Mall called the Nutana Suburban Centre. This area has the highest

concentration of seniors per capita in the country, Mr. Speaker. The seniors in my constituency will benefit from funding increases to the personal care home benefit and the seniors' income plan.

Under this government, Mr. Speaker, there are 15 new long-term care facilities, while the NDP record is that they closed 1,200 long-term beds. Under this government, the seniors' income plan benefit has tripled. When the members opposite were in power, there was no increase to this benefit for 16 years.

Mr. Speaker, it's not all gloom and doom as the NDP would have us believe; there is plenty to celebrate. There are signs of confidence in our economy, signs of renewal. There were 8,000 jobs created in this province from January to February of this year, the highest percentage rate increase among the provinces and over half of the new jobs in Canada in that time period.

Another noteworthy statistic is that Saskatchewan reached more than 1,000 in average weekly earnings in December of 2016, the highest average weekly earnings in the province's history. Through the innovation and determination of the people of this province and the efforts of our Premier, exports have increased by 62 per cent since 2006; our GDP [gross domestic product] has increased 25 per cent; our retail trade is up 61 per cent, the highest growth in the country; and wholesale trade has seen a 90 per cent increase, again leading the provinces.

Our agriculture exports have increased a whopping 186 per cent. Canola exports alone grew a remarkable 524 per cent since 2007. And Saskatchewan's manufacturing sales have increased by 44 per cent since 2006, again the highest growth among the provinces.

This exceptional growth doesn't happen by chance, Mr. Speaker. I remember a conversation I had last year with the deputy consul general for the People's Republic of China. He spoke about our Premier's visits to his country. Efforts by our Premier to sell our province internationally have paid dividends. It is the feather in our provincial cap that Saskatchewan is ranked as the most attractive place in the world, out of 104 jurisdictions, for mining companies to invest. And this province came in fourth in the world as the most attractive place for oil and gas companies to invest.

It's nice to talk popularity polls and surveys, Mr. Speaker, but even better is when a person or a family makes the pivotal decision to move, and moves to Saskatchewan. I recently read in the Legislative Library's newsletter that in 1911, six years after entering Confederation, Saskatchewan's population had doubled to just under a half a million people. This was more than Alberta, more than Manitoba. There were more homesteader applications from 1900 to 1910 than in the entire 1800s, and 60 per cent of these entries ended up coming to Saskatchewan. We were the fastest-growing province in Canada. I won't go on about what happened from those early days after we joined Confederation until recent times. We would be here for days. But when you are a perennial underdog, it doesn't give people a lot of reasons to move here.

Despite our current revenue challenges, our province has now reached a new record and we're back on track with population

growth numbers like the 1920s. We're now flying the province flag. As I mentioned in a recent 75-minute debate I participated in, every single city in the province saw their populations increase in the past five years, and towns and cities and villages also welcome new neighbours.

[15:15]

When we welcome these new residents, thankfully they will have more doctors to choose from as we have radically changed that picture under this government. I met one of those new doctors on Friday, as my family doctor of over 30 years has recently retired due to health challenges and I needed to find a new one. During our initial visit, we talked about dermatologists. I was encouraged to hear that there are now five dermatologists practising in Saskatoon, as this was a bleak picture for quite some time.

How do we explain this unprecedented growth, unprecedented investment, unprecedented population numbers? Did all of this just happen because our beloved Saskatchewan Roughriders are a Canadian favourite? Mr. Speaker, I think there is more to it than that, and I point to the policies of this government as the explanation.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it's rather amusing how one changes their perspective depending on which side of the House they are sitting on. When the member from Saskatoon Centre was minister of the Environment and the NDP cut 500 jobs in the 2004 provincial budget, a large number of those from that particular ministry, he stated, and I quote:

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 these difficult choices.

Now fast-forward to the day following the budget when that same member stated in this House, and I quote:

Mr. Speaker, I think this is hugely ironical, the mess that we find ourselves . . . this government has created, that they're expecting the cleaners, our cleaners, to clean it up.

But this is the kind of mean, vindictive people that are running our government on that side who refuse to take any responsibility for the state of affairs.

This member went on to say, and I quote, "It almost looks like out of a Dickens book, doesn't it?"

Perhaps the member was referring to the Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* and its famous opening line, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." The best of times speaks to the unprecedented growth of our province under this government. The worst of times speaks to the sustained drop in resource revenue that no one saw coming. So when the NDP were running the show, it was called difficult choices. But when this government faces those same decisions, we are mean and vindictive people. I take exception to that, Mr. Speaker.

The day after the budget, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition asked our Premier, and I quote, "Why wasn't he straight with [the] Saskatchewan people?" It brought back memories of the last provincial election and the fact that the NDP made 18 election promises without accounting for the cost to Saskatchewan taxpayers, a \$1 billion price tag for over four years to the people of this province, huge deficits that would have not included the prolonged low commodity prices that we've encountered. Now who wasn't being straight?

Mr. Speaker, there were many words of support for the approach that was taken by the Minister of Finance in this budget, and I will share but a few. John Gormley wrote in the *StarPhoenix* on Friday, and I quote:

This budget, the Saskatchewan Party's 10th, chooses tough choices now rather than deferring. To share restraint across a broad spectrum as we all respond to a natural resources revenue crunch is not easy but [it's] necessary.

SARM president Ray Orb stated in a news release, and I quote:

Despite a significant decline in revenue, the Government of Saskatchewan has kept its promise to dedicate 1 point of the PST to municipal revenue sharing. We applaud the government for staying true to its commitment to municipalities.

And the Association of Saskatchewan Realtors released a statement, and I quote:

. . . ASR grades the new provincial budget [as] a net positive, saying it shows courage in taking difficult measures to tackle the deficit and imagination in shifting toward a tax system that favours growth.

. . . [recognizing] that balancing the books will create gains in everyone's longer-term interest. We also recognize that taxes on transactions are more growth-positive than taxes on assets or income.

So there you have it, Mr. Speaker. This government is meeting the challenges head on and facing the facts, from the reality of ongoing shortfalls of resource revenue and the resulting corporate tax revenue decline, and the pressures of population growth on vital services. This budget faces our new reality of lower resource revenues head on by controlling and reducing government spending, restructuring the tax base, and charts a course of ensuring that Saskatchewan's budget returns to balanced by 2019. This budget prudently includes a 300 million contingency to protect us against revenue declines for things we can't predict like floods and forest fires.

We will keep our economy strong. We will improve our competitive edge to remain an economic leader in Canada. Mr. Speaker, we will commit to protecting our AAA credit rating. We will not add more debt and resulting higher interest payments that could impact the credit rating this government has worked so hard to achieve. There were tough choices to make in this budget, Mr. Speaker, make no mistake about it, but when the going gets tough, the tough get going.

We will work harder to meet that challenge. That is the

Saskatchewan way. Mr. Speaker, there is more work to do and as the government, we know that. But I can think of no better government to shoulder that work than this Saskatchewan Party government. As I stated at the beginning of my remarks, Mr. Speaker, if it wasn't hard, everyone would do it.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the motion brought forward by our Finance minister, and I do not support the amendment by the member from Saskatoon Nutana. Thank you.

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

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a week left, it's next week coming up, it's going to be April 4th, and it is a great honour to be here. It's going to be one year from 2016 to 2017, and thank you very much to all colleagues and cabinets and their staffs for all co-operation with me.

Also the previous week, Mr. Speaker, I remember that . . . It was 2000, last week of March, my wife came from Pakistan to this country. It has been about 16, 17 years today.

Mr. Speaker, with great confidence, I would like to establish my statement about our economy. Our economy is heading in the right direction, with a record high number of job growth, record number of businesses emerging in the economy, and Saskatchewan people have the lowest tax in the nation.

Mr. Speaker, the price of commodities is at its lowest in the last three years, which slowed down the economic momentum of our country and affected provincial economies. Because of the low price of our commodities, our resources revenue is down by \$1 billion per year. Our employment is affected directly and indirectly, but we still see more businesses and jobs emerging in our province.

Mr. Speaker, it is not only 1 billion less revenue. Also the tax revenue is down due to resources sector slowdown, and we reduced the corporate tax revenue. Mr. Speaker, keeping up with the growth momentum and creating 8,000 jobs in February while the population has increased by 77,000 and in the hard work challenges we accepted.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government projects a \$28.5 billion deficit. Alberta shows \$10.3 billion deficit. Manitoba is going to be 1 billion deficit. Mr. Speaker, we have gone through the 10 years period under NDP government where the people of Saskatchewan were ignored and were looked by blind eye and only the lip service was provided. Mr. Speaker, the objective of this government is to serve the Saskatchewan people at the best and the highest level they deserve. And the Saskatchewan Party is showing practical work for people's interest by investing in our infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, remember when the NDP interim leader brought the petition about trucks using Dewdney Avenue to go to the GTH. And when the Leader of the Opposition noticed that there is more traffic on Dewdney Avenue, he must have understood that this heavy traffic is the result of growth and the better and stronger economy in our province. Mr. Speaker, a large population and emerging businesses in our economy brought more traffic to that road. At that given time, the Saskatchewan government identified the need of a bypass in Regina, bridges,

and doubling of highways, keeping our roads safe and efficient while at the same time having traffic and hazardous material movement away from the city.

Mr. Speaker, one death on the road is too many, and we cannot afford it. Why NDP continue to oppose this? It is troubling, taking a local bypass price tag. The budget could have been balanced if not building it, Mr. Speaker, as promised. And we kept Saskatchewan strong, and again we are now meeting the challenge. The money from this project is being invested into this province. It's for the safety of the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the NDP call the bypass project mismanagement. The answer is, we do not compromise the safety of Saskatchewan people with a dollar amount.

The \$1.1 billion, 2017-2018 Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure budget will see work continue on major projects and 990 kilometres of provincial highway across Saskatchewan over the coming year. Mr. Speaker, this year's budget includes \$343 million to start or continue construction across the province, as well, \$500 million for the Regina bypass.

Here are a few highlights, Mr. Speaker, major projects to improve safety and increase capacity on some of Saskatchewan's busiest highways, while also improving their safety and efficiency: continued work on a new overpass at Warman and Martensville; continued work on twinning Highway 7 between Saskatoon and Delisle; continued work on twinning Highway 39 between Estevan and Bienfait; construction of two sets of passing lanes on Highway 5 between Saskatoon and Humboldt; further planning for future twinning and passing lanes on Highways 6 and 39 from Estevan to Regina; and begin planning for passing lanes on Highway 4 north of North Battleford and Highway 7 from Rosetown to the Alberta border; 150 kilometres of rural highway upgrades, including Highway 4 south of Cadillac, Highway 51 near Kelfield, Highway 80 north of Esterhazy, and Highway 322 north of Silton.

Investing more than \$53 million to build, operate, and maintain highways and airports in northern Saskatchewan. Thirty major bridges, rehabilitation and replacement, as well as numerous culvert projects across the province. More than 20 million for urban and rural municipal road projects and airports — funding that is over and above revenue sharing. For the second time in a row, the highway budget tops \$1 billion. This is the second-largest transportation budget in provincial history. This builds on our government's record and commitment to infrastructure, which grows our economy and improves our safety.

With this year's budget, we have now invested over 7.4 billion to improve more than 12 000 kilometres of roads and highways in Saskatchewan: 990 kilometres of provincial highways; 150 kilometres of rural highways upgrades; 300 kilometres of repaving; 400 kilometres of other treatments; 140 of resealing; 14 million for the support of economic growth and safety of rural municipalities; 6.7 million for construction maintenance partnerships with urban municipalities; 700 kilometres for community airports improvement, 50/50 cost sharing.

Mr. Speaker, we all remember the disaster in our health care in Saskatchewan during the NDP government, where they chose to

close 52 hospitals while having the longest surgical wait times in Canada; 1,200 long-term care beds were mercilessly closed, and zero increase to seniors' income plan benefits for 16 years. We remember when Saskatchewan lost 450 nurses and 173 doctors from 2001 to 2006.

[15:30]

Here on this side, the picture is totally different, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan is investing \$5.2 billion this year in core health services and infrastructure to meet the health care needs of Saskatchewan people. The 2017-18 health budget has increased \$38.6 million, which is point seven per cent from 2016 to 2017, and it's more than 51 per cent since 2007. The health budget includes 3.4 billion in funding for regional health authorities, and this is an increase of 1.2 per cent over last year and 57.9 per cent more than the regional health authority allocation in 2007. It includes a new \$12 million investment to address overcapacity pressure and emergency department wait times in Regina and in Saskatoon, and \$24.4 million in funding to address services pressure and operating cost.

This government will meet its commitment to provide additional funding to the Canadian National Institute for the Blind with a 250,000 funding increase in 2017-2018. Mr. Speaker, the province is also providing \$750,000 to begin a human papilloma virus vaccination program for boys, expanding availability of the program that began in 2008.

Mr. Speaker, capital investment in 2017-2018 totals \$83.7 million, a 17.2 per cent increase, affirming our commitment to the children's hospital of Saskatchewan investments, including 15.5 million for the children's hospital of Saskatchewan which also received \$8 million for information technology needs, and 4.4 million in operating funds. The Leader integrated facility will receive \$6.7 million and \$3.5 million will fund electrical renewal project at Regina General and Pasqua hospitals. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency will also receive more than \$170 million and \$3.3 million increase in funding to provide cancer treatment to more patients. Mr. Speaker, the government will continue to subsidize 83 per cent of all of the overall cost of long-term care.

Mr. Speaker, our students are very dear to us, so we strive to provide them with quality education, not throw debt on their shoulders. Mr. Speaker, I do like to remind this House about the closure of 176 schools by the NDP government when their budget met challenges time. I do like to tell this House that our government made a different decision. Instead of closing schools, we are building 40 brand new schools or replacing schools and 25 major renovations. I do like to ask the member across the floor when that many schools were closed, where did those 400 teachers go? And how difficult was it for the teachers with those crowded classrooms? Mr. Speaker, we have 754 more teachers and 164 more student support teachers.

It was an . . . [inaudible] . . . disaster in the education system when the NDP underfunded kindergarten to grade 12 education, leading to significant education property tax increase. And, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan government increased kindergarten to grade 12 operating funding by 32 per cent since 2007, compared to an enrolment growth of 10 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, in 94 days, the new joint school in my constituency, Regina Pasqua, will be opening and students, parents, teachers are very excited and waiting for the next school year to start classes in their new school. For the community, École Harbour Landing School and St. Kateri Tekakwitha School will be milestones in Harbour Landing.

We are spending \$2.02 billion in 2017-2018 budget, a construction of 18 new schools in Regina, Saskatoon, Warman, and Martensville which will also be opening in 94 days. Mr. Speaker, we continue our investment of 119.1 million for capital projects to complete 21 new schools and one major renovation that will open this fall; \$43.2 million for preventative maintenance and renewal and emergent funds, an increase of 5.2 million or 13.7 per cent; \$31.8 million to complete four major capital projects including three new schools in Regina, that is Sacred Heart, École Connaught, and Scott Collegiate. And a major expansion and renovation of St. Brieux School; \$2 million in design of funding for two new projects, consolidation and replacement of schools in Rosthern and Weyburn; \$2.8 million for the purchase of seven new relocated units; \$48.3 million to complete the 18 joint-use schools.

Mr. Speaker, \$55.8 million is being provided for the child care funding. 889 new spaces will be created, including 810 spaces at the 18 new joint schools in Saskatoon, Regina, Warman, and Martensville, bringing the total number of new spaces created in the past 10 years to more than 6,000.

And 3.5 million in operating funding for northern and regional libraries.

Mr. Speaker, we have increased capital funding for post-secondary institutions by 40 per cent over 10 years while the NDP increased 20 per cent over 16 years which is only 1 per cent per year. Mr. Speaker, the 2017-2018 budget continues to invest in post-secondary students while controlling costs to help meet the financial challenges facing the province. 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 graduation retention program which provides up to \$20,000 in income tax credit to graduates who live and work in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, targeted funding is being redirected from the University of Saskatchewan's base operating budget to the College of Medicine. The College of Medicine will receive a total of \$69 million to support accreditation and sustainability. Students will also benefit from over 46 million in key financial support: 26 million for the Student Aid Fund to provide student grants and loans, 12 million for scholarships including the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship, and 8 million for the Saskatchewan advantage grant for education savings.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture's budget for 2017-18 of \$388.6 million continues to support Saskatchewan's strong agriculture industry. Business risk management programs will be fully funded with an investment of \$264.1 million, an increase of almost 4 per cent. Funding of 71.2 million is again being provided for strategic initiatives under the

federal-provincial Growing Forward 2 agreement. The budget continues the province's investment in agriculture research with \$26.8 million. For crop insurance premiums and program delivery, 172.2 million is being provided.

Mr. Speaker, our government's 2017-2018 budget is very supportive to Saskatchewan's most vulnerable people with an increase of 73 million, which is 6.9 per cent. This brings the ministry's budget to 1.125 billion, the largest ever in Social Services history.

Mr. Speaker, despite the fact of commodity prices low in all different sectors, our exports have increased and agriculture export has increased 44 per cent since 2006. Our manufacturing, wholesale, and retail trade sales have increased.

Our average weekly earning has increased 39 per cent. Mr. Speaker, it is at 39 per cent since 2006. We remember NDP job creation record in Canada from 2000 to 2007, just half the national rate of job growth. And from 2007 to 2006, our government holds the record of having the second job creation in Canada, nearly the double national rate of the job growth. Mr. Speaker, it has the lowest PST in our province. A family of four in Saskatchewan pays no income tax on their first \$50,495 of income, the highest tax-free threshold in Canada, where the NDP raised taxes 21 times in 16 years.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot understand the math of the NDP. There are only 16 budgets in 16 years, so how can they raise taxes 21 times? Mr. Speaker, the budget will continue to expand Saskatchewan's economy and opportunities over the last decade. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to end this by expressing my full support for this budget. I believe the minister and all who worked so hard on this did a great job and fully understand what is the best for our province, even though tough decisions needed to be made. I do not support the amendment as the budget has my full support, and we are meeting the challenge. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud today to stand up and respond to the budget. I know there's a lot of people who would like to have my position here where they could respond to the budget as well, and I hope I can speak for a lot of people and some of the concerns that they've brought to my attention.

But first of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank a few people in my life about how they've supported me. Like the member across just said a little while ago, that it's almost a year now that the election from last year, and so in the year it's been quite a transition and a learning experience.

There's been a lot of people in my life that have helped through that, my partner being a big influence in my life, Darren. And he oftentimes listens to me and we'll have a lot of conversations of things that are going on. And it's kind of a good thing because previous to this position, I wasn't able to talk to him a lot about the kind of work I did. But now he gets to watch me

right here, and he knows if I've come to work or not, and he understands what's going on in this House here. So it's nice to have someone who's very supportive.

And I also have . . . I'm really grateful for the kids also in our lives, and I want to thank my stepson Jordon and my stepdaughter Taylor for taking care of my two babies, my dogs Roxy and Diesel, when I'm away, and making sure that they're okay, because oftentimes, Mr. Speaker, Darren and I are on opposite sides of the province, like this week I believe he's in Deschambault. So he works up north and I come all the way down south so we rely on the kids to be watching the dogs. But soon enough, they might be out of the house so we might have to look at other options.

And Jordon's graduating this year. He was accepted at both the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] and the U of R [University of Regina], and just last week he told us that he chose the U of S. I kind of was hoping he would choose the U or R too, but like teenagers are, they go with their friends, and most of his friends were going to the U of S and he's going to study engineering. So that will be very good for him.

And my daughter is also in university through the U of S and she'll be doing her two years of Arts and Science and then she's heading into the school of Social Work. So she'll be finishing her final two years from the U of R. So we're very proud of her as well. My daughter is a very big support in my life as well, and I think she misses me quite a bit while I'm away and so we Snapchat and do all those social media aspects of keeping in touch. But we try to spend as much time as we can on the weekends when I'm home.

This weekend will be definitely a family weekend, and I look forward to it because some other weekends have been very busy with activities. But this weekend hopefully a few people will get some good meals because I oftentimes hear that that's not the case when I'm not around. And so we'll be having some family get-togethers this weekend, and also with my two little grandsons, and they're just so beautiful.

[15:45]

My grandson Rhyker turned two in February, and my grandson Soyer, he's about 20 months because he'll be turning two in August, and they're just developing such personalities and they're so much fun to have. And we went to Bubble Guppies a couple of weeks ago and they just had a blast. And so I look forward to spring and summertime when we can get out and play a little bit, but this weekend we're probably going to have some sleepovers so I'll probably be quite tired on Monday when I come back.

My family's big, and my constituency assistant, Rose, she's a major support in my life as well. And like I said when my daughter's missing me, I think sometimes she heads over to the office and visits with Rose. So she's been a surrogate mother to her while I've been away and she's been a great support as well.

So I want to thank everybody, and my friends who sometimes I neglect because I'm so busy, but they still hang around with me when I've got the opportunity and we have some events planned to spend some time together. So I've got such a great

support system and I really appreciate everybody.

But, Mr. Speaker, today I want to talk a little bit about this budget. This budget was titled *Meeting the Challenge*, but I feel that it's more appropriate to call it creating a challenge. I feel that this budget is about investing in some of the Sask Party priorities of making the most vulnerable pay and allowing to have tax breaks for corporations and the most wealthy. And I believe that the priorities of this budget were not the priorities of the average resident in Saskatchewan.

I'm going to start with talking about the elimination of the grants-in-lieu for municipalities. Mr. Speaker, this is going to cost millions of dollars, and I compare this to cutting your children's allowance because you overspent on your credit card. It's a very unfair burden to place on our municipalities to pay for the mismanagement of this government.

Municipalities were happy to see that the municipal revenue sharing remained, but as SUMA indicated in a press release, the quote is, "Municipal revenue sharing is being effectively gutted for urban municipalities by provincial government downloading and revenue clawbacks." Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party government gives with one hand and takes with the other, and SUMA indicated that "Our members are outraged and so are we."

And I have some quotes from some municipal leaders. This one quote from the former Sask Party candidate in Regina, ward 2 councillor Bob Hawkins says, "This is a budget that comes like a thief in the night." And then I have a quote here from former Conservative candidate and Saskatoon ward 5 councillor Randy Donauer: "This is a transfer of a tax burden from one level of government to another because they can."

And from Regina Mayor Michael Fougere: "It came out of nowhere. Many municipalities have already set their budgets and that's why there's some angst and concern and anger from this council."

And Moose Jaw city manager Matt Noble says, "This is out of the blue. It's a total blindside." And Yorkton Mayor Bob Maloney says, "Just to pass along what's been dumped on our plate would need a 10 per cent increase in taxes." And North Battleford Mayor Ryan Bater says, "Well, outrage is putting it lightly. We are absolutely blindsided by this budget."

Mr. Speaker, this has hit municipalities, and they're really concerned of how they're going to work their budgets because, unlike the provincial government, municipalities need to have a balanced budget. And so this is going to result in cuts to services for residents or it's going to mean more tax increases, and average families can't afford that.

And so we have some communities who are losing almost half of the amount of the revenue sharing that they receive, for example, Yorkton. And we know that this elimination of grants-in-lieu are really going to hit communities like Estevan really hard because they've been impacted by the resource drop, the decline. And how are these families going to adjust if they have a high increase of property taxes? It's just more burden to place on them as well.

And we know that this is not the only thing that's going to be impacting municipalities. We know education tax is going up 10 per cent. So we have more taxes on education, but we're getting less put into education because education got an extreme hit in this budget.

We have the cuts to library services, and we know that library services are important. We have a lot of people who have been contacting us, and I'm sure even members across, about how important these library services are to them. And so if this government continues on their plan, municipalities are going to be pressured to take this over, and they've already been hit with a resource drop.

So we have cuts to heritage and culture funding, and I haven't heard exactly all of the aspects of that. And so that's probably going to be coming within the days and weeks ahead.

And then we have the cuts to the regional parks. And, Mr. Speaker, last budget, many of the communities were hit with that cut, and again with this budget they're hit again. And it seems to me that the heaviest hit were Saskatoon and Regina with Meewasin Valley Authority and Wascana Park. And so both of those cities were hit hard too with the grants-in-lieu being eliminated.

Communities weren't prepared for these levels of cuts, Mr. Speaker. They were prepared that, you know, there was going to be some tightening of the belt buckle, and they implemented some of that in their budgets, but not what equals millions and millions of dollars. And there was no consultation and no contingency plan for them to implement these changes, which I think was very irresponsible and unprofessional for this government to implement.

And so when I look at Prince Albert in itself, in this budget there was no mention of money for a second bridge, and we definitely need a second bridge. They continue to talk about doing surveys on our bridge and seeing how much life it has, but we can't afford to only have one bridge and continue to have one. We need two bridges, Mr. Speaker. And the residents of Prince Albert should not be put on the backs of them, because it is a regional bridge. It's one that's used by many in this province to get up to the North and to stimulate economy in the North.

We also didn't see any money put towards Victoria Hospital to address the wait times and the overcrowding. And there was talk of some money being put towards Saskatoon, Regina, but Prince Albert also has some issues. And this issue was brought up actually at the chamber of commerce meeting that we had in Prince Albert where the Finance minister came and spoke to the audience. And he indicates, and I'll quote from the article that was in the *Daily Herald*:

If there's a problem in ER, the Minister of Health needs to know that and senior management here in the health region need to know that. If it's a matter of dollars, we have some additional dollars in the budget. Regina and Saskatoon tend to be the most clogged areas, but if that's the case here in Prince Albert, we need to address that.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder why did the Minister of Health not know

about this? We have a cabinet minister right from Prince Albert sitting at the table, and he should be telling the Minister of Health that our Victoria Hospital is oftentimes overcrowded and our ER wait times are extreme. And what's the benefit of having a cabinet minister at the table if the issues of Prince Albert aren't going to be addressed right there? And so I thought that was a little bit sad and disturbing that these issues are not being discussed right here. And people were pretty excited to have a cabinet minister representing Prince Albert, but obviously the voice is not there.

We also didn't see any money for mobile crisis, and we know that they deal with crisis issues. We know that there's been a lot of crisis issues in Prince Albert. We have one of the highest levels of poverty. We have highest levels of domestic violence. We have highest levels of suicide rates, and we had cuts to our mobile crisis unit. Instead of investing money into mobile crisis, they're just going to continue to off-load the crisis intervention work on to other agencies like the Victoria Hospital ER [emergency room] and our city police. So that's not very cost effective, and it's not the best way to manage crises either.

Our minister from Prince Albert, the one that's responsible for Crown Investments Corporation, was the one that signed and is sealing the deal to cut the grants-in-lieu, which is going to cost Prince Albert residents millions of dollars along, like I said before, along with a lot of other Saskatchewan residents. But when people in Prince Albert are starting to get their taxes increased, they could blame the minister for Prince Albert Carlton, the Minister for CIC, the member for Prince Albert Carlton because that is a definite big hit for Prince Albert.

And then we have here, when discussing the multi-million dollar cuts to municipalities, the Minister for CIC was quoted saying, "It's their way of contributing to the deficit, to the tougher economic times that the government is facing." Mr. Speaker, municipalities did not cause or contribute to the provincial deficit, yet this government is wanting them to be responsible to pay for it. So that's unacceptable.

And we also have to remember that the member from Prince Albert Carlton is also the Minister for STC, who has made the ultimate decision on eliminating STC. And when talking about eliminating STC services, SUMA released a statement that said this is a vital service to Saskatchewan's hometowns. People and businesses are being stranded by these cuts. This is a slap in the face to all SUMA members, but especially those in the North.

Again no voice for Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker. We've got more jobs that are lost. We've got taxes going up, nothing for resource development, and no money for infrastructure for Prince Albert. So you know, it's very troubling when we know we have that minister right from our home community, and he's not looking out for our best interests.

And also community-based organizations lost a significant amount of money with the cuts to agencies that provide services to our most vulnerable, programs that were deemed as valuable and important by the Sask Party government until they became broke. And then they thought, oh, well maybe we could do without these programs.

One of those programs is the parent mentoring program, and

this is a program that was offered across the province. But I'm going to talk about the impact that it's going to have on Prince Albert.

Prince Albert Family Futures were the ones that implemented the parent mentoring program, and they're being forced to lay off one of their outreach workers. So again, we've lost our crisis services, intervention programs. We're losing a parent mentoring outreach worker, and outreach workers provide rides to medical appointments, milk coupons, and information on prenatal health.

The executive director, Donna Strauss, worries that Prince Albert could see a spike in problematic pregnancies, perhaps even an increase in complications like fetal alcohol syndrome due to the cut in this program. She says, "When we are talking about the most vulnerable families, we're talking about poverty. We are talking about the lack of information about prenatal care." This, Mr. Speaker, is a backwards move. When we're talking about reducing the caseload of social services, we need to provide the supportive services to families and the most vulnerable.

When we're talking about reducing the caseload for social services, we're also seeing a lot of cuts that will reduce that; for example, the cuts to libraries. Mr. Speaker, people use the libraries to find employment. And as quoted in an article in the *StarPhoenix*: "For a province that likes to talk about this budget is about future generations, cutting already underfunded libraries hurts low income families, including children the hardest [hit]."

[16:00]

Mr. Speaker, we also see cuts to job readiness programs. We see cuts to adult basic education and \$2.1 million decrease in the provincial training allowance. Such backwards moves if we're looking at, you know, reducing the caseloads for social services. And this makes me wonder, do the ministers talk and discuss plans together in a future direction? Because I realize a lot of these cuts were from other ministers and their portfolios, but if their priorities are one thing, shouldn't they be discussing this together and working towards a plan?

Mr. Speaker, one of the areas of many that I find very troubling is the loss of spiritual services offered in the hospital, and the cuts to funeral services to people that are on assistance. And I would say that that was a very cruel and short-sighted decision. Saskatchewan is about to become the only province in Canada that will not pay for spiritual care in health region facilities. This is again another backwards move when we talk about promoting mental health. Philip Weaver from the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care said it well when he said:

Without addressing those kinds of spiritual needs around connection and meaning, the physical body may heal but the spirit remains damaged. By ignoring this whole dimension of human existence, people are going to have prolonged distress, longer hospital stays, more expensive hospital stays.

Mr. Speaker, spiritual care extends beyond patients and their family. The spiritual care aids also worked with health care

professionals who might be struggling with the loss of a patient or a difficult situation that came within the health system. And I know that first and foremost because in Prince Albert we had a spiritual care aid, his name is Dennis Serfas, and he built a really good relationship not only with patients and families but with us staff members. And when we lost a client from suicide . . . And I can remember one case in particular, he came over and talked to us and wanted to make sure that we were handling things, and did some debriefing with us. And it was more than just religion, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was about taking care of your spiritual side and your spiritual self, and that means a lot.

And I know when my dad was dying in the hospital and the spiritual services would come, that meant a lot for us to have someone who said, you know, I'm thinking about you guys, and I want to make sure you're doing okay. And that meant especially a lot for my mom who is a very spiritual person. My dad was in the hospital in the city and we come from a small town, so to have our priest from our town to come was not very likely. So this is another impact, I believe, for rural people who might not have the services locally available because when your health issues become severe, you do end up in Saskatoon or Regina. And so to not have this offered and saving simply a million dollars is cruel, cruel and short sighted, like I said before.

But that's not where the cuts end, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There's been an increase to Social Services budget but that's because the utilization rates are going up. So nobody's benefits are going up. Actually it's the opposite. According to a media release from the Ministry of Social Services, "Some benefits in the TEA, SAP, and SAID programs will be reduced or eliminated while others will be reviewed, for [an] estimated savings of up to \$10.6 million."

So they were bragging about adding more, but they're looking at reducing. And in the background, in this news release, it indicates that all TEA [transitional employment allowance] clients will be receiving \$20 per month reduction. And they say, "For example, after July 1, a single parent in a major centre will receive \$946 dollars per month after the change . . ." And right now they're currently getting \$966 per month. Wow, Mr. Speaker, a single mom is receiving less than \$1,000 a month, and they're taking money from her. If she's on the TEA program, she's working on improving her life and the future of her family and is receiving a pay cut from this government. And that seems, again, backwards thinking.

And so I have a few quotes from some really important people here. And the first quote is from Peter Gilmer, the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry, and he says, "If we're going to make cuts towards the most vulnerable people in the province, we think it adds insult to injury to be looking at corporate tax cuts and tax cuts to the wealthy." And the *Saskatoon StarPhoenix* columnist, Jordon Cooper says, "After hurting the poorest of the poor in our province, this government brought in a tax cut for corporations." So we're looking at taking money from the poor and giving it to the rich and that's very sad.

So families on social assistance now also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will have to find a way to pay for school supplies because that funding was cut. Children that are living on social assistance and are poor due to no fault of their own are now going to be

further identified as being poor because Social Services didn't feel that it was a priority to pay for their school supplies.

This budget affected the most vulnerable low-income families with increases to having to pay more for children's clothes. Insurance premiums are going up, power bills will be going up, and property taxes will be going up which will translate to rent going up. And so there was a definite message here from the Sask Party that the poor don't matter in Saskatchewan.

And then we also have the \$11 million cut to housing which I don't know where that's coming from, but I know that's going to be a big hit and an increase to the Social Services budget. Like I said before, the increase to it is because the utilization rates are going up. But I also didn't see any more money for new social work positions. So current workloads are going up — and already are unmanageable and we know that — but there's not an increase in any new positions. And we had all the ministers go up north and say that, you know, the suicide crisis in the North is a major important issue for them, and I do believe that that should be the case. But there's no new resources in this budget for that. I didn't see anything mentioned about providing more money to address those suicide crisis issues.

Also I looked and looked and looked, and I hope that I just did not see it and I just went past it, but I didn't see any money set aside in this budget for the calls of action from the Truth and Reconciliation. And that is a really sad, sad case because those calls of actions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, aren't just recommendations; they're calls of actions to implement now. And they're important, and so it would have been nice to actually have that mentioned within the summary and identified where the money going towards those are.

So the Minister of Social Services talks about a plan for income assistance redesign, but if their redesign is in any way related to the cuts that they have presented in this budget, I am concerned that the most vulnerable in this province will lose more. And so, Mr. Speaker, I've got endless amounts to talk about here, but I really wanted to make sure I touched on those issues.

And I want to reintegrate, like, that the minister . . . We've heard them say that they talk about working on focusing on core services which are education, health, and social services. But yet in this budget there's been cuts to education, cuts to health, and cuts to social services. So they say one thing, and they invest in another.

I really hope that members across use their critical thinking, study the budget, go talk to municipal leaders in your community, talk to educators in your community, talk to the school board members who will tell you that their voice and autonomy has been compromised. And talk to front-line workers in your health centres, in your community-based organizations, and use your critical thinking abilities and vote for a budget based on what is the best decision for the residents in your constituency. And I know that the answer is that this budget will not improve the lives of the people that they represent.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment that was brought forward by my colleague, but I

will not be supporting this unfair, cruel budget.

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

Hon. Ms. Beaudry-Mellor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's no question that this has been a challenging budget and that many very difficult decisions have been made that each of us has been heavy-hearted about, especially in those areas where the result has been the loss of jobs.

But I want to challenge the disturbingly inaccurate characterizations which have been made by members opposite over the past number of weeks and increasingly over the last number of days. Mr. Speaker, on budget day in front of a packed gallery, we heard the Leader of the Opposition say, and I quote, that we "... blew through the savings ...". The Finance critic in her response said that, and again I quote, we "... arrogantly and recklessly spent ...". And even more offensively, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition last Thursday said our government has "... a deficit of decency ...".

I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if a deficit of decency means increasing the Social Services budget, a budget which helps the most vulnerable people in our society, to a record level at a time when we have had a \$1.2 billion drop in revenues over the last three years. I wonder if we were being arrogant and reckless when we introduced the SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] program in 2009, when we've across all of our ministries invested \$3.7 billion to help people with disabilities and have effectively eliminated the 440 wait-list generated by decades of neglect by the former government.

Merv Bender, the Chair of the program implementation advisory committee team remarked just on budget day:

I am very pleased that government is continuing its commitment to the program with a \$16 million increase to the SAID budget for next year. It is especially meaningful in a challenging financial situation that the province chose to make this investment in support of people with significant and enduring disabilities.

I wonder if our arrogance and recklessness is demonstrated by a person-centred process to transition people from the institutionalized setting at Valley View Centre into communities where individuals have the opportunity to be included as citizens and where as we, as citizens, have the opportunity to meet, interact with, and hopefully make friends with neighbours who have physical and mental challenges. This work continues to be supported in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, I sat in this House and listened to almost every budget since 2007, and over the years I've been shocked at just how much this government has invested in helping vulnerable people. Those vulnerable people have included families of children with autism, or women fleeing domestic violence who are in need of shelter, low-income seniors, and people who are at risk of homelessness. These investments in year after year have been made to support people, people who are struggling, Mr. Speaker.

Yet day after day after day we hear about our reckless spending or our mismanagement and waste. I guess we differ here, Mr. Speaker. I don't think it's been a waste to support people with disabilities. I'm proud of the 2009 creation of the SAID program. The NDP record on supporting people with disabilities was that ... well they just didn't. They let people languish on a wait list. It must not have been a priority which is why, I guess, they characterize decisions like this as reckless and arrogant when they talk about our spending during the so-called boom years.

But I guess what is most frustrating, Mr. Speaker, is that the members opposite speak from both sides of their mouth. On the one hand, our spending over the years, much of the investments in services, benefits, and supports for people in the Ministry of Social Services has been part of a record that, according to them, is characterized by mismanagement and waste.

[16:15]

And then, almost in the same sentence sometimes, Mr. Speaker, the same member or one of their colleagues will follow up by saying we've made callous cuts, or we make the most vulnerable pay. And then after that, Mr. Speaker, the Finance critic or the Leader of the Opposition will talk about deficits. Well which is it, Mr. Speaker? Anyone with even the most rudimentary level of basic economics knows you can't simultaneously criticize too many investments, not enough investments, and running a deficit.

And now remember, Mr. Speaker, that I'm speaking largely to the Ministry of Social Services. But this problem is even more pronounced when members get up to petition for an infrastructure project like a bridge and then turn around and call the largest infrastructure investment in the history of our province, which is creating thousands of jobs, an example of scandal, mismanagement, and waste.

I think we can all agree, Mr. Speaker, that these arguments are completely incoherent. And it might be because of the fact that outside of providing criticisms of us on absolutely everything, even if those criticisms contradict each other, Mr. Speaker, they have absolutely no plan of their own. And as was duly noted by the member of Martensville earlier, this is not what we should see by a so-called government-in-waiting, Mr. Speaker.

We have a plan, Mr. Speaker. We have a plan as a government to manage economy and get back to balance in three years. And get this. While there have been some very, very difficult decisions in this budget and even in the Ministry of Social Services, our government has continued to support people who are vulnerable. The Ministry of Social Services has its largest budget to date, Mr. Speaker. Our income assistance area saw a 13 per cent increase. Our disabilities programs have gone up by 7.6 per cent, and child and family program areas have gone up by 5.5 per cent. These increases, Mr. Speaker, are there to make sure people who are struggling continue to get supported.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Meewasin has talked a lot in his former life about housing and homelessness. For example, in an op-ed piece in the *Huffington Post* last year, the member for Saskatoon Meewasin argued that, and I quote:

The most pressing problem — finding stable housing for those who are currently homeless or at risk for homelessness — is one that, fortunately, can be solved. We need to start by collecting real-time, person specific data on homelessness and expanding the application of the Housing First model of supportive housing for individuals with greater challenges. Housing First is an evidence-based approach to ending homelessness that provides direct access to permanent housing and support.

Well, Mr. Speaker, instead of just talking about this, we're actually doing it. Through the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, we have provided \$50,000 to the United Way to assist with tracking and monitoring the effectiveness of Housing First through Journey Home in Saskatoon. We've invested \$60 million to develop 634 units, for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, since we formed government. 496 of those are completed right now and another 138 are under construction; 352 of those, Mr. Speaker, are aimed at those who are specifically hard to house.

Mr. Speaker, our average investment in hard-to-house units for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, since forming government, has been about 70 per year. And we are committed to continuing that work. To that end, we've been working at the FPT [federal-provincial-territorial] tables to emphasize the importance of investments like this.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't really like to go back in time, but I think it speaks volumes when I look at NDP investments in hard-to-house units. For a political party that prides itself on standing up for people who are vulnerable, Mr. Speaker, I find it rather surprising that they built 12 — that's right, just 12 — new hard-to-house units in the last six years in office. That's an average of two per year, Mr. Speaker. We've invested 70 per year, Mr. Speaker. It is part of our reckless and arrogant characterization of our government's spending plan over the last 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, we don't just talk about helping people; we actually do it. And while I am ever mindful, I am ever mindful that there's always, always, always more work to do, I'm comforted by two things, Mr. Speaker. One is, that I've said, we have a plan to grow our economy and get back to balance in three years. And two, Mr. Speaker, is that this is actually in line with the poverty reduction strategy whose very first line, on page 6 of the document states, "Our Government recognizes that first and foremost, to reduce poverty in our province . . . [the] economy must be strong."

Mr. Speaker, it is so obvious that it shouldn't need repeating. But given the trajectory of the narrative I have witnessed since I've had the privilege of sitting in this Assembly, it needs to be emphasized that creating jobs, expanding the tax base, and growing the economy by fostering the conditions for investment enables us to pay for the services, programs, and benefits that people enjoy in health, social services, and education. These three areas, Mr. Speaker, consume 70 per cent of our provincial budget, 70 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

Our job creation record has consistently been one of the best, if not the best in Canada, Mr. Speaker. We've had one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country despite the economic

challenges that we face. We've grown the population to where it now sits at 1.13 million dollars. We are the most attractive mining jurisdiction in the world, Mr. Speaker. We enjoy a AAA credit rating. We have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the country.

In addition to all of these investments I've already identified and more, Mr. Speaker, all these positive economic outcomes have enabled us to remove 112,000 low-income people off the tax rolls. In this budget we have seen the Saskatchewan low-income tax credit enhanced so as to mitigate the impact of other tax changes. I submit, Mr. Speaker, that those are not examples of callousness, recklessness, or arrogance. The point, Mr. Speaker, is that there's a very important relationship, a very important and I think underappreciated relationship between our economic management and the services we provide for people.

And, Mr. Speaker, if we want to know what those impacts would be with a different economic management plan, we just need to look next door in Alberta. We have our very own case study right next door. We have both relied on natural resource revenue which has created challenges for us both. However, that is where the similarities end, Mr. Speaker. They support carbon tax. We don't. They don't have a plan to get back to balance and are just kicking the can down the road. We have a plan to get back to balance in three years.

And what are the results? Alberta's unemployment rate was 7.9 per cent in 2016 and is already at 8.3 per cent in 2017. This places it among one of the highest in the country and above the national average, Mr. Speaker. By contrast, Saskatchewan's unemployment rate was 6 per cent, one of the lowest in Canada.

And while nearly every other province in Canada posted increases in average weekly earnings, Alberta's dropped by 1 per cent. In Saskatchewan our average weekly earnings, Mr. Speaker, increased by 1.8 per cent. Considering this abysmal employment and earnings numbers, Mr. Speaker, I'm shocked to see that the Alberta budget includes a mere 2.2 per cent growth in operating for ministries like Social Services. How can a so-called socially democratic government have only a 2.2 per cent increase in income supports at a time when it is clearly evident that more people will need them? This can not come even close to meeting the utilization pressures in that province.

They've also drained their contingency plan to cover operating, and unlike our government, they haven't built one in to cover unexpected changes in utilization — not in '17-18, not in '18-19, and not in '19-20, Mr. Speaker. I am not making this up.

The case study for what happens when you don't have a sound economic management plan, or frankly any plan at all, is right next door, Mr. Speaker. And it doesn't look very good — not for employment, not for the economy, not for deficit management, and certainly not for vulnerable people.

And for that reason, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to support the good work of the Finance minister and his team and seconded by the member from Moosomin. I will be supporting this budget. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from

Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Kaeding: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. First off, I'd just like to express a few thank yous. First my wife, Carla, who's letting me live the dream. My CA, Rick McIntyre, brand new to the business but he's quickly picked up the responsibilities and adapted very well. I'd like to thank my mom, who I think is probably sitting around the big-screen TV in Royal Estates right now with probably the local residents having potluck. But best of all I'd like to thank the constituents of Melville-Saltcoats who have given me the ability to stand here today and speak to the support for the budget that we presented.

Mr. Speaker, I too would like to add comments and provide support to the 2017 budget presented by the Finance minister last week. I compare this reaction to the simple football analogy — we're second and goal in the big game. We have a number of options in our playbook or we can just decide to punt the ball and hope for the best. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have decided to review all the options. We have utilized a suite of tax incentives, consumption taxes, budget reductions, and funding increases. And if the play unfolds like we practised, we will have this province back to balanced budget by 2020.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a far better strategy than punting the ball on second down and hoping that something positive happens in the future, as the opposition really prefers to do. That play was made well over 10 years ago by a former government, Mr. Speaker, and the outcome was closure of schools, hospitals, and job losses in the thousands. That is not what the majority of citizens in this province want. They ask for a fiscally responsible, well-planned strategy to ensure that this province prospers and makes sure that our kids and my grandkids, your grandkids are not paying for the outrageous things that the NDP would have us do right now.

Although, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the subject of the NDP's plan, or really lack thereof, we hear a lot of noise from members opposite but it often sounds contradictory, one moment calling for more spending yet the next time they're saying, oh you guys are spending way too much. Unfortunately, this rhetoric from the members opposite is hardly surprising.

Really in fact, in the last election, their platform had 18, 18 uncosted promises that would cost us hundreds of millions of dollars every year, a platform that all of those members, with the exception of the member from Meewasin, ran on. Do they still support that sort of budgeting, pretending that they don't have to pay for things in order to get votes? I think the outcome of the last election shows what the people of this province thought of that.

Further, the member from Meewasin supports a carbon tax, a tax on everything that would disproportionately impact our province. NDP members have pledged support for the principles of the Leap Manifesto. And we know through past examples that the NDP here, the NDP in Alberta, the NDP in other provinces, the NDP federally are willing to say almost anything to get elected and then abandon their platform as soon as the polls close.

Our government wants to get our province back to a balanced

budget, and we have a plan to get there. Unfortunately the NDP opposition, the NDP government in Alberta, they've shown no game plan. There's not a plan there. They have no vision as to where they want to move this forward. So it's pretty close to call the game from the bleachers.

The Deputy Speaker: — Even though the member from Melville-Saltcoats has quite a strong voice, there is a lot of conversation happening across the way and it's on both sides of the House. And I would ask those members to take their conversations behind the bar and let the member from Melville-Saltcoats continue. I recognize the member.

Mr. Kaeding: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So this contrasts with our government moving . . . who's willing to make tough decisions necessary to keep Saskatchewan moving forward and not downloading current spending on future generations, my grandkids.

The budget will not balance itself, and we take it seriously as our responsibility to the people of Saskatchewan. Dominion Bond Rating Service just last Thursday gave a thumbs up to the budget, commenting they recognize that the plan is ambitious, and views the plan as credible because of the extent and immediacy of the proposed measures. They ended up providing a solid rating with a stable trend.

[16:30]

Mr. Speaker, I spent an afternoon at the Melville Chamber of Commerce trade show last Friday talking about the budget with the many valued businesses of the Melville area. On the way home after session on Thursday, I talked to a number of businesses and ag producers from the constituency of Melville-Saltcoats who get, they get what we've laid out in the budget of 2017. They understand that something had to be done. They understand what it's like to sacrifice some things to ensure that their businesses, their farms would remain viable for the future.

They weren't all patting us on the back and saying, good job. You know, I get that. But they all said we need to pay a bit more now to ensure that we don't pay a lot more into the future. Everyone agreed that there are a lot of tough decisions that were made. They weren't going to be popular with everyone.

But it was a lot better than the past record of the NDP, which was to tax everything, stifling investment and productivity. Their record is one of increasing income tax, significantly increasing the PST over and over again. Mr. Speaker, those ideas were tried in the 1990s, the early 2000s, so we know whether or not it works. Spoiler alert: it didn't work. Our population dropped. We had the worst job creation record. We lost doctors. We lost nurses. We lost teachers, hospitals. Long-term care facilities closed. Mr. Speaker, those truly were the dark days for our province. In football terms we were getting smoked 44 to 0, and I would even assume that bus ridership out of the province was on the increase during that time.

Mr. Speaker, these are indeed challenging times. I believe everyone knows the numbers: resource revenues declined over 1.3 billion; resource tax revenue is down by hundreds of

millions of dollars. We're in one of the more protracted periods of low resource values that we've seen in recent memory. As world economies, the buyer resource has begun to slow down or contract, we suffer. We suffer from those uncertainties.

As the Premier indicated in his pre-budget address, for our part as government we have to take responsibility and "we must take action to rebalance our spending and our revenues to reflect this new . . . [era]."

As many of our constituents remember, we've been through this before and proverbially have the T-shirt, saying we survived. And we start seeing some of these indicators change, albeit slowly. Oil prices have come off their lows of under \$40 a barrel. Potash price is slowly increasing, and ag commodities, they're holding steady.

Mr. Speaker, a part of every good sports team is having a good offence, having the bodies that could put points on the board, people and policy that can make things happen. During the period of low resource prices, this province, our province, continued to grow with the population. We have added over 162,000 more people in the last 10 years, reversing the trend of population decline that we faced during this previous government's mandate.

The community of Churchbridge, my community, has experienced over a 20 per cent increase in population since the last census. Our schools are full. In fact they're overflowing; they're bursting at the seams. Property listed in our town is gone within a week, maybe two at the most. This is unprecedented growth not seen since this province's inception, since really Confederation over 100 years ago.

It's interesting to note really that the NDP, they've been quoted numerous times saying a population increase couldn't, wouldn't, shouldn't happen. Mr. Speaker, yes, it's put a strain on vital services. But those new citizens have also contributed to the positive growth and economic fortunes of this province. For the first time in this province's history, the average weekly earnings were above \$1,000 and remain the third highest among provinces, all provinces.

"Saskatchewan people are taking home more money at the end of the week, and this a reflection on our economy and the opportunities in our province." That's the Minister of the Economy was quoted as saying. "The increased earnings showed that our wages are very competitive and this remains an attraction for skilled workers to our province."

New job creation, it's been steady to increasing over the last 10 years. We've observed an increase of over 90,000 new jobs since 2006, or an increase of 18.6 per cent. In the November 2016 Sask jobs report:

Major year-over-year gains were reported for professional, scientific and technical services up 4,000; public administration up 3,800; and trade up 3,700.

These are great jobs. These are high-paying jobs. They're on the increase in this province.

Off-reserve Aboriginal employment was up 4,200 [just

under 10 per cent] for five consecutive months of year-over-year increases. Aboriginal youth employment was up 1,000 (+13.3 per cent) for seven consecutive months of year-over-year increases.

Mr. Speaker, these statistics are not the signs of an economy that has been discouraged by government policy. Found in this budget are many more factors that are going to improve and expand the Saskatchewan economy. By lowering personal and corporate income tax rates, we're going to ensure competitiveness across the country. Everyone at every income level is going to pay less tax. Saskatchewan will have the lowest corporate tax rate and manufacturing and processing tax rate in Canada.

Numerous officials quoted over the last week, including the Maclean's editorial board, Fraser Institute, Paul Martin, they've all acknowledged the value of keeping the province competitive in the field of tax applications.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could repeat the iconic empty-folder demonstration by my predecessor Bob Bjonnerud to demonstrate what the repressive tax strategies of the NDP in the '90s and early 2000s did to stimulate investment in this province. Nothing; no major projects of any kind, not a single new project developed during that time. No wonder they didn't expect the population to grow; they didn't give them any reason for being here.

Mr. Speaker, the capital expenditures by private business in and around our constituency in the last 10 years have been astounding: Mosaic coming into the fourth quarter of completing the \$3 billion expansion at our K3 shaft in Esterhazy. PCS [Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Inc.] Rocanville just completed a \$3 billion expansion late last year. In June 2010, Richardson Pioneer opened a \$200 million crush plant in Yorkton. July 2010 the LDM [Louis Dreyfus Mitsui Foods] canola crush plant, also a hundred-million-dollar crush plant, opened in Yorkton. Last Friday, Grain Millers Canada, Yorkton announced a hundred-million-dollar expansion to their oat plant in Yorkton — 25 more new jobs and 110 during construction come with that announcement.

Today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, G3, a major grain company, announced two significant grain-handling facility builds, one located in Melville.

These are projects, investments that benefited hundreds of individuals and companies in Melville-Saltcoats, companies like EMW construction in Saltcoats, Noble Construction in Esterhazy, Saskpro Machine Works in Esterhazy, N&R Concrete in Melville, DJ Miller & Sons Construction in Langenburg, Duncan Construction in Spy Hill, Norenda Construction in Gerald, and the list goes on and on. These are companies employing local people — people who make up our communities, volunteer at our arenas and our dance studios, who populate our schools and pay tax.

Mr. Speaker, I'm quite confused. Really I'm confused by the response and criticism by the opposition. Throughout our term, they and their media personalities have been criticizing this government for not paying enough attention to the Crowns, not investing enough money into infrastructure to keep them viable,

relevant, and competitive with external forces.

Murray Mandryk, *Leader-Post*, August 27th, 2016: “What seems clear is that cost problems at SaskPower aren’t simply about an aging infrastructure that’s admittedly in need of a massive capital injection.” Then we read in the opposition’s election platform where, well, you know, we anticipate that some borrowing will be required for the capital requirements.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the numbers, it’s evident: we’ve invested in our Crowns, and we will not apologize for that. In 2017 we will continue to invest, invest \$3.7 billion. And further we’re going to continue to invest in our schools, in our hospitals, and our care homes.

And our highways, Mr. Speaker, our highways, our constituents in Melville-Saltcoats are going to be blessed with a significant investment into the No. 80 Highway from Esterhazy to Churchbridge. This is a highway that at least half of the 1,200 employees of Mosaic travel every day and every night in our constituency.

You know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? A lot of holes in capital spending that were left to us from the previous government, we have to fill those holes. And it seems like the opposition wants us to abandon all those investments, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They don’t want us to build new schools, but I can attest that’s not what our constituents want.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, every year 40,000 farms in this province make a major, major cash investment, really sticking millions, billions of dollars into the ground or on our pastures with the anticipation of a reasonable return at the end of the year. Agriculture in this province now exports over \$14 billion annually. This is an increase of over 180 per cent since 2006. That’s a big number. We’re first in the world for a number of commodities, including pulse crops, canola and other oilseed products, oats, mustard. The list goes on.

This year this government has provided the highest coverage ever through crop insurance for the products that we produce.

As well we have world-class research facilities found at the University of Saskatchewan Crop Development Centre. This government continues to support research with a \$26.8 million investment in this budget. The rookie crop of varieties released by the CDC [Crop Development Centre] has their production requested specifically around the world. It might be CDC varieties of wheat going into the Warburtons program in England. Maybe it’s the malt barley varieties going into Sapporo Breweries in Japan. It might be a chickpea variety needed in India or an oat variety that General Mills specifically asked for in the United States. Important, one-of-its-kind research in the area of irrigation continues to flourish with this government’s assistance in Outlook, Saskatchewan.

VIDO-InterVac [Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization-international vaccine centre] continues to take on world first-of-its-kind groundbreaking research in Saskatoon in the area of controlling infectious diseases in humans and animals, with continued support from this government.

Livestock producers in this province believe the government

doesn’t need to be in the land ownership business. We know and trust really that producers can manage pastures a lot better than we can as a government. They support the winding up of the Saskatchewan pasture program and look forward to providing input as to how they envision these pastures should be managed into the future. Values extracted from the pasture sales could be put to far better use ensuring the patrons of those pastures, kids’ schools, or their parents’ care homes are adequately funded and maintained.

Another rookie on our roster is the first of its kind in North America, the innovation patent box incentive that’s designed to support the commercialization of new and transformative innovations to ensure that Saskatchewan companies or those willing to locate in Saskatchewan can take full advantage of their wealth of creative, world-leading research and technology. This will encourage innovative companies such as CreateCafe 3D Printing in Saskatoon to be the world leaders in 3-D [three dimensional] printing technologies. Not too distant future, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they’re going to be 3-D printing a house or a barn.

Companies like the Ag Exchange Group of Saskatoon that continue to develop and market new products like their online grain trading system. Or maybe Coconut Calendar, a company in Saskatoon producing a web-based time management application potentially used around the world.

There are a number of fascinating and very innovative companies existing in our province right now that are revolutionizing or have the potential to revolutionize how we’re going to operate in this technologically crazy world. We have Innocorps Research Corporation, which provides innovative water treatment solutions for the oil and gas industry; Polytenna technologies, who have developed polymer antennas for the emerging mm-wave wireless device market; SED Systems, who have been involved in projects such as a deep space antenna network for the European Space Agency; or the SiriusXM digital satellite systems; and the Classic aeronautical gateway systems for Inmarsat.

Or how about Solido Design Automation, who created the world’s top CAD [computer-aided design] software? And their chips are used in products selling around the world: in cellphones, tablets, computers to chip cards, smart TVs, and cars. How about ISM Canada, who’s world renowned for big data analytics and data mining, social media analytics, cloud computing, smart mobile solutions?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a Silicon Valley of the north. But we need these as innovators and we need to ensure that we can retain them and encourage them to produce their products here in Saskatchewan. Attracting and retaining high-income earners also attracts their investment in the business opportunities in Saskatchewan and it promotes economic growth.

The Saskatchewan commercial innovation incentive and Sask research development tax credit are more tools in the tool box, announced or improved in this budget, that are going to continue to encourage these companies to establish here.

Mr. Speaker, we know that there are people who are going to be affected negatively by this budget. A few people are going to

lose jobs. We get that, and we do not take these tough decisions lightly. We understand that. However in true Saskatchewan fashion, many are finding opportunities in what others call negatives. Already in Melville, I have talked to a small husband-and-wife company who have created a courier service that big companies don't normally serve. They are anticipating hiring five more trucks, full-time people, and bringing more trucks on to cover more routes in the courier business. It would not surprise me that services that are reduced or eliminated will be filled in by local entrepreneurs who will find the opportunities where others believe there are obstacles. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this province was built on hard work, perseverance, and innovation — innovation that we see every day in small-town Saskatchewan.

[16:45]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, back to the football terminology — we are coming out of the huddle with a plan. The biggest obstacle we face is the opposition who have a totally unknown game plan. We have all our players ready to meet the challenge they have in front of them. We are not going to punt the ball and hope for the best, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have to deal with lower resource revenues by restructuring the tax base, control spending, and getting the province back to balance soon.

We are leading the country in all positive growth statistics. We'll make sure we are the most competitive jurisdiction in the country, allowing for innovation, and we will continue to be the province that people will continue to want to be in versus the place where everyone was from.

In closing, I would once again like to voice my support for the 2017 budget introduced by our Minister of Finance last Wednesday and make it clear that I do not support the amendment.

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

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the House and speak to 2017-18 budget, as tabled by the Finance minister. And I'm not sure if I'll manage the clock effectively, but hoping so. And if not, I'm going to be supporting the budget and the motion seconded by the member from Moosomin and not the amendment.

But as is customary, I have people to thank as well. And I'd like to thank the people of Coronation Park for their support and giving me the privilege to serve again. I'd like to thank you for your trust in me as your MLA.

I would like to thank my partner, Lisa — actually I call her the Lisa — for her continued support and your belief in me. Thanks for running the campaign. I couldn't have done it without you.

And I know that my mom is watching so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to thank my family and my mom in particular. And she's certainly no stranger here, and she likes coming, and I'd like to acknowledge that, Mr. Speaker.

I'd also like to thank my constituency association for their

tireless work and the volunteers that continue to amaze.

I would like to thank the steady stream of constituency assistants who do their best to keep me organized or close to it. Mr. Speaker, I don't know if it's me or it's the job, but either way, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank Kristy Shaw, who has recently returned from maternity leave, and the myriad of others who filled in to assist during that time. Mr. Speaker, the list, in no particular order, during this mat leave was Maggie, Marlene, Tessa, Hayley, and Bonnie. That's just this year. I'd like to thank . . . their conscientious work serving the people of Coronation Park, Regina, in the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They filled in admirably. And again, maybe it's me, but okay.

Mr. Speaker, this budget was a challenge. Difficult choices were made, but it was our belief as government that we weren't going to kick the can down the road for future governments to deal with. Our decision was to formulate a plan, and as is this case, a three-year plan. Mr. Speaker, we believe that the people of this province want to see a plan; not a shrug of the shoulders and an oh well, we'll sort it out sometime in some fashion. No, Mr. Speaker, that is not what we want and how we're going to deal with our fiscal challenge. We're going to face it. We're going to outline, and outline with a plan of how we're going to deal with it.

Mr. Speaker, the province of Saskatchewan is facing a revenue challenge. Since 2015 our resource revenues declined over \$1.3 billion. Tax revenue is down by hundreds of millions of dollars due to resource sector shutdown.

The population has grown by 162,000 people in the 10-plus years, putting pressure on vital services. Now this is not the worst problem to have. The province has grown. That's a good thing. People have chosen to live here. That's a good thing. This is their new home and the place they want to work and raise their family.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've had the opportunity to speak to hundreds of newcomers in my former role as minister and as the Legislative Secretary for immigration and culture, Mr. Speaker. Their story is one of perseverance, struggle, tragedy, and spirit. Mr. Deputy Speaker, their singular goal is to have a better life, a life that is first and foremost safe, safe for themselves and their family. They've lost everything or given up everything for the hope, and make no mistake, it is hope for a better life. They want what everybody wants.

They want their children to have a better life than they had, and they have found that. They saw snow for the first time and giggled in gratitude. They laughed at the sight of their children playing in the snow and enjoying themselves, just as every Canadian kid does and still does.

They want to have better lives, and now that they're safe they want to contribute to their new home and their new communities. They're learning English and looking for work. And this is not easy as they've also had to learn the culture of Saskatchewan. So how do you explain not only the Saskatchewan culture but Canadian culture to newcomers?

Through organizations like the Open Door Society, they're doing just that. They're learning about their new home. I had

the opportunity this past Saturday to attend my fourth INVOLVE [integrating newcomers with volunteer opportunities to add leadership values through education] Day, integrating newcomers through volunteer and networking experiences, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This provided 20 newcomers from 16 different countries an opportunity to network and volunteer, which is so typically Canadian but also so Saskatchewan. We volunteer more than any other province.

So in discussion with them, I asked what they think of Saskatchewan, and what is it to be Canadian? After some thought, one person from Ghana said, you have to say “sorry” a lot. And yes, I had to agree, we do say sorry a lot. They wondered why we did that when we have done nothing wrong. I said if they go to other countries that’s reserved for when they’re apologizing. I’m not sure how to square that circle, but a good cultural nuance we have.

They also wanted to know where my soldiers were. And I said, soldiers? They go, yes in our country no politician goes anywhere without soldiers, or a limo, and certainly they don’t talk to regular folk. Soldiers, yes — where are mine, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I am wondering that. Where are my soldiers?

An Hon. Member: — Right behind you.

Mr. Docherty: — Right behind me. My colleagues are right behind me, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In the budget we made some difficult choices to ensure core public services like health care, education, and social services, and make sure that they’re sustainable for the long term. We’ve always pursued growth as a government because it pays for these important services Saskatchewan people depend on. We’ll continue making important investments like these as we follow our plan to bring the budget back to balance in 2019. We’re going to invest in people, and we’re going to continue to. Part of that investment, Mr. Speaker, in this budget is a 9 per cent increase to Social Services to support our most vulnerable — the largest budget in Saskatchewan history.

So where did the money go? Forty new schools plus another two in Rosthern and Weyburn; 889 new child care spaces; \$3.3 million for the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency; \$12 million increase to reduce the ER wait times in Regina and Saskatoon. We spent money in infrastructure and paying down debt. I’m puzzled by the criticism of building schools, hospitals, and highways. What was the choice? Not doing any of that or doing a few and leaving things as is, so we chose schools, hospitals, and long-term care.

Mr. Speaker, I’m wondering if we can somehow get to the point where there are facts in relation to the bypass, as one particular issue. I’m a little confused. I don’t know how many petitions were brought forward by the interim leader of the NDP.

An Hon. Member: — 80.

Mr. Docherty: — Eighty about the dangerous truck traffic on Dewdney Avenue. So are we to assume that because you no longer are bringing petitions forward that you’re in favour of the bypass? Or the people who signed the petition are okay with it, or what? I’ll assume that, since in opposition you’re

obligated to complain about everything, that when you’re silent you’re in agreement. I guess that is what we will have to believe since I can’t remember you ever saying you agree, but okay.

The members opposite sure like to torque things. They like to take a few words and phrases and then beat them into oblivion. So as an example, they like to use the term “corporate money,” “big money,” “big business money.” They want to get corporate money and union money donations out of Sask politics. Well that would be interesting because, as the member from Martensville pointed out yesterday, a lot of you would have very little donations if you lost your union donations. You’d probably have zero.

But, Mr. Speaker, in this budget there are tax breaks, and specifically business tax relief as well as personal income tax reductions. But the members opposite like to paint the picture to suit their narrative as corporate tax breaks. Big, bad corporations are benefiting again.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what they don’t say was this is also business tax relief and in particular small-business and medium-business tax relief, Mr. Speaker. But that won’t fit their narrative. Members opposite say they’re the defenders of the little guy. Well they can explain that when small business questions them, or they can stay on their narrative and oh, I made that one up, Mr. Speaker. Oops, sorry about that. Maybe they want to be a real boy, all doom and gloom, sky’s falling, Eeyore, Chicken Little, Henny Penny, Turkey Lurkey — all there, Mr. Speaker, right across.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to tour the province as part of the crime reduction committee. We toured a lot of the province. One thing I didn’t expect, Mr. Speaker, was to be one — I was one with rural Saskatchewan. Me. I didn’t grow up in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and Coronation Park is entirely urban. I have spent most of my working life working with children in need of protection, and young offenders to name a few, so I have a pretty good understanding of crime.

But I was amazed when we met with the Saskatchewan cattle association and they spoke about rustling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They spoke about cattle rustling. Well I was a little bit gobsmacked. Of course I had a few more questions to ask. I got puzzled looks from my colleagues and the cattle association. I just couldn’t wrap my head around how one might engage in rustling. And I’m thinking westerns and driving them field to field and all the logistics of that.

No, it was big trucks pulling up and place a temporary ramp and load them up and drive away. Not the theme from *Rawhide*, as I envisioned. Load ’em up; move ’em out. I think I’m learning. What I know now, I’m offering my cattle expertise to the Ag minister. That’s bovine, don’t you know. I’m going to be the Legislative Secretary or maybe a consultant to the Ag minister, and I’m ready to go. Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I’m ready to go.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my first degree was a Bachelor of Science in earth science and geology and I’m particularly interested in sedimentary petrology. And we have an abundance of that in our province in the coal fields of Coronach and Estevan — the member from Estevan, there you go — to the Bakken formation and the oil and natural gas, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have oil

and the safest way to move it is through pipelines. Or, as the members opposite have countered, leave it in the ground. Well if we need to move it and the pipelines are the best mode, then, Mr. Speaker, we need to.

Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to speak with the minister responsible for Energy and Mines, and in this budget you'll see there was a significant enhancement to the regulatory oversight for the oil and gas industry. Mr. Speaker, there was additional funding allocated to the number of initiatives. The pipeline regulation enhancement program, \$600,000 to that as a start-up. There's \$500,000 increase to core funding to a number of field inspection offices: Estevan, Swift Current, Kindersley, Lloydminster. \$250,000 funding to expand technical capacity of the ministry's support of Government of Saskatchewan's climate change commitments related to the upstream oil and gas industry. And I quote, Mr. Deputy Speaker, "The changes announced today, including the amendment to the administrative levy will enable the Government of Saskatchewan to deliver on significant improvements to its oil and gas regulatory programs." That's Energy and Resources minister, our Energy and Resources minister said. "Public confidence in our regulatory system is vital to the long term growth and development of our oil and gas industry, [Mr. Speaker]."

Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting that it seems that there's some national press taking notice of our response to getting back to balance in comparison to the NDP Alberta. *Maclean's* magazine wrote the following:

Alberta and Saskatchewan have budget problems. And they've had them for decades.

Easy money from resource revenue provided roughly one-quarter of all provincial revenue only a few short years ago. The collapse in oil prices, which aren't expected to rise any time soon, revealed each province's shaky budget foundations for all to see.

Though they . . . [see] similar challenges, their responses are anything but. In Alberta, budget debates are highly polarized . . . It doesn't need to be this way, [Mr. Speaker].

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, Alberta's provincial-named party — the Alberta party — is also proposing a similar middle ground approach).

Mr. Speaker, we're getting attention, national attention in regards to this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they absolutely are standing with Saskatchewan, knowing full well we are responsible fiscal stewards. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

| | |
|-------------------|------------|
| Tell | 1939 |
| McCall | 1939, 1940 |
| Wall | 1939, 1940 |
| Wotherspoon | 1939 |
| Stewart | 1940 |
| Sproule | 1940 |
| Ross | 1940 |
| Beck | 1941 |
| The Speaker | 1941 |

PRESENTING PETITIONS

| | |
|----------------|------|
| Vermette | 1941 |
| Lambert | 1941 |
| Belanger | 1941 |
| Sproule | 1941 |
| Forbes | 1942 |
| Rancourt | 1942 |
| Beck | 1942 |
| Sarauer | 1943 |

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Gender Diversity Awareness Week

| | |
|----------------|------|
| Docherty | 1943 |
|----------------|------|

Prince Albert Students Compete at Model United Nations Assembly

| | |
|----------------|------|
| Rancourt | 1943 |
|----------------|------|

Humanity First Launches Nationwide Campaign

| | |
|------------|------|
| Fiaz | 1943 |
|------------|------|

Empowering Immigrant Women Workshop

| | |
|----------------|------|
| Chartier | 1944 |
|----------------|------|

New Grain-Handling Facilities in Saskatchewan

| | |
|---------------|------|
| Kaeding | 1944 |
|---------------|------|

Local Businessman Receives Business for Peace Award

| | |
|----------------------|------|
| Beaudry-Mellor | 1944 |
|----------------------|------|

New Schools in Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota

| | |
|------------|------|
| Eyre | 1945 |
|------------|------|

QUESTION PERIOD

Regina Bypass Project and Financial Support for Municipalities

| | |
|-------------------|------|
| Wotherspoon | 1945 |
|-------------------|------|

| | |
|------------|------|
| Wall | 1945 |
|------------|------|

Government's Fiscal Management

| | |
|---------------|------|
| Sproule | 1946 |
|---------------|------|

| | |
|---------------|------|
| Doherty | 1947 |
|---------------|------|

Ownership of Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation

| | |
|---------------|------|
| Sproule | 1947 |
|---------------|------|

| | |
|-------------|------|
| Marit | 1947 |
|-------------|------|

Saskatchewan Transportation Company Assets and Services

| | |
|----------------|------|
| Vermette | 1947 |
|----------------|------|

| | |
|----------------|------|
| Hargrave | 1947 |
|----------------|------|

| | |
|----------------|------|
| Chartier | 1948 |
|----------------|------|

| | |
|--------------|------|
| Reiter | 1948 |
|--------------|------|

Funding for Libraries

| | |
|------------|------|
| Beck | 1948 |
|------------|------|

| | |
|--------------|------|
| Morgan | 1948 |
|--------------|------|

Provincial Sales Tax Exemptions

| | |
|---------------|------|
| Sproule | 1949 |
|---------------|------|

| | |
|---------------|------|
| Doherty | 1949 |
|---------------|------|

Funding for Post-Secondary Students

| | |
|-------------|------|
| Meili | 1949 |
|-------------|------|

| | |
|------------|------|
| Eyre | 1949 |
|------------|------|

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 53 — *The Provincial Health Authority Act*

| | |
|--------------|------|
| Reiter | 1949 |
|--------------|------|

| | |
|--|------|
| Bill No. 54 — <i>The Provincial Health Authority Consequential Amendment Act, 2017</i> | |
| <i>Loi de 2017 portant modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Provincial Health Authority Act</i> | |
| Reiter | 1950 |
| Bill No. 55 — <i>The Miscellaneous Statutes (Economy — Audit Assessments) Amendment Act, 2017</i> | |
| Duncan | 1950 |
| Bill No. 56 — <i>The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2017</i> | |
| Duncan | 1950 |
| ORDERS OF THE DAY | |
| SPECIAL ORDER | |
| ADJOURNED DEBATES | |
| MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY | |
| (BUDGET DEBATE) | |
| Dennis | 1950 |
| Lambert | 1953 |
| Fiaz | 1957 |
| Rancourt | 1959 |
| Beaudry-Mellor | 1963 |
| Kaeding | 1965 |
| Docherty | 1968 |

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Brad Wall
Premier

President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Tina Beaudry-Mellor
Minister of Social Services
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff
Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission

Hon. Kevin Doherty
Minister of Finance

Hon. Dustin Duncan
Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Telecommunications

Hon. Bronwyn Eyre
Minister of Advanced Education

Hon. Joe Hargrave
Minister of Crown Investments
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Government Insurance
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Transportation Company

Hon. Donna Harpauer
Minister of Government Relations
Minister Responsible for First Nations,
Métis and Northern Affairs

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Minister of the Economy
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Liquor and Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for The Global
Transportation Hub Authority
Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan
Minister Responsible for Innovation

Hon. David Marit
Minister of Highways and Infrastructure

Hon. Scott Moe
Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Water
Security Agency
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Corporation

Hon. Don Morgan
Deputy Premier
Minister of Education
Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan
Workers' Compensation Board

Hon. Greg Ottenbreit
Minister Responsible for Rural and Remote Health

Hon. Jim Reiter
Minister of Health

Hon. Lyle Stewart
Minister of Agriculture
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Crop
Insurance Corporation

Hon. Christine Tell
Minister of Central Services
Minister Responsible for the Provincial
Capital Commission
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Gaming Corporation

Hon. Gordon Wyant
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Minister Responsible for SaskBuilds
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Power Corporation