



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

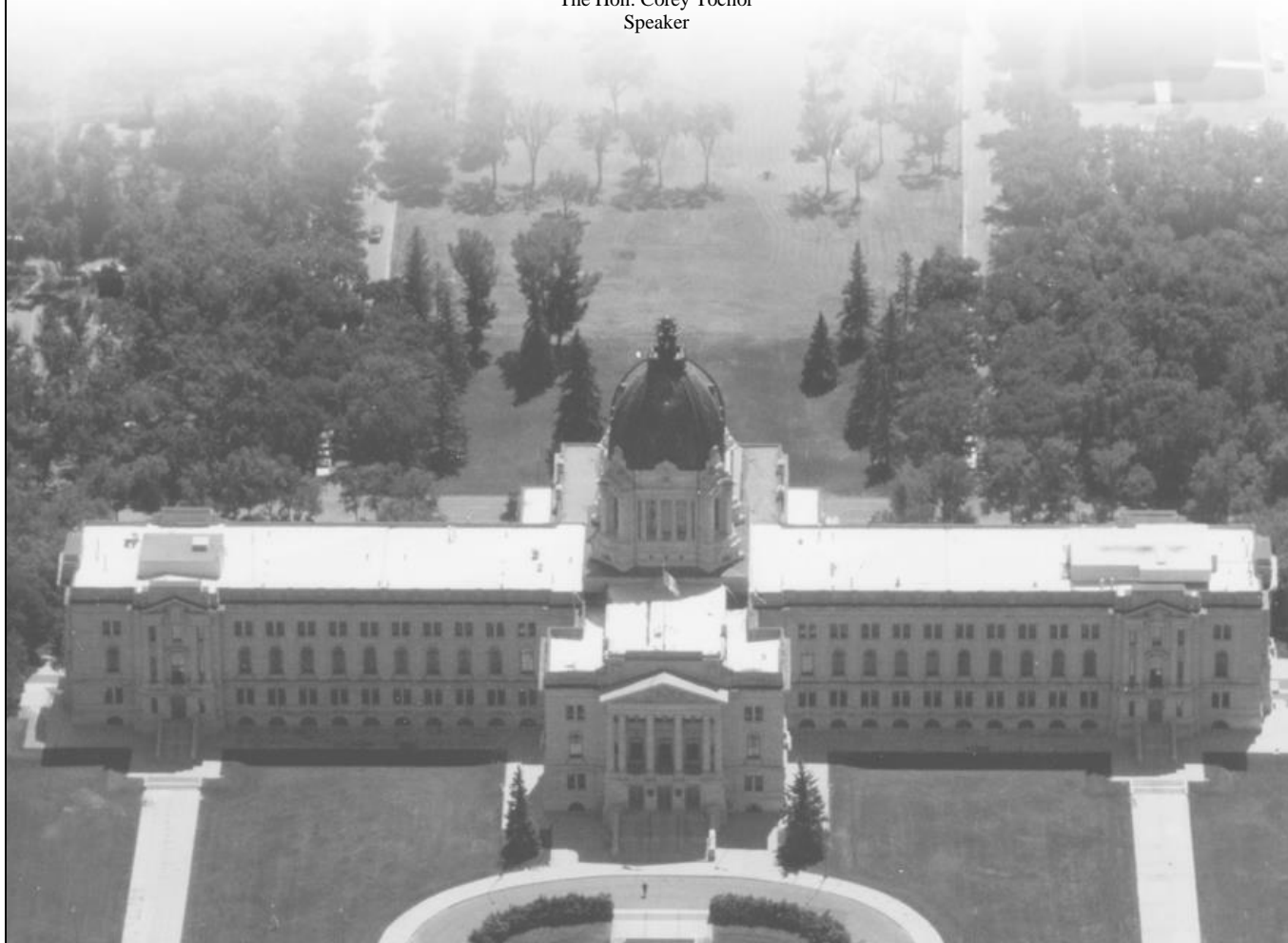
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Corey Tochor
Speaker



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

Speaker — Hon. Corey Tochor

Premier — Hon. Brad Wall

Leader of the Opposition — Trent Wotherspoon

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Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)

Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

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

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[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask leave for an extended introduction.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce in your gallery, and thank, Dr. Louise Greenberg, deputy minister of Advanced Education. Louise is retiring after a 32-year career in the public service. She came to Saskatchewan from Montreal to do her Ph.D. [Doctor of Philosophy] at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan]. And after obtaining her doctorate, she began her career in 1985 with Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food working as a provincial swine specialist. She then worked in various expert capacities in government including in Executive Council, as an intergovernmental officer, and policy adviser in the cabinet planning unit.

Louise returned to the Ministry of Agriculture and became a regular on CBC's [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] *As It Happens* during the BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy] crisis. She was appointed assistant deputy minister and then deputy minister for Regional Economic and Co-operative Development in 2005, and would go on to become associate deputy minister in both Health and Social Services before becoming deputy minister for Advanced Education in 2012.

Several colleagues and I have had the pleasure to work with Louise and have appreciated her thoughtfulness, her warmth, and generosity as a leader and as a colleague. Now in retirement, we expect Louise will spend more of her time on the things she loves to do when she isn't working and multi-tasking such as reading, exercising, and making gourmet food. She'll also be spending more time with her husband, Earl.

Louise, on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, thank you for your service to the people of this province. We would like to wish you a happy, healthy, and enjoyable retirement.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to add my voice in thanks and congratulations to Dr. Greenberg for her service to the province over these many years. The work that leaders in the public service and leaders in the education field provide for this province is extremely important for our future, and I'm very

thankful to you, and wish Dr. Greenberg the best in her retirement. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Environment.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to you and through you to all members of the legislature, I would like to join with others here in congratulating Dr. Greenberg on a successful career here with the Government of Saskatchewan.

And I also would like to add my thank you to her as I had the opportunity to work with her and her team in the Ministry of Advanced Education for a short while. And I always appreciated the relationship that she had with her team in the Ministry of Advanced Education, and the relationship that she had with our post-secondary partners across the province, our colleagues across the nation, and the very sophisticated and great way that she brought the information to our office. It was always appreciated.

And anyone that knows Louise knows that she's a very good cook, and she emails some pictures of food from time to time which, by sheer guilt, I compare those pictures to what's on my plate, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to tell her that they are getting closer. And so just by sheer guilt I am eating better due to my time with Louise.

But I do want to congratulate her on a successful career and wish her all the best as she has some more time to spend with Earl and others into the future. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join in with the Minister of Advanced Education, the Minister of the Environment, the critic for Advanced Ed in congratulating Louise on her outstanding career.

I was Minister of Advanced Education at one time, and Louise was my deputy minister. And my first interaction with her, Mr. Speaker, was she actually dropped off briefing books at my house. She doesn't live far from me here in Regina, so she brought them over to my house when I was appointed Minister of Advanced Education.

And we had a brief conversation, and she said to me, "What do you think about my shoes?" And I said, "Well I guess they're lovely. I don't know." And several interactions later in my office, she kept saying, "Well what about these shoes, Kevin? What do you think about these shoes?" And I finally said, "Why do you keep asking me about your shoes?" And she said, "Someone told me you're a shoe aficionado, and I shop for a lot of shoes." And I went, "No, I'm not. And stop asking me to comment on your shoes, please."

We had a wonderful working relationship, Mr. Speaker. She is a cooking aficionado, as others have mentioned, and still sends out pictures of meals that she prepares for . . . her and Earl prepare for their weekend dinners, and I hope we continue to receive those pictures. And I just want to wish Louise and her husband Earl all the best in retirement, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislative Assembly, seated in your gallery, two friends of mine. We have Mary-Jane Duncan Eger and Katelyn Duncan. These two young women are absolute leaders in our community. Mary-Jane is a new mom, eight-month-old Jameson.

And Katelyn has the opportunity . . . She works for the Ministry of Agriculture as a agricultural awareness specialist. Katelyn also had the opportunity to speak at We Day. So she spoke to over 14,000 young students about what inspires her. And I'll speak more later about these two fine young women. So please, everyone, join with me in welcoming these two fine leaders in our community to our Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to very quickly get on the record with other of my colleagues in terms of saluting and saying a big word of thanks to Dr. Louise Greenberg for 32 years of public service. And I'm sure she sometimes wondered what she had done to spend certain of those years in committee estimates with myself as the opposition critic. You know, the mind races. But in all seriousness, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the service to Dr. Greenberg, and best wishes for a retirement that is eminently well deserved. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And today it's a pleasure for me to rise and present a petition from citizens who are opposed to the federal carbon tax and the decision the federal government has made to impose the carbon tax on the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I know the members opposite won't support us in opposing a federal carbon tax as they voted against the motion last year. But I'm wondering if they'd stand with the members of the USW [United Steelworkers], the members of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the members of the Saskatchewan Heavy Construction Association who had a rally on March 16th to oppose this very carbon tax. So if they're not going to stand with the government, will they at least stand with the people of the province and oppose this carbon tax that is going to make life more . . . less affordable for them across every aspect of their life, Mr. Speaker.

So I'll read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

In the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request 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 our province.

And I implore the members opposite to get off their hands and support us in this endeavour, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

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 the Saskatchewan Transportation Company. They would like us all to know that STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] provides a vital service to many seniors, workers, and families throughout the province; and that by scrapping STC out of the blue and 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 to drive the economy with parcel services 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 the sell-off of 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 Riversdale.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to present a petition once again to reverse the cuts to the Lighthouse program. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners point out that in April 2014, the minister of Social Services said that the Lighthouse in Saskatoon would "... take pressure off of existing detox facilities, hospitals, and police cells, while keeping people safe, especially in our brutally cold winters." They point out that on that very same day, Mr. Speaker, the minister of Health said, "We want to ensure that individuals with mental health and addictions issues have a safe place to stay."

They point out that this government in the past has repeatedly indicated that the Lighthouse stabilization unit keeps individuals out of the hospital emergency rooms and jail cells and, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we couldn't agree more. But the petitioners are concerned that the ministers are now trying to place the responsibility for repairing budget deficits on those experiencing addictions, unemployment, and poverty, on those who are living from day to day without proper services.

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

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan immediately reverse their recent cuts to funding that allows extremely vulnerable people to access the services of the Lighthouse stabilization unit in Saskatoon, and revisit their imposition of a strict and narrow definition of homelessness in November of 2015 which forced the Lighthouse to cut

back its hours of essential service in February of 2016; and take immediate steps to ensure that homeless people in Saskatchewan have emergency shelter, clothing, and food available to them before more lives are lost.

This petition today is signed by citizens of Saskatoon. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I stand in my place under the direction of the member from Prince Albert Northcote for someone, anyone to stand up with her in the support of a second bridge for Prince Albert. And I'm answering that call by presenting the petition requesting a second bridge.

Mr. Speaker, the need for a second bridge for Prince Albert has never been more clear than it is today. Prince Albert, communities north of Prince Albert, and the businesses that send people and products through Prince Albert require a solution. So therefore:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, ask that the Sask Party government stop stalling, hiding behind rhetoric and refusing to listen to the people calling for action, and to 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 do every day, Mr. Speaker, we stand up and we present petitions from all throughout the province. And on these particular three pages that I'm presenting today, the people that have signed this petition are primarily from Prince Albert. And I so present.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising to present a petition opposed to Bill 40 and a potential 49 per cent Crown corporation sell-off. The people who are signing the petition today would like to bring to our attention the following: that the Sask Party's Bill 40 creates a new definition for privatization that allows the government to wind down, dissolve, or sell up to 49 per cent of the shares of a Crown corporation without holding a referendum; that in 2015-16 alone, Saskatchewan's Crown corporations returned 297.2 million in dividends to pay for schools, roads, and hospitals. Those dividends should go to the people of Saskatchewan, not private investors.

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, and this short-sighted legislation would then risk sending millions of Crown dividends to Ottawa rather than the people of Saskatchewan.

So I'll 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.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people who have signed the petition today come from Bienfait, Estevan, Midale. I so present.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition concerning pay equity here in Saskatchewan. And the undersigned residents of the province 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 that research published by the world banks suggest that closing the gender wage gap could be worth the equivalent of 10 per cent of Canada's GDP [gross domestic product].

[10:15]

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 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 that a man makes.

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

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

And, Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition come from Moose Jaw and Maple Creek today. Thank you so much.

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 resources to people in distress. The daytime closure of Prince Albert mobile crisis has put stress on Prince Albert Police Service, Victoria Hospital, and many other agencies in the community. These people may not be trained and/or qualified to provide counselling and intervention services to clients.

And, Mr. Speaker, we know that the services that mobile crisis provides fall under different mandates of the different ministers — the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Services, and the Ministry of Justice — and it would be nice if they could get together and come to a conclusion to provide services for Prince Albert mobile crisis so that we'll have crisis services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in Prince Albert once again.

I'll read the prayer:

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

Mr. Speaker, individuals across the province realize that this is a valuable service that is much needed in Prince Albert, and the individuals signing this particular petition are from Shell Lake, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert. I do so present.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition today regarding libraries in the province. Those who've signed this petition wish to draw our attention to the following: whereas the Saskatchewan government has cut funding for regional libraries in half or by almost 60 per cent or by 3.5 million and eliminated funding for libraries in Regina and Saskatoon. This drastic funding cut will have a devastating impact on libraries, especially regional libraries and the many people who depend upon them, Mr. Speaker.

Whereas libraries are about more than just borrowing books: meeting rooms are used by groups, staff host educational programs and clubs, and the publicly accessible computer terminals are essential to many. There are services for seniors, for children, employment support, language and reading groups, citizenship test preparation, and help for newcomers to build their resumé. Whereas these cuts will have disproportionate impact on rural communities, and whereas libraries are vital community spaces, potential closures or reductions in services will severely impact our communities.

I'll read the prayer:

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

Mr. Speaker, these petitions have been rolling in from around the province, as have the emails — almost 1,100 at last count.

This particular petition has been signed by people who reside in Regina, Moose Jaw, Maple Creek, Ogema, and Saskatoon. 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 very dubious distinction, Mr. Speaker, of having the highest rate of domestic violence by intimate partners amongst all Canadian provinces. One in three Canadian workers have experienced domestic violence, and for many of them the violence follows them to work. Employers lose \$77.9 million annually due to the direct and indirect impacts of domestic violence.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has already enacted legislation and Ontario is on its way to enacting legislation that ensures job security for victims of domestic violence.

I'd like to read the prayer:

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

Mr. Speaker, we tabled a private member's bill that called for the enactment of this specific provision along with two other provisions. Mr. Speaker, we hope that the government will take that call on.

Individuals who signed this particular page of the petition today come from Wymark, Lafleche, Mossbank, and Leader. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Purple Day for Epilepsy Awareness

Mr. Buckingham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In one way or another, epilepsy affects us all. This past Sunday was Purple Day for epilepsy awareness. It was my pleasure to attend a fundraiser on Saturday that was the 10th anniversary of the Saskatchewan epilepsy program. This is the reason that some of my colleagues are wearing purple today, so that we can bring awareness to this important cause.

Mr. Speaker, there are 10,000 people living with epilepsy in our province today. Further, as MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] we all work with someone who has been affected by epilepsy. The Legislative Assembly's lawyer, Ken Ring, has lived with epilepsy for more than 25 years.

Mr. Speaker, there is a growing number of treatment options available and Ken recently was able to get a surgery that has helped control his seizures. The results have been amazing. He has not had a seizure since this life-changing surgery. We are thankful that his quality of life has improved due to this surgery, and we know that there is world-class research taking place around the world and right here in Saskatchewan, where

we are seeing earlier diagnosis, management, and treatment of epilepsy.

Mr. Speaker, like so many things, epilepsy touches us all. And I would ask all members to join me to acknowledge Purple Day and all the hard work of everyone at the Sask epilepsy program at RUH [Royal University Hospital]. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Prince Albert's 2017 Citizen of the Year

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On February 4th, a banquet was held to honour Sheryl Kimbley who was Prince Albert's 2017 Citizen of the Year. Sheryl Kimbley is known for extensive volunteer work around the city of Prince Albert and has dedicated herself to making life better for those of us who call it home.

Kimbley volunteers with Relay for Life and Run for the Cure, has helped organize Voices of the North since its first year, and is a strong advocate for local musical talent. She has also assisted with suicide prevention strategies in Prince Albert and the North, has welcomed Syrian refugees to our city, and is active with feeding the homeless.

Kimbley's dedication to her volunteerism is matched only by the dedication and compassion with which she performs it. She is a wonderful mentor for women and for First Nations people in Prince Albert. Even more than all of that, Mr. Speaker, Sheryl is also a wonderful ambassador for Prince Albert and is outspoken in her support of our city.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join with me in congratulating Sheryl Kimbley, this year's Citizen of the Year in Prince Albert and in thanking the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* and the Prince Albert Kinsmen Club for organizing the Citizen of the Year banquet and making this celebration of Sheryl Kimbley's accomplishment possible. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Provincial Secretary.

Saskatchewan Communities on List of Top 40 Towns

Hon. Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to share with the Assembly a wonderful article from *Country Living* magazine which outlines the top 40 Canadian towns to visit in 2017. This list contains two communities from my constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers: the tourism destinations of Emma Lake and Waskesiu, located near, and in Prince Albert National Park respectively. These communities, among many others in my constituency, offer precious outdoor activities and sightseeing gems. They offer world-class, all-season tourism amenities including fishing, boating, beautiful beaches, and pristine winter trails. Both Emma Lake and Waskesiu are located right next to blue heron provincial park, our province's newest park.

The tourism sector makes up a large segment of the economy here in Saskatchewan Rivers — restaurants, hotels, bed and breakfasts, outfitters, and water sports businesses. But most importantly, the people who make up these communities are

truly deserving of the recognition outlined in this article.

I might also remind all of my colleagues and anyone watching today to take advantage of the free entry to our excellent national parks. To commemorate Canada's 150th birthday, national park entry fees will be waived for 2017.

Please join me in congratulating and acknowledging the communities of Emma and Waskesiu lakes for preserving and promoting Saskatchewan tourism to the world. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Remembering Joseph Auguste Merasty

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, I want to extend condolences to the friends and family of Joseph Auguste Merasty who passed away this past February 27th at the age of 87. I didn't know Mr. Merasty personally, but I do know something of his life through his family and through reading his book titled *The Education of Augie Merasty: A Residential School Memoir*.

Mr. Speaker, it's a hard story but a very important one. Mr. Merasty reminded us that the residential schools weren't just a shameful chapter in this country's history, but that its victims were and are individuals with faces, names, families, hopes and dreams whose lives were forever marred by their experience.

It's for this reason, and I'm sure many more, that the Saskatchewan Library Association chose Mr. Merasty's memoir for its first-ever province-wide community reading initiative, One Book, One Province, for this month of March 2017. I'd like to acknowledge Bruce Walsh, director and publisher of the University of Regina Press who recognized the value of Mr. Merasty's work and chose to publish it. And a special hay-hay as well to Nickita Longman, an early and faithful champion of the work.

And as well, Mr. Speaker, to the book's co-author, David Carpenter, thank you very much. He went above and beyond to ensure that this powerful story was told. In the words of Carpenter:

From Augie, we get the truth. As far as reconciliation is concerned, the more we listen to or read the stories of First Nations people, Indigenous people, the closer we are to some beginning towards reconciliation.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask all members to join me today in recognizing the accomplishments and the courage of Augie Merasty and to extend our condolences to his family and friends on his passing.

[The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.]

Hay-hay.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moosomin.

Grenfell Senior Hockey Team Wins Championship

Mr. Bonk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As each of us here in

the legislature know, senior hockey is a major event for many small communities here in Saskatchewan, and it's no different for the town of Grenfell in my constituency.

After 30 years the Grenfell Spitfires have finally won the Qu'Appelle Valley Hockey League championship which took place last Friday at the Grenfell Regional Park Arena. Led by the general manager Dale Hardy, head coach Dean Amy, and 11-year veteran and hometown product Braden Reiger, the Spitfires knocked off the Milestone Flyers 6 to 3 this past Friday night to win the Qu'Appelle Valley Hockey League championship series three games to none.

The Spitfires fell behind early 2-0 in the game before storming back to tie it late in the first period. Local Grenfell product TJ Reeve netted back-to-back goals early in the third, paving the way for the league's leading scorer, Sanfred King, to tap in the empty net goal to win the championship for the home side.

Mr. Speaker, this championship is not only for the hard-working players and coaches on that team, but the community as well. The Grenfell Regional Park Arena was filled hours before the puck dropped and celebrations lasted well into night after the final buzzer. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members in the Assembly to please join me in congratulating the town of Grenfell and the Grenfell Spitfires on a very successful season. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Rural Women Month

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in the House today to acknowledge that March was proclaimed Rural Women Month. This month recognizes the important contribution of Saskatchewan rural women to their communities and to the agricultural industry.

Mr. Speaker, one in four farm operators in the province is a woman, and 1 in 10 is a sole proprietor. It is a misconception that there are few women in the agricultural field, as women have been working on the farm and have been involved in agricultural business and been business leaders for a very long time.

[10:30]

Mr. Speaker, we have a great example of driven agriculture women right here in our gallery. Mary-Jane Duncan Eger and Katelyn Duncan grew up on the family farm just south of Regina. Even from a young age they were helping out on the farm.

In a CBC article, Katelyn said, "I think we were seen as a worker – a butt in the seat in the combine – so I think having that open mind and opportunity to fill that role on our farming operation really gave us a lot of confidence."

Mr. Speaker, it is women like these sisters who remind us, and the next generation of agriculture women, that farming and agricultural businesses is a good choice for women to make. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in celebrating March

as Rural Women Month. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

New Schools Opening in Regina

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to stand here today to highlight this government's commitment to our education system with the completion of two new schools in my constituency. Regina Public's École Wascana Plains — good name — and Regina Catholic's École St. Elizabeth are the two new schools in the Greens on Gardiner. They are both wonderful facilities and will be home to 850 students and 90 child care centre spaces when they open in September.

The Greens on Gardiner is a brand new neighbourhood and 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. Other area schools surrounding these two facilities will also see benefits from reduced class sizes and less strain on resources. This new joint-use school will also benefit the community as a whole, with access to fitness and a community resource centre.

These facilities will be available to the public after regular school hours, providing a real pillar for these growing communities. Our proud record is one of opening 40 brand new schools, including 21 this year along with 25 major renovations. While we know there is still more work to be done, Mr. Speaker, we are meeting the challenge to keep Saskatchewan strong today and into the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Details of Land Transactions

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, with the budget before us, a budget that breaks trust with Saskatchewan people, straight answers on the Sask Party's GTH [Global Transportation Hub] scandal are essential. Yesterday the Premier did at least take to his feet with respect to a question around the investigation into this scandal. Today though, can he tell us what he personally thought about the land sale when it came back to cabinet and was approved, just a year after it had been rejected, of course? And did he know at that time that the previous sale for approval was with the GTH minister's landlord?

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course the members opposite know that the auditor has looked into this matter. The auditor did a very thorough job of looking through all of the documents that pertained to the matter. The auditor spoke to all of the individuals involved with whom she wished to speak.

The government obviously co-operated fully with her investigation. In fact we asked her to look into this matter, as did the Public Accounts Committee. By her own testimony, she did a very thorough job in looking into the matter. I would

quote the auditor at the conclusion of the audit submission, and I quote:

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Saskatchewan Transportation Company Assets and Services

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, it's really strange that the Premier of Saskatchewan can't take to his feet and answer a simple question like that, Mr. Speaker.

The Sask Party's move to scrap STC came as a surprise to everyone: the passengers, the drivers, the people who believed that their government would follow the Crown protection Act and keep their word, even management at STC, Mr. Speaker.

Now we've got some pamphlets that were ready to distribute to customers. I'll just read a little from one of those pamphlets here, Mr. Speaker: "Coming soon to STC, 16-passenger Mercedes Sprinters. STC will soon be introducing new 16-passenger vehicles, Mercedes Sprinters, into its fleet." Then it goes on to highlight the many, many communities that these Mercedes Sprinters will serve, Mr. Speaker.

Now, they keep saying that they're not privatizing and that this isn't a sell-off. So I guess the question to the Premier is, what's the plan with all STC's equipment and their assets? What's the plan for the shiny new Mercedes buses? What's the plan for the \$27 million bus depot? It's past time for that Premier to come clean on his STC sell-off scheme.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we've mentioned before and the minister has highlighted, this was one of the very difficult decisions that was part of the budget, to discontinue services at STC. There's unfortunately nothing to privatize as an operation, because the company doesn't make any money. In fact it loses a lot of money, as members will know on both sides of the House.

Mr. Speaker, the current subsidy per passenger from the taxpayers to the bus company is \$94 per passenger. Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out for members opposite that this discussion around STC has happened when members opposite were in government. Mr. Speaker, I note that former CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] minister Eldon Lautermilch said, "The problem being the amount of money that corporation STC has been losing in the recent past has been what we believed to be not sustainable." So even in '97, the NDP [New Democratic Party] thought the subsidy to STC was unsustainable. And, Mr. Speaker, do you know what that subsidy was? The per passenger subsidy then, when the NDP thought the thing unsustainable, was \$5.52 a passenger.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the members are heckling from their seat. When they were in office, they did believe that some routes should be cancelled. They believed that routes should be cancelled when the subsidy for per passenger was five bucks. Today, the taxpayers are subsidizing it to the tune of \$90, Mr. Speaker, per passenger, and so we had to make this difficult decision. As for the assets of the company, we'll proceed with an orderly disposition of those assets.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — You know, Mr. Speaker, it's about keeping one's word. And to describe or characterize this as some sort of ... the way that he does just isn't fair. I mean, this service provides service to an entire province. And it costs less, it costs less, costs less than the transit service of the city of Regina, Mr. Speaker.

You know, we have pictures of course of the new Mercedes. They're all decaded up, but they've never been out of the garages, Mr. Speaker. Either they're selling them off and this is a sell-off, or they're letting them rust in a field somewhere, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, this does raise an important question. What kind of analysis did the Sask Party undertake before deciding to scrap this very important service? Was any assessment done at all about the impacts on health care and on patients accessing care? Was there any assessment at all into what this means for corrections or for jobs or for education? Was there any consideration at all as to what the impact is for small businesses and producers, Mr. Speaker?

And we ask these questions because, time and time again, we see the Sask Party shoots first and aims second, Mr. Speaker. Before cutting our provincial public transit and parcel system, it's evident that they didn't undertake a risk assessment and an assessment of all the risks and end impacts. If so, table that. But, Mr. Speaker, will the Premier finally just do the right thing and scrap this short-sighted and reckless sell-off?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, of course very careful consideration and assessment went into this very difficult decision, including ensuring that there would be programs in either the Ministry of Health or Social Services to help those who are most vulnerable get to important medical appointments, for example, if they used to rely on the bus.

Mr. Speaker, again in the member's preamble, well he either is not quite wanting to face reality or he doesn't know that STC actually doesn't service the whole province right now. There's many communities that don't have STC service. Well the member just sort of shrugs.

Mr. Speaker, part of the reason, part of the reason that STC does not serve the whole province is that when they were in office, they discontinued lines. They cut lines. I'm sure they did some assessment as to why they would cut lines. And I would ask the member if he supports the fact that his previous ... that his party in office reduced lines, because they cut those lines. They cut services to Saskatchewan when the subsidy from the

taxpayers to the bus company was \$5 a passenger, and now it's \$90 a passenger.

So, Mr. Speaker, I guess we have just a difference of opinion. We believe that the government should focus on core services in health care and education and social services. We don't believe the taxpayers should . . . in the long term can afford to subsidize, on a per-passenger basis, \$90 per passenger for the bus company. And so we've made the difficult decision, Mr. Speaker. But I wonder if the member can highlight for all the members in the House, at what level of subsidy would he consider to be unacceptable for the taxpayers to subsidize?

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

Changes to Tax Collection Procedures

Mr. Wotherspoon: — You know, Mr. Speaker, answers like that show us that they've not just lost their moral compass, but good old Saskatchewan common sense, Mr. Speaker. You know, they're all over the map. STC's parcel service is an important tool for producers and businesses across Saskatchewan, but the Sask Party has no plan. But the Sask Party doesn't seem to care much these days about supporting local Saskatchewan small businesses. In this budget, it's tax after tax after tax on the job creators, small businesses across Saskatchewan.

You know, the president of the Saskatchewan Construction Association calls the Sask Party's decision to put a new 6 per cent tax on construction labour, "a tax on growth." Mr. Speaker, why did the Premier push ahead with this new tax that puts the province at a competitive disadvantage, raises new barriers to investment by placing a tax directly on investment and jobs? How on earth does he think it makes any sense to ram forward with the epitome of a job-killing tax?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I'll certainly answer the question with respect to taxes, and I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Speaker, he mentioned in his preamble that somehow he inferred that it's good old Saskatchewan common sense to continue indefinitely with a subsidy to a company, \$90 per passenger on that bus. He says it's good old-fashioned Saskatchewan common sense that the government has to provide freight service in the province.

Mr. Speaker, we do have a different view on freight for sure, Mr. Speaker, than members opposite. We think the private sector is more than able to deliver freight around the province. And if the member knew this file, and if he knew his history, he would know that when they discontinued routes, the private sector stepped in on freight. When we've had to discontinue routes, the private sector stepped in on freight. And, Mr. Speaker, we have every expectation that that will be the case again.

And, Mr. Speaker, you know, I understand that in the budget, when we expand the base on PST [provincial sales tax], there will be certain sectors that are frustrated. But, Mr. Speaker, there has been considerable national commentary on the wisdom of our move away from taxes on investment and

income towards taxes on consumption. We have economists and other think tanks weighing in that this is the right thing to do for the economy, Mr. Speaker.

And when the plan is fully implemented, we'll have the lowest income taxes for families. We'll have the lowest income taxes on business. We'll have the lowest manufacturing rate in the country. And, Mr. Speaker, as long as those members aren't sitting on this side of the House giving in to the federal government's wishes, we will never have a carbon tax.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, this tax hike shifts close to \$350 million onto the backs of Saskatchewan people who want to build a new home or renovate, or a business that wants to grow and expand. Surely the minister will admit that a \$350 million jump in costs will be a cold shower on hopes to stimulate that industry.

Mr. Speaker, the minister said yesterday that they had received thousands of calls from businesses about their tax changes. I have no doubt about that. Mr. Speaker, there's nothing about that tax hike that makes any sense. But that seems to be the minister's MO [modus operandi] — hiking job-killing taxes, while families are faced to pay more and businesses lose out.

Restaurants Canada said that the Sask Party's PST changes will have a "devastating impact on restaurants." Mr. Speaker, to again take from Restaurants Canada, why is the minister ". . . punishing the sector of the food industry that creates the most jobs and economic activity"?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Mr. Speaker, we welcome this debate here in the Chamber with respect to the shift from taxing income and productivity in the province of Saskatchewan to taxing consumption, Mr. Speaker. Restaurants, going out to a restaurant for a meal is obviously a consumable good. It is part of a consumption tax base that most other provinces tax, Mr. Speaker. In the province of Manitoba, they're not harmonized with the federal GST [goods and services tax]. They have an 8 per cent provincial sales tax on their restaurants.

[10:45]

Now, Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting. I've done a little research as we're preparing to wrap up the budget debate here. I went back and looked at some of the budgets of the previous government. Back in '02-03, Mr. Speaker, just prior to the '03 election, and '04-05 . . . Well, not interested in an answer. They hate when we go back into their record, Mr. Speaker. They absolutely hate it when we bring up their record.

So we took a look at . . . They were 11 and 12 years into their mandate, Mr. Speaker, 11 and 12 years into their mandate. Why didn't they diversify the economy? Why did they continue to rely on resource revenues as a major part of their revenue base, Mr. Speaker? And it struck me. Do you know why, Mr. Speaker? Because they were getting equalization from Ottawa on an annual basis, Mr. Speaker, equalization from Ottawa to

the tune of over \$3 billion, Mr. Speaker. So they never thought it necessary to have to diversify the economy to attract new business into this province, Mr. Speaker.

We are making a major shift. I acknowledge that. I recognize that. We are making a major shift to get away from our reliance on resource revenues to ensure that our services are sustainable in this province, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party's billion-dollar tax hikes, even when combined with the Sask Party income tax changes, will cost the average family more than \$400 a year.

Mr. Speaker, the other day the minister and the Premier got very confused about how they were punishing small businesses. Mostly that was because they didn't quite understand the difference between an independent business and a large corporation. So let me quote Mr. von Schellwitz of Restaurants Canada again: "Clearly this policy benefits large corporate grocery stores at the expense of thousands of labour-intensive small businesses that make up the hospitality industry."

It seems pretty clear, Mr. Speaker, and the members opposite know this, because over and over and over again they brought petitions against the food tax into this Chamber to read them. So what's changed, Mr. Speaker? Why is the Sask Party breaking their word and adding this tax hike to Saskatchewan restaurants and the families who will be forced more to be their customers?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — First and foremost, it's not a tax on the restaurateur. This is going to be flowed through to the consumers. We acknowledge that, Mr. Speaker. That's part of the shift, that's part of the shift from taxing income and productivity to a consumption-based tax, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I met with the restaurant association. I met with the restaurant association. By their own, by their own admission, Mr. Speaker, in those provinces that have a provincial sales tax harmonized with the GST, they showed a bit of a dip. They showed a bit of dip in — initially when it was harmonized with the GST — in restaurant meals being sold, Mr. Speaker. And then you know what it does, Mr. Speaker? It takes back off. It takes back off.

They also said to us, they said, look . . . I met with them with the Minister of the Economy. They said, look, if you're going to tax restaurant meals, ensure that you level the playing field with respect to ready-to-eat meals in grocery stores. Ensure that you don't have that tax not on the ready-to-eat meals in the Safeways or IGAs or Sobeys of the world, or the Co-op stores of the world. Mr. Speaker, this tax applies to ready-to-eat meals the same as the GST base does, Mr. Speaker, levelling that playing field.

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

Financial Support for Municipalities

Ms. Rancourt: — Mr. Speaker, Restaurants Canada estimates that the Sask Party tax hike will cost Saskatchewan's hospitality industry \$140 million in lost sales. You don't have to be a financial guru to figure out that punishing the sector of the food industry that creates the most jobs and economic activity may not be the best strategy for turning the economy around.

And neither is ripping up agreements with our cities and towns, taking millions of dollars from them and then downloading even more costs. Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party is forcing even more tax hikes onto Saskatchewan families. They have left the cities and towns with no choice. Instead of working together, instead of simply talking, the Sask Party picks fights. And Saskatchewan families will be forced to pay the price.

Yes, the meeting yesterday was a good start, but it should have happened more than a year ago. Can the minister finally say definitely whether municipal revenue sharing will change at all?

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I do agree with the member opposite on one thing: it was a very good conversation that I had with three mayors and the president of SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] yesterday, along with three of the other ministers in our government. Answer to her question, is revenue sharing changing in this budget? The answer is absolutely no.

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Mr. Speaker, municipalities don't know what to expect. They certainly didn't expect to have their grants-in-lieu scrapped. Now many of our cities and towns will be forced to raise taxes and cut services. They also have to try to fill the gaps in this year's budgets they have already passed. And, Mr. Speaker, this may sound crazy to that Sask Party, but the cities and towns want to be able to plan. Instead of certainty, every day they have to wait and see what the Premier will announce next on social media.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday when asked if the Sask Party may reverse their position on the \$36 million download, the minister said, "Never say never." Does the minister not think our cities and towns deserve a better answer than that?

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, there is no secret that there is a \$1.2 billion shortfall, and we're asking our municipal partners to share in about 3 per cent of that shortfall, Mr. Speaker. But it's very rich coming from the member opposite who represents a party that, when they were the governing power, that the municipalities didn't know from one year to the next what their budget was going to be. We had no clue. And they downloaded again and again and again. The predictable revenue sharing formula . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — The predictable formula that we have with the municipalities . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Will the member from Saskatoon Centre come to order. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — The predictable formula that we have in the revenue sharing, Mr. Speaker, has increased revenue sharing to municipalities by over 100 per cent. In our major cities it's 2.5 times more money that they receive under this government than they did when the NDP were in power. Mr. Speaker, they don't want to go back to the unpredictable year-over-year, have-no-clue method of that particular party. And they still have no clue, Mr. Speaker.

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

Funding for Libraries and Education

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sustainable, predictable funding should not be too much for a city or a town to ask of the province. Nor should it be for a library. They're community hubs, Mr. Speaker. And the Minister of Education needs to stop listening to that Minister of the Economy who said, "People have access to the Internet, which is basically a library of everything," Mr. Speaker. His comments would be laughable if they weren't so damaging. The Sask Party doesn't seem to be able to understand that libraries are more than just books. They provide programs and services that Saskatchewan people rely on. In fact, while there are fewer people checking out books, usage of our libraries is way up.

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party's decision to rip out nearly 60 per cent of library funding is already having an impact to these services. The Palliser regional library has already laid off six employees. My question is this: how can the minister claim to be an advocate, claim to be an advocate for literacy and education while making such deep cuts?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we value very much the books and the libraries that we have in our province. Mr. Speaker, we've increased municipal revenue significantly since 2007 and 2008. In Saskatoon and Regina, 97 per cent or more of the funding for libraries come from the municipalities, so the reduction in our funding to libraries is relatively small compared to the funding that comes from the municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, in rural Saskatchewan over 50 per cent of the funding comes from the municipalities. It's healthy and a good exercise to go through to look at and determine how best we can continue to serve the citizens of our province.

We know that usage has dropped. Items checked out of the libraries since '07 has dropped by 1.6 million. The number of

library cards, down by 175,000. Mr. Speaker, we want to have those discussions. We want to be productive and we want to be helpful to the libraries in the rural municipalities in our province.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure how this is helpful to the libraries, and I have over 1,100 emails to my office already indicating just how unhelpful this is to libraries.

Let's pause for a moment. We have a deputy minister who is arrogantly fighting to shut down small libraries because, according to him, they're close enough to a city. He's also the Minister of Education. Mr. Speaker, they're hiking education property tax, but cutting government funding to schools so much that there will actually be less money making it to our kids' classrooms.

The letters are pouring in. The numbers are pouring in. Saskatoon Public Schools, down \$11 million. Regina Public, down \$9.5 million. Mr. Speaker, they're saying these are difficult decisions that have to be made. Of course these are difficult decisions. These are our kids and their future and our future, Mr. Speaker.

But make no mistake, these are Sask Party cuts. It's their decade of mismanagement, scandal, and waste that got us here. They've stolen money from our kids' classrooms, so I'll try one more time for an answer. Why does the minister think that it's okay to use money meant for our kids' classrooms to pay for this government's mismanagement, scandal, and waste?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we've looked at what the regional libraries have in accumulated surplus: Chinook, \$1.6 million; Lakeland Regional Library, \$1.1 million; Palliser, \$2.1 million; Parkland, \$1.2 million; Southeast, \$2.5 million; Wapiti, \$2.88 million; Wheatland, \$2.8 million. Mr. Speaker, the regional libraries should sit down and should work with the municipalities that fund them and try and develop a long-term plan.

Mr. Speaker, in our province we have 306 libraries. Alberta, 265. Manitoba, 128. In Saskatchewan . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the members opposite want to know the facts. I'll give them to them, Mr. Speaker. Let them get out their notepads and write down some things so that they're properly informed for a change.

Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan we have 4,000 citizens per library; Alberta, 15,000; Manitoba, 10,000. Mr. Speaker, why don't we have the discussion about whether we can share libraries with our schools? That's the things that we should be doing. We've got a bunch of public libraries in schools already: Glentworth, Beauval, Buffalo Narrows, Ile-a-la-Crosse, La Loche, Pinehouse, Sandy Bay, Canora, Englefeld, Carnduff, Maryfield, Oungre, Yorkdale, Gronlid, Nipawin, St. Brieux, St. Louis, Tisdale, Outlook, and Warman all share. All share.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon

Meewasin.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

Funding for University of Saskatchewan College of Medicine

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm one of hundreds of physicians in this province who are grateful for the education I received at the College of Medicine here in this province. In each of the last two years, that College of Medicine lost \$20 million in funding — 20 million the year before last, 20 million last year — draining the reserves, something this government knows a lot about. They were informed, Mr. Speaker, that if that 20 million was not returned to this year's budget, we were at risk of losing accreditation of our College of Medicine and risking that college entirely.

So when the budget comes out, we see an announcement that that 20 million is back. Well, wonderful news, until you read the fine print. The university was being informed that they had to give \$20 million from the rest of their funding to the College of Medicine. Bit of an overreach. But the big problem is that that 5 per cent cut that the university was already receiving had become a 10 per cent cut.

Harming the rest of the university, Mr. Speaker, does nothing to help the health of the College of Medicine. Will this minister commit to saving the College of Medicine without starving the University of Saskatchewan?

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

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Mr. Speaker, I would point to a statement by the then president of the university in 2013 that "... accreditation status in the College of Medicine is not a funding issue, it's a fundamental problem of structure." That said, we know the College of Medicine has had its challenges, but as of October 2015 it is no longer on probation, Mr. Speaker. And we continue to work with the college and with the university on a financial and restructuring plan that will ensure full compliance with ongoing accreditation standards.

To that end, Mr. Speaker, 69 million in dedicated funding is being targeted to the college this budget year as part of 309.2 million in operating funding to the university. A fiscally healthy and sustainable College of Medicine is in all our best interests, Mr. Speaker.

[11:00]

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

STATEMENT BY A MEMBER

Apology

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to apologize. I inserted a word that I should not have used, and I do apologize for that.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

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 Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise here today to respond of course to this devastating and callous budget, this damaging budget, Mr. Speaker. But before I get going too far, as other members do, I want to recognize some of the important people in my life that assist with this service and that, you know, make our lives worth living.

In my case, I want to recognize my life's partner, my wife Stephanie who's teaching here today, Mr. Speaker, teaches at George Lee School, Mr. Speaker, here in Regina. And I want to, certainly I think of our little guy, our son William, Mr. Speaker. But I also want to thank and recognize our extended family and, in many ways, it's those extended families that really do support and enlighten, and a bit of a sounding board at times for all of us. And they're always there to help and serve in whatever way that they can.

So certainly to my mom and my dad and to my in-laws and to my sisters and to my brothers-in-law and to my herd of nephews, to the whole gang, I say thank you. In fact they're a formidable force when you hit the campaign trail, Mr. Speaker. But outside of those experiences, there's a lot of, just those rich and rewarding experiences that we have as a family.

And you know, from mom and dad and from our family, it's the values that were instilled at a very early age and throughout our life that guides the work and how I try to approach certainly this role and the service as an MLA, but life in general. And it was that work ethic, Mr. Speaker, that commitment to hard work, and to service though as well, Mr. Speaker, to giving back, that understanding of fairness and of social justice, and that readiness to question the status quo or to fight the things that were wrong, Mr. Speaker.

And as I see . . . You know, I was an educator of course before I was elected, a teacher, Mr. Speaker, and my wife is as well. But I grew up, you know, watching my dad provide that service. You know, as a kid growing up, I saw somebody who put his heart and soul into kids and families and communities. Albert School, Regent Park — I could go through the list, and that was our life. Because not only do you teach the day, but you spend . . . You enrich the lives of those kids and communities through the evenings and through the weekends.

And I draw on those experiences, Mr. Speaker, that I had as a kid growing up, and watching how committed and intrinsically motivated my dad was as an educator. Not all about a big paycheque, because it certainly wasn't that, Mr. Speaker, but working hour upon hour, evening after evening, weekend after weekend, for the greater good of kids and communities. And I

share that because I look at this budget that, quite frankly, devastates the educators in this province, devastates classrooms, Mr. Speaker.

I also am so thankful to work with good people like Gloria Patrick, our constituency assistant in Regina Rosemont — almost the MLA, Mr. Speaker, for Walsh Acres — entered into a process, actually late in an election, ran for almost just three weeks. I think that if she had another day and a half, she'd be the MLA for Walsh Acres, Mr. Speaker. But setting that aside, this is somebody that serves our community, works in youth shelters as well, Mr. Speaker, that has an incredible daughter, Kaitlyn, who's priority number one in her life. And Kaitlyn is involved in certainly supporting our office and our community in so many ways as well. And I'm lucky to work with somebody who takes on the work with the kind of purpose that Gloria does.

I also want to thank the men and women that are sitting here with me here today. In this team, a team of 11 MLAs, Mr. Speaker, we have a mighty team. And not by the number of seats, but certainly by the commitment and the care and the energy and the time that this team of MLAs brings to the people of Saskatchewan. This is a team that takes on this service with care, with commitment, and with the kind of sincerity that, I mean, that everyone in this province should expect from any one of their MLAs. But it's a true honour to serve with people who truly care about the people that they serve, serve their constituencies, but also take on their respective portfolios, whether Finance, through Education or Advanced Ed or Health and beyond, take that on with the kind of spirit and care that it's deserved, Mr. Speaker.

And we don't do it alone. We do it with our families; we do it with the support of our constituents; and certainly we do it with the support of a staff team, Mr. Speaker. Team might be stretching it, Mr. Speaker — maybe enough to field one shift on a hockey rink, Mr. Speaker, but a small team, down in the caucus office of the official opposition. But a group that, again, like sees greater purpose in their work, that grinds it out, Mr. Speaker, to be honest, with hard work, with intelligence obviously to prepare a team like this, and gives us the confidence to hit the floor and helps connect so many of the dots across the province and the people and communities across this province. So to that entire caucus team and its leadership I say thank you as well.

I say thank you to the members of the New Democratic Party of Saskatchewan and to the leadership of that party, as in not myself, Mr. Speaker, but the executive and our provincial secretary and our very small staff team that really take on the work ahead of us with the kind of focus that they need to, clearly focusing and understanding that for us to be able to build Saskatchewan that we, as a party, need to be as strong as we can be and reach out to everyone across the province.

Now importantly, Mr. Speaker, when I enter into these discussions and as we stand in the Assembly and when we address issues in the rotunda and as we reach out across the community, it's our constituents who we're serving. And to the good people of Regina Rosemont, I thank them for the opportunity to continue to serve. I thank them for their trust. I thank them for their advice, their input, their care. And it's

really remarkable, when you come through a process like a budget like this, to really be overwhelmed, certainly by the amount of contact from people all across the province. But my constituents are remarkable, Mr. Speaker. And in many ways it's almost hard to keep up to the emails or the text messages or the Facebook messages or the Twitter messages, Mr. Speaker — messages of care, messages of support, messages that reinforce the importance of the fight that we have before us, Mr. Speaker. And I certainly work for good, honest, hard-working, optimistic people, Mr. Speaker, with good hearts and common sense. And I'm lucky to do so.

And as the official opposition of Saskatchewan, we serve an entire province — in the case of Saskatchewan, an incredible and beautiful province, Mr. Speaker, a vast province that's rich in so many ways, Mr. Speaker, rich in resources as we know, Mr. Speaker, our natural resources that we have. But rich in our natural environments and wildlife and opportunities for people to enjoy and grow and thrive. And rich in communities with incredible stories, Mr. Speaker, as well incredible histories that have been built by many with many people that build the strength that we value here in our province.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, our greatest strength as a province always lies in its people and it's a remarkable honour to serve the people of this province. And at these very challenging times where the threats are very real for Saskatchewan people and where we're reaching out, it's a real honour to be connecting and hearing from so many across the vast reaches of this province, from the far North and from many, so many, Mr. Speaker, across rural Saskatchewan, for whom we need to build and strengthen a relationship, Mr. Speaker, for whom . . . have been betrayed by this budget, Mr. Speaker. So it's with that context and those supports and that lens that I enter into this budget debate.

You know, for a week now we've been rising in this House to address this budget. And the people of Saskatchewan too have been rising up and speaking out and protesting this damaging and callous budget. With it of course, they're recognizing that the Sask Party is not just breaking promise after promise, their word, but they've broken trust with Saskatchewan people. It's a betrayal.

They're failing Saskatchewan families, tearing the things apart that give us strength and the things that will give us strength, Mr. Speaker, the things that people and families count on, that communities depend on. And after nearly a decade in government, the Sask Party seems to have learned nothing about really supporting people and families.

They failed to get the job done during the best years and they're failing big time, Mr. Speaker, during difficult times. Mr. Speaker, far from laying out a plan to build Saskatchewan together, the Sask Party have shown their petty and their short-sighted side with this budget.

The Sask Party in fact is putting brakes on the economic recovery that every family and community deserves, Mr. Speaker. They're attacking our classrooms, our local public education system, Mr. Speaker, breaking their word and hurting our students. They're cutting even deeper into advanced education, in job training, and they're punishing independent

small local businesses, the true job creators in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, they're hiking taxes on families by a billion dollars and forcing municipalities to raise taxes even higher, doing the dirty work of that Premier and that Sask Party, Mr. Speaker, forced to do that work from a government shirking their responsibility.

You know, Mr. Speaker, this is a government that once promised Saskatchewan people that they wouldn't raise taxes. They said it time and time again. They toured around the province, Mr. Speaker, saying that they wouldn't raise taxes.

Instead, Mr. Speaker, they're breaking their word, and they're ushering in the biggest tax hike in Saskatchewan's history, a billion-dollar tax hike, Mr. Speaker. I guess if you're going to break a promise, their theory is, do it in a big way, Mr. Speaker. They're raising the price of just about everything in our province, from restaurant meals to children's clothes, shoes, and our power bills, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party's even raising the cost of going out with a fishing licence and a case of beer, Mr. Speaker.

This budget hits families and people hard. It pounds those that are working so hard to make ends meet and to build a future for their families, and this at a time where their very jobs are being threatened and lost, and actually being threatened and taken away by the actions of that government, Mr. Speaker.

Even when you take into account the tax scheme of the Sask Party, the average Saskatchewan family is paying well over \$400 per year alone, in taxes alone, Mr. Speaker. And then there's the massive increases, four times in the last two years, to our power bills — another \$120, Mr. Speaker.

But it's the Sask Party friends — you know, the big corporations, the wealthiest, and the most well connected — that at this same very time are offensively getting breaks and giveaways, Mr. Speaker. It's not decent. It's not fair. It's bad fiscal policy, Mr. Speaker, shifting benefits to the wealthiest and making the rest of us, hard-working, everyday Saskatchewan people and families, pay the price.

You know it's fair to say that this budget is full of unfair and damaging shifts and it's full of shiftiness, Mr. Speaker, at every turn. And all of this while the Sask Party continues to add billions of dollars of debt to Saskatchewan people. A government that's run deficit after deficit with debt now skyrocketing, if you can imagine, to over \$18 billion in this year alone. In fact they've actually doubled . . . And it's hard to get your mind around this, Mr. Speaker, because it's so, so big. They've actually doubled the size of the debt in just the past five years.

Of course they don't say that on their billboards, Mr. Speaker, but that explains the level of trust that Saskatchewan people now assign to this Sask Party. Deficit after deficit after deficit. You know, this is a government that didn't get the job done during the best days, that couldn't balance the budget, that drained the rainy day fund during the sunniest days, and not saving a dime of course; a government that hid this mess — worked so hard to hide this mess from Saskatchewan people — but are now being exposed. The costs of the years of Sask Party

mismanagement, scandal, and waste clearly piling up for Saskatchewan people. The years of blowing recklessly through dollars on mismanaged projects, Mr. Speaker.

But now it's Saskatchewan people that are forced to pay the price for this mismanagement, this scandal, and this waste. Mr. Speaker, let's put it simply: this is a betrayal of Saskatchewan people.

And the Sask Party don't reflect Saskatchewan values anymore. The actions in this damaging and callous budget — I could call it much, much worse, Mr. Speaker — don't reflect Saskatchewan values.

[11:15]

They weren't straight with the people of Saskatchewan on the state of the finances. They weren't straight about how much they wasted. They weren't straight about the scandals, and they've lost their moral compass, Mr. Speaker.

Despite nearly a decade of record resource revenues, far from saving up a sovereign wealth fund, instead what they've done is piled up foreign debt, Mr. Speaker. And who's paying the price? Are they? Well of course not. It's the cabinet that's not even apologizing for not saving a dime and blowing through the billions during the last decade. Are they apologizing? No. Are they willing to cut their ministerial stipends, the bonuses by just, just 20 per cent, Mr. Speaker, the additional pay that they receive as a cabinet for being responsible for this mess and to show some contrition? No. They want to hold on to those dollars, Mr. Speaker.

Are they willing to cut the number of MLAs by at least five in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and save a quarter million for each and every one of those that are saved, Mr. Speaker? No, they don't want to do that either, Mr. Speaker. It's about protecting their self-interest.

What will they cut? Well they're cutting the funding for our kids' already under-supported classrooms. And in fact they're jacking up the school taxes but cutting their contributions so much that classrooms will end up with much less, millions less: shortfalls in divisions across this province in Swift Current, and Regina, Saskatoon, and beyond, Mr. Speaker.

And they're not just cutting millions. They're also cutting autonomy. They're cutting control, Mr. Speaker, eliminating local voices on school boards by taking over their budgets. A direct takeover of local public education, Mr. Speaker, and they're fleecing even their backbenchers on this one, Mr. Speaker, who I know, who I know heard from local voices on education the importance of maintaining control. So it's a matter of not just being straight with Saskatchewan people, they're not even being straight with their own members, Mr. Speaker.

And they're undermining . . . You know, education, as we know, is a foundation to our future. It's what extends opportunity to all. This attack on our already under-resourced classrooms is devastating. It's devastating for students, for families, for communities. It's devastating for teachers and certainly educational workers, Mr. Speaker. This doesn't build

the kind of future that everyone in this province deserves.

And they're undermining literacy and community-building by cutting funding to our public libraries by almost 60 per cent, blindsiding the libraries in this province, and clearly not even understanding what kind of hub and what kind of purpose libraries provide communities across this province. You know, now they're facing the unfortunate reality, the damaging reality of laying off staff, cutting services, and even looking at closures.

They're cutting in health care too, scrapping local voices from health care. And they're still ramming ahead with their reckless and short-sighted 3.5 per cent cut to the entire public service, Mr. Speaker. No respect and no plan, Mr. Speaker. Services will be lost and people will be thrown out of work. The Sask Party's clearly, through this budget, picking the pockets of people and the most vulnerable.

And, Mr. Speaker, they're completely scrapping a Crown corporation that ties our vast province together and, importantly, serves those in need. Scrapping off and selling STC is wrong, and it's desperate. People from across the province rely on STC to get around, to access education and employment and training. And they rely on it — you know, our small businesses, our producers — on the parcel service, Mr. Speaker.

And people access it for health care. Twelve hundred people last year alone, and this number is growing, relied on it regularly to access medical appointments, including cancer treatments, Mr. Speaker. And I think of organizations like the Cancer Society that's put together a compassionate volunteer team to support those as they come in for cancer treatment, to pick them up at the STC depot and to get them to their care, Mr. Speaker. All of this is being lost.

You know, I was at the depot just the other day, and I saw this very thing. I met one of those volunteers and an elderly woman receiving cancer treatment that was arriving and getting her compassionate ride, Mr. Speaker. This is not a government that cares, and this is not a government that has thought this through.

You know, the Premier of course and all of them pledged, hand over heart, looked people in their eyes, and promised that they wouldn't sell off our Crowns. This budget breaks that promise. And as they sell off our Crowns, Mr. Speaker, sadly they're selling out Saskatchewan people and the future that everyone deserves. Our Crowns belong to and should benefit all the people of Saskatchewan, all the people of our province.

You know, it's also disappointing to see the Sask Party scrapping the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation. It makes money, supports shortline rail with matching grants for improvements and line maintenance, and it's an asset that's there and owned by producers, Mr. Speaker. One lever and a bit of control to address and improve our under-performing grain transportation system, but the Sask Party just doesn't seem to care anymore.

And on top of that, they're downloading millions of cuts onto our cities and towns and forcing them to hike property taxes

too. For decades the province has paid cities for services and provided the Crown buildings through the grants-in-lieu program. But the Sask Party's changing legislation, actually changing the law so they can break their promise and commitment, so that SaskPower and SaskEnergy don't have to pay the cities anymore. They're going to . . . I guess, through the Sask Party, you just squat on the lands of cities and towns all across the province not paying for the services, Mr. Speaker, that they're provided by those cities. And you know, it grabs tens of millions of dollars directly away from our cities and towns across Saskatchewan who are growing and who have needs. And of course this all falls directly to property taxpayers and to families who need services and pay the freight on this, Mr. Speaker.

There's only one taxpayer; I think this is something the Premier needs to understand. You know, it's no wonder that municipal leaders are outraged by this budget, by this move. Regina ward 2 city councillor Bob Hawkins, a former Sask Party candidate said, "This budget comes like a thief in the night."

Mr. Speaker, in the end it will be Saskatchewan families that will feel taken by the Sask Party's mismanagement, scandal, waste, broken promises. The Sask Party claims that somehow all these tax hikes and cuts and layoffs are going to create jobs. There are 40,000 people currently out of work in the province. That's double the number of people unemployed than when the Sask Party took office, doubled the number of people unemployed from 20,000 to 40,000, Mr. Speaker. And instead of investing in job training, post-secondary education, and stimulating the economy, the Sask Party is cutting those very programs.

And they're attacking small businesses too, Mr. Speaker, the job creators, the entrepreneurs. In fact CFIB [Canadian Federation of Independent Business] vice-president Marilyn Braun-Pollon calls this budget ". . . brutal from a small business perspective" and ". . . the biggest tax hike we've seen among Saskatchewan's history." Brutal, Mr. Speaker, from a small business perspective.

The majority of new jobs are created by small businesses, Mr. Speaker. But the Sask Party instead is ramming forward with a plan that doesn't make any sense. Restaurants will feel the pain of the piling on of a new 6 per cent PST, a brand new tax to restaurants, Mr. Speaker. And in a damaging, job-killing, investment-killing, expansion- and renovation-killing move, the Sask Party is hitting the construction industry with a new tax as well, a new 6 per cent tax on jobs. The epitome of a job-killing tax, Mr. Speaker, when we need jobs and we need investment, Mr. Speaker.

You know, the CEO [chief executive officer] of the Saskatoon Home Builders' Association said the Sask Party's new tax on construction materials and labour will have ". . . a huge impact on affordability."

Mr. Speaker, after a decade in government, either the Sask Party just doesn't get it anymore or they couldn't care less about the role that they have to serve all Saskatchewan. You can see it. You can see it in what's missing in this budget. And unless you count the price of rent rising for seniors in care homes and eliminating foot care and hearing aid services,

seniors are ignored in this budget. They're not ignored, Mr. Speaker, they're hurt. They're hurt by this budget. It's disgraceful. It's damaging, all while the wealthiest and well connected get breaks, Mr. Speaker.

There's nothing, nothing in this budget to address the suicide crisis and the unacceptable conditions in many of our communities in northern Saskatchewan, despite promising time and time again that they would work to increase mental health services and supports in these communities, services that are not adequate, that are shamefully under resourced, and that are taking loved ones from families, from communities, from the North, and from all of us, Mr. Speaker, and taking opportunity from this very important and vital region. You know, there's some new money coming in from the federal government on this front, but the Sask Party and the Premier clearly is saying through this budget that it's not a priority for the provincial government.

And, Mr. Speaker, there's not a budget, nary a mention, of the Truth and Reconciliation recommendations in this budget. No dollars to support implementation of the recommendations, something that of course this government has suggested that they'll do, something that's critical to our province's future. But again it's all talk and no walk from this Sask Party, Mr. Speaker.

It couldn't be more clear that this Sask Party has lost their moral compass, forgotten who they're working for, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, that will be the legacy of the Sask Party. That will be the legacy of this Premier, Mr. Speaker — a legacy of deficit after deficit after deficit. A legacy of debt. A legacy of mismanagement despite historic opportunity, Mr. Speaker. A legacy of broken promise after broken promise. A legacy of not being able to keep one's word, Mr. Speaker. That's the legacy of that Premier and the Sask Party.

Mr. Speaker, there's a better way. By being honest and having faith in Saskatchewan people and small businesses, we can do better. Instead of cutting our kids' classrooms, attacking our universities and colleges, and eliminating job-training programs, we can invest in extending opportunity and getting people back to work so that they can collect a paycheque and contribute to the economy and build their lives.

Instead of slashing funding for health care, preventive care, and the most vulnerable, we can help to provide opportunities and supports to build independence, well-being, and health. Instead of jacking up taxes on job creators, our small businesses, our entrepreneurs, we could extend conditions that support them to hire more Saskatchewan people and to thrive, Mr. Speaker.

Instead of breathlessly defending huge payments to foreign contractors and well-connected partisan supporters, Mr. Speaker, we could defend payments, investments to our cities and towns, classrooms, and people and Saskatchewan businesses. And instead of selling off our Crowns, Crowns that benefit all of us and tie us together, we can support, build, and be proud of them and the services they provide, recognizing not just how important they've been to our past but how vital they are to our future, Mr. Speaker, recognizing that when they're gone, they're gone.

Instead of picking fights with cities and slashing funding for parks, rinks, and pools, and even libraries, Mr. Speaker, we can be straight with Saskatchewan people about the state of the finances, the challenges and realities that we face, the decisions that got us here, and how we can work together to get ahead.

The Sask Party has lost their moral compass. This budget is damaging. It's callous. I could call it a whole heck of a lot worse, Mr. Speaker. We offer the amendment to help them find their way. And for so many reasons and many, many, many more reasons that I wasn't able to cite here today, I support the amendment and I will not be supporting the budget.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've been looking forward to participating in the debate. I'd just like to offer, I'd just like to offer some thanks to my colleagues on this side of the House and to thank them, many of them who have intervened in the speech, in the debate, in the budget debate. I want to thank my colleagues for thoughtful and excellent speeches that they've been able to provide for members of the House. I thank them for that. I also want to thank my colleagues for their ongoing support, Mr. Speaker, which is something that I'll never take for granted.

[11:30]

I also want to offer a few thanks. I usually, on important occasions like this, perhaps the address in reply to the Throne Speech, or budget speech day, I like to make sure I thank the people that are most important in my life, my family, especially Tami. We're sort of empty nesters now with our youngest at the University of Saskatchewan. Our son Colter is living in Bowling Green, Kentucky when he's not travelling around, and our daughter and her husband live in Saskatoon. But I remain so very grateful for my wife and my family and for their ongoing support, so I want to put that on the record.

Mr. Speaker, I have not often enough on occasions like this thanked some other people in this building with whom I work and have had the pleasure and honour of working for some time. In the Premier's office here, Mr. Speaker, there are two individuals, Ruth and Rhonda, who are well known to people in this Assembly and well known to people in the building and well known to people across the province to the extent they have engagements with the office. In the case of Ruth, I've been working alongside her as a colleague since we started in 2007 in government.

And they are amazing women; they're wonderful to work with. They make sure people that come to that office feel as they should, that it is theirs, that indeed because it is their office, it belongs to them. And their support, not just for me, but family and the team is something I don't often put on the record enough in terms of how grateful I am for it, so I do so now, Mr. Speaker.

And you know I've had the great benefit of serving with the same senior staff now since we formed government, and in some cases before we formed government, and that doesn't happen very often. Mr. Speaker, I consider my colleagues across the country, other premiers, and I can tell this House

that, you know, a chief of staff generally does not last longer than a couple of years for various reasons in most of the places. And in the case of Joe Donlevy, he is the only chief of staff that I have had, and he is a great support, source of counsel, that I need to publicly thank here. Reg Downs, I've been working with Reg, well, in politics since university, but more recently I guess, if 1999 is recent, in this building here as Reg has continued to serve in opposition and in government. He's a senior adviser, one of my very best friends, and I think probably the best political strategist that there exists in the Dominion of Canada. And so I thank him and Kathy Young, and all. Kathy Young who has been the director of communications and now chief of operations does an amazing job as well. And I just need to thank all of those people and get that on the record.

Mr. Speaker, a few years ago . . . Well the Minister of Government Relations reminds me of someone else. And I think I have made a point of thanking this individual but I think it is important to get on the record that Everett Hindley and I have been working together since 1999 when I convinced him to leave a promising career in news. He was the news director at CKSW in Swift Current. I talked him into working in the constituency office when I was first elected, and we've been together ever since. He's been pretty candid with me that he regrets that decision.

An Hon. Member: — Like peas and carrots.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Yes. The member from Wood River says like peas and carrots. It probably is true. He is invaluable and has become one of my very best friends. And you know, Mr. Speaker, there's that old saying, if you can go to work every day with your friends and do something that you like, you'll never work a day in your life. And I have been so blessed. So I thank all those people for making that possible.

Mr. Speaker, not too many years ago my nephew, one of my nephews, Justin, moved from the province of Alberta to the province of Saskatchewan where he is now working as an agri-farm professional very near Swift Current. He relocated his family, his growing family at the time. And since he's come back that family has grown some more I'm happy to report to members of the House. Mr. Speaker, he has a son, he has two sons now, two daughters and two sons.

His oldest son, Lane, was driving with Justin. I think they heard . . . There was a commercial. Maybe one of the unions had put out an advertisement perhaps a little bit critical of our government. And I think there was a line in the . . . Because I got this text from my nephew, Justin, about my great-nephew, Lane, hearing this advertisement wherein there was a line where the announcer says or somebody in the radio ad says that, and I'm quoting now, Mr. Speaker, "that Brad Wall was making terrible mistakes." And Lane took exception to this. He's only about . . . He's in grade one. But he took exception to this and he said, Dad, that's not true. That is not true. Uncle Brad's not making terrible mistakes; he's making great mistakes.

Mr. Speaker, Tami and I have . . . We have not yet been blessed with grandchildren. Maybe that's coming down the road. But these grandnephews and nieces feature prominently in my thinking even as we were considering the decision making that we were facing in this budget, and even as I've listened to the

debate from members on both sides of the House who earnestly participate and have strongly held views. And that's what this place is all about. But I think of, I do think of Lucy Jane and Lane and Nevaeh and little Holt, the newest baby, when I think about the decisions we've made in this particular budget.

Mr. Speaker, every now and then and it doesn't happen every year and it certainly hasn't happened every year for us. Every now and then though, there is a budget that might speak more to the next generation, that might speak more to the long term even than it does to the current financial affairs of the Government of Saskatchewan and the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, let me just say in a general sense I think that is very much the case with this particular budget.

This budget does propose and offer challenges to my nephew and my niece, to the parents of those kids, challenges that they'll face with respect to perhaps PST changes. He's in agriculture. Agriculture wasn't untouched. Rural Saskatchewan wasn't untouched in this budget. And I am mindful of that, and we are all mindful of that. That's why these decisions are difficult. We know that they affect people's lives, sometimes in ways that we would rather not have them affected. So too, Mr. Speaker, it's important to remember their kids, what this budget might mean for those kids.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of longer term aspects to this budget that I'd like to just touch on a little bit today. Choices that were made that will pay dividends; if not today, then in the mid term and very much so in the long term.

Mr. Speaker, we did, as the Finance minister has very effectively presented, we did move away in this budget from taxing investment and income towards taxing consumption. And economists will tell you that if you can do that in a jurisdiction, you ought to. We've seen the Ministry of Finance's impact assessment of what happens when you adjust taxes on the consumption side versus the income side or the business side, the business tax rate. We know that we can affect the economy more positively by focusing on a more competitive income and investment tax than perhaps being focused on a consumption tax, and so we made that difficult choice, understanding that Lane's dad is going to have more cost with respect to the PST in the short term.

Mr. Speaker, there's another shift in the budget the Minister of Finance has made. And he's going to speak in a moment; I'm sure he'll touch on this. I don't want to dwell on it because I don't want to basically, in advance of his speech, repeat what he's going to say. But the other shift he mentioned, even in question period today, is that we would shift away from resource revenue dependency in this province towards a more stable and reliable tax.

And, Mr. Speaker, I've had it put to me that why didn't you start this a lot earlier? Well that's a pretty fair question. It's a fair question for everybody in this Assembly, for both parties in this Assembly, to have to answer. Why didn't we do this a lot sooner? Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is, that choice was not made. It was not made by members opposite when they were in the government and, to be fair, it wasn't made by us until this particular budget. But we have made the choice now.

I remember there was a rancher in Beechy who — I think it was even at the nominating meeting years ago in Rosetown that selected the current Minister of Health — a rancher from Beechy asked me the rhetorical question, if I knew when the best time to plant a tree was. And I mentioned my chief of staff, Joe Donlevy, Joe has never tired of this story. I want to put that on the record. He asked me when are the best times to plant a tree was? And I said, well I don't know. What's the best time to plant a tree? He said 25 years ago or today.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps this should have been happening 25 years ago, perhaps should have been happening about the time we discovered oil in this province, about the time we started being world leaders in mining potash. Perhaps about that time, somebody that sat in these benches should have said, you know, we need to make sure we're not reliant on the volatile resource revenues of this province. For whatever reason though, and I'm not impugning any motives on either side of the House because we're all here trying to do our best on behalf of those we represent, but for whatever reason, that decision didn't happen.

Well we have signalled in this budget to my grandnieces and nephews and to their generation especially that we will begin today, that we will begin with this budget when it's passed to move this province away from a dependence on resource revenue. Mr. Speaker, it's essential that we do this in the interests of that generation and even in the shorter term interest of the government's finances.

And here's why I would say that. It has become clearer and clearer to all of us on this side of the House and frankly to economists and forecasters, that there may well have been, have taken place already, a structural change with respect to certain commodities, commodities we've got a lot of, commodities that are important to the province of Saskatchewan — resources. That the days of 80 or 90 or \$100 oil, they ain't coming back any time soon, if ever.

I do not know how anybody in this House can consider what's going on in the oil shale play in places like Texas and Oklahoma and not understand . . . and have seen the transformation in terms of the energy independence sort of quotient in the country of the United States as a result of those plays. I don't know how anyone can look at those plays and look at the third-largest reserves on earth right here in Canada, by the way — because that's what Canada has, the third-largest oil reserves — and combine those two developments and realize that . . . I don't know how we can realize anything but the price of oil is not going to be coming back to where it was.

And so, Mr. Speaker, it is with that realization in mind that we have to make some decisions. It's with that realization in mind that the caucus, the men and women of this caucus, led by the Finance minister and treasury board, made some very difficult recommendations that we now see before us in the form of a provincial budget. And so, Mr. Speaker, I know we'll have the debates and I'll listen to . . . I listened to the Leader of the Opposition and, Mr. Speaker, I respect the fact that he doesn't agree with the budget. He's going to oppose it. I respect the fact he'll do so aggressively. That's his job.

But, Mr. Speaker, I also heard in his comments the motives of this side of the House being impugned. I heard in his speech

words and descriptors that would imply that we are not earnestly motivated. Mr. Speaker, maybe he believes that; I'd like to think he actually doesn't believe that. He might think that's part of sort of the rhetorical device that he needs in this place. I'd like to think that he understands, as we understand about them, that we do want what's best for this province, not just for this current situation, not just for Lane's parents who face some of the challenges I mentioned, but that we are earnestly seeking to improve things in the long term for those kids and for that next generation, that the place, the province that we leave them is truly better than the way we found it, Mr. Speaker, because that's what motivated members on this side of the House. That's what has motivated us through this very difficult process. It motivates us still. It's why we would engage in the debate. It's why we would defend a budget that's got a lot of challenging elements to it.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's the essential part of this budget from a long-term perspective, that we will shift taxes away from consumption taxes more . . . sorry, towards consumption, away from investment and income, and that we'd also move off of a reliance on resource revenue. And so, Mr. Speaker, as a feature of this budget, and it hasn't gotten a lot of attention in this province — and I understand that there's a lot in the budget for the media to cover and the opposition to talk about — but it has gotten a lot of coverage outside of the province, and that's the element of the budget that speaks to these tax changes more specifically.

When this plan is fully implemented, and that's just in the mid-term, that's just a few years from now when this budget plan is fully implemented, the people and the province of Saskatchewan will quite rightly be able to say to Canadian families that if you live in the province of Saskatchewan, if your family is here, as an individual or a member of a family, you will pay between the lowest and the third-lowest income taxes in all of Canada. That's assuming that none of the other provinces increase their income taxes and, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that's a sure bet given the level of deficits we see in other jurisdictions without a plan for them to get back to balance.

Fully implemented, a family will pay lower income taxes here than anywhere else in Canada. Fully implemented, a business will pay a lower tax on their income than anywhere else in Canada. We'll be tied with British Columbia. If the members opposite party is successful in that election, I think we'll be standing alone in that regard. I think we'll see an income tax increase on business in BC [British Columbia] as we saw with their colleagues' party in Alberta. They did the same thing there.

[11:45]

So we'll have the lowest to the third-lowest income taxes for families. We'll offer the lowest business taxes for those who create jobs, for those in industry who in fact create the spinoffs by the way, for which create jobs and opportunities for smaller businesses. We'll have the lowest business rate. And, Mr. Speaker, by far, when this plan's fully implemented, we'll have the lowest manufacturing and processing rate in all of Canada. It's not actually going to be even close in terms of the rates.

Mr. Speaker, you know, we've heard, I think again, people

involved in politics on both sides of this aisle for years talk about the importance of diversifying the economy. We have seen in the last seven or eight years a major move in that direction, a major move away from a dependence on the resource sector or even primary production in agriculture, for new jobs and for the economy. But we have to continue that effort, and we have to do more than talk about it. We have to do more than talk about how many eggs in baskets we have. We actually have to have a plan for that, Mr. Speaker.

And so our plan is featured prominently in this budget, that we would be able to say to those that are in Saskatchewan today who manufacture things, who add value, who help diversify the economy, that you stay in this province, you add jobs in this province, and you'll be, you know, you'll pay the lowest tax rate in all of Canada by far. And we also have a message to those companies who aren't currently in Saskatchewan that, if you come here to this province, expect to pay lower taxes on investment, expect to pay the lowest tax on manufacturing and processing. And your employees, those families you will bring with you or that you will hire here will pay the lowest income taxes in all of Canada. Mr. Speaker, that is an advantage. And it speaks to a future that is less reliant on the resource sector but a future where the economy of this province is a leader within Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the only way that we can sustain the valuable public services that members have talked about in their speeches is if the economy's robust enough, in fact, to provide the taxes to support them, if we have that broad tax base that can withstand the volatility of resource price changes, Mr. Speaker. That's our only hope to be able to say to Saskatchewan people, you can expect shorter wait times for health care, because it costs money to shorten those wait times. It's the only way we can say to Saskatchewan people, you'll have the best education possible, because the only way we can afford that education is if there's tax dollars to support it in the long term. It's true for social services. It's true for every quality of life that we might desire for this province.

We need to have a long-term view of how do we make sure that the tax base can support those things, that the economy is strong enough so that the tax base is broad enough that these things can be offered to the people of the province of Saskatchewan. That has always been our focus.

We have a growth plan that's still in effect. We campaigned on it in '07. We updated it in 2011. It called for that reduction in CIT [corporate income tax] that we now just have introduced in this particular budget. But the reason that we have been so focused on growth, that this has been our north star as a government, isn't because we like to talk about pie charts and GDP. It's because we know we need to support public service, and the only way to do that that's sustainable without long-term deficits, Mr. Speaker, is to have a strong enough economy that generates the revenue. And so for this reason too, the budget takes a very long-term view of what we need to do in this province.

Mr. Speaker, even with some deficits that we've had here lately . . . And again I wouldn't agree at all with the characterization of my colleague, the Leader of the Opposition, in terms of the number of deficits. Members in the House will know that the

NDP used a GRF [General Revenue Fund] budgeting when they were in office. In fact their last budget, Mr. Speaker, had them withdrawing about \$500 million from their rainy day fund. This is 2007, Mr. Speaker. It'd be pretty hard to make the case there was even a light mist, never mind rain. But they took \$500 million out in an election year, in an election year, to balance their budget. That's what they did.

And the member for Elphinstone, I'm glad he's been participating in the debate because he was in cabinet. I think he was a minister at the time. And so he would have sat around the table and they would have decided that well, we're going to run a deficit, a General Revenue Fund deficit, and we will balance it by taking money from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, or the rainy day fund.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, they always like to talk about what was left to this government. In that particular budget they used \$500 million from the rainy day fund when I don't think it was raining, and left in that fund \$300 million. That's what was left in that year, because they were running a campaign and they wanted to make some promises and had to fund those things.

But, Mr. Speaker, when we took over, particularly in that first year, there was some significant new revenues coming in from the resource sector. The members opposite like to ask the question rhetorically, where did all that money go? Well, Mr. Speaker, we chose to pay down debt. And, Mr. Speaker, the operating debt, even with this budget, even with these deficits that we have run in the last while, in the last few years, our operating debt is lower than it was than when we were elected by about 15 per cent, Mr. Speaker. We would like that number to be higher and one day we'll get there again, but that's the fact of the matter.

The Leader of the Opposition likes to talk about the overall debt of the province, and fair enough. Yes, the Crown corporations, like any company, finance their business. They borrow. These are large companies. I think under the member's logic that these huge companies, these huge utilities would run . . . would cash flow everything, which of course no entity does. No corporation would do that. They finance those things.

So too we have borrowed for some major projects, mortgages if you will, against definable assets. But, Mr. Speaker, what we have been reducing and what is lower today than it was when we took office, even with this particular budget, is the credit card debt, for want of a better way to describe it. That operating debt where there isn't an asset attached to it, and in some cases there's not even a regular payment schedule that would see that debt retired. And in some cases, Mr. Speaker, we inherited operating debt from not just members opposite but other governments previous to that, at high rates — 14 per cent in some cases.

So, Mr. Speaker, the record of this government, again thinking about the long term, about Lane and his sisters and his brother, is that we have been reducing operating debt. We will continue to reduce operating debt, Mr. Speaker. And that's why they hate those billboards. A colleague said, you know, they always talk about some billboards I think we had put up when we highlighted the fact that we had reduced the operating debt. They don't like it because it doesn't fit with their narrative. But,

Mr. Speaker, it has the happy coincidence though of being true because that operating debt remains down, even today with respect to this particular budget.

There is a recognition of the importance of this budget being about the long term, if you take a look at the infrastructure investment that's in it. Mr. Speaker, huge infrastructure dollars in highways. Mr. Speaker, in this budget, this very difficult budget, two new schools to be built for the province of Saskatchewan. And yes, we will continue to work on the bypass.

Mr. Speaker, day in and day out, the Leader of the Opposition, the interim leader of the NDP, kind of does some drive-by smearing of the women and men that are involved in that bypass project. And we would say to our friends on city council in Regina as a reminder: that's the largest infrastructure project in the history of the province, by the way, invested right here in our capital city.

Mr. Speaker, we hear members basically smear the project and kind of write off the consortium, the group that's out there doing the work. Mr. Speaker, I have done this in question period but I will do it in the course of my budget speech, and that is to remind the Leader of the Opposition and all the members over there, members from Regina who have consistently opposed and ran down this project by the way, I will remind them that of the total businesses involved in the bypass — and it's 134 total business involved in the bypass — 71 per cent are local businesses. Ninety-five are local and from Saskatchewan. And one of the biggest ones, a well-known company that they've kind of, I think, indirectly smeared as well, the Broda Group of companies which is, I think, a century-old business started in that Preeceville, maybe the Invermay area, and then moved into Prince Albert. A family-run business that has employed hundreds of Saskatchewan people, thousands if you consider some of the projects they've been involved with.

Mr. Speaker, I hope we will never hear on this side of the House — I don't think you will — any member that would stand up and first of all run down a project in their own constituency, one that's needed in terms of traffic safety and the important moving of goods and services as the Minister of Central Services talked about yesterday. But none of us would ever kind of run down a project like that because we think there might be a few one-liners in it, as we've heard from the interim leader of the NDP. I don't think you'll ever hear any of us do that, and neither will we ever take a drive-by smear at 71 per cent, 95 local companies who are pretty proud of that project, 95 local companies who have employees who are proud to be working on the Regina bypass because that project is about the future. That project is a project for Lane and his brother and his two sisters.

Mr. Speaker, we are proud to have been the government that finally undertook this project. We knew it was on the books for a long time, frankly like the Global Transportation Hub and other ideas and initiatives that they kept delaying and they kept procrastinating. This side of the House is proud that we are finally moving on that bypass in the interests of the capital city and the overall economic interests of the province.

We're proud that that P3 [public-private partnership], as CTV [Canadian Television Network Ltd.] reported last night, that project is on time and it's on budget. We're proud that there's 8,000 jobs created by that particular project. And we're proud that 71 per cent of the companies are from right here in the province of Saskatchewan. And when it comes down to a choice between them or those companies and their employees, we'll pick the employees and the companies every single time.

They're going to have some explaining to do, I think. I think the member for Regina, the interim leader of the NDP, has probably already had some uncomfortable conversations with those companies who would say, why are you running this project down, to the NDP. Why are you running down a project that's on time and on budget and employing all these Saskatchewan people, and important for the infrastructure of the constituents that he's supposed to represent right here in Regina? I expect if he hasn't had those conversations, they're probably going to be coming.

Mr. Speaker, I know he's had uncomfortable conversations in the past. I think there was that whole Mexico thing, me going to Mexico. We're pretty much aware that he's had uncomfortable conversations before, and I hope that he responds to these companies the same way he did when he made that mistake, which was simply to acknowledge this was not a very good thing to have done and a mistake and that he would now support the project and also support all of those companies that are involved.

Mr. Speaker, the bypass is an indication, and the investment in the budget, in the highways budget, in that bypass is a very clear indicator that we are thinking about the long term in this province, that we are thinking about Lane and his little brother and his sisters as we consider decisions that we need to make.

Mr. Speaker, in order to begin the process of getting expenditures under control, moving away from a dependency of resource revenue, we had to make a number of current choices as well. So there's some long-term initiatives in here: the infrastructure piece I mentioned, what we're going to continue to do on the operating debt and taxes. But there are some current choices we have to make to kind of set up the long-term plans that the government has for the economy and public service. Those are not easy choices.

I remember the debate we had in caucus and the discussion that was there and that occurred during budget finalization with members representing their constituents, voicing also their strongly held views. And what was abundantly clear is that these were difficult choices just because of the amount of discussion we had, much more than has been the case in other budgets for obvious reasons, from the scale and scope of the changes that are here.

But I was proud of my colleagues because there was a real focus, our own rhetorical question of ourselves, and a focus that we all had as to answering the rhetorical question, what's the role of government? What should be our priorities as a government in not just difficult times frankly, but even when times will get a little bit better fiscally?

I think we all agree that our priorities should be in health care,

that our priorities should be in education, that our priorities should be in social services, that our priority should be in safety, public safety. And by the way, I'm very proud that in this particular budget under the Attorney General's . . . the Ministry of Justice's budget we've got some new dollars, some additional dollars to respond to the real concerns in rural Saskatchewan about public safety. And the crime reduction effort by members who are on that committee, we certainly want to thank them for their efforts.

But we've had that discussion on this side: what's the role of government going forward? We're going to have to make some choices. If the price of oil's not coming back and we can't make it all up with other taxes — that would be harmful to the economy — then we have to look at the expenditure side too.

And so we made choices with respect to STC. The minister of STC, the Minister Responsible for STC has done a very good job of ensuring this caucus had all of the information before we made that final decision and ensuring that there was a plan for those who need that transportation, before we moved on it. But, Mr. Speaker, part of his presentation at caucus was the fact that just a few years ago the per-passenger subsidy was 30 bucks, 25 bucks, \$25 per passenger, Mr. Speaker. And what is it today? After we've seen ridership continue to fall and costs for the company continue to increase, it's approaching \$100. It's approaching \$100. Mr. Speaker, I would also point out to members on that side of the House that when they were in office, they cut routes. They made a decision to stop running buses down certain highways, to stop the service. Not reduce it, not go to smaller buses; they cut lines.

[12:00]

Mr. Speaker, we know because we've looked at the evidence, the facts, we know that they made those decisions to cut lines when the per-passenger subsidy from taxpayers to the bus company ranged between two and five bucks a passenger. We're at 100 now. So the NDP thought \$5 per passenger was too much of a subsidy, that they had to cut the service. I'm sure they didn't want to either. It wouldn't have been a fun choice for them to make, to say, well I'm sorry community X and Y, we can't provide bus service to you anymore because it just costs too much money to justify it. We have other priorities, I'm sure they would have said, that we really need to focus on.

That is the nature of the consideration on this side of the House of that particular issue. And we know in rural Saskatchewan that bus service is important. But when it comes to a choice between health care and education and social services or continuing with the subsidy that would be \$100 million over five years, almost \$100 per passenger, we had to make that difficult choice. And we made that difficult choice.

And I'm grateful to be serving with women and men who are prepared to simply look at the facts, understand that this would not be easy, this would be a difficult decision. But make the right decision, if not for now, if not for Lane's dad, then for Lane. Because we need to make sure things are sustained in the long term and in the short term if we are going to leave things better than we found them. And that means more choices.

The Leader of the Opposition, in his speech, talked about how

he opposes the decision we're going to make with respect to selling the cars for the Grain Car Corporation. I guess it's his view, and I respect this view. It's certainly his right not only to hold it but to present it in this place. That's his job. His view is that, I guess, that's a role for government going forward even if, even if you have to make a choice between a grain car, maybe the maintenance that's required, and health care and education and social services . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well no, Mr. Speaker, I think that's the challenge. The member just . . . I couldn't understand what he said, but the Leader of the Opposition said something just now. I get that in opposition you have to oppose, and they've done a good job of that.

But there is another part to the obligation, I think, and that's to offer what you'd do differently. And in his speech he said he doesn't like the tax increases. The NDP have said they wouldn't do the tax increases. In his speech he said, don't like any of the cuts. Don't change revenue sharing. Keep the bus company even at \$90 per passenger and \$100 million over five years. Don't do any of this and balance the budget.

Mr. Speaker, other than pixie dust and unicorns, I don't know how we would . . . I don't know, what's the means to that end? There aren't any means to that end. You have to make difficult decisions, and that's what we have sought to do.

So we've decided, look it's not really the role of the government to be in the . . . We don't need to be in the grain car business. In fact we could work with shortlines, we can work with the industry to make sure the disposition of that asset is good for taxpayers. But it also might be good for those shortlines, might also be good for grain transportation.

Mr. Speaker, I have every faith that that's precisely where the Minister of Highways and Transportation will take us. That is precisely where we will end, Mr. Speaker, with the taxpayers getting a good return for rail cars, and the industry, the grain transportation industry and the shortlines and the agricultural sector, being happy with that decision, Mr. Speaker, at least being satisfied that it's made in the long-term interests of that industry. Those are part of the choices. These are some of the choices we've made.

Tough choice in the current situation to get to a long-term goal on revenue sharing, I should say on municipal government support, because we maintained revenue sharing per the agreement we have with our municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to question period today and I listened to members opposite say, well you know, basically use the argument that municipalities need predictability in their funding from the province. I almost . . . I couldn't believe what I was hearing. The very first place the NDP stopped when they were dealing with budget challenges, stopped to take some cash, was the municipal sector. And then they stopped again the next year, and then they took a little bit more the year after that. And not once did they ever provide municipalities with even an iota of surety or predictability as to what they might expect the next year. It was just a very bad surprise, every particular budget.

But now, Mr. Speaker, they have found, they've found the road to Damascus after that being their record where they downloaded on municipalities every year and failed even in the

good years. And I think members opposite often forget that they were sitting on their own rainy day fund, spending some of it in the end, a lot of it, blowing through their rainy day fund in the end when it was just misting, I think, and not raining.

Mr. Speaker, they were sitting on those dollars and still wouldn't provide municipalities any predictabilities, wouldn't get the deal done, wouldn't get a revenue-sharing deal done. Mr. Speaker, in the election campaign in 2007 we said if we are so honoured to be able to serve in government, one of the very first things we'll do is we'll sit down with the municipal sector and we'll hammer out a municipal revenue-sharing deal for RMs [rural municipality] and for urban municipalities. I don't want to oversimplify it, but we thought it can't be that hard. It can't be 16-years hard to come up with a way to give that predictability to municipalities. Apparently it was for members opposite.

An Hon. Member: — They wouldn't even meet.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — They wouldn't, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Health makes a very good point. They would not even meet with SUMA and SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities]. We had people involved in SARM for a long, long, long time, longer time, and people who were involved in local government in SUMA for a long . . . And they wouldn't even sit down and meet.

So I found the question period today questions pretty interesting because, Mr. Speaker, very early on in the life of our government, we met. We thought, well we could probably meet with them. It seems reasonable. So we did, we met with both sectors, and it was a matter of months and we had a revenue-sharing deal that was predictable for municipalities, a revenue-sharing deal that holds today in this budget, even though there's difficulty.

Now we made a choice around grants-in-lieu, Mr. Speaker. And by the way, members opposite oversimplify grants-in-lieu and say, well that's the taxes these buildings should be paying, Mr. Speaker. It's not actually. It's a very convoluted process that's evolved over the years. And some of it's a recognition for the fact that municipalities sold their electrical utility or their right to be in the electrical utility business to SaskPower back in the day when SaskPower was aggregating its business, and some of it's for other surcharge reasons. But there's not necessarily a direct line between these grants and what the property taxes would be in those buildings and, in some cases, the grants are getting paid and some of the Crowns are paying property taxes.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we looked at that and thought all sectors have to participate in this, especially a sector whose revenue sharing has doubled, doubled. In the case of Regina and Saskatoon, revenue sharing is up two and a half times from what it was when members were in power — and it really wasn't revenue-sharing; it was just whatever they would whimsically decide with every budget to maybe deign to give to the municipal sector — but 2.5 times as great as it was in their last budget when they had about \$700 million in their rainy day fund, Mr. Speaker. Even when they burned through a half a billion of it, they still didn't have money for the municipal sector.

Well that all changed in about 2008, 2009. And, Mr. Speaker, our assurance to the municipal sector is this — and the ministers had good meetings yesterday — our assurance to the municipal sector is this. We do want to make sure that the challenge we're asking all the different sectors in the province to absorb is fairly distributed. We do believe . . . And that's a principle that the Minister of Finance has worked to lead to ensure that the budget's fair, even in the difficult decisions, that it's fair to urban, that it's fair to rural, maybe not necessarily positive in every respect to those sectors, but that what is provided in terms of fiscal restraint is fairly distributed in the sectors of our province, urban and rural, and across our economy. And so we have made the decision that we have made.

Mr. Speaker, there are also some other choices that I want to highlight today, that in a very difficult budget we were also able to see a historic, the largest ever social services budget in the history of the province of Saskatchewan. Knowing that utilization rates are increasing, knowing that government's fundamental job is to be there for those who are most vulnerable, that budget has increased. That's also a current choice that we made, Mr. Speaker, for the immediate term.

Mr. Speaker, we'll hear more in the weeks ahead about an initiative that the Health ministers have been leading with respect to dealing with ER [emergency room] times in our major centres, an innovation that will require an investment, a brand new investment, to achieve a brand new investment that's in this very challenging budget. Mr. Speaker, that is going to be of great interest in both the major cities of our province, and perhaps in other centres as well.

We made a choice, as I mentioned earlier, to build schools in this budget as well. Because, Mr. Speaker, there's been something happening in this province since 2007. Not only has there been a government in place that has been focused on a growth plan but, Mr. Speaker, the population of this province is growing at an historic level, and it hasn't stopped. Even through the challenge of low commodity prices, every quarterly report Stats Canada provides, our population's gone up. It just happened again, just right around the time of budget. Our population has increased and so, Mr. Speaker, that's why we've been building schools. And we're happy to have that challenge. Forty of them and two now at least planning dollars in this budget, in Rosthern and in Weyburn, two great communities, well represented here in this legislature.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that we weren't just thinking about the current year, even our choices that I've just talked about, choices that are very much about more near-term issues that we have in Saskatchewan. But members on this side of the House have been checking out the horizon. We wanted to take this opportunity to make sure we would make things immeasurably better for that next generation, so that Lane doesn't have to first go to Alberta, like his dad did before he came back home to the province.

There's other good news in my family. My brother's actually recently returned. He's the only brother I have, and he was in the House here recently with my youngest nephew. But he was in Alberta, as well as Justin and his family. And you know for me, every time I'm just . . . On Saturday we had a birthday

party for my dad. He turned 75 on the 25th, so we were out at my brother's acreage. He's got a little place on 363, which the Minister of Highways knows needs probably some repair, just south of Swift Current. It was quite a family gathering, the likes of which we haven't had in a while. Do you know why, Mr. Speaker? Because people are home. Kids have come home.

And that's why we're, Mr. Speaker, that's why we're focused on the long term. Because Lane's dad, he chose to leave. He had to go somewhere else, like so many other young people. They left this province. And when we sat in opposition benches, we would meet with heartbroken parents who couldn't figure out, in a province like ours, with all of our resources, with all of our potential, why in the world do young people almost on a default, on a de facto basis, leave, have to leave to find another future?

Mr. Speaker, we didn't think that made much sense either. Hence the growth plan. Hence the focus on, well, things like the graduate retention plan, one of the largest tax reductions for a group of people — post-secondary students — that the province has ever seen. A way for them to earn back almost all of their tuition. And I haven't checked the recent dates, but not very long ago 58,000 young people, students, took advantage of that program and have chosen to stay in this province.

Mr. Speaker, that's the kind of initiative we've undertaken for the short term and for the long term so that Lane at least has the choice to stay in the province when he is the age that his dad decided that he had to leave. That is precisely why this budget takes the long-term view that it does.

Mr. Speaker, the national economists and think tanks have taken a look at recent budgets in Canada. And I won't go into all the details, but you can look at what the Dominion Bond Rating agency had to say. They compared ours with the province of Alberta. They noted that we have a determined plan to return to balance where others don't seem to have that.

Mr. Speaker, there was an assistant professor at the University of Calgary who had to comment on the budget as well. That article in *Maclean's* where he's quoted is entitled, "Saskatchewan swallows the fiscal pill that Alberta refuses: Through restraint and strategic tax hikes, Saskatchewan shows how to get off the royalty rollercoaster."

Mr. Speaker, Jack Mintz in a *National-Post* column also pointed to the fact that from a policy standpoint, the Government of Saskatchewan is on good ground. This is a sound budget that is about the long term, that is about future generations.

And, Mr. Speaker, it is the most difficult budget I've ever been a part of. I think all members of this House, no matter how long they've served in this place, would agree that has been the case for them. But we have made the right decisions. I believe that. Tough funding choices, but the right decisions, not just for the province today, but for the province that Lane and his brother and his sisters will inherit.

And, Mr. Speaker, throughout that process, we have been well led by the Finance minister. And I also want to . . . I'm going to be giving way to him soon, but on behalf of this caucus, and

dare I say on behalf of a province, some of whom are obviously still upset, we owe a thanks to him because we are charting a longer-term vision in view for the province that will leave this province of ours stronger.

Just before the budget was tabled — and I'll close with this — just before the budget was tabled, Stats Canada released the job statistics for the country. And we know they're coming. It's the first Friday of every month, and we know they were coming, and we thought, you know, we were sensing anecdotally that things were turning a little bit. Even though the budget has its challenges, that the economy was kind of getting used to this lower prices — we're not used to them yet — but getting used to lower oil prices and lowering their cost structure, and people were starting to get back to work. And that was true in other sectors as well.

[12:15]

But we didn't know for sure. But I was surprised when the numbers came out. Even though I was expecting some improvement, I was a bit surprised. And maybe I shouldn't have been. Maybe I should never underestimate the people and the economy of this province to be resilient. But I was a little surprised that Saskatchewan posted 8,000 new jobs year over year and month over month and led Canada, Mr. Speaker. It's about 16,000 jobs created nationwide, half of them in the province of Saskatchewan facing low commodity prices.

That tells me something. That tells me that we've been diversifying our economy. That tells me that we've been focused on competitiveness to make sure this is the right place to invest and to create jobs. It tells me we've been also focused on things like infrastructure which has been part of our growth plan and featured prominently in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, this budget continues along that trend. It's focused on the long term. It's focused on competitiveness. It's focused on ensuring that we can sustain public service through a strong and lasting robust-broadened tax base. And for that reason, I am grateful to the Minister of Finance for what he tabled in this Assembly last week, and I will be proud to support this budget, Mr. Speaker, and equally determined and resolved to reject the amendment.

The Speaker: — Why is the Minister of the Economy on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Request leave for an extended introduction.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and it's my pleasure to introduce a good friend of mine, somebody who I've known for some period of time. An

MLA from Alberta, for Calgary-Foothills in particular, elected in a by-election just about two years ago, Mr. Speaker, a professional engineer, a very active member of his community, Mr. Prasad Panda who is sitting on the floor with us here today. Mr. Panda has worked for a number of global companies. He's also, I should note, the official opposition critic for economic development and trade in Alberta, so he's been very busy lately, Mr. Speaker. There has been a lot of work for Mr. Panda.

We had a very good discussion this morning with regard to a number of issues. But I want to thank him for his commitment, his party's commitment to the New West Partnership, which we share a very deep commitment, Mr. Speaker. We believe in open trade in Canada. I understand the Premier in Alberta spoke, had some comments today on the New West Partnership. Maybe I've missed past comments on NWP [New West Partnership], but it's actually the first time I've ever heard her comment on the New West Partnership.

And you know, we have some challenges with regard to our trading relationship with Alberta. We know that they've moved forward with some very anti-trade policies with respect to beer. But the matter is before the courts; I won't kind of speak further on that. But I can say that on this side of House, we appreciate that relationship with the NWP. We're fully committed to NWP. And I would like all members to welcome Mr. Panda to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. With leave to join with the minister in introductions.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming Mr. Prasad Panda to our Legislative Assembly. We're happy to have you here and watch our legislative proceedings today. The minister has already given you a very great introduction, but he forgot to mention one thing that I've heard from your Wildrose colleagues in Alberta — that you're known to be the only Wildrose MLA who opposes the bear hunt. Having your namesake as Mr. Panda, apparently that's what you're teased as.

On behalf of the official opposition, welcome. And I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming you to our Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — Why is the member from Athabasca on his feet?

Mr. Belanger: — I ask for leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too want rise on this occasion today and welcome two very special guests, two wonderful ladies from northern Saskatchewan. Joining us in the east gallery is Mrs. Lorraine Durocher and Mrs. Irene Durocher. Lorraine, of course, is from Jans Bay and Irene is actually from Ile-a-la-Crosse, my home community, but she's moved to Canoe Lake where her and her husband, who unfortunately has passed since, enjoy a very successful business life. And certainly they're quite active in their community.

Both of these ladies are here to bring a couple of students from the Bold Eagle program, which is a great program for young people joining the armed forces. So I'd like to take this opportunity to ask all my colleagues to welcome these two wonderful visitors from northern Saskatchewan. And I would tell them, please enjoy your day, as they are taking a tour of the Assembly, and thank you for all your work for those two young people that you brought all the way to Regina today.

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: — It is my duty pursuant to rule 31(8) to warn the Assembly that the minister is about to exercise his right to close the debate, and afterwards all members will be precluded from speaking to this question. Therefore, if any members wishes to speak, let him or her do so now.

Before I recognize the Minister of Finance, I would like to advise the Assembly that the minister has 20 minutes to close the debate. I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to colleagues here. It is my pleasure to rise in my place a little over a week after I rose in my place to deliver the 2017-18 budget on behalf of this government for the people of Saskatchewan. And like everyone else, I just want to make a few thank yous before I get into my remarks, Mr. Speaker, if I might.

I want to thank my treasury board colleagues. As Chair of treasury board, I get to spend a lot of time with these colleagues, capably assisted by the Vice-Chair, the Minister of the Economy, and then other members who sit on treasury board. It is a long process to put together a provincial budget, Mr. Speaker. We began literally last fall and worked through up to Christmas and then through the January and February months as we put together the budget and bring it together. And we spent a lot of time together listening to presentations and making decisions and advising cabinet and caucus on decisions.

I want to thank the Premier, Mr. Speaker, for his continued confidence in me as the Minister of Finance. This is my second budget now since becoming Minister of Finance in May of 2015. And I want to thank the Premier for his continued confidence, members of cabinet, and most importantly, Mr. Speaker, the members of caucus, all of my colleagues on this side of the House.

This experience with this budget, Mr. Speaker, was truly a caucus-driven development of a provincial budget, more so than I've ever been experienced in. We had long deliberations with members of caucus to talk about some of the decisions that were going to be made in this budget, getting feedback, as the Premier alluded to in his speech, getting feedback from their constituents, their own heartfelt beliefs and thoughts on the direction this budget ought to take as we deal with these challenges. And I found the discussions at times tense, at times emotional and passionate, but certainly . . .

An Hon. Member: — Determined.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Well very determined, of course, but certainly educational for me in the sense of what they were hearing from the various parts of the province that we needed to deliberate on to form this budget.

I want to thank the Finance officials, Mr. Speaker, who this government is so capably served by, led by Clare Isman, a long-time civil servant and professional here in the finance community, and her entire team. But I also want to reach out and thank all the officials across all ministries and the Crown corporations. As treasury board members would know, we have the opportunity to have the various ministries and Crowns come before treasury board — well CIC for that matter on the Crown side — but come and do their presentations and offer up their advice and issues that they want to see funding for, issues that they want to see brought forward to the treasury board table and the cabinet table and the caucus table. So I want to thank all officials across government for their deliberations and advice to this government as we prepared this budget.

I want to thank my office staff here in the building, Mr. Speaker, led by my chief of staff, Morgan; and Paul; Danielle; April; my previous chief of staff, Dawn Popescul, who left my office earlier this year, Mr. Speaker, and is engaged in some other work with respect to Executive Council; and my constituency assistant, Ronnie, who's actually on holiday today. He's in Seattle so I doubt very much he's tuning in, but you never know. He might be online watching this because he likes to follow the proceedings here in the Chamber, Mr. Speaker.

And of course my partner, Nancy, and her two kids — Nancy, who keeps everything in perspective, Mr. Speaker. I've been enjoying following her daughter, Libby, around with respect to basketball, and her son, Ryder, who's in the business school in Saskatoon, just doing terrifically in his third year of university, Mr. Speaker. And I wish those kids well as they prepare for final exams.

You know, Mr. Speaker, mindful of the time I have here today to wrap up this budget debate . . . And I've listened carefully to a lot of the speeches here in the Chamber. I've listened carefully to members of the opposition and their speeches, and certainly

from my colleagues here. I haven't had the opportunity to listen to all of them. I have taken some *Hansard* home. That tells you about my social life. I've taken *Hansard* home and read some of the speeches because I was interested in what members had to say. And I want to follow up on some other speeches I missed yesterday afternoon. I hear there was some very, very powerful speeches here yesterday that I want to follow up and have a look at.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, I'm a bit of a student of history, not nearly as much as the Minister of Energy and Resources, but a bit of a student of history. And I wanted to go back down memory lane a little bit and take a look at what other ministers of Finance had done when faced with challenges here in the province. So *Hansard's* a fascinating document to pick up, Mr. Speaker, because it captures everything that's been said in this Chamber since this Chamber was created.

And I went back. And as I listened to the member from Athabasca give his speech the other night, I thought, I wonder what he said in 1995 when he was a Liberal member in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, sitting on the opposition benches opposing the then-NDP government. So I went back and read his budget speech and then I read his budget speech in 1996, Mr. Speaker. It is the exact same budget speech he gave the other night in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker. Only the players have changed. The issues are still the same.

He was railing on the NDP government of the day of \$15 billion in debt here in the province; 15 billion he said at that time. This was 1995, Mr. Speaker. And he said the province is just in dire straits. It will never survive this NDP government, Mr. Speaker. We need a new Liberal government in this province. We don't want you to screw it up until we get a Liberal government in this province, Mr. Speaker.

I felt a sense of déjà vu all over again, as Yogi Berra would say. And then I listened very carefully to some of the newer members in the opposition benches. And it's a good crop they got elected in 2016, Mr. Speaker. We have a lawyer, and we have a social worker and a former school trustee; and most recently in the Meewasin by-election, a physician. A good crop of outstanding individuals here in the province of Saskatchewan who have a lot to offer here in the province, Mr. Speaker.

So I listened to their critique of the budget and was trying to find where they would offer up their alternative plan if they didn't like the budget. I was particularly interested in the member from Meewasin, who I think aspires to be the leader of the opposition, the leader of the NDP at some point in time — he's run for it twice. Maybe he doesn't, I don't know, Mr. Speaker. But I read through his speech. I listened to it in the Chamber and then I read through his speech to determine if he was going to offer an alternative vision.

And he started down that path, Mr. Speaker, and then you could tell he was shifted to the talking points that he's been given by his caucus mates to just criticize the budget. Criticize the budget, even to the point of saying that we are not investing properly in social investment. With a \$1.4 billion investment in social services in this budget, Mr. Speaker, the largest amount ever, ever, in a social services budget under this government, and yet the member still had the temerity to suggest that we

were not investing in social investment here in the province.

So I read very carefully to see if he was going to offer an alternative plan, and I didn't see that. So I would just offer some advice, if he's willing to take any from me, that as he aspires to the leadership, he's going to have to get off the critic role because they're rock stars over there at being critics, Mr. Speaker. Their former leaders, Mr. Broten and Mr. Lingenfelter, went around this province and were very good at criticizing this Premier and this government. What they weren't so good at was offering alternative vision for the people of Saskatchewan to aspire to.

And so in the absence of an alternative vision or plan, the people will turn to where leadership is, Mr. Speaker. And leadership has been shown in this province by this Premier and this government over the last number of years, and I think it continues in this budget.

I went back, and I hear over and over again that, oh, you have record revenues; you have record revenues. And I'm always reminded by the Minister of Energy and Resources that you know what else we have, Mr. Speaker, is record expenditures, record expenditures in the priority areas of health care, education, social services, highways, and infrastructure, Mr. Speaker.

So I went back and had a look at the financial statements of the province over the last number of years. From 2002, Mr. Speaker, to 2007-08, the last six years the NDP was in government, do you know what they had, Mr. Speaker? They had record revenues. Every single year in those six years in their fiscal years, Mr. Speaker, they had record revenues relative to the size of the GDP in the province. But they had to make some choices. They had to make some choices as to where they were going to spend those record revenues. And the member from Saskatoon Centre, and Regina Elphinstone, and of course, the old member from Athabasca, were part of governments, Mr. Speaker, during those years that made those choices.

So I thought, wouldn't it be interesting to go back and see what choices they made in their budgets. So I looked at two different budgets, '02 and '03, just prior to the election in '03; and then '04-05, coming out of the election of '03.

Tell me if this sounds familiar, Mr. Speaker, and I quote from the budget address from Mr. Eric Cline from 2002-03:

[12:30]

This is not a year for large spending increases. In fact, once again this year our expenditures will exceed our revenues. In this sense, on a cash basis we are in a deficit situation as we were in 1995-96, 1997-98, and last year, and many other years . . . [when we relied upon] savings from previous years to balance our books.

That's in his budget speech, Mr. Speaker. He goes on to say that is why, Mr. Speaker:

Going back at least as far as the Liberal government of Premier Dunning in 1925 [They never like to go back to

their old record, but 1925 was apropos], prudent governments have relied on stabilization funds as we will be doing this year. We will be balancing the books by relying on the savings built up in surplus years. Last year we used \$411 million. This year we'll use \$225 million, Mr. Speaker.

. . . With the new budget year, we will abolish more than 350 full-time equivalent civil service positions . . . [in the province of Saskatchewan].

Mr. Speaker, he went on to say, on tough choices:

The tough choices did not stop with reorganization of government. Mr. Speaker, we will also introduce a number of changes in fees and charges to better recover costs, and we will introduce two tax changes related to alcohol and tobacco.

Does that sound familiar, Mr. Speaker? Then he goes on to say:

Other fees and charges will be increased marginally on a user-fee, cost-recovery basis. Some will be asked to pay a greater share of the cost of prescription drugs and long-term care . . . based upon and subject to their ability to pay.

Mr. Speaker, on public debt, I found this fascinating. The Leader of the Opposition might want to pay attention to this. This is in his budget speech:

Mr. Speaker, a budget is a good time to talk about debt. I want to repeat our position on debt beginning with the distinction between Crown debt on the one hand and operating debt on the other.

Crown corporations, as a matter of course, have some level of debt. They build power lines, take high-speed Internet throughout the province, and so on. These are infrastructure investments, the cost of which should be amortized and paid for over time by those who will use and benefit from them. This is self-liquidating debt [Mr. Speaker] and is quite appropriate.

On the operating side, debt to pay for day-to-day operations is not usually a good thing. Debt to build public infrastructure for today and tomorrow may be. Here too we should aim for a reasonable approach. Public debt does not have to be zero. It should be some reasonable percentage of the gross domestic product. Our tax-supported debt has gone from 41 per cent of GDP in 1993 to 23 per cent today [Mr. Speaker]. Interest costs have gone from a high of \$882 million to a low of \$621 million . . .

He's proud of this, Mr. Speaker. Our debt to GDP on an operating basis this year, Mr. Speaker, is less than 10 per cent. Our interest on the public debt is less than \$400 million. They were bragging about \$623 million interest on the public debt, Mr. Speaker.

Well let's have a look at the budget speech of '04-05. This is after the election of '03, Mr. Speaker, by the Hon. Harry Van Mulligen. Let me see if I can refresh their memories, because

the member from Elphinstone was certainly a member of that government.

This budget responds to the fiscal reality in Saskatchewan.

This budget exemplifies restraint and demands change, because Saskatchewan people understand the value and the inherent importance of prudent financial choices. So we are addressing our financial picture today. We are not delaying until tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, he goes on to say:

Mr. Speaker, our economy — with its dependence on natural resources and commodities — is subject to cyclical fluctuations.

We can experience great swings in commodity prices or production. As examples, I will note the price of oil, or the lower crop production brought on by drought.

These fluctuations can, and do, result in unexpected demands on the provincial treasury. Sometimes the result is increased expenditures. Sometimes it means falling revenues. The only constant is that these changes cannot be anticipated or incorporated into the government's budget and financial plan.

Mr. Speaker, he went on to say:

I am presenting our 11th consecutive balanced General Revenue Fund budget — balanced with the benefit of a \$158 million dollar transfer from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. [Mr. Speaker, it's in the speech.]

This transfer is a 40 per cent reduction from the last fiscal year. [So that was at least \$250 million] We will further reduce the gap between our revenues and expenditures next year, and by the fiscal year 2006/2007, our revenues and expenditures will balance

Mr. Speaker, see if this language sounds familiar:

During the budget process, we conducted an extensive and thorough expenditure review. Our goal was simple, to hold the line and reduce expenditures. We will continue this process.

Everyone has had to make sacrifices. It is our commitment to fiscally responsible governance.

We are holding the line on salaries in government departments, and Crown corporations.

I am sorry to say that some people will lose their jobs today.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great regret that I announce that approximately 500 seasonal, temporary, and permanent staff will be impacted by this budget.

Twelve Departments have had their budgets reduced this fiscal year, Mr. Speaker.

Increasing revenues.

Mr. Speaker, the delivery of essential services is neither easy nor . . . [expensive].

There is a cost that must be paid to protect our quality of life — to preserve those public services essential to Saskatchewan citizens.

To maintain our essential services, provide assistance to our communities, and support our young people, this budget contains a number of revenue initiatives.

This is '04-05, Mr. Speaker. He goes on to talk about "effective midnight." I know the critic for Finance doesn't like that "effective midnight" stuff because it's too difficult for businesses in the province to adjust to that, but effective midnight changes were going to happen. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, he goes on to say, he goes on to say:

We will change the current Fuel Tax exemption on farm gasoline to 80 per cent of all bulk purchases effective April 7, 2004; and the annual farm rebate for retail gasoline purchases is eliminated beginning this calendar year.

And then he says, Mr. Speaker:

Effective midnight tonight the Provincial Sales Tax rate will increase from 6 per cent to 7 per cent.

They eliminated 500 jobs in this budget, Mr. Speaker. They increased the provincial sales tax from 6 per cent to 7 per cent. Their resource revenues were about 16 per cent that year, Mr. Speaker, and they had an \$844 million surplus at the end of that year. Why? That one kind of bugged me. I thought, why would you make those kinds of decisions if you're kind of forecasting that kind of surplus at the end of your fiscal year.

Here's what happened, Mr. Speaker. One of my assistants brought it to my attention. The Iraq war happened that year. The Gulf War happened that year. Oil prices spiked up. They found themselves in a windfall. They still went ahead with this fiscal plan, Mr. Speaker. They went ahead with this fiscal plan with the same kind of language we're talking about here.

But I kept wondering to myself, they've had all these years in government now — this is '04-05, so they're some 14 years, 13, 14 years into their mandate — why didn't they diversify the economy? Why didn't they make the difficult choices at that time, Mr. Speaker, to say, you know what? We can no longer be relying on resource revenues as much as we are. Oh well, we just had a Gulf War. Oil prices spiked up. Let's go spend that money. At the same time they were receiving over \$3 billion over the course of that time in equalization payments, Mr. Speaker, equalization payments.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I find it just somewhat ironic that this is the kind of language being used in budgets back in the day when they stood up as cheerleaders, cheering on these ministers of Finance dealing with the choices of the day. Now I can fundamentally disagree with the philosophy they took with respect to their attempt to diversify the economy, Mr. Speaker.

But here's what we've done on this side of the House. We have to get away from a reliance on resource revenues. That's understandable. We have to get away from that volatility . . . [inaudible] . . . we see on an average basis, Mr. Speaker, over the course of five years, where we see commodity prices doing this and we're trying to make public policy decisions on this side with respect to our spending based on that kind of volatility.

So, Mr. Speaker, we heard that over and over and over again from the people in our pre-budget consultations — whether it was business, stakeholders, in the education sector, in the post-secondary education sector, small businesses, farmers across the province, Mr. Speaker — they said to us over and over again, we have to have some kind of stable level of revenue. At the same time, we have to continue to try to grow our economy, Mr. Speaker. We have to continue to try and grow our economy. That's what we tried to do in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

We are making a major shift. I acknowledge that. Is there some pain associated with that? I fully acknowledge that. This entire government acknowledges that, Mr. Speaker. We are going to move from taxing income and productivity to taxing consumption, and spreading that base out over a much wider spectrum here in the province of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, if resource revenues, for whatever reason, happen to spike back up, we will use those revenues, Mr. Speaker, to either pay down operating debt, perhaps reduce some taxes in a targeted fashion, or reinvest in those priority areas of education, health care, and social services.

Mr. Speaker, that is the plan. The people of this province want to see that their Premier and their government have a plan to get back to balance, given the financial challenges. And they're prepared to share in that, Mr. Speaker. I've heard that over and over again. I've gotten dozens and dozens of emails of saying, stick to your guns. Stick to your guns. Do not back up on this with respect to taking care of the province, with respect to getting to a balanced budget in three years time, Mr. Speaker.

And they have said to me, over and over again, do not follow the path of Alberta. Do not follow the path of Alberta. And here was a quote from the Minister of Finance in Alberta, Mr. Speaker. I'm paraphrasing here, but he said, when asked a question, he said, well, when oil comes back, we will balance the budget, and happy days will be here again. I'm not sure that instills a lot of confidence in the people of Alberta. But so be it, Mr. Speaker. That's what he said. They'll have to deal with their constituents at the next election, based on a lack of a plan.

We are prepared to lay out this plan before the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We're not going to kick the can down the street like these ministers of Finance did back in '02 and '03, and '03 and '04, Mr. Speaker, under an NDP government.

We are going to stick to this plan. It is a plan that does controlling and reducing our government spending. It modernizes and expands our tax system and our tax base, Mr. Speaker. It ensures the economy remains strong. It invests in our priority areas of health care, education, social services,

highways and infrastructure, and it returns our budget to balance in three years time, Mr. Speaker. I am proud of this budget that this government created. I will be supporting the budget, and not the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Order. First the amendment, amended motion, moved by the member from Saskatoon Nutana and seconded by the member from Saskatoon Centre:

That all words after “That the Assembly” be deleted and the following be added:

disagrees with the government for tabling a budget of broken promises, callous cuts, and tax cuts that makes Saskatchewan families pay for the Sask Party's mismanagement, scandal, and waste.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — The nays have it. Call in the members.

[The division bells rang from 12:42 until 12:46.]

The Speaker: — All those in favour of the amended motion please stand.

[Yeas — 11]

Wotherspoon	Vermette	Chartier
Belanger	Sroule	Forbes
Rancourt	Beck	McCall
Sarauer	Meili	

The Speaker: — All those opposed to the motion please stand.

[Nays — 46]

Wall	Moe	Stewart
Wyant	Reiter	Morgan
Harpauer	Doherty	Duncan
Beaudry-Mellor	Hargrave	D'Autremont
Heppner	Boyd	Cheveldayoff
Marit	Tell	Eyre
Merriman	Harrison	Ross
Weekes	Brkich	Hart
Bradshaw	Steinley	Makowsky
Phillips	Lawrence	Wilson
Campeau	Docherty	Michelson
Doke	Cox	Olauson
Steele	Young	Fiaz
Dennis	Bonk	Carr
Nerlien	Lambert	Buckingham
Kaeding		

Clerk: — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the amendment, 11; those opposed, 46.

The Speaker: — I declare the motion lost.

Moved by the member from Regina Northeast and seconded by [The Assembly adjourned at 12:53.]
the member from Moosomin:

That this Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — Yeas have it. Call in the members.

[The division bells rang from 12:49 until 12:50.]

The Speaker: — All those in favour of the motion please stand.

[Yeas — 46]

Wall	Moe	Stewart
Wyant	Reiter	Morgan
Harpauer	Doherty	Duncan
Beaudry-Mellor	Hargrave	D'Autremont
Heppner	Boyd	Cheveldayoff
Marit	Tell	Eyre
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Campeau	Docherty	Michelson
Doke	Cox	Olauson
Steele	Young	Fiaz
Dennis	Bonk	Carr
Nerlien	Lambert	Buckingham
Kaeding		

The Speaker: — All those opposed to the motion please stand.

[Nays — 11]

Wotherspoon	Vermette	Chartier
Belanger	Sproule	Forbes
Rancourt	Beck	McCall
Sarauer	Meili	

Clerk: — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the motion, 46; those opposed, 11.

The Speaker: — I declare the motion carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

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

The Speaker: — It has been moved that the Assembly do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. This Assembly now stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30.

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GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

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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
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Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
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Government Insurance
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
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Minister of the Economy
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Liquor and Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for The Global
Transportation Hub Authority
Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan
Minister Responsible for Innovation

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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Water
Security Agency
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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Crop
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Minister Responsible for the Provincial
Capital Commission
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
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Hon. Gordon Wyant
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Minister Responsible for SaskBuilds
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Power Corporation