



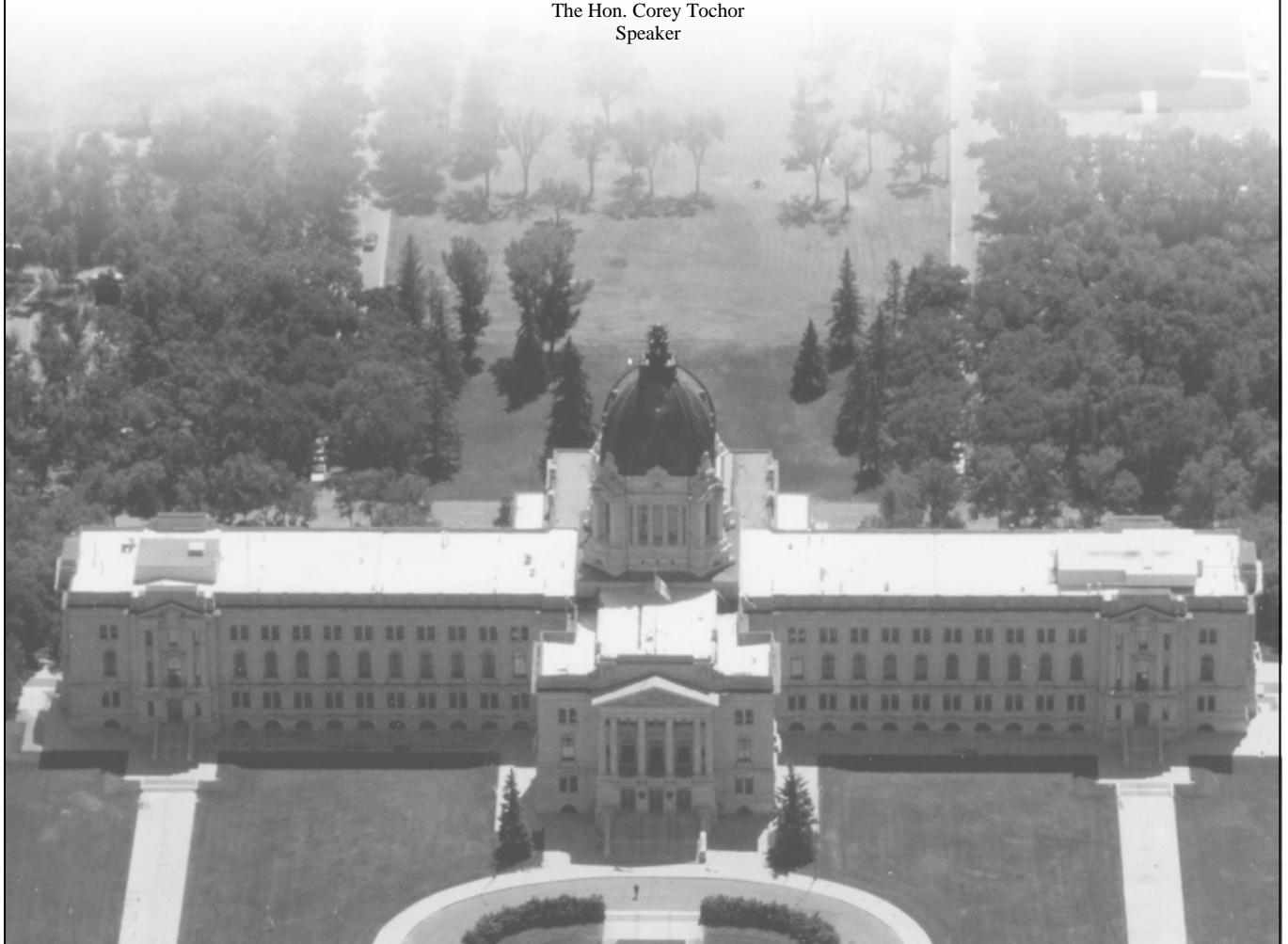
SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)
Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Corey Tochor
Speaker



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2nd Session — 28th Legislature

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[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

The Speaker: — It now being 7 o'clock and 20 seconds, I call this Assembly back to order. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Riversdale.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Ms. Carr, seconded by Mr. Nerlien, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Ms. Sproule.]

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As always, it's my pleasure to enter into debate here in this House tonight on this the occasion of the response to the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to start by thanking important people in my life. The most . . . You, Mr. Speaker, are very important, but not quite as important in my life as my 19-year-old, my 19-year-old Hennessey, who is . . . Sorry to hurt your feelings. My 19-year-old Hennessey, who's in her second year at McGill, who was home for the summer and puts up with me and my work over the course of the summer, but is leading her own life as an adult, which is a really interesting experience, actually having a grown child. And I've also got my foot in a slightly younger world with my almost 10-year-old Ophelia.

It's interesting, my kids put up with an awful lot, are very patient. And last week actually we had a mini-crisis. So Tuesday was the day before the Throne Speech. My daughter wakes up and was a little bit puffy, and so we realized it's probably an allergic reaction. She has some antihistamine throughout the day, it looks a little bit better.

By the end of the day I know that I'm not going to Regina on Tuesday night, it's going to have to wait until Wednesday. And we have an emergency trip to the ER [emergency room] on Tuesday night before the Throne Speech at 1 in the morning and the doctors and the nurses, the staff were wonderful. My daughter looked like a little pink pumpkin for the rest of the week. My really cute daughter, her eye was swollen shut and her . . . it was bad. It was a bad week, Mr. Speaker. What a way to start the first sitting of the legislature.

But my daughters have lots of support in their lives, including my mom and dad who still just live two blocks away from me and are having their own challenges with aging, Mr. Speaker. My dad experiences some dementia, and my mom has been his caregiver. So they're a little less, they're not quite there as much for me as they've been able to in the role as the tables are turning a little bit, Mr. Speaker. But despite the challenges in their life my mom, the day of the Throne Speech, came over to my house and hung out with Ophelia so I could come down here and be a part of that, Mr. Speaker. So my mom and dad, I am still hugely appreciative of all that they do for me. They'd

walk to the end of the earth for their kids, Mr. Speaker.

And my sister Michelle has been the big part of the reason I can do this job, Mr. Speaker. She and her husband John are really close with both my kids, Mr. Speaker. And my sister now we have lots of kids, there are seven kids in my family. But my sister doesn't have children of her own and she now provides . . . she's a caregiver for my mom and dad and helps out there but also helps me. So I feel incredibly grateful to have the support network that I do, Mr. Speaker, that enables me to do this job and to do my very best to serve the people of Saskatoon Riversdale.

I've got wonderful staff in my office. Vanessa, who had to take a sudden leave in August, I sure miss her in my office, but Judy who is my part-time CA [constituency assistant] has been great. And I was happy to welcome Dan Richert into my office, who has been there in an emergency crisis to get some staffing in there. And Dan's been great and does a great job of helping out folks in my constituency and supporting me, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to just give a shout-out to my best friend Moe, who keeps me laughing in this job and on a daily basis when I need it most, and I think I need it quite often, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the staff in the building, the legislative staff who always do such a great job of supporting us whether it's in the library, Mr. Speaker, the Clerk's office, the committee branch, the cafeteria, everybody in this building. They're amazing professionals and such great support. And I want to give a shout-out to our staff in our caucus office who do a lot with limited resources, Mr. Speaker.

My colleague from Saskatoon Centre pointed out that we've had occasion on this side of the House to welcome a few additional members in the last year and a half, Mr. Speaker. We had three new members at the last election, Mr. Speaker, three wonderful, strong women, Mr. Speaker. And last February we welcomed the member from Saskatoon Meewasin, and just a short while ago we welcomed the new member from Saskatoon Fairview, Mr. Speaker.

And I have to say I'm very proud to be part of a caucus that is half women, Mr. Speaker. Six out of twelve of us are women. I think it's incredibly important that our legislatures, our elected bodies, look like the makeup of the province, Mr. Speaker, and are representative of the people we serve. I know we're getting closer on our side of the House here, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to having the opportunity some day, Mr. Speaker, to make up a government that is half women, Mr. Speaker. That is something that I look forward to. I can tell you in my experience as an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] that I've seen many different iterations of this caucus in my eight years here, starting in 2009 where there were 20 of us. I've been part of a caucus where there's been nine, ten, eleven and now twelve. And my male colleagues are wonderful, but I have to tell you that it really does make a difference.

Intellectually, I know this. You can look at all the literature and see how having a diverse set of decision makers around a table makes a real difference. And I can tell you that is my experience in our caucus, Mr. Speaker. It was actually validated

last year at a strategy session with a former MLA who came in and sat around the table with us, and he commented about the openness and the way in which we all dealt with each other, Mr. Speaker. In that time there were five women and five men, so we've added two to our ranks, but it is really a wonderful thing, Mr. Speaker.

So today, what we're talking about, the Throne Speech. We're all giving our responses to the Throne Speech. So I'd like to start with a little bit of context. So we have a Premier who is at the end of his career, Mr. Speaker. Times are a little tougher here in Saskatchewan. The political climate is a little tougher, and the context of the last few months post-budget and even prior to that, with things like the introduction of Bill 40, which would have seen the privatization of up to 49 per cent of our Crowns, Mr. Speaker.

So context here; I'd like to read from a story from July 14th, 2017 that uses words like poor planning. It says here — it's a *StarPhoenix* story, Mr. Speaker:

It's never a good idea for governments to do that because it makes them look like they don't know what they're doing — that they hadn't done sufficient planning or hadn't done effective consultation, and don't have confidence in their own plan.

Mr. Speaker, so that's in reference to the government rolling back budget cuts, Mr. Speaker.

So Mr. Rasmussen is saying it doesn't look like the government knows what they're doing or that they've done sufficient planning, Mr. Speaker. I take that a step further and say: doesn't just look like it, Mr. Speaker; it's very clear that that's the case. This government has not done sufficient planning and does not appear to know what they're doing at this point.

We can look to government flip-flops or changes to budget decisions or what they might refer to as government listening, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to refer to it more as pulling at least one finger out of their ear, or perhaps to put it another way, as Mr. Rasmussen said, poor planning, Mr. Speaker.

We have some of their walk backs — and not that I don't welcome these, Mr. Speaker; I think we welcome them on our side of the House — but they've put . . . I think it illustrates a lack of planning, Mr. Speaker. We've seen them make changes on how PST [provincial sales tax] was going to apply on construction projects. We've seen a walk back of the libraries funding; funerals; the hearing aid plan, delaying it for kids to make sure . . . They've cut the hearing aid plan, Mr. Speaker, but they've realized they needed audiologists to insure that kids had access to those services or public audiologists because the capacity wasn't there in the private sector, Mr. Speaker, so they're delaying that.

We've got Bill 40, sort of, Mr. Speaker. We thought it was a complete repeal of Bill 40 but as it turns out that isn't the case. And another example, the 10 per cent cut to mental health that we learned about in April of last year, Mr. Speaker, and then after months of community-based health organizations being dragged over the coals and not sure whether they were losing all their funding or part of their funding, the minister realizing that

in fact our health care CBOs [community-based organization] do really important work, Mr. Speaker.

Changing their stance on sleep apnea machines, I think this is an interesting thing. On September 13th, 2017, the sleep apnea machines . . . The quote from the Health minister is, "Following consultation with respirologists and review of processes in other jurisdictions, we've determined that the same annual savings could be achieved from an alternate approach," said the Health minister. "This approach will reduce costs for patients and allow better access for those who need it, while still achieving the same savings for the province."

Well I'm glad that the minister realized several months after the budget that there was a different way of doing things, Mr. Speaker.

Or like the 10 per cent cut to CBOs, Mr. Speaker. He's quoted on August 17th — so again several months after we heard that the CBOs were going to be cut — he's quoted as saying, "After conducting the most comprehensive review of health-funded CBOs in close to 10 years, we have decided not to proceed with the 10 per cent reduction," Mr. Speaker. And then he goes on to say, "We understand that the uncertainty around funding during this review period has caused some worry."

No doubt, Mr. Speaker, and it illustrates very clearly a government makes a decision, puts out a directive — we're cutting 10 per cent from our CBOs; we want CBOs to tell us, justify what they do, Mr. Speaker — and not realizing that many of those CBOs, the health regions that fund those CBOs, put together a very intricate plan. Like those CBOs aren't bodies unto themselves; they fit into a plan to make sure that people have the health care they need, Mr. Speaker. So I'm very glad on those cases that the minister or ministers responsible walked those back, but I think it illustrates a clear example of this government not planning, Mr. Speaker.

In this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, there were things that I liked. I have to say first of all that there are no shortage of issues impacting people in Saskatoon Riversdale and throughout the province, Mr. Speaker, but I'm going to focus mostly on my critic areas, which in this case it'll be health and seniors' issues, although there are . . . My absence of comments in some areas, Mr. Speaker, doesn't mean that they're not important. I just know I have colleagues who will cover many subjects like education very ably, Mr. Speaker.

So some of the things that I appreciated in the Throne Speech, I was very happy to hear that the government was going to implement basically the dissenting opinion, the minority opinion by my colleague and I around donor physicians, Mr. Speaker. And we learned last year after many hours of listening to evidence and going through evidence that donor physicians are the linchpin in improving donor rates.

Saskatchewan and Alberta, I believe, are the only two provinces that don't have donor physicians. Rates have gone up everywhere else in large measure because of donor physicians, and donor physicians are the people . . . Actually, Dr. Moser, who is a physician in Saskatoon, had described to me on another discussion back in 2015 that donor physicians are . . . I will give you a definition of them. They help educate their

colleagues around donation. They review any missed opportunities. They can review missed opportunities on a case-by-case basis. They work with regional health authorities and help with collaboration. They're an incredibly important part of making this happen, Mr. Speaker.

I almost fell off my seat actually when I heard that the government was going this direction. Back in 2015 actually this government passed a bill that ... We went through three readings for *The Human Tissue Gift Act* in 2015 that enabled mandatory referral and donation after cardiocirculatory death. There needed to be regulations. But the former Health minister actually had done work on that bill, but the transplant program had requested at that time, aside from that bill, they also wanted donor physicians. And so this has been something that's been asked for for several years, Mr. Speaker. So I was happy we could put it in our minority opinion.

But this is something the government has known for several years now, Mr. Speaker, and is just acting on it now. I was surprised that it was included in this budget because as late as last spring, Mr. Speaker, I asked in estimates about it, and the government, for love nor money, couldn't say donor physician. They talked about a liaison position in their recommendations. In committee we talked about ... they talked about donor coordinators, which are an important part of the system, but they're very different than donor physicians, Mr. Speaker.

[19:15]

So I was very happy to see the government go this direction, and I believe firmly that this will help increase our organ donation rate, which is one of the worst in the country, Mr. Speaker, which will not only be good ... provide people, patients who choose, the families of those who are losing a loved one, with the opportunity for their loved one to donate organs, Mr. Speaker, which can often be part of the healing process.

Consent isn't the issue, Mr. Speaker, consent around organ donation. I just want to read this into the record. That's something that we heard in our committee, that consent isn't in fact the issue. It's not having a system in place that catches those opportunities, Mr. Speaker.

So we heard from page 12 on our report that we did, Mr. Speaker, the organ donation report, the Kidney Foundation of Canada conducted a study in Alberta to understand the potential for organ donation. According to Ms. Van Deurzen, the study shows a high public willingness to donate, and only 10 to 20 per cent of potential donors are lost due to lack of consent. The remaining 80 to 90 per cent of missed opportunities are systemic failures that could be fixed within the health care system. She indicated that these stats are consistent with other jurisdictions surveyed in the US [United States], Mr. Speaker.

So consent is less of an issue, Mr. Speaker. It's having those structures in place, and the big piece of that to put those structures in place are donor physicians. So I'm really very glad that the government decided to go with the dissenting opinion, Mr. Speaker, in the work that we did last year on organ donation. And in fact, the bill that passed in 2015, Mr. Speaker, they've been working on regulations around mandatory referral

and donation after cardiocirculatory death, but that bill has not yet been proclaimed. So I'm looking forward to that bill being proclaimed. Hopefully maybe even we get there this session, depending on what's all in the bill, Mr. Speaker, if it comes back before us to enable donor physicians. So organ donation was one of the things that I appreciated in the speech.

I have to say, promising to keep election promises, Mr. Speaker, so in the 2016 election campaign, the Sask Party committed to individualized funding for kids under six. So the government has said kids will receive \$4,000 per year. So that was a promise two budget cycles ago, Mr. Speaker. This is a government who has yet to keep that promise, but I hope that since they've put it in the Throne Speech, budget number three may be a charm, Mr. Speaker. The seniors' tax deferral on property tax, Mr. Speaker, again, that was something around, I just have to say around individualized funding. I actually presented petitions on that prior to that last election from constituents who believe this was an important measure, but it's not without its challenges.

You think about those kids. You hit six years old, Mr. Speaker, and the individualized funding falls off, and as we know, there's a huge gap for kids who go from health into education when it comes to getting necessary supports. So I just want to flag that as a concern, Mr. Speaker, that those early years are really important, but kids with autism spectrum disorder still need supports beyond six, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to point out that \$4,000 really is a drop in the bucket when it comes to therapies and supports. And there are some families who it will enable them to access ... they'll have additional money to put towards therapies, but the reality is there are many families for whom \$4,000, they still won't be able to access the necessary supports that they need, Mr. Speaker.

Again I was happy to hear about the promise to keep the promise from the 2016 election campaign on the seniors' tax deferral. Again this was something that we've been pushing as well. I'll talk a little bit more about that in a couple minutes here, Mr. Speaker, but I was happy to see that.

Around impaired driving, I had the privilege a few years ago in 2013 to sit on a committee with members of both sides of the House on road safety. And a part of that was around impaired driving, Mr. Speaker. I was happy last year to finally have the government move on the three-day vehicle impoundment for those in the warning range, Mr. Speaker. That was something my colleague from Cumberland and I pushed in 2013. It took three years but we were happy to see it, especially in light of looking at recent stats.

So just an article from October 29, 2017: "Drunk driving deaths up in Saskatchewan in 2016." So I just want to note we didn't increase those penalties until late last year, Mr. Speaker. I think it was the end of October or early November. But "A total of 57 people were killed in Saskatchewan in 2016 in collisions involving alcohol," according to SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance], Mr. Speaker.

So impaired driving is still an issue here in Saskatchewan. So I appreciated the government talking about the possibility of ride

sharing, particularly in smaller communities, Mr. Speaker. I know coming from a centre like Saskatoon, it's great to have taxis, but I know there's lots of people in other communities who don't have access to those kinds of services. So I appreciate that. I think change of culture also involves making sure that people have an opportunity to have a drink and get home safely, making sure that people have the necessary services.

But I think, as my colleague from Saskatoon Centre pointed out, that the goal should be for everybody who's employed or to go home safe as well, Mr. Speaker, and so making sure from an occupational health and safety perspective that anybody involved with ride sharing that they are protected, Mr. Speaker. And my colleague from Saskatoon Centre pointed out some of the struggles I think that the taxi industry has had working with SGI and WCB [Workers' Compensation Board] around safety shields and a number of other issues, Mr. Speaker.

And I think it's absolutely imperative that . . . I know the taxi association has said they are not . . . that they're supportive of ride sharing, but there needs to be a level playing field, Mr. Speaker. But I am very encouraged about the idea of people having safe rides home, Mr. Speaker. Any one, any death on the highway or on any road, Mr. Speaker, because of alcohol or any other impairment for that matter, whether it's other drugs or even prescription drugs, Mr. Speaker, can be a problem. Some of the things that I'd like to point out that were missing, that jumped out at me, that were really absent in this Throne Speech and I would have liked to have seen the government go there.

A Throne Speech is about government priorities, Mr. Speaker. I was sorry to see that mental health, generally speaking, wasn't part of the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker. There's a mental health and addictions action plan, a 10-year mental health and addictions action plan that's almost three years old, Mr. Speaker, and the government has not moved very far on that. But particularly around mental health — and I'll get into some of these in a little bit more detail shortly here, Mr. Speaker — I'd just like to lay out some of the things I would have liked to have seen.

Particularly around mental health too I would have liked to have seen, I think it's important for people in Saskatchewan that we address the youth suicide crisis, Mr. Speaker. And coupled with that, I think we could have talked about reconciliation. There could have been an apology for the Sixties Scoop. I'd like to see our government pursue that, Mr. Speaker.

Another thing that was absent in this Throne Speech was addressing the HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] crisis, Mr. Speaker. I'll get into that in a few minutes too, but we have some of the highest rates in Canada as well. Interpersonal violence, Mr. Speaker; we're the highest of the provinces. We're twice the national rate, Mr. Speaker, of interpersonal violence. And this government's made a move, following actually . . . My colleague from Douglas Park had worked with our colleague from Saskatoon Centre to come up with a bill last spring on interpersonal violence to allow a lease to be broken, Mr. Speaker, when someone was fleeing a violent situation. And the government moved on that, which we're very happy about. They took a part of the bill and included that.

But a really important piece that they missed, Mr. Speaker, is job protection and some guarantee of wages, Mr. Speaker. So when you're fleeing a difficult situation, sometimes you have to be absent from work, and to have job protection is the first thing. You have to feel like you're not going to lose your job in order to make sure you and/or your children are safe. But part of that proposal could also involve paying some of those days, Mr. Speaker. And we would have liked to have seen that happen.

Again, I mention reconciliation. So how do we bring the calls to action to life? I think that that could have been a really great legacy for our Premier as he heads out the door, Mr. Speaker, and I was disappointed to see that not as a key theme in our Speech from the Throne.

As the Health critic, a palliative care strategy, we've all talked, or many of us have talked to folks here who've explained why palliative care is really important here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Recently due to a Supreme Court decision and the federal government moving on medical assistance in dying, I think it becomes even more imperative that we have a proper palliative care strategy. And I'm supportive of medical assistance in dying, but I think on the flip side of that we need to ensure that people have a full range of choices, Mr. Speaker, that they have their pain managed and treated the best they can.

And the reality is, there are pockets of good, Mr. Speaker, but we could benefit from a palliative care strategy, a dementia strategy, Mr. Speaker. We have an aging population here in Saskatchewan. By 2041 — this was an interesting statistic I heard last week at the rural dementia summit — by 2041, seniors will have the highest rate of mental health issues in Canada, Mr. Speaker. I think this is something that . . . When's the best time to plant a tree? It would have been a while ago. The next best time is now, Mr. Speaker. I would have liked to have seen us pursue a dementia strategy, Mr. Speaker. So those are things, sort of general things, that I think are missing in the Throne Speech.

But I'd like to get into a little bit more detail why I think those are areas that we should have pursued, or this government should have pursued, around mental health, Mr. Speaker. So as I mentioned, we have an almost a three-year-old mental health and addictions 10-year action plan. So almost a third of the way through it, Mr. Speaker; very little has been done on that plan, Mr. Speaker.

I have to point out that of all the dollars spent on health care in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, only 5 per cent of those dollars here in Saskatchewan are committed to mental health. In Saskatoon Health Region, which is the largest health region in the province, only 4.5 per cent are committed to mental health. The national average is seven, Mr. Speaker, and in countries that are doing things much better than us, about 11 to 14 per cent are the numbers in a country like Australia that is doing much better on mental health, Mr. Speaker.

And the reality is the rates are going up. You go to RUH [Royal University Hospital] or the Dubé, they're always over capacity, Mr. Speaker. The numbers haven't diminished in recent years; they've gone up. And partly we need to think about how we do things differently, Mr. Speaker. We need better access and

better support in community.

I would argue that we need to do things completely differently around mental health when people are in crisis. I think we need to prevent people from being in crisis, but if they do reach a crisis I don't think our standard emergency room or heading to a hospital is the right place to be, Mr. Speaker.

In Australia, actually in 2013, there was a presentation to the Saskatoon Health Region on the emergency department wait time, the patient flow initiative in 2013. And we heard one of the things they were doing in Australia was creating psychiatric emergency care centres. So some of them are attached to hospitals or acute care facilities, but some of them are stand-alone, but what they are is short-stay and assessment, or assessment and short-stay units. So you can come; you get assessed promptly in a much healthier environment. You might stay for two or three days and get stabilized. That's a really wonderful model, Mr. Speaker.

I was glad to finally see the government agree to fund the temporary assessment unit at RUH, the seven-bed assessment unit, which will be built at RUH. But that space isn't the same space. So the Dubé family donated a million dollars for capital. And the government for months now hadn't been willing to fund the few positions it would take to staff that properly to ensure that instead of waiting . . . So someone who is having a psychotic episode or is anxious or experiencing suicidal thoughts, Mr. Speaker, the last place they want to be is sitting in bright lights, in a noisy hallway, at best in a really uncomfortable, dark, dank room but often in the hallway because our ERs are busy. And mental health, unless you're . . . in the way we rank emergencies, Mr. Speaker, are often further down on a list, Mr. Speaker. So I'm glad the government has agreed to support those positions, because the capital money is there.

[19:30]

But the problem is, when they move over, when the adult emergency moves over to the children's hospital, that same option won't exist. There will be nice physical spaces. There'll be nice rooms for everybody, Mr. Speaker, but it's not just the room. It's the service. It's the way in which we treat mental health patients.

I know my brother, who lost his son four years ago . . . I thought this was a really great example. And so what we do, instead of creating a warm and inviting atmosphere for people who have mental health and addictions issues, who at the best of times have a heck of a time getting help, Mr. Speaker, we put roadblocks in front of them. And even the smallest little speed bump will keep them from accessing those services, Mr. Speaker. And instead of creating that warm and inviting environment, what we do is when someone's in a crisis, we take them up to the hospital and we push them through a door behind which there might not be the appropriate services, Mr. Speaker. So I think we totally need to rethink how we do emergency care.

And I know back in 2014 I asked in committee. It's called the third-door option because you're not entering a hospital for a scheduled procedure and you're not entering through the

emergency department. The third-door option is like a short-stay unit or these assessment and short-stay units. And I know that I was told in committee in 2014 when I asked if that was an option at the children's or the new adult ER in the children's hospital, I was told that we don't want anybody to wait, Mr. Speaker, which is true. But mental health patients are unique, Mr. Speaker, and need to be treated, I think, in a different way.

So another thing that I would have liked to have seen, and I think that it's important to note. So we have over capacity regularly at . . . Sorry, I want to go back to the assessment unit. So it's great that it's going to exist at RUH in Saskatoon but the reality is that same kind of treatment happens at any acute facility here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. So we have to think about that model and changing the model, not just at RUH but everywhere.

One thing I would have liked the government to talk about, there are currently . . . The only children who aren't going to be in the children's hospital, Mr. Speaker, are those who have mental health issues. They will still be in the separate unit at the Dubé which is great that they have their unit but the whole point of a children's hospital is to provide that interdisciplinary support. And the fact remains is the kids will continue to be stigmatized and set aside rather than benefitting from all the services that will be available at the children's hospital, Mr. Speaker, which I think is a shame. And we could have also taken those beds at the Dubé, the separate children's unit, had we moved those kids to the children's hospital and used those beds for adult patients, Mr. Speaker. So I think that that's a shame and a missed opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

I think we need . . . The building of the North Battleford Hospital, Mr. Speaker, is under way. And I've heard . . . I know people who've toured it and have seen it and have said good things about it, Mr. Speaker. But in conjunction with that North Battleford Hospital, several years ago this government, the Ministry of Health, and the health region did a really great report about the building of the hospital. But the other things that are needed which are step-down beds, different kinds of supported housing, Mr. Speaker. So you leave an acute psychiatric facility and you're not just pushed back onto the street or wherever you might have been, Mr. Speaker. So step-down beds provide that added support and the ability to readjust and get the support you need to get back to living your life, Mr. Speaker. And that, it seems to have fallen completely off the radar.

We can't talk about mental health though, Mr. Speaker. Those are just a few of the issues that I know. There's so many around mental health. The 10 per cent cut that this government proposed — and I'm really glad that they've seen the error of their ways, Mr. Speaker — but that 10 per cent cut threw organizations into complete flux. They had trouble. Like how do you make a budget, Mr. Speaker, when you're not sure if you're losing all of your money or part of your money? These are key services in communities around mental health: Sanctum, which is an HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] hospice in Saskatoon; the Canadian Mental Health Association; organizations that support women with reproductive health. Anyway, that put all kinds of people in crisis, Mr. Speaker.

So we can't talk about mental health without talking about the crisis of youth suicides in the North. Just recently actually, Mr. Speaker, at the end of September the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations released a discussion paper on youth suicides. I heard earlier, I think it was the member from Canora-Pelly who was talking about highways and highway safety and said, you can't put a price on a life, Mr. Speaker, and I couldn't agree more. And I think this is why we really need to redouble our efforts to support people in the North on coming up with strategies and creating hope, Mr. Speaker.

I can't even fathom a 10- or 11-year-old child wanting to take their life, Mr. Speaker. It's just unfathomable to me. I think about Ophelia, who will be 10, and I think about the hope and the excitement that she has in life, and I think about kids who don't have that, Mr. Speaker. Poverty, intergenerational violence and trauma because of residential schools, Mr. Speaker — all kinds of reasons why this is happening. But this government could've and this Premier could've made a bold statement in this Speech from the Throne and committed to seriously addressing the youth suicide crisis, Mr. Speaker.

These are some appalling statistics, Mr. Speaker. Since 2005 when deaths began being coded by ethnicity, there's been close to 500 deaths by suicide recorded of First Nations people in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Approximately 62 per cent of all those suicides are by persons under 30 years old, Mr. Speaker. The reality is the rate for First Nations girls aged 10 to 14 is 26 times higher than that of non-First Nations girls, Mr. Speaker — 26 times higher. First Nations boys, six times more likely to commit suicide or to die by suicide, Mr. Speaker. And 25 per cent of all death by suicides in that time that we've been keeping stats on ethnicity were teenagers, Mr. Speaker.

These are stats, Mr. Speaker, but these are real people. These are real children and family members who have moms and dads and aunties and uncles and cousins and friends. And are part of a community, and leave a huge, gaping hole in that community, Mr. Speaker. I cannot even wrap my head around that.

I have to point out when we talk about mental health, so it's a much broader . . . It's not just about providing mental health services. It's about providing housing; it's about providing education. I think about kids on reserve who get, I think it's about 60 cents on the dollar compared to my child who's at a school . . . 60 cents on the dollar compared to my child who's at a school in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. You think about things like that. You think about government cancelling NORTEP [northern teacher education program], which saw huge success around training northern teachers and keeping teachers from community in the North.

Corey O'Soup, who is our Children's Advocate, Mr. Speaker, who is not a New Democrat by the way — he was the Sask Party candidate in 2009 in Saskatoon Riversdale. And just last week actually, in response . . . There had been an article or a story in *the Guardian* citing an 18-month wait for children for mental health, to see psychiatrists in the UK [United Kingdom], Mr. Speaker. And he responded on Twitter by saying, "The wait list . . . in SK to see a child psychiatrist is up to 2 years! Our kids are literally dying as we continue to fail to meet their needs." Mr. Speaker, I think that that speaks volumes and I think that that should have been in our Throne Speech, Mr.

Speaker.

The HIV crisis. I want to point to a couple of articles here where words like "state of emergency," "cause for alarm" are all words being used to talk about our HIV rates here, HIV/AIDS [human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome] here in Saskatchewan.

So just a little snapshot into recent numbers, Mr. Speaker. So we actually saw numbers drop. In 2012 they were at 177; 2013 they were at 129; 2014 they were at 112; and then in 2015 we saw 160. And the preliminary numbers in 2016 were 170, Mr. Speaker. The HIV rates are two times higher in Saskatchewan than the national average, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to quote . . . This is an article from the CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] posted on May 5th, 2017, where:

An infectious disease physician with the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region says Saskatchewan is in what he calls a "state of emergency" as the number of new HIV cases in the province continues to rise.

[He points out that] "It's a complicated dynamic that defies a simple solution, I think, and a simple explanation."

But that doesn't mean we shouldn't try to do the work, Mr. Speaker.

So the ministry, in response to those numbers, has said that it's expected the data to show a rise since there is more testing for the disease, but Dr. Wong points out that that accounts only for part of the explanation, Mr. Speaker. So it requires political will to address this kind of problem, Mr. Speaker, and we need to be doing that.

Another doctor, actually Dr. Stewart, Kris Stewart, a physician in Saskatoon who's part of the Saskatchewan HIV Collaborative, said slight progress has been made, but he's not sure it was the result of a request. So there was a request a year ago to declare a state of emergency. And Dr. Stewart says, "We're the only jurisdiction where the incidence has gone up recently. So that should be a cause for alarm."

He goes on to say, Kris, Dr. Stewart goes on to say, "Very often these are young people, their whole lives ahead of them. Sometimes they have children. In this time and place in the world, we should be doing better than this. And we're not," Mr. Speaker.

This should have been a Throne Speech that started the work on addressing the HIV crisis, Mr. Speaker. Words like "cause for alarm" should have been cause for alarm, to see it show up in our Throne Speech.

Around seniors, I mentioned the property tax deferral, Mr. Speaker, which I was happy about. It was an election promise two budgets ago already. And I hope and I trust that it will be in . . . There's been two budgets since that election promise. I know you looked suspicious, Mr. Speaker, but in fact there have been two budgets since that promise.

And what this government's priorities have been. For example, in the last budget where they could have introduced this tax deferral, they chose a corporate tax cut which they're now rolling back, Mr. Speaker.

But this was this government's priority, a corporate tax cut over a tax deferral for seniors, Mr. Speaker. But as happy as I am about the seniors' deferral, the property tax deferral, we have to point out that this government has seen increases in drug costs for seniors. Not only have they increased it from a \$15 pay to 20 to 25 per prescription, but they also took thousands of people off that program with a change to the threshold, Mr. Speaker.

What else have they done? PST. PST has been a huge issue. Not just on daily goods and services, so the increase from 5 per cent to 6 per cent, Mr. Speaker, but the addition of PST on insurance, Mr. Speaker. That was the one issue this summer I heard tons about in my office: seniors who buy dental insurance, health insurance, mortgage. Some of them still have mortgages who will maybe be applying for this deferral. But now they're paying PST on their insurance, Mr. Speaker.

I have one senior — if I have the email here — who wrote to me:

Hi, Danielle.

I wanted to express my discontent with the government budget and expansion of the sales tax. It really hits middle- and lower-class people and hurts them, versus people with more income. As an individual with fixed pension income, I am now facing unreasonable higher expenses starting this month, specifically with the 6 per cent on insurance. I now have to pay that on health care premiums, dental care premiums, supplementary death benefit plan premiums, house insurance, and vehicle insurance [Mr. Speaker].

I've heard that a lot this summer in my office, Mr. Speaker, and actually on the doorstep in Fairview as well. Many people are not happy with the 6 per cent, and that is a . . . I heard from many seniors, I think, about the . . . I don't have a lot of seniors' complexes or buildings in my constituency, but I do have some, and the health insurance one really stung a lot of them, Mr. Speaker.

This is a government . . . So they're talking about deferral on taxes for housing. But at the same time, this government is choosing to get rid of seniors' housing or affordable housing units in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. In fact in some communities, just talking to some communities, if these units haven't been sold, Sask Housing is going to tear them down and return them to their respective communities, Mr. Speaker. That makes absolutely no sense. These buildings by and large from my understanding, folks that I've spoken to, they've been fairly well maintained. I think there's always a solution, and I don't think selling them or getting rid of them altogether, tearing them down, is the right answer, Mr. Speaker.

[19:45]

Podiatry services. This government in this last budget cut preventative podiatry services, so there wasn't . . . People still had to pay to some degree for podiatry services, but now all that

subsidy is gone, Mr. Speaker, unless you happen to have supplementary health benefits, Mr. Speaker. So a modest-earning senior who is not on any assistance program has to come up with money for preventative podiatry services.

We had a doctor from Moose Jaw, a podiatrist in Moose Jaw, tell us that people will lose limbs, Mr. Speaker. You think about the high rate of diabetes and the cost of diabetes, the cost of someone losing their limb, Mr. Speaker, and this government cuts podiatry services.

The hearing aid plan. So I mentioned earlier that this government has delayed its decision or delayed the full implementation of the cut of the hearing aid plan when it comes to children. But this was a mechanism to help seniors or help folks with affordable hearing aids, Mr. Speaker. Hearing aids, I don't know who can afford hearing aids. If I was in a position with the income that I have, I don't know how I would afford hearing aids, Mr. Speaker. I couldn't imagine a senior on a fixed income having to come up with 5 or \$6,000. That is a reality.

The increase to long-term care rates was a reality. That was something in this budget as well, Mr. Speaker. It was interesting. I just want to draw your attention back to in June . . . In the 2016 election, again in the 2016 election, this government, the Sask Party committed to 17, pardon me, a \$7.5 million reduction in executive pay, Mr. Speaker, and they were going to commit that to the front lines in long-term care, Mr. Speaker. So they were going to expect regions to find pay in upper management or in senior level positions, in executive positions and put that into long-term care. So that was in June of 2016 where we heard that in the Throne or pardon me in the 2016 election campaign.

And then I asked about it in committee, and I was told that that was the plan. And then just last May, as of May 1st, 2017, I'd asked and I was told as of January 31st, 2017, 4.9 million had been saved and then they were expecting to save another 1.2 million by the end of the fiscal year for a target of, I think, \$6.1 million which is shy of the 7.5 million. But 6.1 million would be good to be directed into the front lines. But I was told that of that, only \$1 million of that, Mr. Speaker, was going to make it onto the front lines in long-term care. And anybody who's been in a long-term care facility knows, Mr. Speaker, how short-staffed those facilities are, Mr. Speaker.

I couldn't finish this speech without talking about seniors and STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company]. That cut I wish this is something the government would've also rolled back. I was amazed. Knocking on doors in part of my constituency, I didn't expect STC be a huge issue in Montgomery but in fact it was, Mr. Speaker.

I've over spoken, Mr. Speaker. I always think I don't have too much to say; I'm always surprised. And there's much more I could, but I know that I've used up more than my fair share of time. So I appreciate people's patience with me, Mr. Speaker. And with that I will be supporting my colleague from Saskatoon Nutana's amendment, and I will not be supporting the Throne Speech. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from

Martensville-Warman.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to start this evening by welcoming the newest member to this Chamber, the member for Saskatoon Fairview, on her recent election. I had the opportunity to participate in a debate with her when she ran in 2016 and I found her to be quite capable and articulate and knowledgeable. And I am sure that her time will be well spent here. So I wanted to welcome her to this Chamber.

I also want to recognize the Premier and what he's done for this province. I know that all of us take different paths to get to this Chamber. Mine was a little bit more solemn than others as I was running to replace, well I can't replace my dad, but to fill the seat that he once occupied. And I want to thank the Premier specifically. I know that my dad and I share some tendencies, but the Premier was quick to recognize that I was definitely just me in my own right and allowing me to fulfill different roles that he gave me in my time here.

And I want to acknowledge as well, Mr. Speaker, the absolute dedication that he has to advancing our province and promoting us wherever he goes. He has been probably the fiercest champion that this province has ever seen, and he will be missed. I'm sure that collectively we can fulfill that role, but he did so much for us, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank him for his time here. I know that being the leader of a party is a huge commitment and the Premier of this province is an enormous one, so thank you to him.

To the constituents who have sent me here, I want to thank them for their ongoing support. I've been here for ten and a half years and I get the sense that people are pretty happy at home. Our constituency office is not probably as busy as some. I had a lady phone in a couple of months ago because she was waiting on a donors list and was concerned about the time that she had been waiting. I'm happy to report that since then she's had her procedure, and she's doing very well. But in this Throne Speech, having the rate of organ donation increase through efforts that we can make in conjunction with the health regions just indicates to me that after 10 years of being in government we're still doing things that the people of this province require, as this Throne Speech is filled with new ideas.

As everyone here understands and most people have spoken to, I want to thank my family. To my girls, who are now 20 and 23, and I don't know where the time goes. They had the opportunity this summer to go to Europe on a five-week backpacking trip and I think they hit five different countries. I managed to sneak into London without them knowing and surprise them at a train station. There were many tears because they honestly didn't know that I was coming, and I got to take them to Paris for three days. And so that was exciting for all of us. It was particularly exciting for them because I paid for all of that part of their trip, so they were pretty excited about that. But nonetheless we had a really good time and made some great memories and spent our last night there drinking wine under the Eiffel Tower. Their liquor laws are slightly more lax than ours; I will talk to my seatmate about that after my speech.

And to my fiancé, John, I want to thank him for his patience. Relationships are difficult coming into this job. I think they're probably a little bit more difficult when they're started within

this job, and I've been gone for the majority of our relationship. So thank you to him for his patience. He's a pretty exceptional guy.

I also want to thank the Premier for my new responsibilities as Minister of Energy and Resources. We don't get to dictate what portfolios we're given, but I secretly always wanted this one, and so I was pretty excited about getting about it. It's hard to follow in the shoes of my colleague, the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy, because I know that he has a passion for this file, but I will do my best.

And shortly after I was named minister, I had the opportunity to go to Calgary and meet with industry folks and stakeholders and hear from them about their concerns, what's going well for them, some of the challenges that they're facing. And one of the things that I heard repeatedly is that they appreciated the consistency of how things were done in Saskatchewan. They knew what the rules were and could make their business plans accordingly. There's uncertainty in other areas, but Saskatchewan, it was their perspective that things were going pretty well here and they certainly appreciated that.

And I think that many of us probably have some worries about what we're seeing on the federal scene, whether it's the Liberal government. We saw recently the cancellation of the Energy East project. I know that the federal Liberals like to say it was a business decision. Well of course it was a business decision, but it was a business decision based on changing of the rules in the NEB [National Energy Board] process which is completely under their purview. And it's unfortunate these rules were changed for a pipeline that would have been so very important not just to Saskatchewan and Alberta but to our country as a whole.

I think there's also concern with the new federal NDP [New Democratic Party] leader — I'll get to that in a little bit — and his position on some of these things. And I'd be interested to know what his colleagues here, the NDP in Saskatchewan, feel about some of those positions and whether they will stand up for our province or stand up for their party because those right now are two completely different things. And that is a concern, Mr. Speaker.

So the recently elected leader of the federal NDP has been very public about his dislike, displeasure, non-support of pipelines in this country which is obviously concerning to us, Mr. Speaker. And one of the reasons that he said that he doesn't like them is because it increases oil production and international exports of our products. Well what a horrible position to take, Mr. Speaker, that the problem with pipelines for him — one of the many reasons, I would imagine — is that it might actually increase our exports. I don't know that that's any way to grow our economy, but that would be NDP economics which is a little frightening.

And, Mr. Speaker, not only does he not like pipelines, he doesn't like exports, doesn't want production of oil and gas in this country. He actually went so far to say . . . I have a quote from a media interview he did just this August, August 21 of this year. And he said, "we know that certain technology . . ." And this was in direct response to oil and gas questions, not some other technology:

And we know that certain technology is finite and not sustainable. And to me it doesn't make sense for us to make investments in technology that's not going to be sustainable and create an economy that's long-lasting.

We know that certain industries, while we're heavily dependant on them now, aren't going to be the industries of the future. So it doesn't make sense for us to . . . [invest] in the technology that isn't going to develop sustainable jobs for Canadians.

Well, Mr. Speaker, oil is in the ground; it's coming up every day. And if he thinks that for some reason natural resources in this country are going to suddenly dry up so there's no point in investing in them today, it's completely erroneous.

There is a study recently . . . Excuse me, I'm losing my voice today. There was a study recently, a global energy forecast which between 2014 and 2040 . . . Obviously the consumption of global energy is going to go up. But what's interesting, Mr. Speaker, is the actual makeup between natural gas, oil, nuclear, coal, and renewables, that mix actually doesn't change. And that's factoring in the commitments made under the Paris climate accord that recently took place. So even with all of those provisions factored in to what the future energy use globally is going to be, the mix with natural gas, oil, and coal, which are things that are produced in this province, in this country, will not change.

So then the question is, if we're going to not invest in these technologies in our province and in our country, we're not going to invest in pipelines or approve pipelines — the need for all of these energy sources does not change — so then the question becomes, where does it come from? It's not going to come from Canada. It's not going to come from Saskatchewan. It's going to come from someplace else. So then where does it come from? Then we start importing things from places like Saudi Arabia. We export our jobs to other countries and forgo investment, technology opportunities, and jobs in our own country and our own province, Mr. Speaker.

So those are kind of the focus of both the federal NDP leader and the focus of the federal Liberal leader, is we're going to phase out coal. We're going to phase out oil sands. We're not going to let pipelines be developed. And at what expense, Mr. Speaker? At the expense of this very province.

And so again it will be interesting to see what the position of our provincial NDP is going to be. Well, Mr. Speaker, we know some of their positions. And as both parties in this House are in the midst of leadership elections, so you know, people are talking. But before entering into the leadership race — or this current one because I think this is his third go at it — the member for Saskatoon Meewasin had co-written a paper talking about the phasing out of coal in our province. So again, Mr. Speaker, the NDP going after yet another industry.

And all of this is sort of backed on the premise of, it's more environmentally friendly to not have these things. So if these people think that, at the end of the day, all of our energy is going to come from solar panels and windmills, they are sadly mistaken and they will . . . are now figuratively living in the dark. They will then be literally living in the dark because

they're not going to have the power supply to keep their lights on, Mr. Speaker.

So on the issue of the environment . . . And I've listened with great interest over the last few months because up until now we don't really know where the NDP stand on environmental issues. They don't have any plan for anything, although the member for Regina Rosemont has said previously that we need plans for all of these things. Well that's all fine and good but they don't really have one.

Except I think probably about, I don't know, seven months ago, probably during the spring session, suddenly their new plan on the environment is to encourage us to implement the legislation that we introduced in 2009. That is now their environmental plan, which I find a little strange, considering, Mr. Speaker . . . Because I went back through the record just to make sure. I was the minister at the time, so I thought I was paying attention to what was going on in the House, so I went back just to double-check. The NDP voted against that legislation, all of them. It's on division. It's in the public record. And now the member for Saskatoon Nutana and some of her colleagues, I believe, are telling us that their environmental plan is to force us to implement legislation that we already introduced even though they've already voted against it, which I found quite interesting.

[20:00]

And even at their convention just this past weekend — and I won't read the whole thing into the record, but I will read the end of it — one of their resolutions — it's SC-02 — says:

Whereas the Sask Party's own Green Technology Fund would protect us from having Ottawa force their tax on Saskatchewan families; whereas the Green Technology Fund has already been passed through the legislature; whereas The Conference Board of Canada has estimated that the Green Tech Fund would add billions to the economy and create thousands of jobs [which is interesting that they are so now promoting something that they voted against not so many years ago, ends with], be it further resolved that as a first step to fighting the federal carbon tax and climate change, the Saskatchewan NDP call on the Sask Party to implement their own Green Technology Fund that would make the biggest polluters pay for pollution they cause, invest and diversify in our economy, and create jobs.

So, Mr. Speaker, apparently that is their new environmental plan, and I find it interesting that this is all predicated on the fact that if we do this, a federal government can't impose their own plan on us. So I'm going to go back to their new federal NDP leader who said not so very long ago in relation to what's going on here with the economy and what's going on with the federal government, he said, and I quote, "Well Brad Wall has now resigned, so that's going to be easier to bring a carbon tax on Saskatchewan."

So what exactly is their position? And I haven't heard one of them say anything against their leader's position. All I've heard so far from them about Mr. Singh is the interim Leader of the Opposition in an interview with a Moose Jaw outlet recently,

praising, almost gleeful at his election as their new leader. Well I would hope that they would be slightly more gleeful about the future of our province than this man who wants to shut down every resource that our province has so that they can then implement a federal carbon tax on our province because that's what their party stands for, Mr. Speaker. And I would expect that they would be standing up for our province and not standing up for their party, but we haven't seen that from them, Mr. Speaker.

So all we've seen from them is just a complete void of inspiration for anything new. We see that with their leadership race where they have not just an also-ran, but an also-also-ran. We saw that again at their convention this weekend. The only proposals they have is to take us back to undo a bunch of stuff. There is no new ideas in any of their proposals, just a regurgitation of what we've heard from them in this Chamber for the last 10 years.

So, Mr. Speaker, after 10 years of waiting for the NDP to come up with some new ideas, all we see in this Chamber is what we saw in the election in 2007, and we know what the people of this province decided to do then. We saw a tired NDP, no new ideas, no vision for our province, for our future versus a Saskatchewan Party. And after 10 years, looking at this Throne Speech, 10 years later still bringing new ideas to the table, Mr. Speaker, ideas that are reflected in the people that we talk to every day, as I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks, for the lady who was looking for increased effectiveness in the organ donor program, Mr. Speaker, and it remains that way today.

And I would imagine three years from now when we go back to the polls, the people of this province will see exactly the same thing that they saw in 2007. They can have the same old, same old from the old NDP, Mr. Speaker, or an inspired vision for our province with new ideas from this side of the House.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the amendment. I will be supporting our government and this Throne Speech.

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

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and it's a pleasure for me to join the Throne Speech debates this evening. It's always hard to follow my very well-spoken colleague from Martensville but I'm going to do my best.

And, Mr. Speaker, I do want to start with some of the words that were in our Throne Speech at the very start. I think it's a column from Mr. Ron Petrie, and being close to Thanksgiving I think it's something that we should all read and know why we're thankful to be in this province.

Let it be known that I am grateful. Grateful to be where I am, for starters. As a younger man, brash and full of swagger, I considered my calling to be Vancouver, Montreal, even New York. Only now do I appreciate that what I actually fancied was merely the ideal of my farm boy self, destined for the big city . . .

Where I am is Saskatchewan. Thank goodness.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy that we started our Throne Speech with these words because it really resembles some of the thoughts I've had over the last few years being an MLA and having the opportunity to move to Regina.

I'm from a small town by Swift Current called Rush Lake and born and raised on a farm there, a family farm with my uncle and my father. I always assumed I'd grow up and maybe leave Saskatchewan like many of us did in the early 2000s after we graduated from high school. A lot of my friends left and we decided not to follow. Most of that had to do with a young lady I met in Swift Current one night and we hit it off very well and decided to have our life take us to Regina and we went to university here.

I think the story about our Throne Speech, and started our Throne Speech with this and let us be thankful, is a very good demonstration of we should all be thankful that we do live in Saskatchewan. On both sides of this House we want to work hard to make sure this is the best possible province for our families and for our children and our grandchildren.

The title of the Throne Speech is "Growing Stronger," and I do believe I see our province growing stronger each and every day. I'll go through how we want to get our province to become a stronger province for our children and for our grandchildren. The investments we're going to make now are what is going to put us in good stead and lay a solid foundation for our future.

Mr. Speaker, our population is growing faster than it has in the earliest days of our province. During the last decade of growth, Saskatchewan has grown by more than 160,000 people, reversing the decline of the previous decades.

During a decade of growth, Saskatchewan recorded the second-best job creation record. It had the second-highest growth in the average weekly earnings. We led the nation in retail sales and manufacturing sales growth, and our exporters set new records with agriculture leading the way. Our farmers are the best in the world at what they do and they have taken another good crop despite challenges posed by nature.

The Saskatchewan plan for growth focuses on international engagement, investment, innovation, fiscal responsibility, and investments in infrastructure and education. Mr. Speaker, I think these are important aspects of our Speech from the Throne. It shows our way forward. We're going to look at attracting new investment from outside business and I believe that . . . [inaudible] . . . ensuring our financial house is in order. I know that in the Throne Speech it's mentioned that we're \$400 million ahead of where we thought we'd be at this time and the government debt is 400 million lower than forecasted at budget time.

And people often ask me, as MLAs on both sides of the House, we've been talking with constituents, going around, and they said, why are you focused on debt reduction so much? Why is it important for your government to balance the budget in the next three years? I say, because I think our government is no different than the small business in Yorkton or a farm in Rush Lake. We expect our farmers, our small businesses — and they expect themselves — to balance their budget at the end of every month. And they take that responsibility and they have a pride

of that when they know the books are balanced. And I think their government should be held to that same standard.

So I say it's not just a goal in itself to balance the budget. We balance our budgets so that outside investment realizes we take fiscal responsibility seriously. That means when we balance the budget we can have stable taxes. We can ensure that we have a proper environment for investment so when companies do look from across the country or across the globe where they want to invest, they look at Saskatchewan because we have the best fiscal record in the Dominion of Canada.

And I think that's very important for us to realize: a balanced budget on itself is not the goal but the goal is to attract that outside investment. That outside investment runs our economy, grows our economy, grows our GDP [gross domestic product], grows our weekly earnings, and that allows us to do what governments should do and invest in the quality of life and invest and ensure that the most vulnerable in our society are taken care of.

Like our Premier has always said, growth is not a pursuit in itself. We pursue growth so that we can finish the story, so that we can ensure that we can commit to have autism funding for six-and-under children. And that's not the goal, just to have autism funding for six and under. That's a start of our goal, but we want to do better than that. And we always say that the job's not done, there's always more work to do. We invest in . . . We reach for our balanced-budget goal, but we ensure that we can invest in new schools like Connaught, like Sacred Heart, like the 18 new P3 [public-private partnership] joint-use schools across Saskatoon, Regina, and Warman. That's why we try and track investment into our province. That's why we ensure that our fiscal house is in order, so people know that when they look at Saskatchewan, we have a stable fiscal house, and we are able to ensure that people want to invest in our province, Mr. Speaker.

There's a few things in this Throne Speech that really jumped out at me right away when it was read by the Lieutenant Governor, who we should mention that is probably Vaughn, our Lieutenant Governor's, final Throne Speech. And we appreciate the work she's done. And when she served as Lieutenant Governor, she carried on the good work of Dr. Barnhart in reaching out to children across the North. And she will be missed because she did a wonderful job.

Mr. Speaker, like I was talking about, in the Throne Speech a few things that do jump out to me in particular was when the portion came up on education. This year 21 new schools accommodating more than 11,000 students opened their door for the first time. I'm not sure, and is the Minister of Education . . . I'm not sure if that might be the most new schools that have opened at the start of a school year ever — ever, Mr. Speaker. I think that speaks to some of the commitment that we have. As a father of three young children, I know education's going to be important for me for the next 20 years.

Twenty-one new schools opened across the province, and people are doubting our commitment to education. Mr. Speaker, those schools are located in nine sites in Regina, like I said, Saskatoon, Warman, Martensville, and they were completed in less than two years. In Regina alone, the new École Connaught

Community School and a new Sacred Heart Community School opened along with the māmawêyatitân centre, a unique integrated facility that includes a new Scott Collegiate, a recreational complex, a public library branch, a community police station, and a First Nations elders' ceremonial room.

A lot of people in Regina may not realize this, Mr. Speaker, but when you take a drive down Elphinstone, it is amazing how many new schools you pass driving down that one street in Regina. And that's something that each and every MLA on this side of the House should take pride in, the commitment we've had into education over the last 10 years, over our last decade of growth.

Mr. Speaker, protecting communities. Earlier this year the federal government announced its intentions to legalize the non-medical use of marijuana by July 2018. This is something that has given me pause to cause for quite some time because we did a consultation with over 35,000 submissions talking to people, trying to understand where the people of Saskatchewan were on the legalization of marijuana. It's something that we need to take seriously. It was dumped on our lap by the federal government, and we're looking at what we can do and what we are able to do by July.

And in July, Canada's premiers raised concerns about the feasibility of the federal government's implementation date, noting that more time may be needed. But this review is guided by four objectives: preventing the growth of the underground marijuana market, restricting access to minors, ensuring road and workplace safety, and protecting public health.

And, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to read that into the record and say this government realizes that it's going to be a challenge with the legalization of marijuana. But I believe it's a challenge this caucus and this cabinet is up to. And we're looking forward to moving in the direction and meeting the targets laid out by the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, my government also introduced legalization enabling SGI to offer affordable insurance to drivers working for ride-sourcing companies like Uber and Lyft. I think this is probably one of the most interesting pieces on our Throne Speech because it's yet another new proposal. And I'd say there's quite a few new proposals in this Throne Speech, and that's something our colleagues from across the way haven't really come up with lately, is any new proposals. I know that they debated Uber and Lyft at their convention this week, and I believe they voted down some ideas around Uber and Lyft.

And I find it interesting that the member opposite was on the highway traffic safety committee, her and I, and we agree on some things. I'd say disagree probably on more than we agree on over the last course of, what, six years. But Uber and Lyft, I think is something both sides of this House should get behind. It gives another alternative to people making a very, very poor choice in drinking and driving.

And having Uber come in . . . And I listened to the words from the member from Saskatoon Centre around safety around Uber operators, and he made some good points. But rest assured, I believe the Minister of SGI has been working with some of that, and I believe it's just . . . It's not a fix-all. It's not going to fix

the drinking and driving issue, but it's another arrow in the quiver of the government, another arrow that people can decide and make a better choice if there's more alternatives available, Mr. Speaker.

[20:15]

Mr. Speaker, there is also acting on the committee's recommendations. The government has created a new protection and response team consisting of 250 armed officers who have the authority to arrest and detain those suspected of committing crimes. The PRT [protection and response team] is composed of 120 police officers from the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] and municipal police services, 40 commercial vehicle enforcement officers who have given expanded powers, and 98 conservation officers.

On this side of the House, there was a rural crime committee formed that went around our province and talked to communities that are facing some pretty serious crime issues in their areas. And the member from North Battleford led this crime task force, and he had members go around the province and listen to concerns. And there's some farms around certain areas that have been broken into six times in a month, Mr. Speaker, and they can call the police but they realize they're not going to be there for two hours. So what do you do for two hours?

So there is some legitimate concerns around this rural Saskatchewan, about what can be done about protecting their livelihoods, protecting their lives, protecting their loved ones. And they're looking for some answers, Mr. Speaker, and the PRT is a good step forward in ensuring that rural Saskatchewan families are safer.

Mr. Speaker, in July, amendments to *The Victims of Interpersonal Violence Act* and *The Residential Tenancies Act* came into force. Mr. Speaker, this session the government will look at creating a process to improve the disclosure of decisions made by the Office of Residential Tenancies. This will assist in ensuring problem landlords and problem tenants can be readily identified in the marketplace, which again leads into some of the concerns around domestic violence, where both sides of the House take this issue very seriously.

I know the former Attorney General and Minister of Justice did a lot of work on this file along with the interim leader from the opposition. And I think I would say that this is one of the pieces of legislation where collaborative work done together is shown in this House, and it's nice to see when the two sides work together, things can be done a lot quicker.

Mr. Speaker, ensuring prosperity and competitiveness. International engagement is a priority for our government because trade drives Saskatchewan's economy. More than 100,000 jobs in our province depend on exports. During our decade of growth, Saskatchewan exports to emerging markets, particularly in Asia, have grown by staggering amounts.

Saskatchewan's exports to China have increased 530 per cent over the past decade to 3 billion last year. Exports to India are up 272 per cent to 1.5 billion. Exports to Pakistan up 293 per cent to 548 million, and exports to Indonesia are up 130 per

cent to 543 million. Mr. Speaker, that's a lot of numbers just rattled off, but these numbers are what drives our economy. These numbers are what allows us to help people most in need.

Mr. Speaker, there's a few more numbers I want to bring up here throughout this speech, and one is the number of times that Jagmeet Singh, the new leader of the federal NDP party, has had positive comments regarding pipelines — zero. Mr. Speaker, the number of NDP MLAs who have, MLAs and MPs [Member of Parliament], who have stood up to the federal NDP party with their non-pipeline building — zero.

Mr. Speaker, there is zero NDP MLA leadership candidates who oppose the federal carbon tax. That is outstanding, the fact that both reruns of NDP leaders have not opposed the federal carbon tax. And I'd say that would be one of the most important issues any government is going to face in Saskatchewan in the next 10 years is a federal carbon tax. It would kneecap our economy, kneecap agriculture. And this is something where the numbers we talked about, about expanding international markets will not happen if we have to put in a carbon tax. And I know that the number of candidates that are opposed to the federal carbon tax on this side of the House is five because each and every one of them will continue that fight against Ottawa to ensure that we don't allow them to impose a carbon tax that will kneecap our economy, Mr. Speaker.

And then a few other comments I'm going to make before I close my comments on the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker. The NDP, they were talking about teacher losses today during question period, and I wonder how many teachers were lost in the 16 years of the NDP when they closed 176 schools. I wonder how many teachers lost their jobs then. I wonder how many students had to go to different schools when they closed 176 schools. I wonder how many EAs were lost when they closed 176 schools. And the comments from across is these stats are old. These stats are old. These stats don't matter. But people remember what happened last time an NDP government was in power. They remember that they completely forgot about rural Saskatchewan. They remember that they closed schools across this province.

They also remember that they closed 52 hospitals across this province including the Plains hospital in Regina. And I think they say these are old comments, but every time I go door knocking in Walsh Acres, at least three people bring up the Plains hospital a night. So you remember when they closed that Plains hospital. It is actually one of the reasons why I'm able to stand in this position as MLA for Walsh Acres for two terms is because they closed the Plains hospital. And it might be the reason why I'm here for a third term, Mr. Speaker.

And the other thing I would just mention before closing in some of my final comments is the Rosemont MLA said now is not the time to change the donation. The member from Saskatoon Centre stands on his feet every day and talks about political donations and getting big money out of politics. But the MLA for Rosemont says, well now is not the time to change this. So I think there's a bit of a split within their caucus, because I believe the member from Rosemont's probably going to get a lot of big cheques from unions to make sure that the member from Meewasin doesn't win. So I would like to know if the Saskatoon Centre member has consulted his colleague talking

about getting donations out of politics. It'd be interesting to see if what the question . . . It'd be interesting to see if the member from Rosemont agrees with that. But I digress, Mr. Speaker, and it's just a comment I was wondering when the member from Saskatoon brings all those issues up.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk about a few more things from the Throne Speech. Agriculture. Thanks for efforts of our farmers, ranchers, researchers, processors. Agriculture remains the pillar of our economy. In 2016 Saskatchewan shipped \$14.4 billion worth of agriculture products, more than half of all exports.

Mr. Speaker, my government recognizes that climate change is a reality. We must do more to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which is moving forward. We're always trying to reach the 50 per cent total generating capacity by 2030 for renewables.

And I see that my time is running short here a little bit, Mr. Speaker. And I'd just like to end with a bit of a summation that one of the reasons why I'm proud to support this Speech from the Throne is that it keeps our province moving forward. We're focused on growing our economy. We're focused on growing our province and getting stronger. And for my three kids, a stronger province is what our aim should be, a stronger province that allows for children, for youth to stay in our province, find a job, raise a family, and work in a field that they love is what we should all . . . be our goal for any government that's in power. And that's why I support our Speech from the Throne, because it moves our province forward. It makes our province stronger. And I won't be supporting the amendment.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise and join in the debate on the Speech from the Throne. I have to apologize in advance, Mr. Speaker. I'm having some issues with my voice tonight. I'm a little bit croaky, so I'll . . . Yes, as one of the members said, it seems everybody is sick right now. But I'll certainly get through the speech, Mr. Speaker.

Before I start, I'd just like to acknowledge my seatmate, the Minister of — and of course you, Mr. Speaker — my seatmate, the Minister of Agriculture. You know, I hold him in very high esteem. He's a good friend. And, Mr. Speaker, you can image my surprise today when I saw him walk in and he has an eye patch on. At first I assumed maybe he had another run-in with a carjacker, but he tells me that's not the case. He tells me he was doing some work on the weekend on the farm and he got some dirt in his eye. But people weren't aware of that, Mr. Speaker, so I had a number of texts today asking me why my seatmate was wearing an eye patch, and honestly they all assumed it was because it was Halloween. And the general consensus, Mr. Speaker, is if he wore your hat, he certainly would look like a pirate. So, Mr. Speaker, I think probably tomorrow being Halloween, we should give that a whirl.

Mr. Speaker, as many of my colleagues have done, I want to acknowledge the Premier right now before I get into local issues and talk about my constituency, like most of us do at this point in the Throne Speech debate. The Premier has been a tremendous leader. He is going to be sorely missed. And, Mr.

Speaker, I know history will be extremely kind to him because of his outstanding leadership, Mr. Speaker. And I just want it on record that I'm thanking him for that and for all he's done and for all he'll do in the time left to serve.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned that I wanted to talk about my constituency. As opposed to the general constituency, and so many people in it who in past speeches and budget debate speeches and Throne Speech debate speeches that I've thanked in the past, instead I want to talk about a specific event.

A little over a week ago I was at an event in Rosetown, in the good community of Rosetown that has just treated me so incredibly well. It was a fundraiser put on by the Rosetown fire department to raise money for STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society], an outstanding thing to raise money for, Mr. Speaker. STARS does incredible work right across the province and has been just a godsend to rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the event was a gala that was put on to raise money. It was the sort of thing you'd expect. It was a tremendous banquet. There was live music. They had a silent auction. They raised a lot of money to help a great charitable cause. But I also want to mention that at that event, I was really privileged to play a role in it, to do some presentations to some outstanding fire people that work with the fire department.

Mr. Speaker, there was a number of awards were given out. Deputy Chief Ken Franklin was given an award for 25 years of service. Ken Booth was given a 20-year service award. Dave Wickett was also given a 20-year service award, and Duayne Leys was given a 20-year service award.

And, Mr. Speaker, on top of that, the fire chief, Dennis Ogg, who's been there obviously a long time, was given a 40-year service award. Just outstanding amount of service from an outstanding gentleman. I know Dennis very well. My time before politics, I was in municipal administration. He was the fire chief. Because of some joint fire agreements between the town of Rosetown and adjacent rural municipalities, he was our fire chief as well. And I just want to thank him for all the tremendous work that he's done over the years, and I just want that down on record, Mr. Speaker.

I'd also like to acknowledge Duayne Leys and Kyla Diebert, who did a great deal of work putting on just a tremendous event. I want to say congratulations and thank you to them.

Mr. Speaker, one of the items . . . There's a number of health items in the Speech from the Throne and I'm going to touch on a few of them tonight. Mr. Speaker, one of them was individualized funding for children with autism spectrum disorder. Mr. Speaker, that's a campaign promise that we had made. It's very important, I believe. It's for children who are under six years old, and the funding will be \$4,000 annually for each child. That'll start in the next budget, Mr. Speaker.

We established a working group of stakeholders to review best practices across the country and other jurisdictions, and provide recommendations to the government on how best to deal with this funding, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank that committee for all the good work that they have done.

It should be noted also that the government of the province provides nearly \$8 million in funding right now for autism spectrum disorder through the Ministry of Health. That includes 5 million for professional medical support and consultants in health regions. And, Mr. Speaker, I should point out the dramatic increase in funding that that's been since we were given the privilege of forming government.

Funding for ASD [autism spectrum disorder] when we formed government in 2007 was at a half a million dollars, Mr. Speaker. It's at \$8 million now. So, Mr. Speaker, we're looking forward to moving ahead with this new program. It was a campaign commitment that we made and, Mr. Speaker, it's a campaign commitment that's kept.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne also mentions the children's hospital, the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital in Saskatoon that's 70 per cent complete right now. Mr. Speaker, I want to speak a little bit about . . . You know, it's been well documented the need for that hospital, that service in the province, and how tremendous it'll be for families who are already going through very difficult times with sick children that they can receive outstanding care for their child right in the heart of the province, Mr. Speaker, instead of adding to their difficulty and their stress and having to go outside of the province.

[20:30]

Mr. Speaker, what I would like to touch on right now though is the incredible charitable donation from Jimmy Pattison. Mr. Speaker, I had the great privilege of travelling to Vancouver last winter with the Children's Hospital Foundation with Brynn Boback-Lane, the CEO [chief executive officer] of the foundation; Shelley Brown who's the board Chair; Greg Yuel who's the past Chair; and Dr. Laurence Givelichian, and had an opportunity to play just a small role in the presentation that they gave to Jimmy Pattison and his board of directors.

Mr. Speaker, it was a great experience for me. As everyone probably is well aware, Jimmy Pattison grew up in Luseland, Saskatchewan and I grew up in Tramping Lake which is 20 miles away from Luseland — two small towns. Tramping Lake, when I grew up there, it had a K [kindergarten] through 12 school and sadly that's not there anymore. Through the '80s and '90s that was closed. But, Mr. Speaker, it was a tremendous place to grow up. We didn't have all the services and so I remember very well my parents driving me and my brother and sister to Luseland, the home of Jimmy Pattison, for swimming lessons when I was a small child.

When we went to Vancouver to do the presentation, when I first met Jimmy Pattison, Greg Yuel and I were standing in his hallway, and he has an incredible number of pictures of dignitaries and celebrities from all over North America and around the world, pictures with them. And Greg and I were standing in the hallway looking and Mr. Pattison came down the hall and he saw us there and he stopped and chatted. And at one point I mentioned to him that I grew up very, very close to Luseland, and he didn't say anything so I thought he wasn't really that interested.

The day went on. We went and had lunch with the board of

directors and did the presentation after lunch. But in between when we had finished lunch, he had said to me . . . he asked if I was finished, and he said, come with me. So we went out in the hall, we walked down the hall and he said, so you're from Tramping Lake? And I said, yes I am. And he said, well this won't mean anything to anybody else in there but it might to you.

And he took me to a small, private room he had and he called it his Luseland office. And he had pictures on the wall. He had pictures kind of being framed, maps laid out on desks in there. It was all about Luseland. There was pictures from when he was a young boy, black-and-white pictures of his dad's business with his partner. There was pictures more recent when he had went back for visits, a certificate on the wall where they named him an honorary life citizen because of all the charitable work he's done for that community. It was very moving to see, Mr. Speaker. As a small-town kid, it did my heart good.

And for a gentleman who has become one of the richest people in the country, in fact I think North America . . . He's a multi-billionaire. When you google it, his net worth, you get all kinds of different estimated dollar amounts but, Mr. Speaker, they're all well into the billions. But what he hasn't lost sight of is charity. He was incredibly generous with a \$50 million donation to the Children's Hospital Foundation, Mr. Speaker. And you know, he's a generous man who hasn't forgotten his roots, and I commend him for that.

Another thing that's very important in health care right now, Mr. Speaker, was mentioned in the Throne Speech, are the accountable care units. We invested \$12 million in the last budget towards this. We've had some great success with them, with an accountable care unit. I had an opportunity to go on a tour with one in Regina, which is essentially a group with the doctor, the nurse, the pharmacist, the sort of entire team of health care professionals that tour through the wing and meet with the patient every day. The patient has all the advantages of knowing what their caregivers are thinking and planning to deliver, has an opportunity to ask questions.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think the most important part of that is the results. Already we are seeing some incredible results. The time waiting for an in-patient bed at Regina's Pasqua Hospital from April 2017 to August 2017, just a very few short months, has been reduced by 35 per cent compared with the same period last year in 2016. And in the first three months of operation, the time waiting for an in-patient bed at the accountable care unit at Saskatoon's St. Paul's Hospital has been reduced by 19 per cent compared with the same time last year. So with that in mind, Mr. Speaker, this care model is now spreading to additional units in both Regina and Saskatoon. And we certainly have high hopes for that.

Probably I'm going to focus primarily on health care tonight in my address, Mr. Speaker. And probably nothing is more front-of-mind in health care in Saskatchewan than the significant change we're making in governance and management, and that's amalgamating the 12 health regions into one. Mr. Speaker, it's a very significant task in front of us that our staff have been working on diligently. And it's going to be, to put this in perspective, Mr. Speaker, it's far and away the biggest operation, or will be, in the province, private or

government. It'll be over 40,000 employees, a budget in the billions of dollars.

Now there are some potential savings with that, Mr. Speaker. That's been well-documented in IT [information technology] and also in governance and management. We're going to be going from 12 CEOs [chief executive officer] to one. We're going to be going from about 62 or 63 vice-presidents down to less than 10. So while that will save some money — and again as I mentioned, IT will save some significant money — that isn't the driving force behind this.

The driving force behind this, as listed in the report from the three-person panel that was released last winter, is for better care and for continuity of care, Mr. Speaker. So instead of operating like 12 individual little units, we are going — well, in some cases, still large units — we're going to provide health care with more consistency across the province, Mr. Speaker. I think all the citizens of this province believe that that's the right thing to do is to have consistency of care, and that's the main reason that we're doing this.

Another thing that was mentioned in the Throne Speech is organ and tissue donation. This is a matter of great importance to many people in this province. It's a matter that's near and dear to my heart, Mr. Speaker. We're going to be moving forward with some of the recommendations that the Standing Committee on Human Services spoke about. We're going to be introducing donor physicians and nurse coordinators.

We're going to expand donations to after cardiocirculatory death, Mr. Speaker. That's important; that's going to expand the potential base of donors. And we're also going to implement mandatory referral of in-hospital deaths to also increase the potential organ donors. And we're also going to work on increased public awareness. Mr. Speaker, donor physicians will be responsible for championing and raising awareness of the whole program. I think that's very important, Mr. Speaker.

I have a personal example I want to share with you. I've mentioned this is in this House before. I have a good friend of mine, Jim Angus from Harris, who 11 years ago now, in 2006, underwent a liver transplant in Edmonton. It was a matter of life and death for him. Because someone cared enough to be an organ donor, Mr. Speaker, he had a liver transplant. He is alive and well today. He is enjoying his children and his grandchildren.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's just one example. And there's so many more like that, why organ donation is incredibly important. So I'm very pleased that we're moving forward with this. We haven't ruled out presumed consent. We're going to evaluate how this works out and at some point, Mr. Speaker, down the road we'll decide whether or not we need to move further.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of items, as I said, pertaining to health care right across the board. I am going to deviate from that for just a minute though and go back to the discussion that happened in this Chamber earlier in the day. I'm going to go back to . . . As I mentioned earlier in my speech tonight, before politics I was in municipal work. And there was an issue raised on the floor of the House around municipalities and education property tax and municipal revenue sharing.

Mr. Speaker, I spent my entire career in municipal work before politics, and I remember well what it was like under the NDP. Mr. Speaker, education property tax was a huge issue at every single SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention — always. There were tax revolts across the province. There was even a day when, in protest, hundreds of people showed up at the legislature. Mr. Speaker, that doesn't happen anymore because education property tax . . . The matter has been dealt with.

So, Mr. Speaker, you'll understand if I scoff a bit when the opposition raises that, you know, as if it was some catastrophe that this government made a small increase to education property tax. It's still massively less than it was before we were given the privilege of forming government.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue I wanted to raise on that is municipal revenue sharing. Mr. Speaker, it's increased by over 100 per cent since we were given the privilege of forming government. In those days, when I was in municipal work, at any given time we didn't even know what we were going to get for revenue sharing. You might hear about it on budget day, you might hear about it sometime after. There was never a formula. It was willy-nilly. Mr. Speaker, that's all changed and I find it a bit difficult to swallow because I was there, I lived through that. I find it a bit difficult to have the opposition somehow hold themselves up as the champions of the municipal sector in this province, Mr. Speaker. Nobody's buying that.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to wrap up very soon. I see my time is just about up. Mr. Speaker, before I do though, I just want to thank my staff, my constituency assistant Kathie Parry in the MLA office; my staff in the Minister of Health's office here, Christopher, David, Adam, and Selena. And, Mr. Speaker, the way we're structured, we work very closely, the Minister of Rural and Remote Health and I do, work much as a team but so do our staff. And, Mr. Speaker, the staff in that office, just as in mine, is also tremendous: Julie, Elias, Brett, and Jessica. I want to thank them for all the good work that they do every day helping the citizens of this province and helping the Minister of Rural and Remote Health and myself.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I think my time's almost up and my throat's almost ready to give out. So, Mr. Speaker, I would just say that I will not be supporting the amendment, but I will be very proud to support the original motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Mr. Hargrave: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. It is my privilege to be able to speak to the Speech from the Throne tonight and join this riveting debate.

Firstly, Mr. Speaker, I've had a few people I'd like to thank. First and foremost, first and foremost is my wife, Fran. She's the love of my life and my biggest supporter. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, my four kids: Trent, Angela, Colby, and Jillian. They're all incredible kids who have grown into amazing adults and parents of their own. I'm so very proud of them, and I'm so very proud of the fact that they've all made this province home for themselves and their families.

Next is my six grandchildren who range in age from six months to nine years old, three boys and three girls. Yes, we try to keep equality front and centre in our family. These grandkids are really why I do what I do because I care what this province will be like for them in the years to come.

Some of the folks that I'd like to thank, Mr. Speaker is Joy Schewaga, my CA back in Prince Albert. She's amazing. I've never seen anybody so positive and upbeat on a daily basis. She loves to deal with the people, and I couldn't have found anyone else better.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to thank the constituents of Prince Albert Carlton. I want to thank them for the faith they've put in me not only to look after their interests in Prince Albert and Prince Albert Carlton but for the rest of the province as well.

And finally I'd like to thank one of my colleagues, the member from Swift Current, our Premier. I want to thank him for not only what he has done for me personally but more importantly what he has done for this province. He has changed the attitude in this province through his strong leadership, the growth of the economy, and the growth in the population — growth like this province has never seen in decades. I firmly believe that he'll go down in history as the best premier this province has ever had.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk about a few people who I admire and who had a strong influence on my decision to do some of the things in my life and to become involved in politics. First and foremost is my father, Ivan Hargrave. He was born in 1920 on my grandparents' homestead near Lucky Lake in the province. He was not born in a hospital, but he was born in a two-room soddie. For those who don't know what a soddie is, a soddie is just that, a house built of sod. There was very little lumber available for construction, and so they just stacked sod up on top of one another for the walls and bought minimal amount of wood for the roof.

There were no doctors, just the neighbour's wife to help as a midwife, and they made it through that. He was very sick as a young child. In fact, he was two years old before he could even hold a cookie. And farming in that area was very tough. Crops were poor and you were a long ways away from town. When they needed coal for the fire or groceries, my grandfather would make a 20-mile trip by horse and wagon. This took three days. Finally in 1932 after many poor years of farming, they packed up and again by horse and wagon took the two-week journey to a new home in Pontrilas, Saskatchewan near Nipawin.

[20:45]

In 1941 he joined the army as a signalman and was shipped overseas. He served in Italy, Sicily, France, Germany, and Holland. He served a total of 1,373 days and his total pay for that entire period was \$650.95. That works out to 47 cents a day. In all my years growing up, he would talk about how proud he was to serve his country and how proud he was of the men he served with. He never missed a Remembrance Day ceremony. One of the few stories that he told was of one night as they were being shelled, they all had to dig foxholes to sleep in. One of their vehicles got a direct hit by a shell. When the shelling was over, the guy on his left had been killed and the

guy on his right had been killed. He thanked God that he had been spared, and he remained a devout religious man for the remainder of his life. He was discharged from the army in December of 1945 in time to be home for Christmas.

I think today of the death and destruction that those men seen and the impact it had on their lives. We today talk about PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder], but it was not even recognized back then, and many of those men, when they came home, had mental issues, issues with alcohol and drugs, depression, so many different things. It's such a shame that there was no help for the men.

A year or so after getting back from overseas, he realized that the gal across the road was meant for him. So in 1947 he married my mother, and they would remain married for 63 years. Not long before his death, I went to Prince George where I spent a few days with them. I would stay up later than they would and every night I would hear him say to my mother, good night sweetheart; I love you so much. A love like that comes along, if we are lucky, but once in a lifetime.

In 1951 my father started working for the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and was sent to manage an elevator in Chelan, Saskatchewan. He worked with many long hours and built up lifelong friendships. I never met a single farmer who ever had a bad thing to say about him. He believed in getting involved in the community to make it the best that it could be. He volunteered for boards and committees and truly believed that you have to give back to your community.

I remember most days in the busy season heading straight to the elevator to help him every day after school. My brother had allergies to grain dust which was unfortunate for him that he couldn't come down and help us — just me. So I was down there from cooping cars, which is getting the old rectangle cars ready to be loaded, to shovelling grain bins, cleaning grain dust out of the booth, to sweeping floors.

I of course was not paid for that and never expected any. But on some exceptional busy days, my dad would flip me a couple of dimes and say, hop on your bike, son, and go get us a couple of Pepsi.

In the winter, which was the slow time, I would often go down to the elevator as well, and he taught me how to play crib and dominoes down there. Dad would talk about what's important in life, about what's right and wrong, not that I did anything wrong. But I guess getting caught smoking in the church at about seven years old was probably a bad thing. But he's kind of forgiven me for that. But what is important is that you treat all people fairly, you work hard, and you stay humble. In fact in my office I have a paperweight that says just that. I look at it every day. It says, work hard; stay humble.

In 1973 he retired from the elevator due to poor health and moved to Prince George, BC [British Columbia] where he continued to work. But he was the head gardener at the Prince George hospital until his mandatory retirement in 1985.

Not long after his retirement, he decided to take a trip to Edmonton to see me, one of the very few times he ever travelled without my mother. As the train was on the way to

Edmonton, near Hinton, Alberta, it collided head-on with a freight train. Twenty-three people were killed and many injured including my father. He had broken ribs. And was fortunate as he was on his way up to the front dining car to dine and it was full and so they sent him to the rear dining car. And shortly after that the accident happened and pretty much everybody in the front dining car was killed. VIA wanted to pay him for his injuries, but he said, I'm alive and others died; their families will need the help. That's the kind of man that he was. Later he was forced to take a small settlement, and he did begrudgingly take only a couple hundred dollars.

Shortly after that he and mother bought a motorhome and didn't use it to go south like so many others, but only used it to visit their kids and grandkids. He stayed very active in his community and his church. He told me, in his last days, that he was happy with his 91 years. He had lived a good life with a loving family and a family that he was happy to go and be with his Lord. On March 8th, 2012, he passed away. He was, as I am sure most fathers are, the most influential man in my life, and I think of him every day.

The second man that was an influence in my life was a man named Edward Arthur Knight. He lived right here in Regina. We met in 1986. He was a client of mine when I was with the Bank of Montreal. He was born in Winnipeg as the youngest in his family. His mother was 44 years old when he was born. His father passed away at a very young age, and Ted left school after grade 10 to help his mother pay the bills. One of the things that Ted would say many times later on in his life, there was only two things that kept me from medical school, and that was grade 11 and grade 12.

He worked hard at a career in finance, back in those days when you never needed a degree to work in finance. Another thing he always said was that there's a big difference between being smart and being educated, and I agree with that 100 per cent. He always desired to be in business and finally he got his opportunity and that's when he purchased Crestview Chrysler here in Regina. He was a true entrepreneur. He co-owned an insurance company, clothing store, nightclub, and the Regina Pats. In fact he ended up co-owning 15 car dealerships. He was truly a self-made man that started with nothing, and through hard work had a very rewarding life.

In the summer of 2000 he called me at my office in Saskatoon and said, Joe, I need a favour. You know lots of guys in the car business. And I said, yes, of course I do. Well I need a business partner for my dealership in Prince Albert. Do you know anyone? And I paused for a few seconds and I said yes, I do. He said, great, who? I said, me. He said don't BS me, Joe, and I said, I'm not. He said, you got any money? I said I might be able to put a little bit together to make the deal. So to make a long story short, he drove up the next day; we went out for a drink; and on a cocktail napkin we wrote out our agreement. And we shook hands and our partnership lasted for many years. We got everything put together on October 1st, 2000, and I met him in Prince Albert at the airport and we headed to the dealership to announce that I would be the new managing partner.

Ted was always full of advice, but several things just kind of stick in your head. He said on the trip to the dealership . . . He

said Joe, just so you know, he said, I could lose every dime that I have invested in this dealership, he says, and it won't change my lifestyle a little bit. You, on the other hand, it will. That was enough to keep me working hard for many, many years because I just didn't want to go back to the other life.

Later on the way back to the airport he gave me more advice, and it was advice very similar to what my father had given me. He said, Joe, if you want to be successful and you want to make a difference in your community, you have to get involved, and I live by that still today. I was involved in many organizations and service clubs in Prince Albert and eventually that led me to be in politics.

Ted was diagnosed with stage IV cancer over four years ago and was given 30 days to live. He, as with everything, was very determined to battle cancer. I was fortunate to see him just over a month ago, over four years after he'd been given a month to live. He still had a great sense of humour, and his mind was still very sharp. He passed away October 17th.

One last Ted-ism: time is the currency of life, not money.

The next issue I'd like to talk about is more political. It really involves more than just one person. The first is really a person I never had the privilege of knowing. The reason for that is on October 10, 2014, she was killed by an impaired driver. This impaired driver drove over 40 kilometres on the wrong side of the divided Highway No. 11 between here and Saskatoon before he hit and killed Danille Kerpan. Her father Allan tells the story that no parent would ever want to hear. That is of getting that knock on the door in the middle of the night, that knock with the police officer at the door to tell you a loved one has died. I've met and talked with many families of victims of impaired driving and all of their stories will break your heart.

I also have another story about impaired driving, a true story given to me by a retired RCMP officer. This officer retired early because he had been to so many accidents where the life of someone was tragically taken away that he suffers from post traumatic stress disorder as well. But back in the day when he was still with the RCMP, he was told to just suck it up because that's what we do in the RCMP. I know this story is true and the impacts of the story are many because that retired RCMP officer is my brother. I'd like to read the story that he told to a class of young students:

The following is the response to the many questions that I get daily.

You may only know me as a cop who gave you a ticket last summer, but I am also the guy who lives down the street from you. I'm a parent and I share with the same hope, ambition and dreams that you have for your children. I'm faced with you the same problems you are, share the same moments of agony; I share with you the same feelings of shame, guilt and disappointment when my son or daughter gets into trouble. I'm often asked why I "harass" kids for speeding down the streets. Why do I make such a fuss about kids drinking a little beer? Why is it a big deal about smoking a little pot? These are only a few of your complaints but they all deserve an answer so I'll try.

Each of these complaints, although might be minor, have something important in common. They're all violations of the law, the real harm done in each case is the law has been violated and respect for the rules and the principles that regulate any society are disregarded. To show contempt for these minor laws may eventually lead to the disregard for all law. When that happens everyone is a loser. I'm in no position to teach respect for the law; that's your job as a parent, you are morally responsible for teaching your children proper principles and failure to do so will inadvertently result in bitter disappointment, grief and a feeling of guilt.

You say you are too busy, you don't have any time because you are struggling to make ends meet in an inflated, runaway life, you are angry with me because I call you down to the station at 3:00 in the morning, and all he was doing was drinking a little beer. Sure he is a little drunk now, but he will be okay in the morning, besides that, everybody does it, so what's the big deal? Well, I'm a little angry, a little sick inside when I'm called out to an accident scene involving liquor. Let me tell you about one such accident.

If you can picture the scene — it is a long stretch of highway [near Penticton], a sharp curve at one end, it has been raining; the roads are [all] slippery, car travelling in excess of 80 miles an hour, missed the curve, and plowed into the embankment where it had become airborne and struck a tree. Two of the three young persons were hurled from the vehicle; one into the tree, the other onto the road where the car landed on him, snuffed out his life like a discarded cigarette on the asphalt. He was killed instantly and he's the lucky one. The girl thrown into the tree had her neck broken, and although she was voted queen of her senior prom, and most likely to succeed, she will spend the rest of her life in a wheelchair unable to do anything else, she will live and relive that terrible moment over and over again, many times. The driver is conscious, but in shock and unable to free himself from under the bent, twisted steering column.

[21:00]

His face will be forever scarred, most scars will heal, but the ones inside will not. His breath comes in gasps as he tries desperately to suck air past the blood-filled airway. He is unable to speak and his eyes fixed on me pleadingly, showing that he is terrified and wants help. A feeling of guilt goes through me as I recognize him as the boy I'd let off with a warning the other night for having open liquor in his vehicle. Maybe if I had done things differently he wouldn't be here now, who knows? I don't. He died silently on the side of the road, his eyes staring as if trying to see into the future that he will never have. As I knelt beside this young man I'm filled with incredible grief at the waste of such a valuable resource, our youth. I'm sick with anger and frustration with parents and leaders who think a little bit of alcohol won't hurt anything. I'm filled with contempt for lawmakers who propose lowering drinking age as they will get the booze anyway, so why not make it legal? I'm frustrated with the laws, court rulings and other legal manoeuvring that restrict my ability to do

my job in preventing this kind of tragedy. The ambulance begins the job of scraping up and removing the dead and injured. I stand by watching as hot tears mingle with rain and drip off my cheeks. I would give anything to know who furnishes [these] young people with that legal portion of booze. As I clear the scene, I will spend several hours on reports and several months trying to erase from my memory the details of that night.

I know that eventually the memory of this fatal accident will be diluted and mixed with similar accidents, that I'll be called upon to cover.

Yes, I'm angry and sick at heart, trying to do my job and being tagged the "bad guy." I pray to God that I might never have to face another parent in the middle of the night and say "your son, Bill, or [your] daughter, Susan, has just been killed in a car accident."

You ask me why did this happen?. It happened because a young person stoned out of his mind thought he could handle two tons of hurtling death at 80 miles an hour. It happened because an adult trying to be a "good guy" bought for, or sold to, some minor a case of beer. It happened because you, as a parent, weren't concerned enough about your child to know where he was or what he was doing and you were unconcerned about minors and alcohol abuse and would rather blame me for harassing them when I was only trying to prevent this kind of tragedy. It happened because, as people say, you believe this sort of thing only happens to someone else. For your sake, I hope it doesn't happen to you, but if you continue to permit bad legislation, continue to regard alcohol abuse as part of growing up, then please keep your porch light on, because some cold rainy night you'll find me at your doorstep, eyes downcast staring at my feet, with a message of death of a loved one for you.

Mr. Speaker, impaired driving has to stop. One life lost to impaired driving is one life too many. When we instituted the impaired driving legislation on January 1st, 2017, I feel we made a big step towards making people understand. And the two awareness campaigns we had since then, with the disappearing person — of which several of the people that disappeared in that commercial I had a connection with — and the wingman campaign were very impactful.

I did have one person that I've known for a very long time coming up to me after January 1st, after the legislation was passed and effective, and tell me that I had just lost his vote because of the new impaired driving legislation. Well, Mr. Speaker, as I told him then, that that is a vote that I'm more than prepared to lose.

But at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, SGI is not going to fix this problem. The government is not going to fix this problem. The news media is not going to fix this problem. It will be individual Saskatchewan people who decide that enough is enough and say, I'm not going to be a part of Saskatchewan's impaired driving problem.

Mr. Speaker, I feel that ride share that was spoken about in the Speech from the Throne is another tool in the tool box for the

fight against impaired driving. And I would ask for everyone's support from it.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the motion of the member from Estevan, supporting the Speech from the Throne, and I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Fiaz: — Mr. Speaker, may I have leave to introduce guests?

The Deputy Speaker: — The member has asked for leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member may proceed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all the members of the Assembly, I would like to introduce my friend, my constituent, Shahid Pervaiz. He is a good friend of mine working in SSR [Stewart Southern Railway]. It's something railway, I believe, and hauling our grains.

And he is a good friend of mine. We usually spend a lot of time when not in session, sitting and discussing about the Saskatchewan economy and all that's Saskatchewan-related issues, and how can we improve, how can we improve the Saskatchewan economy and stuff like that.

I want all my colleagues to welcome him in his own Legislative Assembly. Thanks.

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

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Ms. Carr, seconded by Mr. Nerlien, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Ms. Sproule.]

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And thanks to my team for their great support and round of applause that they gave me in this.

I want to start off, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by thanking the Minister of CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] for his words. I think they touched everybody in this Chamber and I would encourage anybody that didn't catch it to replay it on social media because it was very powerful and impactful, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I want to congratulate him on the work that he's done in the short amount of time that he has been elected and as minister to help us get rid of this unfortunate statistic that we are in Saskatchewan. So I want to thank the minister for that and very much appreciate the work that he's done on that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think I'd be amiss if I didn't thank our Premier for his work that he has done as a legislator, as leader of the opposition; before that, critic for SaskEnergy; leader of the official opposition; and then as Premier for the last 10 years. He has the respect of not just his colleagues here in the Legislative Assembly, and we've heard that from members opposite, but across the country. And I think he's done an absolute fabulous job, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of elevating Saskatchewan's status across our country, certainly below the 49th down in the United States, and around the world, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So I very much appreciate it.

I met the Premier several years ago. I believe it was 2002, 2003, when I was only 18 years old, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and could see this energy in this man that I hadn't seen before. I had the stereotypical view of a politician being stuffy, not personable, and I'll leave it at that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I met the Premier at literally a pizza place in Saskatoon and had a great conversation with him as well as my father, at the time who was an elected member of Saskatoon Northwest. And you couldn't contain the energy that the Premier had and the passion that he had for Saskatchewan. And as a person that had moved from Toronto to Saskatchewan and chose to live here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was amazing that somebody could see the value of what they had in Saskatchewan because I didn't know what they had in Saskatchewan till you experience Saskatchewan. And I think he's been first and foremost to be able to take that energy and the drive that is Saskatchewan to the world. And we're very proud of him and I want to thank him for his service.

As we all know on this floor, it's very hard to be away from family, especially when we get new responsibilities, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but he's done it with grace, with a lot of flair, and certainly with the passion of the Saskatchewan people. So I want to thank our Premier for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

While I'm doing my thank yous, I want to thank my wife Leane, who's at home right now. I just happened to send her a little text to make sure she wasn't watching her favourite Netflix show, that I was up and speaking about her; my mother-in-law, Sylvia Durand who is also at home, and they both turned off Netflix for probably four minutes of this speech. So I want to thank them for doing that.

Obviously, I've got to thank my children. Again, and I've said this before, Mr. Deputy Speaker, everybody on this Assembly, we give up time with our family to be here. I don't think anybody is in this for the money. We are well compensated, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but we have to give up a lot at home. So I want to thank Courtney and Carter and Keely and Cassidy for understanding that I'm not at all of the events, that I can't partake in everything. But when I do get back, I very much appreciate the joy that three teenagers and one 21-year-old bring into my life, because there's never a dull moment, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In saying that, I also want to touch base with my minister's

staff, Shannon Andrews, and the group that up there has been able to educate me in a very short amount of time, as well as the ministry staff, Greg Miller, and all the staff over at Social Services. I very much appreciate that. And I also want to thank my predecessor, the member from Regina University, Mr. Deputy Speaker. She did an amazing job as Social Services minister. And I have big shoes to fill, although I think physically they're a little bit smaller and a little bit higher than I'm used to, but . . . and less colourful, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But I want to thank her for her dedication on this file and the work that she did, and I'll try to carry that forward, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I also want to thank my constituency assistants, Danielle, Michelle, and Debbs up in Saskatoon for their work in making sure that I sign everything properly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and make sure that my constituents are getting the representation that they deserve, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now just getting into the Speech from the Throne, I think this again is another great step forward. We've had some difficult fiscal times in this province, across Western Canada. We've had no help from the federal government on alleviating any of those pressures, just adding more pressures onto it. But I'm very proud that our government, certainly within the ministry I represent, that we were able to increase the budget. And again my predecessor from Regina University was able to advocate for the people that are in need.

Now just touching on a couple of the programs within Social Services. Certainly the one that's near and dear to my heart is the SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] program, the assured income for people with disabilities. This is something that hits very home to me, from my work with Special Olympics — I was four years on their provincial board — to working with people at Cosmo years ago in Saskatoon, as well as the SARC [Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres] store when it was up there. And I've had the honour of all getting reacquainted with people that I haven't seen for quite a few years. And it's amazing when I go through some of the homes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I bump into people that worked with me at SaskEnergy from Cosmopolitan Industries out in the middle of places that I never would expect. I bump into people that I haven't seen in years, and we catch up very quickly.

And of course obviously this drives me on a personal level because of my daughter who has a learning disability and is mild to moderate developmental delayed. She graduated high school last year, I'll inform the House. I haven't been able to speak since her graduation. I'm very proud that she graduated.

And now she's into the functionally integrated program at Holy Cross School and doing extremely well, able to go over and work at St. Anne's retirement home and helping out in the kitchen and learning some life skills. Because that's what I want for my daughter, is for her — just like my son and my stepdaughters and anybody that I bump into — I want them to reach their potential. And everybody's potential is different, and I want to make sure that my daughter has every opportunity that is allowed for her. It's very important that she moves forward in life, just like my son and just like my stepdaughters, so I'm very proud of her accomplishments.

But I don't want to focus solely on her because the other three kids will be a little upset. So my stepdaughter, Keely, who has turned into a beautiful young girl, is attending university and also working two jobs, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we believe, in our family . . . I was told a long time ago nobody rides for free. So she's been out working for her education, and her mother and I have been able to help her out with her education and just support her in any way that she can.

My oldest stepdaughter, Cassidy, is looking at a few different options right now, Mr. Deputy Speaker. She's had some challenges in her life, and we're very supportive of her. We're hopeful that she will choose a more solid career path and move forward.

[21:15]

And of course there's my son. Him and I are the only men in the house, so we have our own challenges amongst that. But my son is in hockey, played football this year for the first time, and seems to be enjoying life. He actually, at 15 years old, is just one-half per cent short of being on the honour roll, and he's looking at improving that for the next little . . . grade 10, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So I'm very proud of all of our children.

And my wife, I want to just touch on her career. She had a 14-year career of owning her own business that she decided to close in June of this year. A very successful business, but she wanted to be able to pursue some other things. She's got the bug to be able to try something different, so right now she's pursuing her options and cheering me from home and being able to support the family while I'm down here doing my duties as an MLA and as Minister of Social Services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the Speech from the Throne, the most important thing that I saw that came out of Social Services was that we were able to help out seniors age in home by putting in a tax abatement. If they're under the income threshold of \$70,000, we were able to put their property taxes into a deferral program against the estate. And this is something very important because what we've heard loud and clear is that seniors want to age in home. They don't want to go somewhere into a retirement home unless it's absolutely necessary. So as a government, we've done a lot for seniors. We've tripled the seniors' income plan, from \$90 up to \$270. And we're making sure that we're looking out after all of the most vulnerable people within the Social Services file, but across the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

One of the other things that has been brought up recently in media that I just want to touch on, on my file, is the better use policy. This is something that was introduced back in 2003, while the opposition was in government, to be able to best utilize the assets of the government. Now a lot of these units were in disrepair when we inherited the government, had the opportunity to serve as government. And we've been putting a lot of money . . . I believe the total is in and around \$770 million that we've put in towards the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation to make sure that those houses are the best possible houses for our seniors and for people that need them, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So again, I'm very proud of that.

I wanted to touch on a couple of other things from the Speech

from the Throne. I think we kind of get complacent a little bit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and realize how far we have come. When we're talking about in 2007 that we had a nursing crisis in this province, we're up over 1,000 nurses. And I think we forget about that once in a while because we forget how far we have come. We've had more doctors in the province, rural and remote doctors. We've enhanced the nurse practitioners program, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to make sure that everybody in the province has the best possible health care.

And I think the biggest step, as the Provincial Secretary has outlined, STARS is certainly huge. We have a mobile emergency room that can fly around the province. And I don't want to specifically discuss how many missions they've flown because each one of those is a tragedy into itself, but we all know that STARS are there. When the red helicopter goes by, I make sure that we think about the people that are in that helicopter or they're going to see. And I just . . . It's a quick little prayer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to make sure that they are fine . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Am I already at 18 minutes? Now I'm on to page two.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the other things that I am very proud of as a father of four, is the investment that we've had in education. The joint-use schools, and I know the opposition doesn't like the P3 model, but we absolutely had to do this, Mr. Speaker. If we had of done a traditional build, I think it would have been maybe 12 to 14 years until we got these schools built. I understand that ideologically they don't get this but, Mr. Speaker, we had to meet the demands.

And when I was at a couple of school openings the kids were just beaming. The schools are beautiful and we're meeting the needs of the children across our province, specifically in Regina, Saskatoon, and Martensville, and Warman where the growth has been huge, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I guess the opposition might struggle with this because, under their years as government, growth wasn't an issue. So we wanted to make sure that we were able to meet the needs of the kids in their schools and in their communities, to make sure that they were getting the best possible education with support of the best teachers.

And again, I want to thank the teachers. We just had a meeting with the teachers at my son and daughter's school to make sure that they're on the right track. The teachers are very dedicated to their students and to their classroom. And I want to thank them for the amazing work that they've done to be able to get two of my children through school — actually three, I guess, technically, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And the third one, I hope he gets through in the next couple of years because I don't know if I can survive a couple more years of high school, but it has always been interesting.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to touch on a couple of other things before I wrap up here. I've had the honour since being the Minister of Social Services to travel around the province — Swift Current, Humboldt, Regina, Saskatoon — and be able to talk to what is happening on the front line, and I think that's important. I very much value information that the ministry is giving me and my staff is giving me, but I'm a people person, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I want to get out and talk to people. I want to sit down and hear it from them, what's working and

what's not working.

And I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they've been very direct on the positive feedback, but also on some of the things that we need to work on. And I can guarantee you that we're not going to sit on our laurels, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have work to do. There is always work to do in the Social Services file in making sure that people with disabilities have their needs met, people that are on our transitional employment have their needs met, people that are on our social assistance program, and within our Sask Housing file, to be able to meet those needs. Now that doesn't always necessarily mean more money, Mr. Deputy Speaker; it means making the money that we have in our file the most effective possible.

And again I'm walking in big shoes filled by the previous ministers of Social Services. I think there's been four since we formed government and I'm very honoured to hold this position, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When I first considered getting into politics, when I was working at the Saskatoon Food Bank & Learning Centre, I wanted to make a difference at that level, to help out people in our community and be able to help people move forward in life. And once I got the political bug or the bite of the political bug, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wanted to take that up a level as an MLA and now Minister of Social Services. This is the file I wanted. I think that there's some great successes here we can have with people and I think that there's a lot that we can do to help people. And that always again it doesn't mean more money; it means making sure that the money is working in the best way possible.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think my time is up, but again I just . . . I know everybody's giving me a round of applause to sit down now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and there are lots of laughs and shaking the head of, yes, we've heard enough of you. But I do want to thank my colleagues. I want to make sure that I thank my predecessors, my family, the staff that I get to work with who I'm not quite sure if they're enjoying my music that I have when I'm sitting down in deep thought in the office, but it helps me relax and they seem to get a kick out of the wide spectrum of music that I enjoy.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to make sure that absolutely before I sit down I want to get on the record that I do support the Speech from the Throne and I do not support the amendment that was brought forward by the opposition. So thank you for your time this evening, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my honour and pleasure to present today with my remarks of the Speech from the Throne. Before I start with my remarks, I would like to take this opportunity to thank some important people in my life that help me with this role in the House.

Mr. Speaker, my constituency assistant, Rose, does an amazing job helping individuals that reach out to our office. Rose is very busy managing many calls regarding the critic portfolios I oversee and she handles these calls with such professionalism, empathy, and respect.

I also want to thank my family for their constant support. My partner, Darren, has adjusted to managing the home front while I'm away and I appreciate everything he does to make sure the family's taken care of. And although he acts like he doesn't care too much for the dogs that we have, Roxy and Diesel, I am sure he's giving them plenty of cuddles while I'm away.

Mr. Speaker, family is very important to me, and recently our family lost the matriarch of our family. My mother had a short battle with cancer, and losing her has been a huge loss for our family. I want to thank all the colleagues from both sides of the House that sent me best wishes to me and my family during this tough time. My mother was born in the dirty thirties. She lived a good life, but not always an easy one. She worked hard to raise eight children through many different life challenges and circumstances, and we always felt loved and cared for. At times we had less than others, but we always had what we needed, and appreciated that.

My mother always believed in helping others. She made prayer blankets for people that were ill, blankets for the homeless, hats for newborn babies, and volunteered every chance she got, and did much more. Mr. Speaker, for many years my sister-in-law bought my mother brand new fluffy towels for Christmas, and we later found out that my mother would bring them to the homeless shelter. When asked why she gave her new towels to the neediest, she would quote, "Well they deserve nice new towels also." That was my mom. Appreciate what you have, and give when you can. I will always appreciate the lessons from my mother and carry them on as best as I can.

Mr. Speaker, this summer our family has grown, and we welcomed a new addition. Levi is now our third grandson, and we are just delighted to have him join our family. The grandbabies are so much fun and I enjoy spending precious time with them.

Mr. Speaker, I am so fortunate. I have everything I need. I have an education. I have the financial means to take care of myself and my family. I have wonderful support of friends and I have a loving family. I realize how fortunate I am, and I also realize that not everyone is this fortunate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that government plays a vital role in assuring everyone has the same opportunities. Everyone has a right to education. Everyone has the right to publicly funded medical treatment. Everyone has the right to safe and affordable public transportation. Everybody has the right to feel safe and live in a healthy community. And, Mr. Speaker, everyone has the right to supports and programs in their time of need.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, health care is my background, and improving health care is one of the main motivating factors for me to be actively involved in provincial politics. Health care in this province is in the process of a lot of change. Moving into a single health authority is going to be a challenge, and individuals are very concerned that more and more services will be centralized, and workers are concerned that they will lose their jobs.

Also, Mr. Speaker, in this Throne Speech nothing was mentioned about expanding and improving health care services

in Prince Albert — no mention about addressing large wait times in Prince Albert, no mention about a new hospital to address the increased medical pressures in Prince Albert and area, and no mention of accountable care units for Prince Albert. But, Mr. Speaker, I was most disappointed that there was no mention in the Throne Speech about addressing and providing more mental health services for Prince Albert and the North.

Mr. Speaker, just recently the Children's Advocate said, and I quote:

The wait list here in SK to see a child psychiatrist is up to 2 years! Our kids are literally dying as we continue to fail to meet their needs.

Mr. Speaker, this is completely unacceptable. Children are dying. This is a crisis, but this issue is not even on the government's radar and was not important enough for it to be addressed in the Throne Speech. Suicide is completely preventable, Mr. Speaker, and this government has been failing to work on measures of prevention by simply ensuring that mental health services are available when needed by every resident in this province.

[21:30]

Also, Mr. Speaker, there was no mention about expanding and improving addiction services. This government contradicts itself with bragging about the privatization and expansion of liquor sales, and in the next breath talks about the embarrassing fact that Saskatchewan has the highest rates of impaired driving among the provinces. This is a government that has been cutting addiction services, and in Prince Albert area there was cuts to rural addiction services. Rural communities have some of the highest rates of drinking and driving and have little to no addiction services available. If you really want to address impaired driving, then invest in early education and public promotion, and make sure there are services available for those who need them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was proud that my colleagues from Regina Douglas Park and Saskatoon Centre brought forward a private member's bill that would address barriers for victims of interpersonal violence. This government took a portion of this bill and implemented regulations that would help victims of interpersonal violence, and a fixed-term lease of residential premises without penalty if they are in danger. Now this is a good start, but there is much more work that needs to be done to address interpersonal violence in this province. Saskatchewan has double the national average rate of interpersonal violence.

Mr. Speaker, when you talk to law enforcement officers, they will tell you that alcohol is involved in most of the interpersonal violence calls they receive. Being proud of your legacy on promoting more alcohol use in a province that has high rates of addictions, high rates of impaired driving, high rates of crime, and high rates of interpersonal violence without a plan to address the consequences of alcohol use is irresponsible.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was honoured to sit on the Human Services Committee along with my colleague, the member from Saskatoon Riversdale, when we submitted recommendations for

the Minister of Health to help improve organ donation rates in the province. We listened to many stakeholders, from medical professionals to families that were impacted by the organ donation process. It was so nice to see that the recommendations that we submitted in a minority opinion are being considered by this government.

I want to bring attention to the fact that the member from Saskatoon Riversdale has been working very hard for years to have organ donation rates improved in this province and has worked hard connecting with stakeholders so that she was informed on what processes have been proven to be effective in increasing organ donation rates. And she worked especially hard with ensuring the Human Services Committee had those recommendations in this report. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank her for her guidance and leadership with helping me through my first committee report.

Mr. Speaker, on our break from the duties in this House, I have been busy consulting with community leaders. Mr. Deputy Speaker, municipal leaders have had a difficult challenge in managing with changes that this government has made. Cuts to grants, cuts to grants-in-lieu, and other downloading from the government has put municipalities in a tough situation with having to cut programs and raise taxes. Municipal leaders feel let down by this government and are concerned if more is yet to come.

One big issue that communities were left struggling to deal with was the shutdown of STC. The closure of STC has created issues with municipalities trying to find other ways to address delivering materials in a timely fashion, in a cost-effective way. Municipal leaders also are worried about residents that now struggle to travel for medical appointments with no options.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government tries to justify their cold-hearted decision to cut our only public provincial transportation company by saying that there are private companies available. The reality is that these private companies have not been reliable. Some have said if they have enough passengers, they will make the trip. Some have cancelled their routes because they weren't making enough money. Some have changed their pickup and drop-off spots regularly. And there have been many places that these companies won't even consider going.

Also there is no bathroom facilities on many of these private transportation companies, which is not practical for individuals that might need quick access to these facilities. Mr. Speaker, the impact of the shutdown of STC has very real consequences that are long term.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what kind of government leaves the most vulnerable with no provincial public transportation? What kind of government cuts funeral arrangements and payments for the poorest? What kind of government cuts social services benefits during tough economic times? And what kind of government raises the cost of children's clothing for single mothers?

And what kind of government cuts funding to education when times are tough? Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government has increased education taxes and will generate 67 million more, but decreased education funding by \$58 million. Where is this

money going? Specialized services for kids are reduced and classroom sizes are larger. And in the end, kids are suffering. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are 181 less teachers in this province and 4,500 more students. Let this sink in. This year there are 4,500 more students in Saskatchewan and 181 fewer teachers due to provincial cuts to education. This is appalling.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, more than 3,200 people are unemployed in Saskatchewan, and Prince Albert has unemployment rates that are well over the provincial average. Individuals accessing the food bank has been increasing year after year, and around 50 per cent of individuals receiving services from the food bank are children, which is also well above the national rate. Mr. Deputy Speaker, after a decade of boom, food banks are busier than ever, and one in four children in this province live in poverty. Child poverty rates are above the national average. Saskatchewan has a child poverty rate of 24.6 per cent, which is six percentage points higher than the rest of the country. And 69 per cent of indigenous children on reserve are living in poverty, but yet no mention of child poverty in the Throne Speech.

A few weeks ago I had the pleasure to help with the Thanksgiving supper at the Prince Albert Friendship Centre. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Thanksgiving supper is open to everyone in the city, but many of the guests are the most vulnerable. The gym was full of young and old. Over 200 people attended this free supper. One gentleman told me that this was the first meal he had in a long time. This is a true sign of need in our community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the number of children in care continues to climb. Indigenous children remain overrepresented in the child welfare system, and to this day, we still have an alarming number of children in care that sustain critical injuries and way too many have died. Our child welfare system needs to be completely revamped, but yet received no attention in the Throne Speech.

There is no mention of the Truth and Reconciliation and implementing the calls of action, and no mention of acting on the apology of the Sixties Scoop. Mr. Deputy Speaker, until true reconciliation is acted on, we will unfortunately continue to see the overrepresentation of indigenous children in the child welfare system, high rates of poverty, high rates of addiction use, high rates of interpersonal violence, high rates of unemployment, and high rates of suicide. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government again and again demonstrates that true reconciliation is not a priority for them, and it is very clear that this government has lost its moral compass.

And with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do support the amendment submitted by my colleague, the member of Saskatoon Nutana.

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

Hon. Mr. Doke: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always nice to talk to a captive audience. It is with great pleasure that I stand here tonight in this House to give my reply to the Speech from the Throne.

I would first like to start off by thanking a few very important

people in my life. First and foremost, my wife, Valerie. Thank you for continuing to stand by me and support me, making it possible for me to be here today. You keep our day-to-day operations running with such ease and grace. I could not have done this without you.

I would also like to thank my two constituency assistants, Cheryl Hume who works full time and Maureen Paron who is part time. You ladies keep my office running smoothly and you are a great asset to the front line for my constituents.

I would also like to thank the people of Cut Knife-Turtleford who have supported me and whom I've had the privilege to represent as a member of the Saskatchewan Party.

But not least, I would like to thank my office staff here in the legislature. Shannon, Grant, Carla, Emma, and Tennille, you have all been such a great help to me settling into my new role as the Minister for Government Relations. Your knowledge and experience have made this an easy transition for me.

I would also like to thank Premier Wall for this opportunity to serve in his cabinet. It is a great honour and I will do my utmost to serve with dedication and humility. I will work hard on this file that you have appointed me to and continue serving the constituents of Cut Knife-Turtleford. It was because of you and the great potential I saw in your vision that helped me to make my decision to run in 2011. I wanted to be part of the future you saw for Saskatchewan. Just like you, I want to make a difference in our province. Your leadership has been a great example for all of us and you will truly be missed. I wish you the best of luck in your future endeavours.

There are many areas of importance in the Throne Speech and I want to touch on a few that impact my constituency. Farmers are a major component of the growth and success we have experienced in our province over the last decade, and that is no different in my home constituency. Most of our farmers have gotten their crops off despite a challenging year. However it's looking like another very successful harvest season in Saskatchewan.

Over the last decade, Saskatchewan's total agricultural exports have increased from \$6.4 billion to 14.4 billion. We saw record exports in 2015 of 15.3 billion. During the NDP's last year in government, ag exports were only \$6.4 billion. According to Stats Canada, in 2016 Saskatchewan farmers produced the second-largest crop ever at 35.6 million tonnes. That is 10 per cent above the 10-year average.

Our government has also committed 4.2 million in industry grants to support programs such as 4-H, Ag in the Classroom, Agribition, and more. We will continue to provide strong support to our farmers, ranchers, and agribusinesses.

Our producers are experiencing high cattle prices, which is a pleasant change because the industry is still dealing with the aftermath of BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy] and years of below-normal prices. It is nice to finally see some prices get back to what we saw prior to 2003.

As I continue to look back on the work we have done, it's clear we've come a long way as a province in the last 10 years, but

we still have work to do and we know that. However it's important that we talk about the last decade because some of those members don't seem to have been paying attention.

Where did the money go, they ask. Well hopefully I can help them with that. Since forming government we have made record investments in important infrastructure projects like our highways, schools, and hospitals. Instead of investing in people and infrastructure, the NDP closed 52 hospitals, closed 176 schools, and we are still trying to figure out where they spent their money.

As part of my new portfolio, I would be remiss if I didn't talk about municipal revenue-sharing program in our province. In 2017-18 we invested 258 million in revenue-sharing funding. That is an increase of 130 million or 103 per cent since we took government in 2007.

Municipal revenue sharing is unconditional, no-strings-attached funding for our municipalities. Since forming government we have provided municipalities an astounding 2 billion through revenue sharing. There has been an increase to revenue sharing in 2017 of 158 per cent to the cities, an increase of 54.5 per cent to RMs [rural municipality], and 99 per cent increase to the North.

[21:45]

In the past 10 years we have provided 712 million in revenue sharing to our rural municipalities while the NDP in their last 10 years provided them with only 314 million.

In the past 10 years we have provided over 1.4 billion to our urban municipalities while the NDP provided only 389 million in their last 10 years. That is a 278 per cent increase from our government.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I know those members don't like hearing this information but I've got some more for them. In the past 10 years we've provided northern municipalities with 175 million in revenue sharing and the NDP in their last 10 years in government provided the North with only 63 million. That is a 201 per cent increase from our government.

In my constituency alone, there's been over 1.7 million provided to municipalities in revenue sharing this year.

Education has always been a very important focus for our government. In my constituency, the Northwest School Division has received a total of 51.1 million in operating funding with a preventative maintenance renewal, or PMR, allocation of 1.18 million, which is an increase of 15.1 per cent from the last budget. The Light of Christ school division has received a total of 19.7 million in operating funding, and 394,000 allocation for PMR, which is an increase of 14.8 per cent from last year's budget.

Other capital investments for my area include 540,000 in funding for Lashburn's J.H. Moore Elementary, 328,000 in funding for Turtleford School roof, and 93,000 for the roof at the Edam Hardcastle School.

We know there is more work to be done, and I will continue to

be a strong voice for my constituency. Let's not forget the important part of education is properly funding it. Our government's education budget for this year is 2.02 billion. Saskatchewan's 28 school divisions will receive 1.86 billion in school operating funding, which includes revenue collected from the education property tax.

Our government implemented the largest property tax cut in the province's history, reducing the education property tax by 124 million in 2009. As of 2016-17, our government has reduced the cumulative EPT [education property tax] burden on residents by over 1.3 billion since 2008-09. Our government's commitment is to fund 40 per cent of the cost of education from property taxes and 60 per cent from the General Revenue Fund.

I could go on and on about our record in government and the improvements we've made over the last 10 years, so I think I will. Under our government we have employed over 750 more doctors and over 3,400 nurses of all designations. We have among the shortest surgical wait times in Canada. We have doubled the investments in hospital projects, including a new children's hospital in Saskatoon and new hospitals in North Battleford and Moose Jaw.

Our Heartland Health Region has received 270,000 in capital equipment funding and 380,000 block funding for capital maintenance. The prairie health north region has received 530,000 in capital equipment funding and an astonishing 1.45 million in block funding for capital maintenance.

There have been some monumental investments from our government. During the time when the NDP were in government, they eliminated 1,200 long-term care beds. They also attempted to raise monthly fees for seniors in long-term care facilities to 90 per cent of the senior's income. Since we took government, 15 new long-term care facilities have been built or are in the process. And of course our government has also introduced a new personal care home benefit plan, which provides low-income seniors over \$4,600 per year, on average, to assist with the cost of living in a care home.

In my constituency, our government invested 460,000 to the Maidstone Headstart on a Home, or better known as McConnell Place, in 2015. That was after already investing 400,000 to improvements to the activity centre and group-living homes. In 2010 there was 147,000 that was directly funded to the Wilkie rental development program.

We have seen vast improvements in our highways across the province. After many years of neglect from the NDP, our government has set record investments into our highways. In 10 years our government has invested 7.2 billion into repairing Saskatchewan highways, which is over 1 billion more than the NDP invested in 16 years.

In 2017-18 our government will be investing 4.9 million for highways in my constituency. Part of this includes light-seal preservation on Highway No. 40, east of Cut Knife, and heavy preservation on Highway 14 near Unity.

Total funding in 2015-16 by our government in my constituency was 9.4 million, which included repaving No. 16 west of North Battleford and east of Bresaylor at a cost of 6.4

million. There was also 1.1 million invested into bridge rehabilitation on Highway 17 over the Battle River.

There is also planning under way for passing lanes on Highway 4, north of North Battleford to Cochin. Our government has also been investing in the continued upgrades to Highway No. 26, where all the SAGD [steam-assisted gravity drainage] projects are going on.

As we travel around our beautiful province, we see many provincial parks. Our government has remained committed to investing in our parks. We've had an increase funding by 249 per cent in our 10 years in government compared to the NDP last nine years. Unfortunately the NDP left many of our parks in disrepair, so we knew we had a large job ahead of us. Our government has made repairs and record investments into the parks by adding 2,100 new electrified sites; improvements to washroom facilities, boat launches, and visitor centres. There was 613,000 invested for the construction of the sportsplex in Lashburn. I must note that since our government came into power, the amount of visitors to our provincial parks has increased by nearly a million visits or 32 per cent higher.

Infrastructure has always been of importance to our government. We were left with a massive infrastructure deficit from the NDP. They failed to invest in our highways, schools, and hospitals. We know with a growing province it's vital not only to keep hospitals and schools open but to build new ones. Total investment in infrastructure by our government in the last 10 years has been 11.2 billion, more than double what the NDP invested in its last 10 years.

I've seen in my own constituency many investments in infrastructure. There was 480,000 in funding provided to Unity for a water system upgrade, 1.7 million for sewage lagoon expansion, and 400,000 in funding for the activity centre in Maidstone. Most recently, in 2017, there was funding of 762,000 to the Wilkie wastewater main upgrade, ensuring a more reliable water and wastewater system. Also in 2017 Manitou Beach Water Security Agency berm grant, an engineering project, received 887,000 for repairs and pumping.

As we see the province growing year after year, we also see the need to continue investing in infrastructure. Since forming government we've been able to achieve the second-best job creation record in Canada. During the time that the NDP were in government, the province saw the worst job creation record in the country. It was half the national rate of job growth.

Having a strong economy is a valuable part of driving this province forward. In my area currently there are five producing SAGD oil projects and four more being built. This has created 150 to 200 new jobs during construction. It has also increased revenue to hotels and restaurants in my community. I would like to thank Husky Energy and Serafina oil for their investment into these projects. Husky Energy's investment alone has been close to a billion dollars.

In closing, I would like to touch briefly on our province's growth. Our population is growing faster than it has since the earliest days of our province. Since electing a Saskatchewan Party government, we have seen a decade of growth. Our province has grown by 167 people, making us the

second-fastest-growing province in Canada. It wasn't that long ago we saw people leaving Saskatchewan for other opportunities, jobs, and a better quality of life. The NDP drove people out of Saskatchewan, and population dropped by 22,000 people from 1996 to 2007.

We will never go back to the dark days of the NDP, and that is why I will be supporting the Throne Speech from the member from Estevan and not supporting the amendment. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Meadow Lake.

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

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Meadow Lake has moved that the House adjourns. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 21:56.]

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Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

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