



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

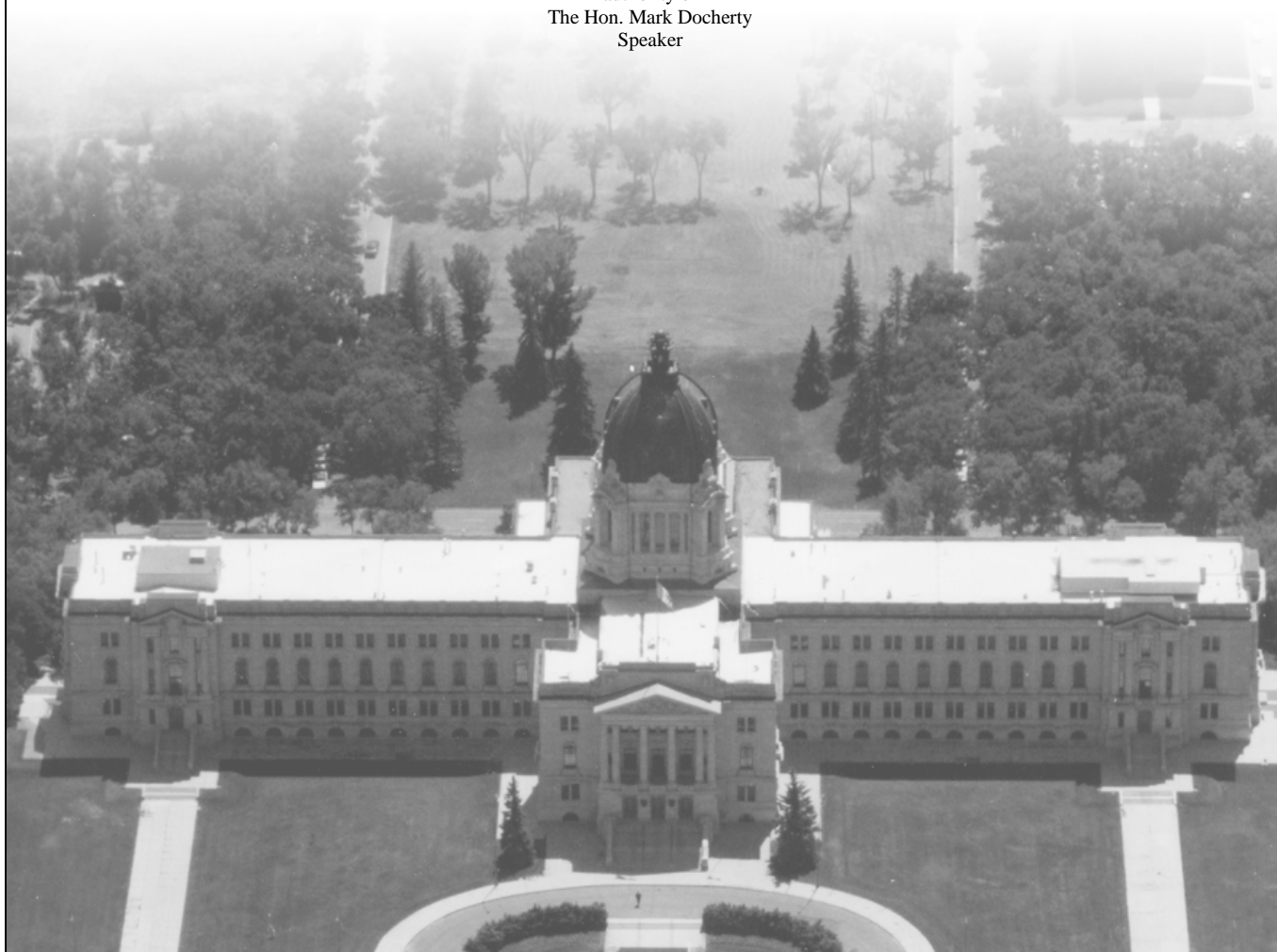
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Mark Docherty
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
2nd Session — 28th Legislature

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Morgan, Hon. Don — Saskatoon Southeast (SP)
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Vermette, Doyle — Cumberland (NDP)
Weekes, Randy — Biggar-Sask Valley (SP)
Wilson, Hon. Nadine — Saskatchewan Rivers (SP)
Wotherspoon, Trent — Regina Rosemont (NDP)
Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)
Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

Vacant — Regina Northeast

Party Standings: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 48; New Democratic Party (NDP) — 12; Vacant — 1

Clerks-at-the-Table

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Principal Clerk — Iris Lang

Clerk Assistant — Kathy Buriaynk

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to move a motion regarding question period.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has asked for leave to move a motion regarding question period. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. I recognize the Government House Leader.

MOTIONS

Extension of Question Period

Hon. Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I move:

That notwithstanding rule 20(1) of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, question period shall be limited to 30 minutes on session day no. 40 being Wednesday, April 11, 2018 through to session day no. 44 being Wednesday, April 18, 2018.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved:

That notwithstanding rule 20(1) of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, question period shall be limited to 30 minutes on session day no. 40 being Wednesday, April 11, 2018 through to session day no. 44 being Wednesday, April 18, 2018.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — All right, we're at introduction of guests and, Mr. Premier, I'll go first. That's once I'm going to trump you. Thanks. Thanks, Mr. Premier.

But today I'm pleased to welcome and introduce some special guests from Ignite Adult Learning Corporation, empowering Regina's youth. They were visiting my office earlier today.

When Ignite began in 1990, Regina was like every other

community in Canada, home to young adults with potential who are living at the margins of society, trapped in generational cycles of poverty, illiteracy, social assistance, and addictions. They were not just unemployed; they were unemployable.

Ignite opened its doors and began welcoming at-risk young adults who, in spite of the considerable barriers they faced, had both the desire and the potential to change the course of their lives and to build brighter futures for themselves and for their children. Ignite offers a trailblazing business entrepreneurial approach that enables their apprentices to heal, learn, and gain meaningful skills for employment and beyond.

Today Ignite graduates have a strong sense of who they are and are becoming active, contributing members of society as employees, homeowners, volunteers, small-business employers, consumers, and taxpayers. Their children as well see the value of education and know that opportunities exist for them to live up to their potential and that the cycles of poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment are not inevitable.

Apprentices from Ignite — and give us a wave when I say your name — Allyson Allary, Amanda Ball, Everett Alexson, Christian Smoke, Damion Counios, Dominique Maxie, Faith Nelson, Harras Lee Lonechild, Chris Thompson, Landon Cozma, Mathieu Kahnape, Robbie King, Shawn Crassweller, Sterling Racette-Runns, Timothy Poitras-Kay, Travis Poitras-Kay, Tyler Moffatt, Tyson Worm-Sunshine.

The staff of Ignite: Terina Shaw who's a fundraiser, corporate liaison officer; Mona Hill, apprentice support services facilitator; Larry Smith, math and science facilitator; Lois McRae, administrative manager; Debby Adair, communications facilitator. Board members: Ken Shaw, Caron Hopfner, Syed Wajid Ali.

I'd just ask all members, please join me in welcoming the Ignite apprentices, staff, and board members to their legislature.

I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I would like to join our Speaker of the House, through all members of this Legislative Assembly, in welcoming those members of Ignite to their Legislative Assembly here today, and also thank them for the effort and the work, and the productive work, producing results, Mr. Speaker. And changing people's lives essentially is that result, Mr. Speaker, here in the community of Regina and across the province, Mr. Speaker. And I want to welcome each of them to their Legislative Assembly here today and thank them for their work that they continue to do.

I also want to, while on my feet, Mr. Speaker, welcome through the members of this Assembly to this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, my constituency assistant from the community of Rosthern-Shellbrook, or the constituency of Rosthern-Shellbrook. She lives in Shellbrook. She's Ms. Sally Fitch, Mr. Speaker, and she runs our office there, runs it very efficiently as the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] has been delinquent the last while, Mr. Speaker.

And she has been a very good representative and contact on

behalf of the constituents in the communities of Rosthern-Shellbrook, Mr. Speaker, and I thank her for that. And I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate her on being a new grandma. I wish all members to welcome Sally to her Legislative Assembly.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to take the opportunity to join the Premier and yourself, Mr. Speaker, in welcoming all of the staff, board members, and students — graduates — from Ignite learning centre corporation along with my colleague, the MLA for Regina Elphinstone, which I know is where your actual building is located. The two of us, as well as all the colleagues in the House, understand the importance of the work that you do in terms of helping people achieve their goals.

I had the opportunity, with the Speaker, to attend your graduation ceremony a few months ago, and I think it's fair to say, it was easily one of the most incredible nights of some of the most inspiring speeches I've ever heard, and they came from your graduates and your alumni. It was absolutely a wonderful, moving evening. And I'm so proud of the work that you've done, both the graduates as well as the staff. Looking forward to seeing where your lives go from here on out. So happy to see that you're here this afternoon. And I'd like to ask all members join me in welcoming all of them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce, in your gallery, Prabha Mitchell, CEO [chief executive officer] of Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan which is based in my constituency of Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota. And two members of her team are with her today, Diane Souillet and Kaurie May. WESK [Women Entrepreneurs Saskatchewan], as it's known, has some 800 members, provides a wide spectrum of supports for women who are starting, buying, expanding, or growing a business.

Over her diverse career, Prabha has led project evaluations, program reviews, authored research reports, and conducted numerous focus groups and consultations. A few years back she was a key player in leading the Certified General Accountants Association of Saskatchewan through a formative unification of the accounting profession which led to the creation of the Chartered Professional Accountants of Saskatchewan. She currently serves as a board member of Saskatchewan Polytechnic, Sask Housing Corporation, and the Saskatoon Public Schools Foundation. We thank her for all her great work.

Please join me, Mr. Speaker, in welcoming Ms. Mitchell and her guests to her Legislative Assembly.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to join — I still haven't got over that voice thing — it's my

pleasure to join the minister in welcoming Prabha and her guests to the legislature here. I've had the opportunity to first meet Prabha when I was the Chair of Public Accounts, and actually we sat down when that legislation was being ushered through the House around accountants coming together as one body, and I appreciated her input then.

But I'm especially appreciative of her work with Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan, particularly around supporting innovation by supporting women entrepreneurs, recognizing that we need to take a gendered lens when it comes to fostering innovation. We had an opportunity in the fall to meet with Women Entrepreneurs and Prabha just a few weeks ago, Mr. Speaker.

Women Entrepreneurs does some wonderful work, and I know that we're all, in this House, very appreciative of that. So with that, I'd like to welcome Prabha and her guests to the Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Buckingham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you, I'd like to introduce my wife, Karen. Karen and I — if you'd give a wave, Karen — my wife and I have been married for 35 years this summer. And you know, we . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . She should get a medal for that, yes. So in those 35 years we raised three children together. The truth of the matter is, she probably did a lot more of that than I did.

The beauty of our life right now is we have four grandchildren, which is the best part of life, in my opinion and her opinion as well. So please help me welcome Karen to her Legislative Assembly.

While I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce Jamie and Kandis Brandrick, if you could give a wave. Jamie and Kandis are from the village of Borden. Kandis was the EMO [Emergency Measures Organization] coordinator during our flooding in 2013 and played a very pivotal role. And I want to always make sure that we recognize people that, you know, helped our province in that time of need.

Jamie is the mayor of Borden. He has been for the last couple of years. He took over after the last mayor left a big mess there. That would be me. And Jamie is also a first responder and a firefighter and a hard-working guy trying to make our province better. Jamie was also a candidate for us in the last election. I'd like this Assembly to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I would also like to introduce Jamie and Kandis Brandrick. I am their MLA and, as mentioned by the member from Saskatoon Westview, Jamie is the mayor of Borden. So please join me in welcoming Kandis and Jamie to the Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to introduce a special guest in the House. And sometimes, you know, when we come in and we see people up in the gallery, you don't quite recognize them. I'd like to introduce Kaurie May. Kaurie lived across the street from our family right from kindergarten to grade 12; in fact I had the pleasure of teaching him in grade 7 and 8. Now I know he's an accountant. I can't say I taught him everything in math, but he was a great kid, played a lot of sports, and it was great.

His brother was here a couple of years ago with the medical students and doing lobbying for that. I think his practice is in Toronto now. And his mom and dad, Gord and Leanne, are just great, stand-up folks. So I'd ask everyone to welcome Kaurie May to his legislature.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Kaeding: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, I'd like to introduce a very special guest today. Sitting in the west gallery are a group of very dedicated home-based educators from four Saskatchewan constituencies. And I'm going to introduce mine that come from Melville-Saltcoats.

We have Lydia Nieminen and her children Ethan, Summerlee, and Jacob. And we have Darcy Miller and her children, Simeret, Eyob, and Bethlehem. Guys, give us a wave. Great, thanks. And we wish all members to welcome Lydia, Darcy, and their families to their Legislative Assembly.

[13:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member from Melville-Saltcoats in welcoming the group of home-based educators that are in the west gallery.

I have two families here, Karen Reinheimer and her son, Klark. If they could give us a wave. And Fred and Amanda Skorobohach — hopefully I got the name right — and their children, Isabella, Thomas, Napoleon, and Nicolas. And I'd ask all members to welcome them to their Assembly.

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

Mr. Dennis: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to follow the other two members. And in the west gallery, I'd like to introduce and welcome Marcus and Lisa Breitreuz from my constituency of Canora-Pelly and their children, Emily, Cole, Ava, and Lily. If I could get everybody to wave over there, I'd like to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

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

Mr. Nerlien: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And to you and through you, I too would like to welcome some guests from my constituency. In the west gallery, a home school group, Dale and Charlotte Shwanke and their children, Madeline, Blake,

Robyn, and Ephram. Please give us a wave, and welcome to your legislature.

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

Hon. Mr. Hargrave: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, I have a guest that is sitting in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, that I'd like to introduce. It's Joy Schewaga. Joy, can you give us a wave up there? Joy is my CA [constituency assistant]. She's one of the hardest working CAs out there. She was here yesterday for the budget. I mean, I know everybody will say that, but mine actually is the hardest-working CA . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, considering what she has to deal with, Mr. Speaker.

But more importantly, Mr. Speaker, Joy has been a friend of mine for 20 years, and a good friend. She's a hockey mom and an athletic mom, and she travels all around the province with her kids, and to hockey and to all kinds of athletics. And they're on the go every weekend as well. And, Mr. Speaker, I was so glad that she could make it down here for budget day yesterday, and to stay over, and take her out for dinner last night, and that she could come here, into the House here today, Mr. Speaker. So I'd like everyone to join me in welcoming Joy to her Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I was a little bit remiss. Kristy Shaw, my CA, is also in the gallery. She's a graduate of Ignite as well.

And the Minister of CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan], you talked about which CA actually had to work a little harder. I would put all your attention towards having to keep me organized as exhibit one. Welcome, Kristy.

Presenting . . . Oh, sorry. One more? I recognize the member from Kindersley . . . [inaudible interjection].

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Francis: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You continue to keep me on my toes. Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to present a petition from citizens who are opposed to the federal government's decision to impose a carbon tax on the province of Saskatchewan. I'd like to read the prayer:

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the citizens of Claydon, Frontier, and Eastend, Saskatchewan. I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition in support of mental health and addictions services in the North. Northern Saskatchewan has some of the highest suicide rates in

the country. The Children's Advocate has put out a report stating the lack of services in the North. The suicide rate is six times higher for First Nations boys than for non-First Nations boys between the ages of 10 and 19, and 26 times higher for First Nations girls than non-First Nations girls. And the prayer reads:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call upon the Sask Party government to treat northern Saskatchewan residents with respect and dignity and immediately invest in more mental health and wellness programs and facilities in the North.

It is signed by many good people of this province; the cities of Prince Albert, Regina, Saskatoon, and La Ronge. I so present.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition regarding funding to our children's classrooms. Those who have signed this petition wish to draw our attention to a few items. One is the fact that last year's budget cut \$54 million for every student for classrooms across this province, despite the fact that this government took in \$67 million in additional funding through education property tax.

Mr. Speaker, those who have signed this petition are well aware that backfilling 30 million of that 54 million does not go near far enough, and that those cuts continue to hurt children and programming throughout the province, in schools in every corner of this province. I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call upon the government to reverse all of the senseless cuts to our children's classrooms and stop making families, teachers, and everyone who works to support our education system pay the price for the Sask Party's mismanagement, scandal, and waste.

Mr. Speaker, those who have signed this petition today reside in Saskatoon and Regina. I do so present.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition to get big money out of Saskatchewan politics. And the undersigned residents of Saskatchewan want to bring to our attention the following: that Saskatchewan's outdated election Act allows corporations, unions, and individuals, even those outside the province, to make unlimited donations to our province's political parties.

And we know that over the past 10 years, the Saskatchewan Party has received \$12.61 million in corporate donations; and of that, \$2.87 million come from companies outside this province of Saskatchewan. And we know that Saskatchewan politics should belong to Saskatchewan people. I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan call on the Sask

Party to overhaul Saskatchewan's campaign finance laws, to end out-of-province donations, to put a ban on donations from corporations and unions, and to put a donation limit on individual donations.

And the people signing this petition today come from the city of Regina. I do so present. Thank you.

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to stand today to present a petition for a second bridge for Prince Albert. The undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring these following points to your attention, Mr. Speaker: that the Diefenbaker bridge in Prince Albert is the primary link that connects the southern part of the province to the North, and that the need for a second bridge for Prince Albert has never been clearer than it is today.

Prince Albert, communities north of Prince Albert, and businesses that send people and products through Prince Albert require a solution; that the Saskatchewan Party government refuses to stand up for Prince Albert and this critical infrastructure issue; and that local municipal governments have limited resources and require a second bridge to be funded through federal and provincial governments and not a P3 [public-private partnership] model.

I'll read the prayer:

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

Mr. Speaker, the individuals signing this petition come from the community of Regina. I do so present.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for critical workplace supports for survivors of domestic violence. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has the dubious distinction of having the highest rates of intimate partner violence amongst all of the provinces in Canada. And we all know that Saskatchewan must do much more and should be doing everything they can to protect survivors of domestic violence. For many who experience interpersonal violence, Mr. Speaker, the violence follows them to their workplace, so we should do all that we can to ensure that our workplaces are a safe space and are protected.

Mr. Speaker, those who sign this petition are calling for five paid days' leave and up to 17 weeks of unpaid leave be made available to workers who are survivors of intimate partner violence, and also that critical workplace supports be made available to survivors of domestic violence if they are living with post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of that domestic

violence.

Mr. Speaker, these are the provisions we're calling for in the private member's Bill No. 609. Mr. Speaker, this is the fourth time we've put forward a bill asking for these provisions. It's time for the Sask Party to do the right thing and vote in favour of that private member's bill and put that into law. I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call upon the Sask Party government to pass legislation to ensure critical supports in the workplace, including reasonable accommodation and paid and unpaid leave for survivors of domestic violence.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals signing this petition today come from McLean and Regina. I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to stand in my place today to present a petition around Orkambi. Whereas Orkambi is the first drug to treat the basic defect in the largest population of Canadians with cystic fibrosis, Mr. Speaker, it could slow disease progression allowing patients to live longer, healthier lives. And the prayer reads as follows:

They respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan urge the Ministry of Health to negotiate a fair price for Orkambi and to make it available to the Saskatchewan drug plan for those who meet the conditions set by Health Canada and the clinical criteria established by the Canadian CF clinicians.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed this petition . . . The number of people that have signed this petition are very impressive. And, Mr. Speaker, as well they also have an online petition on which they are collecting names. And this particular page that I'm presenting today on Orkambi, or people that have signed this particular page, are primarily from Maidstone, Lloydminster. And I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

International Day of Pink

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today marks the International Day of Pink, a day where communities across the country — across the world — can unite in celebrating diversity and raising awareness to stop homophobia, transphobia, transmisogyny, and all forms of bullying. It's a day to say that we will not tolerate violence in our communities. Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, the Day of Pink is a day for expressing kindness, compassion, and courage. Each year on the second Wednesday of April, millions of people wear pink and take a stand. The Day of Pink is a symbol, a spark that empowers and inspires youth across Canada to create amazing social change.

Mr. Speaker, bullying is a complex issue, and youth are demanding that we help to provide solutions. We must listen to the youth leaders in our communities and the solutions they are offering. We must adequately fund anti-bullying workshops and programs for youth and adults. All of us must take the time to educate ourselves about the issues that LGBTQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning] youth are facing in our communities. Most of all, Mr. Speaker, we must show compassion.

Mr. Speaker, anyone can bully. Anyone can be victimized by bullying. But together we can stop it. Mr. Speaker, I ask that my fellow members of the House join with me in standing up for our youth and come together in addressing bullying and discrimination in Saskatchewan on today's Day of Pink and every day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for The Battlefords.

Canadian Cancer Society Daffodil Campaign

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. April is Cancer Awareness Month, also known as Daffodil Month. The daffodil is a symbol of strength and courage in the fight against cancer. Mr. Speaker, we are all very aware of how cancer can affect a family and a community. Though this disease may cast a dark shadow on so many hearts, it's fundraisers like the daffodil campaign that can shine a light during tough times.

Mr. Speaker, this is the 61st Daffodil Month campaign which is run by the Canadian Cancer Society. The daffodil campaign involves hundreds of Saskatchewan volunteers who sell freshly cut daffodils and lapel pins. It is very encouraging to see so many businesses and families across Saskatchewan buying flowers and showing their support by wearing these pins. Donations raised by the campaign go towards life-saving research and information support services, helping people living with cancer, and their families.

The Canadian Cancer Society's vision is to create a world where no Canadian fears cancer. Without the support of the dedicated volunteers and research teams, life-changing campaigns like this would not be possible, so we thank them for their hard work.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage and challenge members in this Assembly to get involved, whether it be buying flowers, wearing a daffodil pin, or scheduling a screening. I ask all members to join me in wishing the Canadian Cancer Society well on their 61st annual daffodil campaign. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Asbestos Awareness Week

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week marked Asbestos Awareness Week. Asbestos is the leading cause of workplace deaths in Canada. It is estimated that 152,000 workers are currently exposed to asbestos, and unfortunately this number is likely much higher.

[14:00]

Mr. Speaker, it has been three years since Howard's law was passed, and we are proud that both sides of the aisle came together for the creation of such an important bill. Howard's law is a mandatory registry of public buildings. Before Howard's law came to be, many public buildings did not have any records of whether asbestos existed or not. When completed, this registry will be the first of its kind in Canada and save many Saskatchewan lives.

Mr. Speaker, we would like to take this time to recognize Howard Willems, whom this law was brought on behalf of. He was a Saskatoon man who passed away from a rare form of cancer caused by inhaling asbestos fibres. Mr. Speaker, we would also like to recognize Jesse Todd who continued to fight for Howard's law to be passed. Jesse is an activist for workers' safety. In 2016 he was the Chair for the Saskatchewan Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization which was started by Howard Willems and Bob Sass. Without such dedicated activists like Jesse, this law may not exist today.

In honour of Howard's memory and Jesse's amazing advocacy, we urge the government to complete the registry. I call on all members to remain vigilant in the protection of Saskatchewan workers and families. Thank you.

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

International Day of Pink

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, April 11th marks the International Day of Pink where people from across the country and the world come together to celebrate diversity while bringing awareness to bullying, homophobia, and transphobia.

This movement began in 2007 in Nova Scotia where two students intervened as a gay student was being bullied for wearing a pink shirt. The students, wanting to do more to prevent this kind of bullying, purchased pink shirts. And a few days later, in an incredible show of solidarity, the entire school arrived in these pink shirts.

This inspirational act launched a global campaign and today communities, schools, organizations within our province are wearing pink today to show their support for this important cause.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to host over 200 Girl Guides today who will be attending the Legislative Assembly Building, and it's wonderful for them to be able to come here and celebrate. The event will be held here this evening, as I said. The goal of the Pink Day is to emphasize the role these young girls can play in stopping bullying.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage everyone in this Assembly to take a lesson from those inspiring young girls and see what roles we can all play in preventing bullying as we continue to make Saskatchewan a safe and welcoming place for everyone. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for

Kelvington-Wadena.

Constituent Recognized for Canola Production

Mr. Nerlien: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, once again Saskatchewan agriculture producers have shown exceptional results in competition in Western Canada. My constituent, AWD Farms Ltd., was recently awarded the Dupont Pioneer Yield Hero Award for canola production at an astounding 98.2 bushels per acre.

Mr. Speaker, this competition is open to farmers from Western Canada and there are stringent rules around the application process, including yield weighing, minimum swath requirements, moisture content, and specifically that irrigated acres do not qualify.

Constituent Doug Hoffus reported that the qualifying sample was taken from a 600-acre area near the Horsehide wildlife management area, approximately 12 miles north of Chelan.

Mr. Speaker, AWD Farms is another example of extraordinary agricultural achievement here in the province of Saskatchewan. Again we have an illustration of sustainable agriculture practices that put our farmers squarely in the lead in global production. With innovative and exceptional producers such as AWD, it's easy to understand why our agriculture continues to power our province.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of everyone in this Assembly, I want to congratulate AWD Farms for all their success, and acknowledge all of our exceptional agriculture producers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Carrot River Valley.

Pasquia Snow Goers Volunteer Time to Maintain Trails

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, the Pasquia Snow Goers is a snowmobile club in northeast Saskatchewan operated by volunteers in Carrot River, Arborfield, and Zenon Park. These volunteers work together to provide over 260 kilometres of excellent groomed and signed trails. These trails meander from Hudson Bay through the provincial forest in the Pasquia Hills, across the farm lands to Nipawin, and continue up to the Lakeland areas. The club also provides warm up shelters supplied with split wood, outhouses, and firepits for a warm up or a quick lunch stop on your ride.

Mr. Speaker, the club was the provincial winner for the Sledtown Showdown, a contest voted on by sled riders from all over Canada. They also defeated Manitoba in the interprovincial contest, moving on to a Western Canadian final against McBride, BC [British Columbia], where we lost by a mere 21 votes. Mr. Speaker, we was robbed.

My CA, Cindy Warner, is a member of the club, and her family won the Canadian Snowmobile Family of the Year, an award received for the hours of volunteer work clearing trails, putting up signs, hauling wood, and whatever else needed to be done. The club also received the Diamonds in the Snow which is presented to young people under the age of 16 who volunteer

their time.

Mr. Speaker, we are very fortunate to have so many volunteers willing to donate their time. On behalf of this Assembly, I'd like to congratulate the Pasquia Snow Goers for their excellent trails and thank the volunteers who work hard to provide this service. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Around the world many gathered to honour those who served in the Battle of Vimy Ridge on April 9th. One hundred and one years ago, divisions of the Canadian corps, many of whom had never met, who had come from every corner of our country, took to the battlefields as one.

What was Canada's identity before that day, Mr. Speaker? We had a confederation. There was a national way. Saskatchewan was a growing province, but to most of the world Canada was just seen as a British extension. After that day, Mr. Speaker, the world saw our country differently. Those young men in the trenches took the ridge, something brave British and French men had tried to do. Our boys did it. This week we've seen the hurt the loss of 15 young lives can do to a community, a province, a nation. Can we even imagine 10,000?

As more recent losses remind us to sign an organ donor card, to hold our loved ones tighter, to be kinder to one another, let the lessons of the older losses stay with us too — that some have sacrificed everything willingly for our freedoms; that the lives we all enjoy today are built on a foundation of courage, honour, and sacred blood. Let us be worthy of their sacrifice. Lest we forget.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Provincial Budget and Government's Fiscal Management

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's the first day after a new budget was introduced, and it's important for us to start by giving credit where credit is due. Never let us be the sort of place where we would knock a good decision simply because it's another party that has made it.

So I want to acknowledge some good decisions in yesterday's budget, one of which was the introduction of full coverage for HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] medications. It's something that's been advocated for by the community and by our members for several years, and we're happy to see that put in place. That will help treat people and prevent new cases.

We also were happy to see something that's been advocated for as well, is funding for autism, and to see this government take a step towards greater treatment, greater support for mental health. These are all positive things.

And you know, we're very happy to have ideas we've been

pushing be accepted and adopted by the folks on the other side. And hey, we've got a few more. If you want to hear any more ideas, we'd be happy to talk about it.

And I guess my question for the Premier is, we've got some ideas on how to improve the economy, how to improve the quality of people's lives. Are there any other ideas that you've seen from us that you'd like to implement, or would you like to sit down and chat a bit about what we could do together?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the member opposite's offer, Mr. Speaker. And we have listened, in some ways, to the members opposite and, just as importantly, to all the people of the province in Saskatchewan as we formulated this budget that was released yesterday by this Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker, the MLA for Humboldt. And we're pleased to say that this budget, Mr. Speaker, continues on our three-year plan to balance, and this budget this year released yesterday keeps us on track, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, while staying on track to that plan to balance, we are able to, as the member opposite, as the Leader of the Opposition indicated, we're able to invest in people, invest in people across the province of Saskatchewan — whether that be, Mr. Speaker, in fully covering HIV drugs; whether that be investing in supports for autism here in the province of Saskatchewan; whether that be investing in our community-based organizations, with a lift to those that are providing services to our disability community, Mr. Speaker, as well as the family services — all the while carrying on with the tremendous infrastructure investment that we have across the province of Saskatchewan in hospitals, in highways, Mr. Speaker, and schools.

So we thank the members opposite for their input in the formulation of this budget, Mr. Speaker, but we thank the people of Saskatchewan for their input as well, Mr. Speaker, as we remain on track on their behalf to balance next year.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, budgets are a chance for a government to really express its vision, the way that it's going to tackle the greatest challenges that are facing a province. What I see in this budget, Mr. Speaker, are a number of missed opportunities.

The greatest challenges that we're facing — challenges of increasing unemployment, more and more people looking for work; the challenges of a changing climate that's affecting communities throughout the province; the challenge of a persistent and drastic inequity between indigenous and non-indigenous people in this province, the challenge of closing that gap — not only was this budget silent on those challenges, Mr. Speaker, we actually saw movement backwards.

We saw no new initiatives. We also saw a cut to the climate change branch of 18 per cent. That's an 80 per cent cut since 2012. We saw a cut to First Nations and Métis programming, including programming for advanced education. We saw cuts to

programs in labour services that would help people get back to work, Mr. Speaker.

This status quo budget fails to address, fails to acknowledge the most pressing challenges of our province, of our generation. Mr. Speaker, does this Premier agree that we need to address those challenges of unemployment, of closing the gap, of climate change? And when will we see meaningful action rather than the steps backward that we've seen in this budget?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, the focus of this government over the last decade has been one of growth, Mr. Speaker, growth of our economy, growth of our exports, growth of the jobs in communities across this province, whether they be in Frontier, Mr. Speaker or St. Brieux, Saskatchewan or Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Regina. Mr. Speaker, that has been the focus so that we can attract families to live here from all around the world. Mr. Speaker, that has been shown and is reflective in communities that I had the opportunity to visit, big and small, across the province, Mr. Speaker.

But more important than any of that, this growth agenda and this strong economy that we have made every effort to continue, Mr. Speaker, and will make every effort into the future, Mr. Speaker, is important to the people of the province. It's not just so that we can attract people from all around the world, Mr. Speaker, to join our communities and grow our population, Mr. Speaker, but to give that next generation every opportunity to stay in this province and choose a career in one of the great communities in the province of Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Budgets, they tell a story. But the story of this budget appears to be no story at all. We see nothing in the way of imagination. We see no vision. We see no plan. Mr. Speaker, we all agree that we want the people of Saskatchewan to have what they need to stay healthy. We want fewer people in poverty, fewer people in our jails, fewer people in our hospitals. We want the people of Saskatchewan to have the chance to thrive. In order to get there, we have to be proactive to make that happen.

But instead we see a reactive budget, Mr. Speaker. We see an increase in health spending because more people are sick, increase in spending in corrections because more people are being put in jail, increased spending in social services because more people are living in poverty. Mr. Speaker, it's a short-sighted budget. There is no long-term plan to get Saskatchewan where we all want us to be.

And we heard this morning at the Prayer Breakfast, the speaker said, when's the best time to plant a tree? He said, it's 30 years ago. When's the second-best time to plant a tree? That's right now. Mr. Speaker, will this government show that they understand the need to think long term, that they will show they have a vision for the future, or will we continue to see the downstream costs rise year after year?

[14:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition referenced in his first question, \$700,000 invested, Mr. Speaker, in HIV medication to ensure those medications are 100 per cent covered, Mr. Speaker. Tree planted.

Mr. Speaker, we invested in autism spectrum disorder in this budget that was released yesterday. Mr. Speaker, \$2.8 million on behalf of the children in the province of Saskatchewan that are struggling with autism, Mr. Speaker. Tree planted.

Mr. Speaker, \$30 million directly into our classrooms and classrooms across this province to ensure that the next generation has the supports and every opportunity to succeed, Mr. Speaker. Tree planted.

Mr. Speaker, \$10 million directly into our community-based organizations on the front lines of servicing people in the province of Saskatchewan and in family services in the disability community, Mr. Speaker. Tree planted.

Mr. Speaker, in the way of the economy, Mr. Speaker, and enhancing the opportunities in the economic fortunes of the province of Saskatchewan, this province under this government will never have a carbon tax on the industries and the people and the families in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Tree planted.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, no shortage of irony there. This government actually cut the reforestation budget to zero in this budget, Mr. Speaker. Now, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party says that they're on track, but we found out that Saskatchewan people are actually on a holding pattern on a railway siding.

Let's look at this track they really are on. Our debt is set to increase to over \$20 billion. That's on track to triple since 2008. We had the highest — the highest, Mr. Speaker — net debt per capita this province has ever seen. Under the Sask Party's plan, we'll be spending \$51 million more on debt charges alone. That's a total of \$655 million on debt. That's money that should be going to health care, to education, supports for the vulnerable, instead of pouring it into things like the GTH's [Global Transportation Hub] growing debt, Mr. Speaker.

And you know what? The budget didn't really give people much hope for the future when we have this debt continuously piling on. To the minister: what is the plan to get Saskatchewan out of this mess?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, it's interesting how the members opposite always portray that we can't have debt, but we need more spending. We can't have taxes, but we need more revenue. Like nothing they say makes any sense, Mr. Speaker. The math just simply doesn't add up.

Very little of the debt, Mr. Speaker, is actually on what we call the credit card debt, or the operating funding debt, Mr. Speaker. That debt is still down from when we became government and

the NDP [New Democratic Party] left.

We do have a debt, higher quite frankly, in our Crown corporations, its capital funding. Because we have a growing population, we need more hook-ups within our utilities, Mr. Speaker. Those hook-ups cost money. We had aging infrastructure that we inherited, Mr. Speaker. To replace that infrastructure costs money. Mr. Speaker, we built roads in this province like we've never seen before . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — I'm having a tough time hearing the answer, if you could come to order. Thanks. I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're building hospitals. We're building schools, not shutting them down. Mr. Speaker, capital costs, how are those . . . We know, and that member opposite should know, that we invest sinking funds to make the future payments on capital borrowing. And she should know that.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, the fact that there are sinking funds doesn't mean that the net debt isn't growing by over 110 per cent since . . . Sorry, I'll try that again. The net debt of Saskatchewan will have increased by over 110 per cent since 2007 by the end of this year.

So I want to ask the minister this: in what world would it be okay to have record debt amounts, especially when it comes to years after years of record revenues? Mr. Speaker, how is it okay to not have a plan to deal with it, not have a plan to create jobs or a plan to build prosperity for the future or maybe even a plan to grow the economy? In this budget, the people of the province were left with nothing but this debt, Mr. Speaker. So to the minister: how can you try to paint such a rosy picture and pretend nothing is wrong when our debt is reaching this level?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, the plan is to grow the economy. And so the economy is greater than it's ever been. Debt to GDP [gross domestic product] in this province, Mr. Speaker, is the third lowest in our entire country, Mr. Speaker. We're neck to neck with British Columbia, and Alberta's is a little lower. But every other province has a higher, a much higher debt-to-GDP ratio than Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. This is manageable debt, Mr. Speaker. Also it was never under the NDP where we had AAA credit rating, and we do now.

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

Funding for Education

Ms. Beck: — Saskatchewan people were expecting so much better from this Premier when it comes to education. The Sask Party had the opportunity to undo the damage that they caused by cutting millions to our children's classrooms, but they chose not to. Yesterday's \$30 million offering doesn't come close to

replacing the \$54 million that they cut from our classrooms just last year, and this despite the fact that by the end of this year we'll see thousands of additional students in our schools.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the budget that boards hoped for, and this certainly is not the budget that our children deserve. Why didn't the Sask Party choose to invest in our future and fully fund our children's classrooms?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the member has said, Mr. Speaker, I met with school board trustees yesterday morning, and they were happy with our budget. Mr. Speaker, \$30 million commitment — promise made, Mr. Speaker, promise kept. And those resources will go to the classroom, Mr. Speaker. Those are resources to invest in the classroom to make sure that we're providing the right quality education for children, Mr. Speaker.

And we're going to continue to have conversations with trustees. We're going to continue to have conversations with teachers and with parents, Mr. Speaker, because we want to make sure that we're making the right investments in the classrooms to prepare our children for the future, the future of this province, which we're going to rely on, Mr. Speaker.

So I'm pleased with the commitment that the Premier has made, Mr. Speaker. We stood together in the rotunda, Mr. Speaker, and made this promise. And it's in the budget, Mr. Speaker, and school boards are pleased with it, Mr. Speaker. But we're going to continue to have an ongoing conversation, a renewed dialogue with teachers, Mr. Speaker, with school board trustees, and with parents to make sure that we are meeting the needs of children in the classroom.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, not as bad as last year is a pretty low bar, and frankly I'd expect more from . . . [inaudible]. The math is easy; negative 54 plus 30 does not equal zero. Teachers and parents are still being forced to pick up the pieces from last year's cuts, and the Sask Party's failure to make investment in education a real priority is nothing but more of the same.

There will be nearly 5,000 additional students in our schools over 2016-17 levels, yet funding from the Sask Party has been cut by 24 million over '16-17 levels. How on earth can the Sask Party sit there and clap for themselves over this failure to invest in our children's future?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, we have made an investment, a \$30 million investment in the classrooms around this province, Mr. Speaker. And we're going to continue to have conversations with our stakeholders, with our partners in education, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that we are meeting the needs of children in the classroom. That's going to be an ongoing dialogue, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, after last year's budget, school divisions went out

and found some great efficiencies within their operations . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Mr. Speaker, well if they'd like to have the answer, I'm happy to give it, Mr. Speaker. But looking for efficiencies within government, whether it's in government or whether it's in school boards, is an important part of governance, Mr. Speaker.

But this \$30 million represents a significant investment, a significant commitment by this government that we understand that it's important to invest in the classrooms of these communities, Mr. Speaker, around this province. And we'll continue to do that, and we'll continue to have conversations to make sure we're meeting the needs of children in Saskatchewan.

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

Saskatchewan Employment Numbers

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, if someone picks my pocket and gives me back half, am I expected to say thank you? According to this month's Stats Canada job figures, Saskatchewan has the slowest rate of job growth in our country, outside of Newfoundland and Labrador. We also have the lowest minimum wage in the country. People are looking at this government to invest in fostering good jobs in a sustainable economy, yet this year's Sask Party budget cuts \$2.9 million from the programs that are designed to get people back to work.

Mr. Speaker, what does the minister have to say to people who are struggling to find work today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Export.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the member opposite looked at a different jobs report than the one that was issued by Statistics Canada last Friday. That jobs report showed that we have, and continue to have, one of the lowest unemployment rates in Canada. It showed that our job growth over the course of the last month was the quickest in Canada, Mr. Speaker: 4,300 jobs created over the last month, over 1,500 jobs created year over year. And, Mr. Speaker, that's consistent with our record on job creation over the course of the last decade of growth, over 60,000 jobs created in this province over that period of time. Their record over the previous 10 years was the worst rate of job creation record in the country.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I didn't comment, this is a fundamentally unserious opposition. They stand up, in question after question they demand more spending, and then they castigate the government over debt. Meanwhile the Leader of the Opposition runs on a \$2.5 billion spending pledge year over year, Mr. Speaker. And then they put out a tweet yesterday saying, "Spending more on social services, corrections, policing, justice and health care does not represent an investment." Mr. Speaker, they need to get their act together. They're an unserious opposition.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, it looks like the minister across only uses year-to-year job numbers when it suits him. Saskatchewan's additional 900 jobs compared to last year, most of them part-time jobs, were nowhere near the 32,000 jobs in British Columbia or the 46,600 jobs in Alberta. And let's remind the member seeking to spin our job numbers that Saskatchewan lost 7,800 jobs in February, compared . . .

[Interjections]

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll remind the member seeking to spin our job numbers that Saskatchewan lost 7,800 jobs in February, compared to 2017. Mr. Speaker, more people are leaving the province today than there were 10 years ago. Just last week I heard an Alberta construction company advertising the work in their province on a Saskatoon radio station.

What does this budget have to offer to people who are giving up on finding a good job in Saskatchewan and packing their bags to head west?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Trade.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Mr. Speaker, it's almost like the NDP have completely forgotten their record in government. This is the problem that they have when they talk about the economy. Their record was the worst in the country on job growth, on population growth, on both of which, Mr. Speaker, there were none when they were in government. The population decreased by 20,000 people in their last decade in office. Over the course of the last decade, our decade of growth, our population in this province has increased by 160,000 people, a rate of growth we have not seen in nearly 80 years, Mr. Speaker. That's the record on this side of the House.

As far as job creation, we've created over 60,000 jobs. The economy of this province has created over 60,000 jobs over the last decade. Over the last month there were over 4,000 jobs created in this province, Mr. Speaker. There were over 1,200 jobs created over the course of the last year in this province, Mr. Speaker. We had the fastest rate of job growth in the entire country.

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, this is an opposition that is fundamentally unserious. This is an opposition that has no credibility on the economy. This is an opposition that needs to look in the mirror and remember what their record was.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Changes to Rental Housing Supplement

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, if we could balance the budget on the pompous rhetoric of that minister, we'd be in pretty good shape here.

This budget continues to hit and hurt the most vulnerable in our province. The choice to cut the rental supplement will only hurt Saskatchewan people and families that are already struggling.

These are vulnerable families with children and people living with disabilities that are living on the tightest of margins. This is the last place that the Sask Party should be looking to balance the books. It's indecent, it lacks common sense, and it defies . . . It lacks basic compassion.

[14:30]

Mr. Speaker, we've seen underhanded manoeuvres like this before. Will this government simply do the right thing and scrap this attack on the most vulnerable today?

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I want to correct the record right off the bat. Nobody that is on our programs right now within social assistance will be affected by this. This is a continuing program. Our Saskatchewan rental housing . . . Well if they're interested in hearing the answer, I'll give them the answer, Mr. Speaker.

What it is, Mr. Speaker, is anybody that is coming onto our program new as of July 1st, because of certain market indicators, Mr. Speaker . . . We have the highest vacancy rate in our nation, Mr. Speaker. We also have the lowest rent in average in our two major cities, in Saskatoon and Regina, in Western Canada, Mr. Speaker. That, combined with a federal program that's coming on board, Mr. Speaker, we understand that this is going to have some impact on some of our clients, Mr. Speaker, but we're prepared to work with those clients to be able to . . . [inaudible].

On top of that, Mr. Speaker, we also have Sask Housing Corporation which has a 12 per cent vacancy rate. There is 740 units in Saskatoon and in Regina combined, Mr. Speaker, that are not being utilized, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, that's a minister that's completely out of touch with the reality facing low-wage workers, people all across Saskatchewan. The vacancy might be up, but the rates that people are paying for rental across this province have not come down, and that minister should know better.

You know, this is a Sask Party government that's actually touted an increase to spending for social services in this budget, and they pretend that that means that they're listening to the most vulnerable. But, Mr. Speaker, the reality is the dollars that are being added to income assistance don't mean that those that need support are actually getting more. It means that more people are seeking support, that more and more people are going onto assistance. In fact, the insufficient rate has been frozen for many years. And now housing dollars are being pulled away, and that's on top of the clawback of basic food budgets of last year, Mr. Speaker.

How can this government boast and be proud of the fact that we continue to see more and more people living in poverty and needing assistance, instead of taking action to address poverty and create opportunity?

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I actually received a report a couple of weeks ago that says the average rent in Saskatchewan and our two major cities of Saskatoon and Regina is down \$150 year over year, Mr. Speaker. Again, Mr. Speaker, we have actually in the last six months — and I don't know if the member opposite has received this information — but in the last six months we have less people on our social assistance program.

Usually, Mr. Speaker, we have an uptick over the winter within our social assistance programs, but in the last six months we've actually seen a down trend in our numbers, Mr. Speaker. And I think this has to do directly with, the Minister of Trade was talking about, is our economy is getting . . . [inaudible]. We are having less and less people across our province on social assistance, Mr. Speaker.

And as far as the rent side of things, Mr. Speaker, we're very happy to work with any clients on an ongoing basis. We have left a window of opportunity for anybody that wants to apply for the Sask rental housing supplement. They have until the end of the month in June to be able to do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Funding for Municipalities

Ms. Rancourt: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's municipal leaders are breathing a sigh of relief, not because this lacklustre budget is good for them, it just isn't as bad as last year. Last year's devastating budget and subsequent Sask Party walk-backs forced municipalities to scramble and redo their budgets. And this year, despite calls from SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] for their fair share of the expanded PST [provincial sales tax] revenues, the minister announced revenue sharing with hometowns will be frozen at its lowest level in years.

How is it fair to make cities and towns pay more but get less than what they're owed? Will the minister assure municipalities will be getting their share of the expanded PST revenues moving forward?

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

Hon. Mr. Kaeding: — Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the question from the opposition, but we will probably not be taking a lot of advice from the opposition as to how we're going to be moving forward in our revenue sharing.

We've got a tremendous relationship with our stakeholders. At our stakeholder meetings yesterday, we had very good reports and very good response from the consultations and the actions that we've taken ahead of time, keeping everybody informed and everybody up to speed as to where we're headed, what we're looking at. We're certainly going to be engaging with our stakeholders the minute we're done our budget presentations here, and start working on what our new municipal

revenue-sharing program may look like.

We've had a lot of changes in the last 10 years. We've got a couple of new potash mines. We have a new bypass. We have new roads. We have new buildings. We have a lot of new . . . We have 160,000 new people living in the province. So we need to look at municipal revenue sharing. We will certainly be getting great input, we believe, from our stakeholders, and they're going to present us their best-case scenarios and move forward. And we're very much looking forward to working with them.

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Mr. Speaker, to say that last year's budget was a shock to municipalities is an understatement. We don't have to look any further than Regina city councillor and Sask Party candidate, Bob Hawkins, when he said, "This is a budget that comes like a thief in the night."

Well, Mr. Speaker, this year the government is forcing municipalities to do their dirty work, taking more out of Saskatchewan families' pockets. This Sask Party budget did not fix the grants-in-lieu mess they created last year. Instead, they have just downloaded the problem to municipalities across the province who will now have no choice but to take more money from taxpayers. How can that minister justify this?

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

Hon. Mr. Kaeding: — Mr. Speaker, I believe we've finally got clarity on grants-in-lieu. It's taken us awhile, but I think we're to the point now where we've got all our stakeholders on the same page, understanding where we're at with grants-in-lieu. It was a very, very difficult process to go through, but where we're at is now we have the most fair, equitable, transparent process in place that all our stakeholders can use and measure as they move forward.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Supports for Northerners

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In what is now becoming a predictable, long-standing Sask Party tradition, yesterday's budget had nothing for the North. When asked by the reporters about what specific measures were included in the budget to create jobs in northern communities, the minister acknowledged that there were no new incentives in the budget for the North, and pointed to education instead.

Families in the North are really struggling. With more than 800 jobs lost in the mining sector recently, they're looking for the Saskatchewan Party government to take action. Business leaders in the Sask Chamber called for northern initiatives. But again, northern and Indigenous communities have been left twisting in the wind.

Why is the Sask Party so intent on leaving the North behind? And why are they the only ones that can't see that we need the North to be strong for Saskatchewan to be strong?

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

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Mr. Speaker, like the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that resource development continues to create opportunities and improve the economic success and well-being for First Nations and Métis communities.

We've announced a mineral development strategy, Mr. Speaker. That's a specific initiative. It's an incentive which we believe will increase the amount of mineral exploration and lead to economic benefits for everybody in the province, Mr. Speaker. That's good news. This program will rebate a portion of incurred drilling costs up to 50,000 per company. And as the member opposite knows, mine development is important in providing valuable employment for northern residents. This program specifically targets exploration in the Creighton-Denare Beach area, Mr. Speaker. It's a great start, good progress.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to question 194.

The Speaker: — Table 194. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the answer to question 195.

The Speaker: — Order 195. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 196 to 210.

The Speaker: — Table 196 to 210. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the answer to question 211.

The Speaker: — Order 211.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Harpauer that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.]

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And

again it's always an honour to be able to rise in this Assembly and speak to government initiatives and the government agenda. And again today we're speaking through this special order. For the next few days we get an opportunity to have a little bit of discussion about the budget that was tabled yesterday.

Our leader said it tells a story and I really think that is what budgets do. They tell stories. They tell perhaps hopes and aspirations of a government. And of course the true story always gets found out in July when Public Accounts comes in and the real numbers are reflected.

However we do tend to get more excited about the budget than we get excited about the Public Accounts and I don't know if it's the timing from March to July or, you know, by the time Public Accounts comes along the story's already told, Mr. Speaker. But this was an aspirational story yesterday and I was able to make some comments yesterday about the lack of many things for the people of Saskatchewan's budget.

I talked about the fact that there's no hope for families who are suffering from rate shock. The fees and rates and taxes have gone up and up and up, and people are struggling with that. There's no hope there. No plan for the future. We have skyrocketing debt. Our net debt is approaching the \$20 billion mark, Mr. Speaker. That's alarming. And yet there appears to be no concern on the part of the government about our net debt.

We talked about lack of inspiration. Other than a couple of small research and development incentives or value-added agricultural tax incentives, really for the creative industries and for creative people, people with excitement and passion and entrepreneurial passion, there isn't a lot to be found in this budget.

And finally we talked about the lack of leadership. And this is something I think that we don't see. A government, the same old Sask Party government that's been there for the last 10 years, they aren't full of any enthusiasm for the future, and they're not showing the leadership that the next generation needs to take us forward, Mr. Speaker.

Today I just want to talk a little bit about some of the reaction of people, what people are saying about the budget. Not just the opposition, but of course people in the community and stakeholders that were here yesterday. There was hundreds of people here to listen to what the government had to say, and they had a lot to say about that, Mr. Speaker.

I want to talk a little bit from some of the quotes that we found, what people are saying in the budget. The USSU [University of Saskatchewan Students' Union] was here yesterday from my alma mater, the University of Saskatchewan, and the student executive representing the students were here and there was some interesting positions they are taking. And what they're saying is . . . Here's a quote from Deena Kapacila who's the VP [vice-president] operations and finance for the USSU. She said:

We put so many dollars into the economy at the University of Saskatchewan, we want to stay here, but that Sask Advantage . . . seems to be leaving students behind. At least I don't see myself in the budget. I don't see a future for me here.

Those are harsh words, Mr. Speaker. And I was disappointed to see the Minister of Advanced Education's response to this, because I think she really diminished the concerns that these students have had, indicating that she too had to work when she was in university. Mr. Speaker, that was then, but this is now. Tuition has gone up, cost of living gone up. The pressures on students . . .

And I don't think she graduated yesterday, Mr. Speaker. I know she graduated a few years ago. I graduated in '79, and back then tuition was much, much lower than it is now. So the pressure on students these days, I think for the minister to sort of say, oh I hear you because I went through that . . . She didn't go through that, Mr. Speaker. It's a much more difficult time for students these days than when she was in university, Mr. Speaker. So I think she needs to perhaps think about responding differently when students are raising the concerns of 2018 and the pressures this government is putting on those students, Mr. Speaker.

[14:45]

We also heard from the Regina homelessness prevention strategy, a fellow named Blair Roberts who said, "There's going to be people who are homeless because of this." And this, of course, is the decision to remove the rental housing supplement as of July 1st for any new social services clients that come into the system, Mr. Speaker.

If they'd check, rents are not going down. My son is looking for rental arrangements right now, and he can barely find a one-bedroom apartment for less than \$600, and that is not an ideal living situation where he's chosen to live, Mr. Speaker. So for people . . . He's got income. He's working. But for people who are not able to find work, the removal of the rental supplement is going to cause great hardship, Mr. Speaker, and this government seems tone-deaf to that.

Restaurants Canada: "We're looking for more from this government." They said, ". . . the Saskatchewan government has not done enough to offset the pain of last year's anti-foodservice budget." And he went on to say a lot there.

Even the president of the University of Regina said, "It isn't keeping up with our pace of enrolment, and our costs that we can't control, like increase in electricity, water, all of those costs. So it means we will have to look at cuts for sure."

There's others here from auto sales manager Rod Dorn from Anderson Auto Sales. He said, "(The government) is hitting the wrong people. Poor people buy the used cars — they're the ones that can't afford those new cars," Mr. Speaker. So again this is a hit on people who have less disposable income and are struggling to get by. So where does this government cut? It's a hit on low-income people.

Mental Health Association, we know that Dave Nelson from the Canadian Mental Health Association was not happy yesterday. He is disappointed in this government's lack of stepping up to the plate. We have a federal government that's willing to throw in \$9.2 million into mental health in this year's budget. What does this government come up with? \$2.2 million. And Dave Nelson is saying it has to be matched dollars. It simply is not

keeping up with the demands on our system when it comes to helping people struggling with mental health issues.

So those are some of the quotes that were in the paper today, Mr. Speaker. Also from the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, there were some concerns about the \$54 million cut, and the lack of getting back to that cut.

One of the things I'm interested in, when the Minister of Education talks about having a respectful conversation with teachers and school boards, I'm trying to imagine these respectful conversations, because he talks about respectful conversations a lot. Now he's a nice guy. He's a guy that does have respectful conversations with people, and I think he's a pleasant and quite affable man, Mr. Speaker. So, you know, I have no issues with that at all. But if all you're doing is having a conversation and still cutting, what does that mean? Is that a respectful conversation, Mr. Speaker?

And I'm really getting tired of the Minister of Education talking about respectful conversations when he can't deliver, when he cannot give schools and our children, K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] classrooms, supports that they need. We know enrolments are going up. We heard our Education critic, our member from Regina Lakeview, eloquently talk about that in question period, if you could hear her, Mr. Speaker. But she really raised those concerns eloquently. And we get the minister stand up say, what we need is conversations.

Mr. Speaker, I think the time for conversations is over. Those conversations have been had. Schools have been very clear in their respectful conversations with the minister, what they need. And then the minister has replied, saying, you're not getting that funding. So I think he needs to move on to a different tack because, as nice as he is, it's not something I think that's respectful anymore if you keep giving the wrong answers all the time, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, I think those are most of the comments that I want to address. I know that many of my colleagues will have a number of things to say about the stakeholder reaction to this budget, to the story that the Sask Party's trying to spin.

I noticed yesterday in my comments there was some, you know, a room full of community leaders and stakeholders in this room. And even then, members opposite did not like it when I . . . You know, the hubris bubble is just getting bigger and bigger over there, Mr. Speaker. So every time you poke at it and let a little air out, you hear the noises coming out of that balloon over there.

And I think when we have guests in our Assembly, as you said yourself, Mr. Speaker, even school . . . Oh, I hear more air coming out right now, Mr. Speaker. That's something I think that we need to act a little more mature about. But you know, I know you've made a strong effort. I know I myself tend to erupt with comments from time to time. But I was quite surprised at the attitude of this government yesterday that anyone would dare to have the audacity to criticize them, Mr. Speaker. It's shameful.

But anyways, I don't know, the member from Indian Head seems to be yelling about something. I'm not quite sure what

he's going on about . . . Here he goes again, Mr. Speaker. So I'm afraid I'm pricking the balloon a little bit more over there, and it's not going over very well.

There's one aspect of this budget that is different from last year and different from . . . This is the fourth year now that we've had the summary financials. So we've heard lots in this Assembly about whether or not summary financial statements should be used. As you know that in 2013, in 2013 the . . . Perhaps the other members . . .

[Interjections]

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

Ms. Sproule: — There's been a change in third-quarter reporting in the last quarter of the last year, and I think we have to really raise some serious questions about the government's motives behind that. And this has to do with the pension accrual adjustments that now show up because we are now in the summary reporting world. So I'm going to break it down for everybody, Mr. Speaker, and hope I can set this out in a way that shows the jiggery-pokery that the government is up to in this year's financial statement.

So what we have is . . . Summary started in 2016. I'll try to lay this out as best as I can. In 2016 the government said the deficit was 107 million. Mr. Speaker, the language that was used there when they were representing that, there was a little asterisk. So they reported they were going to have a surplus of 107 million but there was a little asterisk. And the asterisk, if you look, it says, "Before adjustment to account for pension costs on an accrual basis."

This is something that the auditor specifically asked them not to do, but they did it. And you have to ask yourself: why did they do that? I'll give all the numbers globally at the end of this commentary, Mr. Speaker, but I just want to talk about what the government was saying in their first summary financial budget. And I'm going to quote page 43 of the '15-16 budget:

Pension expense in the budget is calculated using the same accounting and actuarial rules reported in the Public Accounts. The pension expense in the 2015-16 Estimates reflects cash requirements for the current year and an adjustment is made and reported in the 2015-16 Budget to account for government's pension expense on an accrual basis.

Now here's the kicker, Mr. Speaker. Here's what they said:

Because of the volatile, long-term and non-cash nature of the pension accrual adjustment, it is reported separately so as to not influence annual spending and taxation policy.

So they reported it separately. So when they said what the surplus would be, which would be 107 million, they forgot to mention — or they chose not to mention — that the adjustment for pension accrual was \$820 million. If they had reported it then like they did yesterday, they would have had a deficit of \$713.8 million. So in '15-16 if they had reported the way they did yesterday, they would have shown a deficit of \$713.8

million. Interesting, Mr. Speaker. But that was what they definitely said.

And I actually had a conversation with the minister and the officials in committee about that, and I asked them, why are you doing that? Why aren't you including the pension accrual adjustment in your surplus or deficit in your forecast? And this is what the official said. This is on page 86 of Crown and Central Agencies Committee, June 27th, 2016. And what he said is:

The other thing that I'll point out is that from a budget presentation on page 67, you'll see that we report the deficit or surplus prior to our accounting for the pension liability change, and then subsequent we add or subtract the amount of the change in the pension liability that moves it to accrual accounting. That's the top table.

So it does show up, Mr. Speaker. This pension accrual adjustment is there every year, but it's not there in the forecast for a surplus or deficit. He goes on to say, "Pension liabilities are a little bit unique in that they rely on a number of estimates that are made by actuaries."

And, Mr. Speaker, keep in mind this is their justification for not including it:

One of the biggest factors, influences is the change in the interest rates. And as we discussed the other day, a 1 per cent drop in the interest rates costs the province approximately \$1 billion in the liability change. Those payments are probably being paid out over the next 30 to 35 years, and those fluctuations are going to change over the years quite dramatically, as they have in the past.

So this is the quote I want people to pay special attention to when they're looking at this. He says:

The way the budget is presented currently, I think it gives a fairly clear picture of the cost of operating government on a more current basis. So the numbers that you see prior to the pension liability are the numbers that are going to be I guess closer to the amounts that we're actually paying out in the coming year, whereas the pension liabilities are estimates of costs well into the future, in many cases 30 years.

So on June 27th, 2016, the government was defending their choice to report pension accrual adjustments separately. And as I said, Mr. Speaker, if they had reported it as the auditor had asked them to do in her 2016 report, they would have actually pegged a deficit of 713.8 million instead of a surplus of 107.

The next years, '17 and '18, the pension accrual adjustment was much smaller. In 2017 it was \$130 million and actually in 2018 it was budgeted at \$11.3 million. So you could see, Mr. Speaker, where the government probably didn't have a case one way or another to include those numbers. It would have actually made a better situation for them because they were positive numbers and they were in a deficit world, Mr. Speaker.

But for the same reasons . . . and I'll read out of the budget of 2016-17. And in 2016-17, the government said this, and I quote

from page 46: "Expense in the 2016-17 Budget is presented before the adjustment to account for pension costs on an accrual basis . . ." So again, they carried on that in '16-17.

In 2017-18, Mr. Speaker, in the budget on page 36, what did they say? They are still defending this approach, contrary to what the auditor had suggested. And this is a quote from 2017-18 on page 36:

The pension expense in the 2017-18 Estimates reflects cash requirements for the current year and an adjustment is made and reported in the 2017-18 Budget to account for the government's pension expense on an accrual basis.

Here's the kicker:

Because of the volatile, long-term and non-cash nature of the pension accrual adjustment, it is reported separately so as to not influence annual spending and taxation policies.

A very, very, very clear statement by the government in 2017-18 — the pension accrual adjustments would not be reported prior to the . . . in the expenses estimates.

And if you go through this budget, Mr. Speaker, in 2017, you will find those asterisks on many, many pages. For example, you'll find it on page 43, a little footnote: "Before the adjustment of account for pension costs on an accrual basis." And this of course was in education and debt charges. And that's where it becomes very significant in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

Page 45 . . . oh sorry, that was the price of oil. Page 46, on the outlook itself, the financial outlook itself, there is that little asterisk that says, "Before the adjustment to account for pension costs on an accrual basis."

Where else do we have that reflected? We have it in a number of the reports at the end of the budget, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to flip back to that section, the budget financial tables. The statement for accumulated deficit has a footnote, no. 2, "Before the adjustment to account for pension costs on an accrual basis."

The report on this change in net debt alone has before . . . a footnote, "Before adjustment to account for pension costs on an accrual basis." We have . . . I think there are a few more spots in here, Mr. Speaker. However you could see where the government was very, very clear a year ago that they would not use these numbers to do their forecasting and to tell the people of Saskatchewan what they believed the outlook would be for finances in this province.

There's always a table. There's always a table in the budget, Mr. Speaker, called the medium term financial outlook, and this is an outlook where they go from 2017-18, '18-19, '19-20, and '20-21. So you can see the variation in these adjustments is significant. It's gone from a negative 820 million in 2016 to . . . And here's the news this year. It's up actually quite positive this year. It's a \$393.2 million positive adjustment.

Well what has this government done, Mr. Speaker, when you have them refusing steadfastly to include this pension

adjustment for the first three years of their four years of summary budget reporting, but all of a sudden they can't resist because this year that positive number of \$393.2 million is going to turn a \$758 million deficit into a projected \$365 million deficit? So, Mr. Speaker, if this government had held steadfast and continued to refuse to do what they've done for the last three years, they would have had to report a \$758 million deficit, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to repeat that. They would have had to report a \$758 million deficit, Mr. Speaker, this year if they had not had that positive pension accrual adjustment to pull out and insert so that they're only projecting now a \$365 million deficit.

[15:00]

Mr. Speaker, how in any planet would that be justifiable, Mr. Speaker? And I asked, why is this change being made? And no one could give me an answer. Now they didn't do it in the budget last year. They didn't do it at mid-term last year. The first time we see any suggestion of this change being made was in the third quarter reports at the end of February, Mr. Speaker. And you've got to wonder, why was that? Well interest rates had gone up a little bit, Mr. Speaker. So we know that our debt charges aren't going to be as high. We know that our pension payouts and the adjustment for pension accruals are going to be more positive, Mr. Speaker. So someone at that point in time decided they were going to change how they reported.

And, Mr. Speaker, that is . . . I don't know. I just feel like it is missing the mark, I think is as far as I can go in parliamentary language. And I would like to use other language, Mr. Speaker, but we're not allowed in this House. I was able to talk about it more directly in the media, and I guess that's one advantage.

But if we look at the language that we find now in this year, the 2018-19 budget that was handed out yesterday, it's found on page 47. What is the government . . . What tune are they singing now? This is a whole new tune. Last year it was maybe a bit of an air in a minor key. It was a bit, you know, we can't do this because it's, you know, volatile and we don't want to, you know, mess things up, despite the fact that the auditor thought they should.

Now what do we say? Well here we go . . . Oh, I think I've got the wrong quote, Mr. Speaker. It's on this page. Oh boy, I'm going to have to find it. I didn't mark the right page, Mr. Speaker. It's in here somewhere, so just bear with me. Oh, here we are. It's on page 42, under expense.

So the tune last year, I'm just going to reread that and I'm going to compare with the new song this year. It's more like a jig. If you're a fiddler, you'll know what I'm talking about. But last year was a bit of a dirge, and this year it's a jig . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I think the member from Arm River likes jigs, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure. I can't quite hear what he's saying. But he's a fast dancer, that's for sure. He's got those toes tapping. As a House Leader, you've got to be a good toe tapper, that's for sure.

So here's last year's slow air:

Because of the volatile, long-term, and non-cash nature of the pension accrual adjustment, it is reported separately so

as to not influence annual spending and taxation policies.

Here is the jig from this year, Mr. Speaker:

Expense in the 2018-19 Budget includes pension expense on an accrual basis, consistent with the audited financial statements that appear in the Public Accounts. The 2017-18 Budget has been restated to reflect this change.

So good news for everyone, Mr. Speaker. Now that the pension accrual adjustment is a nice, positive \$400 million, it's perhaps time to include that in our budgeting and in our forecasting. They go on to say:

Total expense is budgeted at \$14.6 billion in 2018-19 . . . The change from last year's budget includes a \$404 million decrease in . . . pension liability (the pension accrual adjustment), reflecting prior-year actuarial losses that are finished being recognized in 2017-18 and new actuarial gains as a result of higher interest rates and other changes in actuarial assumptions.

So what a good story, Mr. Speaker. We've got higher interest rates. We just found \$400 million that we can now include in our forecast, so that this year's deficit of \$365 million would have been at \$758.2 million yesterday if they had kept doing what they were doing in the three previous years.

Mr. Speaker, people are asking about that. I've had media question me about that. I've had people talk about it, and I just think that's . . . When I say a budget is a story, it really is a story, and how you choose the story, you can use the language of '17-18, this sad story of volatility and we really can't include those numbers. And we have officials telling us that in committee, you know, volatile, long-term, non-cash nature; it's reported separately. Three years in a row. Three years in a row. That's what the public is being told.

Now this year we have, oh geez, expense in this budget includes pension expense on an accrual basis, consistent with the audited financial statements that appear. And also, not only this year but last year we restated it as well. Mr. Speaker, I just find that that's something that people really will have to look closely at.

And I know my eyes glaze over when this stuff comes up, Mr. Speaker. Pensions, accrual, adjustments, what do those terms mean? They're all highly economic terms. They're the stuff of accounting. And even as a lawyer, you know, who can I know be very boring at times, it's . . . accounting just, you know, my eyes glaze over. So I think that's part of what this government hopes.

But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be asking those questions. I'm going to be asking in committee. I'm going to continue to ask them and to find out why the government suddenly in 2013 . . . or sorry, in the third quarter of '17-18 flipped the switch. And I think they have to be honest with the people of Saskatchewan. They have to tell us why those changes were made. And not just because we felt like it or, well, we thought it was a good time to do it or anything. Because the numbers tell a completely different story, Mr. Speaker.

And so I think there's many more things in this budget that are of concern, and we certainly will be doing that here in the House in the next few days. We will also be taking much more close looks at all of these estimates in committee. And for people that are watching, make sure that you check out the committee schedule. Because each ministry, we'll be looking at it closely in committee and looking more . . . peeling off the layers a little bit of the high numbers and taking a look behind the curtain of the large numbers and digging into some of the details of this budget. And as I said yesterday, this is almost \$15 billion of Saskatchewan money, so this is no small change, Mr. Speaker.

And the role of the opposition, of course, is to shine a light on the spending of this government. We've seen spending like crazy in the last few years. We've seen the debt explode. So we have a lot to say and we have a lot of questions. But I think the motion that was tabled by the minister yesterday really got it wrong. And I'm going to actually propose a separate motion here, and I know it's here because I've got it. And it's a motion to amend, as my House Leader has pointed out, and so I'm going to read this motion at this point before I conclude my remarks.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move the following motion:

That all the words after "that the Assembly" be deleted and the following be added:

disagrees with the government for tabling a budget that fails to make smart investments to grow the economy, create jobs, prioritize education, and protect the most vulnerable.

Mr. Speaker, I so move.

The Speaker: — The member for Saskatoon Nutana has moved an amendment:

That the words after "that the Assembly" be deleted and the following be added:

disagrees with the government for tabling a budget that fails to make smart investments to grow the economy, create jobs, prioritize education, and protect the most vulnerable.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? I recognize the member for Saskatoon Riversdale.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to enter into the debate. And you'll notice that I still have a bit of a croaky voice. The member actually for Martensville and I were commiserating the other day about our voices and probably the joy that many people in this House feel by us not having quite the voices we usually do . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, but the member for Martensville has said her voice is better today, but anyway mine is not quite there yet, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise to support the amendment put forward by my colleague from Saskatoon Nutana, the Finance critic for Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. It's always a privilege to rise in this House and enter debate, and today is no exception. But

before I begin my remarks on the 2018-19 Saskatchewan provincial budget, I would like to once again extend my condolences to the families and friends of all who lost their lives in the tragic Humboldt Broncos bus crash and send out best wishes for recovery and healing to those who were injured and impacted by this horrific accident.

As difficult as it may be at a time like this to focus on the work in front of us, we all have jobs that we've been sent to do by the people of our province, and mine as a member of the opposition is to hold the government to account, and I intend to do just that. In my following remarks, I'll focus my attention on my duties as critic in the areas of Health, seniors, and Status of Women, and touch on some areas that I know will also have an impact on the people of Saskatoon Riversdale.

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party has titled their budget *On Track*, but after the review of this budget the question becomes, on track to what? My colleague from Saskatoon Nutana pointed out that for a second year in a row, this budget is certainly on track to higher taxes.

Last year the Sask Party raised PST by close to a billion dollars, including adding it to restaurant meals and construction services. Talking to some smaller restaurant owners in the past while, I hear stories of how the PST has negatively impacted their businesses. I can think of one popular Riversdale restaurant that has had to cut its staff down from 16 to 11, the owner says, because of the PST increase. And according to a contractor constituent of mine, adding PST to construction services has been bad for business. In her words:

PST is a definite problem. Not only does it take money directly out of my pocket on dollars earned, but it affects the ability to win contracts in the first place, [adding that] 6 per cent an invoice can be very prohibitive to some of my lower income or more frugal clients, can mean the client's overall budget is smaller to accommodate the extra taxation, which means I earn less, but I am taxed more.

Some small companies are absorbing the cost of the PST so they are more competitive. I'm not interested in reducing the cost of my labour so the government can spend more with the same impunity they have thus far.

And in this budget, the Sask Party continues the trend of picking more than change out of people's pockets by adding PST to the purchase of a used car. I can think of lots of hard-working folks in Saskatoon Riversdale, hard-working families for whom an extra few hundred dollars on their purchase of a modest used vehicle will have a negative impact. Contrary to the Sask Party belief, there are many people who don't have a few extra hundred dollars lying around. With bankruptcies on the rise here and mortgage arrears in Saskatchewan three times higher than the national average, it is clear that there are many people who are struggling to make ends meet, let alone find extra money to pay for Saskatchewan mismanagement and waste.

The Sask Party is certainly on track to record debt, which will hit \$20 billion by next year. Our province's net debt will have increased by over 110 per cent since 2007, also by the end of this year. I think it's important to point out that this is a

government that has had record revenues at its disposal, more money than any government has ever had in the history of this province. And what have they done with it? They have spent it all, and more, adding billions in debt and I would argue, put us in a place where our footing is far less solid than it should be. And they have certainly not have used our resources well to get at the root causes of challenges facing our province, nor have they searched for long-term sustainable solutions to these challenges.

In looking at this government's commitments in health spending, I'd have to admit there are some positive measures — which I think it's always important to note, and I'll get to some of them — but I think it's safe to say that many of these measures are, as they say, a day late and a dollar short.

The Finance critic pointed out that this budget is one that is lacking in a plan and in leadership. But I would take this a few steps farther and say, the record of the Sask Party's administration, especially in recent years, has been one devoid of long-term planning or envisioning a bold future. Instead, its record has been very much reactive rather than proactive as it becomes a tired government that is long in the tooth. I see that, especially in health.

There's some targeted money in this budget for long overdue mental health spending — 11.4 million for community-based mental health supports, of which 9.2 million comes directly from the federal government. Actually I am curious. The other 2.2 million that the province is adding to this spending, does this include the approximately 1.5 million carry-over mental health money from the federal government from last year that the province received and didn't see fit to spend? Or is that money accounted for in the 9.2 million? I'll have a chance to ask that in committee. But either way, this spending is desperately needed. Saskatchewan has long been at the bottom of the list in Canada when it comes to mental health spending as a percentage of total health dollar spending, falling at about 5 per cent.

[15:15]

It's important to point out, even with this new targeted funding, we are still just at over 5 per cent of mental health spending as a percentage to health spending. The national average is 7 per cent, and organizations like the Canadian Mental Health Association have been calling on provinces and territories to increase that spending to 9 per cent. Places that are doing mental health better than others — like New Zealand, Australia, and the United Kingdom — spend anywhere from 10 per cent to 14 per cent of their health budgets on mental health. So we're still at the bottom of the pack despite this new spending and targeted money from the federal government.

I've just mentioned many numbers but the reality is that those numbers represent services and supports, or a lack thereof, for those living with and suffering from mental health issues. What does this 5 per cent mean here in Saskatchewan? It means a two-year wait for youth to see a psychiatrist. It means a government bragging about opening a mental health assessment unit where the capital is funded by a private donor, and only after much pressure, the government ensuring the popular unit is funded by forcing resources to be pulled from other areas of

mental health and addictions to make it work.

It means incredibly limited supportive housing options for those who could really benefit from step-down housing in the community. It means an end to sliding-scale, affordable counselling by some family service organizations; and instead, counselling being offered by social work and psychology students, not registered professionals with years of experience, for lower income citizens for a flat \$25 rate.

It means months-long waits for those seeking in-patient addictions help when they are desperately looking for support and to make change in their lives now. It means no strategy to deal with an emerging opioid crisis that is now reaching Saskatchewan after ravaging other parts of Canada. It means no help for the very real crystal meth crisis that has led to all types of increasing crime rates here in the province and strained our acute mental health facilities. It means no dedicated geriatric mental health supports for our aging population. It means emergency departments in our larger centres are often over capacity and can't properly deal with mental health challenges who really should have received better supports in community in order to keep them out of the emergency department in the first place. It means young children in the North, who should have so much to live for, Mr. Speaker, but instead feel so hopeless that they die by suicide.

That, Mr. Speaker, is what 5 per cent spending looks like in real terms, and that is why that \$11.4 million is appreciated but falls dreadfully short of the mark.

When it comes to health spending, I was glad to hear the government is finally delivering on its promise to families with children with autism spectrum disorder. It's important to note that this is the third budget since that promise for individualized funding for children under six. So there are children who would have qualified for support if the government would have kept its election promise in the June 2016 budget, who are now no longer eligible.

I'd also like to note that the impact of autism spectrum disorder does not end when a child turns six. Living on the spectrum requires a range of lifespan supports and we certainly should not ignore those over six.

It's also important to note that when children become school-aged, they stop receiving the health supports for those with autism spectrum disorder and begin to fall under the education system, which we know has been on the receiving end of massive cuts. Even with \$30 million in partially restored funding this year, the education sector is far behind being able to support all students including those with varied challenges. The shortage of therapists of all disciplines — like occupational therapists and speech language pathologists to name a few — in the school system is very real. As well I continue to hear from folks in the community around the long waits to actually even get a diagnosis in the first place.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention too that \$4,000 to a family in rural Saskatchewan, where there are few if any supports and services to purchase, does not go nearly as far as it does for those of us who live in larger centres. Time for parents to take off work, travel time, and accommodations to head to the larger

centres to access those services, to purchase those services, will quickly eat away at that money available to support their kids.

I was glad to see the government say it would finally ensure universal funding for access to antiretrovirals for those with HIV. Although only a small number of patients didn't have access to these medications, in a province with the highest rate of HIV in Canada and the number of new cases first . . . last year almost tripled the national average. These dollars are incredibly important. There's also a small pot of money going to organizations doing important work in this area.

But I submit the government's current record on this issue is lacking and it needs to do more. It did have an HIV strategy from 2010 to 2014 after new cases of HIV peaked in 2009 at 199. Following that, for five years numbers dropped to a low of 112, but when the strategy ended, numbers began to go up with increases to 160 new cases in 2015 and 170 new cases in 2017 — the only jurisdiction where the incidents have gone up in recently. It is time for the government to build with those who work in this area and who have lived experience with strategy to address the increases that are being seen in more remote and northern areas.

As the Health critic, I hear from people all across the province about the challenges they face in paying for their prescription drugs. The federal government in its last budget is at least acknowledging the importance of a pharmacare program, although I do have some concerns from his comments that the federal Finance minister does not really understand what this program should look like to reap the greatest benefits.

But there was not even a word in the Sask Party budget on the burden of prescription drug costs. I suppose one should be thankful that this government isn't continuing its trend of making prescription drugs more expensive than they have in the past few years for seniors and families. But people should not have to decide between their medication and other necessities of life like food, shelter, or paying to keep the light and the heat on. I hear too many stories about folks not filling prescriptions or choosing to ration important medication to save money. With overcrowded emergency departments, this government should be very concerned when people can't take their medications to manage things like chronic conditions that often land them in the hospital.

The government increasing costs of medications is just one issue that I continue to hear about from so many seniors living on fixed incomes. I also hear from them about the rising cost of living under this government including the seemingly ever-increasing utility bills. In listening to the minister's speech yesterday and doing initial comb-throughs of this budget, I didn't hear or read the word "senior" uttered even once. We have an aging population here and there are many concerns seniors would like addressed including improving their cost of living through measures around housing, power bills, or prescription drugs. On housing, instead we hear that this government is cutting the rental house supplements.

Unfortunately we did have references in last year's budget with regard to seniors, whose effects still remain. Last year the government chose to pull more money out of the pockets of those living in long-term care, cut the hearing aid plan that had

helped make hearing aids a wee bit more affordable, and shuttered STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company], which helped seniors, especially in rural and remote communities, stay connected to important things like medical treatment and family. Maybe seniors are thankful that they didn't get mentioned in the budget from this perspective. But I knew many were hoping to see the government fund a seniors' advocate, work on affordability, and improve the state of long-term care, which has for many years now been highlighted in the government's own reports by the Ombudsman and the auditor as hugely problematic.

When it comes to the state of care, long-term care facilities — and in other health care facilities for that matter — there's something mentioned in this budget for which I have a huge concern. The government plans to cut \$70 million from the budget in the next two years, they say, from what they call "efficiency measures and attrition." I think I've even heard the words "vacancy management" related to the \$70 million.

I can tell you from the conversations I have with both health care workers and patients that they have been the victims of vacancy management under this government for years now, resulting in short-staffing, burnt out or injured staff, and patient and resident care that could and should be so much better. I'm not sure the Sask Party realizes this, but just because someone retires or moves jobs, that doesn't mean his or her work ceases to exist. Not hiring someone new to replace someone vacating a position only means an increased burden on an already stretched health care workforce.

There's one last area that I'd like to mention that falls under my duties as the Status of Women critic. I heard the word "innovation" in this budget, particularly as it relates to technology. But I believe this government has missed an opportunity to tap into a key segment of entrepreneurs who could help increase jobs and grow the economy at a time we so desperately need it.

Last fall we legislators had a chance to hear from Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan about the unique challenges facing women and the opportunities that lie in looking through a gendered lens when it comes to creating programs and policies meant to foster entrepreneurship. Just a few weeks ago we had another chance to hear about the issue at an event supported by a number of organizations, including Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, among others. I would've liked to have seen this government choose to foster innovation and some dedicated support for women entrepreneurs in this budget.

There are so many things in this budget that I'd like to address, but we have a limited time to have our say and there are many members who would like to speak to this budget. I look forward to getting into committee and digging deeper on the items mentioned in this budget and in my remarks, and others that were conspicuously absent from the budget and that I haven't had the opportunity to cover.

One that jumps to mind that was mentioned in the Throne Speech is this government's stated commitment to build a donor physician program to improve our abysmal organ donation rates here. I think this becomes even further magnified by the

Humboldt Broncos tragedy and the wonderful gift of Logan Boulet and his family. Logan signed his organ donation card and his family carried through with his wishes, and six people will live because of this young man's thoughtfulness and thinking of others beyond him, Mr. Speaker. So I look forward in committee to finding out where exactly we are around the commitment to donor physicians in the Throne Speech, and I'm wondering why it wasn't mentioned in the budget. I'm wondering if there are actual resources available for it.

But with that I'd like to echo my colleague from Nutana's concerns with this budget — its lack of a plan, of hope, of inspiration, and of leadership. I know it is not just the opposition who is disappointed to see this, but people all across the province. For these reasons and more, I will be supporting the member from Nutana's amendment and cannot in good conscience support this government's motion. Thank you.

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

Mr. Dennis: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it's an honour to stand up in front of you today and it's an honour and privilege to rise in the Assembly to speak in support of the Finance minister's 2018-19 budget.

We have just finished our second year being elected on our second anniversary, April 4th, and I'd like to start off by a few acknowledgments. First of all I'd like to thank my wife, Lorri, who's been married to me for 33 years. She's a nurse practitioner who works in Canora, and she's one lucky woman.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to acknowledge my family, my oldest daughter Jasmine Ostapowich who works for Walker Projects right here in Regina. She was at the budget yesterday and quite thrilled and excited of how good it was and that I'm here. Also my son-in-law Shane Ostapowich: he's a manager at SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] right here in Regina. He played for the Regina Rams. And my one and only grandson, Lewis, he's two and a half years old. He's grandpa's little boy. And he's a Bruins fan, and this year he's going to experience his first Stanley Cup as a Bruins fan.

Then I have my daughter Jade Dennis living in Regina and working at the Correctional Centre right here in Regina. And she's a great hockey player who played for the U of R [University of Regina] Cougars, and she's a great sport. And yesterday was her birthday, so I'd like to wish her a happy birthday.

Then I have Carson Dennis, my youngest son. He's living in Melville and working at the golf course there the last five years. He's turf management and this year he stayed in Melville and he decided to become an icemaker, so they talked him into . . . does curling ice and even got the old man out there to curl in a bonspiel with him, which I won't elaborate too much into because it was horrible.

I'd also like to thank my CA, Carol Sleeva, and my casual student, Abby Gulka who's a university student, for all their help in taking care of my constituents and also myself. I'd also like to thank my executive and all my constituents for their continued support.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to thank my colleagues and the staff here for all their help over the last two years. And it's been a special two years in my office at the legislature. We have seven in our office, and they're family and friends and we've become really close.

Mr. Speaker, the last year I've seen a lot of change. We have lost two colleagues, Roger Parent and Kevin Phillips. Then we went through some tough budget in 2017-18 with some tough decisions. Along with that came changes to our Premier and our Finance minister, along with others.

[15:30]

But one main theme was kept. We as a government have a three-year plan to get back to balance, and although we have seen some tough decisions, we are showing that we are fiscally responsible and we're on track to a balanced budget.

An Hon. Member: — Don't forget the Speaker.

Mr. Dennis: — And the Speaker. Mr. Speaker, sorry — I forgot. I've had some good times with you too as well. Mr. Speaker, this budget keeps the plan on track with controlled spending while continuing to make investments in health care, education, social services, all while keeping our economy strong and growing.

Mr. Speaker, the change to our new . . . of our new Premier came some announcements and changes that are being fulfilled: increased education funding, reinstating the PST on life, health, and agriculture insurance. And finally, he will continue to fight to have no carbon tax.

Mr. Speaker, this budget follows what we've heard from the Saskatchewan people: to control our spending while working towards a balanced budget. We will keep it on track and we'll be balanced in 2019 and '20 while supporting the growth of our economy. Mr. Speaker, we will continue to invest in our schools, roads, highways, hospitals, health care, education, social services, and we will not raise provincial tax rates, sales tax rates, income tax rates, and education property tax this year.

Mr. Speaker, we will provide high-quality services in health care spending of over 5.36 billion or 39 per cent of our total expenses this year. This includes \$3.5 billion in health authority for operating funding, up 72 million from last year. We will provide funding to prepare for the North Battleford hospital and also help the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital in 2019. There will be a \$49.4 million increase in physician service and recruitment of new specialists and primary physicians. We will spend \$700,000 additionally to ensure 100 per cent coverage on HIV drugs as well as providing HIV supports. We will invest \$520,000 to screen babies for hearing loss that are born here in Saskatchewan. We will also look to fulfilling our government commitment to provide individualized funding for the children with autism disorder, initial funding of \$4,000 per year for children under six years old, to a total of 2.8 million.

Mr. Speaker, this budget will keep high-quality education for the K to 12 grade students. We will fulfill the Premier's promise and increase funding by \$30 million. This will result in an increased funding of the 27 divisions by 1.87 million in

operating fund. This will allow an additional hiring of up to 400 teachers and other support.

Mr. Speaker, we will provide \$77 million in child care funding, \$20.8 million of new federal funding through the Canada-Sask early learning daycare program. This will support the 16,000 existing spaces and create 2,500 spaces by 2020. We will also continue to support libraries of more than \$11 million.

Mr. Speaker, our advanced education budget is up 1.5 per cent to 729 million. This provides stable funding to the post-secondary institutions across Saskatchewan — universities, colleges, tech schools — that are seeing no change from last year. 673 million is going to operating and capital grants to post-secondary institutions, including \$470 million to the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Regina, and federated and affiliated colleges. \$151 million is going to Sask Polytech and the Sask Indian Institute of Technologies and Gabriel Dumont Institute.

Thirty million to the Saskatchewan regional colleges, and more than \$22 million for repairs and maintenance throughout the post-secondary sector. Nearly \$88 million is going to be allocated to the U of S College of Medicine, helping to ensure the college provides quality medical education. Saskatchewan's post-secondary students will also benefit: \$34 million in direct financial supports provided for this budget.

This budget will also continue the graduate retention program, one of the most aggressive and successful youth retention programs in Canada, providing up to \$20,000 in income tax credits for post-secondary graduates who live in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, social services and assistance will see a record 1.3 billion on the budget, a \$25 million increase. This will help support the vulnerable, the children in need, at-risk families, people with disabilities, seniors, and low-income people. \$10 million will be allocated to increase the adults with intellectual disabilities or mental health challenges. \$10 million will be allocated to move people out of Valley View Centre to new community-based homes. \$4.5 million for extended family members who are caring for at-risk children and youth. There will also be some funding, \$250,000, to operate a new group home in La Ronge for five adults with intellectual disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, in this budget our government continues to address the problem with rural crime, of which you were part of, in studying . . . Part of the study. Sorry, Mr. Speaker, part of the study. Maybe you were creating some problems. And we will do some funding for the protection and response team that was launched last summer. The team consists of 258 officers who will have arrest and detention powers, including the municipal police, the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police], the highways enforcement officers, and the environment conservation officers. This budget will provide 4.9 million in new funding from the SGI enhancements to the rural crime strategy, which will allow to hire an additional 30 police positions. Additional funding of 2.4 million will be allocated to expand the early case resolution in Regina and Saskatoon to focus on the short-term remand.

Mr. Speaker, we will be spending \$2.7 billion on infrastructure investments in 2018-19, and here are some highlights. The

Crown corporation will be spending \$1.5 billion and \$883 million to SaskPower to renew distribution and transmission systems. SaskTel will be investing \$298 million to increase and upgrade the wireless and wireline networks. \$268 million will be spent on SaskEnergy to ensure safe and reliable services in a growing market. SaskWater will receive \$34 million to address aging infrastructure and continue growth.

In 2018-19, we'll be spending \$1.2 billion on the Saskatchewan Builds capital builds.

Transportation and infrastructure will get 690.8 million: 330 of that million will go to the Regina bypass; 214 million will go to enhancement projects for highway repairs in rural Saskatchewan, including passing lanes in highways 6, 39, and interchanges in Warman and Martensville; 126 million for rehabilitation projects, which includes 280 kilometres of repaving; and \$18 million for transfers to strategic municipal infrastructure programs; and 2.2 million for machinery, equipment, and accommodations and ferry capital.

There will be \$206.5 million allocated to the municipal infrastructure: 191 million in transfers to the New Building Canada Fund which will be allocated towards Clean Water and Wastewater Fund, the Gas Tax Fund, the Public Transit Infrastructure Fund, transit assistance, and Communities in Transition funding. Also \$15 million in funding will be to help complete the north commuter parkway bridge in Saskatoon.

K to 12 schools will also receive 76.4 million: 49.6 million will be provided for maintenance and renewal; 22.7 will be for the construction of schools in Rosthern and Weyburn; 1 million for facility assessments; and 3.1 million for relocatables. Advanced education will see \$22.4 million allocated to provide preventative maintenance.

Also, Mr. Speaker, we'll be spending \$128.2 million in health: 34 million for the construction to finish up the construction in North Battleford at the hospital; \$65.4 million for maintenance and equipment; \$200 million to complete the government's commitment to Jim Pattison Children's Hospital in Saskatoon; \$7.2 million for electrical renewal in the provincial hospitals, and 1.5 for the ownership interest in laboratory equipment in Saskatchewan Health Authority.

Mr. Speaker — no, I'm not done yet — this budget also provides stable, predictable funding for municipalities and nearly \$250 million in municipal revenue sharing, an increase of almost 90 per cent since 2007. This amount was set through the established funding formula of one point PST in 2016-17.

The government remains committed to providing predictable and stable funding to municipalities. Municipal revenue sharing of \$241 million is allocated in this way: \$155 million to urban municipalities, more than 68 million to rural municipalities, and 18 million to northern municipalities. As well, our government continues to support programs and initiatives specifically targeted to the First Nations and Métis.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the member from Saskatoon Nutana stated that the government has misspent money and has no plan for the future. I'm not really sure if she had the right budget book or the right year, but I'd like to shed some light on the past

and give her some of these answers.

Mr. Speaker, she asked where the money's gone. Well we reduced operating debt by over a billion dollars. Tax reductions have saved people more than 5.9 billion. We took 112,000 people off the provincial tax roll; \$4.3 billion in personal tax cuts; \$1.3 billion in education property tax, saving \$100 million a year to people. That is where the money has gone.

Mr. Speaker, funding under this government invested in infrastructure over \$12.5 billion since 2007; 1.4 billion for our health care system, more than doubled over the last 10 years. And some of the projects are the children's hospital. We've built 15 new long-term care facilities; the Moose Jaw Hospital; and Saskatchewan Hospital. And we spent over \$8 billion on highways, over 12 000 kilometres of road repaired and rebuilt; and nearly \$1.5 billion to build and repair schools, 40 new replacement schools. And lots of renovations and maintenance and almost \$50 million in maintenance and renewals.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to touch on what we have done over the last 10 years as a government and reflect on the NDP's time in power ... [inaudible interjection] ... Yes, I know. Mr. Speaker, population over the last 10 years has grown by a hundred and sixty-seven thousand dollars ... people, sorry. Dollars — I've been talking dollars and cents all the time here. We've got the second-best job creation in Canada since, from 2007-17. Saskatchewan has the lowest PST of any province with PST.

Seven hundred and fifty more doctors and 3,400 more nurses in this province. We've got among the shortest wait times in Canada. We opened 15 long-term care facilities. We've tripled the seniors' income plan from \$90 to 270. We built 40 brand new and replacement schools and 25 major repairs and renovations. We've got 840 more teachers and 173 more student support teachers since 2007. We've increased operating and capital funding in post-secondary institutions by 53 per cent.

[15:45]

We have 8,500 more new child care spaces since 2007, 75 per cent increase. And we've increased revenue share funding by municipalities by almost 90 per cent since 2007. And also we have brought in STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society] ambulance to Saskatchewan which we witnessed the value of them this past weekend, Mr. Speaker.

Now under the ... Mr. Speaker, now I'll go under the NDP record, give them a little history. Let's go back to their history. Population dropped by 22,000 from '96 to 2007. They had the worst job creation in Canada from 2000 to 2007. NDP raised the taxes 21 times in 16 years and raised PST four times to a record high of 9 per cent, and raising the gas tax twice. Saskatchewan lost 450 nurses, 173 doctors from 2001 to 2006. We had the longest surgical wait times in Canada and we closed 52 hospitals and there was plans for more.

An Hon. Member: — Really?

Mr. Dennis: — Yes. Yes. They closed 1,200 long-term care beds. And there was no increase to the seniors' income plan for

16 years. Then they closed 176 schools from 2001 to 2007, and they dropped the number of teachers by more than 400. And they nearly had a tax revolt during that time. The NDP, they cut nearly \$500 million out of municipal revenue sharing during this time, and they are complaining about us freezing the municipal revenue sharing.

Mr. Speaker, I will compare our record to the NDP any day of the week. We will not take advice from the opposition and the new Opposition Leader who has a \$2.5 billion wish list and his wish to impose a carbon tax.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at this budget, I see that we are on track with our plan to get back to balance in 2019-20, and we will continue to deliver the programs and the services for the people of Saskatchewan. Our government will continue investing in our infrastructure and we'll keep this province strong.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I would like to thank our new Premier, our Finance minister for a terrific budget. I would like to end my speech by saying that I will be supporting and seconding this budget as it was presented. A motion ... Sorry. I would like to make a motion to second it, and I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Martensville.

Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to begin my remarks today by thanking the member for Athabasca for his pre-emptory enthusiasm for my speech. I know he always appreciates when I get up, and so thank you to him for that.

Mr. Speaker, it's my first opportunity: I want to congratulate you on your position of Speaker. I know that we had a chat about this earlier a few weeks ago, and I know that you take this job very seriously. But you also have the amazing ability to inject humour into our day, and we all know that we need that once in a while in this place. So congratulations to you, and I know that you'll do a good job.

I also want to welcome the new MLAs that are here, the MLAs from Kindersley, Swift Current, and Melfort. I know what it's like to win in a by-election. You come in kind of on your own. It's a little bit different than winning in a general election when you've got a cohort coming in with you. And luckily for these guys they've got three of them, so they came in together. And I want them to know that they are most welcome on our team, and we really are a team, Mr. Speaker. So welcome to them.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank my fiancé, John. He is a very patient man, both with me and with my job. I tend to be quite apologetic about the time I'm away from home, and every time I start going down that path his response every time is, you just go do what you have to do and I'll be home. I'll be here when you get back home. So I want to thank him. In pretty much exactly three months I get to marry the best man that I've ever met and so I'm pretty excited about that.

Mr. Speaker, his story, his family's story is one that we hear over and over again in Saskatchewan. His mom and dad and sister, and John, moved here from Greece in 1977 and immediately became contributors to our economy. They have

worked so very hard, and just a great story of a family that re-established themselves in Saskatoon and love every day they're in Canada, except still, after all these years, the winters. Being in Greece would be slightly better than being here.

I also want to thank my constituents, their ongoing support for me. I know that in 2007 when I was first elected, I sat down with community leaders and asked them for a list of things that they wanted me to do on their behalf. And I'm happy to report after 10 and a half years in government, that list has been complete, whether it's a municipal water system for Hepburn or roads or schools and all the other things that they had asked.

I want to thank my colleagues, both past and present, for their support of the things that I've brought forward over the years to make sure that these incredibly fast-growing communities, that their needs are being met. And because we have seen a decade of growth, Mr. Speaker, and that growth has been about the most prevalent in the cities of Warman and Martensville, and to sort of see our government step up and make sure their needs are being met is very encouraging to me as their MLA.

I also wanted to congratulate the Finance minister on her very first budget. I know, we all know, that the Minister of Finance has had a very difficult few days, more difficult than a lot of us in this Chamber. And she's one of the strongest people that I've ever met, and I'm so very proud to call her a colleague and even more proud to be able to call her a friend. So to the Finance minister: job well done in the face of adversity, and we're all very proud of you.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the budget. Obviously the name of the budget is *On Track*. We made a commitment over the course of three years to get our budget back to balance, and the budget that was released this week does just that. We look across our country, whether it's the federal government or I think most, if not all, other provincial governments have absolutely no plan. Their plan is to go deeper into debt, more borrowing without any hope of getting out of that in the short term. And that is not the tack that we wanted to take.

We didn't have any desire to kick this down the road to future generations. We took a look at this and decided that responsible spending was the way to go, and we are on track to get our budget back to balance while continuing to invest in our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, it was interesting. It was noted earlier in question period, a tweet that the NDP put out when it came to our budget. And they said yesterday, and I quote, "Spending more in social services, corrections, policing, justice, and health care does not represent an investment."

Well I don't know what would qualify as an investment. So I took the time to . . . We were just talking about grammar and words and I'm usually pretty good at those things, but just to make sure that I wasn't offside, I went and found an actual definition of "investment" and it says, Mr. Speaker, "To commit money or capital in order to gain a financial return, or to spend or devote for future advantage or benefit." I would argue that this budget does exactly that, Mr. Speaker, that we are investing, whether it's health care or roads or education or

policing or justice or the other things that the NDP had talked about yesterday. And, Mr. Speaker, one of those investments . . .

And I found it interesting too that the Finance critic for the NDP, the member for Saskatoon Nutana, said there was no inspiration in here. I would challenge her to get out of this building and go talk to regular people, who I would suggest were inspired by some of the things that were in yesterday's budget.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Capital Network said this, and I quote, "In today's budget, the Government of Saskatchewan announced the creation of the Saskatchewan technology start-up incentive program." They went on to say that "SCN anticipates the tax credit will inspire more investors to invest in Saskatchewan companies while providing them with the capital they need to grow beyond their start-up phase in Saskatchewan."

They continued on, saying:

We applaud the efforts and commitment of our government towards growing Saskatchewan's economy. This is a big step toward the right direction and we are looking to making this program a success.

Mr. Speaker, it sounds pretty inspiring to me, and perhaps the member for Saskatoon Nutana would like to go out and meet with some of these people.

But to go back to their quote saying that these aren't investments, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure how paying 100 per cent for HIV drug coverage is not an investment. And to his credit, the Leader of the Opposition gave us credit for doing that, but it goes directly against the words of their Finance critic yesterday and the NDP in general saying that these things weren't investments. I don't know how targeted funding for children with autism isn't an investment. It totally fits the definition that I just read, and anybody else in this place other than apparently the members opposite would understand that this is an investment.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure how screening babies for hearing loss is not an investment into the people of this province. And, Mr. Speaker, the executive director of the Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services said yesterday, and I quote, "This was the best budgetary thing that could ever happen in the province in my opinion. This is gigantic for us. This is huge." And again, Mr. Speaker, I would say inspiring and offering hope.

Again the member for Nutana said there was no hope in this budget. I would commit that every parent who has a child born in this province who will now have a hearing test done, there's hope for those children and those parents, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I guess also an odd thing for us to hear is saying that none of these things count as investment. The member for Saskatoon Nutana, their Finance critic, gets up and I think most of her speech yesterday and today focused on debt. At the same time, they stand up every day in this House and ask us to spend more.

Mr. Speaker, their own platform that their leader put out, and in electing him leader they're endorsing this platform. And they have yet to refute the costing of this. If they've got other numbers I'd like to see that. Although interesting enough, the Finance critic says she doesn't like accounting so I'm not sure what she's doing in her job, but she can explain that as well. Mr. Speaker, it's two and a half billion dollars a year. Over a course of a government's term it's \$10 billion in spending. They have a spending plan but, Mr. Speaker, they have absolutely no revenue plan. So exactly how are they planning on paying for this?

They want to be government in 2020. It is incumbent upon them to tell the people of this province what they're going to do. You can't just say we're going to spend, spend, spend on this side without telling people how you're going to pay for it on the other side, and that is a gaping hole in their plan. So good on you for having all these great ideas of where you're going to spend all this money, but how are you going to pay for it? If you want to be government, I think that is part of your responsibility, to tell the people of this province how it's going to be paid for.

But, Mr. Speaker, we do have a plan, and I think the people of this province understand that, especially as I said before, in light of what other governments are doing. And I want to quote Todd MacKay, the prairie director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. He said, and I quote, "I can't think of any other government in all of Canada who's actually trimming spending. I don't know if a government has actually slayed a deficit without trimming spending, so when you see that spending number coming down it makes you feel good about the future."

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Construction Association said, "The budget strikes a balance between eliminating the deficit while encouraging ongoing growth and investment in the Saskatchewan economy." And, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what our plan is. We're going to stay out of the lives of private business and let them do what they're doing and continue to grow our economy while having an eye on a balanced budget next year.

I went through the member for Nutana's speech from yesterday, and it's the usual doom and gloom, that the world's coming to an end and the sky is falling. But the one thing that stood out for me, Mr. Speaker, is she highlighted a few things in that speech, but some of the very first things that she said in her speech in relation to our budget were increased SaskPower bills and cost of living for Saskatchewan residents. I thought that was pretty interesting considering their party endorses a carbon tax, Mr. Speaker. And what do you think is going to drive up power bills in our province and increase the cost of living for the people of our province more than a carbon tax? So I'm not quite sure how she can voice concern on one side and then on the other be the supporter of a tax which will increase the cost of everything.

And, Mr. Speaker, they call our fight against a carbon tax a pointless crusade. Mr. Speaker, I would call it doing our job. Our job is to stand up for the people of the province, the people that we represent, and that is exactly what we plan to do in light of the federal government saying that they're going to impose this carbon tax on us. So while the members opposite would wave the white flag and surrender to that, we will not. We will

continue the good fight, Mr. Speaker, because it's the right thing to do for the people of this province.

[16:00]

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the member for Nutana talked about hope, and we know that there is hope in this budget. I read some quotes from organizations who see that hope with the funding and the investment that we have offered. And, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that the NDP are the owners of hope in this province. We've seen a marked change in the attitudes of the people in this province over the last 10 and a half years and we saw, Mr. Speaker, that in 2007, hope beat fear. It beat fear again in 2011. It beat it again in 2016, and I would contend that hope will again beat fear in the 2020 election, Mr. Speaker.

I will end my remarks there. There are many who are coming after me to speak but, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this budget. I believe it's the right thing for our province, and I will not be supporting the amendment put forward by the member for Nutana.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Ms. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to rise in this Assembly today and enter into the debate on our government's 2018-19 budget.

But before I get into the details on the budget, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to publicly congratulate you on being elected to Speaker of this Assembly. The process to giving you this role is what democracy is all about and the privilege of having the choice to vote and choose who provides us leadership here in this Assembly, in our province, and in our country is nothing short of humbling.

I'm also humbled by the honour and privilege it was for the opportunity to be able, as a female, to have been able to put my name forward for Speaker along with many of my male colleagues. So we are so fortunate and blessed to live in this country. My colleagues in this Assembly were all given the choice, and I am honoured to recognize you as Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to take this opportunity to once again thank the voters of my constituency. It is because of their confidence and trust in me to represent them that I am able to stand here before you in this Assembly. For the many that I meet with, listen to their concerns, and seek to address their issues, I hope I have served you well. I want to tell them that I am humbled and honoured by their support.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday our Finance minister tabled a budget that provided a strong commitment to the people of this province; that would keep our economy strong, stable, moving forward; that will ensure essential high-quality services like health care, education, and social services are maintained and appropriately resourced; all while controlling spending, having no tax increases — which includes no carbon tax — and does return us to balance by 2019-20.

Mr. Speaker, this tells me we do have a plan. We do offer hope and inspiration in this budget. We do show strong leadership in many areas and the future under this government is on track to

get back to balance in the next fiscal year. Not parked, as the opposition member from Saskatoon Nutana so dismally would like the people to believe.

Mr. Speaker, even though we have seen some resurgence in our resource sectors, they have not created the optimism in the oil and gas sector that there was prior to 2014. And I can tell you that oil companies in Lloydminster and the surrounding area have been slowly rehiring back skilled employees but with much more caution this time around. Mr. Speaker, it's not about the unwillingness to drill or invest in new wells, but it is the inability to get their product to market. Amidst all the controversy over the development of pipelines, they continue to wait with a bated breath for our federal government to step up to the plate.

Mr. Speaker, this industry is a valuable and important economic resource for our economy and we must support the push to get pipelines approved and built. They are the safest way to get our oil to global markets. Oil and gas is responsible for an estimated 15 per cent of Saskatchewan's GDP and recent numbers — such as increased production, exploration, and revenue — have shown clear signs of renewed activity and growth in the industry. Saskatchewan is the second-largest producer among Canada's provinces, accounting for an estimated 12 per cent of the nation's crude oil production.

Mr. Speaker, as a government and as an oil-producing province, we stand behind the need to get construction going on the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain expansion pipeline. Canada is an exporting nation and, more specifically, Saskatchewan's exports are precisely our source point of wealth and they are job creators. The continuous delays are not only frustrating to Kinder Morgan, who has put huge investment in this project already, but to all the oil companies here in Saskatchewan who already saw the discard of the Energy East pipeline. Mr. Speaker, our government will continue to stand up and speak out for pipelines.

I'm also happy to note that the 2018-19 budget will see significant enhancement to the province's petroleum and mineral resource sectors, providing incentive programs to encourage mineral exploration and tap into an unrealized potential that we have right here in Saskatchewan, allowing us to diversify our mineral sector. It's also an opportunity for job growth in our northern and rural communities.

The Fraser Institute, in its recent 2017 survey for mining investment, ranks Saskatchewan second out of 91 jurisdictions in the world for mining investment attractiveness. Preliminary estimates indicate the value of our mineral sales for 2017 were at 6.4 billion. And we continue to remain strong global leaders in uranium and potash production as well.

Mr. Speaker, over the past decade our province has grown by 167,000 people. With that growth comes the need for new and continuous renewal of infrastructure. This includes schools, hospitals, long-term care homes, housing, roads, and highways. We have invested \$12.5 billion in infrastructure needs in this province since 2007, an average of 1 billion per year.

Mr. Speaker, our commitment in this 2018-19 budget continues to provide the necessary investment that will give our citizens

valuable assets now and into the future. That's what they are, Mr. Speaker, valuable assets. Our investments now will always have a dollar figure attached to them but, more importantly, they will be there for the citizens of this province to enjoy and use now and into the future.

Mr. Speaker, over the last decade I have seen new schools in my own constituency, gym replacements, additional preventative maintenance renewal funding for schools, daycare spaces, new hospital equipment, and just recently, a new CT [computerized tomography] scanner. Next week we will be breaking ground for a new STARS helipad.

There has been new homeowner units and rental repairs for Social Services housing; new home ownership funding for low-income families under the CHIP [community housing initiative program] program; kilometres of highways repaired and improved; financial support to renovate a newly acquired community youth centre; financial support for work readiness, youth, and adult skills training; and significant dollars invested in victim services supports, addiction and treatment programs, our sexual assault centre, 24-hour crisis, residential services, and financial support to Onion Lake First Nation for their youth justice reintegration program. All of this in my own constituency.

Mr. Speaker, this 2018-19 budget has committed additional dollars to health, education, and social services once again, which supports, once again, almost all of these areas I just mentioned. This truly is an investment in the people of Saskatchewan.

As well, Mr. Speaker, this budget continues to provide strong, predictable, and stable funding for municipalities. Municipal revenue sharing for Lloydminster went from \$713,166 in 2007 to over \$2 million in 2018-19, a 190 per cent increase, allowing the local municipal government to make important and necessary investments for its citizens.

An Hon. Member: — How much?

Ms. Young: — 2,071,568. The 2018-19 budget will invest 206 million in municipal infrastructure, including 190 million for cost-shared federal infrastructure programs. Mr. Speaker, I know how important these infrastructure dollars are to the municipalities in my constituency. The RM [rural municipality] of Frenchman Butte has benefited from this type of infrastructure partnership in helping them to build a new lagoon system to support three rural communities in their area.

The city of Lloydminster has been working closely and co-operatively with our Minister of Environment and SaskWater to move forward a long-overdue waste water treatment plant. They have committed, along with federal government support, to get this project moving as quickly as possible, but they are being held up by the lack of a willing conversation and commitment of the Alberta NDP government. Two-thirds of the citizens of Lloydminster flush their toilets into the system on the Saskatchewan side of the border city. I fear this may have to be another one of those shut-off-the-tap or throw-the-switch to back up the flow in order to get their attention.

Mr. Speaker, farming and ranching has been a long-standing staple of our Saskatchewan economy, and it is a significant driver to the economy and most certainly to the livelihood of the people in my constituency. We are proud of our Saskatchewan farmers and ranchers who work hard to ensure our economy stays strong and provides food to the world. There is no one commodity whose producer spends more time watching the weather, agonizing over it, procrastinating about it, yet thanks the Lord when all goes well.

Saskatchewan producers harvested a crop of about 35 million tonnes in 2017, the fifth consecutive year the provincial harvest has been more than 30 million tonnes. Saskatchewan's 2017 agriculture exports were the fourth largest on record with total sales of 13.5 billion, an increase of more than 60 per cent since 2010. So it's good to see in this budget the continued investment of 378.6 million to help ensure a strong agricultural sector, including a record investment for agricultural research and for business risk management programs.

We all know, through the history of our province and our farming communities, that farmers have been our most innovative, creative, and flexible people we could ever imagine. Just read a local history book and think of where farming is today — new crops, new cattle breeds, new farming methods and techniques, new technological advances in equipment, and much more — and then you will appreciate not only the adversity our farmers have faced, but the strength and ingenuity they have achieved to become a significant and major contributor to the province's GDP. The 31.8 million agriculture research budget will foster and support the new technologies to help grow and advance our farming and ranching industries.

Mr. Speaker, this budget's investment in the justice system assures the people of this province, and particularly the rural areas in my constituency, it assures them that we are listening. The northwest area of our province has seen a dramatic increase in the number of property crimes and criminal activity. The 4.9 million to assist the protection and response team and the annual funding of 1 million from the Ministry of Corrections and Policing is welcome news for my constituents. Since the new year, additional temporary special force teams have been deployed to some of the rural communities in my constituency to assist with patrolling and investigations.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity on behalf of myself and my constituents to say thank you to the RCMP and crime units for these additional efforts. It is very much appreciated. I know more work needs to be done on this, but I know we are moving forward on the training of 258 armed officers who will have arrest and detention powers. Hopefully the additional forces will roll out soon in the coming months and provide those much needed extra eyes and attention to what has become a serious situation in our rural areas of this province.

Mr. Speaker, this past Sunday I had the privilege of attending and participating in our community's Métis Local 18 family culture day in Lloydminster. There was traditional bannock and soup served, great music, and lots of jigging to entertain the crowd of approximately 200 people who came out with their families. They received funding and support through the Gabriel Dumont Institute to provide cultural programs and activities for their members and to be able to add their

wonderful cultural experience and history to the diversity of our community. I'm glad to see our government support of \$200 million for targeted program funding to First Nations and Métis organizations in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, we have been a government that has always recognized and supported the needs of our most vulnerable in society. The 2018-19 budget once again increases the Ministry of Social Services' budget by 54.4 million or 4.8 per cent. These additional funds are aimed at supporting at-risk children and adults with intellectual disabilities, and supporting the caregivers and community-based organizations that work daily to support the needs of these individuals.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to control spending and finding savings, such as we have done, by reducing the number of government-owned vehicles; working with our unions and organizations to reach satisfactory and cost-saving, sustainable agreements; and finding cost-saving efficiencies within our own ministries and government agencies.

Mr. Speaker, we do have a deficit. But, Mr. Speaker, unlike other provinces who would rather spend into oblivion and don't seem to care about the financial burden they are placing on our future generations — or even like our NDP opposition who plans to spend 2.5 billion a year without any indication of where those dollars may come from and will burden my children and grandchildren with unimaginable debt — this government will continue to reduce our debt by controlling our spending, growing our economy, and investing in the priority of the people, that being health care, education, and social services.

[16:15]

Mr. Speaker, it is the job of the opposition to criticize, but when they tweet out a statement after the budget that says, "Spending more on social services, corrections, policing, justice and health care does not represent an investment," I find this utterly ridiculous. A statement like this is complete nonsense, and the people of Saskatchewan know this. Mr. Speaker, if anything from the opposition is ridiculous, it's the spending of 2.5 billion per year of taxpayers' dollars without costing out your plan.

Mr. Speaker, we do have a plan. We do have much hope for the growth and prosperity of our province and people. We do have inspiration from those who have chosen to elect all of those you see sitting on this side of the House to lead them forward. We do have strong leadership in our forward-thinking, strong-willed, conscientious, passionate, and caring leader — our Premier. And we are on track to create a renewed and exciting, strong Saskatchewan for another decade to come.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the 2018-19 budget submitted in this Assembly by the Minister of Finance, and I will not be supporting the amendment put forward by the opposition.

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

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be joining the debate, the motion for the budget, our budget this year of 2018-19.

To start off with, I will join some of the other members that have mentioned . . . again, I did do some condolence motions this week of course for the town of Humboldt, the Broncos, and all those affected by the terrible tragedy this week. But again I just want to reiterate that Humboldt and everybody affected by that tragic accident is in our thoughts and prayers and will continue to be for some time.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is going to be interesting to talk to. I'm going to touch on some of the areas at fairly high level. I'll dive deeper maybe into some of the health portions of the budget.

But first off I do want to specifically thank a lot of different people. And I know we do customarily do that, but this past year's been a bit of a different experience for me, and there's a lot of people that I really do need to thank.

First and foremost, my family. We have some new members coming into the family. We actually have, our eldest daughter is engaged; she's going to be married this June 30th. And Mark Cuthill, her fiancé, is going to be joining our family officially although he's been a member of our family for some time already, as well as his two daughters, our soon-to-be granddaughters officially — Raya and Malaya are just a great addition to our family as well.

I've talked about my granddaughter Wynnslet quite a bit, and she's become a bit of a social media sensation. I think her family's pretty proud of her. But just this last Thursday we were pleased to welcome another member to our family. Otto Gregory Krahenbil, our new grandson just joined the world here last Thursday at 7:16. I was able to be there for his birth and actually get a picture with him about three minutes old. So that was a lot of fun. And you know, it's just great to have more people coming into the family and growing our family in that way, Mr. Speaker.

Again support in personal life has been great and the support that they do give me enabling me to do this job. As many would know, when you're doing this job, during session you're here four or five days a week and outside of session I'm usually here two, three, four days a week. So I am away from home quite a bit. I try and get home on weekends. But I am so appreciative of the support and the love that I do get from my immediate family.

Of course we can't do this job, we can't do our job without our staff support, Mr. Speaker. My staff back in Yorkton, Lauretta and Rachelle, do an amazing job representing me and doing the case work day to day back home. So I want to give them a huge shout-out and thank you. Of course the staff here in Regina, the ministry, the minister's office staff both in the Minister of Health and the Minister of Rural and Remote Health's office has worked very much together, and we just couldn't do our jobs without them. So I'm very appreciative of their support, both personally and work support as well, Mr. Speaker.

Of course our colleagues. Our former premier, Brad Wall, who is now gone on to a different part of his life, he was just such a great support, such a great leader. We do miss him, but you know, we're just so happy for him moving on and again moving on to the next part of his life. But of course our new Premier, and I would count as a friend, the member from

Rosthern-Shellbrook is doing just an amazing job and he's growing into that role in an amazing way. And I recognized that before in the work that he had done in the different files that he had held, representing us around this province and even nationally and internationally. And the way he's growing into this new role as Premier and leader of our party is just . . . an amazing, amazing job he's doing. So we're just so thankful for him.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention my friend and colleague that I work with day to day, the Minister of Health . . . the member from Rosetown is a great support and friend as well. And I'm going to refrain from poking at him because he's right here and he might . . . But he's a great friend, and I really do appreciate his support and being able to work with him every day.

Of course my fellow MLAs, I'm very proud of all of them. They're great colleagues and do a great amount of work, and really represent their constituencies very well. I want to give a specific mention to two of my neighbouring MLAs: one from Canora-Pelly, and the Minister of Government Relations, the member for Melville-Saltcoats. Over the last year there's been a lot of situations where I wasn't able to attend maybe some events and things at home, and they were always willing to step up and cover me off in my Yorkton constituency. So I'm just so thankful for them as well, Mr. Speaker.

And of course our three new MLAs on this side of the House — the member for Swift Current, the member for Kindersley, and of course the member for Melfort — that just joined us over the last little while, Mr. Speaker. So thankful to have them on this side of the House, winning those elections, but more so the contribution that they have and will be making to the government and representing their constituencies in the coming years that they will serve here, Mr. Speaker. So congratulations to them.

And of course congratulations to you on your new role as Speaker, Mr. Speaker. I count you as a friend as well, and so far you've been very kind to me — you haven't thrown me out of the House — so I'm appreciative of that, and you're doing a pretty good job. So we'll try and stay on your better side.

Of course all the people of the constituency of Yorkton that have given me the honour of serving them here, I'm very appreciative of them, and of course for the support, I will mention too, that I've gotten from them over the last year, year and a half, Mr. Speaker. And also the people we work with day to day in the caucus office, and more specifically with the Minister of Health and I — the deputy minister, his office with the assistant deputy ministers, all their support staff.

Of course our new Saskatchewan Health Authority, all the executive that is running that new health authority, the work that they're doing. Almost a seamless transition to the single health authority, Mr. Speaker. I want to mention them and of course the great work that they've been doing, and so thankful of them, the CEO, Scott Livingstone, and the work that he's doing over there. And you know, Mr. Speaker, I had a lot of faith in Scott when he was named to that position. And the work that I've seen him do at the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency over the years, how he's taken . . . how he's led that agency to a point of, you know, delivering a very specific health care

service, but delivering it effectively, both urban and rural and remotely in this province, specifically cancer care, which can be quite broad in delivery.

But the way they've done such a great job in building that system and delivering that service to people around this province regardless of where they live, and taking some of that philosophy and some of that experience and now moving into the Saskatchewan Health Authority, I have a lot of confidence in the work that him and his team are going to be able to do, Mr. Speaker.

As with any budget, there's some things we can point to specifically for our communities, for our constituencies, but also realizing that so many of the things that are in this budget do impact the province and namely our constituencies directly and sometimes indirectly. So I'm going to just touch on a lot of those. I know my fellow members and ministers are going to be focusing more on some of their portfolios and some of these other things. So I'm going to briefly touch on some of those, and I'll focus more on the health portfolio as time allows, Mr. Speaker.

So of course the theme of this budget is on track, as been mentioned, and that's because our balanced budget approach is on track. Of course many realize we were over \$600 million deficit last year, being able to achieve a plan of 365 million this year and moving to a \$6 million surplus the next year. And then on the out-years, 108 million and \$212 million surpluses, very achievable and planning for those in the coming years, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, how are we going to do that? Well there's a number of different ways we're going to be able to do that, Mr. Speaker. First and foremost, something we've strived very hard to do over the last number of years is controlled spending. And as many I think realize throughout the province that, you know, controlling government spending is a necessity. And one of the things that I think some aren't really aware of is that we've been hit with a resource revenue reduction because of the soft oil and potash, uranium, and other resource sectors of about 1 to \$1.3 billion per year over the last three, you know, coming up to four years.

So we've had to do a lot of initial work over those years to offset some of those losses. So that work has undergone a lot of work, a lot of attention, and gotten just to the point that we've, you know . . . Admittedly, last year we had to make some difficult decisions to start bringing ourselves back to balance.

But looking at some of the initiatives that we have done over the years that continue to happen, the Minister of Central Services, my seatmate, some of the initiatives he's done with reducing the CVA [central vehicle agency] fleet or maybe eliminating executive air services to save money in that respect, Mr. Speaker. So a lot of those things we're doing internally to save money. Some of the reductions that have happened over the years in Executive Council, in the Premier's office, in staffing situations right here in this building have helped save some money. So I think we're leading by example. So we'll continue to do what we can in controlling spending in as many areas as possible without impacting people to the best of our ability, as much as we possibly can.

Of course this budget, we talked about quite a bit about no tax increases. Although with the PST, we have done a little bit of a shift when it comes to used cars, but for the most part, no tax increases. And first and foremost, the most important thing is we are not going to implement a carbon tax, which I know many members across the floor seem to support. But, Mr. Speaker, when you think about even some of the criticism we've gotten recently about the 60-some-odd million dollars that the federal government had offered if we implemented a carbon tax over a four-year period — you know, 10, \$15 million a year — to do that, we'd have to implement a \$4 billion impact to the people of this province, something we're not willing to do, and we will not do that, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to fulfilling some of our commitments to some of the expectations of the people in the province when it comes to the services that they require or expect, Mr. Speaker . . . I will talk about health care a little bit more in depth in a moment or two. But of course my friend, the member from Saskatoon Northwest, the Minister of Education, our Deputy Premier, some of the money that he put back into the budget — 7.5 million in-year funding last year, 30 million this coming year for classroom supports — I think is a very good move and very appreciated by the sector.

A lot of the funding increases that have gone to foster families, caregivers, community-based organizations — I think \$10 million additional funding to CBOs [community-based organization] this year, Mr. Speaker. Investments in the North such as the group home in La Ronge and other investments, Mr. Speaker. And even some of the other investments when it comes to infrastructure or programs, say specifically through the health authority, that do directly impact the North. We know previous to the health authority development that the northern regions actually realize the higher increase in their spending in the northern health regions than most of our southern health regions, Mr. Speaker. So I believe we are paying attention to those needs and trying to respond as best as we can.

When we look at infrastructure investments, there's been significant infrastructure investments. I know the member from Canora-Pelly that was seconding the motion talked about some of those, the significant investment we've made in infrastructure over the years in multiple ministries, whether it's highways, hospitals, and healthier schools, and across the board, Mr. Speaker. And those investments continue.

Not a whole lot of new capital investments this year, but continued investments in infrastructure to finish some of these very important projects that we have been working on, namely the children's hospital, the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital, the Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford and others, Mr. Speaker.

We see some significant investments in infrastructure as well when we look around the province, although some of these are specific to Regina or Saskatoon, whether it's the bypass or whether it's the bridge project up in Saskatoon. But so many people from here do go to those communities, and it does help them when they're moving around those communities. But it also helps our economy, which benefits our whole province, Mr. Speaker.

And of course I would be remiss if I didn't mention a lot of the twinning and the passing lane projects that we've undertaken. And in this budget a million dollars put towards planning and design of the passing lanes between Melville and Canora which, as you would know, goes right through Yorkton. So a lot of that traffic that does move between Yorkton and Melville, Yorkton and Canora, realizing these passing lanes will just be a great asset to our community and of course increase highway safety there in the coming years.

Plus my understanding is the design will include some work around the intersection just north of Yorkton that turns truck traffic, a lot of heavy truck traffic into the P&H [Parrish & Heimbecker] plant. It turns them into the Grain Millers plant, one of the largest oat processors in North America, I believe it is. And of course Grain Millers Road leads right down to the canola plant, so in the coming years, you know, planning on getting that connection done so we can move that truck traffic through that intersection and down to some of those facilities.

I think it's been spoken to at length so I'll just touch on some of these, Mr. Speaker: keeping our economy strong; of course funding through the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership; increasing our export capacities; some of the new tax incentives, namely the Saskatchewan value-added agriculture and Saskatchewan technology start-up programs that support investment, job creation, and productivity; and then of course incentive programs to encourage mineral exploration and grow and diverse our mineral sector, which we know a lot of our family members and neighbours do work in these sectors, whether it's potash, oil, gas, and the like, Mr. Speaker.

[16:30]

So I did talk a little bit about keeping our balanced budget on track and where we're going from here, Mr. Speaker, the tax changes that I did speak about. One thing I want to touch on briefly is our revenue sharing with our communities. And I understand our local community of Yorkton initially was impacted probably one of the hardest percentage-wise. You know, when I realized that we were being impacted by a high percentage, I initially . . . I immediately called the Premier and some of my colleagues and asked, you know, is there something we can do, not only specifically for Yorkton, but to minimize the impact on some of our municipal partners?

So that's when we came up with the plan to cap these impacts by 30 per cent, which effectively went from a \$1.6 million impact to the city of Yorkton, returning half of that down to an \$800,000 impact. So I think they were thankful for that return, although slightly disappointed as to what . . . the way the program had rolled out, but realizing that we were going to move to a new revenue-sharing program, but specifically something to replace the grants-in-lieu, which was . . . has been pointed out, is kind of an ad hoc and doesn't really make a lot of sense and is quite an unbalanced and unfair program.

So what we moved to this year, there's a little bit of backfilling capital that keeps places like the city of Yorkton, my own municipality, from having any further impact from last year, but also moving to a new plan that actually impacts or actually pays for the grants-in-lieu, grants-in-lieu of property taxes. So government entities, Crown corporations within my

municipality, we'll be getting those grants-in-lieu to offset those taxes that they don't collect. So that'll be a direct, understandable program to cover those grants-in-lieu.

And then we look at some of the other programs that were sort of all over the map when it came to some of the grants-in-lieu, so to speak, that came from Crown corporations. And of course, as you realize, we're moving to a surcharge system that will put those monies back directly into that community that are collected from that community. So initially there shouldn't be a very large impact, a zero impact to my community, but as we are a growing community, as industry comes, as people come, and the usages of some of these sources increase, they will increase over time, an increase in that income. And I'm very confident that it will be a very good plan, a better plan than is right now, and a very fair plan going into the future, Mr. Speaker.

So just in general, you know, we're supporting a strong and growing economy. We're investing again in health care, education, social services, protective services. I think I mentioned the \$4.9 million — maybe I didn't — going to the rural crime strategy, which is very important, not only in some of these areas that have been in the news lately but also in communities like my own where we do have a lot of rural areas, a lot of farmers, that they want to feel safe as well. So I'm thinking and I'm believing that with the increase in police presence, with some of the other partners in the rural crime strategy, we're going to have a very effective system now and into the future. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the plan that of course was originally put in place by our former premier, and carried on by this Premier with some additional changes, that is I believe paying dividends to our province.

I just want to briefly go through, of course, some of the investments in health care which is the portfolio that I co-minister with the member from Rosetown. We know that there is an additional 2.5 per cent lift in health care which I think is appreciated by many. We have the \$3.5 billion for the Saskatchewan Health Authority which does include 25 million for the general operating and pressures; \$19 million of the federal funding to support the provincial connected care strategy to improve access to community-based and team-based community health care services and primary care services to our community settings.

And we know, through some of the work that was done through the accountable care unit in Regina . . . And we're expanding that program of course here and into Saskatoon as well. And then with some of the communities, health services that will be integrated over time with a team-based approach are going to be very proactive and I think getting our population healthier and offsetting some of those pressures in our emergency rooms, Mr. Speaker.

Of course we know we have the investment to phase in the increased physician capacity at the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital, of course money in the budget to implement the staffing and the start-up of the Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford. You know, the additional funding that is coming both federally and provincially to improve mental health services throughout the province, not only just families but children and many other people, Mr. Speaker. And I think a lot

of the members have already spoken about the universal newborn hearing screening program that has \$523,000 in funding.

Of course, capital funding, I spoke about some of the big projects: the children's hospital, the Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford, but also some of the other smaller funds that are going to upkeep maintenance and improve some of the electrical services in some of our specifically major hospitals, and of course those funds that are going to finish those projects that are already under way.

A fairly big chunk in this budget, Mr. Speaker, is the \$49.4 million additional money for physician services. And that's because not necessarily that we're less healthy but it's because we have a growing province. We have 160,000 additional people here. We have a younger population. A lot of our seniors are living longer and of course staying in the province, not moving off to BC, to Kelowna or wherever to retire. That does impact our health care system. So we have additional pressures so we are of course putting extra money in this budget to offset some of those physician pressures and continue with the plan we have been doing, with training more doctors and hiring more doctors, nurses, health care professionals. Contrary to some of the words of the members opposite about cuts in health care, we have more doctors, more nurses, more care aids, and all the like all the way through the health care system that will work in this province year over year, Mr. Speaker.

One thing I know the Leader of the Opposition, that's very close to his heart and something we're very proud to put in play this year, Mr. Speaker, was the additional funds for the HIV strategy. Not only \$50,000 to AIDS Saskatoon, \$50,000 to the Westside Clinic, but also the \$600,000 additional to provide 100 per cent funding for HIV drugs, Mr. Speaker. And we know that it's very important that we do get this under control, that it is a very communicable disease. But as long as we make sure that these people have access to their medications — and they are easier-to-take medications now, Mr. Speaker — we can start getting ahead of this terrible, terrible disease.

One thing I have to admit I sort of shook my head at this afternoon during question period, the Leader of the Opposition referring to us adopting some of their ideas. I'll point to one, Mr. Speaker, the individualized funding for autism services. I don't remember ever hearing the NDP talking about that, but here's their idea of autism services: \$500,000 annually, Mr. Speaker, \$500,000. We upped that autism support to \$8 million and now with this additional \$2.8 million in support to individual autism services, Mr. Speaker, that's I think a far cry from their idea of \$500,000, Mr. Speaker.

The additional money going to the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, I know they're very appreciative of that. They're doing great work so we're happy to support them. And of course the extra money going to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Network to help them with their work, Mr. Speaker.

Of course mental health is very important to everybody in this House, important to everybody in this province, specifically in light of some of the tragedies we've seen in the North, some of the tragedies we've seen around the province with youth and unfortunately sometimes resorting to suicide, Mr. Speaker. And

you know, it's something that touches everyone's heart. I think a lot of us in here are parents, aunts and uncles, and to hear of a young person taking their life is, you know, there is nothing more tragic, Mr. Speaker.

So we looked at total health care funding for mental health, about 275 million plus. Of course when we tie in the addictions funding which is broken out of that, it's an additional I think 45 or so million dollars. But then if we look at the other ministries that actually provide mental health supports, whether it's the ag mental health line or many others, Mr. Speaker, about 85 million extra dollars. So I know a lot of that isn't included in other provinces, but when we look at that, our spending is pretty significant. And of course the Minister of Health has talked about it at length and so have the Premier and Deputy Premier and others, that we're going to continually strive to hit that 7 per cent target. And we will continue to work towards that goal, Mr. Speaker.

You know, something that's close to my heart, remote presence technology, we're going to continue to support that through our health authority, implement not only Telehealth, but of course the nurse robots. The health in your hands, the doc in a box, so to speak, is a very effective piece of technology that works amazingly well, and look at expanding that into every area we can to continue to support health care, but also rural and remote health care where it's actually the most effective.

And of course something close to my heart is EMS [emergency medical services]. I've been doing a lot of work on the EMS file. I really want to thank Ron Dufresne who formerly was . . . I think he owned Moose Jaw ambulance services. He went to I think the ministry for a bit. He did a lot of work at air ambulance to get some challenges under control there and it's just an amazingly operating and valuable service. But also he worked at STARS for five years and now he's been doing a lot of work on the EMS file, and really effective there. So I'm very thankful for the work that he has done, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it seems like I'm getting the hook here right away. You know, there's one thing, much to the chagrin of my colleagues possibly, there's one thing that I really want to touch on in health care, and it's very personal, Mr. Speaker. I touched on it a bit, but over the last year and a half I was diagnosed, about a year and a half ago, I was diagnosed with colorectal cancer. And I want to thank the members on this side of the House, the Premier, former premier, this Premier, and again so many people that did offer so much support.

But I really want to thank specifically the people in the health care system for my personal experience. And why that is, is I didn't want to get any special treatment in the system. I was really impressed with the primary health care system at home, getting in for diagnostic imaging. I was triaged and got in for diagnostic imaging. You know, where some would think it's too long, but I understand the system. You get triaged, you get in, and of course that was done in a timely manner.

But the work that was done through the Cancer Agency, I just can't say enough about the great work that they did there. Mr. Speaker, quite often I would be in to work early in the morning, and I would throw off my jacket and my tie when I knew I had about 15 minutes to get to the Allan Blair Cancer Centre, and so

they had no idea who I was. So it was over time, asking questions and building a relationship with them . . . It took about four weeks for them to figure out that I was the Minister of Rural and Remote Health, which was very interesting to see how great the care was without them knowing anything, just how they treat all the patients. And it really gave me a true appreciation for them.

But also, you know, once they found out who I was and what I represented, some of the quite honest conversations I had, whether it was around continuous improvement or some of the other things, Mr. Speaker. But it really encouraged me as to how they were accepting of a lot of these practices. They realized a lot of the improvements, but I was also willing to listen to some of the challenges that they had. So that was a very eye-opening experience.

And of course being the Minister of Rural Health, getting my surgery back home in Yorkton, very appreciative of all the health care professionals there. And again, I'm going to wrap this up. But just so appreciative of all those medical professionals that did give such great service.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that, thank you very much for your time. I thank my colleagues for enduring my long-winded speeches. I will be supporting the main motion, seconded by the member for Canora-Pelly. I will not be supporting the amendment.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise into the budget debate that we're having in 2018 and the budget that we have before us.

Before I start, I do also want to add my condolences and prayers and thoughts with the community of Humboldt. This tragedy that happened last Friday afternoon is one that will stay with us for a long, long time. And of course we have just learned of another death today, of the trainer I believe. And our thoughts and prayers go to her family as well.

So we all stand with Humboldt and the struggle they have, that they will have, and their families. And I know the funerals will be tough, and our thoughts and prayers as well with the MLA from Humboldt who I know is deeply committed to her community. And so I think all of us are of the same mind of that.

I want to talk specifically about some of my concerns with this budget. Of course yesterday was the government's best day to put forward its platform of how it sees the budget will be for the year. And of course as it plays out over the course of the year, we see reality set in that the hopes and aspirations of the government, whether they are accurately planned or are they accurate at all.

[16:45]

I have to say, and I know my colleague from Nutana, I have to say that I thought her speech and her comments, her commentary on the budget, have been spot on. She has really raised a number of deep concerns that we have. And the question of the title, *On Track* — on track to where? And the

metaphor that we're like a train, a set of cars that are on some siding somewhere waiting for something to happen. We may be on track, but this government has provided no leadership, no vision, no imagination for the families and people of the province in terms of having hope for the future here in Saskatchewan.

We see a government that's caught deep into rhetoric, and we saw that today. We saw some of the language and rhetoric that this government is using to defend their position. And it's alarming, Mr. Speaker, it's deeply alarming. Here we have people, families paying more than ever in their taxes. PST, more than ever, some \$667 a year that they will be paying, whether it's in child's clothing, restaurant meals, you name it, that they didn't pay before. And why? Because of this government's mismanagement, when over the course of the past decade they had record revenues, revenues that were unheard of, the kind of money that was coming in and was mismanaged by this government.

And of course the debt that we have, and of course we talked about the higher power rates than we've ever had before. Mr. Speaker, we have more people living in poverty or near poverty than ever before. This is not a good situation. We're a have province, and we are proud of that, but in fact we spend more than ever on social assistance and this is something that we should not take lightly.

We have the lowest minimum wage in the country now. The Maritimes province are above us. Newfoundland's above us, and why is that? And this is a tough situation for many people. And then we're hearing of the cut to the rental supplement, and I'll talk more about that.

But I thought the critic for Finance raised a very important point that this government seems to be . . . that they just don't hear or they can't fathom that we have a situation where we have mortgage arrears now are three times the national average. So that's our province, Saskatchewan. Mortgage arrears are three times the national average. That means people are paying . . . living paycheque to paycheque in a very vulnerable circumstance. And this government did not seem at all interested in providing any kind of relief.

Mr. Speaker, I've raised this point on a bill that we have before us, the land contracts bill. And it talked about the notice of foreclosures and they were the highest in 1990-91 with 1,900 people having been served their notice of foreclosure on their homes. The lowest was in 2008 where it had come down to 428. We know the 2012 records are 688, and that's nearly a jump of a quarter, of a third. That's a huge jump to go from 428 to 688 in four short years.

But, Mr. Speaker, the irony today was we asked for in written questions the number of notice of foreclosures for the years since 2012 to 2018. That answer was ordered. This government knows the answer to that question but won't share that answer. This is a government that came to power saying they'd be transparent and accountable. We would like to know how many people are facing foreclosures this year, how many faced them last year. But this government won't come clean and tell us what actually were the number of foreclosures. So we hear you have a very different kind of province than what these folks are

portraying.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the member, our Finance critic, when she talked a little bit about the general debt and the fact when they seem immune or . . . It was interesting that the Minister of Finance thinks that we're okay with the debt levels we're incurring here, that we're nearly doubling our debt and it will even be higher. But if they used the same reporting protocols as they used last year, the deficit this year would be much greater. It would be actually closer to \$750 million. And, Mr. Speaker, we are paying \$655 million in debt servicing. What we could do with that kind of money. What we could do with that kind of money.

Well, Mr. Speaker, and I know the Minister of the Economy doesn't like it when we raise a question about people getting to work. There's 7,800 lost jobs last year, and he will pull out numbers. We see the kind of action that's happening in Alberta or British Columbia, but it's not happening here in Saskatchewan. We have the slowest job growth, but all we get is rhetoric. So, Mr. Speaker, we have some real concerns about that.

Now in many ways last year's budget can be a bit of shock and awe. People were just shocked at the gall of the government, at what they were doing, particularly to the municipalities, people on social assistance. And in some ways this is an improvement. But we know that concept of shock and awe, and people go, oh, well we should be thankful this year that it wasn't as bad as last year. But people deserve more. They deserve leadership. They deserve hope. They deserve inspiration. These are difficult times for people living in Saskatchewan.

And we saw this particularly in education where the education budget was cut by \$54 million. They restored \$30 million and they expect to be thanked for that, Mr. Speaker. They expect to be thanked for that. And as my colleague from Fairview said, you know, it's like a pickpocket taking money out of your pocket and then giving you half back and expecting you to say thanks. Well we're shocked by that. We're shocked by that. This government should actually be restoring funding. Our classrooms are full. They're getting more and more kids in the classrooms, and what do we have?

So, Mr. Speaker, as I said that we're really concerned about this kind of thing. I do want to say, I want to talk just briefly about the minister's comments on mental health, and we're appreciative. We're glad to see that there's over \$11 million being spent on that, but we understand some \$9 million are coming this year from the federal government. And as my colleague from Riversdale actually asked the question, what about the \$1.5 million that was earmarked for last year? Is that part of the 11 million? And so . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . It is part of the 11 million. Okay.

So actually we are hoping, we are hoping . . . We are calling the government to get, not only to meet the 7 per cent target, if I understand what the minister was talking about. What we need to be at, 9 per cent or even more, you know. And I appreciate the minister, and I think this is important. He talked about other avenues and other departments that can help, for example, in agriculture, their rural helpline. That's very good, very important.

But I know that we see in labour, we see PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] as a big issue. And people are not getting served with PTSD, especially those . . . And my colleague from Riversdale has raised this in terms of volunteers who are asked to serve in emergency medical situations, and they don't have . . . they're not covered by Workers' Comp and they don't have a plan. But they are suffering from PTSD because they are the front lines, first responders. And so we need to do more about that.

And I just want to talk briefly about the rental housing supplement. I've talked . . . I think I've talked every year for 12, 14 years on this topic. And I was surprised that I didn't hear more about what I have said. I want to see, Mr. Speaker, more research into this. This is a good program and if it's working with the federal program, fair enough. But the federal program, we understand, doesn't kick in until 2020. There's an 18-month gap, 18-month gap. People will wonder about what's happening. The Minister of Social Services says that people are grandfathered in now. That's kind of true. The question is, what happens if you're on it now and you move? We understand you're off. You're not grandfathered in, so that you are done. And so people are now going to be frozen into the places where they're at. And this is an issue.

You know \$50 million is a lot to pay in rental supplements. And if you look back in the comments I've said . . . And I expect to hear somebody throw this back to me. I've said, is there a way we could have spent that \$50 million better in terms of building social housing, building seniors' housing, building affordable housing.

The minister talked about Sask Housing vacancies. Fair enough. But we know this government has raised the rents in Sask Housing apartments and that's probably why people aren't in those places because they've chosen to look in the private market, or they might know somebody, or they may be doubling up or tripling up. So this is a real, real issue.

Mr. Speaker, I want to put this on the record. The Minister of Justice has not raised the funding for the Human Rights Commission now in several years. And I see that there is a lot of attention, a lot of people going to the Human Rights Commission, and I know this is a problem. And this is one that even a minor . . . And now, you know, I don't want the members to say I'm asking for \$2.5 billion here — they'll get their pencils real sharp — but some sort of increase to recognize how important this service is, some sort of increase.

We saw a cut to the Energy Star program and it will save some \$2.8 million, you know. So there are . . . You do different things with different programs. And so you save \$2.8 million there. And I get now it's normalized. People are looking for Energy Star programs, and that's fair enough. But we still need to make sure our core programs like Human Rights Commission are being funded fairly.

I just want to talk briefly in my new critic role. I'm . . . [inaudible] . . . coming back is a bit of recycling. I'm now back into the environmental cycle. But the carbon tax, he made a big point about that, no carbon tax, fair enough. But I found it really odd, really odd, they are not providing any money at all for their court case — zero money for that.

Now we've been down this road before when they decided to go to the Supreme Court over labour issues and I had several questions about, where's the money for that. And they said, well the ministry officials can do it off the side of their desk. And I got in a lot of trouble for saying something like that. Because they said it was a priority. Well if it's a priority, why is it not reflected in the budget? Well they're all just there to do their work. I don't know if that really flies. And we saw what happened with the labour court case in Ottawa and how well we did there.

Mr. Speaker, this is so ironic that we have, on one hand, those folks . . . And the minister will get up and talk about the resilience plan and what's happening there and how important that is. And there's some really good parts in there, and I have to say that I'm looking forward to seeing how that unfolds. There's some good work in terms of the agricultural contributions, all of that. But at the same time, they've cut the people I assume will be doing the actual research by some 18 per cent. And that unit has been cut, I understand, some 80 per cent since 2012. So how is there any credibility on this file?

The Premier got up and was talking about planting trees today. Reforestation is now down to zero. It's completely cut. So the only guy who's planting trees is the Premier. And so . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, there you go. There you go. They must have been fact checking. They're not helping at all. Well there you go.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to put on the record about some things around recycling. And this is from the Retail Council of Canada and they were not happy about the new environmental handling charges. Now I know, I understand how this money recycles through the GRF [General Revenue Fund] and then comes back to Sarcan, but the fees are very high.

Now this is a case . . . Now the Minister of Justice, he wants to get up, but he's eating up my clock and he'll get his time when he gets his time. What do they say? Without consultation. Have we heard that before with this group? Without consultation. And without notice, the province of Saskatchewan announced on Friday, March 23rd, 2018 the new environmental handling charges. This is industry talking about this. This is industry talking about this. So we'll have lots of questions about this.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to put on record that there's a lot of problems on this budget and I have a lot of concerns. I'll be supporting the amendment for sure. But I want to make sure I get on record, I still have the biggest problem with big money. And all you have to do is follow the money to know where this budget is actually coming from. This is all about big money, Mr. Speaker. I support the amendment. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — It now being 5 p.m., this Assembly stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.]

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