



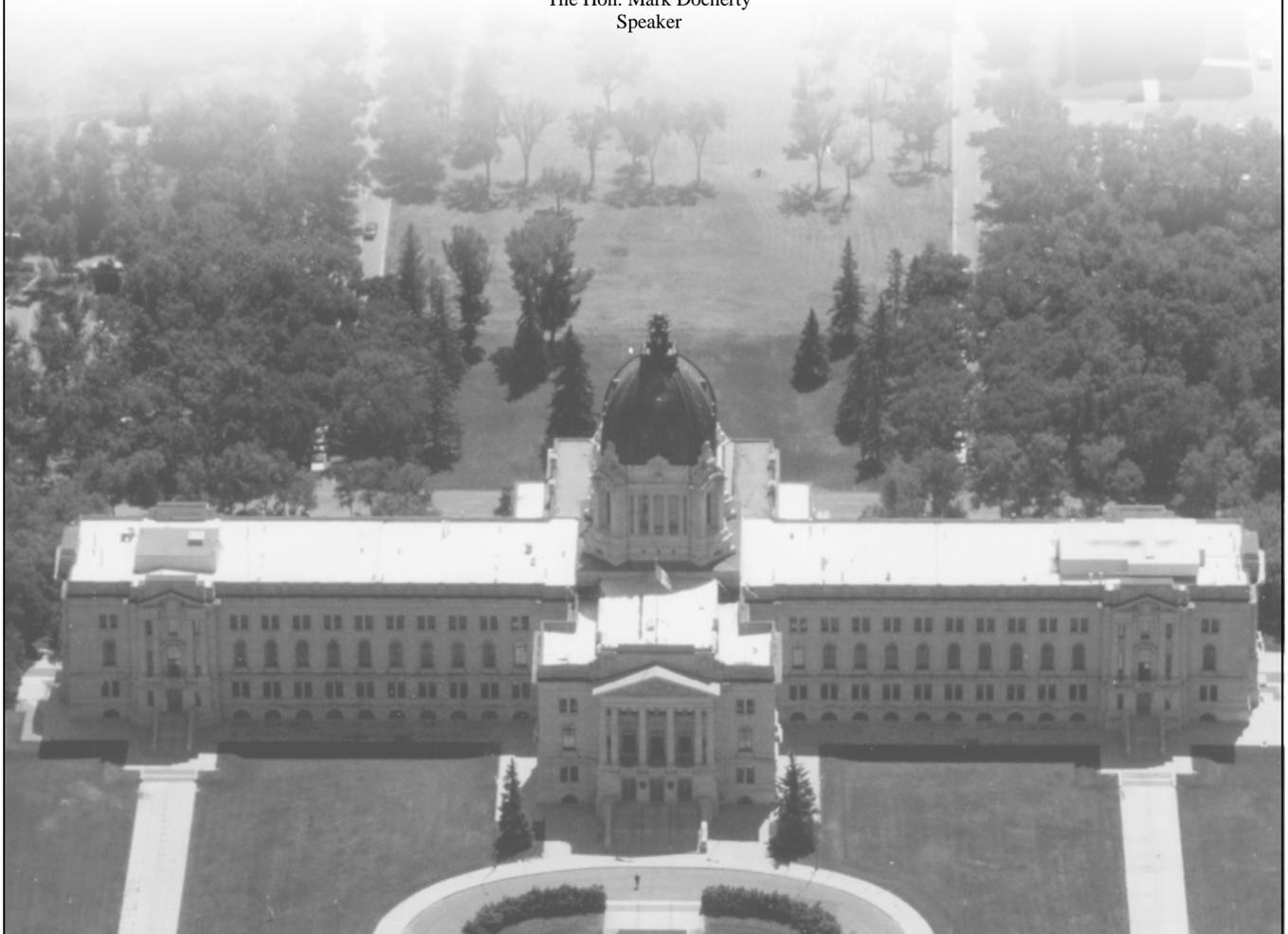
SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)
Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Mark Docherty
Speaker



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2nd Session — 28th Legislature

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Vacant — Regina Northeast

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

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[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

The Deputy Speaker: — It now being 7 o'clock, we will resume debate on the main motion and the amendment.

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, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Ms. Sproule.]

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

Mr. Nerlien: — Thank you. Thank you, colleagues, for that warm welcome. I appreciate that. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I begin tonight by paying homage to all those involved in the Humboldt tragedy. And tonight I want to pay particular attention to a few people that maybe are on the periphery of the story.

Chris Beaudry, the assistant coach, who was early on the scene. Chris is from my constituency, and I spoke to him not that long ago. And I texted him after the accident and he was doing relatively well, but I can't possibly imagine what he might be going through.

I want to also mention the local farm families in that particular area and, particularly, the Shumlanski family who are originally from my area. Imagine what those farm families are dealing with day in and day out as they pass that site and they relive it every day.

I'm concerned as well, obviously, for the bus drivers — the folks from Charlie's Charters and all of the bus drivers across the province — who serve their communities so well by hauling the teams around; the volunteers from community to community, whether it's hockey games, ball games, any of those kinds of events; and even the folks that move so many people around in the tourism industry. And I think we have a great deal of respect for those drivers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the truck drivers of this province are so professional, and each and every one of them is hurting by this incident. And I note in particular one of my friends at home who is a truck driver; he's also a singer — Nino Hernandez. Some of you may have seen him sing at the Rider games. But he rewrote the lyrics to the song "Hallelujah" and has posted them online, and it is an amazing, beautiful tribute to the hockey players, to the families and to all those involved. And I would encourage anyone and everyone to seek that out.

I also just want to touch briefly on what I think is probably going to be something that comes forward over time, and that is the resiliency of the players themselves. I think I know well enough from my own experience as a parent of hockey players that they are incredibly bonded in a team. And I'm quite sure that the hockey players will find solace amongst themselves, will find ways to give tribute to the players that have been lost and to those that have been severely injured, and they will bind together as a team and as a fraternity across the hockey world. And those players will never be forgotten, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to change just for a second. I'd like all of my colleagues to give some thought to something from a little different perspective on this incident. So I'll ask my colleagues to imagine for a moment that they are the bus driver or the truck driver on that fateful day. It's a bright, clear day. You've just completed preparing a load for the truck or you've just stopped in Tisdale with the team deeply engaged in game preparation. In any event, you're about 20 minutes from the intersection of 35 and 335.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, imagine with me that either you, the driver of the truck, or you, the driver of the bus, had dropped your keys as you were approaching the door to leave. You reach over to pick up your keys and sort through them to get the right key in your hand as you approach your vehicle. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that act of picking up your keys would have taken about five seconds. You get in the vehicle, start up, and head down the road. Had either driver had that experience that day, either the bus or the truck would have been 440 feet away from that intersection at that fateful moment at normal speeds.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, despite everything, despite any laws or signs or training or any number of reviews that will be undertaken, let's not lose sight of the fact that sometimes fate is the cruellest thing. It is in our nature to look for someone, some organization, the government, or our deity to blame. It's our nature to speculate or opine on what could have or should have or might have been done differently. But we must ask all of our citizens to wait for all of the analysis to be completed before we make any judgments.

It is of no comfort to those who are dealing with this tragic loss of life or those on the periphery to be second-guessing or to be speculating on the if-only scenarios. Let us give time to the appropriate agencies, the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police], Highways, first response teams, including support services, to do their analysis and debriefing.

Mr. Speaker, if I might quote German author Hermann Hesse:

I have always believed, and I still believe, that whatever good or bad fortune may come our way, we can always give it meaning and transform it into something of value.

Let us as legislatures be patient as we gather the evidence from these situations. We have an obligation to the citizens of Saskatchewan to be the level heads, to consider all factors, to reach out to the stakeholders, to reach out to communities, to reassure our friends and neighbours that we continue to have their safety in mind as they move people and goods across this great province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I get into the budget, allow me to briefly thank a few folks. I want to acknowledge my constituency executive. We all know how important they are to our relationship with our constituents, and I am truly honoured by their support. Many in this House know that I lost my friend and constituency president to suicide a couple of months ago. Mr. Deputy Speaker, he was a young, accomplished businessman, a former mayor and civic leader, a huge volunteer in the community and in sports, and a proud citizen of this province. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the spectre of deeply buried mental health issues and its consequences is not limited to young or old, to the advantaged or disadvantaged, or to any segment of society, nor is it lost on any of us. This is a discussion whose time is long past and must continue in earnest.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to thank my constituents, who never hesitate to give me feedback, both positive and negative, on things we are doing as a government. I want to thank the Premier and congratulate him on his leadership win and the ministers of this government for always being open to discussion on any matters of importance.

I also want to pay particular thanks to the chiefs of staff and the ministerial assistants and all of the people we work with every day. They have always been professional and responsive. Also we would not be able to do what we do without our constituency assistants, and despite what others have said, I think I have the best one in the province. Thanks, Chris, for all you do.

Our families are incredibly important. I'm very lucky to have a brother and sister and their spouses who never hesitate to keep me grounded and provide me with the most unfettered feedback. And last and most important, my wife and family, who are incredibly supportive and interested in what I and we do in this place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank the Finance ministers and the members of treasury board for the hard work they put in to developing the 2018-19 budget. Much of what I would say about the budget has been said many times by my colleagues on this side of the House, but I would be remiss if I didn't at very least comment on our good friends opposite view of the world and how things actually work in real life.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP [New Democratic Party] Finance critic and most across the way cannot grasp that investment in the infrastructure is an investment in the future of the province. The NDP talk about no plan. I would argue that they have no idea what a plan is. The fundamental definition of a plan is an intention to achieve something. Nothing could be more evident. Since day one of our government, we have had a plan to grow the province of Saskatchewan, unlike members opposite whose plan was apparently to starve the province of its youth, its vigour, its talent, and its hope.

We have a plan for employment growth and we have more than 60,000 new jobs in the province. We have a plan to grow agriculture. Year after year, records being set and investments in new diversification and value-added programs. We have a plan to grow technology and we've had an exceptionally positive response from the tech sector to our focus on innovation, not only through current announcements but, year

after year, to the innovation in ag, the economy, health technology, and other advancements. We have a plan to grow mining and investments in initiatives for diversification of the industry.

We need to look no further than the record investments in infrastructure in health, in schools, in energy, in power, in highways, in long-term care facilities, in SaskTel, and municipal infrastructure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with growth comes challenges. Any of us who have been in business know the value of investing for the future. Sometimes the capital investment is well ahead of the operational cash flow. None of the members opposite seem to grasp the concepts that plans are a road map, not a tunnel. Some roads might have detours. Some might be under repair — and that's more likely under our government than it ever was under theirs.

Unlike our friends opposite, our road map is right side up. Plans go through various stages from concept to development to operationalization to fine tuning. Sometimes that process takes years. Plans must account for various scenarios, but those that are uncontrollable are by definition outside your ability to define. Fort McMurray or Brexit or the financial collapse of 2008-09 might be examples. But sometimes we need to make adjustments. Forest fires, drought, flooding, and many other things affect the timing of expenditures.

In fact, to put it in perspective, a few days ago in a news briefing budget day, the NDP finance critic said that as a government — listen to this, colleagues — as a government they knew how to balance a budget. What audacity. Sure we remember. May I quote from the 2007 budget: "The March 19th federal budget announced a \$266 million equalization payment to Saskatchewan." That is their badge of honour, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, members opposite go on and on about our debt. And here's an interesting fact: their projected debt to GDP [gross domestic product] in their 2007 budget was, for the 2008 year, 23.8 per cent. Ours in the 2018-19 budget is 22.5 per cent. Facts, ladies and gentlemen. It is the same old story. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm going to ask colleagues to respond to some questions. How many schools did they close to balance the budget?

An Hon. Member: — 176.

Mr. Nerlien: — 176. How many hospitals did they close to balance the budget?

An Hon. Member: — 52.

Mr. Nerlien: — 52. How many long-term care beds did they close? How many doctors left Saskatchewan? 173. How many nurses left? 450. How many highways did they paint black rather than repair, and then the second part of that question is, who was the minister of Highways with the paintbrush? The member from Athabasca was the minister of Highways with the big paintbrush. And they cut \$500 million from municipal revenue sharing.

[19:15]

Colleagues, there are three ways governments have to deal with revenue and expense equations in a budget: they can raise taxes, they can reduce expenses, or they can increase debt. A plan does not include knee-jerk reactions to every issue that members opposite portray as apoplectic.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are on track. And I remind members opposite that a track is a road or a path-affording passage, especially a tough one. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where have we been and where are we now? Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, West Texas Intermediate had a high of 107.95 USD [United States dollars] in 2014 and a low of 26.19 in 2016. This morning WTI [West Texas Intermediate] was at 65.83. Potash had a high of 323 a tonne in 2014 and a low of 214 in '17. The last close, I believe, was at 226. Uranium had a high of 44 USD a pound in '14 and a low of 18 in '16. I believe uranium closed around \$21.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are seeing a recovery, but it is modest at best. And our industries in this province should be congratulated and celebrated each and every day for their incredible resilience.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is why our plan to diversify the economy through strategic investments in ag value, in science, in technology innovation, and in mining diversification and so many other innovations across government and, more importantly, supporting the private sector through lower taxes and, critically, a positive view of the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, over 70 per cent of our budget is dedicated to health, education, and social services. I just want to highlight a couple from my particular constituency: revenue sharing in Kelvington, up 86 per cent since 2007; in Wadena, 90 per cent.

This is education. And I know the member goes on and on about education funding, but I wanted to highlight just specifically the preventative maintenance renewal projects in my constituency: Horizon School Division budget allocation, up 15 per cent; Christ the Teacher Roman Catholic School Division preventative maintenance budget, up 16 per cent; Good Spirit School Division, up 11 per cent; North East School Division, up 15 per cent. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think we're investing in the schools and the supports within those schools very handily.

I do also want to thank the Minister of Highways for making an investment this year in a particularly challenging piece of highway in my constituency. And I want to point out from 2007 to 2014 roughly \$98 million was invested in highways across the constituency. But there is more to do, and I will remind the minister often of that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a call to action is empty without a commitment to personal responsibility and accountability. Far too often we are challenged by a call to action to fix something for somebody else. In context, there isn't a single one of us in this room that isn't heartbroken by a family struggle through no fault of their own, or concerned by a community challenged with budget issues due to some calamity or the incredible challenges in health care as we become so much better in

identifying disease and the resultant challenges in treatment.

The issue is about how we respond. My colleagues have outlined numerous ways we have responded. I will simply refer you back to the excellent speeches by each of the ministers about the important investments of their portfolios.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will comment very briefly on the pipeline issue. The federal Trudeau Liberals' lack of action on Kinder Morgan is made more telling this morning when it was reported that Prime Minister Trudeau told the media in France that we can't get out of the oil and gas industry soon enough.

The BC [British Columbia] NDP government's complete and utter disregard for Canadian law and national-provincial jurisdiction is nothing short of ludicrous. Further, and I'll use the word ludicrous again, statements by the Minister of the Environment on not having any time for politicians that disagreed with her.

The challenge of government is to not suffer the myopia of special interests or the cause of the moment, but to consider the broader long-term implications of regulatory and policy decisions. The latest announcement by Prime Minister Trudeau, Premier Notley, and Premier Horgan is simply another example of left-leaning governments throwing taxpayers' money — our money — at a private project that private industry would well have accomplished had they not put every possible regulatory roadblock in place to stop it.

Notley and Trudeau are going to fund the investment risk that is absolutely 100 per cent attributable to the three governments involved. It is nothing more than a socialist transfer of wealth among socialists to create a photo op and a feel-good moment at our expense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are truly well served by a broad range of dedicated public servants in the province of Saskatchewan. They understand that the taxpayer is their customer. They understand that service delivery is about customer delivery.

With rigorous attention to our taxpayer customers we, as the political component, and our broader public service will continue to work with the individuals, small, medium, and large businesses, CBOs [community based organizations], and numerous service organizations across the province to keep Saskatchewan on track.

Let us never lose sight of the fact that it is the people of Saskatchewan, not the government, that drives the economy. If the Humboldt tragedy can teach us anything, it is so absolutely evident that the people of this province think about each other first. Our first responder teams, health care professionals, and everyone involved immediately responded with true altruism and dedication to humanity ahead of any other purpose. There is a great lesson in that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Saskatchewan Volunteer Medals have on them the term *nos ipsos dedimus*, which means "We gave of ourselves." Nothing speaks to Saskatchewan values better than this. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting the budget put forward by the Minister of Finance, and I will not be supporting the opposition amendment. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in conclusion,

we are proud of our record, we are proud of our citizens, and we are Humboldt strong. Thank you.

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

Mr. Bradshaw: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to stand up and support our budget tonight. But first I would also like to put my condolences through to the Humboldt Broncos because this is an unprecedented tragedy. And I want to thank the fire departments, the first responders, the volunteers from Nipawin, Carrot River, Zenon Park, Tisdale, Melfort. Of course, I'd like to thank STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society] too for the work that they have done and the Alliance Church that did a great job over in Nipawin. I also have to thank all of the physicians in the cities too.

Mr. Speaker, this was an unprecedented tragedy, and I attended the funeral on Friday for Glen Doerksen, the bus driver from Carrot River. And I'll tell you, I wasn't counting . . . My wife and I went in there at a quarter after 1. The funeral was at 2, and we got some of the last seats in there. Somehow they managed to jam in about 1,300 people into our community centre. And that just shows how well-liked this person was.

And I know we've all ridden on, I've ridden on the buses as a fan. My kids rode on the bus. They played hockey, they played football, so they rode the bus. And we always thought it was a great and a safe way to go, and I believe it still is. It's just one of those tragedies that, I'll tell you, we just never want to see happen again. And like I said, it was unprecedented.

Mr. Speaker, also I'd like to continue on and thank the people from Carrot River Valley who have been supporting me over the past number of years. And you know, I really appreciate their support to work on their behalf. And even though some of them know me, they still keep on voting for me, so I can't quite figure that one out. But, Mr. Speaker, this has been a real privilege to be able to sit in this House and represent them for the government.

I also want to thank my CAs [constituency assistant], Shelley Meyer and Cindy Warner. They do a fantastic job back in our office. And to tell the truth, I think most people here know it, our CAs do the real hard part of the work. They're the ones that answer the phones and talk to various different people. And I have to say that they are very, very, very professional in what they do.

And, needless to say, any of us in here, we have to also think of our families. You know, my children, that was the reason I got into government — I've explained that quite a few times in this House; I don't have to explain it again — because I wanted to see our children working in Saskatchewan. And both Morgan and Gina are working in Saskatchewan.

Gina is teaching. And I think back to the old days back when the NDP were in power. You know, they were so busy chasing students and people out of the province that if she went into a teaching career, she probably wouldn't have one in this province. She would probably have to go to Alberta or British Columbia or, heaven forbid, Ontario, Mr. Speaker. And you know, it's great to see them working in the province.

Of course, Morgan is well known; quite a few people actually know him. He works in the building here, and he's probably far more politically astute than what I am. He keeps on saying, Dad, you shouldn't keep talking the way you do, and sooner or later it's going to catch up. And he's probably got a good point, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to thank my wife, Terry. She is very happy to keep me busy in Regina. And I think that she enjoys it that I manage to get out of her hair for a while and she out of mine, although that's just a figure of speech, Mr. Speaker.

Anyway, I also want to thank our Finance minister who did the yeoman work on putting this budget together. And you know, she's from Humboldt and boy, I'll tell you, that had to have been tough to be able to come in here just shortly after that tragic accident and do that. And I know that, you know, she knew some of those kids. That was a tough thing for her to do and I really, I really give her credit. And I give her credit also for having what we call in our budget as on track because, Mr. Speaker, that's what this budget is. It has kept it on track.

I want to also thank our new Premier, or at least I want to say that our new Premier, I want to congratulate him on being elected and the new Opposition Leader. Been a lot of changes around here, but things just have to continue on, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I guess I wanted to talk just a little bit about some of the things that have happened in Carrot River Valley with this budget. Now the Finance critic stood up and said, well you're underfunding the municipalities. Well let me tell you, on revenue sharing, Tisdale has gone up 111 per cent since 2007 on the money that they've received. Nipawin has gone up 111 per cent from what they received in 2007. Hudson Bay has gone up 69 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Just exactly what is the Finance critic sitting there and complaining about?

Then you go to the Education critic saying we're underfunding our schools. Well it was just mentioned by the member from Kelvington-Wadena about the PMR [preventative maintenance and renewal] increase from the last budget. This last budget is 15 per cent, Mr. Speaker. How are we underfunding the schools? And also the other good part about it, I can remember going to that school when Morgan was playing basketball, and the roof was leaking. They had five-gallon pails all over the place in that school. Porcupine Plain now has a new school. Another one was Hudson Bay. Hudson Bay they had black mould, part of the school was condemned. Hudson Bay now has a new school. Just exactly how are we underfunding education, Mr. Speaker?

[19:30]

Mr. Speaker, we've also got record amounts going out in health again, health up two and a half per cent. We've got social services went up 4.8 per cent. Mr. Speaker, how can they say that we're underfunding them?

And we look at the highways. Another thing that's going on up in my constituency, the Minister of Highways — although I had to drive him over, I had to put 50 pounds of air in my air shocks to make sure that my truck rode real well — but he is doing 21 kilometres of upgrades on Highway 255 up to Tobin Lake,

which is a great resort village, Mr. Speaker. So how can you say that we are just cutting out all of these things? Mr. Speaker, we are not.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to the NDP. Here's one of things about the NDP. And I want to quote the NDP leader that he said on April the 11th, 2018. And he said:

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 . . .

Mr. Speaker, this budget does that. And let's go back to what the NDP planted. The NDP, well due to the fact of, let's face it, they don't have any agriculture people over there, and they got a little mixed up on their seeds. Well all they planted, all they planted was a rose bush, Mr. Speaker.

Now the flower looked pretty, but guess what? You know, it's got those thorns all over it. And those thorns were chasing the people all out of Saskatchewan because every time they tried do something, they try and go up and smell a rose, they get pricked. And then that's it, they go. And they would leave and they would go to Alberta. They would go to British Columbia, wherever. They got out of the province. And, Mr. Speaker, that is the NDP's record in this province. They had the worst record, the out-migration record because they kept on getting people with these rose thorns. Mr. Speaker, that just shows what they . . .

And speaking of agriculture, I just have to get into agriculture a little bit, and I really don't have that much time, Mr. Speaker. But you know, one of the promises that the new leader of the NDP made, he wanted to encourage agriculture practices that decrease carbon inputs through crop choices, fuel-efficient farm equipment, etc. Mr. Speaker, do you think farmers aren't doing this on their own? Farmers are very innovative people. They know how to do these things. They don't have to have the government sit back and tell them what to do.

But they went even further. Apparently they wanted shut down the . . . to help us so we wouldn't move so much grain. So they want to have an incentive out there for everybody to go organic, so we can produce about a quarter of as much grain, and that way, it'll help out the shipments of grain out to the coast, Mr. Speaker.

You can go through this thing, but . . . And I got a really good one here. I am going to run out of time real quick here, Mr. Speaker. But yes, this is one I noticed in here. Out of their \$2.5 billion per year promises that they made — that I don't know how they were going to pay for; boy, they'd really have to put the carbon tax up since they're in favour of that too — they had “. . . commission a study on the viability of producing generic drugs here in Saskatchewan through a new Crown corporation, SaskPharm.”

Mr. Speaker, the CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] tried to run a box factory. They tried to run a shoe factory, Mr. Speaker. They tried to run a potato factory, Mr.

Speaker. How well did that work for them? And now they want to start up pharmaceuticals and start making them right here in Saskatchewan. Good deal, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP truthfully doesn't have a clue on how to run a province or how to run a business or how to run a farm, and it's very evident. And all they can think about is supporting a carbon tax. They say, when they talked about it, when they were doing their reply to the budget, they said, well you have no plan to reduce emissions. Prairie resilience, Mr. Speaker, a plan put together by our Environment minister, which will work way better than any, any carbon tax, which we all know, which has been proven in other jurisdictions will not work.

So, Mr. Speaker, I guess my time is up. I could go on for a long time, Mr. Speaker, but I'm going to be supporting this budget, Mr. Speaker. And there's absolutely no way I'll support the amendment. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I once again mention the Humboldt Broncos. It is very close to my constituency. Humboldt is the town I do my business in. But I was able to speak on it the other day, so I won't dwell on it. So I will just say let us all pray for the people affected by the tragic event.

I would first, before I get into the budget speech, like to say thank you to my team Telfer, Don and Mary Anne, who run my office. And Mary Anne's been there now 14 years, and she was constituency assistant for Arlene Julé before that. So she knows more about it than any of us here. But I appreciate the support that I get from both Don and Mary Anne, and above all I appreciate their friendship.

I would also like to say thank you to my wife, Valerie. She's been my best friend and partner, lady auctioneer. Anything we need, she's there to support and build. So I thank her for being my Valerie.

I would like to thank the Minister of Finance and her crew. It was quite a job, and they came through with amazing, amazing results. I would like to thank our new Premier. I'm impressed already, so thank you very much. I would also like to thank the people of my constituency, the historic constituency of Batoche.

And now to the budget. This budget is the foundation for the return to a balanced budget. As the economy blossoms, Saskatchewan will be standing on a firm foundation as we go forward. When we look at other provinces and see them digging deeper, beyond their reach, we look at that and say, we don't want to go that way. Mr. Speaker, the old adage goes, you can't get out of a hole by digging it deeper.

The comments coming in about this year's budget are very strong and very supportive. They all think it's a wonderful budget for the situation we're in. People see this budget as a key move to keep Saskatchewan ahead of the pack. We unfortunately see our federal government digging deeper and deeper. We know it will take generations — yes, generations — to recover, and we in Saskatchewan won't go that route.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to address interest rates, a factor of gigantic proportion that is often ignored. They have been at an all-time low. The interest rates were to the point that they were not a major factor in the decision made to purchase a house, a car, land. But, Mr. Speaker, the interest rates are starting to creep back up. I hope everyone here that's old enough can remember interest rates at 18 per cent.

I talked to a gentleman after the budget, and he told me that he and his wife at that time took out a mortgage to buy a new home at the rate of 18 per cent. The price tag was 90,000, and he said at times, he said they were sweating blood. By the end of the mortgage, they said they would never, ever do that again. So now a new house would be from 2 to 300,000 or more. If interest rates climb, how do you ever pay that off? The odds are stacked against you, and you could be facing the sad reality of losing your home. Saskatchewan is preparing for such a situation. High interest rates would cripple our economy.

Mr. Speaker, this budget stands with a plan and with a vision. The plan is to stay on track to get back to a balanced budget. The vision is to look well into the future so that we will be on a firm foundation, not standing in a hole that we can't see out of. If we stay the course with this budget, we will be able to deal with the future with strength and confidence.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan cannot move forward unless we address the federal Trudeau carbon tax. No matter how you try to sell it, it's a tax grab. No matter what colour lens you look through, it's still a federal tax grab. First off is the ridiculous statement that the money will go straight back to the provinces. There has never been and never will be a tax that is revenue neutral. Someone has to pay the federal bean counters, and they don't come cheap. The cost of administration would be huge.

The biggest factor for Saskatchewan is we are an exporting province. If we have another tax, how do we compete in markets around the world? We already have the extra cost of moving our product to market because we are a landlocked province and have the added cost of getting our product to the shipping ports on the coast.

Our Finance minister delivered an exceptional budget, considering the financial situation and world markets. I was proud to hear our Finance minister's statement on carbon tax. There will be no carbon tax. The response of the visitors in our legislature that day was very enthusiastic. I was disappointed to see no positive response from the NDP. Mr. Speaker, the NDP say they support the economy and small business. How can you say that and yet are prepared to add another cost to our exporting province?

The carbon tax only looks at how much carbon we produce. Would it not be correct to balance that with the amount of carbon we sequester? The truth is Saskatchewan sequesters more carbon than it produces, and that's not counting Boundary dam 3 which sequesters over 2 million tonnes. It is our cropland and forest that sequester a vast amount of carbon, over 12 million tonnes. Boundary dam is the first of its kind in the world and a leader, a world leader in carbon sequestration. But of course the NDP are against that also.

The NDP are against Boundary dam. They are against pipelines.

They are against uranium. So to spur on the economy, the NDP would support a carbon tax and things like the Leap manifesto. I don't see how and I can't see any way of making that connection. Those two items would have Saskatchewan back in the dark days of a have-not province. You cannot lift up Saskatchewan's economy by dragging it down.

I heard an NDP supporter say that Saskatchewan stands alone against the carbon tax. Well to quote an old farm saying, Mr. Speaker, hold your horses. We now see Manitoba coming onside. We can see two quick changes on the electoral horizon. There are soon to be two provincial elections: one in Alberta, one in Ontario. If I were a betting man, I would bet that when the new government of those provinces looks at what the cost of the carbon tax is, they will join the Saskatchewan team. You could see then the domino effect sweep across the country and they all fall down.

[19:45]

Mr. Speaker, how can anyone who truly wants to grow our economy support the carbon tax? The province of British Columbia has had a carbon tax for the past three years. The carbon tax, Trudeau says, is designed to reduce carbon outputs. Well, Mr. Speaker, in reality what has happened in British Columbia is their carbon footprint has increased.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also told that former US [United States] president Bill Clinton kept a card in his pocket that said, "It's the economy, stupid." It does not matter which side of the 49th parallel you are on, this statement fits. Without a robust economy, how do you pay the bills — health care, education, highways? It all begins to fall apart if the economy fails.

Mr. Speaker, because of my agricultural background and family history, agriculture is very near and dear to me. Depending on the crop year, Saskatchewan has between 44 and 47 of all of Canada's cropland. Agriculture is the foundation of this province. It is what we are. As a result, I am pleased with the budget as it relates to agriculture. The ag budget is 378 million. This recognized the importance of ag in a tough time.

I must also comment on the 258 million to fully fund — fully fund — AgStability, AgriInvest, western livestock price insurance, and crop insurance. Agriculture needs to be strong in this province and with this budget, agriculture will remain strong and continue to grow.

Mr. Speaker, other members have commented on the leader of the opposition's promises made during his leadership run. Of course, we've all heard the costed-out price tag on his promises, and this needs to be said over and over. The people of Saskatchewan need to know. The price is beyond two and a half billion a year. Talk about digging the hole deeper. Mr. Speaker, if those financial wizards on the other side of the House have their way, Saskatchewan will become a black hole. No escape, no bottom. Just deeper, deeper, deeper.

I would now like to address pipelines. I agree there is a risk factor with pipelines. There's also a risk factor with crossing the street. We take the risk to cross the street because it far outweighs the option of staying on this side of the street. We take risks like this every single day. This also applies to

pipelines. The risk to pipelines is far, far less than using rail. The risk for pipelines is far less than the human rights abuses that are occurring in some of the countries we get oil from. The risk factor of damage to the environment is far greater with ships crossing an unprotected ocean.

Mr. Speaker, the standard practice for a ship bringing oil to North America is to pump off the cargo of oil when it gets here, and then they pump the cargo holds full of salt water, sea water for ballast. Otherwise the ship would bob around like a cork and they couldn't control it on the trip back. Now the big factor is when they return to their home port, they pump off the sea water to reload again with oil. Unfortunately with the pumping off of the sea water, the sludge from the bottom of the oil tanks which floats on the water comes along with it and is put into our aquatic system.

Mr. Speaker, we have our own oil — in fact more than we can use. We also have refineries. All we need is pipelines to complete the pattern. Canadians should be using Canadian oil. Mr. Speaker, it's time for the NDP to look at pipelines with both eyes open.

Mr. Speaker, for all the above reasons and many, many more, I will enthusiastically be supporting this powerful budget and I totally reject the NDP's amendment to the budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It really is a privilege for me to rise in this Assembly and speak in favour of the budget that was presented. And like many of my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, I have people I also want to thank and pay tribute to at this time, if I could, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, we all want to thank our families and I also want to take this time to do the same. I want to acknowledge my wife Lois for all the times that she's at home alone. She's managing an insurance business in Assiniboia. Actually in the last few years, when I was with SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], she raised our kids pretty well when I was gone so much, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to also thank my kids for the sacrifice they've made for letting me take this opportunity to represent the constituents of Wood River. Our daughter Katelyn is here in the city of Regina. Her and her husband Darrel have blessed us with two beautiful granddaughters, Lily and Olivia, ages six and two. And our son Jordan is finishing up. He's got his last year to become a specialist in the medical field as a doctor and has high hopes of returning back to this province to practise, and we're anxious to await that day, Mr. Speaker.

Now I want to take this opportunity if I could to thank, obviously, our staffs. At my constituency office, Sandy Kuffner is my CA. She's a phenomenal woman that does a lot of work for me. And as a result of being here, the phone doesn't stop ringing, and she answers a lot of questions and deals with issues, Mr. Speaker. And Wendie Yorga is our assistant who fills in when Sandy's not there, and I want to recognize and also thank her for the work she does.

And also in the ministry staff also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank the entire team I have up there. There's Brenda, of course, and Robin, Mark, and my chief of staff, David Cooper. I want to recognize them and thank them for all the work that they do on behalf of myself but also behalf of the ministry and the people of the province.

And I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I didn't take this opportunity to thank the Ministry of Highways' senior administration over there. The deputy minister, Fred Antunes, does a great job and has put a great team together of assistant deputy ministers and looking after the highway network in this province and the tendering and all the process we go through.

And also, I guess, in light of the situation today — when you look outside, you see the snow again, and it doesn't look like winter's quite over — I want to take this opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to thank the highway employees, the winter employees that look after our highway network to the best of their ability to make sure that everybody has a safe journey home or to wherever they might be going, Mr. Speaker. And I think they've done a phenomenal job in recognition of the length of the winter that we've had this year, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't seem to be ending. There seems to be a lot of jokes that sooner or later we're going to have a weekend of summer, and hopefully it comes much, much before that.

And I want to take this opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to thank the volunteers on my executive and the work that they do while I'm not back in the constituency, and also thank the citizens of Wood River constituency for giving me this honour and privilege to represent them in this Assembly, representing the citizens of Wood River constituency, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to also obviously take this time to thank the Premier for giving me this honour and privilege to serve as the Minister of Highways and also as Minister of SaskBuilds and Priority Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

As I have said, I will be supporting this budget put forward by our Finance minister, the member from Humboldt-Watrous, Mr. Speaker. And like many that have stood up here on the Assembly floor through this process, Mr. Speaker, they've all recognized and paid their respects to the incident that happened on April 6th with the Humboldt hockey team. And of course our thoughts and prayers go out to all those who were greatly impacted by this tragedy that happened on April 6th, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But I also want to take this opportunity to really thank all the first responders in the province, Mr. Speaker, that respond to tragedies like this and do their job in a very professional manner, Mr. Speaker, to the STARS and the entire first responders team in providing this fantastic volunteer service, Mr. Speaker, that they provide to the communities in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

In my little hometown of Fife Lake where I was born and raised, Mr. Speaker, I played hockey in our little local rink there, where we had natural ice, and played all my minor hockey there. They had a little tournament last weekend, Mr. Speaker. It was 10-and-under kids. They invited kids from all over just to come and play. They were going to have a little

three-on-three tournament.

The village of Fife Lake is about 30 or 35 people, and I think when I was growing up it might have peaked at about 100 or 120. But even so, they had this little three-on-three tournament. It's natural ice in this rink, and it's put in totally voluntarily by the families and parents, and the kitchen is run by them. They had over 40 kids attend this from other communities that came in, and they had a great day. But the thing that caught me, really hit home with me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is they had a picture of the 42 kids in a circle around centre ice. And they just wanted to make sure that these kids would never forget what happened on April 6th with the Humboldt Broncos hockey team, Mr. Speaker.

And I guess for someone like me, and I'm sure many in this province, I had the privilege of playing in the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League for more than four years and did drive a bus or ride a bus all those times and played in Humboldt on many occasions and drove that highway many times. We were blessed that I met my wife through that process.

I think the big thing that's came for me out of that is you form friendships on that bus, not only on the ice but you form friendships on that bus, friendships that I still have today. I may not see some of the guys for 10 or 15 years, but we sure have a great respect for each other. And when we see each other, it's just we're good friends and that's what it is. I think anybody that's played team sport and ridden on a bus realizes just what that means to everybody, and I think it just emphasizes the sincerity that we all have and what happened on that tragic day.

I want to get into the budget like many of my colleagues did. And I guess, first and foremost we have to say that we are on track to balance in 2020, and I think that's got to be a key message here, Mr. Speaker. It's a fiscally responsible budget, and the one thing that hasn't been said that really should be said is that we're even cutting government expenses. When you look at a 1.4 per cent reduction in government expenses and still reducing the debt, I think it's showing that this government is on the right track to make sure the economy continues to grow and also not burdening our kids and our grandkids with debt down the road, Mr. Speaker.

I want to talk, as I said, about the budget and what it means to us. And obviously the big one is, it really has to be emphasized there's no carbon tax in this budget, Mr. Speaker, and I'll speak more about that in a minute. But for an example, Ministry of Highways crews — just to give you some examples about that — burned between 6 and 8 million litres of fuel per year, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A carbon tax would cost the Ministry of Highways an additional \$900,000 a year, Mr. Speaker.

And also this last week we had the Saskatchewan highway construction had their AGM [annual general meeting] here in Regina. And I was at it and spoke to quite a few; actually they had done a little work for me. There was 13 contractors that had put together what they had spent, and these 13 companies spend about \$20 million on fuel every year, Mr. Speaker. The carbon tax would have impacted them about \$2 million a year which would have been just passed on back into the tendering process to the Ministry of Highways, which at the end costs taxpayers

more money, Mr. Speaker. So just imagine what a carbon tax would do to the business community or to the farming community.

This year's highways budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a budget of \$924 million. Including this year's budget, we've invested more than 3 billion in our highways and the roads over the last three years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and our total transportation investment since 2008 now exceeds \$8 billion. This includes a capital budget of 673 million that will be invested in improvements on 825 kilometres of highways and roads across this province, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue work on phase 2 of the Regina bypass. The budget provides about 50 million to continue and complete our plan for interchanges, twinning and passing lanes on these key corridors, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[20:00]

We're continuing work on the new interchanges at Warman and Martensville and they are ahead of schedule, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On Highway 7 we'll continue twinning between Vanscoy and Delisle, and we'll start the planning work for passing lanes between Rosetown and the Alberta border, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're going to start the functional planning for passing lanes and some sections of twinning on Highway 6 and 39 between Regina and Estevan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and two sets of passing lanes will be built this year between Regina and Highway 39 junction at Corinne.

We're also building two sets of passing lanes on Highway 4 between North Battleford and Cochin, and last year we opened a couple of sets of passing lanes on Highway 5 between Humboldt and Highway No. 2, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This year we're starting the planning work for what will likely be a multi-year project to widen, repave, build passing lanes between Highway 2 and Saskatoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We will also start the planning work for passing lanes on highways 9 and 10 between Melville and Canora, and on Highway 2 between Moose Jaw and Chamberlain.

We will be investing about 118 million into 700 kilometres of repaving and preventative maintenance across the province. This includes 280 kilometres of full repaving of highways like — and I'll give you some examples, Mr. Deputy Speaker — Highway 2 south of Chamberlain, Highway 4 north of North Battleford, Highway 26 between Vawn and Mervin, and Highway 35 south of Weyburn. We will also complete 280 kilometres of preventative pavement seals, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and 140 kilometres of medium preservation treatment like microsurfacing.

In this budget we will also take care of bridges and culverts. This year we're investing 61 million into replacing and rehabbing bridges and culverts. This will provide for replacement and major repairs to 30 bridges, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It will also fund numerous culvert replacements across the provincial highway system.

We are also earmarking 13 million to continue making permanent repairs from floods in previous years and to reduce the risk of flooding in the future. We will complete landslides and erosion repairs on Highway 11 near Lumsden and Highway 9 north of North Battleford, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy

Speaker, those are some of the highlights that we have in the budget.

I also want to talk about, if I could, some of our partnership programs that we have. When we look at what we call our municipal roads for the economy program that we partner with the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, we have committed 14 million to that program where we continue to work on clearing what we call our Clearing the Path corridors, which are primary-weight grid road systems in the RM [rural municipality] system where you can get from a primary highway to a primary highway using the RM grid road system.

And over \$6 million into the urban highway connector program again, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And there we're looking at doing some work in Melfort and Prince Albert and looking at other communities also, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted by the budget and the process when I look at the partnerships that we are working on with municipalities. We've had the privilege of signing two partnerships already and looking forward to growing that interest with municipalities, where we can share on refurbishing some of what we call our lower volume TMS [thin membrane surface] highway system and improve it, as what they want to do is improve it for local traffic and improve the safety around that, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to talk if I could, Mr. Speaker, I still want to talk about the budget, about the Regina bypass if I could, Mr. Speaker. I think it's a great project, one that we really should be embracing and really talking about, Mr. Speaker. When you look at the investment we've made on that, the capital investment of \$1.2 billion with a 30-year maintenance contract, you look at over 11 bypasses, over 40 kilometres of twinned highway, 55 kilometres of access road, Mr. Speaker.

But the biggest thing about this thing is safety. It is going to improve safety to a growing area, one of the fastest growing areas in this province on the east side of Regina. We're proud of that and we should be proud of that. And I just want to recognize . . . I think the members opposite should really embrace this thing as a good news story for the province of Saskatchewan because, first and foremost, what we have to talk about is safety. And that's what it does. But it also encourages industry to grow and to come to this province because it gives them direct access to obviously a national highway system across this country, but also gives them a pretty short link into the United States down 6 and 39 to that port.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting when the member from Athabasca goes on and on about how he thinks it's a bad project and, you know, and the cost and all that. And as he said yesterday . . . But, Mr. Speaker, I want to quote the member from Athabasca in the Economy Committee in April 29th in 2014, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I read his quote:

And it should be stated right at the front that one of the things that's really important to this side of the Assembly is that it is important that people out there understand, when it comes to the Regina bypass, the NDP are in full support of having the bypass built, Mr. Speaker . . .

Quoted in saying that in the Economy Committee, and so I just wonder, you know I just wonder. You know, when they talk about the price at, they say at 400 million, 400 million was three bypasses on the east side of Regina, Mr. Speaker. That has grown to 11 bypasses, Mr. Speaker. That's what it's got, is interchanges. And we look at what they are and we're . . . As I said earlier, over 40-some kilometres of twinning and 55 kilometres of service road.

This is going to be an excellent bypass around the city of Regina, and it's going to actually help grow industry on the east side of Regina and on the west side of Regina, Mr. Speaker. I've actually even had a discussion with a municipality on the east side of the city, the RM of Edenwold, Mr. Speaker, just a week or so ago. And they're already starting to see more development come as a result of those interchanges put in at those communities, so it's important.

But one of the things they've also said is, they've always said, where did the money go? Where did the money go? Well, Mr. Speaker, and all you have to look at is what we have spent. You look at the highways. That's spending over \$8 billion, you know, in that time frame, but you look from 2007. I think our budget is about \$8.4 billion that we have spent on highway infrastructure since 2007.

You look at the schools that we built since 2007, Mr. Speaker. Over 40 new schools have been built in the province of Saskatchewan. So you know, you talk about hospitals. You look at all the new hospitals built since 2007. And I hope I don't forget any, Mr. Speaker, but you just have to look around the province. You look at Moose Jaw's got a new hospital. Swift Current's got a new hospital. Maple Creek's got a new hospital. Shellbrook's got a new hospital.

An Hon. Member: — Leader.

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Leader has a new hospital. Moose Jaw has a new hospital. Shellbrook has a new hospital.

An Hon. Member: — Kipling.

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Kipling has a new hospital.

An Hon. Member: — Porcupine Plain.

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Porcupine Plain has a new hospital. Mr. Speaker, I mean you start looking at . . .

An Hon. Member: — Radville.

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Radville has a new hospital. It just goes on and the names are still coming out to me, Mr. Speaker. So it's amazing. So if they want to know where the money went, all they have to do is ask. We'll tell them, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

When you look at senior homes, look at the 15 new senior homes built across the province, and obviously probably going to be more built. I know there's lots of communities that are looking at opportunities for seniors' housing and things like that.

But on the other side of the coin, we can't forget what we got

away from, Mr. Speaker, in 2007. We got away from a government that closed a hundred and . . . How many schools? 176 schools, you know, and just thought nothing of doing it. Closed 52 hospitals. Never built, but never built anything, Mr. Speaker, just closed it. They just closed it. They went to communities and said, we're closing your school. Figure out where you're going to go, but we're closing this school. They just did it, Mr. Speaker. There was no opportunity for growth. And now we have it, Mr. Speaker.

So with that, I think I've pretty well taken up my time. I probably went a little over again. I was just a bit over, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So with that, I will be supporting the motion put forward by my esteemed colleague, the member from Humboldt-Watrous, and I will not be supporting the amendment put forward by the member from Nutana, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to join in on a little discussion here. And I guess facts, you know, back and forth everyone has their facts and their stories. But at the end of the day, you know, before I get into the facts and some of the comments and go back and forth, I just want to again, like many of the members in this Assembly, thinking about the families and those that, you know, need our prayers and our thoughts. And everybody has come together in this province and, you know, not only in Canada but there's so many that have sent their prayers and best wishes to those injured and those that are grieving the loss of their loved one. So I just want to say to everyone, you know, that's out there, we're thinking about you and we'll continue to pray. You'll be in our prayers.

So having said that, I know that the members, you know, like to talk about all the great things that are in the budget, and I know we have to get on to that. Before I talk about some of things in that budget and respond to that that people have shared with me . . . They're not always my stories that I'm sharing. People tell me when I hear, talking to them and they tell you where things are working for them. You hear where things aren't working for them, and I think government has an obligation to hear those things and the challenges that the citizens of this province are feeling and the struggles that being put on them.

But having said that, before I get into that I just want to again, I want to thank my family, thank my CA and those individuals that help out in the constituency to help the good people who are struggling sometimes with many different issues, whether they're dealing with the ministry — however, you know, we get to deal with them. I just want to thank my staff who do a great job of doing casework and working with the ministries to resolve those caseworks — and that's what we want at the end of the day — in a positive way. And I have to be honest with you. Some of those situations get dealt with, and the ministry . . . Some of them work well and you can get things done and accomplish them. And I thank them for that. There are some that are a little slow on dealing with issues, and we'll work on those areas.

But having said that, I know I don't have a lot of time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I want to I guess think about some of the

comments people are talking about and some of the challenges that some are feeling. And my heart goes out to many when I think about back in the North.

And I think about some of the crises that we're having in our province. And I have been to so many funerals. I have attended funerals of mothers, fathers, mushrooms, kohkoms, loved ones who have to say farewell and goodbye to a young person because of suicide, the mental health, the addictions that so many are troubled with. And it's hard. I tell you, there's nothing like it, going to funeral after funeral to pay your respects and to talk to the family and try to give them some type of comfort, and hope at the end of the day we can say, well hopefully the government hears that and they'll respond with the need. It's a crisis, and they'll respond.

Then we have the child advocate weighing in on it, his report come out. And I'll be honest with you: he's ringing alarm bells to the government that it is a crisis, that we have to respond. Whether it's the North, rural, urban, you know, we need to deal with this. The government, I hope, hears this. And I mean this with the most sincere, that they will act. All citizens deserve to have the treatment — the addictions — that this province can put forward.

When we look at, with the revenue we have, the government picks and chooses the priorities. And I understand that. The good people of this province make a decision on who's going to govern. But again I'll reach out, and on behalf of many, I'll reach out to the government to say, you need to do more. You need to hear the child advocate. You need to hear the parents. You need to deal with the crisis. You cannot close your eyes and wish it away because it's not going to go away. We have the addictions, and we see that.

It's affecting many in this province, and we hear our leaders calling for it. We hear families calling for it. We hear the front-line workers saying more needs to be done. It is a crisis and we've got to work together. And so be it, if it's a task force they need to put on it. Whatever they need, I know our side would be willing to work with the government to do whatever we can with the front-line workers to say once and for all.

I think about partnerships. And I know the ministers and colleagues on the other side and even on this side sometimes talk about partnerships, and partnerships in a meaningful way. And I think about the La Ronge Indian Band. They're trying to partner. And I know they have reached out to the provincial government, the federal government, and to whoever else, to partner, to build a wellness centre, to try to deal with some of the issues I've raised and some of the challenges that many young people and the youth are dealing with. And it's not only the young people. We have many people dealing with addictions.

So I'm hoping the government will hear. We were hoping in this budget there would be some of that involvement, partnership with that. And I will encourage that and will continue to encourage the government and the new Premier.

[20:15]

I want again to say congratulations to the new Premier, and say

I hope he will move forward in dealing with some of these while his citizens are dying and struggling with addictions, with mental health. I would encourage him, and I hope he will move forward. But having said that, and some of the other challenges that are facing northern residents, it's not just, you know, not just that.

And I think about the long-term care and I think about our seniors in the North. And we've seen different reports, and I think the government acknowledged. The Minister of Rural and Remote has acknowledged, you know, that yes, it is a priority. He says it's going to be a priority. No citizen, a senior, should wait 165 days for a senior's bed, and that's what they're waiting in the northern region. That is shameful. And I'm hoping that the government will say, it's time. I was hoping that we would get an announcement for long-term care.

I've said before, four budgets ago, we had about 500,000 for planning. I've sometime wondered, where did that money go? And they say, well it was for planning. Okay, well the planning's done. You went through all . . . And I even went and took part and seen exactly what they're going to do, and we were hoping maybe this time the North, northern Saskatchewan, would get a new long-term care. It is a priority. We were hoping that would happen. The government chose not to. I guess they picked priorities and I guess that La Ronge and the North is not a priority. The seniors that live there, 165 days is not a priority of a government. And that in itself, to the seniors that I represent, you know, and those families who are struggling, saying, Doyle, where do I . . . What do I do with mom? What do I do with dad? What do I do with my kohkom? She's 80 years old. What do I do? Where do I take her? And some of those families are struggling. So I think about that.

I think about the affordability. I've had seniors talk to me about their power bills and, you know, could this budget have had some priorities, some relief for seniors? But we see cost of living is just going, just being added on. And I know government likes to say, oh, no more; we didn't raise taxes, you know. And they want to go behind that and cheerlead. That's fine. Go ahead. I understand it. You want to play the politics. It's the way it is, and you cheerlead that. That's all right. Pat yourselves on the back. No, they didn't raise taxes but everywhere else people are struggling with affordability, to put food on the table. Utilities are going out the roof. These are the challenges that many people are facing. They're struggling.

And I ask the government who has so much. And they look at the government saying, the government has so much; will you assist us and help us? We need you, now anyway. When it's medications, you know, when you hear seniors talking about . . . And it is not something I want to talk about and play politics with. When they're saying they're struggling with getting their medications, paying their rent, or buying food, like where is it? Like I don't have enough.

Then you look at programs where the most vulnerable . . . And here's a government would have, could have said, you know what; our last budget was terrible. We went after. So we have reversed some of that because of the pressure from the public. And I've got to give credit. When the pressure was put on . . . And I would say to those people who took a stand and say, we're not accepting this when we're going to move forward —

they put the pressure on the government — it's great to see that when the people of this province say enough is enough and we'll put the pressure, that the government backed down.

Now some of these other areas, maybe the government will back down. I think about PST [provincial sales tax]. Now they want to talk about PST on used vehicles. Here was a government in 2007 came in and said at the time, you know, there was PST on used vehicles. Well some of the comments were just ridiculous or whatever. You know, they were looking at that. It didn't make sense and they were going to take care, and they did.

But lo and behold, times have changed. Record revenue year after year. And some tough times, give it. Make some different choices. Don't put no money away for the rainy day. You spent the rainy day fund we did have and it's all gone. And now you're saying, now these things need to come into play and we're going to have PST on used vehicles. And they expect the business people, they expect the public to say, oh, well that's okay.

But government has picked priorities. And I think about the Regina bypass. They keep patting themselves on the back. But when you go back from 400 million and then you go to 800 and you keep going up and up and then you say, oh, but we added stuff. We added things. It's going to be the greatest thing. Then you think about the GTH [Global Transportation Hub]. That was a priority? That was a priority. Not seniors, not housing for the most vulnerable housing. You cancelled a program that would help the most vulnerable pay their rent, to pay their rent as they're struggling to make ends meet because you have raised utilities, PST on kids' clothes. There are so many things that have hurt the good people of this province, and they're trying to do their part.

And I think about students going to university. And I think about them and the part-time jobs that they . . . How many of them have to work extra? And they're trying. Where do they get it? Every time the government says, well we've got to cut back, and then they put it onto the university. Well the university has their priorities. It's their choice; it's their decision. We give that to them. Well hold it here. If you're going to impact them in any way, they have to either cut or they have to raise tuition. Well you know, tuition rates are going pretty high for students. They're not happy.

You know, at the end of the day if you think that they're going to forget . . . And you know, that's to the members over there, and I know sometimes there's so many of you over there, and I know you mock us and you laugh and that's okay. But being Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, to raise the issues of the people, that are truly hurting the people back home, that are truly hurting people in this province, I say I'm not somebody who is, I want to say, wants to be here in the sense of always criticizing.

But I am going to give you credit because, you know, I've heard members say, well they never give us any credit. I have, and I'll give you credit again.

I think about a group home. You announced funding for a group home in La Ronge, \$250,000 to build a group home. That's

really great for those individuals who lobbied and got that. I say to them, good work; way to go. Five individuals, adults with intellectual will have a group home, and that's good. We'll see about how they're going to pay for that, and that will all roll out. But it looks like they're going to build it and that's good.

I think about the community of Creighton. I think about the hard work that many of them done over there lobbying, petitions asking for a group home. They were not a priority. This government has decided that you in Creighton, your family members who need a group home, you are not going to get one. You're not a priority of this government. Well I have talked to a few of them. They're not so happy. But they're happy for those individuals who got it. They understand that. You know, that's the way it is. They wish them well. But when you have groups of area where you pick and choose . . . And there's many challenges facing the Creighton residents when it comes to health care.

You know, health care, they have many issues. And we're going to get into some of those issues I guess in committee, and the challenges that are facing residents of Saskatchewan who live on the border of Manitoba who are not getting the health care that they deserve and want. Maybe this budget could have helped some of that, and maybe the government will prioritize some of that area.

So having said that, I look at the classrooms, and when you talk to front-line teachers, and you talk to the teachers, the struggles that they're having — the large classrooms, the challenges with disabilities. And then more and more the government has put more and more on the boards of education, more on the municipalities. You're going to pay more as citizens but you're going to get less. And this government has the nerve to say they've got a budget that they're proud of.

And I'll talk about the amendment after, and why anybody would be opposed to what the amendment says, and we'll get into that. But that's up to them to discuss with the Saskatchewan residents.

Now when I think about some of the challenges that are facing Saskatchewan families, we talked about, you know, the PST is hurting them, the budget. You talk about the debt. And when you say to people and you show them . . . Your own documents show what the debt is. How you can just kind of ignore that and think that it's not going to be . . . You know, we've got a million-plus people. How our grandkids and kids are not going to . . . I don't get how some of you make the comments you do. It's your right to. But to make it like that \$20 billion debt, and growing, isn't a big deal, like I really find it hard. I don't know how much interest we're paying per year on the deficit, on that debt.

So you're taking money where it could be . . . Build a long-term care centre in La Ronge for seniors that are 165 days waiting for a bed. Adult group home in Creighton, you could build that. Some of the roads . . . The partnership you could do with First Nations. And I think about La Ronge band with the wellness centre. You could do that with those dollars that you've spent.

But no, don't put no money away for a rainy day. Spend everything and add to the debt. It's a shame the amount of

money you have added to the debt and then you try to spin it and say it's all great. Well the people aren't buying it and they're starting to struggle, day in and day out, just to survive.

So you know, having said that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know I could go over all the different challenges that are facing the people that I represent. And people that I have seen in different places have shared with me some of the struggles, where they're struggling, you know. But having said that, I want to talk a little bit about, you know, the government's motion here on the budget. And as some will be a surprise, you know, I will not be supporting that.

But you know what's really amazing to me? What's really amazing, a government that sits there and talks about certain areas. And let me just kind of . . . Exactly what did the amended motion read? What was it we were trying to ask the government to do? Well let's see here, here: smarter investment to grow the economy. Wow, why would you guys want to support that?

Hang on, hang on, hang on. Oh, create more jobs for Saskatchewan families. Why would you guys want to support that, right? You know, prioritize education for our kids and adults. Why would you guys want to, you know, why would you guys support that? Why would you? Why would you not support the most vulnerable? You know, at the end of the day you say, well you can't support that. That's fine. And you know, I've had my days of . . . I didn't support your budget when you put out the 500,000, you ran little ads. It's amazing what you guys were willing to do. Didn't work for you. Mr. Chair, it did not work for them. Did not work for them, Mr. Chair. It did not, Mr. Speaker, work for them, you know.

So having said that, the end of the day people decide, and we'll come here and we'll serve petitions. And I think about our seniors, and I think about our trappers who are seniors. I've talked to the Minister of Environment. I'm waiting for a phone call. I keep saying, ring those phones every morning, you know. But this is a serious matter I'm talking about. I've served a petition. I've talked to him. I know the trappers have asked. They're hoping that the government of the day, the government of the day will say, seniors that fish can get a free fishing licence for angling at 65. The trappers are asking for that too, and I'm hoping that the minister, you know, will look upon himself and say, I'm going to have a serious look at it and deal with that. These are just something that maybe . . . and I know it's going to cost, take a little money out of his budget, but maybe they could find that in that budget of, you know, billions.

Sometimes residents aren't asking for a lot — small amounts of money, and different priorities — and I realize the government has that option to do that. This is kind of why I wanted to have a little talk about how this budget was impacting many in this province. Many people in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have been challenged and will be challenged. And this thing, as this rolls out and I think the news comes to the Saskatchewan people, and as people look at their budget and they find out, you know, community-based organizations and many others — we'll see how it's all going to come out, what challenges municipalities and everything else.

I know they say initially, oh it's all great, and that's what

they're trying to spin. We'll see, because we've seen sometimes, it rolls out over weeks, and as people understand exactly how the budget will impact them. We'll find out, and we'll get a chance to share more of that, but I guess I took my time. But I wanted to express some of the concerns that I've heard. Not my concerns, as it is for the people that I represent and the people I see in this province saying they're struggling. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will say thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to join in debate on the budget.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moosomin.

Mr. Bonk: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think I'll start off today by giving some congratulations, and I'd like to congratulate the new Speaker of the House. I think he's doing an excellent job so far, and it's Festivus all year round now that he's in the Chair. And I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank our new Premier and congratulate him for the great job that he's doing. He's the most, I guess, steady, stalwart, stoic Premier that we have, and we'd really use what he's offering right now in this time that we've had. He's had quite a time of turmoil since he's taken over the reins, and I think he's just doing an exemplary job.

I'd also like to take a moment to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on his new appointment as the leader there. He's got a big job ahead of him and I wish him well.

I think I'll start where I should, Mr. Speaker, by doing some thank yous. I'd like to thank, first and foremost, my wife, Candace, for keeping the home fires burning and for maintaining things at the farm. And it always amazes me how efficient and hard working that lady is. It's amazing the amount of work she can get done in a day, and she does it with a smile and just keeps everything running very smoothly, and I wouldn't say always happy at home, but she does keep it running smoothly.

I'd like to also say a big thank you to my daughter, Emma. Emma is 14 years old now and she's quite the little entrepreneur and very interested in politics, Mr. Speaker. I think she's got a bright future ahead of her in whatever career she chooses, but right now she wants to be a veterinarian. But she also said she wants to be the prime minister one day, so we'll see where that takes her.

[20:30]

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank my parents, my father, Lorne, and my mother, Diane. They're at home and they look after the farm and make sure that they have everything looked after there so I can be here, Mr. Speaker, representing the good people of Moosomin constituency.

And along with that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the good people of Moosomin constituency. I feel I am very blessed to have one of the very best constituencies in the whole province. They don't ask that much of us. They want us to have a good road, a good hospital, good school, a nursing home, and then just get out of the way, let them do their work. And if we can provide that for them, they'll keep voting our way forever, I think, and appreciate us for doing the job that we're doing.

One person I really do want to mention is my CA, Tim Hovdestad. Tim Hovdestad is someone who is doing that job, it looks like, effortlessly. He's turned our constituency office into a bit of a coffee shop. He's also turned it into an art gallery for local artists. There's a rotating procession of artists that come through; once a month they switch. And it's a great way to use publicly funded space to promote our local arts community.

And I think Tim has just been just an excellent CA. One thing that Tim has always said, that when someone phones our office he wants it to be the very best call that they have had, and when they visit the office he wants it to be the very best visit that they've had. And I have to say, from the feedback that we're getting, he's doing his job very, very well.

I'd also like to thank my constituency executive. I think we have a very young dynamic . . . Actually I think I'm the second-oldest person on our whole constituency team, and they're a hard-working, good bunch of individuals. And one of our executive, Tyler Thomlinson, he actually won the Premier's Award last fall for outstanding service to the Saskatchewan Party, so I'd like to give a special shout-out to Tyler.

Last Friday I attended the funeral for Adam Herold in Montmartre. And I just want to make a mention of this tragedy that we've had in the province and how Saskatchewan definitely has become stronger. And our heart goes out to anyone who's affected by that, particularly the Herold family. I know this family very well, particularly Raelene, who's Raelene Englot, who was a neighbour of mine growing up. I was in 4-H with Raelene and I just know the family well: her parents, Lawrence and Carole, and all her brothers and sisters. And it's just a very tough and a tragic thing to have to go through.

I know this first-hand, Mr. Speaker. In 1998 I lost my brother-in-law and just before his 26th birthday. And my brother, who was 20 at the time, moved in with my sister to kind of help her through this. And I was living in Hungary. I got the phone call one day that my grandfather had died and I got the message. And my dad said, well please, please call home because, you know, your grandfather's passed away. And he helped us farm. He was the patriarch of our family. And I made the call home and my dad said, I've got some other bad news: your brother passed away. So within a very short period of time I know what it's like to have tremendous loss. So my heart goes out to that family, the Herold family, and all who are affected by this tragedy.

I want to say one thing about the people, particularly in our area and I'm sure it goes for all across Saskatchewan. When my brother and my grandpa died, it was right at harvest time. And I remember being at home and it was a tough time for us. We didn't really feel like getting out there and harvesting very much. And I remember the neighbours, all the neighbour guys who had come through our yard with swathers, combines, grain trucks. They weren't the guys who would come in the house and say anything to you, but they were the ones who were there, who got it done just with . . . We didn't have to worry about anything, and these are the people that . . . This is Saskatchewan people. This is why I'm so proud to be from this province.

Last Friday there was also a hockey game that was put on in

Moosomin in honour of the . . . well not in honour but to pay respects to the tragedy that happened for the Broncos, and they raised \$53,000 for the cause. And I want to give a big shout-out to the people in Moosomin who put that on because I think it's something that just speaks to the heart of our community.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to speak now to the budget. I think that this budget is a budget that was very well crafted by our Finance minister who's . . . We can't imagine what she's been through in the last two weeks, and I just think she's done an exemplary job and all of us should commend her for the good work she's done.

Mr. Speaker, this budget was done in consultation with the people of Saskatchewan. Last year if there was one thing we did hear from the people of Saskatchewan is they wished they could've had a little more involvement in the budgeting process. Well we've listened to them. We've talked to them. We've talked to our industry stakeholders. We've heard what they had to say and we've incorporated in this budget.

If there's one thing that we need in this province, it's a stable, steady economy. And if you're a private businessman, the last thing you want is unpredictability. We have tried to keep this budget as stable, predictable, and as business friendly as we could make it. Because if there's one way we can pay for the services that we expect in this province, it's by having a strong and robust economy.

Mr. Speaker, we've done this by a few different things and one, I think, is a very important thing and one thing that we really had to work on and we've heard from our constituents is to control spending. Without controlling spending and fixing what some would consider a structural deficit by controlling spending and understanding where our money's going, it's the first step into bringing our budget back to balance. I can't be overstated. This is something that's so important. We've reduced our overall spending by 1.5 per cent in this budget and that has put us on track to balanced budget by next year.

Mr. Speaker, we've also done this by keeping our corporate and personal income taxes low, and this is something that spurs investment. We know that. When people have money in their pocket, they're apt to spend more. And it's something that is a signal, an indicator, of how well our province's economy is doing. Mr. Speaker, there has been no increases in educational property tax or the provincial sales tax.

We've also had, Mr. Speaker, and it's something I would really like to speak to, and that's the export side of our province. I've had a long career in private business in exports and international trade, and one thing that we should be all very, very proud of in this province is the Saskatchewan Trade Export Partnership. The work that they've done has been just outstanding. They are the gold standard in Canada for . . . Well actually they're the gold standard in the world for a sub-national organization that promotes trade. We've increased funding to STEP [Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership] year over year, which increases our export activity. Saskatchewan is a province that exports about 98 per cent of what we produce. Without a strong marketing and global reach, it would be a huge disadvantage for our province, and I have to give STEP so much credit for what they've done and the good

work that they continue to do.

We've also increased . . . and something I'm very proud of is the Saskatchewan value-added agriculture incentive. And this is the, in my opinion, the next step in this province. We've got outstanding agricultural producers in Saskatchewan, world leaders. There's no question. I think we're seeing a slowdown a little bit in our capacity to have huge increases in production, but the next logical step for our province is value-added. This is the next thing we have to do to extract more value out of the products we produce. And this value-added tax incentive that we've created, I think will spur investment.

We're already seeing that. We're already hearing from potential investors of how they find this very attractive, because as we know that capital is very mobile, Mr. Speaker. It can move anywhere in the world very quickly now, and it's all about competitiveness. We have to maintain our competitive advantage, and we have world-class producers. We have world-class labour in this province. We just need to take that next step and add value to our products. And I know that the Minister of Agriculture, he's been involved in many of these conversations with different value-added or secondary processors from all over the world. And Saskatchewan is the place that they want to be. There is investment out there looking for a home. And we hope that that home will be Saskatchewan.

We also have a record investment in health, Mr. Speaker. And I'd just like to highlight some of the things that we've seen in Moosomin constituency specifically, Mr. Speaker. We've got in health, I'd like to especially highlight the Kipling integrated health facility. That was something that was long fought for by my predecessor, Don Toth. I think that the people of Kipling, Kennedy, Windthorst, I guess to some extent Broadview, owe him a lot of gratitude for the hard work that he put in to make sure that that became a reality. Because that is just one outstanding facility. It's got the hospital. It's got the long-term care portion of it, and it's just, it's been a great success.

Also revenue sharing in Moosomin constituency has increased by 136 per cent, Mr. Speaker. I think that this is something that it's almost unbelievable if we consider where we were at in 2007 under the NDP government. Education in the Prairie Valley School Division, and that would include Wolseley, Grenfell, Broadview, Montmartre, and Kipling schools, and Kennedy school I guess. There used to be Glenavon school, Francis school and . . . but those were closed under the NDP. But anyways it's a 14 per cent increase in the budget for those schools under this new budget. Southeast Cornerstone school, Moosomin and Rocanville, a 15 per cent increase in this budget. I think, Mr. Speaker, this is something that shows our commitment to education and how we take seriously the concerns of our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, the highways budget in our constituency, I remember what it was like in 2007. And what a difference now. There's been just . . . I have a long list of the highway projects that have been done in our province, and there's a lot more coming. And I just am so thankful for the good work that's been done on our highways because, as we know, we're talking about our agricultural production; we're talking about potash production, oil production, manufacturing in our constituency. They all rely on road and rail, Mr. Speaker.

There's social services. Social services have . . . The budget's been increased in our constituency as well. We have rental construction in Rocanville. We've got Whitewood. We've got also in Kipling. And, Mr. Speaker, these are sorely needed, and I know that because the residents of those communities are extremely happy that our government has stepped up and offered incentives to make sure that those projects are built.

Mr. Speaker, we've also had a \$750,000 credit to the Moosomin recreation facility. This is a world-class facility now, Mr. Speaker. We've got simulators for hockey, golf. It's just an amazing . . . For baseball. We've got a rink. We've got a walking track. It's just something that you don't normally see outside of the two big centres in Saskatchewan. So I know that the residents are very thankful for that.

But, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that with this budget we know that we've kept things stable, consistent, and on track to a balance. This is our goal, Mr. Speaker. We will reach this goal. And to that end I will support the motion that's put forward by the Minister of Finance and I will not support the amendment put forward by the opposition.

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it is indeed an honour to enter into this budget debate and to have an opportunity to talk a little bit about my family, about my constituency, the constituency that I have the pleasure of representing in this legislature, Saskatoon Willowgrove. And to talk about Central Services, and a little bit about my ministerial capacity and what is an important and maybe overlooked ministry in Central Services and how it has the ability to help fund other ministries. We all know that in the Sask Party our top priorities are health care, education, and social services. And indeed we all work towards that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about my family. They are the ones that enable me to do my job. And certainly my children Carter and Paige, when I was first elected to the Legislative Assembly, they were 3 and 5 years old. So they were very young and didn't really understand what Dad was doing and why Dad was away from home so much.

But over the years, you know, now they're 20 and 18. Carter is in third year university at University of Saskatchewan, a member of the Huskie track and field team and taking business in university. And really coming to understand, I think, the issues that are facing our province even at his young age, and certainly using that to help him with his studies and his learning.

Paige is in grade 12 and so it's an interesting time at our house with all the drama that comes with having a daughter in grade 12 and in her final year of high school and looking forward to graduation. And she had an opportunity to go on a trip with her school to Italy over Easter, so she had an opportunity to see a little bit of the world and to understand and appreciate what we have here back in Saskatchewan as well.

[20:45]

Trish, my wife, had a chance to be here in the legislature just last week to watch the budget first-hand and to see the excellent job that our Finance minister has done. Trish is running her own business and things are working out very well.

So I thank all of them for giving me the opportunity to serve the people of Saskatoon Willowgrove and the people of Saskatchewan, and to do a job that I love, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I certainly enjoy every day coming to work. No two days are the same, as all members know, and there certainly is a challenge each and every day what comes before you.

Before I get too far into my speech, I want to talk about my constituency assistants, Barb and Jenny, and Jacquie who helps out as well. Barb and Jenny are located in the office and are certainly able to provide service to anyone who comes in or emails. They take great pride in getting back to constituents very quickly and working with ministers' offices and ensuring that those questions get answered in a prompt and direct fashion. So I thank Barb and Jenny for that. Jacquie does my newsletter and it goes out to some 12,000 people not only here in Saskatchewan, not only constituents, but really people around the country and beyond. And they have an opportunity to learn a little bit about Saskatchewan through the newsletter, and I feel it's a great way to communicate. So I thank Barb, Jenny, and Jacquie for that.

The constituency of Saskatoon Willowgrove, it often mirrors what's happening in our province. It's a thriving, growing constituency. It's one that has infrastructure needs and those needs are being met. In the last number of years we had four new schools into the Saskatoon Willowgrove constituency. And we've seen people from around the world, as they come and make Saskatchewan their home, settle in the constituency of Saskatoon Willowgrove. And that's very exciting.

When you meet people that have come to Saskatchewan, you learn their story of why they've come here to make a better future for their family. And what I really appreciate is the entrepreneurial spirit of those individuals. When they come to Saskatchewan they want to make a living. They want to thrive and they want to contribute to the economy of our province, and for that we say thank you to each and every one of those residents.

Brand new neighbourhoods are sprouting up. Evergreen is one that is being populated very quickly and certainly one that I'm very proud to represent. Brand new neighbourhood of Brighton is one that in the last election, Mr. Speaker, there was a poll for Brighton but there was nobody that lived there. So at the end of the day, they had to combine that poll with another one. But over the last two years many, many dozens of houses have sprung up and there's hundreds of individuals that live in that part of the thriving constituency of Saskatoon Willowgrove.

You know, there's a few challenges in the constituency right now. A new overpass is being built, and with that comes some of the challenges of commuting back and forth to work and some of the detours on the roadways. But that's something that constituents will be certainly happy to live with. Because at the end of the day we're going to see an infrastructure project, as many as we're seeing around the province, certainly in Martensville and Warman and others in Saskatoon and Regina.

We're very, very fortunate. They don't come without a cost. They're very expensive, but we need that type of infrastructure to make sure that our growing population has an opportunity to continue to contribute.

Not too long ago, I had the opportunity to stand in the legislature and pay tribute to the Humboldt Broncos on that very solemn day in the legislature, a very important day, and I think one that all of us as members will remember for quite some time. And you know, the tributes continue and the funerals are taking place and the celebrations of life continue to this day. Yesterday in my home city, Evan Thomas, they had the celebration of life for Evan and I saw . . . you know, SaskTel Centre was just filled with friends and neighbours and people who really care about those individuals.

Xavier Labelle is a constituent of Saskatoon Willowgrove and a neighbour of mine just across the alley way, and I certainly wish him and his family all the best as I do for each and every one of the families and all those that are affected by the Humboldt Broncos tragedy.

Certainly I want to comment on the Finance minister in representing the constituency of Humboldt and having the real fortitude to deliver the budget in very trying times. And she did a wonderful job in doing that, and for that I thank her very, very much.

The budget as we all know is titled *On Track*, and that's certainly what I'm hearing from people outside of this building. The Finance minister spoke to the chamber of commerce in Regina here very recently and certainly did a great job of talking about the highlights, and what I'm hearing back from that is that indeed this government and this Finance minister are on track. I know the Finance minister will be in Saskatoon very shortly and doing the same thing, talking to various stakeholders, and I hope they feel the same way about it. I know that they will.

I know some highlights for me certainly are hearing . . . or in the legislature, the screening of young children and their hearing needs is something that I was very, very pleased to see, and I've received some emails about it. You know, the funding for autism, autism spectrum disorder came up in question period today and my seatmate had the opportunity to answer the opposition's questions, and he stated the facts about autism in Saskatchewan. Under the NDP 2007, \$500,000 went to autism funding. This year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$8.55 million goes to autism, and that just shows the benefits of growth.

You know, we always talk about why we want to grow this province, and certainly it is because we want to have more money to fund things like autism and autism spectrum disorder and other challenges that we have. And we are certainly leading the way in the country in many regards as I talk to people who are here to listen to the budget.

I want to talk to you a little about, I made reference at the beginning about Central Services and the good work that Central Services does in ensuring that the government's footprint is as small as possible, is as efficient as possible, and providing the opportunity for the private sector to do the work wherever they can.

And when it comes to the CVA, central vehicle agency, the Finance minister had an opportunity in her speech to highlight some of the good work that's being done in this ministry. The Ministry of Central Services entered into a pilot with the private sector, with Enterprise Rent-A-Car was the successful bidder. And certainly that pilot saved us \$275,000, but not only that, they also provide the services in a better way, in a more creative way. So overall the reduction of the CVA fleet in the province has saved the government \$5.155 million or a 14.7 per cent decrease across government CVA costs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I was minister, and certainly a credit to previous ministers, we looked at the cleaning services that were provided to government. And I know it was a somewhat contentious issue here and the opposition tried to make hay of it, but here's the reality of it, Mr. Speaker. Taxpayers are now saving \$3.5 million each and every year. Eleven companies are now supplying cleaning services to government buildings. New cleaning service contractors hired 49 of the former employees. There were about 150 that were severed, and 49 of them came back as employees. Five of the 13 contracted businesses are employee owned.

So, Mr. Speaker, it shows that when you're creative within government, when you look at, when you value each and every taxpayer's dollar and you look for more creative ways of funding things, it can be a win-win situation. And that's certainly what we're seeing. Employees are now business owners and providing the same services, and certainly we're seeing that. And the severances regarding that were paid in the '16-17 year. In the '17-18 year we saved \$3.5 million, and now in '18-19 we're going to save another \$3.5 million.

Mr. Speaker, it goes on and on in this ministry. The executive air services, on March 16th, 2017 the decision was made — because of the drastic decline in use of our government air services, the executive air services — to sell the planes, to get away, to challenge ministers and all members of the Legislative Assembly to do without and to do things in a more efficient way. Well, Mr. Speaker, we're saving seven hundred to one million dollars each and every year.

So it all adds up. When you talk about the \$5 million from CVA, the 3.5 each year on cleaners, the executive air services — it goes up into the tens of millions of dollars. And that's certainly a way that government can be responsible and help to fund health care and education and social services. The members opposite, they always, you know, they talk about wanting us to spend more and more and more, but we have to do it in a responsible way that's responsible to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan.

I want to talk a little bit about investments in my home city of Saskatoon. And you know, very quickly, I know there's many members that want to speak tonight: \$331 million funding for the University of Saskatchewan; \$18.3 million increase to support restructuring initiatives and implementation of a new strategic plan at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] College of Medicine; \$6.8 million in operating and maintenance capital funding for St. Thomas More College; 148.6 in total operating and maintenance capital for Sask Polytech.

When we look at highways and infrastructure, oftentimes you

know, we talk about highways and we say how they benefit rural Saskatchewan, but they benefit urban Saskatchewan residents as well. When we look at highways, Highway 7, grading and twinning east of Vanscoy and west of Vanscoy; Highway 7, grading and twinning west of Vanscoy to Delisle; Highway 11, repaving south of Saskatoon; Highway 16, repaving east of Saskatoon, repaving west of Saskatoon, and rehabilitation near the Borden bridge and the North Saskatchewan River — that's just a very few that impact on the residents of Saskatoon Willowgrove. And we're very, very thankful and fortunate to see a record investment in highways in our province.

You know, in my former ministry, I was minister of Parks, Culture and Sport, so it's an area that's very dear to me. You know, we look at the Western Development Museum. We continue to fund museums across the province, and \$4.2 million. Wanuskewin Heritage Park continues to benefit from government investment of \$600,000.

And the Meewasin Valley Authority, you know, that's one that . . . We've challenged the MVA [Meewasin Valley Authority] to see if they can become self-sufficient, if they can be creative and look at a way that they can not have to rely on government funding indefinitely. And they've asked for the time to be able to do that, and I'm pleased to say that our government, you know, along with Saskatoon City Council, the University of Saskatchewan, has said that we will partner with them to ensure that they are able to become self-sufficient in the near future.

When we look at health care in Saskatchewan, \$3.5 billion to the Saskatchewan Health Authority, some \$5.3 billion overall. We're very, very fortunate. And I know that there's many health care workers that live in the constituency of Saskatoon Willowgrove, and I'm very, very pleased.

You know, \$20 million in this budget alone to fulfill the government's commitment for the capital construction on the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all members know that we've been waiting for so long, and this government, right from day one, was committed to the children's hospital. We felt that it wasn't right that just Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island are the only provinces that didn't have a dedicated children's hospital. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, soon that will change. And we continue to meet that challenge, not only for capital costs, but also for money to ensure that we have the specialists here. Dr. Laurence Givelichian is one that's been committed for most of his career to see that this hospital is staffed up with the surgeons, the experts in the health care field that we need. And certainly this budget goes a long way to make sure that that's been happening.

[21:00]

As the previous speaker before me, the member from Moosomin indicated STEP, increased investment in the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership. I had an opportunity, again with previous responsibilities, to travel with individuals from STEP and to see them work first-hand and to hear from individuals and say, I wish we had a group like that in our province or in our country. So STEP continues to do a wonderful job for the people of Saskatchewan, and I'm very

proud to see the increased investment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, I have an opportunity to talk in this legislature quite often, and I just want to, you know, highlight what I feel the highlights at the end of this budget are. A family of four in Saskatchewan pay no income tax on their first \$50,495 of income. That's the highest tax-free threshold in Canada. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that's something that we should all be proud of, making sure that each and every dollar that Saskatchewan residents make and work so hard for, that they can keep as much of that as possible. And certainly a family of four keeping the first \$50,000 is something that we're very, very proud of.

Over the last decade 62,000 new jobs were created in Saskatchewan, another thing that we can be very, very, very proud of. We removed 112,000 low-income people off the provincial income tax rolls. Now this is something that doesn't come up in question period. It's something that the opposition tends to ignore, and they don't make this . . . But that's something that we have an opportunity to celebrate here in Saskatchewan.

In Saskatchewan, residents have the second-lowest provincial tax and utility burden in the country at nearly every income level. Mr. Speaker, that's something that we strive for as a government, to ensure that those taxes are as low as possible and they continue. Last year we enhanced our low-income tax credit by \$100 per adult and \$40 per child. Saskatchewan has the lowest sales tax of any province with a PST, and the PST is still exempt from basic groceries, prescription drugs, electricity, and natural gas, Mr. Speaker.

We want to make sure that, you know, we're committed to balance the budget, and we want to do that. And Saskatchewan people are telling me — and I know that they're telling members on this side of the House, and I know they're telling members on the opposite side of the House as well — that this government is on track.

Average weekly earnings in January 2018 were \$1,028.71, the third highest in the country, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and above the national average of \$995. Saskatchewan has the lowest sales tax of any province with a PST, and the PST is still exempt in many areas, as I've indicated.

Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan under this government we will indeed . . . And I know that the Premier has talked about this and members of this side of the House have done it, and I think it's so important. You know, you just need to take a trip outside the province and see what's happening in the rest of the country. Saskatchewan will be the only province for now, because I think the support is going to be growing when we look at what's happening in Alberta and Ontario and other places. I think that history will show that Saskatchewan led the way on this — we will not have a carbon tax, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that's something I'm very, very proud of, and I know that members on this side of the House, certainly.

So you know, with that, Mr. Speaker, I think I've taken my time. I will certainly not be supporting the amendment that the individuals opposite have put forward, but I will be supporting the budget that was brought forward by the member from

Humboldt and seconded by the member from Canora-Pelly and eloquently debated by members on this side of the House. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you for this opportunity for me to enter into this debate, and I look forward to the vote very quickly.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melfort.

Mr. Goudy: — I want to congratulate the Speaker on his new position, and I can honestly say that he's the best one that I've ever had. Congratulations to our new Premier on the role that he has in this province. From all that I've seen of him, he's an honourable man with a big heart, at the centre of which is his family and the people of this great province.

I must admit it was a huge statement when he showed up the first day of his new position in Melfort to support us in our campaign and went to a Mustangs game. So he's a Premier of the people.

I want to congratulate the new Leader of the Opposition as well. He's doing a good job there. Congratulations to the member from Swift Current. I can say for sure your aunt is very proud of you. And the new member at Kindersley, he set the bar high with a new record, 88 percent. A little bit of gloating going on, but that's good.

It's a privilege to stand in this House today, Mr. Speaker, representing the people of my constituency. It's a very sobering thought to think that the people that raised me and taught me have now sent me to represent them in Regina, and I am humbled by that. On their behalf, I'm going to tell you that I will be supporting the budget but not the amendment made by the NDP. But I will speak a bit to the budget and I want to, before I do that, just thank some very important people in my life, Mr. Speaker, some who have sacrificed a lot so that I could be here tonight.

First of all though, I want to thank the people of my constituency and all the people from my hometown. I grew up in Melfort. That was where I went from K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] and yet it's the people in the other communities around — Gronlid, St. Brieux, Lake Lenore, Quill Lake, all these kinds of places — I'm looking forward to the opportunity to get to know each and every one of them.

You know, I want to thank Mr. Kevin Phillips and his wife, April. You know, I remember back in the days I lived in Albania and, you know, it was a strange country, Mr. Speaker. I was the first person that most people in any village had ever seen from outside of their own country. And I remember after the rainy season, the roads were all washed out. There were no maps, and so I had to look for footprints to find the villages, to find the people.

And you know, everywhere I go in my constituency, I'm finding the footprints of the one who went before me, and that's Kevin Phillips. And it always seems to lead to great places — to seniors' homes, to fundraisers, to people in need. You know, he was the kind of guy who stood for the community, who stood for the people, and I'm looking forward to walking in his footsteps, Mr. Speaker. And April, I want to again thank her for

her blessing.

I want to mention one of the other MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] from our constituency too, Rod Gantefoer. I really appreciate he and Carole have moved back to our constituency and to our town. He is able to mentor me and teach me the things that he was strong in. I really appreciate his support.

Peggy Gordon, our CA, you know, I don't know what I would have done without her. Really we had no one left to show us what to do. Everything was in disarray, and Peggy really helped me find my feet.

Six months ago, the last thing I thought I would be was the MLA for our constituency here standing in Regina, Mr. Speaker. And so I just want to mention some people who supported me through the campaign, and they basically just hit the ground running through the nomination into the campaign. Kevin and Jodi Graham, good friends of mine; they moved in; they built a house next door to my wife and I, and that was providence. You know, he's one of the most organized, well-spoken people that I know. And we joked. I said you couldn't run a donkey and win, and I guess he proved me wrong.

So you know, Jodi and the kids, they did so much as well, coming along with my kids and my wife, and I appreciate them very much. Pattie and Tim Draude, kids of two past MLAs in this caucus, Rod Gantefoer and June Draude, they're a great match and I appreciate them very much. When it came time, Pattie . . . She caved in. She told me she wouldn't be my campaign manager but when she saw Kevin would co-lead with her, she submitted to it and I appreciate them very much.

Zach and Brandi Moskal looked after all the finances. Rob and Tanya Moulton, they looked after everything else. Tim Highmoor from here, I just want to say that's one of the toughest, most committed guys I've ever met. Kaitlin Blackmer, just crazy organized. All of the MLAs who came door to door, I thank them very much. I noticed even some of the ones from across the floor were in my town knocking on the doors, and I'm not sure what they said about me and my party, but I'm sure they were good things — guessing . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Good things about Kevin. There you go. So thank you for that.

Darlene Campbell, the Swift Current MLA understands. There is a political junkie, I think we could say. If it wasn't for her, I don't think the last three MLAs from our constituency would have got in. Tom Healey, a great friend and a mentor for me.

And you know, my mom and dad, what can I say about them other than you don't realize how much your parents love you and how much sacrifice they have for you in your life until you have your own kids and become a parent yourself. I just want to thank them for all of their support for me in my whole life and especially through this process.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, others have done a lot but most of all I'd like to recognize my wife and my kids. They've put up a lot over the years and I am very thankful for them. My wife — I imported a beautiful girl from Manitoba, Mr. Speaker — and all

my friends tell me that I married up and I agree with them wholeheartedly. I thank God for blinding her eyes momentarily.

There's a lot of talk here in the House, Mr. Speaker, about the population growth in Saskatchewan, and I just want to say that my wife and I have done our part to help out with those statistics. We've increased our family by 300 per cent in the 21 years of our marriage and are very thankful for all six of our children.

Mr. Speaker, I have a son, Joel, living in Kindersley finishing up his level 3 power engineering. And he's going to fulfill my obligation I made to his mom to build her a house this summer. We sold ours before this all happened, and I made a promise. So he'll be building a house this summer.

We have three teenaged daughters after that, and things are always exciting around our house. My first daughter, Mary Jane, she's moving here to Regina to take dental hygiene and I'm looking forward to having her here. She's going to look after me, I'm sure. Our second daughter is Sara, now in grade 11. She's my joyful conscience who keeps her dad in line if I get a bad attitude. And then we have a girl, Rachel. She's in grade 9, full of life and laughter. And then I have a son David who waits for me at the door with a football every Thursday to get back from Regina, and he's keeping me in shape running patterns for him. Finally, Mr. Speaker, my wife tells me that this is our last child. It's our daughter Hanna. She's in grade 1, and she'll always be her daddy's little girl.

Mr. Speaker, this is my first budget, and it's funny that I had a little experience before it was revealed to the province. I thought it was a pretty neat deal to get a peek behind the curtain and be able to see the budget before it was presented. So me and the other two newbies were brought in and shared the budget there. And you know, some people talk about what about this heartless cuts or heartless taxes from our side of the House. And so I saw a little bit of that with the tax on used vehicles.

I, because of the six kids, drive what my children call a Hutterite van. And so I had a deal lined up, Mr. Speaker, to buy a hybrid car. I thought it would be great and had a good deal. I was going to transfer the money that night. My wife was going to pick it up the next morning. And our heartless Finance minister told me at the end of that meeting, so now that you've heard the budget, none of you will be able to buy a used car until after the budget's revealed.

So I'm looking forward to paying the tax on that used car, Mr. Speaker. But you know, I wouldn't call it heartless, Mr. Speaker, because, you know, I've been in a spot where I couldn't afford the newest of vehicles, and my son is in that spot today. And I know he just happened to buy a car for \$4,900. And for those who can't afford the tax, Mr. Speaker, we can see the heart of the government in providing cars without tax for those who can't afford it.

Concerning the budget, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to speak at it from a personal perspective and from a perspective of those in my constituency. And personally I'm proud to be part of the Saskatchewan Party and believe that our Finance minister, though it was a very difficult time in her life, did a great job in

presenting a good, a very good budget for this time.

We all should have guiding principles in our life that filter the decisions and the choices that we make. Otherwise, Mr. Speaker, we can get pretty far off track. It's very natural to judge ourselves by our intentions and others by their actions, Mr. Speaker. But having time to reflect and judge ourselves according to our guiding principles, it's an important part of life.

And you know, I normally carry the . . . I'm a card-carrying member. I left mine at home though, and asked around our caucus office, anybody got a card? And so Kimberley Rathwell is the one actual card-carrying member in the caucus office. And so I'm going to read some of the guiding principles. It says:

Economic growth and job creation through the private sector, not government, as the engine of the economy;

Smaller, less intrusive, more efficient government;

Steady, gradual reduction in government spending and taxation while maintaining a firm commitment to balanced budgets;

. . . A strong social safety net which protects those who truly need support while encouraging individuals to become self-sufficient.

[21:15]

If we didn't follow these guiding principles, Mr. Speaker, I don't know. These principles are clearly seen in the budget that's been presented. I've always tried to spend less than I've earned, to save all that I can, and to share when someone needs help, when I see a need. Those principles have served me well so far, Mr. Speaker, and I see them in this government's principles as well. They have a budget plan that is on track to get back to balanced.

I'm willing to guess one or two of us over the years have had unforeseen shortfalls or expenses in our personal lives. We've maybe had to put an expense, car repair on a credit card that we didn't have the money to cover. And yet we had to work hard to get back to the place where that credit card was paid off. But we also have debt, healthy debt that's not reactionary to our circumstances, debt like our mortgages that we systematically plan. And that's one thing that I hope the members across the floor understand. You know, there's good debt and there's bad debt.

That's why I'm glad to be a part of this government, who seems to have the same guiding principles that I do. Though their responsibility is so much more vast than any of us individually, I believe we have leaders who treat other people's money as if it was coming out of their own pocket, and they treat debt to the same degree as they would treat their own personal debt.

I spent some time, Mr. Speaker, with people in our own constituency after the budget was released and I was glad to see that, though there was an acknowledgement that things are tight . . . And it reminded me of a picture I'd once seen. It was from

the '30s and a couple of farmers are standing in their field and they're awfully thin. One has straw in his mouth, and they've both got their belts pulled in and there's six loops hanging out the bottom, and the gophers' holes were above ground. And the one farmer said to the other, he said, well I guess we'll just have to tighten our belts a little.

And though there was an acknowledgement that things may be a little bit tight, there was an overall consensus from the business people, the educators, farmers, retirees, doctors, nurses, students, and families in general, that they appreciate what our government is doing to balance the budget. We're glad this government is committed to staying on track to balance. There's a security and assurance that comes from being fiscally conservative through difficult times even though the initial desire is to keep spending.

Mr. Speaker, I grew up in a community where, if it wasn't for the farmers, none of us would be there. The four RMs that line up at Melfort grow enough grain and oil seeds to manufacture, to bake bread, to give a loaf of bread for every single home in the GTA [Greater Toronto Area] every single day of the year. So those farmers in my area feed the GTA.

And you know when I was born in 1971, a bushel of wheat was how much? \$5. A bushel of wheat was \$5. Today, what's a bushel of wheat? \$5. You know things are tight. Things are tough, but we in Saskatchewan prairies are resilient and we can figure things out. We don't need the government to step in and help us out in every way. We believe in small government — less intrusive, more efficient.

We believe that economic growth and job creation should come through the private sector. I spoke to some businessmen in our constituency, two men specifically that employ about 1,000 people together. And so I asked them what they thought, and it was interesting to see that they wholeheartedly agreed with a quote from the Saskatchewan Construction Association that says:

Finally, for a budget based on private sector growth, the government has done an excellent job of staying out of the way of private sector's . . . on the road to growth.

You know, Mr. Speaker, this country was not built by the government. This country was built by pioneers and people who got together and looked after the needs of one another. We built our schools. We built our roads. We built our barns. And we did that together. I've watched in my own constituency. In times when you need to tighten your belt, you've got to look to your people.

And in the town of Melfort we wanted to see something for the people. We saw a lot of single moms, a lot of people who had both parents at work. And they would take their child out of school and they would take them to the doctor, and they'd wait in that doctor's office, and they would find that the doctor would be at the hospital. And the doctor wouldn't come back, so they'd have to take their child back to school and go back to work and make another appointment. So we talked with one another and we said, you know, what we really need to do is we need to get a clinic attached to the hospital, so that those doctors when they go to check their patients, they can go in, they can

check their patients, and they can be right back.

So I am glad to say, Mr. Speaker, that the people of our community came together with business and they built a clinic without the government's help, and we housed those doctors. Made in Saskatchewan, made-in-rural-Saskatchewan solutions for rural Saskatchewan problems.

Mr. Speaker, this budget has done many great things for our community. It's not just the people looking after themselves. We've repaved many . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Am I at 18 minutes? Wow. And I am done. Wow, how did 18 minutes go by so quick? So anyways, they've paved some roads. Fifteen per cent extra, they've given us the PMR, which is looking after our school buildings — 15 per cent. You know, putting on roofs, you know, when you can't afford to build a new . . .

So, Mr. Speaker, a lot of money's been spent by the government in my constituency. People are thankful. People are happy. And I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, when it comes time, I stand and I'm going to vote in support of our budget and not for the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As everybody would say, it's always a privilege to stand in this House and enter into the debate. It's hard to believe; I think this is number 18 or 19. Not that I've entered into each debate, but we've been able to be here and listen to that many budgets, and that's really quite a scary number when you think about it. I never believed that I would be here for that many, but here I am.

I want to just first of all comment on the three new members on this side: the member from Swift Current, who spoke yesterday; the member from Kindersley, who spoke earlier today; and now the person that I have to follow, the member from Melfort. And what an amazing job that all three of those have done. I can tell you, I can tell you back in '99 when there was 17 of us doing our maiden speech, they were not nearly that solid, and we got the party to this point. Can imagine where the party's going to be with people like that taking it from here on in? So congratulations to them. They did a great job. And I was really sad to hear that your time had run out because you certainly could have taken some of my time. It'd be a lot more entertaining than what I have to say.

I do want to, as many members have talked about, is talk a little bit about my constituency. Then I'll talk a little bit about . . . First I'll talk a little bit of who I want to thank, then a little on the constituency, a little bit about the budget, and then my favourite part, going after the opposition.

I'm going to try and hurry through the first four topics so I can spend a fair amount of time on that latter. I don't know if I've ever spoke when I looked across and saw such a blank look on all the members' faces on the other side. You know, there's just no expression over there whatsoever. In fact, yes, it's probably the best group of opposition I've seen any time that I've risen in this House. But okay, anyway, back to the matter at hand.

I'm very blessed, as we all would say, that we get to represent

one of the best areas in the province. I think I do, Indian Head-Milestone. Have had that opportunity since 1999 — 18, 19 years going on. Great people, amazing people. Mainly deals with agriculture until you go to the very north of that constituency in the Qu'Appelle Valley and the people up and down the lakes and really the resort area of Fort Qu'Appelle, because it's a four-season resort area. Whether it's a ski hill in the wintertime or the lakes in the summertime, great location. But great, great people up and down that area and all throughout the constituency. I'm very blessed to represent them.

I'm also blessed to have such a strong — as many people have said — constituency assistant, Nicole Entner-McCullough, who has been my constituency assistant since 2007 and does a great job every day in the office dealing with the constituents. And we're very, very fortunate. Don't have a lot of complaints. Some issues every so often that we can help work through, but generally, you know, very self-supporting constituents that don't look at government as a solution. They look at what can they do as a solution as opposed to turning to government and saying, what can government do to get me out of my problem. And so we're very, very fortunate. But I'm also — again as I said, having Nicole run the office — very fortunate.

I want to thank Cindy, my wife. Of course as we all have said: you don't get here on your own, and you certainly don't remain here on your own. You need support at home.

I'm not sure whether the boys know I'm an MLA though. They probably aren't really following my career very much, and I don't know why that would be. They seem to have their own career going on. And it's interesting, because of course they, you know, if you would measure success by recognition or high profile, they've been fairly successful. They've made quite a name for themselves, both of them, whether it's in the competition side or on the media side. But on a regular basis I'll run into somebody that knows a heck of a lot more of what they're doing than what we do, what Cindy and I do at times. Because of Instagram or whatever else that people follow them, they seem to know what the boys are doing more than what we do.

I just want to briefly say — and I haven't had a chance publicly really to talk much about it, not that I don't know if anybody would really be interested — but just a little bit about the Olympic experience. It is, you know, just a rare occasion that you can go to an event like that and not only just go to an event like that and take the Olympics in, but also then to see one son compete and the other one be in the broadcast industry, which I mean . . . Wow, CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation]? Really, Craig? But no, they're covering the Olympics. So to see him cover . . . And it was really quite an amazing experience.

But I think it would be much more fun if you could go there without people involved, because when you have someone involved the pressure, and especially when the person would go in, like Mark went in as probably a favourite, as the favourite to bring home a medal for Canada. And you just . . . And I remember four years ago how the pressure was so intense. And I don't know what he felt; I didn't really care what he felt, but I felt the pressure as parents.

And you know, when you're going in as the favourite there's only one place to go. You can win and do what is expected of you, or you may not win and the letdown, and certainly there's that feeling. But what I would say, my real thought on the Olympics is any person that can go and compete at that level is an amazing person, an amazing athlete that's had to go through an awful lot to get to that point. If you're fortunate enough to compete in the Olympics and land on the podium, it is absolutely amazing because of all that needs to be gone through.

And we certainly had it happen in our family with Mark, you know, being in that serious accident about a year before and then landing on the podium in the slopestyle. But for those that finish on the top of the podium the stars absolutely have to align, and every person that walks out of that competition with a gold medal, or team that walks out of those competitions that happen once every four years with a gold medal, you know it just is awe-inspiring to think of what they have had to go through to get to that point, all that had to happen that day to make that happen.

You know, I can say that Mark ended up with a bronze in the slopestyle, which was great. He was favoured going into the big air. He had great warm-ups. He had great two days before. He was on top of his game. And for those that'll say well, you know, he was injured, he would not say that because none of those factors contributed to his result. It was just that day he wasn't on. And for somebody to end up on the top of the podium once every four years in the Olympics is an absolutely amazing feat.

So what I would say also, probably the hardest-working person that I saw there was Craig. He was very, very busy not only calling the snowboard events, but also hosting an evening show with Kelly VanderBeek as well as then doing interviews on the side with athletes for the other interest stories that he was conducting.

So, you know, you think you would go there and you would see your kids — we were there for 15 days in South Korea — that we would see the boys a fair amount. And we really didn't see them at all. We had lunch a couple of times with Craig and really didn't see Mark very much at all. So it really is not a family holiday. It was cold. It was windy. There was very little English spoken. It was really tough to get around. The logistics were really, really difficult. But other than that, it was a really great experience.

[21:30]

Now to the budget. I don't know if anybody's keeping track. I forgot to start my clock. So how far have I gone now? Five minutes probably. So the budget. You know, this budget, I really think the title says it all — it's *On Track*. The province is on track; the government is on track. And I think anybody that looks at this budget in isolation is making a great mistake because this isn't a budget that can be looked at in isolation. This is part of a three-year package of budgets: last year being a very difficult budget; this one perhaps not quite as difficult; and next year getting back to balance.

Because I think all of us in this House have the responsibility,

and especially the members on the opposite side of the House have the responsibility of first of all answering this question: do you believe that a province should run a balanced budget? Because if you don't, then deficits are okay, because deficits are okay in many other provinces right now. Alberta will say yes; it's eight and a half billion dollars in debt. We're not sure when we're going to get out of a deficit position — maybe in five years; maybe in 10 years — with no plan to get out. And right now what is really scary . . . Because it's our tax dollars too, even though we're not the government federally, but it's our tax dollars to have a federal government that is spending money with no idea of how to get out of deficit.

Now difficult decisions were made last year, absolutely. And there was some tax increases and there were some budgets, you know, maybe cuts to some, not maybe quite as drastic as what the opposition tries to make it out. But those tough decisions had to be made because fundamentally our government believes that deficit budgeting is not okay, that deficit budgeting cannot go on year after year after year. We have to have a plan, and it's a three-year plan to get to balanced budget.

That's why this *On Track* is so important. It's not a siding, track siding. It is the long track. It's the long road. First year, difficult decisions. This year, maybe not quite so bad — no tax increases, increased spending on a lot of areas. But more importantly, it keeps us on track to be at balance next year, which puts the province in a very good position. Let's hope the commodities turn around, seeing oil prices increase. Let's hope commodities turn around, that it will loosen the pressure off a little bit. But if it doesn't, the projections in this budget, put forward by the Minister of Finance and cabinet and the Sask Party as a whole, will have us in a very good position generations ahead.

And you know, it's not . . . when you listen to the opposition, day in and day out, you'd almost think or swear that we weren't spending any money. We have expenditures of \$14.6 billion is our expenditure line in the budget. Now that's . . . what's \$14.6 million? That's \$40 million a day our government is spending. And when you listen to the opposition each and every day, number one, it's not enough. You'd swear we're not spending anything in health care or education. That is simply untrue: \$40 million a day to put us to a \$14.6 billion expenditure budget. Spending in health care, spending in education — is it as much as what they want to spend? Absolutely not.

But you know, I've been listening to the new Leader of the Opposition, and it's interesting, his philosophy. His philosophy is spend, for sure, but the more you spend, the more you save. And that's what his philosophy is. And it's very evident when you look in the platform of that member, of the Leader of the Opposition, which they all support now because that is their leader, even though I know a lot of the members on that side had somebody else in mind for a leader. I think there was only one caucus member that was supporting, but all 11 members on that side now support a document like this, which is \$2.5 billion a year. And you know, so that's just a typical idea of how you can spend your way to save money.

I understand the philosophy, and there's a couple of members here that have been Health ministers, and you'll have a lot of groups come in and they'll say, you know, if we can spend here

and spend here, we'll save here. You can continue to spend and in theory, it makes, you know, it kind of makes sense. But until you . . . the reality, there just is not enough money to spend to get to that point.

You have to make those decisions of what is feasible in a balanced budget, and I think that's what the government has done very, very well, whether it's the spending in health care and the continuation of infrastructure projects that are going to be legacy projects for this province, a province that has never had a children's hospital — only one other one in the nation that didn't have a children's hospital — a legacy project here in Saskatchewan as a children's hospital. The facility in North Battleford, I remember touring it many times. And that is a legacy hospital, a new psychiatric hospital in North Battleford. The other one was over 100 years old. That's the spending that is being done, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to ensure that we have the infrastructure moving forward. Those are just a couple of examples in health care. There are many in education I could talk to.

Certainly the east Regina bypass is a legacy project for this province. This isn't a one-year or one-term project. This is a legacy project that will increase the efficiency of traffic flow around this city, into the GTH, out of the GTH, connecting the national highway system. It is a project that, quite frankly, if the NDP were in power and they wanted to go back to the original drawing of perhaps three bypasses and then connecting into the Ring Road . . . That's what, when they talk about \$400 million . . . That project is not even . . . should be just completely wiped off the map because it just doesn't make sense. And the project, the legacy project, the east Regina bypass, certainly does.

But I think, you know, I could go on and on about all the benefits of the budget, and there's certainly many more that I'm just touching. So many members have spoke so well about, you know, the expenditures that we have put in place, the fact that there's no tax increases and how important that is. The whole piece around the carbon tax, I think each and every one of us on this side could spend our 15 minutes on why there shouldn't be a carbon tax. I wish each member on that side could stand up and debate that, why they think there should be a carbon tax, because it would be extremely detrimental.

But I really think that after the budget and listening to the critic, who is here now — I'm glad to see that she's here — after her comments after the budget . . . Now I realize that, you know, the room is full and it tends to be a little bit of a partisan group. There tends to be I think probably a little bit more, few more Sask Party supporters than NDP. Mind you, in most rooms in this province there'll be a little more Sask Party supporters than there'll be NDP supporters.

But it was really interesting to hear the — and other members have talked about it — but to hear the member from Humboldt-Watrous talk about the budget and then the critic get up and completely be on the exact opposite page, and watching the faces of so many of the supporters. And a lot of them were our supporters, and so I can understand that.

A lot of them certainly were neutral — the cities, the RMs, SARM, and the construction association — a lot of those people that were neutral and talking to them after, they really kind of

questioned what did that critic listen to. Did they listen to the same budget? And I know, you know, there's spin on both sides. They'll go, the opposition will spin it one way and we'll spin it the other. But when you're spending \$40 million a day or \$14.6 million and then you hear the critic stand up and talk the way she did. You know, the only person that I really saw clapping heartily at the end of that was Don Cody with his orange from Prince Albert; he thought it was a great speech. So she did have one supporter in the room, but the rest of the people I think certainly questioned it.

The other thing that I find interesting, really quickly, with the member, the Finance critic for the NDP . . . We've talked about the document that their leader has put forward and we've said it was \$2.5 billion, \$2.5 billion a year. And every so often she'll say, how did you cost that. We don't think that's right. Well if it's not 2.5, what is it? 1.5? 2 billion? They will not cost their own document.

So my point to the opposition is, I think they have done a marvellous job over the last 11 years in opposition. I think they've got a long ways to go yet to get better at it, Mr. Speaker. I think they'll be there for sure another eight years. I'm predicting another 12 to 16 years on that side, and I think by that time they'll have it down. I think they'll be pretty good at opposition by that time.

But, Mr. Speaker, you can't be irresponsible in opposition and put out a document like this without costing. It's absolutely irresponsible. And if you want to talk about why they're not getting traction across the province . . . I was at a reception tonight, and there was a couple of them there. And after listening to the opposition speeches and the doom and gloom in this province that it must be in if you listen to their speeches, and then you go to a reception and you talk to the business guys . . . Is it as robust as it was three or four years ago? Absolutely not. Is it better than it was 10 years ago? Absolutely. And they'll say it person to person to person, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition has a long ways to go to get credibility, and it starts tomorrow when they're going to vote for their amendment which none of us will, Mr. Speaker. Because what they should be doing is voting for the budget because that's what I'm going to be doing. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — I recognize the member from Regina Douglas Park.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, mister deputy deputy speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this evening and contribute my thoughts to the budget. Because I'm entering into this debate fairly late in the lineup, I've had the . . . well I would want to say privilege but I've heard a lot of folks on the other side, so I don't know if it was necessarily a privilege or if I've done something terrible in a past life, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But in any event I've had the opportunity to hear many, many speeches from both sides of the Chamber, and it helps. It's hard to have new things to add, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I will do my best this evening.

I do want to join colleagues on both sides of the Chamber to pay my respects and let all know that my thoughts are with all of those impacted by the Humboldt bus tragedy. We know that it's impacting many people, not just families and friends, and it

hurts them in a way that I don't think anyone else can really relate to, but it is a tragedy that reverberates throughout the entire province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I do want to take the opportunity as well to welcome to the Chamber the members from Melfort and Kindersley and Swift Current who have all done their maiden speeches over the last two days, and I hope that their experience in the House is everything that they thought it would be, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I do also want to take this opportunity to thank those who allow me to do the work that I have the honour of doing in this House, including my loved ones, my family, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They sacrifice a lot so I can be here, and I do very much appreciate that. I also want to thank my constituency assistant, Nathaniel. I know a lot of folks on both sides have taken the opportunity to thank their constituency assistant and I want to do the same. He's been working with me since I was elected in 2016 and before that he was a friend, and surprisingly to me he continues to be one even though he is now my constituency assistant. As if we don't spend enough time together, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're also gym buddies. Three times a week we get up early in the morning and we go to LG Fitness, which is a good Douglas Park business. Actually the owner, Leslie Genoway, I just noticed was nominated for a YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] Women of Distinction Award.

And I'm sure members opposite aren't surprised to know that Nathaniel and I are going to the gym, because my muscles are essentially bursting out of my blazer, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But I'm sure they're happy to know which gym I'm attending so that they'll all sign up soon. But don't go to the 7 a.m. class. That's my class and it's my stress-relieving class, but 6 a.m. would be great time for folks if they're looking for a way to get jacked like me and find a way to relieve some stress, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But I do want to take some time, and I know my time is limited. I want to enter some of the thoughts that I have with respect to the budget, some of the concerns we're hearing from stakeholders, and the concerns I've been hearing in particular from constituents, because if you'd hear the rhetoric and the spin from the other side, you would think that everything is fine.

[21:45]

And one of the things I was hearing a lot when I was walking around the rotunda on budget day and talking with stakeholders were stakeholders that were a bit deflated, that were disappointed by the budget, but as they were saying to me, not as disappointed as they were the year prior. And they didn't necessarily want to speak as loudly as they did last budget because at least it wasn't as bad as last year, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that's a real sad thing to hear from the folks who are doing such great work across our province, that if the government treats them bad enough, that they'll take what they can get.

So our job, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in opposition is to be that voice and to help amplify that voice that we're hearing from those folks. And I do want to read a few of the quotes into the record, because I heard quite a few quotes from the other side of

folks who were saying that this is the greatest budget since budgets have ever existed, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But they're failing to mention some of the other folks that we're hearing from.

The first one I want to read is Deena Kapacila, who is the VP [vice-president] of operations and finance for the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And she said:

Some students are coming to me saying they're working two or three jobs. To tell them to get a fourth job to try to pay for university, it's just not an option . . . We want to stay here, but that Sask advantage . . . seems to be leaving students behind . . . I don't see a future for me here.

Another one is from the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation president Patrick Maze: "With more students and fewer teachers, today's budget won't make it any easier to meet the needs of students."

Here's another one. Mark von Schellwitz who's from Restaurants Canada said:

The Saskatchewan government has not done enough to offset the pain of last year's anti-foodservice budget . . . As a result of these tax increases, Saskatchewan restaurant sales were down by a staggering 4.5 per cent, resulting in the loss of 1,700 industry jobs.

Mr. Speaker, 4.5 per cent in the restaurant industry is quite devastating. Their margins, profit margins, are often relatively small. So when you see a 4.5 per cent decline, that means closed businesses, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that means closed local businesses that are supporting local people, that are helping our local economy, that are hiring local folks, and that's really devastating. And that's one of the things I wanted to add. Members opposite don't like it when we talk about the last budget and they don't like how we talk about how this budget did nothing to offset the devastation that was in the last budget. And that's important for us to continue talking about because those impacts are still very real for Saskatchewan businesses and Saskatchewan families.

Another quote for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is from University of Regina president, Vianne Timmons. She 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."

Mr. Speaker, the cuts to universities have been quite severe, in particular last budget. And it's not being relieved by this particular budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This budget doesn't get us back to where we were prior to 2017. So that's still quite devastating. When we saw universities being forced to find ways of offsetting the cuts to their funding, they were cutting programs. They were cutting teachers. They were cutting professors, while at the same time we've seen tuition increase to a very staggering level, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And what we're hearing now is that's not going to change, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we've heard from the minister in question period over the last few days. When she talks about this issue, she talks about finding other streams of funding for the universities and the

universities need to be finding other ways of funding, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And the important thing when we're talking about the budget and we're talking about these issues, budgets are — and other people have said it more eloquently than me — budgets are where you can see the values in a government. So what we see from this government are cuts to education, which means cuts to our future, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Even the minister herself, she wasn't talking about it in this respect, but was talking about how beneficial a university degree can be to that person who attains that university degree. And when we have students who are going . . . And we're hearing more and more, students who are getting suitcases for their grade 12 graduations and being sent to other provinces for their university education because the tuition here is significantly higher than tuition in other provinces, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Let me read to you another quote. This one's from Peter Gilmer, the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry, and he said:

Even though vacancy rates are going up, we certainly know that rent is not going down. It will be a real disaster unless they significantly fill in the gap, and quite frankly I just don't trust them to do that.

Mr. Speaker, and this is talking about one of the particularly most heartless cuts in this budget, which was the shutting down of the rental housing supplement program, which is really going to affect the most vulnerable. It's pretty similar to the cut we saw last year to SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability], the changes that were made to SAID where the housing top-up would be not given to new recipients and would be cut if there were any changes.

So I have constituents who call my office who are in precarious housing situations, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that are living in, the best way I can say it is non-optimal living situations. They're living in places that are not clean. You would not want your family member living there. But they are continuing to live there because they cannot lose that top-up. And they do not want to move because they will lose that top-up and they will not be able to find a place to rent. Because although vacancy rates are going up, the cost of living in these apartments is not going down. The cost of rent is not going down, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that's the problem.

And we hear members opposite chirp about the social housing vacancy rates, but we're also hearing about social housing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as even that is being made unaffordable for those who need to use that. So when social housing is unaffordable, we have a very serious problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Let me read another quote for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is from Anderson Auto Sales manager, Rod Dorn. "A lot of families have trouble affording vehicles as it is right now, and they've stretched their budget to the limit, so to add another \$600 onto an automobile is going to make it tough for them," Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And this is with respect to the recent change, the recent tax that the government made, the PST they've added to used car sales. And I'm trying to find — here we go — some quotes. This is an interesting turn that's happened by this government, considering the then opposition leader at the time, Brad Wall, in 2007 campaigned and advocated for removing PST on used cars. And when he did that, he said, "Saskatchewan people expect their government to do things that make sense and taxing the same car over and over every time it is sold just doesn't make sense." He also said, "A Saskatchewan Party government is committed to fairness and common sense in our tax system and will eliminate this form of double taxation," Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So again that's another . . . They like to talk about how they didn't raise the taxes this year, but we're seeing yet again more PST expansion creep. We've also seen, similar to what we saw last budget, we saw one or two rollbacks but we're still hearing, like I said, the devastation that the restaurant tax had or the food tax had on restaurants.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we still hear about the devastation that the expansion onto construction has had on that industry, and as a result on our economy, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And don't forget the expansion on kids' clothes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There was nothing in this budget to roll any of those provisions back. Instead we're seeing a PST increase, PST expansion onto used cars. And now we're hearing that SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] is going to be responsible for determining whether or not a private sale is at market rate or was at the appropriate evaluation, and then they are going to apply either the red book value or the sale value, whichever one was higher, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And hearing that sort of government interference from a Tory government is quite ironic to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I'd like to read another quote for you. This is Dave Nelson, Canadian Mental Health Association: "For the fourth year in a row, we have zero per cent." And then another quote from him: "You cannot keep and maintain and attract professional staff if you keep losing every year," Mr. Speaker. And he's talking about the concerns about the lack of mental health dollars in this budget. And I do know that this is a very important issue on both sides of the House, and everybody has some experience, directly or indirectly, loved ones or otherwise, who've had challenges in mental health. And I do think that everyone knows that the concerns around access to mental health services is a real one and is experienced by many, many.

But like I said, budgets are indications of values of a government, and this budget failed to match the federal mental health dollars, which frankly was surprising to me, Mr. Speaker. The way we were hearing in question period, the way the Minister of Health was talking, I was pretty sure that we were going to see a real influx in mental health dollars. So I don't know what happened there. I don't know what went wrong. It's really unfortunate. Not only is it an important issue and it's turning into a crisis not just in our province, but I would say in our larger community, in the country, but it also . . . You also see the effects that not adequately providing mental health services has, not just in Health but in many other ministries as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We see it in education, in the classrooms. When children don't have access to support services, those strains fall on the teacher. And when we see cuts to education budgets, that problem gets compounded because those extra supports that are in the education sector that are meant to fill in the gaps for those who can't access, for example, the health sector, are gone, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We also see it in justice as well. The access to health care providers and mental health supports in our jails is dismal, and that's an understatement, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We should be ensuring that there is ample access because we don't want those inmates back in jail again, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We need to make sure that they're not reoffending.

I also have done a few ride-alongs with some police officers in Regina, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I find that, and I've also heard but I've also saw, that police officers spend a lot of their time answering and responding to mental health calls, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And oftentimes that requires them to take an individual who is undergoing mental distress to the hospital. And they have to stay with them sometimes for upwards of 12 hours because it can take that long to be able to see somebody, to access those services, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So that's tying up our police resources — that should be out answering calls on, you know, matters of crime — in our health care sector.

So when you fail to make these investments, it actually ends up costing more money in the long run. Because we see the devastation in education. We see the devastation in justice. We see the devastation in corrections and policing, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[22:00]

I already mentioned education already a little bit, but I do want to say that that was another one that I was actually expecting to see more of a rollback than we did this time around. It sounded in question period, the way the minister was talking, I totally thought that we would see funding, at a minimum, at the level that it was prior to 2017, back in 2016, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What we instead saw was a \$24 million shortfall from where we were in 2016. That's not to account the thousands of more students we have coming into our system in 2018.

And the members opposite talk like we should be thanking them for the \$30 million they did put back into the system. And I think it's best described by if the government took 20 bucks from me and then handed me 15 back, they'd expect some applause. But that's not how that works in my world, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Or I know it's also not how it works in the world of the members on this side of the Chamber.

So because of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and for all of the other reasons that I expressed, and many more that I would love to talk about had I had more time, I will of course be supporting the very reasonable and well-thought-out amendment that was put forward by my colleague, and I will not be supporting the budget.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cypress Hills.

Mr. Steele: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before I get into talking about the budget, I'd like to acknowledge a few people over at my constituency, my family, and all the thanks for the support over the last few years here.

First of all, I'd like to thank my wife for all the hard work and support, that she supports me through being here in the legislature; and for many years, my colleague, the minister from Wood River. The years in the municipal politics that I've been in, it's been quite a few years and she kept the home fires burning. I'd like to mention one thing. I had a mixed-grain farm, which no longer is a mixed-grain farm. Over the years I spent in municipal government, the cows seemed to disappear. She wasn't a real fan of doing chores.

But also I'd like to thank my kids. My oldest, Nicole, and her husband, Eric, they live right outside the city here in Grand Coulee with my two grandsons, Kohen and Hudson. I'm very proud of Nicole. She's a teacher. She's on maternity leave right now. And Eric works for SaskEnergy.

My son Burton and his wife, Audrey. He's an RCMP officer. They're actually nice and close to the city too. They are stationed out here right outside of White City. They were transferred from the northern community of Pelican Narrows down here. And my son is in general policing just outside the city, but is also on the ERT [emergency response team] team for the RCMP. And Audrey works in the crime department out of "F" Division at Depot.

I have my youngest daughter, Brittany. She is in Lethbridge. She's an RN working on becoming a nurse practitioner. Unfortunately she seems to be pretty stable right there. Hoping someday she'll come back to Saskatchewan.

Also I'd like to acknowledge the glue that's in my constituency office. It's Twila. Her family went through some devastating times last fall with the fires. Her son and her husband were caught in the fires and were within inches of losing their life. But the health care system within the province and within our neighbouring province of Alberta, both individuals survived and are doing quite well. Her son Evan has a long ways to go yet as far as his recovery.

Also I'd like to acknowledge the voters of the Cypress Hills constituency for all the support that they've given me over the last little while. I've got to say it's one of the best areas to represent.

And I'd like to get into the speech for the budget. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to stand in support of the budget. This government has shown clearly that we are keeping Saskatchewan strong with the 2018-19 budget.

Mr. Speaker, before I start talking about the budget, I want to take the time to acknowledge everyone that has been affected by the tragic accident within Humboldt Broncos.

What an amazing province and country we live in. It has truly been amazing to see the support that has come from not only the community but from around the world. The acts of kindness and support truly make everyone believe in mankind. It shows how the country can pull together to support those during their

time of need. It allows the families to have the support that is needed when their world has been turned upside down — the hockey sticks being put out with respect to the teams and their families, wearing the jerseys, and supporting the yellow and green.

I personally have seen and have been part of an emotional devastation that has happened during the scenes of a tragic situation. I have witnessed and have been part of the communities when they've pulled together and reached out to support their neighbours, as they did when my constituency had those tragic fires in Burstall and Tompkins last fall.

Volunteers came out to fight fires they have never witnessed before. In the aftermath, people prepared meals, worked countless hours, and laboured and helped above and beyond their own workloads. Side by side, everyone worked beside each other, many hands making lighter work for everyone involved. Companies, RMs, towns offered their services and equipment and manpower. These wonderful people and communities allowed the families that had been injured to take the time that was needed to heal and get their feet back underneath them. It strengthened our communities and brought people closer together and made them achieve things they never thought possible.

It is hard to lose a loved one, to see them injured or hurt. There isn't a manual to tell you how long it takes to heal. The only thing we do know is that it takes time. But eventually the hurt will lessen. Your lives are forever changed in the blink of an eye. Remember to take time to reminisce. Take time to stop and enjoy all the big and little things in your life. Continue to use the strength and support of those that surround you. Remain strong. Believe that eventually, time, things will get better.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to recognize all the front-line workers, nurses, doctors, EMS [emergency medical services], staff, police officers, and firemen who all stepped up to the plate to offer their level of expertise to those injured in this horrific accident. The professionalism in taking care of the injured and their families during this time of need was outstanding.

Mr. Speaker, STARS also played big part in transportation of the injured on that tragic day. STARS, the Shock Trauma Air Rescue service, which has been operating in Western Canada providing highly specialized air medical services to the people for over 30 years, STARS offers a lifeline anywhere in our province offering advanced, quick health care services. STARS and the Saskatchewan emergency medical services system together provide services with quick emergency response times across the province. Mr. Speaker, it is a crucial link to rural and isolated areas and hope and life-saving transportation in a quick time frame to those that are injured or ill.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has provided funding to STARS since 2012 for their annual operating costs. This government makes sure health care is provided to those in remote and isolated areas a priority. STARS has provided care to 2,200 patients in the province since its start in Saskatchewan, 757 of those injured in 2015-2016 alone. The STARS flight team consists of advanced care paramedics, critical care nursing, and physician oversight which are also available on flights if

required.

Mr. Speaker, this government appreciates the rural fire departments, their staff, and their volunteers who help assist the STARS teams with landing and takeoff. Mr. Speaker, we are constructing new helipads to help serve the new Moose Jaw and children's hospital. We need to continue to meet the needs of Saskatchewan people as the services for STARS continues to grow.

I want to finish by saying STARS and all the other air ambulances are a key part of provincial network emergency medical services that include our ground and air first responders. Mr. Speaker, the government and the caucus have shown clearly that we are keeping Saskatchewan strong with the 2018-2019 budget.

The job of every member of the Legislative Assembly is to help keep Saskatchewan moving forward and shaping the better province for today, tomorrow, and the future. This is a job we all take seriously. These decisions are what was needed to meet the challenges we are facing, and I believe that the end results will be what is needed to bring the budget to balance over the course of the next few years.

The most important part of any budget is to keep the revenues and expenditures manageable. With the resource revenues declining over the last couple of years, our government is faced with economic and budgetary challenges in the 2018-2019 budget. Mr. Speaker, this year's budget continues to commit to moving away from relying on resource revenues and continuing to build a solid foundation using the revenues . . . resources during these challenging times. Our government will continue to do that and keep the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan.

Under the financial strains, our government made tough decisions. We will continue to invest in our province's future, keeping the deficit and the debt in control. Mr. Speaker, we still maintain infrastructure throughout our province. It will keep our economy growing, create jobs, making it easier to move products and sustain economic growth. Any investment that will benefit our province for years to come, improving quality of life for the generations to follow — these smart, strategic investments will help grow our economy and make Saskatchewan even a better place to call home.

Mr. Speaker, the budget contains a strong investment in education: 2.5 billion will be invested in programs and services to continue with supporting child care, early years, libraries, and pre-kindergarten to grade 12, investing in the future of the children of our province. The increases in funding will allow school divisions to invest at the classroom level, to invest in supporting our teachers and educational support staff.

Mr. Speaker, education plays a great . . . [inaudible] . . . role in everyone's lives. Getting a proper education is very necessary. It improves us with fundamental tools we'll continue to use throughout our lives. Just like food is necessary to maintain a healthy body, education provides us with mental, physical, and social well-being, so we can be successful in our personal growth for the future.

We as a government want to continue to ensure that we are able to provide important tools offering support and strength in classrooms for our children, our communities, and our province. Schools are the hearts of our communities. It provides stability within our communities. Mr. Speaker, the NDP closed 176 schools during their time in power.

Education is a fundamental part of the foundation of our province, and our government wants to make sure we are providing the right services in the right locations, using the best delivery options possible.

We want to ensure education remains relevant and viable. Mr. Speaker, every year to continue to support the growth of child care spaces across the province, over the last 10 years we have added 8,500 new child care spaces, 70.5 per cent increase since 2007. We continue to invest in our youth, our future, which we feel is very worthy of investment.

Mr. Speaker, our government is dedicated to meeting the challenges before us, controlling and reducing spending, and ensuring our economy remains strong. As a government, we took the time to look at every area of service delivery, to every area of service delivered, to ensure that the resources are being used in the most effective and efficient manner.

I want to point out that this government has been a leader in the field of health care since we took office in 2007, including a reduction of wait times and the increase in health care spending. Our government has shown not only does it benefit urban care centres, but also those in rural and remote areas in this province. Mr. Speaker, we have made significant improvements towards creating facilities, providing innovative services, and recruiting health care professionals throughout the rural and remote areas of the province.

[22:15]

In the area of physician recruitment for the province, the numbers speak for themselves. With increases in physicians from the previous government's time in office, this is nearly 750 more licensed physicians and over 3,400 more nurses. Saskatchewan lost more than 173 doctors and over 450 nurses during the previous government's time in power during 2001 to 2006.

Mr. Speaker, it was not only physicians and nursing that have increased since 2007. The number of specialized specialists in Saskatchewan has gone up as well. The Canadian Institute of Health Information even recognized Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, as one of the two provinces with the highest physician growth rates in the past five years.

Mr. Speaker, our government strongly supports resource-based industries. This year's budget will see 1.5 per cent increase in the Ministry of Energy and Resources' budget. The increase of 750,000 will contribute to mineral development strategy to create an incentive to encourage further mineral exploration and development in the province. An additional \$1 million will continue to support the integrated resource information centre, strengthening the province's approach for pipeline regulations and safety. Mr. Speaker, supporting these incentives in the energy sector continues to strengthen and support our alliance

with the oil and gas industry to ensure that we are continuing to operate safely within our province.

We continue to invest in strategies to support and encourage the mining industry in the exploration of minerals throughout the province. Our government recognizes the significant potential the mining and industry offers to our province. They create many jobs within our communities.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's agriculture plays a large part of everyday life. The 2018-2019 budget invested \$378.6 million towards the agriculture sector. The work on the farm or ranch differs throughout the year, with each season bringing its highs and its lows, with its rewards as well. Spring is a very busy time of the year for agriculture — newly worked soil when planting a crop, or the sight of a newborn calf.

Mr. Speaker, our budget includes an increased funding for agriculture in many different aspects, one being for animal protection. The new three-year funding agreement will provide 800,000 a year. Throughout all the diversity, producers always emerge stronger than before. They bind together and support each other and display Canadian pride that has sustained farmers and ranchers for so many centuries.

On our modern farms, youth are more knowledgeable in achieving things our forefathers never thought possible. Our governments want to continue to support agriculture investing, agricultural research, and continue to support management programs such as crop insurance. Agriculture is the foundation of our province and our government wants to make sure we are providing the right services in the right locations, using the best delivery options possible.

We are asking producers and industry how we can better serve them and how we can ensure activities remain relevant and available. With the industry forever evolving, extensive activities needed to drive sustainable growth and ensuring that producers stay competitive in the global market, agriculture research will continue to be supported with investment of 31.8 million being funded by the province.

Mr. Speaker, we are fostering programs for new technologies and increased funding for food centres, livestock, and forage centres, supporting farmers and ranchers to continue to develop and produce self-sufficient, high-value operations. Our government wants to ensure that our next generation is in a good position to build their futures right here at home.

Over the last decade Saskatchewan agriculture's exports have grown. Our producers have harvested around 35 million tonnes in 2017 alone. The fifth consecutive year of the province's harvest has been more than 30 million tonnes. Mr. Speaker, last year's ag exports were the fourth largest on the record with a total of 13.5 billion, an increase of more than 60 per cent since 2010.

In all, Saskatchewan's ag food exports make Saskatchewan agriculture the most diversified market for any sector in the Canadian economy. We can be proud of the work that our producers do every day. Not only does this hard work benefit our province but it benefits our nation as well.

Mr. Speaker, as a government we have honoured the commitments we have made to those who have supported and who have voted for us. Our government has taken the time to listen to the people of our province and we have acted. Our government has made a choice that we will define our future.

We are continuing to move forward and keep up the maintenance on our aging infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, our highways handle a lot of wear and tear in the Southwest between agriculture, oil field, and general traffic. We continue to invest in our highways to ensure that they remain safe and sustainable for years to come.

The 2017-2018 budget investment of 10.9 million towards the highways construction, repair, and maintenance. Last summer Highway 13 from Eastend to the junction of Highway 21 had been worked on with medium preservation being done to it. This year's budget will continue to see more maintenance repairs on 800 kilometres of highway improvements being done across the province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of this budget. I'm proud of the decisions that we have made. This budget shows that our government cares for the people of Saskatchewan. We're growing to continue moving forward and returning the budget to balance. And I support the 2018-2019 budget and not the amendment. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As always, it's a great honour to rise in this great room in this beautiful building to speak about this, I think, very solid budget. I'm very impressed with this budget, Mr. Speaker.

And before I start my remarks I want to mention last week I had the opportunity to speak on our day of condolence about the accident. And I just want to tell the people of Humboldt and the Humboldt Broncos organization, and especially the family and friends and loved ones of those who were closest to the accident, that we are all thinking about you. And since our day of condolence we've found out that people around the world are. They are aware of what happened on that intersection of Highway 35 and 335. And there's been an outpouring of support and caring from around the world, and I hope that that can help bring those families and loved ones strength at this time.

Mr. Speaker, when we get elected into this place, especially on this team on this side of the floor — I'm not so sure there's much of a team on the other side, Mr. Speaker, but there is an organization — we are committed to being part of this team when we get elected over here . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I hear a lone voice in the wilderness, Mr. Speaker. But not so much on that side, Mr. Speaker.

So I want to mention my family: my wife, Linda; and my daughter Stephanie and her husband, Gabe, and their sons Stewart and Jack; and my daughter Alison and her daughter Liberty; and my son Lee and his wife, Jessie, and their daughter Josie, and little Sam, my youngest grandson, two years old the other day. That's why we do it, Mr. Speaker.

And they quickly learn when we get elected to this place, on this team that is charged with governing the province at this point in time, that the things they like to do sort of have to work around our schedules here. And it's . . . I don't know if they think of it as a hardship, but it's a little different life. You don't necessarily get to do the things they'd like to do as a family all the time when they'd like to do them. And they make those sacrifices so that we can be here, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank my family.

And in my constituency office I have a force of nature, Terry Lynn Carefoot, and she's awesome. She keeps me organized, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to run out of time here. There were a few things I wanted to talk about. I want to talk about the contrast between the way that we govern this province and the way that the NDP used to when they had the opportunity, or should I say before they squandered the opportunity to do that, Mr. Speaker. I have a couple of lists of things I wanted to read, had time permitted, that would illustrate the contrast between a responsible budget like the one our Finance minister presented here in this budget cycle and what they did. I wanted to go through a couple of lists of items that they spent money on in those days, Mr. Speaker. I won't have time for that.

But I will say that this budget is very responsible. It's a budget that's well thought out. It's a budget that we can all be proud of. And it's a budget that the people of Saskatchewan are very, very comfortable with, Mr. Speaker. And you know . . . Oh, I guess I'd better not start; I don't have time. But in any event, Mr. Speaker, you know, I think since my time is almost over . . .

An Hon. Member: — We'll stay as long as you want.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Yes, I bet. Mr. Speaker, they've consented to stay as long as I want. How's that with you, sir? I didn't think so. Okay, I'll wrap up. This budget is, it's on track, Mr. Speaker. It shows confidence in the province of Saskatchewan, and it'll keep Saskatchewan headed in the right direction, Mr. Speaker. And accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I support the budget and I will not be supporting the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: — Seeing that it is very near to the time of adjournment, this House will stand adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:30.]

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