



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

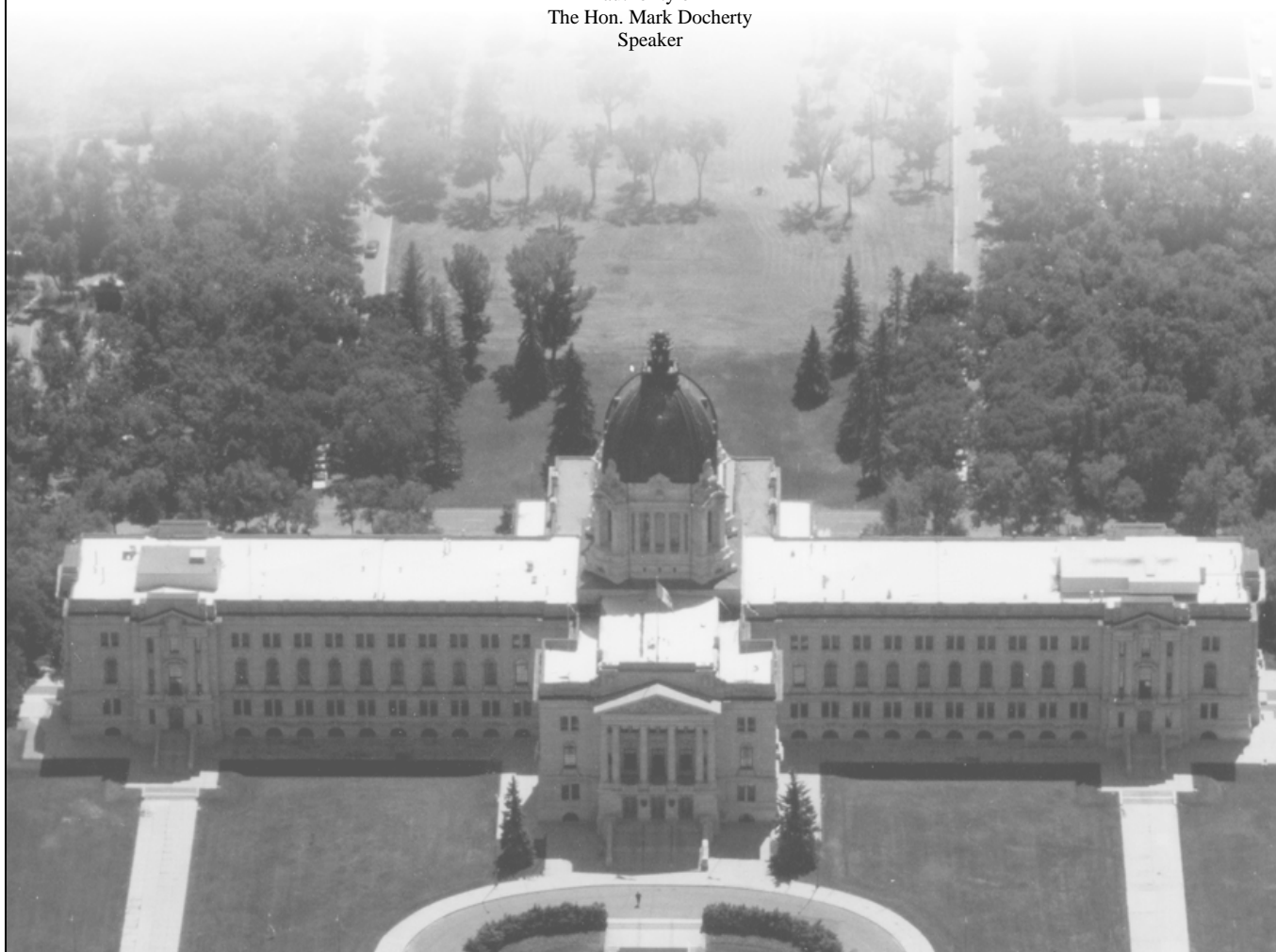
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Mark Docherty
Speaker



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

Speaker — Hon. Mark Docherty
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Leader of the Opposition — Ryan Meili

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Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

Vacant — Regina Northeast

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

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of this honourable Assembly, I'd like to introduce a school group of 13 grade 5 students from Herbert School. The students are accompanied today by their teacher, Pat Jahnke; educational assistant, Donovan Epp; and the school principal, Arron Kohlman. I'd ask all members to give them a warm welcome to their Legislative Assembly, and I look forward to meeting with them a little later.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my absolute honour this afternoon to rise and to introduce a school group seated in the east gallery, Mr. Speaker. With us today we have eight grade 6 to 8 students who attend Prairie Sky School, not too far from here. I suspect you walked over today, did you?

This is a great group of kids. They attend a unique school in Regina Lakeview just off Hill Avenue and spend a lot of time in the community and doing work for the community, Mr. Speaker. Joining them today or with them today is their teacher, Mr. Dave Vanderberg. And I invite all members to welcome these students to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Hon. Ms. Beaudry-Mellor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It brings me great pleasure to introduce my friend Jodie Hetherington who's seated up in the far gallery. If you could give a wave. Jodie is well known to many of us on this side of the House. She and her husband, Mark, are big farmers in the Minister of Agriculture's constituency.

You know, my husband and I were very close friends with her late father-in-law, Doug Hetherington. She's a registered nurse and mother of three: Lukas, Alyssa, and Jacob. They are big boosters of the community in so many ways, Mr. Speaker, perhaps most notably, their involvement with the Moose Jaw Warriors, where they not only support the organization but they also billet many of the players and mentor them through. In this last two weeks it's been particularly important, to recognize your work there. They're also very active at Lindale School and very, very strong philanthropists. I want to welcome you to your Legislative Assembly.

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

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to also recognize Jodie Hetherington. Jodie is a very bright young woman in the agriculture community and the community

surrounding Moose Jaw, and also a very valuable addition to my constituency executive. And I'd like to welcome her here.

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

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you, through you to all the members of the Assembly, I would like to introduce one of my friends, neighbours, and constituents. Shahid Pervaiz is here to watch question period. I ask all the members to join me and welcome him in his legislature.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melfort.

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

The Speaker: — I need the member to be in his correct seat. Okay, we're moving. I recognize the member for — stand up — I recognize the member for Melfort.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the citizens of Porcupine Plain, and I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Father and Son Recognized at Track and Field Championship

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past February, a number of University of Saskatchewan Huskie athletes participated in the Canada West track and field championships held at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. One of those was proud Métis athlete Kieran Johnston. Kieran is a gifted athlete, winning the 2015 Huskie Track Rookie of the Year. During the Winnipeg competition, Kieran was the lone gold medallist for the Huskies, earning gold in the men's heptathlon and the silver in the 60-metre hurdles race.

Kieran is an incredibly well-rounded young man. Even with all the hours of training involved with track, he still finds time for his other interests like acting. For instance, this past fall he had a major role playing the initially shy Brad in the University of Saskatchewan production of *Rocky Horror Picture Show*.

Kieran's father, Todd Johnston, was also there at the Canada West track and field championships in his role as the assistant coach for the Huskies women's team. Todd — who originally hails from my constituency of Saskatoon Riversdale, and his mother still calls it home — is no slouch himself and won the Assistant Coach of the Year at the Canada West track and field awards banquet.

In March, Kieran also went on to win gold in the heptathlon at the U Sports national championship where he scored 5,259 points, 208 points ahead of the silver medallist, by finishing first in all but two of the seven events. And this month Kieran was also named the University of Saskatchewan Male Athlete of the Year. Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members join me in congratulating Kieran and his dad, Todd, on their well-deserved honours.

The Speaker: — Does anybody have a statement? I recognize the member for Saskatoon Eastview.

Former Premier Inducted Into Hall of Fame

Mr. Tochor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night myself, along with the Premier and many members of this Assembly, had the pleasure of attending the Junior Achievement of Saskatchewan Hall of Fame inductee ceremony. The most recent inductee was someone members of both sides of this House know well: our former premier, Brad Wall. He's our province's first and only premier to be inducted into the hall of fame.

Brad was being inducted thanks to his work in helping businesses thrive throughout the province of Saskatchewan. From clearing red tape to slashing business tax rates, Brad made it a priority to provide a competitive environment for Saskatchewan businesses to thrive. And, Mr. Speaker, competitive business environments help our communities. The second-fastest economic growth in Canada over the past 10 years has allowed us to invest in health care, education, and social services.

But, Mr. Speaker, Brad would be the first person to say government doesn't deserve all the credit. Organizations such as Junior Achievement are just as, if not more, important as JA [Junior Achievement] impacts Saskatchewan students' lives through their training, materials, and mentorship, teaching students the value of free enterprise and developing their leadership skills and entrepreneur skills. We've heard some of the impact last night in speeches from current and former JA members, and can see it through the impressive network of entrepreneurial educators and volunteers JA has.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of this entire Assembly, I would like to congratulate Brad Wall on being inducted into the Junior Achievement Hall of Fame, and thank Junior Achievement for all the great work that they do. Thank you.

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

Regina Philanthropists Win Citizen of the Year Award

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, it's my great pleasure to focus a spotlight on a couple of Regina's most active philanthropists,

Doug and Gloria Archer. Gloria and Doug are residents of Regina Lakeview. They co-founded Knight Archer Insurance Brokers in 1981. Doug was mayor of Regina from 1988 to 2000, certainly a good run by anyone's standard. They've also strengthened the life of Regina residents with their strong vision to champion diversity and help care for our community's children.

Earlier this year, they were recognized for their incredible work. On January 1st of this year, the Archers were named co-recipients of CTV's [Canadian Television Network Ltd.] Citizen of the Year Award for 2017. What an accomplishment, Mr. Speaker. This is well deserved.

Gloria and Doug have spent many years volunteering in their community, just to name a few, with the University of Regina Cougar athletics; Regina Multicultural Council Celebration of Cultures, Mosaic; Habitat for Humanity; Run for the Cure; MS [multiple sclerosis] Super Cities Walk; and the Cystic Fibrosis Bike Run.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to all of this, Gloria and Doug are the driving force behind the annual Brighter Futures for Children benefit which has already raised over \$750,000 for SCEP [Socialization, Communication, and Education Program] Centre and Regina's Early Learning Centre.

I ask all members to join me in saluting Gloria and Doug Archer on being named co-recipients of CTV's Citizen of the Year Award for 2017 and for all the incredible work that they do in our community. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Swift Current.

Impaired Driving Prevention Campaigns Recognized

Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] and two very important awards they'll be receiving this June. It's been announced that SGI will be the recipient of two recognitions at the International Association of Business Communicators Gold Quill Awards for two of their media campaigns: People Shouldn't Disappear, and Be a Good Wingman.

Mr. Speaker, this year there were 94 Awards of Excellence handed out and 164 Awards of Merit, representing 13 countries from around the world. The Gold Quill Awards are recognized globally as one of the most prestigious awards in the communications industry.

The People Shouldn't Disappear campaign kickoff media event is the recipient of the Award of Merit in the category of special events, and the Be a Good Wingman campaign has won the Award of Excellence in the category of marketing, advertising, and brand communication.

Mr. Speaker, impaired driving is still a problem in Saskatchewan. The Minister for SGI as well as our government take road safety very seriously. We've been working hard to drive the message home that impaired driving is not acceptable. We've already made some changes regarding the penalties for impaired driving, and there will be more legislation coming. We

also want to thank the families who courageously share their stories through these media campaigns in order to bring the issue to the forefront so that we all remember the consequences of our actions.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members please join me in congratulating all those involved with the SGI campaigns on these awards. Thank you.

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

Heart and Stroke Foundation Fundraiser

Mr. Oluson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently I, along with the Minister of Social Services, took part in the Heart and Stroke Foundation's Hockey Heroes Weekend fundraising event in Saskatoon. The fundraiser had strong support from participants, sponsors, and the community. Together they raised \$420,000 for awareness initiatives and CPR [cardiopulmonary resuscitation] training in the province.

The event included 15 hockey teams playing in the round robin tournament. Mr. Speaker, part of the appeal was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for participants to play hockey alongside NHL [National Hockey League] alumni like great Montreal Canadiens Brian Skrudland and John Scott. This twist added an incentive for teams to raise money, as the top fundraiser was awarded the first pick for choosing a former NHL player.

Mr. Speaker, the Heart and Stroke Foundation along with the University of Saskatchewan College of Medicine have been instrumental partners in helping the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation provide long-term funding for a stroke and research Chair in Saskatchewan. Under the leadership of stroke research Chair Dr. Michael Kelly, there are now province-wide protocols for emergency stroke evaluation and treatment. These protocols will help to ensure stroke patients receive intervention within those first few critical hours, as well as identify patients who may benefit from a clot-removal surgical procedure to improve chance of recovery.

[13:45]

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to acknowledge everyone who raised funds and participated in the Hockey Heroes Weekend. Thank you.

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

Family Farm Wins Charolais Breeder of the Year Award

Mr. Dennis: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in this Assembly today to acknowledge the success of a local farmer in my constituency. Founded in 1993, Sliding Hills Charolais is a farming operation located south of Canora. The farm consists of a herd of 120 cows and 14 quarters of land used for both cash crops and pastures. They were recently awarded the 2017 Saskatchewan Charolais Breeder of the Year Award from the Saskatchewan Charolais Association for the farm's work.

Mr. Speaker, like so many farming operations across the province, Sliding Hills Charolais is family owned and operated. Carey and LeeAnn started the farm, but their children Sarah, Laura, and Dale have become significantly involved in the farming operations. In fact, the farm does all the farm work without any hired help. All three Weinbender children have or are working towards agriculture degrees from the University of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the family farm is truly the backbone of Saskatchewan. And as an old member of the farming community, it's inspiring to see young farmers continue to make an impact on this industry.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the entire Assembly, I'd like to congratulate the Weinbender family for winning the 2017 Saskatchewan Charolais Breeder of the Year Award and wish them the best in the future.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

Reesor Ranch Offers Award-Winning Hospitality

Mr. Steele: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to talk to the Assembly about the Reesor Ranch, located in the Cypress Hills. Mr. Speaker, the Reesor Ranch is a fifth-generation homestead, established in 1904. In 2017, it was designated as Saskatchewan's first provincial heritage ranch. Everyone enjoyed an authentic, good old western ranch experience by lodging in their ranch house or in one of their cozy rental cabins. The ranch is also home to a log barn which can be rented out for special occasions.

Mr. Speaker, the atmosphere of the historic Reesor Ranch is unique. There is a wealth of heritage to be discovered during your visit, learning about Canada's early history and the Cypress Hills massacre, or take a tour of the area riding horseback, or take a guided walking or ATV [all-terrain vehicle] tour through the hills. The Ranch Hall Grill is available to serve the guests meals throughout their stay.

Mr. Speaker, in 2006 the Reesor Ranch won a Saskatchewan Tourism Award, making it no surprise that they have been awarded the Business of the Year employing just under 20 people. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask everyone in the Assembly to join me in congratulating everyone at the Reesor Ranch for their hard work while helping keep Canada's western roots alive. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Determination of Conflict of Interest

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we learned that Bill Boyd, the Sask Party's former Economy minister who resigned in the midst of a conflict of interest scandal, was fined \$35,000 after pleading guilty to environmental charges. This was a minister that the former premier described as the DNA of the Sask Party.

And, Mr. Speaker, he promoted his irrigation project, his

private project, while still a minister when he was in China. He went on to start the same irrigation project without getting prior approval from the Water Security Agency. He's now been investigated and convicted for environmental charges relating to this project. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Boyd pressured the Water Security Agency and was able to get a difficult-to-get licence more quickly than usual, and the minister was the minister responsible for the water security at the time.

With a past minister of the Crown now convicted, now convicted for abuses committed while in government, Mr. Speaker, what will the Premier do to make sure this never happens again? Will this Premier make changes to the conflict of interest legislation to prevent this kind of abuse?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that there was some charges that were laid, Mr. Speaker, to a colleague of all of ours. There was four charges that were laid under *The Environmental Management and Protection Act*, and there was two of those charges that were pled guilty to, Mr. Speaker.

Now the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, is that the people of the province can rest assured that this particular incident was investigated, Mr. Speaker. And the process that we have through the investigation, through the channels of justice, Mr. Speaker, this individual was treated in exactly the same fashion as any other individual would across the province of Saskatchewan. I think the people of this great province can feel so assured, Mr. Speaker, that this is a case . . . Everyone in this province is treated in an identical fashion in this type of an incident, Mr. Speaker, no matter who you are.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, no, people in this province should not all be treated in an identical fashion — the members of this House need to be held to a higher standard.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday's convictions are not the only possible charges hanging over Mr. Boyd's time as a minister in this Saskatchewan Party government. The RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] investigation into land transactions at the Global Transportation Hub was concluded last November, Mr. Speaker. The results were forwarded to the Manitoba Crown prosecutors five months ago to review and determine next steps.

Has there been an update on the status of this review? When will the people of Saskatchewan have the full story on this investigation, and what is the government doing to clear the air of scandal that continues to hang over the Global Transportation Hub?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite might want to weigh in to a prosecution or a police investigation. We're not going to do that. The matter is with the Manitoba department of justice, and that's where it'll stay till it's finished. We will make no inquiries. We're not dealing with it. It's up to them to finish it, and we'll wait.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, the opening question remains. We are to be held to a higher standard. Conflict of interest of members in this House is something that needs to be investigated in great detail, and we have asked numerous times this session without getting an answer. Will this Premier take the steps to strengthen, as the Deputy Premier suggested, our conflict of interest legislation?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we have legislation that's in place. That legislation precludes a minister from participating in or consideration on something that's before cabinet before the matter is voted on. Mr. Speaker, if a member comes across that kind of situation, the member is by statute obliged to recuse himself. That happens on a regular basis.

Mr. Speaker, all of the members on this side of the House, and I presume on that side of the House, meet at least annually with the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. They review all of their affairs. They deal with those affairs, and they go back to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner for advice periodically. The Conflict of Interest Commissioner provides rulings where it is appropriate. And, Mr. Speaker, if the Conflict of Interest Commissioner makes recommendations, we'll look at those.

If the members want to have further discussion about something, we'll always be welcome to have that discussion. But, Mr. Speaker, what I do take strong exception with is with the inference that somebody has done something wrong or improper, because it's simply not the case.

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

Mr. Meili: — There was sufficient concern, Mr. Speaker, for the RCMP to spend a significant amount of time with members on that side. Mr. Speaker, there was a conviction. There is evidence of a minister acting in conflict of interest, and we have a minister on that side who's already requested a review of conflict of interest legislation.

We're very open to doing that, strengthening that legislation, Mr. Speaker. We have yet to hear a response of why this Premier would not be open, when we know that a cloud of scandal hangs over so many projects, why he would not be open to be making sure that there's no possibility of even the impression of a conflict of interest.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite might well do well to discuss with the member that they have, or the two members that are members of the Law Society and get some discussion with them about when is it appropriate to weigh in to something that is before justice. And we do not interfere with that process in any way. A police investigation is something that ought be done totally separate from this government. It is and it will be, as is the process with prosecution.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite talk about conflict of

interest. Mr. Speaker, that is something that those members ought to look at themselves on. The Leader of the Opposition took donations, took donations from 12 wealthy individuals. They donated almost 5,000 each to the leadership campaign, well in excess of their suggested limit.

Mr. Speaker, those individuals as well have no issue with taking donations from their union friends — \$81,000 from UFCW [United Food & Commercial Workers], \$54,000 from Unifor, 37,000 from United Steelworkers, \$35,000 from the Canadian Labour Congress. Mr. Speaker, they talk about not taking money from outside the province. They talk about not wanting to take money from corporations. Mr. Speaker, that group of people should . . .

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

Recruitment of Staff for Children's Hospital

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly glad to hear that there's more interest on that side in getting big money out of politics. We've been on that train for a long time, and we're very happy to head down that road. We'd also really love an answer, at some point, on strengthening the conflict of interest legislation. We continue to hear nothing.

Mr. Speaker, what we do hear from this government is boasting about the approaching completion of the \$300 million children's hospital in Saskatoon. Having a great children's hospital would be wonderful, Mr. Speaker.

However the Peachey report, commissioned by the Ministry of Health, has revealed that there are significant challenges in the government's ability to adequately staff that children's hospital. Saskatchewan has fewer pediatricians per capita than any province that has a children's hospital, and this government has set staffing targets that are lower than the recommendations commissioned by its own ministry. In general pediatrics alone, the Peachey report recommended 60 general pediatricians. There are currently less than 15 in Saskatoon, the city that's going to have this children's hospital — less than 10 full-time positions — and people, pediatricians ready to work.

Where are the positions, Mr. Speaker? What is this government's plan to ensure sufficient number of pediatric specialists for the children's hospital in Saskatoon so that Saskatchewan's kids will get the care they need?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a great deal of work has gone into recruiting for all types of specialists, Mr. Speaker. The vast majority of the specialists have already been recruited. Dr. Givelichian who is in charge of this, assures us that we're, if not ahead of schedule, at least on schedule for recruitment, Mr. Speaker. We're recruiting a number of different specialties, Mr. Speaker, well in advance of the kickoff for the new hospital, which is on time and on budget, Mr. Speaker. I have great faith in Dr. Givelichian's ability to continue to do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Support for Education

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, that's less than a quarter of what's needed. And the Sask Party loves to talk of their support for kids but the numbers tell a much different story. Regina Public has welcomed over 1,700 new students since 2014. In order to maintain class sizes and basic levels of support, the division would have had to have added 110 additional teachers over that same time period. Instead, due to underfunding, they've only been able to add 12. That's enough students to fill five or six schools, Mr. Speaker, but only enough teachers to fill about half a staff room.

How can that minister say with a straight face that the Sask Party is doing enough to support our children's education?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well, Mr. Speaker, with a straight face I'll tell you this: we've invested an additional \$30 million in this year's budget to support classrooms around this province, Mr. Speaker. We've also committed to an ongoing conversation with school boards, with teachers, with trustees, and with parents, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that we are supporting children in the classroom to an appropriate level, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue to have those conversations.

I've just received, Mr. Speaker, the enrolment projections for the fall, and I'm going to have a talk with my ministry. I'm going to have a talk with school board trustees to see what that looks like, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that we are providing the right resources.

But for the member to stand up and say that this government has no commitment, Mr. Speaker, to public education, I just ask her to look at the budget: \$30 million in additional resources, Mr. Speaker, \$30 million which will support children in our classrooms, Mr. Speaker. And that's not to mention the \$41 million, Mr. Speaker, that we got from the federal government to help support early years, Mr. Speaker. This all shows a commitment on the part of this government to support children in our classrooms.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, predictably that minister keeps going back to his \$30 million offering and more talk. Year over year, funding still represents over a \$20 million cut to our children's classrooms, and it's having a direct impact on the quality of education. As charts from the school division show, the Sask Party's failures to fully fund education is having a direct impact. With growing class sizes and complexity there is so much more support that's needed in our children's classrooms. And more of the same underfunding simply isn't good enough.

The minister loves to talk about the so-called efficiencies they have forced on school divisions over the last round of cuts. Does he count the 98 missing students from Regina Public Schools as one of those efficiencies?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

[14:00]

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I have talked about efficiencies. I have talked about efficiencies, Mr. Speaker, with respect to school divisions. And I would think that the people of Saskatchewan would expect their governments, would expect their school boards, would expect their municipal councils, Mr. Speaker, to look for efficiencies where they need to find efficiencies, Mr. Speaker. It only makes sense when you're protecting the taxpayer's dollar, Mr. Speaker. And we'll continue to encourage school divisions to look for efficiencies within their operations, Mr. Speaker, because the more efficiencies they find within their operations, the more supports there are for the classroom.

But I'll return to my original comment, Mr. Speaker. This government is committed to continuing to support public education, to support the children in this province, because we understand that ensuring that we provide the right supports for children guarantees the future success of this province both economically and socially, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to do that, and we'll continue to have the conversations that we need to have, Mr. Speaker, so that we make sure that we are providing the right supports.

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

Provincial Sales Tax Exemptions

Ms. Sproule: — In 2007 members opposite ran on a promise to do away with the PST [provincial sales tax] on used cars. And let's recall, Mr. Speaker, it was their former leader, Brad Wall, who said government should avoid doing dumb things, and the idea of charging the PST on the same used car over and over again seems pretty dumb. Now that they're pinching pennies, the Sask Party's perfectly fine with taking \$95 million out of consumers' pockets.

And it wasn't so long ago that that Finance minister used to stand in her place presenting petitions asking, "Please do not tax our food." And that Premier and that Finance minister and most of the front bench campaigned on making life a little more affordable for Saskatchewan families by expanding PST exemptions for kids' clothes. It was the first release off the printer after the 2011 election, Mr. Speaker — promise kept.

Fast-forward all these years later and now the Sask Party is taxing used cars, taxing kids' clothes, and taxing restaurant meals. What changed? How can the Sask Party justify this stunning hypocrisy?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I don't think the member opposite has been listening to this government now for a couple years. What changed was resource revenues fell by \$1.3 billion. That's what changed. So the economic revenues for this province changed and changed dramatically.

We're committed for those services for the people of Saskatchewan and be able to have them sustainable into the future, Mr. Speaker. That's in health care; that's in education;

that's in social safety net programs, Mr. Speaker. But somewhere we have to find the revenue in order to do that. That's what changed.

It's funny how she's criticizing it. We've gone to a very similar manner in treating used cars as her NDP [New Democratic Party] Party used when they were in government, Mr. Speaker. Now she calls it silly.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's difficult decisions that we have to make. It's no surprise we have been shifting from our reliance on resource revenue to that of consumption, Mr. Speaker. This is substantial income that will not hurt the economy.

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

SaskPower Rates

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Finance minister turned to page 62 of the budget. She compared the cost of living that Saskatchewan people are faced with to the taxes and fees people in other parts of the country pay. But she failed to mention, Mr. Speaker, on that same page, families in our province pay some of the highest power bills in the country. And with their indecision on Boundary dam 4 and 5, Saskatchewan families are bracing for even more tax hikes to pay for more carbon capture experiments.

Yesterday the SaskPower minister made it clear. The decision on Boundary dam 4 and 5 is one that is up to this cabinet. So to the Finance minister: does she support spending billions more on carbon capture for Boundary dam 4 and 5, and how much higher will that drive our SaskPower bills?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, obviously we know and SaskPower knows that they need to work hard to ensure that we keep rates affordable for residents and industry all across this province.

Mr. Speaker, I would note that next door to us, Manitoba Hydro is seeking annual increases of 7.9 per cent for the next two years — actually in fact until 2023-24. Mr. Speaker, obviously Alberta has a different way that their rates are set but certainly their rates will be impacted by a carbon tax, Mr. Speaker, as well as British Columbia is seeking a 3 per cent increase this year, and rates have increased 24 per cent over the last five years, Mr. Speaker. What we're not going to do ... And certainly that doesn't even touch on what's happened in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, obviously we need to balance off ensuring that rates are competitive while also ensuring that we're doing our part to reduce emissions, Mr. Speaker. And as the members know, 2 million tonnes of carbon dioxide have been sequestered safely underground and have helped enhance oil recovery, which obviously helps the revenue for the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Those are the decisions that we'll have to make going forward.

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, the rates in Saskatchewan are not acceptable. Families in Saskatchewan are paying an average of \$1,377 for their SaskPower bills, but in Alberta it's only \$908 and in Manitoba it's only \$746. Families from our neighbours to the east and west pay hundreds of dollars less each year because power companies in their provinces aren't forcing ratepayers to fork over billions on misguided investments and post-combustion carbon capture, utilization, and storage.

Now we asked the Finance minister whether she's going to support imposing that on tax ratepayers in the future. She didn't answer. I'm going to ask the SaskPower minister: can he tell us, how is it fair that Saskatchewan families should have to pay so much more? And how will he vote when the decision to expand CCS [carbon capture and storage] to BD4 [Boundary dam 4] and 5 finally makes its way to the cabinet table?

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Well as I've indicated in the past, Mr. Speaker, we know that for a number of years, over the last number of years, we've had zero per cent increases for SaskPower. Obviously we've had an increase this year, last year as well, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what I don't think that those numbers that she's referencing take into account is the fact that as I just indicated, Manitoba Hydro, which obviously hasn't relied on coal-fired generation, they rely on hydro generation. But still, Mr. Speaker, they're going to see nearly 8 per cent annual increases from now until 2023-24, Mr. Speaker, so we'll see what those numbers do to the power rates in Manitoba.

Next door in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, obviously a carbon tax is going to have an impact on power rates, Mr. Speaker. Certainly I've had people from Alberta that I know that have sent me their gas bills, their power bills, and notice that the carbon tax on a gas bill in Alberta almost equates to the dollar amount that is spent on the actual gas that is consumed. That's what a carbon tax is doing in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, and we know it's happening in British Columbia as well, Mr. Speaker.

So obviously we have to balance off ensuring that we have the power to supply to the people in an affordable way, and . . .

The Speaker: — Next question. Recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Municipal Revenue Sharing

Ms. Rancourt: — SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] has been arguing that since the province has downloaded costs onto Saskatchewan towns and cities, stripped them of additional revenue sources, cut funding for urban parks and highway connectors, froze the community rink affordability grant and Main Street Saskatchewan, that they have a right to their fair share of the expanded PST introduced in the calculation for municipal revenue sharing, which only makes sense.

Instead what they've heard from the Sask Party is that it will be frozen at the lowest it has been in six years. How is that fair? They are making hometowns pay more in fees and taxes while they're getting significantly less than their fair share from the Saskatchewan Party.

Will the minister commit today that Saskatchewan towns and cities will in fact get the full point of the ever-expanding PST revenues they have no choice but to pay?

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Kaeding: — Mr. Speaker, we have a very strong and solid relationship with our stakeholder partners. We've had a very lengthy agreement with them on our municipal revenue-sharing agreement that's provided tremendous amounts of revenue to them on a very reliable and steady basis over time. We're not going to lose that relationship with them. We have promised them that we'll have stakeholder engagement to review the entire program to see if it still continues to fit their needs and where we're at.

As we've enhanced our infrastructure over time, we've built new bridges; we've had new facilities in place; we've added 160,000 more people to the province. All of these have specific demands on our province, but we have continued to provide that kind of revenue sharing with our partners.

Mr. Speaker, the last 11 years the NDP were in government provided a total of \$818 million. That's a small pittance to what they were able to share with our municipal stakeholders. \$2.5 billion is what we've provided our municipal stakeholders in the last number of years, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to support them.

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

Ms. Rancourt: — It isn't just that Saskatchewan towns and cities are paying more and getting less. On budget day, SUMA President Gordon Barnhart said the expanded PST is a serious barrier to desperately needed infrastructure upgrades. He said the current infrastructure funding comes nowhere near meeting the needs and that the PST being charged on construction materials is hurting municipalities. He said:

We get a grant from the federal government, we get a grant from the province, and then we have to do the cost matching, and then we pay PST on that. A lot of communities have raised the right amount of money and then didn't have enough to cover the PST, and that has really hit them hard. SUMA says one of the most serious issues for municipalities is coming up with the money for the infrastructure cost share, a challenge that has only been made worse by the expansion of the PST.

Again to the minister: will he commit to providing cities and towns across the province their fair share of the PST revenues moving forward?

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

Hon. Mr. Kaeding: — Mr. Speaker, the municipal revenue-sharing agreement that we've got with our stakeholders is really the envy of the nation. We've got a number of provinces around us wish that they had the same opportunity that we've provided our stakeholder groups.

Mr. Speaker, we have been committed to renewing and investing in infrastructure in this province and certainly been asking our stakeholders' engagement in how these programs should be looking in the future. Mr. Speaker, municipalities saw \$412.9 million in direct provincial support in the 2018-19 budget for infrastructure. We've had a number of programs. We've had \$73.8 million to provide a New Building Canada Fund, 12.5 million Clean Water and Wastewater Fund, \$15 million provided to Saskatoon for the north commuter bridge.

Mr. Speaker, these are commitments that we've made to our stakeholders to ensuring that they've got the services they can provide their communities moving into the future. Mr. Speaker, we've invested nearly \$15 billion in . . . more than double what the NDP has over that same period in time to infrastructure within this province.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Saskatoon Freeway Project

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party's former leader used to say the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. But in the case of the bypass, we're really hoping that wasn't the case, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday we asked about the Saskatoon bypass seeming an awful lot like the Regina bypass whose price tag ballooned to \$2 billion. It has come under fire from the Provincial Auditor, and the Regina bypass is subject to dozens of lawsuits costing millions of dollars.

Well the minister rolled into the rotunda to clear the air, and I quote: "It's no different than we did on the Regina bypass." Are you kidding me? Mr. Speaker, are they going to do this again? It's exactly what they did with the Regina bypass — that is the problem. Did the minister not read, or does he not care what the auditor wrote in her report?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the Saskatoon freeway project, Mr. Speaker, we have narrowed the scope of where the freeway is going to go. We have narrowed that scope to 500 metres, Mr. Speaker. We are in the design phase of the north side of the Saskatoon bypass on that way. We've worked with the city of Saskatoon. We've notified the rural municipality of Corman Park on where that 500 kilometre right-of-way is going to be. We've engaged that process. We've listened to the Provincial Auditor starting that process.

Mr. Speaker, we have to be very clear. The Saskatoon freeway is a long way down the road, Mr. Speaker. It is beyond the five-year time frame. We are starting the planning process. We are taking the recommendations of the auditor and starting the process of where the freeway is going to go.

Unlike the members opposite with the Regina bypass, that discussion started with the NDP in the '90s, Mr. Speaker. They could have started land acquisitions there. They did absolutely nothing, Mr. Speaker. We started the process. We got the Regina bypass. Mr. Speaker, we're going to save lives and we're going to save a lot of lives, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Saving lives is very important. But saving taxpayer money is as well. Let me clear the air a little, Mr. Speaker. The auditor — and I'll be very slow on this one — the auditor said consultations that took place provided business owners and municipalities a good indication of where the route would go. She said this insight could have led to land speculation and skyrocketing costs. And I know the members opposite don't seem to have much concern for what they do with taxpayers' money, but Saskatchewan people cannot afford to have the Sask Party screw up another multi-billion-dollar megaproject.

[14:15]

To the minister: what's the expected cost of this project, and will the profits be staying in Saskatchewan instead of being snowplowed away to a corporation in France?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Mr. Speaker, the Saskatoon freeway project is a long way down the road. We haven't even started the process of cost estimation on this. What we have started is what the auditor had put in the recommendations of narrowing the scope of where the project might happen . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order, please. Can't hear questions or answers. Recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have started the process of where the Saskatoon freeway, where possibly it might go. We have narrowed that scope to a 500-metre window, Mr. Speaker. That's the width that we have looked at. We have narrowed that scope in process of what the Provincial Auditor had asked us to do. We are just in that process, Mr. Speaker. The freeway is years down the road, Mr. Speaker. It's just in the preliminary stages of designing where that freeway will go, Mr. Speaker.

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

Rail Transportation Issues

Ms. Beck: — Issues with grain transportation over the last five years have cost producers in our province billions, with potential for further delays as there may be another transportation crisis by noon on Saturday. Our national rail companies have failed to meet their obligations and get our products to market in a fast and efficient manner. Successive federal governments have allowed rail companies to run roughshod over producers.

And producers are being forced to deal with consequences while railways have laid off staff and closed producer loading sites. APAS [Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan] President Todd Lewis is calling for federal changes that would see demurrage charges paid for by the railways instead of millions in penalties for producers.

My question: what is the Sask Party doing to ensure our grain transportation system actually works? And will he join us and APAS in calling on Ottawa to force the railways to pick up the tab on demurrage charges when grain doesn't get loaded in port on time?

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, railway transportation remains a priority for our government. Unfortunately, we've . . . There is some news that that member may not yet be aware of. CP's [Canadian Pacific Railway] unions gave notice to strike April 18th. Minister Marit and I asked the federal government for back-to-work legislation to ensure movement of goods, so I can assure the member that we're a ways ahead of where she's at today.

We will continue, Mr. Speaker, to be actively engaged with the federal government to ensure that Saskatchewan continues to have equitable access to rail, adequate levels of service, and competitive prices. On May 16th, 2017, Mr. Speaker, the federal Minister of Transport introduced the *Transportation Modernization Act*. We have been keeping in touch with both railways and . . .

The Speaker: — Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. 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 Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it's a pleasure to be able to stand in the House to address the budget today and to support the amendment that my colleague has put forward. Before I get started with my comments directly on the budget, Mr. Speaker, I do want to, as is custom, mention a few people, mention a few people that have had a very important role in my life, especially in this past year.

I want to thank the residents of Saskatoon Meewasin who just over a year ago were kind enough to put their confidence in me and elect me as the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Meewasin. And I hope that I am able to earn their respect and make them happy with that decision, Mr. Speaker.

One of the people who I fully believe is able to do that is Jasmine Liska, my constituency assistant in Saskatoon Meewasin, who is doing an incredible amount of work. She's so strong on the casework, such a great representative day to day, as I need to be on the road so much. She's able to keep that

office running so well, extremely strong person. I'm very fortunate to have the chance to work with Jasmine Liska.

I also want to mention the members of the NDP, Mr. Speaker. We had over 13,000 members at the end of January, over 81 per cent of whom cast their vote in a leadership race. It was a positive race, had so many people who participated, and just a ton of work that went in from the staff at the party office, the executive members from the different constituencies, the president. Everyone who was involved did an incredible amount of work to make sure that that race ran well and people had a chance to express their democratic option, Mr. Speaker.

I want to also add thanks to our caucus staff. We have an incredible group here in the legislature, Mr. Speaker, who work, every day, hours that certainly don't match up with the pay, Mr. Speaker. They work hard, long hours. We're a small and scrappy crew in opposition, but that group punches above their weight and they keep us informed and ready to come into this House. We are so grateful for the work that they do.

I also want to point out the work of this caucus team. I'm so grateful to be able to be part of this team, to have their support, such a hard-working, committed, intelligent, almost all of them very good-looking group of members of the legislative assessment. I'm the one exception, members, just so you know. I'm the one exception. A great bunch of folks to argue, to discuss, to debate, and to come in here as a united team ready to put forth the best ideas, the best options for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, on the personal side of things, I've been so lucky throughout my life and especially in this last very busy year to have the support of my family. My parents, Wally and Lea in Moose Jaw which, regardless what the member of Moose Jaw North might suggest, are pretty big supporters. We get along pretty well . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I'm sure they do. Yes, thanks very much. And have been an incredible amount of support, you know, through this process and to the family.

And to Mahli Brindamour, my wife — who is a pediatrician working with refugee populations, doing incredible work in Saskatoon and in La Loche and Ile-a-la-Crosse — this year on maternity leave, home with Augustin or Gus, our little guy. He's seven months old. And we've also got, of course, Abraham, my companion on the road and my top adviser. He's six and a half and great to spend time with. Very proud of that boy.

Mr. Speaker, to get to today's budget or this year's budget, budgets are the clearest and most powerful means that a government has to set its own direction and to highlight the direction of the province. Now they're a powerful statement of what a government stands for, what it values, what it aspires to, and the plan to get there.

A good budget focuses on smart investments and the things that keep us healthy: good jobs and a sustainable economy; a world-class education, equipping the next generation of leaders with the skills they need to thrive; the health system that not only takes care of us when we're ill but supports us to be well; and a plan to make sure that everyone has a chance at their best life, has access to decent housing, to affordable, nutritious food.

And the biggest question that we must ask ourselves when we assess a budget is, will this document, will this plan improve our lives or not? Will more people be healthier and happier because of the choices that are made? Have these choices contributed to a province that will be continuously getting better?

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the budget we have before us, this Premier's first and most important test, fails to satisfactorily answer that question. If we ask what statement does this budget really make, it's a statement that you shouldn't expect any better, that you should get used to paying more and getting less. It's a statement of a government that's clinging to a story that doesn't work for people, doesn't work for the economy.

It may be the first budget of a new Premier, Mr. Speaker, but it's got a very clear heritage. It's very much the budget of a tired government, a government that's been in power too long. It's out of ideas, who has a short-sighted approach that has seen them squander a resource revenue boom they were happy to take credit for, but didn't have the wisdom or foresight to manage for the long term.

In the past few years we've seen this government fumble the downturn for which they'd failed to prepare. They've tried to cut their way back to growth, axing programs or selling off the very things that make us strong. And people around Saskatchewan are taking notice. People who were willing to give this government the benefit of the doubt are now sitting up and taking notice, asking how we failed so badly to invest during the good times and how, after a decade of record revenues, now we're faced with record debt.

It's a budget that can't be viewed in isolation. Last year's budget provoked a powerful, protective response from the people of this province that speaks to the core of who we are, to the strength and resilience of our communities, to our determination to hold our government to the highest standard because we can accept no less.

That budget provoked a widespread movement that forced this government to walk back several of the least popular measures — cuts to funerals for people who die while living in poverty, cuts to libraries, things that made no sense — and it led to the most popular premier in the country to end up making for the exit and sniping from the sidelines of the corporate speaker circuit, Mr. Speaker. And it leaves us with a lingering sense that this is a government that is running on steam.

I've toured the province, as have these members around me. We've toured the province this last year since the last budget, and we've heard so many stories of the way the choices in that budget hurt people directly: seniors who had to move into the city because they no longer had transport to town for appointments, stories of patients with conditions like diabetes or HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] who lost their special diet funding, or parents that are distraught over cuts to their children's classrooms.

In this year's budget the Sask Party learned to tread a bit more carefully, but it's the same bankrupt approach. Budgets tell a story. While this one might not be the raging dumpster fire of a year ago, that fire still smoulders and those damaging cuts are

still hurting people. This year's budget only adds further fuel to those flames.

This year's budget is a story of a lack of vision, of missed opportunity, and of doubling down on a failed austerity approach. It's a story of a government that's asleep at the switch on the greatest challenges facing our province: no action on the slumping economy with growing poverty, with growing unemployment; no action on climate change; no action on reconciliation and closing the gap and outcomes between First Nations and Métis people and the rest of the province.

Worse than silent on these existential challenges we face to our way of life, to our relations to one another and the land that supports us, this budget actually moves us backwards, cutting the climate change branch by 18 per cent — that's an 80 per cent cut since 2012 — cutting employment programs to get people back to work, cutting support for First Nations and Métis students to advance in their education, Mr. Speaker.

Perhaps the most telling sign that this government fails to understand why social investment . . . is the government's press release with this budget that boasted for the second year in a row of the highest expenditure in social services in the province's history. Now that sounds — and we've heard some of the members across say, how can you be complaining about that? — and it sounds like it might be a good and generous thing until you look into the fine print, Mr. Speaker.

You realize that spending on social assistance isn't going up because people are getting more. It's not because we're actually having a plan to reduce poverty. It's just that there's more people on social assistance. In fact the rates which provide people on the margins with very, very little, that should allow them enough to eat, enough to have a place to stay, they've remained unchanged for over a decade, and a decade in which the cost of living has grown tremendously, Mr. Speaker.

So let's be clear. We've got a government that's out there boasting about spending more on social services, not because they're making the investment needed to provide the supports that will help people pull themselves out of poverty. They're spending more because people are living in poverty, because more people are living in poverty — a direct result, a direct result of a decade of neglect, a decade of growth in inequalities. Costs are rising in health, in social services, in justice because this government has doubled down on missing opportunities for upstream investments, doubled down on austerity by removing the housing supplement that for some means the difference between having a place to call home and finding themselves out on the street.

[14:30]

We also see the damage done, Mr. Speaker, by last year's choices. They remain in effect this year. We see that damage reflected in the poor job numbers that we see compared to our neighbours in the West. We see that damage in declining restaurant revenues because PST has been added to the bill. We see it in slumping home sales and in rising numbers of families falling behind on their mortgage payment, a 40 per cent increase in the last five years, a rate three times the national average.

People are struggling, Mr. Speaker, under the increased cost of living because of budget choices, budget choices like the addition of PST to construction labour, to restaurant meals, to kid's clothes, and now to used cars, an addition that makes life less affordable and slows down our economy in a time of much needed stimulation.

As the former premier said about the idea of taxing the same used car over and over again, government should avoid doing dumb things, and that seemed pretty dumb. In the spirit of avoiding doing dumb things, Mr. Speaker, we'd like to see this government change its approach away from seeking to cut its way to growth, which has been shown around the world and right here at home to hurt people and to slow down our economic recovery. It's the exact opposite of what's needed to build a healthy society.

Sadly this failed approach has been the guiding idea of this government over the last few years and the reason that people have been losing faith in this government. It's the fallacy of a false economy, of stepping over dollars to pick up dimes, of making short-term cuts that cost us big for years to come.

Everyone who has managed a household budget intuitively understands this notion of a false economy, and especially Saskatchewan families today who face the daily challenge of doing more with less. It's making the minimum payment on a credit card bill each month because the monthly budget is so squeezed, but the interest charges are adding up. It's not having your car serviced until the indicator light goes on. You know we're all guilty of this sort of action sometimes, but yet we expect better, we need better from our government. We expect our elected representatives to put the time and thought into planning ahead, especially when we see the costs and the lost revenues adding up after years of false economy government.

Perhaps the worst example of this, Mr. Speaker, is the inaction already mentioned on addressing poverty — \$3.8 billion each year and that's probably a conservative estimate, Mr. Speaker. \$3.8 billion lost each year to our economy because of increased costs in health, in justice, and social services that are a direct result of failure to act on poverty.

Mr. Speaker, there's a lot more debit than credit in this budget, but I will take a moment to give credit where credit is due. It can't all be bad, Mr. Speaker, and there are things, things that we've been asking for for a while, that we saw show up in this budget.

I must comment on the positive choice that was deciding to cover antiretroviral drugs for people who have HIV. Since 2015 we've been advocating for that step. It's good to see it finally in place because it makes sense. When somebody is on those medications, it improves their health. It also makes it almost impossible for them to transmit the illness to someone else. That's an upstream investment that makes a real difference in the lives of the individual and those around them, moving into that mode of thinking of, where do we invest now that can save us money in the long term, that can grow our economy?

Now, Mr. Speaker, we've been talking a lot about what's wrong with this budget. And often the question we get, and it's a fair question, well what would you do differently? What would a

good budget look like? Well, Mr. Speaker, a good budget starts with a vision. It starts with a vision of a healthy society, a province where everyone has the chance to live their best life. It would start with an evidence-based and forward-thinking shift away from that false economy, that penny-wise-and-pound-foolish approach that does so much damage to our budget and our economy. It would involve thinking of social investment in terms of return on investment, both in increased economic activity and in future savings on spending on corrections, on social services, on health.

You know, I've seen members on the other side waving around a document once in a while, Mr. Speaker, things that they pulled from ideas discussed during the NDP leadership campaign. And I won't spend too much time talking about the false economy and false accounting in that. We know that this government has a talent to see things balloon to billions of dollars. The issue isn't so much the calculations that were made. It's that it was missing a column. It was missing a column.

It looked at every one of those investments and said, here's a cost. Looked at investments in early childhood development and said, here's how much that would cost us. Mr. Speaker, for every dollar you put into early childhood education, your economy grows; your GDP [gross domestic product] grows by \$1.50 to \$1.70. That's just the GDP effect. It makes no mention of the 6 to 10 down the road that are saved in additional costs when that kid has a chance to thrive and have a great life instead of struggling. That's the kind of investments that a good budget would be seeking out, Mr. Speaker, those upstream investments in the things that promote long-term economic prosperity and long-term quality of life.

It would also look to save where saving is appropriate, using mechanisms like Choosing Wisely. Approximately 30 per cent of health budgets are spent on procedures, medications, etc., that actually don't work. And if we used a program where we're doing evidence-based care, we could decrease costs considerably and have those funds available — not to respond to people's ill health, but to invest in keeping them healthy in the first place.

A good budget would involve a commitment to supporting the creation of good jobs and a sustainable economy. One that protects and supports workers in industries like oil and gas and heavy industry, but also invests in the clean energy infrastructure of the future and the good jobs that will get it built and keep it running.

It would involve the commitment to move beyond words. The nice words of reconciliation which are very important, but to move beyond those words to taking action, to closing the gap in health outcomes, in justice outcomes, in income, and education. And it would pay for these wise investments by taking a wise approach to making sure we get a fair share on our non-renewable energy resources, all of our non-renewable resources, by making sure that those who benefit the most — the companies and individuals that benefit the most — contribute back.

Unlike what we saw last year when this government decided to increase the PST and broaden the number of things that it

applied to, shifting taxation at the same time as they cut taxes for the wealthiest in the province, so that if you were one of the bottom 10 per cent of earners after last year's budget, you saw your taxes increase as 2 per cent of your income. If you're in the middle, it went up by 1 per cent. If you're at the top, it went up by nothing at all. Shifting in the wrong direction so that those who can afford the least are once again, under this government, paying the most, Mr. Speaker. Which is why this year's budget is so clearly off track. In fact, it threatens to derail much of what makes us strong.

In a province as blessed as ours, there's no excuse for such a disappointing, short-sighted budget, a budget that lacks a vision, a budget that lacks a plan. The people of this province, the people of Saskatchewan expect and deserve better. And that's why, Mr. Speaker, the members of the opposition will be voting for the amendment tabled by our Finance critic. People deserve better. Our children deserve better. Future generations deserve better. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour and a pleasure to stand in front of you today in the Legislative Assembly to speak in support of the Finance minister's 2018 and '19 budget. But before I do that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to pass my sincere condolences on to the relatives, teammates, and friends impacted by the tragic Humboldt Broncos team bus crash a while ago.

Many in our rural communities have ridden a hockey bus and know the friendships and bonds that develop with teammates, coaches, and fans alike. And many in my constituency know someone, a relative or a friend, who's been closely impacted by this tragedy. This has hit close to home in our communities. Several in my own constituency have played on the Bronco team or played against them. Some team members have been placed with families that are very close to . . . in my constituency and very close to my hometown. They became like family. My condolences to all the people that were involved in that tragic situation.

Before I make any further comment on the budget though, I would like to also take this opportunity to thank my family members for all their support over the years I've been in office. It has been greatly appreciated. Since being elected as MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] in the constituency of Arm River, I'm honoured to . . . that I'm honoured to represent all the fine members in the Arm River constituency and also . . . It used to be Arm River-Watrous.

I would also like to take this time to acknowledge the work of my two CAs [constituency assistant], Lavonne and Donna, who do all the work in my constituency while I'm up here. Without their help, I would not be able to be in Regina doing my job in the legislature. Lavonne and Donna represent myself in the community and also at my constituency office, handling the case work that comes in there. Basically the whole time I'm up here in session I'm just trying to give them advice by phone, but usually they're the ones giving me advice.

You know, Mr. Speaker, as a government we are in the second year of a three-year plan to get back to balance. The 2018-2019

budget keeps Saskatchewan on track with major investments in health, education, social services, infrastructure, and all the while steadily improving the outlook of the province over the next four years. In this year, the second year of our three-year plan, the government is fiscally staying on track. Our focus has included revenue and expense measures. The ongoing effort by the Government of Saskatchewan has continued to control spending in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, I know that many of the ministers and members on this side of the House have spoken in support of the 2018 and '19 budget as it relates to their portfolios and also their constituencies. I too would like to add my comments and support in this budget debate.

First of all I am proud that our deficit is falling. The capital plan is working and debt growth has slowed. Recovery is now well under way and we're on track. Our government is staying on track by not increasing tax rates, by keeping our economy strong, and a return to balance. Not only that, Mr. Speaker, we continue to deliver high-quality services to the citizens of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, while we will have a projected deficit this year, the return to balance is forecast for 2019-2020 . . . is strong along with a modest surplus of \$6 million in 2019 and 2020. This, along with a higher surplus of 108 million in 2020-2021, and even a higher surplus of 212 million in 2021-2022 budget, is being projected.

Mr. Speaker, while staying on track, our government has made record funding investments in Saskatchewan health of 5.36 billion, an increase of 2.9 from the 2017-2018 budget. This includes a \$600,000 investment which will provide universal drug coverage for 100 per cent HIV coverage, 50,000 for AIDS Saskatoon, and another 50,000 to Saskatoon's Westside Clinic to provide additional HIV supports.

Autistic children will receive individual funding of \$4,000 for an autistic child up to the age of six years. The total funding for this is \$28 million. Newborn hearing screening has been implemented.

Budgeting for the social services and assistance is increased by 25 million to a record 1.38 billion. Funding will be targeted to communities who provide direct daily care to adults with intellectual disabilities or mental health challenges. This will include direct supports to families and daily care for children in need of protection, CBOs [community-based organization], and family-focused services.

Funding is increased for family services. Example, for foster parents, continue to be supported. Mental health, which is a very challenging issue right across Canada, we're working to address that. We're including a pilot project to assist at-risk youth in schools, is being funded along with additional positions in eight communities. These are to name only a few of the health budget highlights as we move forward.

Education. While staying on track, our government has also made significant investments in education, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Education states that the school board trustees are happy to see an increase in funding for education for a total of

1.87 billion. This will enable school divisions to hire up to 400 teachers and other support to help in the classroom, which is an increasing tax on the education system as I meet with children and also a trustee.

[14:45]

Each school division identifies their greatest needs and targets their funding to those areas. We've given the trustees more autonomy, which, when I've talked to the trustees I know, that's what they're asking for is more freedom to do the funding. Because they are at the front line, Mr. Speaker, the school trustees, the teachers, and the support staff, they know where the money can best be directed. So we're trying to provide as much autonomy as we possibly can as we work forward with this, because we know that this has to be done in partnership with all the stakeholders involved. Because when it comes to children, those are our most important future as we move forward.

This budget also has an increase of 30 million in education funding, but we will continue to meet with teachers and trustees and parents because this is ongoing as we move forward. It's something we have to work together with, and I know that our minister is willing to meet with as many trustees and school divisions as possible. In fact, I know I have some meetings coming up in the near future with divisions in my constituency. In addition, Mr. Speaker, the school divisions receive 1.87 billion in school operating fund and 418 million for teacher benefits and benefits.

As we move forward in this budget, I move into highways and infrastructure, which in my constituency is probably what I get the most calls on. Especially being spring, as we move forward, a lot of our highways are getting . . . especially the wet and cold spring that we have, especially this spring. But as we move forward, Mr. Speaker, highways are always an issue. They've been an issue ever since I can remember as a kid. But we're addressing the problem the best way we can and throwing . . . Every year we actually put more money into highways. We've made it a huge priority.

I can remember when I first got elected, and that's probably the reason that I got elected in '99, was the shape of the highways. And I know the members opposite get mad when we go back to that, but I'll tell you what. That was an issue in the '90s. They did not put a lot of money into highways. The TMS [thin membrane surface] were basically being destroyed. And I know that when I went door to door in every little town I was at, that was always the discussion in '99. Whether the members opposite, you know, want to yell from their seats on it or not, that's up to them, but that's what I heard in '99.

We knew that it always is going to be an ongoing issue as you move forward. I mean with this province, the size of it and the amount of grain that we have moving up and down, of product as more things are moved by truck, as the trucks get bigger and there's just more, even on our secondary highways now you meet a lot of truck traffic. And also other traffic: motorhomes going to such of the big places as Diefenbaker in my constituency, the lakes and the tourist areas. A lot of traffic as we move forward. So we've made highways a priority.

Major safety improvements are coming to some of the busy highways. We're putting 924 million, going forward, towards the highways and infrastructure budget. Approximately 51 million is going to be invested in major safety programs. Some of these projects include: continuing work on the Warman and Martensville interchanges; continuing work on twinning Highway No. 7 between Vanscoy and Delisle; in my constituency, No. 11, there's going to be a lot of . . . is doing a bunch of work on Aylesbury; we're doing finishing work on Highway No. 42 in my constituency; Highway 15 around Semans, they're doing a bunch of work on that as we move forward. And we're working every year to put more and more where we can towards highways. These are just a few of the highlight funding that's provided. There will be many more smaller highway projects that will be started throughout the province as money comes in. It's always . . . If there is extra, the Minister of Highways always seems to get his share, which is good.

With it there is also 280 kilometres of light treatment, seal coats; 140 kilometres of medium paving, microsurfacing; 280 kilometres of full repaving on various highways across the province. There is also 330 million for continued work on the phase 2 of the Regina bypass.

I know the member, in question period, had mentioned that safety is important. Then he mentioned saving taxpayers' money is important. Well if I could pick the two, it wouldn't even be close; it's saving lives. I don't know how many lives have been saved by that interchange or that bypass, but I think there's been a few and there will be a few in the future. To me that's more important than a little bit of debt.

We will also allocate 21 million to support the municipal transportation programs that we're working with the regional highway committees that are spread out through the constituencies. I remember going to many meetings and getting their input and finding out from the RMs [rural municipality] where the best highway traffic . . . where we can best direct the highway traffic and best direct the money so that we get full use of our money on the highways.

I know that we've signed this over the years on Skudesnes Road, which we provided funding two years ago to get the semis off of Highway 44 to go to the terminal at Loreburn. And we've worked with the RMs as we worked forward if we can sign more agreements with them. And I know the minister has been working with that and that's been a very good program to work. If we can get as much as we can onto certain highway or grid paths and keep that traffic on there, then it's easier to maintain than having a bunch of small networks spread out. So those are some of the initiatives that we're working for.

As you know, we also have the third-lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in this country. We have manageable debt and we have an AAA credit rating, the second highest of all provinces.

We also enjoy one of the lowest unemployment rates in Canada. We have the fastest growth and our population's increased by 160,000 in this last decade. When I first ran, that was the biggest issue on top of highways, was the people leaving. So obviously what we're doing is working. There's always more to do. There's always that. But I'll tell you what, Mr. Speaker.

That tells me we're on the right track when you look at them and you look at the people that are coming, that are wanting to move to Saskatchewan. That tells me that the name of this budget is the right way, is on the right track.

You know, the NDP ask questions after questions for more and more funding, but then again voice their displeasure at any tax increases or other measures aimed at providing funding and balancing the budget. I know when we were in opposition, we provided solutions. We did not just complain just for the sake of it. And I know that in my constituency I've heard this a few times from my constituents. They actually call the opposition unserious because they just seem to be just on one thing. It's just whatever we do is wrong. You know, I think they need to provide more substance, more ideas as they work forward instead of just saying what we're doing is wrong. Obviously with some of the things I've stated, we are doing the right things and working in the right direction as we move forward in our constituency.

You know, we have a plan to control spending and also with that to deliver high-quality services for Saskatchewan people. The plan is not to increase taxes where it can be helped. We also have to balance that with providing high-quality services. The two go hand in hand, and that's part of being a government. When I was in the municipal sector, same thing. We had that balance of providing services and also trying to keep taxes low. That were the two . . . two always went hand in hand. And that's something that our government has been very good at doing, Mr. Speaker.

You know, and one of the other things when I'm out and about in my constituency is the carbon tax. I haven't heard one person in my constituency in favour of it. Not one. This is an issue that they feel that it's just a straight tax that is just going to Ottawa and it's not the right way to work with climate change. You know, we have an in-province plan for that. And as we move forward in the future, I mean this is something that we need to be developing. It's not to just basically I see almost from the left side of the political structure of just banning oil, not working to create a solution. And I think we are.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that I want to thank you for allowing me to enter this important debate. I will be supporting the main motion by our Finance minister, and I cannot support the amendment put forth by the NDP.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all members that have participated in this, what I think is a very important debate here in this House as we proceed on our three-year plan to balance here, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people in the province of Saskatchewan. And this year's budget keeps us on track to that plan to balance, Mr. Speaker.

And we will make every effort throughout the year to adhere to our spending initiatives that we have, all the while investing on behalf of the people of this province, investing in those services that the people of Saskatchewan expect their provincial government to invest in, Mr. Speaker. And we will continue to work with them, whether it be municipalities, whether it be

individuals, whether it be families, whether it be our community-based organizations, whoever that may be, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to work with them to represent them in the best way that we are able.

Mr. Speaker, as customary, I would like to just make a few personal comments prior to going into a little more of the meat and potatoes, if you will, of the budget that was presented here the other day.

And the first acknowledgment that I want to make, Mr. Speaker, is to my friend, the Minister of Finance, the MLA for the community of Humboldt, and all that she has been through the last couple of weeks and the last number of months in the formulation of this budget, and most particularly the last couple of weeks as she stands in support of all of the members that were affected by such a tragic accident in our province. Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge her for everything she's done.

Mr. Speaker, as customary, I do want to acknowledge my constituency assistant, Mrs. Sally Fitch that, as I always say in this Assembly, thankfully is the eyes, ears, and most thankfully the face of Rosthern-Shellbrook in our office, Mr. Speaker. And I haven't gotten there as much as I'm used to the last couple of months. I have been home a few times but not as much as I have been used to in the years past, Mr. Speaker. So I thank her for the effort that she makes and the graceful nature and the efficient manner in which she works with all of the constituents that reach out to our constituency office, Mr. Speaker. And she represents not only myself but the Government of Saskatchewan and this Assembly very well to our constituents in Rosthern-Shellbrook and now a few from outside that seem to be contacting our office from time to time, Mr. Speaker. But she does a great job and I thank her for the effort that she brings each and every day.

I also want to thank the staff in our office here in this building, Mr. Speaker: Ruth Gaura who's recently retired and has been here for decades in the Government of Saskatchewan in some capacity; Rhonda Romanuk, Mr. Speaker; as well as Launa in our office, who has recently moved into our office.

Mr. Speaker, they treat the Premier's office with the respect and honour that it deserves, regardless of the inhabitant who's inhabiting it at that point in time, Mr. Speaker. And I thank them for that, and I thank them for continually reminding myself as well as others that this is the office of a position, not of a person, Mr. Speaker. And it's an office, a respectful office of a position that represents the people of the province of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, I thank them. I thank them for showing up each and every day with a smile on their face and reminding me why we're here, Mr. Speaker.

Last but certainly not least, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Brad Wall for the capacity that he has built over the years in this building on the staff side, in all of our ministers' offices, in the caucus office, in Executive Council as well as throughout the ministries, and has attracted I think some of the best and brightest minds of our province to work on behalf of this Legislative Assembly, on behalf of the members on both sides of this House, and has at times created maybe some spirited debate in this House from time to time, Mr. Speaker.

But I think it's fair to say that he has represented the people of this province earnestly. He's represented them in good faith, Mr. Speaker, and he's represented them to the very best of his ability. And I think he's provided good leadership for our party, Mr. Speaker, but also for the people in this great province of Saskatchewan.

[15:00]

And I would like to thank him not only for the efforts that he had made on the party side, but on the staff side in this building and the volunteers across the province of Saskatchewan as people wanted to be involved, Mr. Speaker, but for the attractive nature that he has provided. So that all of these people here, Mr. Speaker, that I have the honour of standing with and serving with, including yourself, Mr. Speaker, have been attracted to run for this party and represent constituents and people and families from across the province of Saskatchewan in this Assembly, which is truly the greatest honour. And he alluded to it many times, about the greatest honour for each and every one of us to have in our careers, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to thank him for the leadership that he has provided our party, our province, and all of the people in this great province of Saskatchewan over the last 10 years. And I wish him all the best in everything that him and Tami choose, and his family, in the years ahead, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to this budget that was presented in this Chamber last week, as I said, it's a strong budget as we are on track on our plan to balance, with a \$365 million deficit in the year, proceeding to a \$6 million surplus next year, Mr. Speaker. And as I said, it's a budget that keeps us on track and it's a budget that continues to invest in those very services: health care, social services, our communities' most vulnerable. It invests in education, all the while giving us the opportunity, giving our economy the opportunity to flourish here, Mr. Speaker.

And it's a budget I think members on this side are happy to present in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and it's a budget that I personally, as Premier and leader of this province, Mr. Speaker, am proud to present to the people of the province of Saskatchewan. And here's why: two and a half per cent increase to health care in this budget, Mr. Speaker. \$5.77 billion, Mr. Speaker, invested in our health care services across the province, Mr. Speaker.

It isn't that long ago, Mr. Speaker, that we were out travelling the world. The reason for the creation of Saskdocs, the reason for the investment in our College of Medicine and in our nurse training seats here in the province of Saskatchewan is because we didn't have the services available that the people of this province wanted, Mr. Speaker. We didn't have them available in rural Saskatchewan and we didn't have them available in urban Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And it's through ample investment over a number of years.

And I think of the Health ministers that have been involved in that over the last decade: the member from Indian Head-Milestone; the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy; and most recently we had the member from Biggar; the member from Lloydminster — the previous member from Lloydminster;

and now the very competent leadership on the file from the member, our Minister of Rural and Remote Health from the community of Yorkton; and last but not least, Mr. Speaker, the member from Rosetown, my friend, our current Minister of Health.

Mr. Speaker, what this looks like is investment, but also innovation. And we've had the opportunity in this House to talk about our surgical wait time initiative and some of the lower . . . bringing our wait list times here in this province, Mr. Speaker, from some of the longest times in the nation of Canada. Some of the longest wait list times were here in Saskatchewan just over a decade ago. Mr. Speaker, today we are among the shortest wait list times in the nation of Canada.

And that has come about through a commitment to investment but also a commitment to innovation and looking at our system differently and providing those services, those private services, Mr. Speaker, with one lineup. One public lineup, Mr. Speaker. And it's proved well in the wait time, in our surgical wait time initiative that I think has been successful here in the province of Saskatchewan. And I look forward to similar innovative initiatives being put forward in the months and years ahead, Mr. Speaker.

I point to the amalgamation of our health regions, Mr. Speaker; \$19 million savings just this year that can be reinvested in health care services in communities across the province of Saskatchewan. This is new. This is a new initiative. It has happened. We have had the opportunity to learn from other provinces, and we took that opportunity, Mr. Speaker, and we implemented that change here in our health system. And I would say that it has done well, not just in the way of savings, but also in the delivery of service.

And I talked to individuals that responded just a couple of weeks ago to this tragic accident in the province of Saskatchewan and how the STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society] air ambulance as well as our provincial air ambulance . . . and actually I believe there was an air ambulance that was requested and came in from the province of Alberta to help out that evening, Mr. Speaker. And it was all . . . I won't say seamless. I won't say seamless at all. But it worked very well, as we had one organizing body for all of this information to go through. And I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge, on that very same evening, the heroic efforts of all of those that showed up in health care facilities across this province on a moment's notice, Mr. Speaker, to tend to our friends and neighbours who were affected in this tragedy.

Mr. Speaker, that health care investment, it includes a number of things that have been asked for in this Assembly. But I would also put forward they've been asked for by people across the province, you know, investments in capital infrastructure across this great province, Mr. Speaker. And there's been 15 new long-term care facilities which have been mentioned hundreds of times in this Assembly and maybe even in a news release or two on behalf of the government.

But one of those health care facilities is in the community where I live, Mr. Speaker, in the Parkland integrated facility in the community of Shellbrook. And it's appreciated by the residents that are in it, which is most important. It's appreciated

by the staff. And I know this very same appreciation is occurring in 14 other rural communities across the province.

We have a new hospital, a new Saskatchewan Hospital, an integrated hospital in North Battleford, Mr. Speaker. An over 100-year-old facility was replaced finally by the Government of Saskatchewan, a very necessary investment, one that was recognized, not just by the community but by people across the province of Saskatchewan. And it's such a necessary investment that was provided on behalf of those people by this government.

We have a new hospital in Moose Jaw. I had the opportunity to visit that hospital a few months ago, Mr. Speaker. A beautiful facility it is and a busy facility it is, with people coming and going within that hospital, family members visiting their loved ones, and a very necessary piece of infrastructure to the great community of Moose Jaw.

And we have, last but not least, the investment in the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital in Saskatoon, of which I look forward to the opening. I look forward to the services that can be provided by that facility and the individuals serving in that facility, Mr. Speaker, as it begins . . . as it comes online. The children's hospital would not be necessary . . . would not be able to be operational, Mr. Speaker, as there's no children's hospital in this nation that isn't closely associated and affiliated with a college of medicine. Mr. Speaker, members opposite and the Leader of the Opposition I think is, you know, has a great affinity for our University of Saskatchewan, as I do, as well as our College of Medicine, as I do, Mr. Speaker.

When I ran for this position in 2011, we were short of physicians and we were short of health care professionals at that point in time, Mr. Speaker, and we had to change. We had to change how we brought physicians in from around the world. And I remember conversations with the Rural and Remote Health minister of the day, the member from Biggar. I remember conversations with the Health minister, the member . . . the previous Health minister, the member from Indian Head-Milestone, about specific to how we can recruit and retain these medical professionals — nurses, physicians, nurse practitioners, whatever we could find — into, I know in my constituency, a couple of communities. But across this province, I know there's communities that were short of those medical professionals, and thereby there was individuals and people that were short of the access that they deserve, Mr. Speaker. Now this investment that is continued in this budget has allowed us to recruit, retain, train, now have working in this province over 750 more physicians in communities right across this province.

Some of those in the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital will be there to work there, Mr. Speaker. But some of those are in my community. Some of those are in rural communities across this great province servicing infrastructure like the Humboldt Hospital, Mr. Speaker, servicing infrastructure like the Tisdale and Nipawin hospitals that were so overutilized on this tragic night less than two weeks ago, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to that, in addition to those 750 physicians across this great province providing services to all of the people that we represent in this facility, there are 3,400 more nurses

working in those very same health care facilities, Mr. Speaker.

This is in contrast, this is in stark contrast to a government that is satisfied to stay stagnant for some seven decades in this province, Mr. Speaker. The contrast is this: over the five years previous to this government, to a Saskatchewan Party government here in the province of Saskatchewan, we lost 450 nurses, Mr. Speaker. We lost 173 doctors. And I can talk about the 52 hospitals, but I won't, Mr. Speaker. I won't talk about those, Mr. Speaker. But we were losing, we were losing medical professionals in our communities across this province, and it was starting to show up. It was starting to show up in the lack of access to those individuals in communities that I now represent.

So we took action in the way of changing how we bring these physicians in, Mr. Speaker, from around the world. But we also took action in the investment in our College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan. We took our seats from 60 to 100. We took our medical residency seats from 60 to 120 to ensure that we were training our best and brightest minds right here in the province of Saskatchewan.

And we converted Saskdocs to not only recruit our medical professionals from around the world, but to look right into our College of Medicine and retain and attract those individuals into our communities here in the province of Saskatchewan. And the graduate retention program doesn't hurt neither as we keep them around. And that is how we have invested, Mr. Speaker, in medical professionals in our communities and invested in the future of our communities . . . [inaudible].

Mr. Speaker, there is many things that were asked for across the Assembly here with respect to education. It was asked for more investment in education. There's \$30 million in this year's budget, Mr. Speaker — a commitment that I made as I travelled this province over the last number of years. But I made that commitment after talking to multiple educational professionals across this province. Some of them are intricately related to me, Mr. Speaker, and they told me very loudly what was needed

But there's a number of teachers and educational assistants and board members that I talked to across this province. I know some other members that were traveling; I talked to them as well. It was investment that was needed and it was investment that was needed right in our front lines of the classroom, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that each and every individual in those classrooms, our next generation — your children, my children, and all of our province's children — have every opportunity to get the education that they deserve and succeed in whatever they choose, Mr. Speaker. This is investment that is needed. It's investment that's added to our investment here in the province of Saskatchewan that is somewhat about double what it was from 10 years previous.

Never mind, Mr. Speaker, you add to that the 40 new schools that have been built. I think 18 opened this last year in our two largest urban centres or there close by with Warman and Martensville being added to it. This is unprecedented investment. This is unprecedented investment in our next generation, in our kids of this province, Mr. Speaker, and it's going to give them every opportunity to succeed and to continue with the success that we've enjoyed the last decade in

our great province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I also heard as I travelled the province about the investments required in health care, the investments required in education. I also heard about the investments required in our communities' most vulnerable across the province. And this year, Mr. Speaker, our social services and assistance will increase by some \$25 million to \$1.38 billion in the province of Saskatchewan invested in our communities' most vulnerable.

And I would make note of the funding increase to our community-based organizations, Mr. Speaker, in particular in the family services and those offering support to our families in the province but also to the disability community in our province, Mr. Speaker. And I saw . . . I had seen as well over the last number of years where this investment goes. And just last Saturday, I was in the community of Spiritwood to follow up on an event that I attended there in 2012. In 2012 we opened a group home in Spiritwood, Mr. Speaker. We're going to open one in La Ronge with this budget, and I would encourage the member from Cumberland to have a look at possibly supporting that when he has the opportunity. But we opened one in Spiritwood in 2012, Mr. Speaker. It was operated by Prairie Community Endeavours, a great, for all intents and purposes, group of volunteers that came together in that community over a decade ago and have been advocating for those with intellectual disabilities in that community. And we were happy to fund that group home in 2012.

I was back there this past Saturday, Mr. Speaker, as there was funding provided to open, renovate, open and add an addition on to a building to expand their day program, Mr. Speaker, in that community. And there's a genuine appreciation from not only those that are attending, as they have some more room now, they have some rooms to conduct, you know, a number of different things. They have a kitchen set up there as well, Mr. Speaker, where they, you know, make different things. They have a quiet room. They have a quiet room, Mr. Speaker, that was, you know, much needed and didn't have the opportunity to have that before. So it was a great investment I think, and an investment that I'm proud to be a part of as the Government of Saskatchewan, in those that need it in our communities.

[15:15]

And this was not in our larger urban community. This was in the community of Spiritwood of about 1,000 people, Mr. Speaker. There was I think seven or eight people that were using that day home, and it was so very appreciated — not just by those individuals, not just by their families — but it was appreciated by the community of Spiritwood and those surrounding communities, Mr. Speaker, that work so hard to fundraise and to add funds and add efforts and show up and help, Mr. Speaker. And that is how our communities are built. That is how we provide the services that we do.

And I was so very proud, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Minister of Social Services who advocated quite hard for this, as did the Minister of Finance as it made its way through, Mr. Speaker, to increase this investment on behalf of some of our community's most vulnerable, to ensure that those community-based organizations, community-based organizations like Prairie Community Endeavours have the

funding available, Mr. Speaker, to provide the services for those individuals in our communities that so rightfully deserve it.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, this budget continues to invest in those services that the people of the province want their provincial government and expect their provincial government to invest in — health care and education, Mr. Speaker, in our community's most vulnerable. But it also provides us the opportunity to grow our economy, which is the other side, Mr. Speaker, the economic side of government, providing that opportunity for businesses to flourish here in the province of Saskatchewan, businesses that hire people in communities across this great province, whether it's in Frontier, whether it's in St. Brieux, or whether it's in our urban centres of Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker, and so on across this province. And we have done that.

It is no secret how we expand the economy in the province of Saskatchewan. We're an export-based economy. We export stuff to some 150-plus countries all around the world. This is what we do, Mr. Speaker. As we have opportunities to climb that value chain, we're able to climb the value of those exports. And this is how we've grown the last decade, make no bones about it.

Mr. Speaker, 10 years ago we had exports in this province of about \$16 billion. We've increased that to a high of about 32. I think we've backed off to about 28 or so this past year due to the price of oil, the price of potash. The price of some of our natural resources has slipped, which ultimately is the conversation around our budgets the last couple of years, Mr. Speaker, as our revenue lines are down along with those corporations and those natural resource corporations in the province.

But this is how we grow our economy, Mr. Speaker. And we have grown it over the last decade, some 65 per cent. When we do that we create jobs right across this province, as I mentioned. As we create those jobs it gives us the opportunity as a province to attract people to move here from countries all around the world, Mr. Speaker, and we've seen that. In our communities, Regina, the community of Spiritwood, where Prairie Community Endeavours is operating, has 70 people from the Filipino community that live and work in that community, Mr. Speaker, of 1,000 people. Our communities across this province are very, very reflective of that immigration that we have enjoyed over the last decade, Mr. Speaker.

And we're going to do more, Mr. Speaker. We're going to do more, creating jobs with our industries here in the province of Saskatchewan and attracting people to move here from all over the world. Just as important as that, Mr. Speaker, we are going to provide those very same jobs, those very same careers, the very same opportunity to educate themselves for those careers to that next generation, to our children here in the province of Saskatchewan, so that they have the opportunity to stay in this province, to have a career in this province, Mr. Speaker, hopefully in a community of their choice, maybe the community where they grew up, Mr. Speaker.

And for 70 long years under the members opposite and left-of-centre governments in this province, Mr. Speaker, that opportunity was never there, as our greatest export in this

province wasn't grain. It wasn't wheat. It wasn't pulse crops. It wasn't potash. It wasn't energy. It was our kids. It was our kids, Mr. Speaker. It was our kids that were leaving for Alberta and other areas around the world.

I graduated high school in 1991, Mr. Speaker, and most of my friends, including myself, jumped on a plane out of here the very next day. One-way ticket, Mr. Speaker, to Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. Most of my friends, some of them, have come back, Mr. Speaker, but many have continued on with their careers. And some of the best and brightest in other provinces of this nation, Mr. Speaker, and we're bringing our kids home. We're bringing our kids home.

We're going to do it through continuing to expand our investment in creating those export markets, Mr. Speaker, expanding our investment into the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership. A small amount, Mr. Speaker, but an effective organization that is part of that 65 per cent increase in exports here in the province.

Mr. Speaker, we introduced the Saskatchewan Technology Start-up Incentive, Mr. Speaker, a 45 per cent incentive to boost that business, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Innovation is actively out talking to this sector, Mr. Speaker, and all of these individuals, to ensure they have every opportunity to not only start their business here, Mr. Speaker, get to the incubation stage, but actually to continue on employing people in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, last but not least, we need to always remember what our strengths are. And as I said, we export items — manufactured goods, mining goods, agricultural goods, Mr. Speaker, energy products — all around the world. This is what we do.

So a 15 per cent incentive on our value-added agriculture industries here in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, not only has the opportunity to provide those direct jobs and those plants that we're able to attract . . . And we have many of them in the canola crush as well as the pulse industry here in the province, Mr. Speaker. But not only those direct jobs, but this allows our ag industry to start to climb that value chain, Mr. Speaker, start to push those exports that I talked about, increasing some 65 per cent to \$30 billion to hit 35, Mr. Speaker, to hit 40, to hit 45, Mr. Speaker, and create those jobs that attract those people from all around the world and ensure that our children have every opportunity to succeed in the next generation. And the best thing about it all, Mr. Speaker, is they won't have a burgeoning debt, due to prudent decisions made today by this government, Mr. Speaker, and they won't have a carbon tax.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue. We will continue to advocate on behalf of our economy and the expansion of our economy, the expansion of our exports, Mr. Speaker, and every opportunity that we can to create jobs in our communities across this province, Mr. Speaker. The question in question period today with respect to grain transportation was relevant, as we are challenged again this year with getting our products to market, Mr. Speaker. We've been challenged a number, twice in the last four years on getting those products to market, Mr. Speaker, in agriculture.

We now have oil products on our rail lines, Mr. Speaker, when they belong in a pipeline. They belong in a safe, efficient pipeline, Mr. Speaker, a pipeline to a port coast, Mr. Speaker. And we have some questions to ask on this. And we're going to ask some more questions in the days ahead on pipelines, Mr. Speaker, and on ensuring that we can get our products — our energy products, our agricultural products, all of the products that we produce here in the province, produce or extract here in the province of Saskatchewan — to that port position.

And I've made some comments over the last number of days with respect to the jurisdiction of the federal government over our rail lines, Mr. Speaker, and it holds true with respect to dealing with CP and CN, Mr. Speaker. But they also have jurisdiction over our pipelines here in the nation. And I agree with the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, when he says that our federal government should step into this space and provide some leadership, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Trans Mountain pipeline, the Kinder Morgan pipeline, Mr. Speaker.

And we are willing to do what it takes to ensure the start and the construction of that pipeline, Mr. Speaker, to get that energy product in that pipeline, Mr. Speaker, to get it off the rail so that we can get our agriculture, our potash, our lumber products on the rail, Mr. Speaker. If we are to continue to grow our economy, we need access to those ports, Mr. Speaker. We need access to that tidewater. We need access to those some 150 countries that we want to export products to each and every year.

Mr. Speaker, and there are some questions that the people of the province of Saskatchewan are starting to ask. And they're starting to ask the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, what is their position on Trans Mountain? We've seen in this House, Mr. Speaker, they seem lukewarm positive or supportive of the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline. They feel that the federal government should step in and provide leadership.

I agree with all that, Mr. Speaker, but there is some ambiguity when we get out to the rotunda, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to actually taking action to stand up for Saskatchewan industry, Saskatchewan jobs, and Saskatchewan families, Mr. Speaker, in doing what is necessary to ensure the expedient start of that pipeline.

And I wondered to myself, I said, why are they unclear on this, Mr. Speaker? Why is the Leader of the Opposition unclear on this pipeline that is so important to narrowing that differential gap and increasing the value of our products that we can export out of our province, Mr. Speaker, as we're exporting at about a \$2.6 billion a year discount due to the oil price differential? This pipeline will start to narrow that, Mr. Speaker, and start to add to the economy of the province of Saskatchewan. And it's a bump that we can most certainly use, Mr. Speaker.

So I asked myself, I asked myself, why could anyone be unclear on our province's position with respect to this? But I found some clues, Mr. Speaker. I found a few clues. During the last election campaign, the 2016 election campaign, all of us in this House, we took donations, Mr. Speaker, from a number of different individuals, corporations, unions, across the province, Mr. Speaker, some outside of the province, Mr. Speaker. But

the fact of the matter is — and this may be a clue to the ambiguity on standing up for Saskatchewan people and trying to ensure the construction of that Trans Mountain pipeline, Mr. Speaker — is the members opposite, the Saskatchewan NDP accepted a \$7,500 donation from John Horgan and the BC [British Columbia] NDP, Mr. Speaker.

And the question, the question that the people of the province have, Mr. Speaker, is that Leader of the Opposition, are those members over there beholden to John Horgan in his position on shutting down energy transport from the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker? That was my first clue. That was my first clue, Mr. Speaker. Are the Saskatchewan NDP really under the wing of John Horgan and the BC NDP when it comes to the transport of our products to an export position?

Mr. Speaker, the other day a senior staff member in the caucus office of the NDP, they tweeted — I call it Twitter but I'm corrected all the time; you don't Twitter, you tweet, Mr. Speaker — he tweeted, and I quote, "There is a strong business case against Kinder Morgan," and with this hashtag, #stopkindermorgan, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's a senior member in the caucus office of the NDP, and it's disturbing to the people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

And to me it was another clue. It's another clue why the members opposite won't go out to the rotunda, Mr. Speaker, and stand up for our industries, stand up to ensure that our national government, our Prime Minister lead on this file, and ensure the construction of that project supporting all of the industries here in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And last but not least was one last ... [inaudible] ... Mr. Speaker. A short while ago, Mr. Speaker, there was a federal NDP leadership campaign. I didn't follow it very closely, but others did, a few people. A few people, Mr. Speaker, apparently one over there. Some of the members over there even participated in that federal leadership campaign, Mr. Speaker. And there was a ... One of the candidates running there, Mr. Speaker, was an NDP MP [Member of Parliament], I believe from Manitoba, if I'm not mistaken, Niki Ashton. And she said this, Mr. Speaker, and I quote, "We need to stand united against Kinder Morgan."

Mr. Speaker, as she was fundraising, like many of us were during the election, during the leadership election, members on that side, Mr. Speaker ... But the fact of the matter is the Leader of the NDP Opposition in Saskatchewan, very quickly after that comment was made, within a number of weeks, sent a \$500 cheque to her leadership campaign, Mr. Speaker. So you have the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, accepting money from the BC NDP, donating money to the leadership campaign of an NDP leadership candidate, Mr. Speaker, all of which want to shut down energy products not just in Canada, but more specifically in the province of Saskatchewan.

Which I would put forward, our energy products in this province, Mr. Speaker, should be expanded not only across the nation of Canada to replace energy products that are coming in from areas like Algeria, Venezuela, and Saudi Arabia, Mr. Speaker. The energy that we produce is much more ethical and it's produced much more sustainably than those products that are imported from around the world, Mr. Speaker. And

Canadians should use Western Canadian products when it comes to energy, and we should get those products to other areas of the world if we're serious in any way, Mr. Speaker, about sustainable production from an environmental perspective, but also — also, Mr. Speaker — from a human perspective.

Mr. Speaker, in closing ... That's all I'll say about NDP leadership races. Mr. Speaker, in closing, this is a budget that I am proud, as leader of this party, and Premier of this province, I'm proud to stand alongside my colleagues, the Minister of Finance and all of the members on this side to put this budget in front of the people of the province, Mr. Speaker, as it remains ... it continues on our track to balance, Mr. Speaker. And it keeps us on track to ensure that the investments that we have enjoyed over the last decade will be there not this year, not just this year, not just next year, but for decades into the future, Mr. Speaker, for that next generation.

[15:30]

Mr. Speaker, it's a budget that continues to invest in the services the people of this province expect such as health care, such as education, such as investing in our communities' most vulnerable, Mr. Speaker, and investing in every opportunity for our economy to grow and expand so that we can have everything we've had the last decade and more, Mr. Speaker.

I will continue as Premier of this province, Mr. Speaker, to stand by each of my colleagues and stand for the people in the communities and the families across this province in whatever way is called on me, Mr. Speaker. I give that to each and every member of this province today, and I will stand for this budget, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to say I will not be supporting the amendment that was put forward by the members opposite, Mr. Speaker. But I will proudly be supporting this budget that was tabled in this Assembly by the Minister of Finance, the MLA for Humboldt, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — It is my duty pursuant to rule 31(7) to warn the Assembly that the minister's about to exercise her right to close the debate, and afterwards all members will be precluded from speaking to this question. Therefore, if any member wishes to speak, let him or her do so now. I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I too have a number of thank yous to give to so many people in this province and this Assembly and in the building.

I want to begin of course by thanking my three daughters: Crystal, Shannon, and Lindsay; and my son-in-law Rusty, Shannon's partner, Brian. And we had, of course, the four new adorable little people that are part of my life here in the Assembly on budget day: Makenna, Emryk, Lucas, and James.

Emryk now likes watching the Grandma Donna show. He really needs a life. So he sits there and watches the legislature channel and that has become his new Grandma Donna show. And he even watches when it's scrolling the pictures looking for Grandma Donna's picture. So he's figured out the green

underneath is the green team, and she's on the green team, and then there's the orange team. And it's quite comical because he'll sit there for about 20 minutes. It's taken over *PAW Patrol*.

You know, I also have to say a huge thank you for my fiancé, Tom. He's the most tolerant, patient man ever. Obviously I'm not home a lot and he is very tolerant of that and very, very supportive of what I do.

I want to say thank you to my staff in my office, my chief of staff, Stacey. I have Nicole, Dane, Brendan, and Carla. They work very hard. We are all new to the Finance portfolio so this was a full new team putting together a budget for the very first time.

I want to thank my constituency assistant, Susan Dunne. She works very, very hard for me in the city of Humboldt and for the entire constituency of Humboldt-Watrous. And she too has had a very tough time this last week and a half because she too knows these families and it's touched her very much. But I have to say, Susan Dunne is an exemplary example of how Humboldt is strong.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all my officials in the Ministry of Finance. This of course is my first budget as Finance minister and I can't say how much I appreciate their support, their expertise, their knowledge. And I want to thank my Finance deputy minister, Rupen Pandya. This also was his first budget, so we have a lot of newbies on this team. And you know, he put in hours and hours and never once did I feel unsupported at any given time, so I thank Rupen so very, very much.

I want to thank all of the members who served on the treasury board. This is not the Finance minister's budget. This is our government's budget, and many people have input into that budget. And I had a number of members on treasury board who worked hard with me for countless hours, so I thank them.

I want to thank the previous Finance minister, Kevin Doherty. Kevin did a lot of heavy lifting. I pointed out in my budget speech that it was not easy to shift our reliance on resource revenue to consumption. There were difficult decisions that had to be made and, Mr. Speaker, Kevin did that and Kevin was also supportive of me. Kevin was also impacted by the tragedy and he reached out to me immediately. He used to be a Broncos player.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you to someone that I've admired for a lot of years and worked very closely with for my entire political career, but he's intimidating at times, and that's previous Finance minister, Ken Krawetz. So Ken Krawetz has been with us as the adviser and he was going to sit on treasury board with me. Like that's a little intimidating and you've got to wonder like yes, you know, Ken is the previous Finance minister; is this going to be a problem? Well I'll tell you, it was not in the least. I could not have been more supported than I was from Ken Krawetz. Ken Krawetz has absolutely been a pillar for me and he has been happy for the work that I have done. And so, Ken Krawetz, I can't say thank you enough.

I want to thank the members on both sides of the House. Of course, the members on the government side of the House for their co-operation and hard work through the whole budget

process, but both sides of the House for the support that they've given me over the tragic situation. Many were at the vigil on both sides of the House, but that was the day there was no, no division, no division at all, and so I thank you all for that. The caucus colleagues have been tremendous.

I'd like to thank the staff in the building. They too have been a tremendous support, many of them who worked with me because I've had so many portfolios. But you know, they always tease me that they'll do what I ask because they're scared of me, but I know that's not true. I know they really do care. Yes, they do. Each and every day, you know, I feel so supported in this building, and now in the last week and a half, more than ever before. I appreciate the staff that we have in this building.

I'd like to thank the former premier, Brad Wall, for having the confidence to appoint me as the Minister of Finance. And of course I want to thank the new Premier who decided not to change that. But he has worked tirelessly, along with myself and the members of treasury board and caucus, to help prepare for this budget. But also I cannot thank the Premier for the support that I had this past week, not as a premier, not as a colleague, as a friend, and that means everything to me.

Lastly I want to thank the community of Humboldt. As the MLA from Humboldt, it's been an honour to serve as their representative here in this Assembly. And as I've said over the past week and a half, I have been absolutely amazed and quite frankly inspired by the strength that is in my community. The compassion that's been shown from both within the community of Humboldt, but from around the province and the country and the world is what keeps our communities and families strong. So thank you to everyone for the compassion and thank you for your support.

Mr. Speaker, as I stated a week ago, we have a plan and that plan is on track. Over the past week, I've been watching and listening very carefully for feedback on the budget. The vast majority of what I've heard is that members of the public are satisfied that we have a plan to get back to balance and that plan is working. When I provided an update on the third quarter of the '17-18 fiscal year, it was then I felt very confident that we were on track and our plan is working. There is no doubt there we still have difficult decisions that we need to make as we go forward.

But we aren't here today to discuss last year's budget and those difficult decisions. We're here to reflect on this budget and future decisions.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great comfort to see the deficit number shrink. I am pleased to see the progress that we made and to see that we're able to continue to make increased investments in health care, education, in our social safety net services, for the people of Saskatchewan. And by the looks of some of the reactions to the budget, it's being well received.

I note CIBC's [Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce] commentary on the provincial budget, and I quote:

Saskatchewan delivered a budget consistent with its steady hand approach to prudent fiscal management, continuing

the track record of the Saskatchewan Party that has been in power since 2007 and that won a third mandate in the 2016 general election on a campaign pledge of sticking to its conservative principles. Today's budget, the first under new Premier Scott Moe, carries on that tradition with a firm commitment to get [back] to balance in 2019/20.

Mr. Speaker, we've controlled spending in this budget. Expenditures are forecast to be down 1.4 per cent, down from last year's budget, helping to further close our current operating deficit. Part of controlling expenditures is looking for efficiencies.

Another reaction to our budget on that controlled spending was Todd MacKay, the Prairie director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. He said this, and I quote:

I can't think of any other government in all of Canada who's actually trimming spending. I don't know if a government can actually slay a deficit without trimming spending. So when you see the spending numbers coming down, it makes you feel good about the future.

And while we've been able to limit spending, I was proud that this budget contains no increases to tax rates. And that means all provincial tax rates including sales tax, personal income tax, corporate income tax, education property tax all remain the same.

Our government has cumulatively provided nearly \$5 billion in personal income tax reductions and about \$1.4 billion in education property tax reductions since we took office in 2007. In this budget we've maintained the half point of personal income tax reduction we announced last year, which saved taxpayers \$59 million last year and an additional \$121 million in the 2018 tax year.

To give an illustration of how that affects the people of Saskatchewan, a family of four with the combined total of \$50,000 in income will pay zero income tax over this year. The tax reduction we've introduced during our time in government means that this family is paying \$2,300 less in income tax than compared in 2007 when the NDP were in power.

Mr. Speaker, when we formed government over a decade ago, we were faced with a massive infrastructure deficit. The significant funding we've provided has fixed highways, built schools, built long-term care facilities and hospitals. I note that for the first time ever we will finally have a children's hospital in our province.

In addition, this year the community of North Battleford will have a state-of-the-art mental health facility to help those with mental health challenges within our province, something the members opposite have been calling for. They've been calling for increased services for mental health and yet when that's provided, they criticize over and over again.

Our government knows that in order to sustain these important investments and future investments going forward, we need to have a strong economy, Mr. Speaker. We need to have jobs in the province and we need to remain open for business. And while we can't control what the federal government does and

we can't control what other jurisdictions do, we're going to make absolutely every effort imaginable to ensure that our province is a place where our energy resource sectors continue to thrive. And we hope the members opposite will join us in those efforts as we move forward.

This budget does just that. It continues to support energy sector, the tech sector, the businesses within our province, small business, large corporations who are continuing to support the economy of Saskatchewan.

I would like to highlight something referenced in this budget document. The Fraser Institute annual survey of mining companies named Saskatchewan the best place in Canada and the second-best jurisdiction in the world for mining investment, based on competitive taxes, regulatory certainty, and permitting practices. Mr. Speaker, that's very significant. It's hugely significant for my constituency. I have a number of potash mines, Mr. Speaker. Those potash mines are important to my constituency for employment, for the families within the constituency. And so it is good that our province is supporting that industry.

Mr. Speaker, I note the reaction from John Hopkins, the CEO [chief executive officer] of the Regina Chamber who said, and I quote, "Very good in terms of stability for the private sector and it really sets the message, sets the tone, that we are open for business here in Saskatchewan. We want to see continued growth here in Saskatchewan."

[15:45]

I believe that we've taken a balanced approach given the fiscal situation in the province. We have delivered a budget that keeps Saskatchewan on track by controlling spending, by investing in people, by investing in infrastructure, and by remaining open for business.

Mr. Speaker, I've listened to many of the comments made by the members opposite, and all of them critical. Even when we have the services they asked for, they're still critical that they aren't enough money, they're not put in place fast enough, that they don't go far enough or broad enough, even though they far exceed the services and programming that their party had in place when they were government.

But I've never heard a plan from the members opposite. I've never once heard a plan. They keep saying that we don't have a plan and yet many, many of the financial institutes that examine our budget and businesses that have examined our budget have noted there's a plan and that they're pleased with that plan and they feel that plan is on track. The NDP opposite keeps reminding us that they don't think we have a plan. But what's theirs?

They don't want to see taxes increased, Mr. Speaker. They don't want to see debt increased, Mr. Speaker. But yet they want to spend, according to the Leader of the Opposition's platform, an additional two point billion dollars. Mr. Speaker, where's that supposed to come from? Where is it supposed to come from? Where do they plan to get the money? There is no money tree, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't just magically happen. So what is the NDP plan?

I spent a number of years in opposition and I always remember the rule of thumb was, we were told from our support staff, always have a three-point plan. Unless you're going to scrap it completely and criticize the government — which was the NDP of the day — unless you're going to scrap their idea completely, you'd better have a three-point plan because you're not a government in waiting unless you do. That's telling of the members opposite.

They have no plan. They don't have the alternative. They have no idea how they would do things differently. They criticize tax changes. They criticize programs because it's not enough. Not enough for education. Not enough for health care. Not enough for social safety nets. Not enough for anything or ... Absolutely nothing that we've expanded is enough.

I asked the Leader of the Opposition yesterday, how much? One of his members was asking questions about Advanced Education. So I said, how much? He said, enough. Not a number. It's just not a number in anyone's world. I can just imagine if I asked my three daughters when they were going to go out one night, like I'll give you enough. I can imagine the different numbers I would have got before they went out that door if they thought they could just be provided with enough.

Mr. Speaker, they have no plan. They have no idea. They criticize without an alternative, and that just is not a government in waiting. They do not know how they would pay for the promises and the suggestions that was made by their leader. They do not know what they would do to stimulate the economy. I think I heard the Leader of the Opposition say something about, we need to just tax the rich. We need to tax them more. I'm sure that's what he said in his speech, that we're taking too many taxes from the lower income level people, Mr. Speaker. Does he not realize how many people we've taken off the tax roll completely?

Mr. Speaker, it's going to be interesting when estimates come up because I know that there's going to be a number of criticisms that I'm going to hear from the NDP Finance critic. But what I'm very interested to hear is, what's her alternative? What's her plan? I have yet to hear it. You cannot ... I mean it's just not mathematically possible. And you can't automatically say it's because of waste because everything they have identified that they don't agree with, they wouldn't have done.

They wouldn't have done the bypass. They would have just allowed the unsafe conditions that was happening on one of our busiest highways in our province. They would have just let that continue. They wouldn't have done that, but that's fair enough. That is something they wouldn't have done. They wouldn't have done the John Black contract, and they wouldn't have bought the GTH [Global Transportation Hub] land. Fair enough. That doesn't add up to \$1.3 billion each and every year, Mr. Speaker. It's a shortfall each and every year that we need to backfill. How would they do it? How would they do it, Mr. Speaker? And I don't see one single answer coming out of those members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, estimates are going to be interesting, and let's see if they are going to now come to committee with a plan. Or maybe in the weeks ahead they'll just offer it up here in the

Assembly because I know there's a lot of people just waiting to hear what it is, because unless they have a plan they're not taking this seriously. Criticism is not the only job of an opposition party. You've got to have some suggestions.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude my remarks with a quote from the Dominion Bond Rating Service's commentary on this budget. And I dare to say, Mr. Speaker, maybe they're the experts that understand the budget a little bit more than the members opposite in the NDP party. And that quote is this: "Having demonstrated its commitment to responsible fiscal policy, DBRS expects the province will be successful in balancing the provincial budget in 2019-20." Mr. Speaker, I'm inclined to agree. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The minister has closed debate. Pursuant to rule 31(8) it is my duty at this time to put the question on the amendment. The question before the Assembly is the proposed amendment to the budget motion moved by the member from Saskatoon Nutana, seconded by the member from Regina Douglas Park, that:

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — Those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — Those opposed to the motion, please say no.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — I think the nos have it. Call in the members.

[The division bells rang from 15:52 until 15:54.]

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the proposed amendment to the budget motion moved by the member from Saskatoon Nutana, seconded by the member from Regina Douglas Park, that:

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

All those in favour of the motion please stand.

[Yeas — 12]

Meili	Vermette	Wotherspoon
Beck	Sproule	Forbes
Rancourt	Mowat	Saraauer
McCall	Belanger	Chartier

The Speaker: — All those opposed please stand.

[Nays — 45]

Moe	Beaudry-Mellor	Merriman
Stewart	Reiter	Wyant
Morgan	Harpauer	Duncan
Marit	Hargrave	D'Autremont
Cox	Heppner	Kaeding
Makowsky	Tell	Eyre
Brkich	Harrison	Ottenbreit
Cheveldayoff	Weekes	Hart
Kirsch	Bradshaw	Fiaz
Carr	Lawrence	Wilson
McMorris	Michelson	Bonk
Doke	Steinley	Hindley
Buckingham	Lambert	Dennis
Nerlien	Steele	Tochor
Goudy	Olauson	Francis

Clerk Assistant: — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the amendment, 12; those opposed, 45.

The Speaker: — I declare the amendment lost.

So the question before the Assembly is the budget motion moved by the Minister of Finance, seconded by the member from Canora-Pelly:

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — Those in favour of the motion please say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — Those opposed to the motion please say no.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — I believe the ayes have it. Call in the members.

[The division bells rang from 15:59 until 16:00.]

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is:

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

All those in favour of the motion please stand.

[Yeas — 45]

Moe	Beaudry-Mellor	Merriman
Stewart	Reiter	Wyant
Morgan	Harpauer	Duncan

Marit	Hargrave	D'Autremont
Cox	Heppner	Kaeding
Makowsky	Tell	Eyre
Brkich	Harrison	Ottenbreit
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Kirsch	Bradshaw	Fiaz
Carr	Lawrence	Wilson
McMorris	Michelson	Bonk
Doke	Steinley	Hindley
Buckingham	Lambert	Dennis
Nerlien	Steele	Tochor
Goudy	Olauson	Francis

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

[Nays — 12]

Meili	Vermette	Wotherspoon
Beck	Sproule	Forbes
Rancourt	Mowat	Sarauer
McCall	Belanger	Chartier

Clerk: — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the budget motion, 45; those opposed, 12.

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

Hon. Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that this House do adjourn for the day.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved to adjourn debate. This House stands adjourned until . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, sorry. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. This House stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:03.]

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President of the Executive Council

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Hon. Tina Beaudry-Mellor

Minister of Advanced Education

Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Minister Responsible for Innovation

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff

Minister of Central Services

Minister Responsible for the Provincial

Capital Commission

Minister Responsible for Public Service Commission

Hon. Dustin Duncan

Minister of Environment

Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Water

Security Agency

Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan

Power Corporation

Hon. Bronwyn Eyre

Minister of Energy and Resources

Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated

Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan

Water Corporation

Hon. Joe Hargrave

Minister of Crown Investments

Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan

Government Insurance

Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan

Transportation Company

Hon. Donna Harpauer

Minister of Finance

Hon. Jeremy Harrison

Minister of Trade and Export Development

Minister of Immigration and Career Training

Hon. Warren Kaeding

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Minister Responsible for First Nations, Métis
and Northern Affairs

Hon. Gene Makowsky

Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport

Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Liquor
and Gaming Authority

Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan

Hon. David Marit

Minister of Highways and Infrastructure

Minister Responsible for SaskBuilds and
Priority Saskatchewan

Hon. Paul Merriman

Minister of Social Services

Hon. Don Morgan

Minister of Justice and Attorney General

Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety

Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan

Workers' Compensation Board

Minister Responsible for The Global

Transportation Hub Authority

Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan

Telecommunications

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Minister Responsible for Rural and Remote Health

Hon. Jim Reiter

Minister of Health

Hon. Lyle Stewart

Minister of Agriculture

Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Crop
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Hon. Christine Tell

Minister of Corrections and Policing

Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Gaming Corporation

Hon. Gordon Wyant

Deputy Premier

Minister of Education