



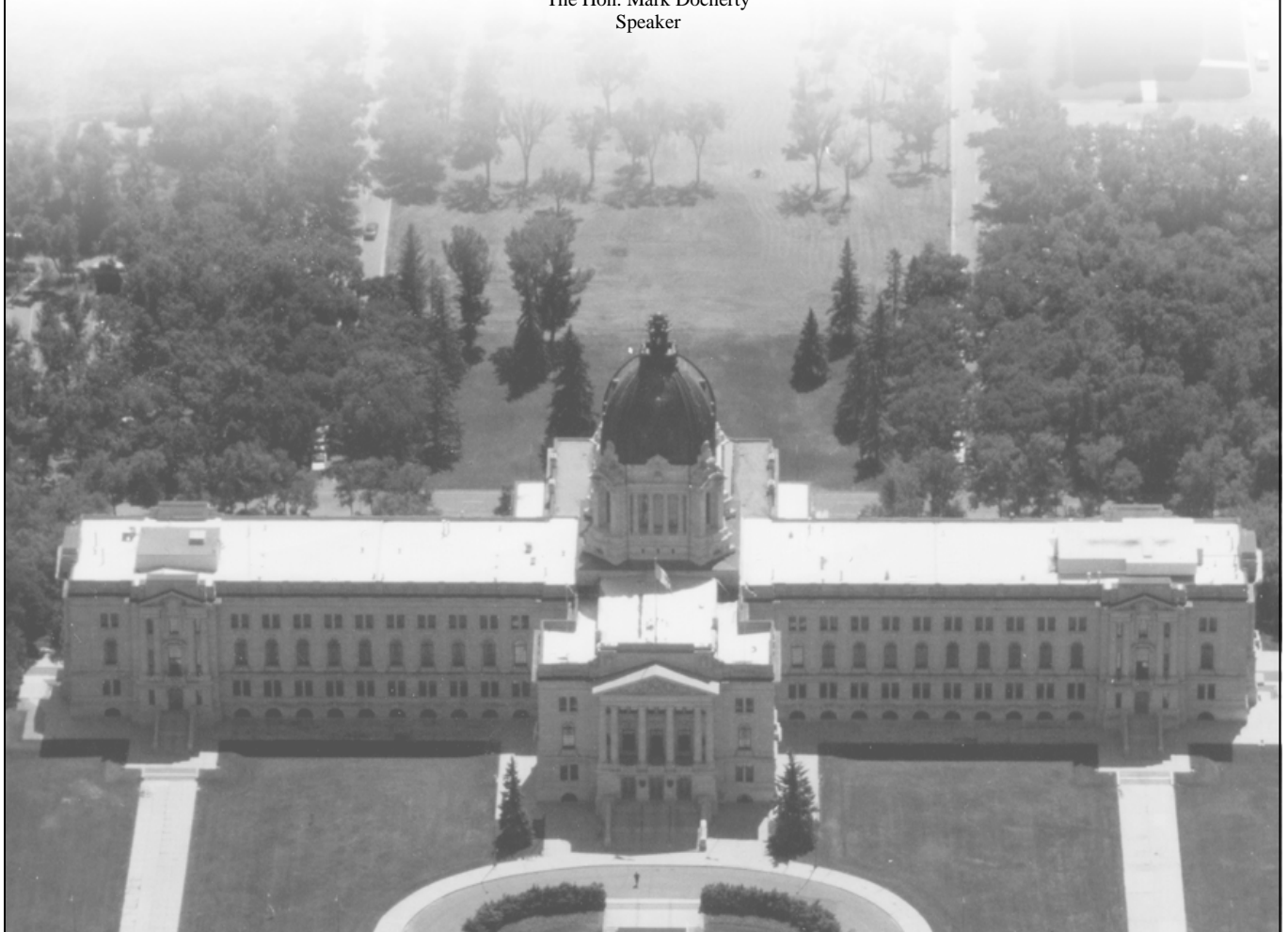
THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

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
3rd Session — 28th Legislature

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

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Lawrence , Greg — Moose Jaw Wakamow (SP)	

Party Standings: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 48; New Democratic Party (NDP) — 13

Clerks-at-the-Table

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Mr. Hargrave: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to rise today to welcome Dawn Regan to our legislature. She's sitting in your west gallery. Thanks, Dawn. Dawn is the chief operating officer of MADD Canada [Mothers Against Drunk Driving] and has been with the organization since 1995. Dawn is responsible for the overall strategic direction for MADD campaigns, programs, and services, executive producer of the school assembly program, and editor of the *MADD Matters* newsletter.

I, along with the member from Regina Gardiner Park, had the opportunity to be at Thom Collegiate this morning to talk with students and view a presentation on impaired driving. Mr. Speaker, we have a great relationship with MADD Canada. I was pleased to be able to attend MADD Canada's convention last fall, Mr. Speaker, and was very honoured to be presented with MADD Canada's Citizen of Distinction Award for all our government's efforts to reduce impaired driving.

I look forward to our continued partnership with MADD Canada, and I invite all members to welcome Dawn to the Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to join with the minister across and welcome Dawn to her legislature here. We really appreciate everything that MADD Canada does. And especially our chapter in Saskatchewan here, they've been working diligently and very hard to reduce impaired driving within our province. And we know that we have a lot of work still to do with regards to reducing our numbers, but we really appreciate everything that your organization does. And on behalf of the official opposition, we'd like to welcome you here and ask all members here to welcome you to your legislature. Thanks.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Nerlien: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we all know, the federal government has done everything possible to restrict trade in the oil and gas industry in Canada, in particular with Bill C-48, the bill to ban tanker traffic in the West; and Bill C-69, the no-more-pipelines bill. But today, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise 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 citizens of Waldheim and Perdue. I do so present.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again today to present petitions on behalf of concerned citizens, families, businesses from communities all across our province relating to the imposition of the PST [provincial sales tax] onto construction labour. Of course this has hit our industry hard across the province. Thousands have been impacted with their jobs, Mr. Speaker. Many have been forced outside of Saskatchewan to pursue employment. Permits are down. It's certainly hurting our economy. And we know that the PST and the doubling of the take has really hit families hard, Mr. Speaker. In fact we know now, out of budget documents, that the average family is now paying almost \$800 more per year in just over a four-year period. That's a 70 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker.

The prayer reads as follows:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Sask Party government to stop saddling families and businesses with the costs of their mismanagement and immediately reinstate the PST exemption on construction and stop hurting Saskatchewan businesses and families.

These petitions today are signed by concerned residents of Regina. I so submit.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition that calls on the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to implement mental health education for Saskatchewan students.

Those who have signed this petition wish to draw our attention to the following: that according to the Canadian Mental Health Association, 1 in 5 people in Canada will personally experience a mental health problem or illness; that mental illness affects people of all ages, education, and income levels, as well as cultures; and that the stigma and discrimination attached to mental illness presents a serious barrier, not only to diagnosis and treatment, but also to acceptance in the community; that Statistics Canada has reported that suicide remains the second-leading cause of death for young people from the ages of 15 to 34 in Canada; and that improving mental health literacy through curriculum development could enhance knowledge and change attitudes in students and in teachers, promote positive mental health development, and decrease the stigma associated with mental illness.

Mr. Speaker, I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Sask Party government to support the introduction of mental health education as a mandatory part of the school curriculum.

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

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today to present a petition calling for a public inquiry and forensic audit into the Regina bypass. The people who have signed this petition would like to bring to our attention the following: land developers purchased 640 acres of land along Tower Road and had the Regina bypass moved to accommodate their developments. Thousands of people were impacted directly and lost their land, their homes, their businesses, access, life's work, health, history, and future. Land developers were paid up to 80 times more for their land than long-term land, home, and business owners. Vinci, a French contractor that is deeply rooted in scandals in Europe, was awarded the contract to build the \$2 billion Regina bypass.

Mr. Speaker, I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan call for a judicial public inquiry and forensic audit into the entire Regina bypass land scandal.

Mr. Speaker, the folks who have signed this petition today are from the towns of Kamsack, city of Yorkton, Saskatoon, Regina, and the town of Southey, and the city of Weyburn. I so submit.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition to get big money out of Saskatchewan politics. And the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan want to bring to our attention the following: that Saskatchewan's outdated election Act allows corporations, unions, and individuals, and those even living outside the province to make unlimited donations to our province's political parties. And we know that the people of Saskatchewan deserve to live in a fair province where all voices are equal and money can't influence politics.

But, Mr. Speaker, over the past 10 years the Saskatchewan Party has received \$12.61 million in corporate donations, and of that, 2.87 million came from companies outside this province. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan politics should belong to Saskatchewan people. And the federal government and the provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, Quebec, and Nova Scotia have moved to limit this influence and level the playing field by banning corporate and union donations to political parties.

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

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Sask Party government to overhaul Saskatchewan's

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

Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition come from Vanguard, Vanscoy, and Raymore. I do so present. Thank you.

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

Mr. Pedersen: — Mr. Speaker, thank you. I have a petition here calling for real action to fight climate change.

Mr. Speaker, the residents of Saskatchewan signing this are of a very young age. They met here on the steps of this building here a few weeks ago demanding action on climate change.

They wish to draw to our attention that Saskatchewan has the highest greenhouse gas emissions per capita in all of Canada. They want to draw to our attention that the Sask Party government has failed to tackle climate change, reduce emissions on the province's own targets, and they haven't put a real plan in place to protect the natural environment. They want to draw our attention that slashing programs and funding for the environment have set our province on a backwards course. And they want to draw our attention to the fact that the Sask Party government's inaction on climate change is reflected by the fact that our per capita greenhouse gas emissions in Saskatchewan are more than three times that of Canada, and that there has been a steady increase in payments under the provincial disaster assistance program.

Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads as follows:

We, in the prayer, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan enact a real plan and allocate appropriate funding in the provincial budget to tackle climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, helping families transition to energy-efficient homes, and encouraging everyone in the province to take real action to protect the environment.

I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Vision 2020 Plan

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week's budget left me a little uninspired. Gone are the Wall days with his big plans and grandiose visions. But, Mr. Speaker, as we creep up to the finish line with the former premier's vision 2020 plan, it's pretty clear why the Sask Party has left that document on the shelf.

Let's give it a gander, Mr. Speaker. This government wanted to reduce the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous graduates, hoping to have a 65 per cent indigenous grad rate by next year. We've barely inched forward and rates are more than 20 per cent off.

This government promised to fully eliminate emergency room

waits by 2017, imagining folks would just walk right in. Now, Mr. Speaker, anyone will tell you that our ERs [emergency room] are busting at the seams as people are waiting hours for care.

This government promised no one would wait more than three months for surgery. As of the last count, there were 9,700 people who had already waited more than three months. They told us they'd keep 500 million in the rainy day fund, and now it's gone. They promised to cut debt in half, but it's set to triple by 2021. Not just that, they promised that when the debt was fully retired, they'd fire up a heritage initiative to save non-renewable revenues for future generations.

Mr. Speaker, gone are the days of shiny things and big plans. The only thing Saskatchewan people can look forward to these days is decades of shelling out cash for P3 [public-private partnership] megaprojects and paying hundreds of millions . . .

The Speaker: — Next statement. Next member's statement. I recognize the member for Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood.

World Tuberculosis Day

Ms. Lambert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday March 24th was World Tuberculosis or TB Day. Every year this day serves as a reminder that TB remains a serious illness across the globe. This year's theme, It's Time, emphasizes the urgency to act on the commitments made by global leaders to end TB.

My maternal grandfather, Emilien Berthiaume, spent 10 months in the Fort Qu'Appelle Sanatorium. Fort San was the primary TB treatment centre in the province.

Mr. Speaker, since 2013 TB Prevention and Control Saskatchewan has expanded their focus to identify and treat people with latent TB infections, and our government provides \$2.6 million each year to address this serious issue.

We also participate in the provincial tuberculosis partnership, which brings together key partners including the Saskatchewan Health Authority, provincial and federal governments, and the Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority.

[13:45]

Mr. Speaker, the joint efforts of this partnership focus on important issues, including early diagnosis and access to medical care, treatment and prevention, awareness and education, and social and community programs and services. Access to enhanced point-of-care testing, particularly in the North, can help quickly identify and initiate timely treatment. Together we can improve the health of Saskatchewan residents. I'd ask that all members join me in acknowledging World TB Day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Social Work Week in Saskatchewan

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week is Social Work Week in Saskatchewan, and this year's theme is Real

People, Real Impact. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are suffering from impacts created by this Sask Party government. The cruel cuts to services have resulted in real suffering for real people. More families and children are using food banks. In fact, Mr. Speaker, food banks are struggling to keep up with the demand. Many families are struggling to make ends meet. Mr. Speaker, the government would do well to remember this year's theme and to remember that decisions made have real impacts on real people.

As a registered social worker, I am proud of the work my colleagues perform every day across the province. Social workers provide support to families, individuals, adults, and children. They provide services ranging from crisis intervention, group and one-on-one counselling, marriage and family therapy, addictions counselling, and child protection. Many social workers are now working under difficult circumstances due to the callous cuts of this government.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in acknowledging the hundreds of social workers across Saskatchewan and commending them on their dedication, compassion, and work ethic, and that we express our gratitude to them during this Social Work Week. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The member for Regina Walsh Acres.

Greek Independence Day

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take the opportunity to recognize March 25th as Greek Independence Day. Today we'd like to celebrate with the wonderful Greek community here in Regina and across Saskatchewan.

In 1821 the Greeks rose up against the Ottoman Empire, which had occupied Greece for almost 400 years, leading to the War of Independence and eventually Greece's formation as an independent state. Almost 200 years later, Greek communities across the world celebrate with large parades, flags, and traditional Greek outfits.

Mr. Speaker, we are very lucky to have such a wonderful and welcoming Greek community throughout Saskatchewan. It is important that we take the time to celebrate with our Greek friends as they have contributed so much to the quality of life here in our province. Whether it's during our Mosaic cultural festival or at fundraising events like An Evening in Greece, the Greek community loves sharing their culture, food, dance, language with all of us.

Here in Regina, locals and tourists can sample authentic Greek meals at numerous wonderful restaurants. I know I've never passed up an opportunity to have some moussaka. Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members to join me in celebrating Greek Independence Day. Thank you.

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

New Group Home Opens in Regina

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to let everyone know that a new replacement group home opened

in Regina on Thursday. The group home is operated by Regina Residential Resource Centre. Since 1974, RRRC [Regina Residential Resource Centre] has been supporting people with intellectual disabilities in Regina through its respite home, supportive independent living programs, self-managed programs, and group homes.

Mr. Speaker, I was fortunate to attend the grand opening of the new home on Hames Crescent, Regina. Our government provided \$23,338 on top of its regular annual funding to go towards the mortgage of the new home.

This project is one of the many examples of our government's commitment to make Saskatchewan the best place in Canada to live for people with disabilities. Since forming government we have invested \$5 billion across all the ministries to support people with disabilities. Mr. Speaker, RRRC is another one of the community partners that our government has been working with to follow through on this commitment.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the House to join me in recognizing the grand opening of Regina Residential Resources Centre's group home.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Business Builder Awards Presented in Saskatoon

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I attended and brought greetings to the 22nd annual North Saskatoon Business Association Business Builder Awards in Saskatoon presented by Nutrien. This award ceremony is a celebration of the achievements and accomplishments of hard-working men and women in our community. It is a chance to showcase innovation and excellence in Saskatoon as well as to profile and thank some great mentors.

Mr. Speaker, the NSBA [North Saskatoon Business Association] began in 1965 as a fledgling association of like-minded business leaders in Saskatoon's north end. Decades later the NSBA continues to grow and advocate on behalf of its members while hosting top-quality events for the business community.

Mr. Speaker, here's a list of just a few of the great accomplished winners from the event: Brandt Industries for the New Direction Award; JNE Welding Limited Partnership for the Quality Management Award; Echelon Wealth Partners Inc. for the Small Business Award; Crew Rowhouse, who received the Young Promising Entrepreneur Award; SREDA [Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority] for the Team Building Award; and Kent Smith-Windsor for the Shirley Ryan Lifetime Achievement Award.

Mr. Speaker, I now ask all members to join me in congratulating all the nominees and award winners of the NSBA Business Builder Awards and thank the association for another great event. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Prism Awards Presented in Moose Jaw

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 2nd the annual Prism Awards were handed out in Moose Jaw. The Prism Awards are hosted every year in March by the Business Women of Moose Jaw. Mr. Speaker, the evening is meant to celebrate and highlight the women in Moose Jaw who have gone above and beyond to make their community a better place. For the past six years all of the money raised from the gala has been donated to Moose Jaw Transition House.

Mr. Speaker, this year's winners were Bonnie Nelson, who won the Mentor Award for her career in nursing and helping others in health care. Mr. Speaker, along with Nelson, the other winners included Emmy Barr for the Perseverance Award; Nicole Radfelder won the Role Model Award for her work and involvement with Roots of Empathy; and counsellor Crystal Froese won the Influential Award. Kaia Isenor won the award for Youth Achievement, and Kyra Klassen won for the most successful. Mr. Speaker, the Lifetime Achievement Award went to Betty Butler.

The Prism Awards are truly one of the most positive events in Moose Jaw every year. I ask all members to join me in congratulating all of this year's award winners. And to all the organizers and volunteers of this year's Prism Awards, thank you for continuing to make our city of Moose Jaw a wonderful community to be part of. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Access to Chinese Markets

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's an issue that's top of mind for people across Saskatchewan, in particular those in agriculture: the situation regarding our access to markets in China. We heard recently that canola will be blocked from entering China. Now there are concerns about other grains as well, Mr. Speaker. Obviously this is a big deal — close to \$2 billion per year, our second-largest customer worldwide.

My question for the Premier is, can he give us an update on exactly what's happening, what steps have been taken since we raised this last in the legislature, and what work is under way to make sure that we have access to this market and we're expanding access to other markets for Saskatchewan grains?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question, which is of utmost importance to the economy here in the province of Saskatchewan and utmost importance to the wealth of our communities and our families across the province of Saskatchewan and as well, I dare say, across the nation of Canada, Mr. Speaker, with 45 per cent of our Canadian canola exports do go to China. They're our largest market for canola exports, and 50 per cent of that canola, Mr. Speaker, comes from this province.

So as we said last week, our Minister of Agriculture has reached

out to his counterpart, the federal Minister of Agriculture. Our Minister of Trade and Export has reached out as well to Minister Freeland, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and relations, Mr. Speaker, as well as the Minister of Trade, who is the lead on this file from the federal government's perspective, Mr. Speaker.

We've also reached out to a number of industry associations, producers, exporters, Mr. Speaker, the Canadian embassy in China, Mr. Speaker. And we continue to work with those associations, work with our federal government in support of our trade relations, not just with China, Mr. Speaker, but our trade relations with all of the countries that we do business with, Mr. Speaker.

The federal government has indicated that this is a matter of science, if you will, and a matter of contamination. We agree that we should go through the steps of ensuring that we can again display that Saskatchewan and Canada provide the very best canola product in the world, Mr. Speaker. We believe that, Mr. Speaker, but we will also be asking and have asked the federal government to elevate this to a diplomatic level, Mr. Speaker, with both the USA [United States of America] as well as China to ensure that we can ensure our canola access to both of those markets and other markets around the world.

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

Attendance at Rallies and Support for Immigration

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Thursday a number of people in this Assembly took part in vigils, showing solidarity with Saskatchewan's Muslim community. I was among them in Saskatoon and so were a number of other members, including the Minister of Justice. And I'm sure that he heard, as I did, from the community a desire to see, as the National Council of Canadian Muslims have recommended, January 29th, which is the anniversary of the mosque shooting in Quebec, see that day declared as a day of action against hate and intolerance.

And we'd raised that in the House last week. I was glad to see on Twitter that the minister referenced this last night. That's showing leadership, allowing Saskatchewan to be in the forefront, the first province to recognize that date. And I saw some of the awful responses on Twitter. I appreciated the leadership there.

My question now for the Premier is, will he be willing to take the next step in leadership and make it clear that neither he nor his cabinet or any members of his caucus will be present at any events that have even the loosest association with hate or intolerance?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, we were very happy to announce the Minister of Justice, our Attorney General — which in this province are the same people — we were happy to announce that we will be supporting the United Nations day against Islamophobia, Mr. Speaker. And we're proud to do that, Mr. Speaker. We're proud to partake in the vigils across this province.

As I've said numerous times in this Assembly and outside of this

Assembly, Mr. Speaker, we denounce, we condemn all racist thoughts, deeds, actions, Mr. Speaker, and words. There's no place for those actions, those words, those thoughts in our communities across this province. There's no place for them on social media, Mr. Speaker, and there's no place for them in the world.

Mr. Speaker, we need to continue, in particular in communities across the province of Saskatchewan, to treat our neighbours, treat our friends, treat those people that we encounter each and every day in precisely the same manner that we expect to be treated in return. Mr. Speaker, I've always believed that. I've been taught that. And I would ask the people of this province to ensure they live by those words.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On January 3rd, former Premier Wall tweeted about an event, an oil and gas rally. When he was informed that that was actually a yellow vest rally, he took the tweet down and told people to look elsewhere. He's no longer in the premier's chair but he realized he needed to show leadership, distance himself from what the yellow vest movement is and is continuing to become, and not encourage people to take part in that.

My question for the Premier: he's now in that chair. He has a role to show leadership. His actions and his words give a great indication to the public of how they should engage in these movements. Will he stand up today and make it clear that he'll distance himself from the yellow vest movement and not allow any of his caucus members to attend any further events?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, if memory serves me correctly, Mr. Speaker, I believe the link on that particular social media post was to the wrong event, Mr. Speaker. It was changed. It was changed quickly.

With respect to members on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we will always represent the people that we represent as MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] across the province, Mr. Speaker. And it is my true belief, and we've discussed this, that everyone on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, in every method possible denounce any racist actions, Mr. Speaker, any racist words, or any racist thoughts, Mr. Speaker.

Again, there's no place for that in our Saskatchewan society or our communities, and there's no place for that in the world, Mr. Speaker. We believe that on this side of the House and we'll continue to denounce any of those actions, any of those thoughts, Mr. Speaker, whether they be here or abroad.

[14:00]

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate those sentiments. I appreciate those words. They don't, however, coincide with the message that is sent when cabinet ministers and the Premier attend or support yellow vest rallies.

The question, Mr. Speaker, is this: will the Premier make it clear that there will be no further involvement with the yellow vest movement from his caucus? Simple question.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I've attended a number of rallies. To my knowledge, none of them have been in any way associated with, you know, any racist thoughts or anything, or racist words or anything to that matter, Mr. Speaker.

Members on this side of the House in their constituencies have attended rallies in support of the industries that create wealth in our communities across the province, Mr. Speaker, in communities that have a strong energy industry or maybe a coal-powered industry or maybe an agricultural industry or a manufacturing industry. Members on this side of the House will work with people in their constituencies and they will support those industries that create wealth, Mr. Speaker, not only for the community in general but for the families that they serve in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

There have been rallies that have been attended, Mr. Speaker, with respect to defending and standing up for those Saskatchewan industries and those Saskatchewan opportunities. Mr. Speaker, at every opportunity we have denounced any racist thoughts or deeds or words that have been associated with anything of the aforementioned, Mr. Speaker, and we'll continue to do just that.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, it's a simple question and the answer was not clear. We did not get an answer. In fact we hear that this Premier will continue to allow his members to engage with yellow vest movements. And one has to ask the question, how much hate is too much? How many signs that are anti-immigrant is too many? And we've seen one of the signs that's the most common as recently as Saturday on Albert Street. We saw signs against the UN [United Nations] compact on migration.

Last week we asked the Premier his position on this. Does he share the leader of the federal Conservatives' position, being against the UN compact, or is he willing to stand up and say what's right and say that he's in support of migration? Very clear, simple yes or no. Does the Premier support the UN compact on migration?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, it was yesterday . . . Well, what's today? Monday. Yesterday as a matter of fact, I was in a different city. I was on my way to church and someone was holding up a sign that essentially meant, don't go to church, Mr. Speaker. I still went to church, Mr. Speaker. I did yesterday.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, is the Leader of the Opposition was outside at the very same rally that I attended in support of our Saskatchewan industries, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is, is that when it comes to immigration and supporting people from other countries that are moving to this province, Mr. Speaker — and I would say by example, setting an example for how to treat people that move

into our nation, Mr. Speaker — our record is clear in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

165,000 more people live here in the province than did under when members opposite had the opportunity. 108,000 of those, Mr. Speaker, 108,000 of those came from other countries from all around the world, I believe, from about 190 other countries around the world. And they are now not only settled in communities across the province, Mr. Speaker, they are part of over 320 communities here in the province of Saskatchewan. They are part of our province today, and they'll be part of our province in the future.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, this is not that hard. If he believed any of what he was saying, he'd be able to and willing to stand up and simply say, yes or no. And so let's try one more time — yes or no on the UN compact on migration? Yes or no on the yellow vests?

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order, please. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, this province's record is exactly what should be looked at with respect to making our province, our communities . . . Our families have done this across the province, Mr. Speaker, in making our place, the communities that we live in, a welcoming place for 108,000 people to move to here, Mr. Speaker, and to participate not only in our communities, but I would say in a vibrant and expanding economy here in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, they're coming here because there is the opportunity for a better life. There is an opportunity for a career, and there is opportunity for them to generate wealth within their family, Mr. Speaker. That's why we will continue, continue to ensure that we have . . . and welcome each and every one of them with open arms into this province, Mr. Speaker. And we'll continue to ensure that we stand up for the wealth, the export-driven economy that creates wealth, not only for the people that live here — record amount of people that live here, I might add — but for the people that are yet to come, and which we will be working hard to attract from countries all around this world, Mr. Speaker. Our record is strong and we stand on that.

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

Funding for Education

Ms. Beck: — That's a lot of words to say no, Mr. Speaker. Last week's budget leaves Saskatchewan students falling behind from kindergarten right through post-secondary. For the second year in a row, badly needed funding for post-secondary education . . .

[Interjections]

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the second year in a row, badly needed funding for post-secondary education is flat

while costs continue to rise. Our universities and colleges have been forced to leave vacancies while students bear more and more of the cost through rising tuition. Students at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] and the U of R [University of Regina] pay the highest tuition in Western Canada.

How can the Minister for Advanced Education justify the damage that her government is inflicting year after year on students and our institutions of higher learning?

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

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, as the member opposite will know, universities are autonomous institutions. They set their own tuition fees, Mr. Speaker. Our government provides a record level of student supports to help battle tuition rates set out by post-secondary institutions. In '19-20, Mr. Speaker, we're providing nearly \$111 million to student supports through loans, scholarships, bursaries, and grants. That represents a 262 per cent increase since our government took office, Mr. Speaker. The graduate retention program has provided 69,000 graduates in this province with more than 406 million in tax rebates. If that's not commitment, I don't know what is, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, once again a failure to take responsibility for a crisis of their own making. Our institutions are struggling after this government's 5 per cent cut followed by two years of back-to-back zeros. They have made deep cuts to programming, scholarships, and staffing to deal with this government's austerity approach.

And now the U of R faculty is on the verge of strike and students risk losing their semester because the government has put faculty and administration in an impossible situation. If U of R profs are forced to strike, the member for Regina University must bear the blame. With nothing to show for Advanced Education in this year's budget, what will the minister do now to ensure that faculty get the supports that they need and the U of R students don't lose their semester?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the concern for students is our government's number one priority. Student financial assistance for the current semester will not be impacted by any potential labour disruption; funding will continue as it is. Study permits for international students are provided by the federal government. In the event of a disruption, we will work with our federal partners at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to minimize their impact.

Mr. Speaker, these students are about to graduate. They're about to start new jobs. They're about to go into postgraduate programs. Mr. Speaker, we do not want to have a labour disruption of any kind in our province. We'd encourage both sides to get back to the bargaining table and do what they do best — negotiate a settlement, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, it sounds like they have a plan for after labour disputes break down. How about a plan for before to properly fund our institutions?

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan School Boards Association and the Saskatoon school boards have said that the additional \$14 million for supports in classrooms in this budget fail to keep pace with even the rising costs, contradicting the minister's own words. When you account for inflation and the 7,000 additional students in our classrooms since 2016, we see much more clearly the damage that this government has done to our schools with falling per-student investment year after year after year.

Per-student funding today is only about 10,200 and that is hundreds of dollars less than the inadequate funding of just five years ago. And adjusted for rising costs, we are facing \$100 million deficit in our classrooms today. How can the Minister of Education justify another year of falling per-student funding in the supports that our kids need to succeed?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to stand in my place and again announce to the House, Mr. Speaker, the largest operating budget for K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education in the history of this province. Now the member knows, Mr. Speaker — she's a former school board trustee — that the Ministry of Education doesn't fund on a per-student basis. The funding formula's developed in concert with school divisions, Mr. Speaker, to provide funding in a . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — I'd just remind the members, let's come to order. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, the funding formula is a complex formula, Mr. Speaker. It's not funded on a per-pupil basis. Certainly the number of children that are in any particular school division goes into factoring how much money goes in, so from our perspective, Mr. Speaker, in addition to the \$30 million that was added to the funding formula last year, another \$26.2 million in the funding formula this year, Mr. Speaker.

But as the member has said, and the Leader of the Opposition has said, Mr. Speaker, it's not all about money, Mr. Speaker. It's about results. And that's why, Mr. Speaker, we've included in this year's budget, Mr. Speaker, a half a million dollars to talk about innovation, to talk about how we deliver public education in the classrooms, to address the issues that the teachers, that school board trustees have raised with me over the last year. And we'll continue to do that, acting always in the best interests of the students in this province.

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

Funding for Alternative School

Ms. Beck: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that the minister decided to find his feet and talk about innovative programming. Since 1972, Cornwall Alternative School has been providing innovative programming and extra supports for some of our city's most vulnerable kids. These are students who are often

living on the margins and have found the supports and the environment that they need to succeed at this school.

Despite the cabinet signing off on three years of funding for Cornwall Alternative going through to 2020, the Sask Party quietly cut this important funding in its budget last week. What possible justification is there for this short-sighted cut?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I'll be happy to answer that question, Mr. Speaker. It's about doing what's in the best interests of the kids in our school division, Mr. Speaker. We know that the children that are coming out of Cornwall, Mr. Speaker, who graduate out or come out after grade 10 and go back into grade 11 and grade 12, Mr. Speaker, aren't very good at making the transition into grade 11. We've heard this not only from people at Cornwall, Mr. Speaker, but we've heard it from people in the school division. And that's why the ministry has had some conversations with the school divisions, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly the school divisions are providing a significant amount of the support that these kids are going to need to make sure that they can get through to grade 12 and to graduate, Mr. Speaker. Certainly the two school divisions in Regina are providing the services that these kids need, Mr. Speaker. We had the same situation in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, where we closed down Radius, and those kids made a good, seamless transition into the mainstream school division, Mr. Speaker. So we'll always act in the best interests of kids, Mr. Speaker, and that's why this decision was made.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, today at 5:30, myself and my colleagues and many members of the community will be heading over to Cornwall Alternative School to hear about this program, its value to both the community and the students. And I would invite . . . I would save a chair in my car, Mr. Speaker, for the minister to join us because I think there's a lot that he needs to hear about the programming at Cornwall Alternative.

Mr. Speaker, this program exists for students who aren't finding success in the public or separate system. This vital support costs the government less than \$1 million a year, and it simply doesn't make sense to claw back supports from students who need it the most.

The dedicated teachers and staff have been working for years, going above and beyond, Mr. Speaker, to help these students reach their full potential. Last year, and here's some statistics for the minister, 95 per cent of students at this school said that they would not be attending school if it wasn't for Cornwall. Eighty-six per cent improved their marks, and attendance was at a very impressive 81 per cent.

Investing in Cornwall and in these students is the right thing to do. Will the minister reverse these senseless cuts today?

[14:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — As I mentioned in my last answer, Mr. Speaker, decisions are made by this government, Mr. Speaker. They're always made in the best interests of the children, Mr. Speaker.

We know that the two school divisions here in Regina can provide the services that these kids need. When this program was first started, Mr. Speaker, we didn't have the kinds of supports in the schools that we have now. Mr. Speaker, we want to make sure that these children can transition properly from grade 10 into grade 11. We know that there has been some successes, Mr. Speaker, with the program, no question. But we want to make sure that the kids, to the greatest extent possible, can transition back into the regular school system.

Mr. Speaker, we want to make sure that these kids have a good track, Mr. Speaker, to graduating. We believe, in consultation with the Ministry of Education, Mr. Speaker, that the services can be provided through the school division to ensure that we have graduation success for these kids, Mr. Speaker, programs that are available within the school divisions as they exist today.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has presided over an increase in costs in health, in justice, in social services because of an increase in crime, in illness, and in poverty. That's what's going up. And the only way to get those costs under control, the only way to prevent that increase is to invest upstream, to invest in education, in particular in the education of those who are most at risk.

And so the decision to cut Cornwall, to eliminate Cornwall, such a successful program, and the decision to do so after having signed a three-year deal is completely mind-boggling, completely counter to where we need to invest to reduce costs and improve lives in this province. But it's a pattern.

We saw the Premier when he was minister of Advanced Education. He gave an increase to that sector. Then he took it back halfway through the year. Then he signed a three-year deal with NORTEP [northern teacher education program] and then a year later he signed a letter that cancelled NORTEP.

Now this government had signed a three-year deal with Cornwall. They've committed to a three-year deal, and now they're saying that that deal is no good anymore; they're cutting all of their funding. How are the people of Saskatchewan supposed to trust the word of this government when their signature on the bottom of a paper doesn't mean a thing?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, those words are very rich coming from a party that closed 176 schools across the province, Mr. Speaker, coming less than a week after the largest education budget that has ever been introduced in the province of Saskatchewan. The commitment this government has had over the last decade is to take an education budget from less than a billion dollars, Mr. Speaker, to a full two and a half billion dollars here in the province because we believe in the next generation, Mr. Speaker.

We now have a government that is building schools, Mr. Speaker, not closing them: 46 new schools, Mr. Speaker, versus 176 schools closed. We have a government that is hiring people, Mr. Speaker, investing in people in those very buildings — over 900 teachers, over 177 support staff — to ensure that the next generation, our children, the next generation for this province has every opportunity for success, Mr. Speaker. That's the record of this government. It's the record of the members opposite, Mr. Speaker. And that's the record of this province.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the answer to question no. 61.

The Speaker: — Ordered, 61. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answer to question no. 62.

The Speaker: — Tabled, 62. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the answer to question no. 63.

The Speaker: — Ordered, question 63.

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 Mr. Wotherspoon.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you so much for the opportunity to be able to speak to this budget, a budget that is the right balance. Our plan was to get back to balance in a three-year budget cycle, and we are completely on track to make that happen. We have and we are striking the right balance.

This is my third opportunity to speak to a budget since I've had the privilege to sit as the MLA for Estevan. And now with my additional role as Minister of Highways and Infrastructure, it is a story that is truly developing as we go. But before I talk about my political journey, I would like to catch you up a little bit on my personal story.

You know, life truly is a blessing. When I spoke last about my family, I told you that my daughter Miranda was going to get married to the nephew of the member from Saskatoon Centre.

Well all went off without a hitch and I now have a wonderful son-in-law named Jon. And not only that, they are expecting their first child in June of this year. They decided not to find out if they were having a boy or a girl, so it's going to be a wonderful surprise when June comes.

And speaking of blessings, my daughter Mercedes and her partner, Jay, brought a beautiful baby girl into the world in November of last year. Jordyn Brookelyn is just about four months old and she has managed to capture my heart in words that just cannot be expressed. I know, I know, I don't look near old enough to be a grandmother, huh? You were all thinking it, but it's true. And of course my son, Wyatt, he just turned 23. He continues to farm with his dad and his granddad near Outram just outside of Estevan. And what can I say? He's a single 23-year-old male.

Of course I would be remiss if I did not mention my partner, Bart. The job we do here takes us away from home a good portion of the time, and our partners are the ones that have to pick up the slack when we are away. So I would like to thank Bart for doing such a great job when I am away from home. Once again, everybody loves Bart.

In my constituency back home, I would like to take the opportunity to thank Rosalie, Susan, and Gale for all that they do for me. It truly does take a team to ensure that we are doing a good job for our constituents. And talking about teams, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to David, Robyn, Sean, and Bonnie who work with me here in the building. They truly do everything they can to make my job as minister as seamless as possible. And to my deputy minister, Fred, and his complement of professionals, thank you.

When I sit in my seat here and listen to the words of our Premier, they resonate more and more with me. He has a plan. He has put a team together, a team to implement that plan, and that plan is the right balance. And that plan is coming to fruition, Mr. Speaker.

I've heard him talk on more than one occasion about building a province that is a place we want our children to live and where we want to raise our families, where we want to work, Mr. Speaker. A province that is full of opportunities for everyone. As I watch my family grow, I cannot help but see the possibilities that we have for them right here in this fantastic province of Saskatchewan. The reason I'm able to see those possibilities so clearly is because of the right balance that is being struck.

So on to our '19-20 provincial budget. And just in case you missed the title of our budget, it is *The Right Balance*. That's right. It is the right balance for Saskatchewan. In this budget, we highlight five things: the budget will be balanced; there'll be no new taxes or tax increases; we will be investing in health care, seniors, students and classrooms, and vulnerable families; we will be focusing on safety; and lastly, we are investing in infrastructure in both rural and urban Saskatchewan.

One of the committees I have the opportunity to sit on is treasury board. When I was first assigned to this committee, I thought, what have I done to deserve this. The number of meetings is endless. The meetings are long. The material you receive ahead of time is extensive that we have to read. This year is my third

consecutive year being on this committee, and I would not trade it for the world.

The committee gives me a chance to get a true, fulsome look at what is happening in every ministry within government. It gives me a true appreciation for all of the very difficult decisions that each and every minister has to make as they are deliberating their budgets for the year. And because of our commitment to bring it back to balanced, each and every one of these ministers has had to work very hard to ensure that we find the right balance. So the fact that we are bringing in a balanced budget tells me that these ministers have taken their task put in front of them very, very seriously and have delivered on what is asked of them.

This budget that has been here has been three years in the making, and it truly has been a team effort to find the right balance. Of course, having a Minister of Finance as the Chair of treasury board did help. When I grow up, I want to be just like her. The common-sense approach she brings to the meetings is met with respect from her peers. The history and corporate knowledge she has makes weighing decisions and ensuring we don't repeat mistakes made in the past. And of course, her iron fist helps just a little bit.

My point is she managed to work with the committee and the stakeholders, and she did find the right balance, which is why we have a balanced budget today. I would like to extend my sincere thank you to her for her excellent leadership, and hopefully I get assigned to the committee again next season. Even though I thought it was a curse to start with, I truly don't want to give it up now.

And, Mr. Speaker, as we were going into planning for this year's budget, I heard on more than one occasion people ask, what tax increases are going to take place to ensure the budget is balanced? Well I'm happy to report that there are no new tax increases or new taxes this year at all. Not only that, Mr. Speaker, we are very happy to report that we will be giving a new tax credit to recognize the value of volunteer emergency responders. These first responders are oftentimes the fabric of our communities. They give so selflessly of themselves for the betterment of their communities. So when this tax credit was being considered, it just made sense.

And I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to brag a little about our accomplishment as a government over the past years. Personal income tax reductions over the past decade have provided over \$610 million in annual savings. Our business tax rates are amongst the lowest in the country and we also have the highest small-business income threshold in Canada. These accomplishments have definitely met the right balance.

And, Mr. Speaker, we are investing in people around the province of Saskatchewan. As I have sat here in this House over the past couple of weeks, I've heard the opposition criticize our record on what we are spending on mental health. Currently we are making a significant contribution in mental health. This year the total investment will be \$402 million, Mr. Speaker. That is up nearly \$30 million from last year. This is the largest commitment ever to mental health services in our province. Once again, an investment in the people of our province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure I've mentioned in the past that both of my

daughters are schoolteachers. One teaches grade 1 in Saskatoon and the other teaches grade 7 in Estevan. So I am truly glad that we are continuing to invest in our students and our classrooms. We are actually increasing school operating funding for divisions by more than \$26 million. This will bring their annual operating up to 1.9 billion, and we are able to do this while maintaining our educational property taxes. Once again, finding the right balance.

As many of you are aware, I had the opportunity to sit on my city council for 10 years in Estevan, and I remember when we would be doing our budgeting. And it was very difficult too, because we never knew what kind of funding we were going to be receiving from the province. Planning for capital was almost impossible, and there was no predictability.

But things changed, Mr. Speaker, when our Saskatchewan Party government brought in revenue sharing. The commitment to revenue share was made over 10 years ago, and recently we have consulted with stakeholders and have come to a new revenue-sharing formula that will continue to be predictable for our communities. This year they will receive 4 per cent more than they did last year. For my community of Estevan, in 2007 they received \$886,000. In this budget, Mr. Speaker, they will receive just about 2.1 million. That is a 136 per cent increase for my community — and it's dependable and it's predictable.

[14:30]

And now to touch on work I do as the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure. This year's Highways and Infrastructure budget is \$706.1 million, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, safety is paramount for the government, which is why we will continue to make these investments we are making. On April 6, 2018, it marked one of the most horrific traffic collisions in our province's history. It was a reminder of how quickly life can change. And it made us ask ourselves, what can we do? Can we do more?

This budget will see improvements to more than 60 intersections. This is a five-year commitment of \$65 million, including \$13 million a year. This will include new turning lanes, lighting, clearing sightlines, and rumble strips. To give you an idea of just a handful of the projects that will take place this year, my ministry will make improvements on Highway 35 and 335 as recommended in the independent engineering report. Lighting improvements will be made through Kindersley on Highway 7, in addition to Highway 3 at Shellbrook, Highway 16 at Langham, and Highway 8 south of Churchbridge. Lighting improvements and a northbound bypass lane will be installed at the junction of Highway 21 and 307. Major improvements will be made to Highway 1 at Kalium, with new entrance and exit lamps, and a new flashing red light on the stop sign in Green Lake at the junction of Highway 155 and 55 will be installed.

We will also invest another \$7 million through the safety improvement program to reduce the frequency and severity of collisions at specific locations around the province. So, Mr. Speaker, over the next five years, safety and intersections will receive \$100 million — that's \$20 million a year — to help advance those.

But as I mentioned, we've already been investing in this kind of stuff through the safety improvement program. And this program was at \$7 million this last budget, unlike the 1 million the

members opposite were spending when they were in power. And now, with our enhanced intersection safety, it comes up to \$20 million a year we'll be investing in that program, so I'm very proud of that.

Mr. Speaker, we're also working with communities and partners across the province. Another strategy to improve transportation is through integration of all the road surfaces across the provinces and all the infrastructure. My ministry isn't the only organization that builds and maintains roads. When you include urban streets and RM [rural municipality] roads, our total road network in Saskatchewan is over an astonishing 190 000 kilometres.

By working together collectively, we can do more. This year we'll provide more than \$6.7 million in funding to municipalities to support their transportation systems through the urban highway connector program, as well as 14 million through the municipal roads for the economy program. We will also continue to provide \$700,000 through the community airport partnership, leveraging a total of 1.4 million investment in local airports, Mr. Speaker.

We also have passing lane projects that will be taking place throughout the province. Passing lanes are becoming very popular. Mr. Speaker, my first opportunity to use passing lanes throughout the province has been pretty good, because I got to use them south of Regina last year as they completed those projects. We've got two sets that have already been completed, and then going forward over the next couple of years we're going to be completing right from Regina all the way to Estevan. But we have projects that will also be taking place on Highway 9 and 10 between Canora and Melville, and planning for passing lanes and other safety improvements on Highway 5 west of Saskatoon. And this is just to name a few, Mr. Speaker.

We've got lots of stuff happening in Highways. I've got pages and pages of information here. But, Mr. Speaker, our government has made some hard choices to bring our budget back to balance, and I would argue that it is the right balance. But as you can see, we have always understood the importance of a safe and efficient transportation network. While still investing in our schools, hospitals, and our people, like any budget we have some limitations. So we need to be strategic. This budget ensures the investment our government makes in programs, services, and infrastructure are sustainable into the future.

But, Mr. Speaker, we face some headwinds. The Trudeau government has imposed a carbon tax on Saskatchewan, beginning April 1st. Our Premier has been a vocal advocate against this tax. It will make the cost of operating more expensive. We know the vast majority are vehemently opposed to this tax, so we will continue to fight and it is likely going to go for several rounds.

So, Mr. Speaker, in closing, I'm very pleased to support the motion that has been brought forward by the Minister of Finance and seconded by the member from Indian Head-Milestone. I will not be supporting the amendment. Mr. Speaker, we have found the right balance. Thank you.

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

Mr. Bradshaw: — Well thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And this is not going to be a universe budget, but it will be a right-balanced budget, Mr. Speaker. And I'm very happy to be able to speak to this. It's a great budget for the province of Saskatchewan and its hard work.

And I will get into the budget after a little bit. First off of course, like the rest of the members around here, I want to talk a little bit about my constituency and my people up there. And I want to thank the people of Carrot River Valley for having the honour and privilege of representing them for the past eleven and a half years. And I hope to continue that in 2020. I want to thank my CAs [constituency assistant], Shelley and Cindy, who do the yeoman work at home while I'm not there, while I'm down here in Regina. And they're great, great people. They certainly have been there for quite some time and know how to handle the phone and know how to handle the constituents who call in there and bring their concerns, bring their concerns to me.

I also would like to thank my family, my wife, Terry, who has to do without me all, you know, as we're in session. That happens to, well all of us here, basically. You know, we're gone a lot and especially being, you know, I'm 400 clicks away from home. So when I'm down in Regina, it's hard for her. She has to go out and shovel off the driveway for me, which is kind of nice to have the driveway cleaned when I get home, and it also keeps her in good shape.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about our right-balanced budget. You know, it's been a tough three years, Mr. Speaker. We said three years ago that this government was going to get this budget balanced, and we did. And we had to make some tough decisions to do that. Not all of them were received exactly with enthusiasm by everybody, but the people of Saskatchewan, the people of Saskatchewan wanted the balanced budget, and that's what we're going to do.

And you know something? You take a look at it. We're also going to end up keeping our AAA credit rating through this budget. Now there's only, I believe, one other province in Canada that has a AAA credit rating, and so that puts us in good stead with all across the country.

I have to give our Finance minister, the member from Humboldt, credit for doing a fantastic job of working through all of this. And I also want to give all the members of treasury board credit and all the ministries credit. That took a lot of work to get this down to the right balance, Mr. Speaker.

But even within this budget — and that's why we call it the right balance — you know, we're not seeing any personal tax increases. This is great: \$610 million saved by the people of Saskatchewan, 112,000 people, low-income people, taken off the tax rolls.

The NDP [New Democratic Party] stands up there day after day, and they want, you know, they want to have a \$15 minimum wage, etc., etc. But back in the days when the NDP was in there, where did they start taxing the people of Saskatchewan? It was a lowly, just a little over \$8,000. And now, I believe, it's sitting somewhere closer to \$16,000. Mr. Speaker, like it's okay to pay out a big minimum wage, but then if you're going to turn around and take it away in taxes, that means people are just going to have

less money in their jeans anyway.

Another thing, every day we hear the member from Saskatoon Riversdale talk about health, and how terrible, how terrible our health situation is. Mr. Speaker, let's just take a look at what's happened to health since we were privileged to form government in 2007. What have we got? Nine hundred more doctors, 900 more physicians out there, 3,700 more nurses. How about all the new hospitals we have? I just happen to have it. A few things in here that . . . actually long-term care facilities. But you know, we have \$407 million for a psychiatric hospital in North Battleford, just opened. Just opened, Mr. Speaker. We have \$235 million built the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital.

These are great things: \$80 million to build the Dr. F.H. Wigmore Regional Hospital over in Moose Jaw; \$52 million to build the Roy Romanow Provincial Lab; 23.9 million to build the Humboldt District Health Complex; 5.2 million in planning funding is being provided for the La Ronge long-term care replacement; Prince Albert Victoria Hospital, a re-development; former Regina-Qu'Appelle long-term replacement project; and the Weyburn Hospital replacement.

Now when you compare that, when you compare that to the NDP's record, we're doing a lot for health. So you know, I don't quite know where the member from Saskatoon Riversdale, how she can keep on complaining about our Health when we have been working so hard to make health care one of the priorities within this government. And actually even in my own constituency, when I first was elected, there were only four physicians in Nipawin — four. We're at 12 physicians now.

We had the first long-term care facility being built since the Grant Devine days in the Carrot River Valley constituency. That's Newmarket Place in Tisdale. Mr. Speaker, this government believes in going to . . . [inaudible] . . . priorities, which is health, education, and things like that.

Anyway, then we have the member from Regina Lakeview who always complains about education, and I can't figure this one out either. We come out with the largest education budget that this province has ever had and we're looking after our children. I think that the education budget, if I remember right, it has gone up by 32 per cent, compared to only a 12 per cent increase in population in the schools.

You know, when we take a look at 40 . . . what is it, 44 brand new schools being built within the province. Forty-four new schools. Heck, Mr. Speaker, I can remember when my son was playing basketball and we went over to Porcupine Plain in that old school there, and the water was literally running through their roof. They had pails set up all over the school. Porcupine has a brand new school now.

And then we can go to Hudson Bay, where it was condemned because of mould. Mr. Speaker, what did the NDP do about that? Basically nothing. They tried to clean it a little bit. This government built a brand new school in Hudson Bay. So I'd really question, I'd really question the members when they sit there and complain about things like that.

Now we have the member from Regina Northeast who is the Agriculture critic. I'm wondering if he is going to follow his

leader's ideas and pay farmers to go organic. And maybe that's in their long-term agenda because if they all went organic, there would be less people going down the highways, less trucks going down the highways, and it would save on the highways. I don't know if that's what their long-term thing is.

But what really gets me is why, why would you have somebody like that telling farmers what to do? I have no problem if somebody wants to be an organic farmer. They can go ahead and do it. I've got no problem with that. But why would the government go out there and try and make decisions for farmers? But that's the typical NDP way.

[14:45]

Speaking of that, how far out of touch they are with farmers, the member from — or with rural Saskatchewan, really — the member from Regina Northeast was talking the other day about his electric car and how great his electric car was. He said a third of the people in Saskatchewan wanted to have electric vehicles. Now I kind of question where that came from because in the wintertime he said they work great. You know, he said you turn the heat on and the heat comes on right away.

And of course, you know, Mr. Speaker, it's a lot different when you're at where I'm at, 400 kilometres away from Regina. Now he has to drive a few blocks and he can come down here and just plug his car into the government's electricity and refuel it. But unfortunately I have to come from Carrot River. Now I can tell you, if I'm going to take off and start driving from Carrot River when it's 40 below, I can tell you the batteries in that car are going to maybe get me about as far as Tisdale before it's going to give up the ghost. But I guess if I put on a snow toboggan suit and didn't use the heater, I could maybe make it as far as Melfort. But that's how far removed from rural Saskatchewan that the NDP government is. They just don't understand, don't understand the things that we do in rural Saskatchewan.

You know, at one time the NDP had Saskatchewan farmers paying a tremendous amount of education tax on their property. And there were actually revolts back in those days. They just really didn't look after rural Saskatchewan whatsoever and the thing is, is they also didn't look after any of the highways out in rural Saskatchewan either. Mr. Speaker, that's one thing I was going to bring up.

I'm quite proud to announce that in our constituency . . . I'm going to back up a little bit and just talk about the constituency. We have a great tourism resource up there between snow toboggan trails, and we also have great fishing at Tobin Lake. Tobin Lake is world-renowned for its walleye, and they have tournaments up there every year. There's millions of dollars that come up there and go into that tournament.

Well the road going out to the resort village of Tobin Lake was in an absolute deplorable state, in a deplorable state. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to announce that this road is being built by this government. They're working on it this year; hopefully they'll get it finished, I believe, in probably 2021. That road is going to be finished to have all of our tourists come up there to Tobin Lake and to be able to go fishing.

But let's go back now. I just wanted to throw that in. I want to

talk a little bit about revenue sharing for rural Saskatchewan. You know, in Tisdale the revenue sharing has increased from \$304,805 to \$662,091, a 117 per cent increase. Nipawin's revenue sharing went from 414,501 to 900,000, a 117 per cent increase. The smaller towns are not forgotten either. Hudson Bay revenue sharing increased from 169,209 to \$295,025, a 74 per cent increase.

We've got a total operating funding for the North East School Division of \$54.3 million, plus a PMR [preventative maintenance and renewal] allocation of \$1.75 million — something that those school divisions have been asking for, for a long time.

Let's talk about some of the big things that have happened in the Carrot River Valley constituency. 2009, the Zenon Park école school project, 182,000. Nipawin addition to Central Park Learning Centre, 4.1 million, completed in 2015. The Hudson Bay School, I brought that up before, 17.68 million. Cumberland College got a new building in 2008 at the Nipawin campus. And in 2010, more funding for Cumberland College in Nipawin with federal knowledge infrastructure program of \$5 million. Then we've had various things — I'm sitting here looking at the time, Mr. Speaker; I have to continue on — but all these different things that are being put into our rural communities.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, now we know what he has said before, what he's on record as saying. He supports a carbon tax for this province, Mr. Speaker, which is devastating to our industries. People do not . . . Some people don't realize how much that carbon tax is going to cost. I figured it out on my car because I have to drive quite a few miles every year. I figured out just for my car alone, this year, this year it will be an extra \$300 on my gasoline bill. Just this year alone. And that's before the feds put it up even more. And that's only for my car. That doesn't include my wife's vehicle, any of our stuff around the farm, or any farmers.

And the farmers are going to get hit and big time because even though the Trudeau government claims that they won't charge them on their fuel, there's all the transportation; there's the fertilizer; there's all the crop care products out there that are going to cost a lot of money.

Now I'm kind of curious on the Leader of the Opposition. Is he going to go along with his federal . . . I know they voted the other day to support pipelines, but what about their federal leader? He's totally against pipelines. Is the federal leader going to wave the stick over them and make them change their mind on that? I haven't seen anything very ambitious come out of the opposition on the pipelines, which we need to help increase our budget so that next year it's not just going to be the right balance; we're going to be way up to the good, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we also talk about the Opposition Leader who brought out his fancy paper, his fancy paper that he never actually got around to figuring out what it was going to cost — \$2.5 billion a year, 2.5 billion. Where are they going to raise that money? Where are they going to raise that money? They're going to pull it out of thin air. They're just going to sit back there and hope, hope upon hope, that they will get money somehow.

The member from Athabasca likes whooping and hollering from across his place but he, he is one of the people that left all of our

infrastructure that we have to spend on in this province. Back when he was minister of Highways, Mr. Speaker, he wasn't fixing any of the roads in this province, which made it that we had to go back and we had to spend money to fix those roads because he wouldn't do it when he was minister of Highways, back in the former administration.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that our Minister of Finance has put together a great budget that is a well-balanced budget for the whole of this province and probably — how would we say this — one of the better budgets, one of the better budgets in all of Canada. And I definitely will be supporting the budget, Mr. Speaker, and I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to enter into this debate today to talk about the budget that was presented to us last week and to give some insights on this important day.

The government likes to say that the budget is balanced, Mr. Speaker, but the budget isn't balanced when it adds \$1.8 billion to debt this year. They've tripled the debt. They've doubled the take on the PST and flattened the economy. And their cuts are hurting our kids in the classrooms.

They like to talk about how there's record spending in health. Sure. They're patting themselves on the back, but the spending isn't keeping pace with what is needed. There's a drop in the bucket for the necessary spending on health capital. It's 3 per cent of what's needed for health infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. We don't see any smart front-end initiatives to get emergency department waits under control.

And as far as mental health goes, I'm proud to be part of a caucus with the first mental health and addictions critic and someone who has worked very hard — I'm talking about my colleague from Saskatoon Riversdale — has worked very hard to bring these issues to the forefront. There have been a number of concerns that have been brought forward and we had people in the legislature week after week after week in the fall session to share their stories. So I'm glad to hear that the government is listening to that part, but we are still catching up to other provinces. By no means are we leaders on this front, Mr. Speaker.

So let's go into some of this in a little more detail. So overall, the fact that the debt has tripled, Mr. Speaker, is very disappointing in a year when the government's going to say that they have found the right balance. The right balance under what circumstances, Mr. Speaker? We've increased the debt by 1.8 billion this year. It was 7.9 billion in 2009. It's going to be 23.1 billion in 2021 and is projected to be 26 billion in 2023. That's not strong fiscal management. There's no balance in a budget that piles on billions of dollars of new debt and puts our Crowns' futures at risk.

Year after year we've seen deficit after deficit from the Sask Party government. And their razor-thin surplus this year could easily be wiped out by supplementary estimates, as we see year after year that they've been unable to adequately account for the

extra money that's going to be needed in health utilization, in social services utilization. And the government comes in the middle of the year and asks for more money in the terms of supplementary estimates. And then we can see that this government . . . This budget could be wiped out, the surplus could be wiped out very quickly under these circumstances.

They've doubled their take on the PST and flattened the economy. Life is a lot more expensive now, Mr. Speaker. The average family is paying 778 more dollars in PST a year since 2015. Households are suffering. Housing markets are in the dumps with the highest numbers of foreclosures since the early '90s. Homeowners are struggling to make ends meet. There's been a 200 per cent spike in home foreclosures since the Sask Party formed government. People can't afford their houses, Mr. Speaker. If this doesn't say something about the cost of living increasing, I don't know what does.

There's no balance in a budget that keeps people out of work. We have a plan on this side of the House to create thousands of jobs through Renew Saskatchewan and I suggest that that is something that the members opposite will take a look at.

They're hurting our classrooms, Mr. Speaker. We heard about this at length today when the member from Regina Lakeview stood up and asked a number of questions in question period about these decisions that directly impact the kids in our classrooms. And we're talking about early childhood education right up to post-secondary. It's incredibly short-sighted. I heard on the radio this morning someone talking about it being short-sighted. And classrooms are still feeling the squeeze when they've already been starved of the resources they need and deserve.

This budget only adds 16 million to school operating funding, which is a drop in the bucket. Classrooms have been neglected during the boom times of record revenue that have been coming in. They were hit with a cut of \$54 million in 2017. At the same time, schools have grown by 7,000 students. Teachers are dealing with overcrowded classrooms, tight resources, and complex needs. And students are left without the supports they require, Mr. Speaker.

We've seen the Sask Party disrespecting crucial education partners like teachers and school boards. Sadly this budget is not working to repair the damage that's been done. And I think that everyone should look closely at what the per-capita funding per student is to see that this budget simply is not keeping up with the pressures, with cost pressures and population growth.

[15:00]

So we're talking about cuts that haven't been restored. Per-student funding is hundreds of dollars lower than it was before these cuts, which is putting incredible pressure on our classrooms, Mr. Speaker. We're calling for the Sask Party government to be honest with Saskatchewan people about the consequences of their budget choices, to invest where it counts, to make front-end investments, to scrap the PST on construction that has damaged the industry and the economy, and to invest in our classrooms and see these as an area to make smart investments because of the benefits that will come later on.

When we talk about the health budget in particular, Mr. Speaker, you'll know that I'm the critic for Health, so I've taken a keen look at the health budget and want to make some remarks specifically on that front. This budget represents the bare minimum of spending to be able to keep up with cost pressures. They're falling short of what's needed. When you take mental health out of the equation, we're actually seeing less than a 2 per cent increase in health dollars when we should be seeing a 4 or 5 per cent increase when you factor in population growth and cost pressures. These pressures include population growth. They include an aging population, wages and salaries, and increased utilization as well.

So they're falling short of what's needed. And this is a pattern, Mr. Speaker. It's routine behaviour that the government asks for more money for supplementary estimates. We can see it . . . or in special warrants for funding. It shows that the budget isn't balanced when they have to keep going back, asking for more money. And according to CIHI [Canadian Institute of Health Information] in 2017, when you compare Saskatchewan to the other provinces, Saskatchewan has the smallest per cent increase in health spending at 0.2 per cent per person growth of all provinces.

It's a drop in the bucket for spending on health capital, Mr. Speaker. They're spending 103 million on health infrastructure when there is an infrastructure deficit that has ballooned to \$3.3 billion, Mr. Speaker. That's 3.12 per cent of what's needed — 3 per cent. At this rate, how can they expect our health facilities to stay open? How can they expect that they won't be crumbling and have to close? They need this money in order to be able to be improved.

We are nowhere near keeping pace on health infrastructure, and government still isn't being transparent on this. Where is the priority list for infrastructure spending? Do they have one? Are they following that priority list? What's up next for builds and repairs? There's no transparency on this front.

We still haven't seen the long-term care facilities that were promised in the 2016 election. There's no money for Grenfell long-term care that was announced, so I guess that means that it's going to be a private build, Mr. Speaker, and that they haven't been listening to the folks who came to the legislature here to raise concerns about what this means for access and what it means for quality of care. And we don't see investments in the front end to get emergency department waits under control.

There's a \$1.6 million increase to the Connected Care strategy for a total of \$20.6 million. It looks like this money is going toward home care, Mr. Speaker. But last year they put 19 million of federal money into the Connected Care strategy, and what was the result? As the ministry officials shared with us at the Public Accounts Committee, wait times are similar or higher on all four measures that are used. They haven't come remotely close to realizing their goal of a 35 per cent reduction on wait times.

And this doesn't appear to be a priority, to get these costs under control. We aren't seeing the budget dollars going in that direction whatsoever, Mr. Speaker. It's their own goal and it's one they've adjusted repeatedly. First they wanted it to be down to zero waits. Then they asked for a 60 per cent reduction; they were trying to get there. Then they moved the goalpost again;

maybe we can get to 35 per cent. And they're not succeeding, Mr. Speaker. We're all suffering, waiting in emergency departments. Our families are suffering, our communities are suffering as a result of this government's inability to get this under control. They base these numbers on four sets of emergency department performance: how long you wait to see a doctor from when you arrive, how long you stay, whether you're admitted or not admitted, and then how long you wait for a bed if you are staying.

So this ministry's goal was to reduce ED [emergency department] waits by 35 per cent by March 31st. So how many days do we have left to get there? It's the 25th right now, so we have six days in order to be able to get to that goal. We are so far from getting back to that 2013-2014 baseline, Mr. Speaker. One point six million being added is a start. Home care keeps people close to home. It's one way to impact emergency department waits, but it's sadly not even close to being enough toward the effort to enhancing team-based care in our communities. Community supports are paramount. We need connected hospital care, comm care, and quality transitions.

So other areas that we talk about in terms of the health budget, Mr. Speaker, we see that autism funding increased the individualized funding from \$4,000 to \$6,000. This is good but it still only applies for diagnosed kids under six years old. So I know there are a number of folks who feel like they've been left out of the equation. They've come forward since the budget. We've had conversations with those folks as well, and it's really disappointing to see that it's such a small group of people that will benefit from this funding. There are a number of other models that other provinces are employing that folks on that side of the House should be looking at.

We're two years into the amalgamation of the Saskatchewan Health Authority. We were promised savings. We were promised millions of dollars of savings, 20 million at one point. Then they cut it down to 10 million last year. But we're still looking to see where those savings are going to materialize, Mr. Speaker, where we're going to see them. So I am still looking and hoping to see something from that because it sure puts people through a tremendous amount of change if we're not actually going to see any material benefit for that change.

There is funding toward an organ donor registry. But what about investing in donor physicians, as we heard a tiny bit about last year, Mr. Speaker, a proven, evidence-based way to increase the number of donors?

There is funding for the First Link program, which I know was a key initiative of the Alzheimer Society. It's a great initiative, helps folks get connected, helps family supports get put in place, and this should make a significant impact on families. I know this is what they were asking for. We're certainly happy to see that those supports will be in place and that families will have access to those resources, Mr. Speaker. I understand it's being spread throughout the different areas of the province now.

Health CBOs [community-based organization] are being offered 1 per cent this year to go into salaries. This is really an area that needs investment, that we have been calling for investment, Mr. Speaker. These folks provide critical supports and this is not enough, Mr. Speaker, for the critical supports that are being

provided here.

There's a funding increase to account for more doctors, nurses, and staff at the children's hospital in Saskatoon. This is certainly welcomed and required, Mr. Speaker. We know there are tremendous challenges with the current state of staffing right now. 1.4 million toward a Saskatoon hospice: again we've heard folks in the community calling for this, Mr. Speaker. 700,000 for a satellite dialysis unit to accommodate patients in Meadow Lake. 100,000 towards 24 physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and nurses in complete decongestive therapy for what will impact about 30,000 people with lymphedema in Saskatchewan. And the Sask Cancer Agency getting \$8 million in new funding to support oncology drugs and recruit additional oncologists.

When we talk about mental health, Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to see these targeted investments for mental health. Many of these areas are things that we have been calling for for several years, and folks in the community have been calling for. It's a start but we are so far behind what other provinces have been doing, Mr. Speaker. We've also called for the permanent mental health unit in Saskatoon, but funding provided will only offer a short stay unit of seven beds for a seven-day stay. There is federal money toward an opioid plan. The Sask Party government has folded crystal meth into this approach. We've heard from the minister but we haven't seen a concerted plan on behalf of this government. We haven't seen dollars matched, anything going into that from this government.

So there are many other areas that we need to see investments on, and after coming out of this time of record revenue it's so disappointing to see the areas that have been cut, Mr. Speaker. We've heard about some of those cuts today. I know my colleagues are going to spend a lot more time looking into each individual area, especially the areas that fall into their critic portfolios, to show the ways in which this government has squandered a decade of resource revenues, Mr. Speaker.

I'm prepared to say that I can't support the budget motion, and I'll be supporting the amendment that was moved by the member from Regina Rosemont, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Buckingham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to share some comments on the budget that was presented to us last Wednesday. This budget, I am very pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, is a balanced budget, balanced both fiscally and socially, a budget that completes a three-year plan to get back to balance.

And I want to say a sincere thank you to the Finance minister and the Premier for their leadership on this. And I also want to say thank you to our former Finance minister, Kevin Doherty, and former premier, Brad Wall, for getting the process started and making the tough decisions to get us started on getting back to balance.

Not only does this budget get us back to balance, but it does so with the right balance for Saskatchewan with key investments in health care, seniors, students, vulnerable families, among other things. Mr. Speaker, this budget contains no new taxes and no tax

increases and provides a surplus of 34.4 million.

But first, Mr. Speaker, before I get too deep into the budget, I want to say thank you to a few people that helped me to be here today. Mr. Speaker, I'm so blessed to have a family that is so supportive of me and my role as the MLA for Saskatoon Westview. I think that the one that sacrifices the most though is our spouses or partners. While we are here, Mr. Speaker, you know, they have to look after what might go on in our home. You know, you might get a foot of snow; they have to figure out a way to get that looked after. Might have a broken water line. Whatever it might be, they have to take care of it. And so they pay a price for us to have the privilege of serving in our constituencies.

Mr. Speaker, my wife and I have been married for over 35 years now, and I've been blessed to raise a family with her. Karen has always been the one that has been so strong in keeping the family together and for that I owe her a lot of gratitude. Karen and I have been blessed with three wonderful children, Deanna, Corey, and Kayla, and four great grandchildren, Bentley, Hayden, Ava, and Madden.

My oldest daughter Deanna works at Cosmo Industries in Saskatoon and lives in a group home there. Mr. Speaker, Deanna has the ability to show us the things in life that are really important, which is always family. My son Corey is married to Jade and have two children, Bentley and Hayden. Corey, at 31 years old, is a sergeant and commanding officer of the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] detachment in Kitscoty, Alberta. My youngest daughter Kayla is married to Lyndon Block, and they have two children, Ava and Madden. Kayla, at 29, is a certified financial planner with a CIM [chartered investment manager] designation and a fellow of the Canadian Securities Institute.

Mr. Speaker, I grew up on a farm near Shellbrook, I guess not that far away from our Premier actually, and I grew up there with three older brothers, Rod, Jim, and Walter. Unfortunately this summer we lost my brother older than me to cancer. Mr. Speaker, my parents that are Ervin and Pat I think have done a great job instilling a hard work ethic in our family.

[15:15]

And you know, my dad will be 98 years old in a few short weeks and I think had a very positive influence in my life growing up but also, you know, he's still a good source of knowledge for me today. And you know, having lived almost a century, he's seen a lot of different things. It's hard to imagine all the change he has seen in our province when you think about it. Being born in 1921, this legislature was only finished, completed in 1912 and so he has seen a lot of change. But one thing my dad has always said is he's so proud of his family and all of his children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say thank you to my constituency assistant, Sasha. You know, Sasha always keeps our office in a highly organized fashion and deals with constituents in a very timely manner. I also want to say thank you to Gwen Joa. Gwen stepped in while Sasha was gone for a year on a maternity leave, and Gwen picked up and ran the office for a year. And I'm very thankful for that.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank my constituency team of Kim Groff, Cameron Scott, Silas Dain, Gwen Joa, Gurpartep Kels, Sumith Priyashantha, and Rod Hiltz, who is actually out in Alberta right now helping a UPC candidate get elected in Calgary.

Mr. Speaker, there has always been so many people that help you throughout the year and if I didn't mention you, I apologize for that and I thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I also think it's important to thank my colleagues because all of them have worked collectively towards us getting back to balance, and I think that's so important that everybody's had a role in that. And I think, Mr. Speaker, we have a very strong Premier and a strong cabinet who has obviously made some excellent decisions on how to govern our province and balance the budget while making sure that Saskatchewan people get the services that they need and desire.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, they know that this is a good budget. You can hear it in their budget replies. And their questions during question period — hardly any on the budget actually — continually flip-flop. They say that we haven't spent enough and then, two minutes later, that we spent far too much. And so, you know, we always have to challenge them on their position.

They admit that our government has had record revenues to work with. And yes, revenues have increased significantly since 2007. And that's what happens, Mr. Speaker, when you don't drive business and investment out of the province like they did during their 16 years in government. And they still haven't learned, Mr. Speaker, that you need to be supportive of business if you want them to invest.

Mr. Speaker, they still support a federally imposed carbon tax on the province of Saskatchewan, a carbon tax that would devastate Saskatchewan's residents. Their leader, Mr. Speaker, has spoken at anti-pipeline rallies. And oil is a huge concern for the Western provinces, but specifically for us, Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, that is weak leadership, when they don't take a role to support Saskatchewan business. And if they had it their way, they'd be borrowing two and a half billion dollars a year for four years just to keep up with their promises that they made before. And imagine how far in debt we would be. Mr. Speaker, our government will stand with our Premier to fight a federally imposed carbon tax that would be devastating to our economy and Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Regina Rosemont said in his reply to the budget that we have doubled the PST. What a surprise for the people when they take them at their word and then they end up at the checkout counter and find out that actually the PST hasn't changed whatsoever. In fact, this budget has no new taxes or tax increases.

Mr. Speaker, we know that a lot of members opposite wish that they could form government. Recently their leader made a statement that they are just not ready to govern. And you know what? On this side of the House, we couldn't agree with them more on that.

But back to the member for Regina Rosemont's statement on the

PST doubling: how much credibility do you have when you misstate the true facts? If you ever hope to form government, you need to have credibility, and cherry-picking statistics or making statements out of context will not increase your credibility. And so we always have to correct their so-called facts to make sure that everyone gets the full picture.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is a balanced budget with a surplus of 34.4 million. Not only is this year's budget balanced, but there is a plan to keep it balanced for years to come. A budget that has no new taxes or taxes increased.

Mr. Speaker, something else that's in the budget that I think is really important is the tax credit for emergency responders for 3,000 per year. I want to personally thank the Premier and his cabinet for this decision. Mr. Speaker, in a lot of cases it costs emergency responders to volunteer their help. They use their own vehicles to get to the fire hall, and in almost every case, it costs them money to do that. And they could submit for that, they could submit those costs, but it would come out of a budget that they would . . . then be more limited to purchase emergency equipment that they need.

You know, it wasn't so long ago, Mr. Speaker, that I was a volunteer firefighter with the village of Borden, a community with a very busy highway running right through town. And I haven't forgot how dangerous our highways can be for first responders. And we need to thank those generous, brave souls for the service that they provide to our Saskatchewan residents. We all expect someone to show up when we call 911, and so giving them a tax credit is a great idea. Another way we can help emergency responders is to slow down to a safe speed and follow their directions. Responders are so often out on our highways in very poor road conditions, which can create a dangerous situation for all of those involved. Sometimes the thing that they would appreciate the most, Mr. Speaker, would be your foot on your brake.

Mr. Speaker, over the past decade, personal tax deductions have saved Saskatchewan residents \$610 million. Mr. Speaker, business tax rates in Saskatchewan are among the lowest in Canada and the highest small business tax threshold in Canada. Mr. Speaker, these decisions keep investment in Saskatchewan and have helped create over 71,000 new jobs in Saskatchewan since 2007. GDP [gross domestic product] has also grown by almost 20 per cent since 2007. Mr. Speaker, our government will continue to grow our economy and continue to create jobs in Saskatchewan.

Since 2007 our population has grown by more than 160,000 people, and a lot of those people came here from international destinations — 108,000 actually of them at last count. And our government will continue to support a strong immigration policy and keep striving to get the federal government to allow us as many new immigrants through the Saskatchewan immigrant nomination program, a program recognized as the best in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, February was a record month for job growth in Saskatchewan. Female employment, full-time employment, and overall employment all hit record highs for the month of February. Saskatchewan's population grew by 11,259 in 2018 for a total of 1,168,423. February was the seventh consecutive month

of job growth in Saskatchewan. And in other great news, The Conference Board of Canada predicts Saskatchewan's economy will grow by 2.2 per cent, ranking fourth in the country.

Mr. Speaker, in stark contrast to that, when the NDP were in government for 16 years, people left in droves due to lack of opportunity. But not only were people leaving, businesses were closing and had no confidence in their government of that day. From 1996 to 2007 the population dropped by 22,000 people and people were leaving for good reason, Mr. Speaker, but not because they wanted to. From 2000 to 2007 job creation was the worst in Canada and was actually half the national rate. I know, Mr. Speaker. I was one of those that had to go elsewhere to find a paycheque. And it's no wonder people were leaving as the government raised taxes 21 times in 16 years, including raising the PST four times and raising the gas tax twice.

Mr. Speaker, since we have had the privilege of forming government, Saskatchewan has had the longest sustained rate of growth in Canada with a population now of 1.17 million, an increase of over 160,000 people since 2007. Saskatchewan has had the third-best job growth rate since 2007.

Mr. Speaker, this government has made key investments within this balanced budget, and one of those key investments is in mental health and addictions support. The 2019-20 budget makes the largest investment in mental health and addiction services in Saskatchewan's history, to a total of 420 million . . . or 402 million pardon me, an increase of 30 million. The largest investment includes 13.7 million to support the new hospital in North Battleford. This includes funding for more than 140 beds to treat individuals with mental health and addictions challenges.

Mr. Speaker, this balanced budget includes an increase to K to 12 education of 26.2 million over last year and a total operating funding of 1.9 billion a year to Saskatchewan's 27 school divisions. In addition to classroom learning, school infrastructure investments will increase by over 20 million over last year to 95.6 million in the 2019-2020 budget. And this includes 3 million for planning projects for new major schools; 250,000 to determine the scope of a replacement school for St. Frances School in Saskatoon; 29 million for two consolidation projects in Weyburn and Rosthern; 55.9 million for preventative maintenance; 6.4 million for relocatables; and 1 million for school facility assessments.

Mr. Speaker, this government understands how important K to 12 education is, and that is why our government will continue to invest in education and that is why we have moved forward with 46 brand new or replacement schools and 23 major school renovations. Mr. Speaker, our government has also hired more than 925 teachers and 177 more support teachers since 2007. And K to 12 operating funding has increased by 34 per cent since 2007, compared to an enrolment increase of 13 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, for the record, the NDP during their time in government closed 176 schools, and from 2001 to 2007 the number of teachers dropped by 400. Mr. Speaker, the NDP also underfunded education, leading to property tax increases and tax revolts.

Mr. Speaker, while we are on the topic of education we should also maybe talk about post-secondary education investment. Our

government has increased operating and capital funding for post-secondary institutions by 53 per cent. And while the NDP were in government, funding increased by 20 per cent over 16 years. Mr. Speaker, our government understands the importance of education and will continue to make post-secondary education a priority in this province.

Mr. Speaker, after a lot of consultation by the Minister of Government Relations with municipal stakeholders, a new funding agreement has been brought forward. Revenue sharing is important to all municipalities. Cities, towns, villages, and rural municipalities have ever-changing needs within their communities, and revenue sharing is a stable source of revenue for many projects. Direct provincial supports for municipalities this year will total, for the coming year, at 437.1 million. This represents a 25.4 million or 6.2 per cent increase over 2018-19. Funding will be as follows: 161.3 million for urban municipalities, 71.7 million for rural municipalities, and 18.6 million for northern municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, since 2007, funding for municipal revenue sharing has nearly doubled. Additional key investments include 89.4 million in provincial infrastructure funding for the New Building Canada Fund; 25 million in provincial funding for the new Investing in Canada infrastructure program; 14 million for the municipal roads for the economy program; and 6.7 million for the urban connector program; 1.6 million for provincial infrastructure funding for the Clean Water and Wastewater program, which is actually winding down; and 1.4 million for the strategic partnership program. And all of these investments are important, Mr. Speaker, to keep our communities growing and support their infrastructure needs.

[15:30]

Mr. Speaker, our government is investing in highways in this balanced budget with one of the most important investments being around intersection safety. Mr. Speaker, I have driven professionally for probably between 2 and 3 million miles on highways in Canada. And I am proud of this government's investment in highway projects over the last 11 years. Saskatchewan was for so long the laughingstock of highways and the butt of so many jokes. No longer, Mr. Speaker. This year will mark the opening of the new Regina bypass. And as a professional driver, I can tell you that most people have no idea the treat that they are about to receive when it opens.

Mr. Speaker, not only will this be a benefit to the city of Regina, it will be a significant benefit to all traffic in the Regina area. The city of Regina will see an enormous benefit of taking traffic off of their streets. This is the largest infrastructure project in the province's history. It will be another positive step in building Saskatchewan's economy.

Mr. Speaker, other highway investments include an enhanced intersection-safety project which is a five-year, \$65 million project to improve safety and save lives. Mr. Speaker, Highways is also investing 7 million through the safety improvement program to reduce the frequency and severity of collisions. The 2019-20 balanced budget will see improvements to more than 60 intersections including turning lanes, lighting, clearing of snow lines, and the installation of rumble strips.

Mr. Speaker, this balanced budget also provides more than 60 million to begin, continue, or complete work on twinning or passing lanes. This budget also includes an investment of 121.3 million on repairing and upgrading highways, bridges, and culverts to 920 kilometres of highway.

Mr. Speaker, highways are a very important investment in our province and this government will continue to build our economy and bring more people to Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately my time allotted has expired and I won't be able to discuss all the other great investments that we have. But, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I will be supporting the budget and not the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise in the Assembly today here to speak a little bit about the 2019-2020 budget, and to perhaps talk about a few of the things that the member for Saskatoon Westview did not talk about. I think he covered most of it there, so he did a pretty good job . . . covered most of the topics there, but his time did elapse so we'll move on to some of the other things in the budget this year.

Mr. Speaker, if I could, just a few thank yous. And it won't be as long as it was last year when I had probably about half the speech was thank yous, but . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No. Yes, I've lost a lot . . . Yes, fewer friends, according to the member for Moose Jaw.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for serving in that capacity as the Speaker of the Assembly. I would like to thank my family, Mr. Speaker, my wife, Anita, and my stepkids Raven and Adler. Raven's wrapping up her time in New Zealand. She'll be coming back home in about three weeks or so, Mr. Speaker. And my stepson Adler who's working for a company in Swift Current based in the oil patch, he is raising a young 19-month-old son right now, our grandson Axel, who brings a lot of joy to our family.

My folks up at Melfort, the good constituency of Melfort, who have — they have a good member up there — Tom and Pat Hindley. My brother Taylor, my sisters Erica and Melissa, my niece Elizabeth, and I can't of course forget my Aunt Darlene who I think is one of two people who might be watching this back home right now and is a good supporter of the member for Melfort as well.

So people back in Swift Current, Mr. Speaker, my executive and my directors-at-large, my volunteers who help out on a regular basis. Of course, the constituency assistant who has served with me so well, Nola Smith who does great work in the MLA office on Central Avenue there in Swift Current, and her family, her husband Dave and their daughters, who have become very close friends of ours. And I want to thank Nola for the great work that she does in our constituency office.

And last but not least, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the good people of Swift Current who, I guess it was just over a year or so ago that they put their trust in me to serve as their MLA. And I want to thank the folks in Swift Current who have been very supportive of myself and my family and have been just a good

source of inspiration as I carry on in this role.

Mr. Speaker, if I could, before we get into the budget here, when we talk about the 2019-2020 budget which, as we've said, is the right balance for the people of Swift Current and the people of Saskatchewan, I'd like to thank a few people: of course the Premier; and the Finance minister, the member for Humboldt; and the caucus and the cabinet who are all parts of this year's budget.

But I think we need to go back a couple of years and thank the previous premier, my predecessor, the former MLA for Swift Current and former premier, Mr. Brad Wall, for his leadership at that time, as well as the former Finance minister, Kevin Doherty, as well as the caucus and the cabinet of the day — many of whom are sitting here on this side of the Chamber right now — for the difficult decisions they made a couple of years ago as they talked about getting on a three-year plan to get back to balance. And we'll talk a little bit about it this afternoon. Some of my colleagues have already spoken about it, about the reason why this is a significant achievement for us and why we've been looking forward to this budget, the 2019-2020 budget.

So if I could, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about the 2019-2020 budget. As I said before, it is a balanced budget with no new taxes and no tax hikes, Mr. Speaker. And in addition there's also a . . . there's projected to be a small surplus this year, and additional surpluses in the years ahead. And this is important for a number of reasons, Mr. Speaker, and the reason it is important is because it allows for some sustainability.

Now if we talk about some of the major investments into the budget this year, Swift Current I would argue, my community, my constituency, had the opportunity to benefit in years previous from some of those budgets. We've had a number of fairly significant capital infrastructure projects in Swift Current such as a couple of new schools there, École Centennial and All Saints Catholic School, room for over 1,000 kids, and that school opened a few years ago. That was very significant. Of course The Meadows long-term care facility, and that was a very, very important project for us, Mr. Speaker. That long-term care facility was one of the first ones that was done in our province and was done under a P3 model which has been very successful, and is a cutting-edge, top-of-the-line health care facility, long-term health care facility, in our community, with more beds than what we had before.

Our previous three long-term care facilities in Swift Current had approximately 194 beds, and as the population ages and the city of Swift Current serves not just the community itself but a surrounding area of Swift Current in southwest Saskatchewan, we found the need to increase the number of beds in that particular facility. So in The Meadows long-term care facility is 225 beds, and it's well staffed by some great people there that provide some outstanding services to the people of Swift Current and area.

Previous investments, Mr. Speaker. You know, these are important to talk about because we've had some significant investments on highways in and around Swift Current. The No. 1 Highway had a . . . No. 1 and 4 Highway had a significant traffic safety improvement project and intersection improvements a number of years ago. That's improved safety.

We've put in some significant investments into the No. 4 Highway — a truck climbing lane at Saskatchewan Landing, which used to be located in the constituency but is now outside. But that was a very, very important investment for us. We heard from a number of people about the importance of safety and improving safety at the Saskatchewan Landing and Highway 4, north of Swift Current.

There's been some work done on the Highway 4 south of Swift Current, as we get more and more of that particular stretch of highway completed, closer towards the Canada/US [United States] border, and that work continues on Highway No. 4.

Mr. Speaker, there were some investments into social services in previous years. A couple of years ago, five new housing development units in Swift Current; as well, an additional six units which are under construction. There's about half a million dollars worth of work in those particular investments.

Just a couple of months ago, Mr. Speaker, earlier this winter the Minister for Rural and Remote Health — the member for Yorkton — and myself had the opportunity to cut the ribbon on the new permanent heliport for the Cypress Regional Hospital in Swift Current, Mr. Speaker, \$425,000 investment. And as I understand it, the heliport at the Cypress Regional Hospital is one of the busier heliports in the province because of the large area it serves and also the nature of work that takes place in and around southwest Saskatchewan.

There was some funding — I should go back — into the Natural Wonders Early Learning Centre, close to a million dollars in that particular investment in previous years, Mr. Speaker. Speaking of which, back in December this government, the Minister of Education announced an additional 150 new child care spaces across the province and the community of Swift Current. We benefited from that. There'll be an additional 30 new child care spaces in our community as a result of that investment, which is important for the parents and families of Swift Current and southwest Saskatchewan.

Revenue sharing, Mr. Speaker. For a long time we've heard from municipalities about . . . And this dates back to prior to 2007, back to the NDP opposition days when they were in government. But we heard from municipal leaders the need for a significant and a predictable revenue-sharing formula. And we've been able to deliver that predictable revenue-sharing formula, Mr. Speaker. We've done that for the past 10 years and revised it a bit in this particular budget year.

In the 2019-2020 budget, Mr. Speaker, Swift Current's share of revenue sharing will be just over \$3 million, and that is a very, very large number, Mr. Speaker. If you think about it, it is an about 130 per cent increase in revenue sharing compared to what they used to get, about 1.3 million back in 2007. So that is a large amount and a good amount of funding to the city of Swift Current for the work they do. So those are a few of the previous investments in years gone by to the community of Swift Current.

This year, Mr. Speaker, we're seeing some good investments into other communities around the province, other communities who have some needs. Communities such as the city of Weyburn, which will be receiving a much-needed hospital in their community, and that is well deserved. Communities such as

Moose Jaw, which is getting some new schools, as I understand it, which were lobbied for on a regular basis by their MLAs, the MLAs for Moose Jaw North and Moose Jaw Wakamow, who did fantastic work lobbying on behalf of their constituents. And they will be benefiting from some new schools in the city of Moose Jaw.

Meadow Lake, Mr. Speaker, the community of Meadow Lake in northwest Saskatchewan is getting a new long-term care facility. I talked about Swift Current's long-term care facility, our new facility we got a few years ago, and how important that was to the people of Swift Current and southwest Saskatchewan. And I know that when that particular facility opens in Meadow Lake, it is going to be an absolute gem for the people of northwest Saskatchewan, providing the care that those folks deserve.

Mr. Speaker, in the 2019-2020 budget we're going to talk a bit about some of the major investments that were part of this budget. And if I could, Mr. Speaker, I'll talk about a few particular areas here. Some of my colleagues have touched on some of these already, but there's others that I think are worth mentioning again.

My colleague from Saskatoon Westview talked a bit about the investment into mental health. And that is a major, major investment for our government, Mr. Speaker, an additional \$30 million this year, a total of \$402 million towards mental health and addictions service. That is the largest-ever investment into mental health and addictions in Saskatchewan's history.

And that, Mr. Speaker . . . You think about some of the recent announcements that have been made, whether it was a little over, about three weeks ago or so, the grand opening of the new Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford, which is the single-largest investment in mental health in our province's history, the grand opening on March 8th. A 284-bed facility that replaces the old 156-bed facility up in North Battleford.

On that particular day, Mr. Speaker, I actually wasn't able to join the Premier and the ministers of Health and a number of my colleagues up there in North Battleford because I was in Swift Current, in my constituency, proud to announce the kickoff or the official opening, I guess you will, of Swift Current's version of the community resource teams. And we have a number of those that are being launched around the province. I think there's about eight of those will be opened up across Saskatchewan.

And in the case of Swift Current, it's a seven-person community response team or resource team there, Mr. Speaker. And what that team does, what that CR [community resource] team does, is it takes a new approach to providing mental health in Swift Current and southwest Saskatchewan. And I know some of the folks who are part of that team, and they are good, hard-working, long-time members of the community of Swift Current. And I know that when I talked to them that Friday in my constituency, they were happy. They were very happy about that announcement. They were excited about the opportunities to kind of approach things from a different perspective and in terms of being able to offer mental health supports.

[15:45]

There's always more work to do, Mr. Speaker. You'll hear us say

that on many occasions, because we never say that the work is done, and that is something that we need to continue to work on. But it is important that we talk about the significant investment into mental health and addiction services across Saskatchewan. On top of what I talked about earlier, you know, we also have three new rapid access to addiction medicine clinics in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert; more money to train and recruit health care professionals; and funding for 18 new mental health walk-in counselling clinics.

Speaking of health care, Mr. Speaker, we could talk a bit about the children's hospital, which is on time and on budget and is about 92 per cent complete. That will open later on in 2019. And as you may recall, Mr. Speaker, this is something that we talked about and campaigned on prior to the 2007 election, and something that we thought that the people of Saskatchewan, the families of Saskatchewan, and particularly the children of Saskatchewan deserved, was a dedicated children's hospital located in Saskatoon. And of course, sponsored there in part with a large donation from a well-known businessman, not just in Saskatchewan but across Canada and I dare to say North America, but Jim Pattison. And we'd like to thank the Pattison Foundation for their commitment to the children's hospital in Saskatoon, which will open this fall and provide great care to the families across Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, on top of those particular investments, there's been some significant highways investments over a number of years, and that continues this year in the new Highways minister's budget. She has talked about some of the work that is being done there, \$13 million in the first of a five-year \$65 million enhanced intersection safety program, which I think will benefit over 60 intersections in our province to improve signage, sight lines, lighting, and just overall safety in a number of these intersections in and around southwest Saskatchewan. I think some of those dollars may be targeted to No. 1 Highway in the Cypress Hills constituency near Gull Lake.

There's some money being spent on more twinning and passing lanes. About \$60 million, Mr. Speaker, across the province will also improve safety for Saskatchewan drivers. And I've had a chance to travel not only some of the newly twinned highways but particularly some of these highways that have the passing lanes. The ones that I am most familiar with is on Highway 7 between Rosetown and the city of Saskatoon. And those passing lanes on that particular highway are very, very important, I think, and have done a lot to help improve safety in our province, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue to do that because we heard that from the people of Saskatchewan. The drivers have said that's something that they wanted to see done.

Vulnerable families, Mr. Speaker. We've made some significant investments there. Foster families, for example. It was announced in this 2019-2020 budget that families who complete their training to increase their caregiver skills will receive up to \$500 more per month per child. And I had an opportunity back in October at an appreciation banquet to speak to some of the folks in Swift Current and southwest Saskatchewan who are foster parents. And, Mr. Speaker, I had a chance to meet people who are new foster parents — they'd been foster parents for maybe a year or two — and others who have been foster parents for decades. And their commitment to improving the lives of children in Saskatchewan is just absolutely phenomenal. So I

think it's important that we help provide some additional funding for those folks for the good work they do.

Autism individualized funding. Mr. Speaker, this is something we were lobbied for, for a number of years, and we have always said that, as the funding would allow, we would contribute to this particular project. And you'll have noticed in the 2019-2020 budget, Mr. Speaker, that that funding will be increasing from 4,000 to \$6,000 annually for each child with autism under the age of six. Again more work to do, but at least we are making steps towards that and making some significant investments for the families of autistic parents across Saskatchewan.

Funding for people with disabilities. Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on. There was an increase into the Saskatchewan assured income for disability program, more funding for residential and day programming. I've talked about the children's hospital, Mr. Speaker.

I perhaps glanced over and didn't mention when I was talking about highways, but the Regina bypass, again another project that is improving safety and traffic flow in and around Regina and is on time and on budget. I have had a chance to tour it a little bit earlier back in the fall and see some of the work that was done on the east side of Regina. And just the amazing amount of work that that has done to improve safety because that's what we were hearing from, Mr. Speaker, we're hearing from the people and the constituents that were contacting their MLAs in that area about the important work that needed to be done to improve safety, and that's what the Regina bypass will do. And it will open in the fall of 2019 on time and on budget, Mr. Speaker.

New money for . . . Planning dollars for the Victoria Hospital in Prince Albert. I've spoken about Weyburn. More cell towers across Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, including some in southwest Saskatchewan. I was driving in today and I actually dropped a call, and so hopefully I think that maybe perhaps that area may be up for a new cell tower.

Mr. Speaker, this is all within a balanced budget. And what's important, Mr. Speaker, is the reason that we've focused on a balanced budget is you have to be able to make these decisions and make these investments in a long-term sustainable manner. And that's why we have focused so hard and made some very difficult decisions. Believe me, Mr. Speaker, these were not easy decisions.

And I'm sure that, you know, I've heard from constituents of mine in Swift Current; I'm sure other members across the province have also heard from their constituents in their ridings about perhaps they haven't agreed with all the decisions that we have made. But we've tried to make these decisions with the long-term vision that we want this province to be the best place in Canada for a person to live and raise a family and establish their careers. And I think if we're able to do things like provide these sorts of programs and services but do it in a long-term sustainable manner, I think that's what the people of Saskatchewan would appreciate.

I forgot to mention, Mr. Speaker, and I do want to get this on the record, this is also another important investment: the \$3,000 tax credit for volunteer first responders. We have thousands of people, Mr. Speaker, that provide that service across our province

and particularly in rural communities. And I just want to thank them for the good work they do because that is just a small token of our appreciation towards what they do.

Mr. Speaker, I think I don't have a lot of time left, but I just want to say it's important that we do this in a long-term sustainable manner. You have to have a plan, Mr. Speaker, and not everybody has a plan. The members opposite don't really have a plan. You heard a little bit about it earlier today. You know, the member for Fairview was up talking about don't like increasing debts, about we don't spend enough but you've taxed too much, but you're not taxing enough, everything's being neglected. And, Mr. Speaker, couldn't be further from the truth.

Mr. Speaker, it's easy to . . . You know what? Sometimes being in this Chamber and listening to social media or traditional media or anywhere, it's kind of like listening to the post-game show after a Rider game, and particularly after a loss, because all the armchair quarterbacks come out, Mr. Speaker. And it's usually pretty tame after a Rider win, but after a loss, all of the armchair quarterbacks come out. And you know, I think we've all been an armchair quarterback from time to time, but some are armchair quarterbacks more regularly than others.

And it's easy to criticize, Mr. Speaker. It's easy to sit there on the couch at home and phone up the radio show and say, well I wouldn't have done that. And you know, well what would you have done? Well I would have started the backup quarterback or the third-string, or we would have started somebody else at running back, or maybe would have run some, you know, zone defence instead of a man-to-man coverage.

But it's pretty easy to say that after the fact, Mr. Speaker. Or sometimes what we'll hear is, they'll just say, well we would have scored more points than the opposition. Well how would you do that? Well you know, Mr. Speaker, you have to have a plan. And we don't hear that from the members opposite. We really don't hear a plan as to how they're going to do that in a long-term, sustainable fashion. You can't just be an armchair quarterback all the time. The last time, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite, when they were the quarterback, they didn't turn out so well. Sacked a lot of times, Mr. Speaker. Took a loss on the play, kind of going back towards the end zone, Mr. Speaker.

Anyways, Mr. Speaker, I think I've kind of surpassed my time, but I just want to wrap up by saying that you can't always be an armchair quarterback. If you want to be a government, you actually have to put a plan forward to the people of Saskatchewan, a long-term, sustainable plan, which is what the 2019-2020 budget is. It's the right balance, Mr. Speaker, for the people of Saskatchewan, and the right balance for a province for the years going forward.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will wrap up by saying this: I unfortunately will not be supporting the ridiculous amendment from the members opposite. However, I will support the great budget from the Minister of Finance, the member for Humboldt. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Lumsden-Morse.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a

great honour and a privilege to rise and speak in this beautiful historic place in support of this great balanced budget and on behalf of a government that has a plan to keep future budgets balanced.

But first, Mr. Speaker, there are some people who richly deserve my thanks. Mr. Speaker, we are all here to serve our constituencies, as well as the best interests of the province as a whole. And, Mr. Speaker, I thank my constituents, the great, hard-working people of Lumsden-Morse. Mr. Speaker, they are stalwart Saskatchewan people, people, Mr. Speaker, who work on farms and ranches and small businesses and government agencies or Crowns and some for larger companies as well. They're productive, Mr. Speaker. They don't complain very much. They mostly keep their heads down and keep on working and they're the kind of people, that salt-of-the-earth people, Mr. Speaker, that keep Saskatchewan the best place to live, work, and to raise a family.

Mr. Speaker, these stalwart Saskatchewan people have sent me to this great, historical place to work on their behalf and on behalf of the province that we all love so much. And, Mr. Speaker, they've done so five times now; I've had the privilege of serving here for nearly 20 years. I can't say I've enjoyed every single minute of it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but overall it has seemed like more of an honour and a privilege than a job. And certainly it's the greatest honour ever bestowed upon me.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my constituency exec, some of whom have been my political partners since the 1970s, but most of whom have joined us much later than that. And they are committed volunteers who do the behind-the-scenes constituency work that enable me to do the work of the province. These volunteers in each of our constituencies, unsung heroes, enable all of us to be here. Mr. Speaker, I want to extend a special thank you to my constituency assistant, Terry Lynn Carefoot. Terry Lynn is competent and courteous and excels as the first point of contact in my constituency for those with inquiries of any kind. And, Mr. Speaker, my constituency and the province could not be better served.

Last but not least, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my family. Without the help and support of our families, it would be very difficult for any of us to be here. My wife, Linda, a true life partner for forty-seven and a half years now, Mr. Speaker, is my biggest fan and strongest supporter in what I do here, and she always has been through all of the many things that we've done together through our married lives. Through thick and thin, she's always been my little rock who recently has nursed me back from a pretty dismal state of health to the picture of health, vigour, and virility that you see standing before you today, Mr. Speaker.

Our three children, Stephanie, Alison, and Lee, are also great supporters, great supports to both of us. And we are very proud of the outstanding people that they have become: Stephanie, the CEO [chief executive officer] of her own growing company in Ontario, Mr. Speaker; and Alison, vice-president and chief of staff of a national private sector trade association; and Lee is CEO of our family farming corporation.

Now to the budget, Mr. Speaker, the right balance for Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, for as long as I can remember, the NDP standard lines have held their party up as protectors of those

less able to help themselves. Mr. Speaker, comparing the records of their government to our Saskatchewan Party government simply does not support that contention on any social issue. Mr. Speaker, the spending of our government in this budget and the smart programming that our ministers have provided for health, mental health, children in classrooms, vulnerable families, and persons with disabilities not only surpasses what little the NDP did in those years, in those 16 years, but puts them to shame, Mr. Speaker, and dismembers their contention that they are friends of those less fortunate. The budget continues our government's smart allocation of funding to these areas as it should, Mr. Speaker.

[16:00]

Mr. Speaker, the budget is a balanced budget, and it's the right balance for Saskatchewan. The budget is the right balance to keep our economy strong. It contains no new taxes or no tax increases. It delivers increased support for children in classrooms and vulnerable families and persons with disabilities. It takes important investments in infrastructure in both urban and rural Saskatchewan. The budget makes record investments in mental health and highway safety. It carefully balances responsible government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, spending with investments in vital government services in order to achieve a balanced budget that is affordable and sustainable now and into the future. It's a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker, where revenue exceeds expenditures. The budget will keep Saskatchewan strong and will keep our economy strong. It's the right balance for Saskatchewan.

Mental health and addictions spending in this budget represents the largest ever investment in mental health addiction services at \$402 million, Mr. Speaker, up \$30 million from last year. Mr. Speaker, that new spending will provide over 140 beds for mental health and addictions treatment; three new rapid access to addiction medicine clinics in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker; \$1.4 million to recruit and train more health care professionals to treat crystal meth and opioid addictions; and funding for 18 new mental health walk-in counselling clinics.

About a year after the tragic accident involving the Humboldt Broncos bus crash, the Minister of Highways' new initiatives for the 2019-20 budget involves spending that will make our highways even safer, Mr. Speaker, including \$13 million as the first step of a five-year, \$65 million enhanced intersection safety program that will improve signage, sightlines and lighting, and safety features like rumble strips at intersections throughout the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and \$60 million for twinning and passing lane projects that will also improve safety on Saskatchewan highways. 1.1 million more for drug-impaired driving detection training for police.

With new funding, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for children in the classrooms, the Minister of Education will exceed what the NDP have been asking for with \$1.9 billion in operating funding for the school divisions, an increase of more than \$26 million over the last year. This budget increases school division funding while education property tax rates remain unchanged.

Consolidation and replacement of St. Pius and Argyle Schools in Regina; funding for a new joint-use school to replace Sacred Heart, St. Mary, Empire, and Westmount schools in Moose Jaw;

funding to plan the replacement of St. Frances School in Saskatoon; \$29 million for ongoing construction of new schools in Rosthern and Weyburn — always more to do, Mr. Speaker, but these investments are very positive for K to 12 education.

For vulnerable families, Mr. Speaker, foster families who complete training to increase their caregiving skills will receive up to \$500 per month more per child. This will go a long way to make our foster homes even better and safer, Mr. Speaker. The autism individualized funding benefit will increase by 50 per cent from 4,000 to \$6,000 annually for each child with autism under the age of six. Increased funding for third party agencies that deliver services to children and families, Mr. Speaker, will also be included.

Our government has done a lot for persons with disabilities, Mr. Speaker, and this budget continues this important work with a \$6.3 million increase for the Saskatchewan assured assistance income for disability, or SAID program, Mr. Speaker; increased funding for private service homes and third party agencies that provide services for persons with intellectual disabilities; \$3.5 million to transition youth with intellectual disabilities to adult disability services, Mr. Deputy Speaker; and \$2.6 million to provide residential and day programming services to high-needs adults who urgently require services. New funding of \$500,000 will continue to improve access to respite supports for families caring for adult children with intellectual disabilities.

Our government continues our strong commitment to infrastructure improvements in the province, Mr. Speaker, with \$2.7 billion for infrastructure investment including the Crown corporations; completion of the new Jim Pattison Children's Hospital in Saskatoon; completion of the Regina bypass; 12 million to begin construction of a new long-term care facility to replace the Northland Pioneers Lodge in Meadow Lake; 2.5 million for preconstruction design of a new Victoria Hospital in Prince Albert; 2.5 million for the planning and design of a new hospital in Weyburn; 41 new SaskTel cellular sites this year as part of a two-year initiative to add 100 new cellular sites in smaller communities across Saskatchewan; funding to repair and improve 1000 kilometres of highway, Mr. Speaker. Municipal infrastructure funding exceeds \$229 million in this budget, an 11 per cent increase from last year.

Mr. Speaker, the word “dismalism,” Mr. Speaker, I don't think . . . That must not be a word, Mr. Speaker, because I tried to look it up. “Dismalism” — I can't find it anywhere, Mr. Speaker. But if thesauruses ever attempt to describe the NDP, this single new word, “dismalism,” would be the most concise, descriptive, and accurate definition of the NDP. Everywhere they are government, the results, both economic and social, are the same — dismal.

Mr. Speaker, this budget not only provided more for social programs that I have pointed out but also continues our government's programs that support investment and job creation. And, Mr. Speaker, people need to remember that business investment is the only way to create real, sustainable jobs. The business investment that we attract pays for the social programs that are important, particularly for those of us less advantaged.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to compare the records of our government so far in our first 11 years with the

last 16 years of NDP government. Mr. Speaker, since 2007 our population under our Saskatchewan Party government has grown by 160,000 people. Saskatchewan has the longest rate of sustained growth in Canada, now with a population of 1.17 million people, Mr. Speaker. Under the NDP in their last term in office, population dropped by 22,000 people from 1996 to 2007.

We have the third-best job creation record in Canada since 2007. The NDP record during their time in office is the worst job creation record in Canada from 2000 to 2007, at just half of the average national rate of job growth.

Saskatchewan under our government, Mr. Speaker, has the lowest PST of any province in Canada with a PST. A family of four in Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, pays no income tax on their first \$50,495 of income, the highest tax-free threshold in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, you know, they heckle, Mr. Speaker. They don't like to hear their own record. They don't want to hear their own record, Mr. Speaker. What does that say about them? What does that say about their intentions if they're ever government again? They'll do the same thing again. There are people over there who have been around long enough to remember that these things are true. And they're not very proud of it, so they try to drown me out with their heckling from the front row over there. But it won't work. It won't work. Hansard picks this up. The people of the province will be watching on television because I'm quite a draw.

And during that time, during that time when they were in office, they raised taxes 21 times in 16 years, including raising the PST four times and the gas tax twice.

In health care, Mr. Speaker, in our time in office we've acquired more than 900 more doctors and 3,700 more nurses. Under the NDP government, Saskatchewan lost 450 nurses and 173 doctors just between 2001 and 2006 alone.

We have among the shortest surgical wait-lists in Canada right now, Mr. Speaker, under our government. During the NDP years, all 16 of them, they had the longest surgical wait times in Canada.

We have doubled investments in hospital projects, including the new children's hospital in Saskatoon and new hospitals in Moose Jaw and North Battleford. What did they do, Mr. Speaker? They closed 52 hospitals in this province.

On behalf of seniors, our government has opened 15 new long-term care facilities for seniors. The NDP closed 1,200 long-term care beds. We have tripled the seniors' income plan benefit from \$90 to \$270 a month. Under their watch, there was no increase to the seniors' income plan benefit for 16 years.

In education, Mr. Speaker, we have moved forward with 46 brand new or replacement schools and 23 major school renovations. They closed 176 schools in this province. We've provided 925 more teachers and 177 more student-support teachers since 2007. But from 2001 to 2007, under the NDP, the number of teachers dropped by 400. We have increased K to 12 operating funding by 34 per cent since 2007 compared to an enrolment growth of 13 per cent. Under the NDP, they underfunded K to 12 education leading to significant education property tax increases and tax revolts.

In post-secondary education, Mr. Speaker, we increased operating capital funding for post-secondary institutions by 53 per cent in 11 years. Increased funding under the NDP for post-secondary institutions by just 20 per cent over 16 years, just over 1 per cent per year for them, Mr. Speaker.

Child care spaces, our government has provided 7,116 new child care spaces since 2007. That's a 76 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker, in child care spaces provided this government since 2007. Under the NDP, just 2,856 new child care spaces in 16 years. That's fewer than 180 spaces per year.

In funding for municipalities, Mr. Speaker, we have increased revenue-sharing funding to municipalities by 98 per cent since 2007. Total investment of over \$2.6 billion compared to their last 11 years of 818 million. We have provided 1.7 billion or 205 per cent more to municipalities. The NDP cut nearly \$500 million out of municipal revenue sharing during their time in office.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Minister of Finance, treasury board, the good people in the Ministry of Finance, as well as each and every minister in this great government, all working under the leadership of our Premier to create this landmark budget that is a balanced budget and a budget that facilitates a strong economy while funding health, education, and our social programs at unprecedented levels. This is a balanced budget that will continue to support our AAA credit rating.

This is a budget, Mr. Speaker, that is balanced despite unfair federal Liberal policies that take equalization payments from us while at the same time have botched trading relationships with our largest trading partners and propose to pass Bill C-69 that will make the building of any future pipelines an untenable proposition. On top of all that, they will impose a punitive and ineffective carbon tax on April 1st.

[16:15]

With our own federal government working against us, Mr. Speaker, a loss of \$1.2 billion in resource revenues, only a small portion of which has been replaced to date, this is a great budget. This three-year project to get back to balance after the sudden loss of \$1.2 billion of resource revenue, all culminating in this balanced budget, has been an epic struggle and a defining moment of victory for our government and for the province of Saskatchewan.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I support the motion and this great budget, and I will not be supporting the ill-conceived amendment of the NDP opposition. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and God bless Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Nerlien: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll just say ditto to the words from the member from Lumsden-Morse. I couldn't agree more with everything that he said, and he spoke most eloquently, as he usually does.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll just take a minute to say thank you to my family for their support in this role. I'm very, very honoured to rise in this House and to attend on behalf of the constituents of

Kelvington-Wadena, and I truly appreciate my family's support and certainly the support of my constituents in this place.

I want to thank my constituency assistant, Chris, for her outstanding work in the office back home, and truly appreciate all that she does in working with our constituents and being very, very responsive to their questions, inquiries, concerns, and issues. And I think that's an extremely important role on our behalf.

I want to take this opportunity as well to thank the executive on my constituency association who are very, very supportive and have done a yeoman's effort in building the constituency membership. But also we've engaged a number of young people on our executive and I think that's particularly important, and I'm very, very pleased to have some outstanding young people engaged in the constituency efforts.

And I do want to say thank you to my colleagues, especially the ones that are closest to me in my offices because they keep it light and they challenge each other and they certainly challenge me, and I think we're all better for it. And I'm really, really pleased to have such a great group of people to work with every single day, and I truly appreciate that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to just bring to mind when we look out in this Chamber and remember that this particular building I think the Chamber was opened in January of 1912. And I do wonder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the time since that date — now the minister from Cannington, or the member from Cannington, may have been there, but I was not — but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wonder over the years since then what the nature of some of the budget debates might have been, and some of the challenges that this province has faced over the years and the incredible effort that must have gone into facing those challenges. And I think in particular the war years, World War I, World War II, obviously, and also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the dirty thirties and obviously you know, there were certain periods in history, the wet years of the '50s and of the '70s again.

And I think too, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the incredible infrastructure build-out that occurred in the '60s and the challenges that ministers of Finance might have been dealing with at that time. And I think we truly have to appreciate the effort that goes into building a budget and the vision that goes into building a budget.

If we go back again to the earliest days, I think it's important to bring to mind — because I'm going to come back to this a little bit later — but I think it's important to bring to mind that the federal Liberals actually interfered in the governance of Saskatchewan before Saskatchewan was a province because they actually appointed sir Walter Scott as the first premier. There was a time when Sir Frederick Haultain was actually proposing that we have the province of Buffalo, and you've probably heard that term relatively lately, which would have been the combined provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. And Sir Wilfred Laurier, the prime minister of the day, didn't particularly care for that idea. Chances are he maybe first saw that Saskatchewan and Alberta would be a pretty imposing province as one. And he took the liberty of saying that we're not going to do that, and he appointed sir Walter Scott as the first premier.

And I think, you know, we've obviously seen that same interference in the '80s. I was a banker during the introduction of the National Energy Program and I can tell you that that was an incredibly devastating time for the people of Saskatchewan and Alberta. And that was the first Trudeau, and now obviously we have the second Trudeau and all of the issues that we're facing with him. And I'll come back to that as well in a minute.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think though all of us here, certainly on this side of the House, recognize that when we walk up those steps in the front and we put this pin on in the morning, I think we fully recognize and appreciate the solemn responsibility that we have to our constituents. And I think, you know, I think that we respect the input from constituents, but I really, truly believe that they have an appreciation for the difficulty that we have year after year in looking forward and trying to put together a budget that responds to their needs and aspirations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's important to note that the budget process is a long, long process. It essentially has already begun for next year, and we play that out through a number of different ways. Obviously the stakeholder engagements are ongoing all the time. There are initiatives that come directly out of ministries. Obviously there are committees that are meeting with various interest groups. And then as those things progress, they obviously go before treasury board.

And I take this opportunity to say thank you to the members of treasury board who do an incredible amount of work throughout the year. And they truly are the guardians at the gate. I guess I could . . . I have great respect for the work that treasury board does, and then of course the Minister of Finance and the Finance ministry, the senior officials and the work that they do.

This is a very long process. This is not something that happens on the back of a napkin. It takes a lot of time, a lot of energy from a lot of people to get through all of the line items and the literally hundreds of position papers that come forward from the various agencies and ministries to get to the point of a budget. And certainly then once it's gone through that, a lot of those things come back to committees and then obviously on to cabinet.

And I think someone mentioned the other day — might have been the Premier or the Minister of Finance — I think it's really, really interesting when they pointed out that the easy decisions are easy. You either do it or don't do it — very simple, very straightforward. Where it gets difficult, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is when you have really, really important needs that need to be addressed but you have to make choices.

And we really have to respect and appreciate both treasury board, the Ministry of Finance and of course the Finance minister and cabinet, in making those very, very difficult decisions that have to happen year after year. I think it's really important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we look at the context of this particular budget, a budget that does provide the right balance for all of us.

And you know, we've had over three years of commodity challenges, clearly in the oil and gas industry, but in uranium and in potash. And I think we've struggled through those three years. But I think it's important to note that we made the adjustments. We made the commitment three years ago to deal with those challenges, and we made the adjustments in our budgetary

process and how we look at broadening the revenue sources across the province to accommodate for those losses on the commodity side. And I think we're far better for it. And I again respect the vision of the former premier, Mr. Wall, and the former minister of Finance, Mr. Doherty, for the incredible work that they did to set us on this path.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we face headwinds. It's been mentioned by others, Bill C-69, the no-more-pipelines bill from the federal government; Bill C-48, the ban on tanker traffic. And it's important to note that Bill C-48 only deals with a ban on tanker traffic on the west coast, nothing to do with the east coast where we've got oil coming in from around the world. There's something fundamentally wrong with that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's been noted earlier that we've had 55, I believe it's \$55 billion worth of oil capital flight out of Canada, largely to the United States, purely as a response to a federal government that has signalled over and over again . . . I can't use any other word but disdain for the oil and gas industry, and I think it's absolutely shameful, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I quote Don Braid from the *Calgary Herald* on the weekend. He said, in the latest act, he said, "Senate cuts Alberta [and Saskatchewan] out of tanker ban hearings in 'unprecedented stampede of stupid.'"

Mr. Speaker, I don't think that it can be stated more clearly what is going on with respect to our challenges. And we now have another emerging challenge that I fear the federal government isn't taking as seriously as they certainly should, and that is the concern that we have around canola right now. I'm very, very concerned for our agriculture community. I think that that's something that we need to be very mindful of.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to just take one second to point out one little sign that the oil industry may actually be turning the corner and responding. And I just picked this notice up. This weekend was the Rangeland Derby Canvas Auction in Calgary for the chuckwagons, and the numbers were slightly up this year. So the oil and gas industry and the industry in Calgary is spending a tiny bit more on the canvas auction, and that actually is a pretty strong reflection of what's going on in industry in southern Alberta, is that canvas auction. And I want to point out specifically that Evan Salmond from my constituency, his canvas sold for 105,000 — number six out of, I think it was 36 canvases.

[16:30]

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, notwithstanding some of the headwinds that we have, I do want to talk about a couple of specific budget items, one in particular that I've been involved with for the last number of months. And that is as Legislative Secretary I've been very engaged with the telecommunications industry, both SaskTel and the private players in the marketplace, working on the issue of connectivity in rural Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can't tell you how important I think this is. Again if we look back in history, when we built out the power grid or when we built out the energy grid, those were critical infrastructure investments of the day, but today the critical infrastructure investment may well be connectivity. If we think about the importance of connectivity to agriculture, to manufacturing, to education, to health and safety, across the board, connectivity is absolutely critical.

And I'm very, very pleased to say that we've announced already, I believe it's something like 91 new cell towers. And I have the list in front of me. I could probably take about five minutes and go through the list of communities, but . . . Why not? Muenster, Earl Grey, Sedley, Lucky Lake, Marsden, Abernethy, Mervin, Torquay, Conquest, Fillmore, Grayson, Cree Lake, Manor, Drake, Briercrest, Riverhurst . . . I feel like . . .

An Hon. Member: — You've been everywhere, man.

Mr. Nerlien: — I've been everywhere, man. Morse, Kisbey, Glenavon, Waldeck, Theodore, Weldon, Paddockwood, Mortlach, Govan, Lang, Midale, Marcelin, Spalding, Lintlaw, Semans, Ebenezer, Zenon Park, Brock, Denzil, Simpson, Kennedy, Odessa, Goodsoil, White Fox, Carievale, Macoun — whoops, sorry, Odessa and Goodsoil are still coming — Macoun, McTaggart, Lake Lenore, Meota, and Val Marie, and more to come, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I can't say how pleased I am to see the progress that we've made already on this particular file and look forward to some more.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to just highlight a couple of things. I think this is definitely a budget about numbers because budgets are always about numbers, but I think it's important to recognize that this is also a budget about people. And when it comes to the fully funded ag risk programs, I do think about the farmers in my communities — Megan, Sheldon, Doug, and Ryan, and so many others — and I think of how important these types of investments are to them. And I wish to point out one special investment in the agriculture community, and I note it specifically for the members opposite. There was a \$350,000 increase in the rat control program. What can I say?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the investments in health. The investments in health are critical. We've seen investments in digital X-rays, remote health care, remote health technology. I think again of the people that are involved in health care. And in my community I think in particular of Dr. Pieterse who's retiring this year but who has provided incredible service to our community over the last many years. And we're so pleased to have had him, and I certainly think we can wish him well in his retirement.

And I think of the nurses like Janice and Sonja and Caroline who have done so much as professionals in our community. And I'm so proud of their work ethic, their professionalism in what they do every single day. We've have some exposure to the home care environment over the last while. My mother's husband has required a bit of extra attention and the home care folks — Berlynn and others — are just incredible. We're so very pleased.

And again this is a budget about people and supporting the people that serve our communities. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could go on and on about that, but I do want to recognize in the education sector, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've had incredible people. Certainly my wife's family has a large number of educators in it. And again we're so proud of the work ethic that they bring to the table every day.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a couple of quick points about members opposite. They can't seem to understand that there really are only three ways to balance the books in government. You have to do it with one of three things: debt, taxes, or services. And you have to find the right balance. And I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we

have found the right balance again this year in that. And I question — and I think that this is a question that they need to be asked day in and day out by members of the media and members of the public — what would you cut, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Simply that, what would you cut if you want so much money? The Leader of the Opposition wants two and a half billion dollars to spend. Where would he get that? Ask him that question, Mr. Deputy Speaker: where would he get that?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wanted to bring up a word, and I know the member earlier was trying to identify a word that might describe NDP governments, but I found a word that I think applies across the board here to the members opposite. It's called the practice of obscurantism . . . is the practice of deliberately practising the act of existential and recondite philosophy. To that point . . .

An Hon. Member: — I can't figure out why this guy's not in cabinet. I just can't figure it out.

Mr. Nerlien: — I can't either. He's saying, why isn't he in cabinet? And I appreciate that. But to that point, the member from Saskatoon Nutana said the other day . . . I think it was Thursday. She talked for 15 minutes about the budget and then she said, and I quote, "I don't know if I'm reading these numbers right." Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have said for several years we don't think they're reading these numbers right. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting this budget from the Minister of Finance and I will not be supporting the motion from the members opposite. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Mr. Makowsky: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure to join the debate this afternoon on behalf of the constituents I represent in this wonderful building. It is certainly a pleasure to do so. We don't often get to be on our feet. We have a lot of members on this side of the House thankfully, Mr. Speaker, so I just have a few minutes here to talk about our quite balanced budget, a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker.

And several members have mentioned earlier about thanking treasury board members. Well I am a member of treasury board, have been for a number of years, and it's a pleasure to have to say here, it's a pleasure to say here that indeed this is a balanced budget, no matter what the members opposite say. There is more revenue than expense, Mr. Speaker.

And so, Mr. Speaker, three years ago we set forth on this path as many members have talked about. We had a \$1.3 billion hole blown in our budget by a precipitous drop in revenue royalties, non-renewable revenues, Mr. Speaker, and we had to make some very tough, difficult decisions. Not a lot of fun in those long meetings a lot of the time, Mr. Speaker, and they certainly were very long. You don't want to harm the economy by any means. You want to invest in services and people in the province, but also you can't sustain that level of deficit ongoing, Mr. Speaker, for current and future generations and for our strong economy, Mr. Speaker. I think those difficult decisions a few years ago will make things . . . will serve our economy well in the next many years, Mr. Speaker.

Just briefly a few thanks, if I could, Mr. Speaker. Of course thank

you to my colleagues on the third floor who work in the minister's office of PCS [Parks, Culture and Sport]. We have Jarret, we have Jill, we have Kirsten, and we have Sherry, who do great work on behalf of the people of the province of Saskatchewan. And in my constituency office, Brittany has been doing great work, as I mentioned, for all the folks in the Regina Gardiner Park and has done so for many years.

Of course thanks to my family. I'm away quite often for different important events, but I'm lucky I'm a Regina MLA, Mr. Speaker, and so that makes things a little better. I get to still be very involved. I like to do a little coaching here and there, Mr. Speaker. So thanks again to Tami and my three boys, Mr. Speaker.

When you talk about a budget every year, Mr. Speaker, you kind of mention your family, those kinds of things, and different things that are happening, and how quickly you progress through life it seems when, you know, especially when your kids hit high school. It seems to just really rocket by, Mr. Speaker.

Our oldest son is going to graduate from Miller Comprehensive this year, Mr. Speaker, and attend the U of R in the fall. So I can hardly believe how time has flown. In the early years of course it seems to go a lot slower, Mr. Speaker. But I just wanted to mention, since it's his last year in the public school system, Mr. Speaker, what a great experience it's been for all three of my kids in that, in the Regina Catholic system, Mr. Speaker. I mean the teachers are great. They do a wonderful job, boy.

The teachers volunteer for different things. I've been able to be involved with Miller High School. I might have mentioned once or twice to my colleagues that we were able to win the provincial title this year, but that doesn't just happen. Just for example this weekend, Mr. Speaker, our head coach, who is also a full-time teacher, and some of his other colleagues are organizing a fundraiser for new uniforms for the kids. And so those guys just . . . They give, they volunteer, on and on. They go above and beyond, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to mention in the education system as well the schools that were announced here in Regina. As a Regina MLA, I certainly appreciate that. St. Pius and Argyle, on top of many schools have been built in Saskatchewan over the last few years, just on Elphinstone Street alone, Mr. Speaker.

And so we've certainly invested. We have the largest budget in history, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate the work of all the teachers and all the support staff and all the people that volunteer to make our kids, and especially my kids, have had a great experience. And they continue . . . When they come home, they're excited. They're excited about what happened in school. Not all the time; mostly about what happened in gym class. That seems to be the highlight of the day for my guys. But they certainly appreciate it, and I know they will and it will — sorry — it will serve them as they go forward, big time.

Mr. Speaker, specifically for the budget, I'd like to have a few points about the ministry I'm responsible for, as in Parks, Culture and Sport, Mr. Speaker. Not certainly one of the bigger line items within the budget — we're talking in the millions of dollars; some of them are in the billions of dollars, hundreds of millions of dollars — but I think there's some important things here that

the folks that may be watching might be interested in, Mr. Speaker.

And I'd say it's generally a status quo budget. Not a lot of room for big increases in any of the ministries, certainly in a smaller one. But one thing we were able to come up with this year, Mr. Speaker, is \$100,000 for the Legions within our great province. And how important those Legions are, I know, to all the communities out there. There's dozens of them out there, and they're gathering places for communities. They are, from what I understand, and I hope I'm not speaking out of turn, Mr. Speaker, but they can be healing places as well, Mr. Speaker, for those folks who have served our country so nobly, so greatly, and it's so appreciated, the work they do. And this money, again not a whole lot of money in the grand scheme of things, but again very important and targeted and can leverage a lot, I think, out there, Mr. Speaker. And so, certainly happy to see that through our ministry, Mr. Speaker.

On the camping side just briefly, Mr. Speaker, status quo on the parks capital side. Our government over the last 10 years or so has done large improvements within our parks system, whether it be boat launches or service centres or electrified camping. I know that's been a big expenditure over the last few years. Camping has certainly changed over the last several years, Mr. Speaker. Bigger units need more size and more amperage to be able to run their units, Mr. Speaker.

[16:45]

And we've invested heavily, this government has invested heavily, over 120 million since 2007 on the capital side. Service centres. Some of the highlights this year, if passed . . . We encourage the members opposite to pass this budget. Vote along with us so we can get some of these things done in our wonderful campsites and parks throughout our province.

One of them being at Buffalo Pound Provincial Park, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately the pool structure failed, the piping failed — certainly don't understand the engineering part of it — but that was certainly a blow to that provincial park, that particular park. I know a lot of families gather at the pool they had there, plan their summer around swimming lessons that they could take at the pool, for example. I know we heard that from our customers and hopefully this year we will, again if the budget's passed, we want to have that pool redone throughout this year in time for the 2020 camping season.

A new visitor centre at Candle Lake . . . I should have mentioned before a lot of water treatment facilities have been upgraded in the last several years within our provincial parks. Obviously very important. When you think about it, during the summer, Mr. Speaker, a lot of our larger parks essentially become pretty decent-sized municipalities. Thousands of people in there that rely extensively on sewer and water, Mr. Speaker. And that is something we have invested heavily in and so it's there on the docket at Duck Mountain this year. And again hopefully we get this budget passed. Several more, thousands more sites electrified over the last decade or so and more sites. And again, status quo on the preventative maintenance, Mr. Speaker.

Also on the capital side, specimen preservation equipment for the RSM [Royal Saskatchewan Museum], Mr. Speaker, so we're

doing some good work. We have some world-renowned scientists over at the RSM at the annex. They do good work over there and, Mr. Speaker, this is something that will help those folks continue to do great work on behalf of the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

I've been over there and they do some interesting things. And the paleontologists, they have amber with specimens from hundreds of millions of years ago that they examine and they can tell things, what life was like, again, hundreds of millions of years ago. And they study bees and they study indigenous birds and plants, etc. So it's a very interesting thing that we . . . Again, a smaller part of the budget, Mr. Speaker, but important work being done in our ministry, Mr. Speaker.

I think one of the highlights that I've had since being in government, Mr. Speaker, is the ability to sign along with the lottery partners — Sask Sport, Mr. Speaker, as well as SaskCulture, and the Parks and Recreation Association — sign a new five-year agreement for the lottery distribution of funds. I know I've come up through the system here in Saskatchewan, very proud of that. My kids are as well, and I've coached many, many kids who have benefited from those dollars. They're seed dollars for sports and recreation right across our province, a unique endeavour from humble beginnings in 1971.

There was a group of businessmen — there's a whole book about it, Mr. Speaker, but just briefly, as I see my time is running out quickly — who underwrote it initially until government sort of came on board to grab the lottery licence, to eventually Sask Sport. And so we appreciate those. And there's — I don't want to use the wrong term — but some of the folks from way back when still come out to the lottery agreement, and boy, that was certainly a special moment for myself, to see people that were pioneers in this unique part of our province and to continue that. I know there's certainty around funding for the next five years, Mr. Speaker, which I know all the partners are very appreciative of, and we're of course appreciative of all the great work they do.

Mr. Speaker, at the wonderful Royal Saskatchewan Museum, Mr. Speaker, there's a new exhibit going in. It's Scotty, the T. rex. It'll be open in May, Mr. Speaker, and it'll be exciting. It'll complement the great museum in Eastend, Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Excuse me, I'm losing my voice here. It might be time for me to sit down.

But folks that are interested in that new exhibit, it's going to be exciting. It's going to be a major change, and that is on top of the new elevator that was installed about a year ago to increase accessibility to our wonderful, historic RSM, Mr. Speaker.

The WDM [Western Development Museum] parking lot in Saskatoon finally got a makeover, Mr. Speaker. That's been ongoing for many, many, many years with a sometimes impassable parking lot. We were able to get that fixed this year for folks that enjoy those facilities.

This summer is the Western Canada Summer Games. The Western Canada Summer Games are coming to Swift Current, Mr. Speaker. We're funding that this year, this August, Mr. Speaker. We're looking forward to . . . And if anyone's in the area, please come cheer on our awesome athletes here in Saskatchewan.

There's a new reservation system, Mr. Speaker, on the Saskatchewan Parks website. I just want to mention that. I want to encourage all of our campers who reserve sites online that, starting April 2nd for seasonal sites and then April the 4th I believe for group camping sites or day use sites I believe, and then I think on the 8th a staggered approach to nightly reservation sites, Mr. Speaker . . . Please go on if you're watching. If you're a camper and you have for many years, please register for the new site.

So the morning of each park that is opening or accepting reservations, you don't want to be doing it that morning. It starts at 7 a.m. The queuing system starts at 7 a.m. so please be diligent, if you haven't already done so, to register for the new sites within our province . . . Not new sites, rather, our new reservation system because the old system is gone, Mr. Speaker. It was no longer supported so again we look forward to that new transition and an easier site to navigate, Mr. Speaker, and again an aid to all our campers who have that chance to get their favourite sites in their favourite park, hopefully on the weekend that they are interested in doing so this year, Mr. Speaker. Expect another great camping season. We've had great numbers the last several years and a lot of that is the natural beauty there, but I think also some of the investments our government's made over, as I mentioned, the last decade into our wonderful campsites and our camping experience, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to talk quickly about some major events that are coming to Saskatchewan in the next few years. We just had, in Regina, the Canadian Women's Open which was an absolutely wonderful event. It was one of my favourite sporting events I've been able to go to and we were able to do it. I'd never been to a PGA [Professional Golfers' Association] event, and I was so . . . I've always said I'm going to go one time; I want to see how a pro actually hits a golf ball. And I got to see that. I was able to follow Brooke Henderson around the wonderful Wascana golf course. And they just did a great job, and congratulations on all the people that were involved in that. And what a boon to our local economy and exposure internationally for Regina and Saskatchewan. What a great event.

We just had the Brier in Regina as well, Mr. Speaker, a great event about a year ago, Mr. Speaker. Just announced an interesting initiative event, is the NHL [National Hockey League] Heritage Classic. Two NHL teams, the Flames and the Jets, are going to be at our wonderful new Mosaic Stadium in October of this year for a regular season game. First time in Canada that a regular season game is being played in the stadium series, so wonderful to have that.

And of course the Grey Cup in 2020 again at Mosaic Stadium, Mr. Speaker. And that's going to be a great event, as it always is here in Saskatchewan — very passionate about our football in this province. And I think it underscores, when we see events like this coming to our province, the nice stadium we have here. Certainly it was a big investment in our community and in our province, but it certainly is an attraction for major events. Our folks in Saskatchewan don't always have to travel to see major events. They're coming right here to our province and it will certainly help our tourism economy as we move forward.

And of course the Junos will be in Saskatoon as well and that's a great event that's been held twice before in our great province, in

Regina and in Saskatoon. I anticipate that that will be a wonderful event once again.

So again, Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to stand before the House and say my speech and how proud I am of this government and the hard work that they've done over the last number of years in getting to this balanced budget, Mr. Speaker. Again there was many tough decisions that had to be made, but it is a balanced budget. I'm going to go ahead and support this budget, Mr. Speaker. I'm not that interested in supporting the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

There was a few . . . As I was, if I had time at the end, I was just going to quickly talk about, again, my kids' experience within the Regina Catholic system, Mr. Speaker, and what great work that the teachers, the administrators, the coaches, the volunteers have done. And, Mr. Speaker, and some of the words I've heard in just the last couple of days from the members of the opposition, they've called it a crisis, breaking point, starved, neglected — all in our public system, Mr. Speaker.

Listening to that, I was flashing back to a Dickens novel, Mr. Speaker. This is, you know, turn of the 18th century, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I am a teacher. I am a teacher. And I . . . [inaudible] . . . before, Mr. Speaker.

I don't for a second discount that within the school system there are difficulties. I think there's been difficulties for many years within the school system. There's been some tough times. But, Mr. Speaker, my experience is we have great teachers. And I'm not discounting, Mr. Speaker, there's challenges in every classroom. Believe me, I've experienced them. No question about it, Mr. Speaker. And I don't discount. I've heard from constituents as well who happen to be teachers on . . . There's English as additional language pressures — no question — with newcomers coming all the time. That's a great thing, but of course there are some stresses.

I'm not discounting that. I'm not talking about that. But I think we do a disservice when we hear some of those words from the members opposite, Mr. Speaker. Because our teachers do a great . . . They do great work and they do a good job. And remember, this is the largest budget in Saskatchewan history for education.

We support our educators, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to do that, Mr. Speaker. So again proud of all our teachers, proud of my time spent in Regina Public, proud of my boys who have been through that system and again for the most part had a great experience, have had a great experience, and doesn't quite match what I hear from the members opposite.

But again, Mr. Speaker, I am going to go ahead and use up the exact end of my time. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the work from my colleague from Humboldt, who is obviously the Minister of Finance. She's a great leader in our party but a great leader for the government and a great leader for this province. There's no doubt about that. She knows her stuff and I'm proud to work with that member closely on treasury board, as I mentioned.

And again, Mr. Speaker, fairly unique in this great country to have a balanced budget, and again no equalization in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. But so proud of being able to represent my constituents and, Mr. Speaker, again I'm going to

go ahead and support the budget when we vote on it in a couple days. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — It now being 5 o'clock, this House stands recessed until 7 p.m. this evening.

[The Assembly recessed from 17:00 until 19:00.]

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