



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

of the

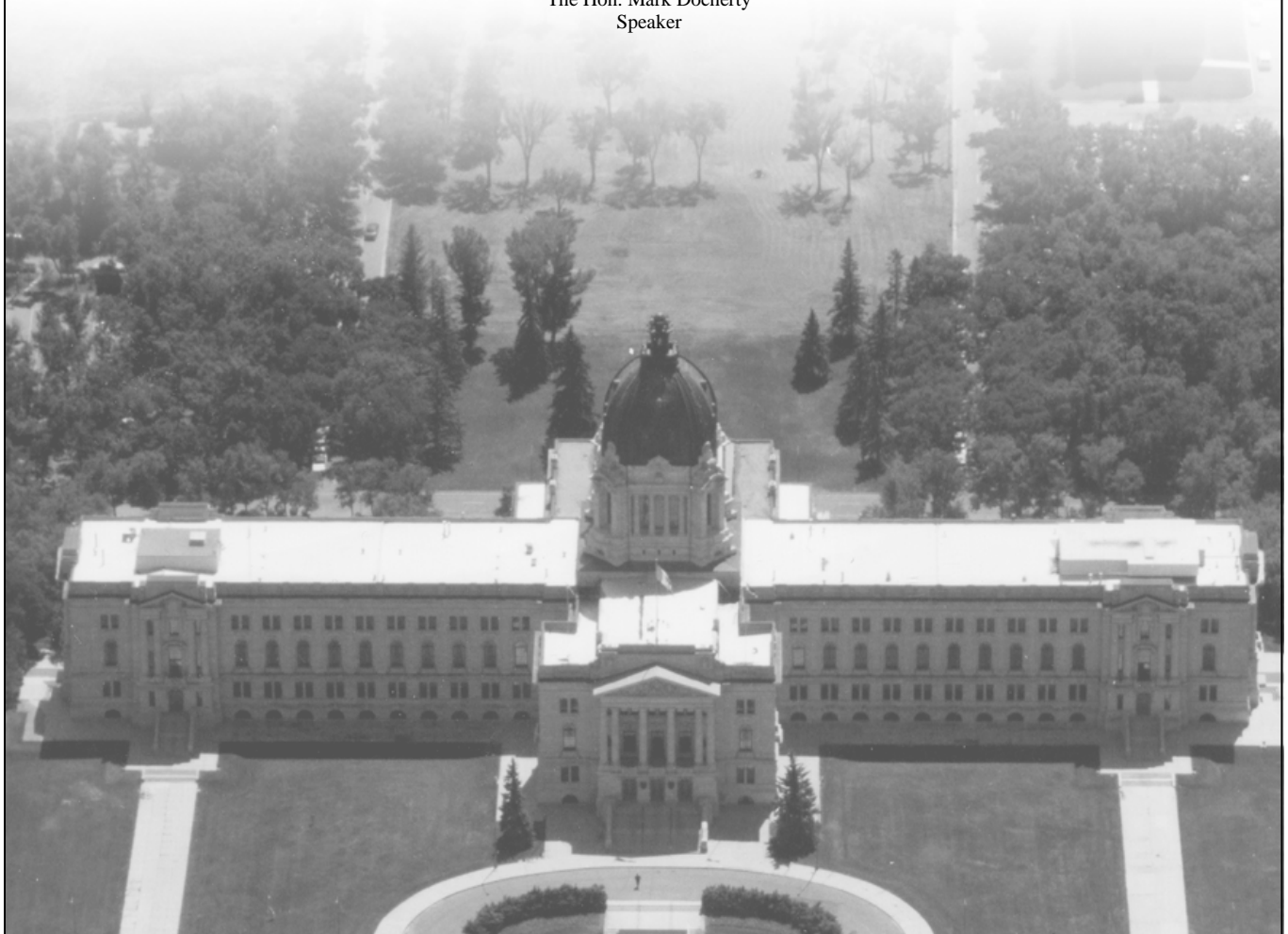
**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

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**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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



**MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**  
**3rd Session — 28th Legislature**

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**Premier** — Hon. Scott Moe  
**Leader of the Opposition** — Ryan Meili

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

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**Clerk** — Gregory A. Putz

**Law Clerk & Parliamentary Counsel** — Kenneth S. Ring, Q.C.

**Principal Clerk** — Iris Lang

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[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

**EVENING SITTING**

**The Deputy Speaker:** — It now being 7 p.m., I call the Assembly to order. I recognize the member from Regina Lakeview.

**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.]

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is my pleasure and my honour to rise this evening, this night sitting, and enter into debate around the 2019-2020 provincial budget. Before I get started with my comments directed specifically about the budget, I'd like to take some time, as is tradition, to say some thank yous.

And of course at the top of my list tonight to thank is those who work in my office, my constituency assistants, Chris and Cory. I'm very lucky to have two very hard-working folks who work in our office and very skilfully serve the needs of the constituents of Regina Lakeview, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Their knowledge of the constituency and the casework, and their ability to interact with the many calls that come into our office and the many concerns really is a service to the people of Regina Lakeview, and certainly is something that I appreciate greatly, if I don't say it often enough, Mr. Speaker.

I'd also like to, when we're talking about long overdue thank yous, I want to say a thank you to my colleagues. Not only are they good fun to be in here with during the night sittings, this is, you know, often where we draw our strength. Ours is a role unlike many other roles that people play, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to have a good team like this beside you and around you while you do the work that you were sent here by your constituents to do really is a pleasure and an honour to serve with each of them. So I'd like to say thank you to them for all of their hard work.

And also to the staff. I know the staff who work in our office, again I will put them on the list of folks who don't get thanked nearly enough. There's a lot that goes on to make sure that we are ready for question period, for estimates, that when we have delegations, groups such as we had here today, that they are taken care of and their needs are seen to. It really is a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes that doesn't get acknowledged nearly often enough.

And I would like to say thank you to my family. Mr. Speaker, I have thanked them before but this year has been a big year in our family. We had our oldest daughter go off to university, so we're still readjusting at our house, looking forward to having her back at home in less than a month. And you know, the support of my

partner, Guy, the two kids that are still at home.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had to laugh today. I had media and a lot of questions. Just to keep me humble, I also had a text from my son asking what was for supper. So, Mr. Speaker, we try to find the balance here, and sometimes it's our families who remind us that you still have to put food on the table at home now and then, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I hear that the word "balance" got the attention of some of the members opposite certainly, and that's going to be a theme of my comments here this evening is balance, how we achieve balance, how we define balance. I know that this is a balance that the government, the Finance minister, and the Premier, they'd like to have us believe that this was a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker. But I think that my comments will be around the ways that this wasn't a balanced budget.

I guess in the first way is in a financial sense. This is a budget that will add \$1.8 billion this year to the provincial debt, Mr. Speaker. This is something that we have seen year after year with this government, an increase in the provincial debt load despite having governed through some of the most prosperous times in the history of the province.

I recently posted a photo, and maybe it's clipped a little bit too closely, Mr. Speaker, but I clipped a photo from the budget, page no. 48, which looks at the borrowing and debt. There is a graph on that page that looks at the years between 2008 and projects into 2023. And when I posted this, I was accused by a member of the public that I was displaying NDP [New Democratic Party] propaganda or something of the like, until I explained that, no, this is actually from the budget document. It is the case that between 2008 and 2023, we'll see a tripling of the provincial debt, the forecast in 2023 being for \$26 billion in provincial debt, Mr. Speaker.

So it's very difficult to have any discussion about budget balance when we see that sort of imbalance in terms of adding to the provincial debt, but also imbalance in terms of what we are burdening our children with down the road. Again, that number is \$26 billion by 2023, something that we all ought to pay attention to.

Certainly, there are times when it makes sense to add to the debt. You know, borrowing costs for infrastructure, I think there is an argument that can be made there at certain times that that is reasonable. What does seem more than a little unreasonable, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the fact that after 12 years, 12 of the highest record revenue years in the history of this province, that we are in a situation where we have a projection of \$26 billion in the near future.

And were that it alone, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that would be one thing, but we've done that while also underfunding our education system. We have done that and yet maintained the highest levels of domestic violence, twice the national average, in this province. We have done that while maintaining a record number of children and seniors who are using food banks in our province. We have managed to not address a growing addiction issue in the province. And we are in a situation where not only public debt is growing at an alarming rate, also consumer debt in this province

is growing at an alarming rate.

And the outcome of this has been that there are many people — certainly people that I talk to, that my colleagues talk to every day — who are finding it increasingly difficult to pay the bills. We see mortgages in arrears in this province at twice, three times the national average, when in 2008 Saskatchewan in that same category was under the national average.

So that is some of the balance, I think. Any time you talk about balance, I think this government would want us to look at this budget in isolation — in isolation of other budgets, in isolation of the last 12 years, but also in isolation of the other factors, other things that are going on in the province. But I think that you certainly cannot have a true balance if you are going to look at it through such a narrow lens.

This of course is the third year of the government's so-called plan to balance, a three-year plan that was kicked off by that 2017 budget, Mr. Speaker, that people of Saskatchewan are still reeling from. I think I'd like to talk a little bit about education and remind folks where we were at in 2017 with regards to education. In 2014 — I'm going to back it up a little bit before that — when I sat on the Regina Public School Board, fall of 2014 just before Christmas, we received a letter. And the oil prices certainly had decreased, I think starting about August of that year. It was significant and it was worrisome for the province.

We had been asking for years from this government for some allocation to deal with the cost of growing enrolments. The school division was growing by about 700 students a year, 600 to 700 students a year, as the system is provincially about 2,000 students a year, and really we're struggling to keep pace with the funding rates and with that level of growth.

But by fall 2014, the government was already looking at education as a place to cut to paper over their mismanagement, the fact that they had spent everything up to that point, Mr. Speaker. So that was my first indication that maybe it was time to move into provincial politics at that point.

In 2017, of course the first year of this three-year plan to balance, we saw the government cut \$54 million from growing classrooms in this province — an unprecedented cut; a cut that still reverberates throughout the education system today; a cut that necessitated the closure of preschools for children who are deaf; the closure of Discovery Preschools; the increase in distance for children to walk to school, so a pullback of transportation funding; and just a whole lot of cuts right throughout the education sector. More cuts to educational assistants, something we have seen in rapid decline under this government.

And really, be it school boards or parents or the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation] or EAs [educational assistant] who work in the school, everyone's sounding the alarm that there was no fat left to cut in education, that we were now cutting to the bone and we were impacting the learning of students. At that time I remember very clearly that many indicated that they had grave concerns about the ability of the underfunded school system to deliver on the education sector plan goals which are due to expire next year, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And so when this budget talks about balance, what we're talking about really is holding a lot of those cuts, a lot of that underfunding for yet another year in this province.

There was some additional funding, to be fair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, some additional funding. The minister did indicate that they would be fully funding the teachers' contract. That would in most instances be self-evident given the fact that they hold the purse strings, but it has not always been the case. In 2017 the minister also announced that they would only be providing half the funding for the previously agreed-upon teachers' contract, of course with the minister's signature on it. So that's a theme I'll pick up again later. So when we look at that \$26 million that this government likes to talk about with regard to funding, that comes off the top, the \$10 million for the teachers' contract.

[19:15]

What also has to be accounted for is growth within the system. Our schools continue to grow, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it has been many years since the government gave a mid-year adjustment to deal with that growth, and it has been many, many years since government funding kept pace with that growth. On top of that we have inflation. So all told, the estimation by the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association] is that in order to just maintain class sizes, the level of support to deal with inflation on things like increased PST [provincial sales tax], to deal with any contract increases, and just basic inflation, gasoline, things like that within the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] system, it would require about \$35 million of additional funding.

So not only did this 26 sort of barely get us back to where we were two years ago, we now have an additional \$35 million that's missing from the system. And not only that. That's not the only deficit in the school system, because this isn't like starting a construction job, and when there's not enough money, laying your tools down. Education . . . Those kids need to be in those classrooms. This is their one chance to get that education. So this has gone on in our classrooms for the last two and three years, creating a deficit all the way through, Mr. Speaker.

Not only that, not only the money. It is the deterioration of relationships within the sector, and that's something that we hear all over this province, that we hear of . . . I believe the number is still 50 per cent of our teachers leaving the profession within the first five years. Teachers coming out of teachers' college and facing real difficulties dealing with the complexity and crowded in the classrooms, Mr. Speaker. So we can't talk about any balance when we are talking about that sort of imbalance within our school system, Mr. Speaker.

Some other points about this budget and why we're not quite accepting the government's assertion that there's balance. We see, well as might reasonably be expected I think by many folks, we see increased spending on illness, on poverty, on crime, which are the consequences. Something as basic as an investment in education . . . You can make the choice to invest in education and reap the rewards of that. I know the early years, the province . . . the Ministry of Education's own early years document quotes between every dollar that's invested in quality early childhood education returns between 4 and \$9 over the course of that child's lifetime. We are failing to make those investments.

I'm going to quote from a recent report, February of 2019: "Saskatchewan child care gets a failing grade." And I'm going to read some of the points under this, but first I'm going to talk about what led to this report.

In March of 2018 this province signed a three-year bilateral agreement with the federal government around early years funding. For some reason, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan was, I believe, the last to sign on to this agreement — in some cases, a full year later than other provinces signed on for this federal money. This is to be invested in child care in the province. I know that some of the money was used to backfill some of the cuts that occurred, particularly with pre-K [pre-kindergarten] programs for children with special needs, but we have many questions about what happens when this bilateral agreement runs out, when this \$41 million runs out from the federal government.

If you look at the budget from this year, it looks like the spending for child care went down. What happened is that we were so late to the table in signing this agreement that they had to spend a higher allocation last year, so that is why it looks like there was a decrease. There have been an increase in the number of spaces in the province but we're still not at balance. I'll read some of the highlights of this report.

Saskatchewan's child care policy continues to be based on outdated and inaccurate family models in which one parent, often the father, goes to work and the other, often the mother, stays at home. Licensed child care in Saskatchewan can accommodate only 18 per cent of children aged 5 and under, but 70 per cent of Saskatchewan mothers of children aged 5 and under go to work. So we have a system that needs updating in this province, and certainly that's something I've heard from parents and also heard from those who work within the sector.

This is a big issue within our child care system. The income cut-off for the maximum subsidy for a two-parent family with two children is \$1,700 a month or \$20,000 per year, which has not increased since the 1980s, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If you can imagine what wages were in the 1980s . . . I know it's been sort of slow and stagnant growth but still we can remember what things cost in 1980s. Our child care subsidy regime has not changed since the 1980s and that is having an impact on families.

This is another piece and I think this is crucial, because this is another document that this government put in place that's coming to the end of its life without having met the goals.

The government's . . . *Early Years Plan 2016-2020* contains no concrete plans or policies, no clear targets for the development of child care spaces, no guaranteed budgets and no measures of evaluation.

Mr. Speaker, it is great to put out documents, to set goals, but you have to resource them. You have to have a plan. You have to check in with them, and that simply has not been the case within child care within the system.

And I'll read the conclusion. By making several policy recommendations for improving child care in Saskatchewan, appropriate funding, overhauling the current subsidy system, mandatory wages for early childhood educators and assistants, and moving responsibility for all child care and learning policies

to a single ministry. So hopefully when the minister is having some of those conversations and is listening, he's listening to some of these recommendations.

We know that those who work within the early childhood education sector, despite having requirements of having one or two or three years of education, are paid at levels barely above our very inadequate minimum wage. And that has all sorts of impacts, not only for them and their families, but it has huge impacts for the turnover within the sector. It's time, if we value this, that we ensure that we have a look at that sector to make sure that it's meeting the needs. Not only to the children in those programs, but those workers are being properly valued as well and we're doing something about the turnover.

I should have looked at the clock before I started, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But I think I ought to talk about something else here very, very quickly, Mr. Speaker, and that is the decision around Cornwall School. And I'm going to . . . We had some updates here today, and I was glad to hear that the minister had considered revisiting this decision. But it is puzzling — to be as kind as I can be, Mr. Deputy Speaker — that we're having this discussion after the decision was made to cut this program.

Cornwall Alternative School has served this city for 47 years. They signed an agreement with this government in 2017 to provide funding until 2020. So imagine their surprise when they have a signed agreement in hand with the minister's signature on it, that they get a phone call on budget day to come down to the legislature and they find out that their funding's been cut. The minister has since noted that he maybe should have listened more. I know he's very fond of saying that he's been having conversations. How does it happen that you have the conversations after the decision is cut, after you've disrupted all of those students, you've disrupted the staff? I'm glad that it's being revisited but this simply — if I may offer some advice — is not the way to go about treating your partners in the education sector, not the way to be treating a program that is providing such valuable service.

And because you've heard a lot of my words and I'm now reorientating myself to the time, I want to read something into the record. And this is a letter from a parent, and I hope that those who are making the decisions hear this from Cornwall School:

To whom it may concern,

I feel it would be a terrible injustice to close down the Cornwall Alternative School. This school has helped so many young individuals regain their confidence, individuality, and self-respect, which they had lost at the regular school that they attended. They were bullied, belittled, then navigated to the wrong people for the support they needed. They got into drugs, alcohol, run-ins with the law.

This is my story. The Cornwall Alternative School changed my baby's life and gave her her life back, her confidence, and self-respect. She was able to move from there to graduate grade 12 and continue to university. My daughter has become a beautiful, loving person inside and out. Seriously, I believe none of this would have ever happened if she had not attended the Cornwall Alternative

School.

Please, please, please don't close down this amazing school, and let other disheartened children learn their potential.

Mr. Speaker, I say this in closing and I say this: when you are driving towards balance, we can never let these children, decisions like this be collateral damage. We have to take a long-term view of this province. We have to take a holistic view of investments that we're making, and we have to . . . Please know that we will be judged in this province by how we treat children and the most vulnerable. And right now, Mr. Speaker, there is no balance with regard to investment in those groups.

With that I will move to conclude my remarks and I will not be supporting the government's budget motion.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford.

**Mr. Doke:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm honoured to enter into this budget debate, the last year of a plan to get back to balance. A promise made and a promise kept in the 2019-20 budget that is balanced.

Mr. Speaker, I would first like to take this opportunity to thank a few people. First my wife, Valerie, who looks after everything while I'm gone and definitely I could not do this job without her. And she's great for the economy, believe me.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank and recognize my constituency assistant, Cheryl Hume, for all her hard work and dedication to running a very efficient constituency office. Maureen Paron is our casual office person and is a valued part of our office. These two ladies serve the Cut Knife-Turtleford constituents very well.

Since being sworn in as president of PNWER [Pacific North West Economic Region] in July of 2018 and Co-Chair of the annual summit, which will be held in Saskatoon from July 21st to the 25th, 2019, there's been lots of extra work for these two ladies. And they have done an excellent job and the summit is shaping up very well.

Mr. Speaker, preparing a provincial budget is a long and trying task. I would like to thank the Finance minister's leadership through this process. The minister along with treasury board members and all the ministers have been going hard since the Finance minister's first budget. Mr. Speaker, the 2019-20 budget is the last of a three-year plan to get back to balance and, Mr. Speaker, we have a balanced budget.

Mr. Speaker, this year's budget provides the right balance by increasing support for mental health and for vulnerable families. It increases funding to classrooms and it improves highway safety. Mr. Speaker, our province's population and our economy are growing; this budget strikes the right balance by investing into the hospitals, schools, highways, and Crown infrastructure that Saskatchewan people need.

Mr. Speaker, this budget contains no new taxes or tax increases, so it is the right balance to keep our economy strong. It balances much-needed investments with carefully managed spending in

order to achieve a balanced budget that is affordable and sustainable now and into years ahead.

[19:30]

Mr. Speaker, the 2019-20 budget is balanced, with a projected surplus of 34.4 million. Higher surpluses of 49 million, 72 million, and 84 million are projected for the three fiscal years that follow.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a few minutes and talk about health care and mental health. The 2019-20 Ministry of Health budget invests a record \$5.55 billion in health care programs and services, an increase of 196 billion or 3.7 per cent over last year, and up 60 per cent since 2007-08.

Mr. Speaker, this 2019-20 health budget strikes the right balance between funding new mental health and addiction programs and funding other ongoing health services and priorities. This budget also takes the important step of creating an organ registry, which we hope will encourage Saskatchewan people to register their intent to donate. The funding of 558,000 will support the creation of a provincial organ donor registry. Work will commence immediately with a goal of launching a registry before the end of the year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the 2019-20 health capital budget includes 12 million to begin construction of a new long-term care facility in Meadow Lake with capacity increased from 55 to 72 beds. Construction is expected to begin in the spring of 2020. Capital funding of 5 million will be divided between Weyburn hospital replacement project and the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital redevelopment project to prepare both proposals to enter into the final stage of approval.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, individualized funding for children under the age of six with autism spectrum disorder will increase from 4,000 annually to 6,000 annually. The 2019-20 budget provides 1.4 million in new operational funding for Saskatoon's first free-standing hospice facility, St. Paul's Hospital hospice at Glengarda, scheduled to open in the spring of 2020.

Mr. Speaker, this year the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital will open. And to expand on this, the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital will better meet the needs of our province's children, expecting mothers, and families by enhancing child patient care and enabling recruitment and retention of pediatric specialists. The hospital is currently 92 per cent complete. We are on schedule to open in late 2019 and 257 million has been provided by the provincial government to this project. This includes a \$20 million instalment from the 2018-19 budget. The Jim Pattison Children's Hospital project will have 176 beds: 65 maternal and 111 pediatric. In addition, a helipad has been included to ensure STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Service] has a landing space when transporting critically ill and injured patients to the new hospital.

The neonatal intensive care unit capacity will increase from 38 bassinets to 44, with space ready to staff 48 bassinets by 2021. This represents added capacity for the entire province and changes services delivered from a bay-style NICU [neonatal intensive care unit] to individual patient rooms.

The Saskatchewan Health Authority has a detailed staff recruitment plan and is on track to meet recruitment expectations before the opening of the hospital. The total project cost is estimated 285.9 million, of which the government is covering 90 per cent or 257 million. The remaining 10 per cent or 28.3 million is being funded through the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital Foundation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the 2019-20 budget makes the largest investment in mental health and addiction services in Saskatchewan's history. The Ministry of Health funding for the mental health and addictions increases by nearly 30 million in the 2019-20 budget to a total of 402 million. This includes 13.7 million to increase to support the new Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford.

Mr. Speaker, the new North Battleford psychiatric hospital is now complete and is the single largest investment in mental health in our province's history. I was pleased to attend the grand opening March 8th, 2019. And, Mr. Speaker, having family and friends that have worked at the old facility for a long time, as you may know — and I'm sure you have friends and family that still work there — the new 284-bed facility replaces the old 156-bed hospital with two correctional facilities. The new facility will include 188 psychiatric rehabilitation beds and a 96-room secure wing for offenders living with mental health issues.

The \$407 million hospital was built as a P3, or a public-private partnership. A P3 requires the builder to maintain the facility in like-new condition for 30 years and shifts the risk of the cost overruns onto the builder. Before a P3 proceeds, a value-for-money report is done by an accounting firm. In this case, the report confirmed that choosing a P3 saved \$90 million, an 18 per cent savings for taxpayers over the course of the 30-year contract.

Mr. Speaker, this budget makes the largest commitment ever to mental health services in our province. This includes funding for more than 140 new beds to treat individuals with mental health and addiction challenges.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan 2019-20 budget increases support to municipalities with consistent and predictable funding. Direct provincial supports for the municipalities will total 437.1 million for the current year, supporting infrastructure projects and community initiatives through the municipal revenue-sharing program which gives local governments the funds they need to properly administer their growth, their community, and their economy. This represents a 25.4 million, or a 6.2 per cent increase over the 2018-19 budget.

Mr. Speaker, the 2019-20 budget includes 251.6 million for municipal revenue sharing, an increase of 10.5 million, or 4.4 per cent from the 2018-19 budget. Municipal revenue sharing equals three-quarters of one point of the provincial sales tax revenue from 2017 to 2018. Total funding will be allocated as follows: 161 million, an increase of 6.3 million to urban municipalities; 71.7 million, an increase of 3.6 million to rural municipalities; and 18.6 million, an increase of 645,000 to northern municipalities. This is an increase of 124.3 million, or 97.7 per cent from the 2007-2008 budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the 2019 budget includes 138.1 million in provincial support for municipal infrastructure, an increase of 14.8 million or 12 per cent from the 2018-19 budget due to the following: 25 million for new funding for the provincial share of the Investing in Canada infrastructure program, 89.4 million; 15.6 million or 21.2 per cent increase in the provincial portion of the New Building Canada Fund; 1.6 million of \$10.8 million, or 87 per cent decrease in the provincial portion of the Clean Water and Wastewater Fund; 14 million for the municipal roads for the economy program; 6.7 million for the urban connector program; 1.4 million for the strategic partnership.

I know the member from Athabasca just can't believe all the money that's going to municipalities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the 2019 budget includes 47.4 million in other funding for municipalities, an increase of 151,000 or 0.3 per cent from the 2018-19 budget. Funding consists of 16.1 million in policing grants; 11.2 million, an increase of 128,000 or 1.2 per cent, for a grant to provincial libraries; 8.6 million, an increase of 12,000 or 1 per cent, for grants in lieu of taxes to municipalities and libraries; 4.9 million grant funding for urban parks; 3.8 million, an increase of 250,000 or 7.1 per cent, for transit assistance for people with disabilities program; 1.6 million, or 239,000, 12.7 per cent decrease for the discount bus program; 700,000 for the community airports partnership program; and 496 for provincial municipal supports.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the 2019-20 budget provides 2.48 billion for the Ministry of Education, which supports pre-K, pre-kindergarten to grade 12 classrooms, early learning and child care, libraries, and literacy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan's 27 school divisions will receive 1.9 billion in school operating funding for the 2019-20 school year. This is an increase of 26.2 million, or 1.4 per cent more than last year's 1.872 billion. 10.5 million for operating grants for qualified independent schools and historical high schools, an increase of 879,000 due to an increase of enrolments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, 72.6 million for child care funding, which includes 15 million in funding provided by the federal government through the Canada-Saskatchewan Early Learning and Child Care Agreement; 15.6 million in continued funding for KidsFirst; 4.3 million for early childhood intervention programs, a \$300,000 increase over last year; and 2.4 million in continued funding for the nutrition programs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, 95.6 million for capital investments, including 3 million to provide planning and design funding for the replacement of two schools in Regina and four schools in Moose Jaw; 250,000 to determine the scope of a replacement school for St. Frances elementary in Saskatoon; 29 million to provide funding for two ongoing major school consolidation projects in Rosthern and Weyburn; 55.9 million for preventative maintenance and renewal and emergency funding; 6.4 million for relocatable classrooms; and 1 million for school facility assessments.

No wonder they're upset, members opposite. They can't understand this. There's so much stuff here, it's unbelievable. I don't know how we're going to do it, but we're going to do it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, 11.2 million in supports for libraries, 128,000 increase over last year's spending; 6 million in resource-sharing grants for seven regional library systems; 989,000 in resource-sharing grants for a system in northern Saskatchewan; 1.4 million for municipal libraries in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert; and 2.4 million to support universal access to the library services and for infrastructure, including internet connectivity and the single integrated library system; 1 million in continued funding to support Saskatchewan's literacy programs and 541,000 to the network of family inner-city hubs; 500,000 to continue to support the provision of 20 summer literacy camps in eight school divisions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan is striking the right balance by making strategic investments in the province's correctional facilities and Saskatchewan coroner services and by continuing to fund targeted police initiatives across the province.

Mr. Speaker, included in this budget is an ongoing investment of more than 7 million for the operation of the new Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford. The secure site of the facility will provide services to offenders living with significant mental health issues. This first-of-its-kind facility will be operated by the Saskatchewan Health Authority and provide 96 beds for offenders.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, more than 8.5 million is being invested in the correctional system to increase security, reduce contraband coming into facilities, and increase the number of beds for young offenders. This includes 1.2 million for custody services, including new staff hired in the correctional facilities; 3.8 million to continue replacing security infrastructure in correctional centres across the province; 1 million for the ministry's contraband reduction initiative, including a new body scanner at the Prince Albert Correctional Centre; 2 million to complete the new living unit at the Paul Dojack Youth Centre; and 586,000 to staff the new living unit at the Paul Dojack Centre.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the budget includes more than 15 million to continue funding to 128 municipal police positions and targeted policing initiatives across the province. The ministry also remains committed to addressing the issue of rural crime through continued investment in the protection and response team, crime reduction teams, and the combined traffic safety service of Saskatchewan initiative.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture's budget will increase 3 per cent in 2019-20 to 391.3 million, ensuring programming to support the success of farmers, ranchers, and agribusinesses continue. The budget fully funds business risk management programs, sustains investments in agriculture. This will encourage . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, the 2019 budget contains 271.9 million to fully fund business risk management programs offered under the federal-provincial Canadian Agricultural Partnership, including crop insurance, AgriStability, AgriInvest, and western livestock.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've got to tell you a story. We've got a little bit of time here. But it wasn't that long ago I was down in the cafeteria, and the member from Athabasca come by and he said, "If I have one regret in life, it's that God didn't let me play hockey against you." He's talking about me now. And I said to

him, "God may have saved your life."

[19:45]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the crop insurance program includes a number of enhancements for 2019-20, including higher coverage on tame and native grazing lands to better reflect the losses producers experience during a shortfall in forage production. Approximately 30 million acres are anticipated to be insured under the crop insurance this year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government continues to invest 31.9 million in agriculture research, with funding for research projects, demonstration, and adoption of new technologies. The research funding is part of the 71.2 million that will be invested this year in the strategic programs under the five-year CAP [Canadian Agricultural Partnership] agreement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget continues to support a number of industry organizations, with funding for groups that include Agriculture in the Classroom, Saskatchewan 4-H Council, the Farm & Food Care Saskatchewan. These organizations, among others, help build trust in agriculture, develop future leaders, and support a sustainable industry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan's agriculture sector is an important part of the province. The province's diverse economy producers harvested a crop of more than 35 million tonnes in 2018, the sixth consecutive year the provincial harvest has been more than 30 million tonnes. Saskatchewan's 2018 total agri-food exports were 13.4 billion, an increase of more than 60 per cent since 2010.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, just a few words on highways. The 2019-20 Highways and Infrastructure budget invests 706 million in Saskatchewan highways and roads with a focus on improving safety. Now this would definitely be something that the member from Athabasca should listen to, as he was a previous Highways minister. This is a big number for him to absorb, but it's here. This year's budget improves about 1000 kilometres of provincial highways and provides 351 million for capital projects, in addition to the 89 million for the completion of the Regina bypass in the fall of 2019.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, 13 million for the first year of a five-year, 65 million enhanced intersection safety investment; 7 million through the safety improvement program to reduce the frequency of, severity of collisions. The 2019-20 budget will see improvements to more than 60 intersections, including new turning lanes, lighting, clearing of sightlines, and installation of rumble strips.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget provides more than 60 million to begin or continue or complete work on twinning and passing lanes, including twinning Highway 7 at Vanscoy; construction of two sets of passing lanes west of Rosetown on Highway 7 and Highway 2 north of Moose Jaw; continues construction of passing lanes and short sections of twinning on Highway 6 and 39 near Regina and Estevan; commence construction of passing lanes on Highways 9 and 10 between Canora and Melville; planning for passing lanes and other safety improvements on Highway 5 west of Saskatoon, and it will be the continuation of the Highway 4 project with the passing lanes there, which a very



good job was done; instalment of 121.3 million into 920 kilometres of repaving and preventative maintenance across the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to speak a little about the oil and gas development in my constituency. Serafina Energy and Husky Energy have and are building large-scale SAGD [steam-assisted gravity drainage] plants. Serafina has a plant operating at Vawn and another one at Meota. They currently are building a facility just east of the junction of Highway 4 and 26. They also have two projects in the early stages of development at Prince.

Mr. Speaker, Husky Energy has plants operating at Rush Lake, Pikes Peak, Edam, Vawn, and are building at Spruce Lake and just north of Maidstone on Highway 21, about 12 miles north of Maidstone.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these facilities employ hundreds of people during construction and good-paying jobs once completed. Mr. Speaker, as oil companies invest, there is a constant irritant that prohibits them from getting their product to market. That irritant is what caused us to lose about 1.2 billion in resource revenue, along with the price going down. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that irritant is the federal Liberals and their leader, Justin Trudeau.

I would like to talk a bit about the federal government, what it really has done to oil in the West. Upon election in 2015, Prime Minister Trudeau, the first thing out of his mouth was he was going to phase out the oil sands. Then the Trans Mountain pipeline in November of 2006, he approved that and he approved the Enbridge Line 3, and then he cancelled the Northern Gateway and the Energy East pipeline. He then bought the Kinder Morgan line.

It wasn't really for sale, but he couldn't get it passed to do an expansion, so he bought it so nobody else would get it. It shows that there is a plan here. The way it is right now, the federal government controls all the oil in Canada. There is only one line going to the West due for expansion. Who knows if it'll happen or whatever.

The Prime Minister also champions himself for First Nations. I'd just like to point out a couple things on that. Calvin Helin, chairman and president of Eagle Spirit Energy Holdings, was in Calgary last week spreading the news about an important First Nations energy initiative. Helin believes that the Eagle Spirit Energy corridor is a nation-building project, the first indigenous-led major infrastructure project in Canadian history.

The corridor is in the territories where it has found First Nations support. Eagle Spirit's energy crude oil pipeline would carry medium to heavy crude without condensate, which would satisfy critics who say diluted bitumen would be much harder to clean up than crude oil after a spill.

Eagle Spirit Energy CEO [chief executive officer] Calvin Helin says 35 First Nations supported the pipeline because it wouldn't carry diluted bitumen, and this robust support along with the fact that risk rating shipping from the port near Prince Rupert is very low means the project has excellent chances for regulatory approval.

However as Bill C-48 plans to formally ban tankers on the north BC [British Columbia] coast and could become law later this year, it will be an obstacle for northern pipeline proposals. In preparation, the Energy East says it will deal with landowners. Pretty much between the 35 bands they own just about all the land from Fort McMurray to Fort Nelson and then to Kitimat. So this is another impediment and they are heading to court over this.

Mr. Speaker, also I'd just like to mention about . . . Stephen Buffalo is the CEO of the Indian Resource Council, which is made up of 134 First Nations. Now this First Nation group is prepared to buy the Trans Mountain, but of course Bill C-69 then came into effect. And so now they're in court over a bunch of things on C-69. So you've got 134 First Nations now that want to buy the old Kinder Morgan line and take it over. But once again, we're not, the federal government is in control of that and they're in court again.

Mr. Speaker, it's all about control with the federal government. And I think that the former leader, the real leader of the federal Liberals, Mr. Gerry Butts, has got his wish; it's come true. He's got control of everything.

Mr. Speaker, our government has adjusted to these deterrents by the federal government. We are balanced. We will stand up for Saskatchewan residents and fight the carbon tax put in place by the federal Liberal government.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the budget motion and not the amendment by the NDP.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Canora-Pelly.

**Mr. Dennis:** — Thank you for the support, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to rise today in the Assembly to support the Finance minister in the '19-20 budget — a balanced budget with the right balance.

Mr. Speaker, first of all I'd like to — my third budget here — I'd still like to make some acknowledgements on this balanced budget. And I would like to thank my wife Lorri who has been my main support for me while I've been here the last three years. We've been married for 34 years, three lovely children. And I would tell you one thing, she's a lot happier since I got elected and I'm not home very much.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to acknowledge the rest of my family. My daughter, my oldest daughter Jasmine, she's employed by Walker Projects in Regina and she's married to Shane Ostapowich. I hear some chirping on the other side; I'm just doing introductions. Shane Ostapowich, he's the manager at SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] in Regina. And my two grandsons, Lewis who is three and a half years old, and he's my little boy, and he's a Bruins fan. And also I have a new addition in November 29th, baby Oliver. He's my new addition, November 29th, and he will soon be a Bruins fan too as well.

My second daughter Jade also lives in Regina, and she's currently employed at the correctional centre in Regina here. She's a great athlete, loves sports, still plays hockey, played for the U of R [University of Regina]. And last fall she bought a

house and finally moved away from her father, and for that I'm very thankful I don't have to clean the hair out of the sinks anymore or anything like that.

And then I've got my youngest son, Carson Dennis. He's 26 coming 27, still single, and for the last seven years he's been in Melville working at the golf course. And the last two winters they recruited him to make some ice, and he's the icemaker at the curling rink right now. Pretty good hockey player and curler too as well, and he's still single for anybody who's watching.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to thank our Finance Minister from the Humboldt constituency along with her wonderful staff and the treasury board, which I had the pleasure of . . . my first term being on the treasury board. I found it a lot of work, a lot of hours, but really rewarding and it was a great crew to work with. And although we had some difficult decisions, we came up with the right ones, I think, and the right balance. And we're balanced, so it's great.

I'd also like to thank our current Premier for keeping the boat in the right direction, and our previous premier, Brad Wall, and our previous Finance minister, Kevin Doherty, who made some tough decisions. And in the direction in 2017-18 budget, there was some tough decisions to be made and a three-year plan to get back to balance. And I really want to thank them and wish them well in their new ventures. So they've done a great job, and I thank the new Premier, and kudos to the Finance Minister.

I'd also like to thank my colleagues and the staff around this fine building. They've supported me well. They've heckled me. They've been really good and it's great to see. They're friends for life. I've grown to get some closer friends as we move on.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to thank my office staff. First of all, Carol Sleeva, who worked previously for Deputy Premier Ken Krawetz, and then she worked for me for the last two and a half years and finally retired in 2018, September, and I wish her well. She's got a new grandchild and I am sure she'll enjoy it, and I wish her well and thank her very much.

I'd also like to thank my new CA [constituency assistant], Gladys Zavislak. She just retired from crop insurance and I quickly nabbed her. She's been wonderful helping me out and doing a great job along with me. I also, when Gladys can't make it, I have a couple casual staff for the summer: Deb Gabora and Abby Gulka. I'd like to thank them too for putting in time and helping out where our constituents in our office.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to take time to talk a little bit about my Canora-Pelly executive and numerous people throughout the constituency. Sean Wilson, he's my president. He's the mayor from Buchanan. Sylvester Hrynkiw, the vice-president from Canora. Kris Cherewyk, our provincial council from Norquay; Daryl Stevenson, our treasurer from Burgis Beach; Gladys Zavislak, our secretary from Canora; and Melissa Johnson, our membership chair from the RM [rural municipality] of Keys, a farm gal.

Along with our directors at large: Jim Paluck from Kamsack; Garth Harris, the mayor from Preeceville; Patty Reynolds from Preeceville; along with Theresa Chabun, Glen Dutchak and Carlene Dutchak, Patty Kolodziejki, all from Canora.

I'd also like to thank, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to thank everybody from the Canora-Pelly constituency for their ongoing support over the last three years. And just in December I got renominated, and I look forward to the 2020 fall election and representing my constituency once again.

[20:00]

Mr. Speaker, I will now give you an overview of some of the highlights. Mr. Speaker, health expenses are projected at 5.8 billion, an increase of 2.1 per cent. This includes mental health and addiction services that are a strong focus of this budget, with nearly \$402 million allocated, an increase of nearly \$30 million, the largest commitment in mental health services in our province.

This includes \$13.7 million to staff the new Saskatchewan North Battleford hospital, which was recently opened at a record investment of 407 million. The new 284-bed facility replaces the old 156-bed hospital and two correctional facilities. The new facility will include 188 psychiatric rehabilitation beds and a 96-room secure wing for offenders living with mental health issues.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP seem to be quite concerned about the lack of spending on mental health over the last few weeks on these issues. And yet I look over there, and none of them showed up for the ribbon cutting in North Battleford . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, for the new facility. Mr. Speaker, yes — no shows. No shows.

Mr. Speaker, this budget also allocates \$5 million for the final stages for a new hospital in Weyburn and the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital redevelopment project.

Senior care improvement includes investing \$12 million to begin the construction to replace the Pioneers Lodge in Meadow Lake, fulfilling a commitment to replace 13 long-care facilities in our province — not closing them, building them. Construction is expected to begin in 2020. We're also due \$1.1 million to the Alzheimer Society. Operating funds to the Saskatchewan Health Authority has increased by 3.2 per cent to \$3.6 billion. This includes \$23 million increase for the Jim Pattison Hospital, which will be completed and open this fall in 2019 on time and on budget.

A funding increase of \$700,000 for children under the age of six with autism spectrum disorder, which will increase from 4,000 to 6,000 annual per child. A \$558,000 investment will support the creation of a provincial organ donor registry, which I just signed up for.

Mr. Speaker, since 2007 in health care, we have increased 900 doctors and over 3,700 additional nurses to our province.

**An Hon. Member:** — How many?

**Mr. Dennis:** — 3,700. Along with that, we have doubled the investment in hospital projects, including a new children's hospital in Saskatoon, a new hospital in Moose Jaw, and a recently opened one in North Battleford.

Mr. Speaker, under the NDP from 2001 to 2006, we lost 450 nurses, 173 doctors, and closed 52 hospitals. Shame. But I must

say the NDP did open one hospital and that was back in 1974. And I think the only one . . . well, maybe a couple of you were still around in those days. But it was opened and it was the Plains Hospital. That was opened for \$9 million in 1974. 1974 they opened it, and then in 1998 — I think they were still in power — they closed it. They decommissioned it for \$21 million. So you guys did build something and then you decommissioned it.

Mr. Speaker, in Social Services the budget is \$1.43 billion, an increase of 3.7 per cent. The ministry's income assistance budget has increased by 10 million. This includes \$6.3 million increased funding for the Saskatchewan assured income disability or the SAID program. Increase of 5.9 to third party agencies that deliver services on behalf of the ministry include \$1.4 million for foster families, 2.6 million for third party support for people with intellectual disabilities. There is an increase of 27.7 million for supports of at-risk children and families. Also an increase of 6.6 million for ministries, support for adults with intellectual disabilities.

Due to the review of the province's income assistance program, Social Services is launching a new program for new clients, the SIS program or Saskatchewan income support. And it will assist people to start a career, strengthen their abilities, thus becoming more self-sufficient.

The member from Athabasca is chirping over there, but I'm not sure what he has . . . He mumbles all the time. I don't know.

Mr. Speaker, education. Our government is investing \$3.28 billion in children's education: up more than 19 million from last year, over 7 million for advanced education. This budget will provide \$2.48 billion for the Ministry of Education which includes pre-kindergarten to grade 12, early learning, child care, and libraries.

Mr. Speaker, I chaired the library review after 2017-18. We clawed back some money from the libraries, and then after some thoughts we reversed the charges and reinstated the money along with the review. And I was chairing that review and I'm proud to say, you know, it is kind of funny, because for me to get the libraries, I never was much for libraries. My wife frequents them quite a bit. I was in a library to check my curling scores. That was probably about it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But I've gained quite a respect for libraries. There's a great use for them in our province, and I'm glad to say we reinstated it. We're going to keep the funding. We're going to add 1 per cent. And we're going to look at making changes, positive changes. I see that it houses 300,000 people. There's 300,000 people that enter in a year, from seniors to kids' programs to vulnerable . . . And it's just, you know, great for the communities. It's a great place, and I'm glad to see that we're going to continue with it.

Also the 27 school divisions will receive 1.9 billion in school operating funds, an increase of 26.2 million. 95.6 million will be allocated to school infrastructure, an increase of nearly 20 million over last year's totals. This includes \$3 million to provide planning and design for the following two new schools: a joint replacement school at École St. Pius elementary school and Argyle elementary school in Regina. A joint-use replacement consolidation at Sacred Heart, St. Mary, Empire, and Westmount schools in Moose Jaw; \$250,000 to determine the scope of a

replacement for the school of St. Frances in Saskatoon; \$29 million to provide funding for two ongoing major schools in Rosthern and Weyburn; \$55 million for the preservation, maintenance, and renewal emergency fund; and \$6.4 million for relocatable classrooms; and 1 million for school facility assessments.

Mr. Speaker, since 2007 we've moved forward with 46 brand new school replacements. And 23 major school renovations, 925 more teachers, and 177 more student supports since 2007. We've increased K to 12 funding over this time by 34 per cent. Mr. Speaker, what did the NDP do? They closed 176 schools from 2001 to 2007, and they got rid of 400 teachers.

Mr. Speaker, 2019-20 budget does strike the right balance when it comes to advanced education. Funding highlights include maintaining operating grants for the universities and tech schools, allocating over \$88 million for the College of Medicine and the University of Saskatchewan, and increasing funding for school financial assistance programs, the student loan programs, grant scholarships, and the graduate retention.

Mr. Speaker, this budget will provide a total of \$673 million in operating and capital grants to the U of S [University of Saskatchewan], the U of R, Sask Polytechnic, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, the Gabriel Dumont Institute, and regional colleges. Of this 673 million, more than \$22 million will be allocated throughout the post-secondary sector. Mr. Speaker, since 2007 the province has invested \$10 billion in post-secondary institutions and student supports. That's an increase of 53 per cent since 2007.

Mr. Speaker, this budget provides the right balance in the agriculture sector in our province, which is an important part of the province's diverse economy. The agriculture's budget will increase to 391.3 million, an increase of 3 per cent. Some of the highlights include 271.9 million to fund business risk management programs which include CAP, crop insurance, AgriStability, AgriInvest, and the western livestock price insurance programs. 31.9 million will be invested in agriculture research. Mr. Speaker, all of this will be done without increasing any portion of the education portion of property taxes or any other taxes this year.

Mr. Speaker, the budget is the right balance for corrections and policing in our great province. Over 8.5 per cent is invested into the correctional systems; more than 7 million for the operation of the new Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford, a portion of which 96 beds for offenders living with mental health issues; more than 15 million in funding to 128 municipal police officers; an additional \$1.6 million to the Coroners Service. It is great to see these implementations which strive to continue the safety and the security of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Environment is also at the right balance for the people of Saskatchewan, mandating environmental protection and sustainable resource management. Some highlights in the 2019-20 budget include over 27 million for Sarcan recycling program, an increase of 2.248 million. 9.252 million is being allocated to purchase the one CL-215T air tanker which will join the fleet in the 2022 wildfire season.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has presented a balanced

budget in 2019-20 and there will be a slight projected surplus of 34.4 million. Revenue forecast is at 15.03 billion, up 5.5 per cent, and expense is projected at 4.99 billion, which is up 2.6 per cent. The three ministries, Health, Education, Social Services are incurring over \$10 billion expenses, which is approximately 71 per cent of the entire expenses.

There is \$211 million allocated for First Nations and Métis, up 4.7 per cent. Included are 72.7 million in gaming agreements transfers for the First Nations and Métis; \$45 million to community organizations and supports; and allocations of resources to public safety and emergency service for all First Nation communities.

New to the 2019-20 budget offers non-refundable \$3,000 tax credit for volunteer firefighters and medical first responders who volunteer for at least 200 hours.

Mr. Speaker, budget highlights for Highways and Infrastructure include \$20 million to be invested in safety on Saskatchewan highways. Thirteen million for highway intersection safety fulfills a commitment to help reduce risk of collision at intersections. Included in this commitment is intersection improvements to 35 and 335, intersection sight triangle improvements and installation of rumble strips.

This budget works to improve approximately 1000 kilometres of provincial highways, providing \$351 million for capital projects as well as \$89 million to complete the Regina bypass, slated for this fall. Over \$60 million for twinning the passing lanes and, as my colleague said, I am pleased to see the passing lanes project between Melville and Canora will be starting this spring.

[20:15]

We are spending over \$15 million on municipal police and \$1.1 million for drug-impaired driver training. Mr. Speaker, municipal revenue sharing overall funding has increased from 240 million to 251 million. These funds will be distributed, 161.3 million to the urban municipalities, 71.7 to the rural, and 18.6 million to northern municipalities. Also the municipalities will total 437 from multiple ministries, an increase of 6.2 per cent. These funds aid in proper administration for the communities.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to throw a shout-out to our Government Relations minister who announced this new formula that will give stable funding to the municipalities at three-quarter per cent of PST collected. And I'd like to thank him and his staff for all the hard work they're doing. You know, over the years I was mayor, started in 2000 to 2007. We had no stable funding at all. Some years we didn't have much, they had floated. We had no security. It was hard to do a budget. Now we have secure funding. So it's nice to see, and I'd like to thank the Minister of the Government Relations.

And you know, also I'd like to say that the revenue sharing in Canora since 2007 went from 206,000 to 415,000, a 101 per cent increase. Kamsack revenue sharing went from 185,652 to 389,201, a 110 per cent increase. Preeceville revenue sharing increased from 108,000 to 231,000, a 113 per cent increase.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is investing \$2.7 billion in rural and urban infrastructure. Some of the capital investments include

\$873 million for enhancements in SaskPower, \$321 million enhancements into SaskTel, \$340 million into SaskEnergy, and 32 million into SaskWater. Mr. Speaker, the NDP on the other side, I don't think they realize what debt is. It's, you know, it's an infrastructure investment for the future of our province. They wouldn't know about infrastructure and debt because you guys never did anything. You left us with closed hospitals, closed schools, and potholes.

Mr. Speaker, last night the member opposite — and I don't know, I'm kind of maybe a nerd — I was watching TV last night from my house, and last night the member opposite from Saskatoon Riversdale asked our government if we wanted a medal or a chest to pin it on. I don't know; I thought that was kind of a little goofy. But I would just tell them, you know, we're not asking for anything. We're just doing our job — something that they couldn't do when they were in power . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, there is more to do, but we're on track and we're on the right balance to continue to grow our province and care for the people of the future of our province, Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, last night when I was also watching, the member opposite from Regina Northeast — and this kind of just blew me away — he was smiling while he talked about not reopening the 176 schools and 52 hospitals that they closed, and why we didn't reopen them. And he kind of smirked about it and that made me sick. Here's a guy that is bragging and going out into rural Saskatchewan. He wants to reconnect and he is smirking at closing these hospitals and these schools. Shame on them.

Mr. Speaker, again, I'd like to say to the members opposite, you guys just don't get it and you don't understand.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP are like Chicken Little. They use the scare tactics and the doom and gloom. And they all sit there like a bunch of puppets and you kind of pull their string and it's gone. The sky is falling, the sky is falling — that's all they've got. It's all doom and gloom over there.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I'd like to once again say that the '19-20 budget has the right balance and has fulfilled a three-year commitment to get back to balance. I will be supporting the motion by Indian Head-Milestone and not the amendment. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

**Hon. Ms. Wilson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my privilege to rise in the House and take part in the budget debate. All the positive things that are happening in our government's balanced budget affects the constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers and its constituents, people who happen to be in my community, good hard-working people of Saskatchewan. And throughout my speech I'd like to mention what I've been doing in their communities, and how the budget affects the people of Saskatchewan Rivers, how it contributes to the quality of life for all people.

The diversity of the budget decision supports all Saskatchewan citizens and, Mr. Speaker, is in the best interests of this province. This government is in touch with Saskatchewan people as it serves and has an obligation and a responsibility to provide

services creating the right balance. Responsible spending and sustainable programs is a mandate for this government, and the message is for a great province, a great province to live and work and raise your family and your family's traditions and cultures.

I was privileged to experience a wonderful holiday season, one I hope will soon be an annual tradition at Christmas for my family. The Candle Lake Festival of Lights was a great way to share the magic of Christmas with our family. Even though it was a frosty evening, the hot cocoa and treats was a fine way of warming up. Community members, volunteers, and SaskParks did an excellent job of making Sandy Bay campground a fine winter playground. And not only is it good for summer camping, but the winter experience will be memorable also for families.

Now, it's surrounded by the boreal forest, and forest fires are a common occurrence. The '19-20 budget includes over 9 million for new firefighting aircraft which will protect our environment and the families that live there. We will continue to use it for resource management. And in the area where I live, men and women are employed by the fire suppression unit. They live in the area and this is good news for Saskatchewan River constituents.

Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Harold Magrath turned 100 this past year. The Big River Legion members hosted a fine birthday celebration for this World War II veteran, who welcomed his guests warmly. He even remembered my name. Harold is a Legion life member who, as you can imagine, has quite a life history to tell. He has suffered the loss of three children and four grandchildren but still manages to find joy in his life.

Our seniors are incredible people who have made Saskatchewan come into full potential of greatness and have an incredible work ethic and willingness to help others. Now this budget and our government continues to care for our Saskatchewan seniors by continuing to build long-term care facilities and increasing home care support to help seniors live longer in their homes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another aspect of Saskatchewan culture I participate in and enjoy is the 4-H youth clubs. To be able to belong and learn by doing is a positive aspect of growing up in this particular environment of mentorship and guidance. By supporting our local and regional clubs, I see these supports enhance and teach our younger members of Saskatchewan valuable lessons of life.

Now last month I helped judge a local 4-H public speaking club event at Spruce Home. Now these young people demonstrated poise and confidence and interesting speeches to the audience of their peers, their parents, and their grandparents. It's a great way to start achieving goals to bring to post-secondary education and employment. Now most of these clubs centre around agriculture and the rural way of life in Saskatchewan, and our government's budget will help achieve those goals of seeing agriculture continue to thrive in this province.

In the budget, agriculture is funded to over 391 million, providing continued investment in research and funding the crop program. Now there's more. The budget supports funding for the groups: Ag in the Classroom, Farm and Food, and of course my favourite, the Saskatchewan 4-H Council.

Now our government will always reflect those qualities of determination, reliance, and resourcefulness as it stands up for our province and works to build a stronger Saskatchewan while developing future leaders and supporting our sustainable ranch and farm families.

Our budget will invest 20 million in the highways and improvements that will help all of the farm families in rural Saskatchewan, and this infrastructure will safely move agriculture products, school buses, and families throughout Saskatchewan. One thousand kilometres of provincial highways will be improved, while bridges and culverts will be upgraded or replaced, with 60 million in funding. Highway 2 North has seen over 5 million in repaving, and Highway 55 near Nipawin has seen an investment in a major bridge repair.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan is known for its volunteers and its first-rate hospitality. The Prince Albert area is no exception to this. Hosted at the Prince Albert Golf & Curling Club and the Art Hauser Centre was the New Holland Canadian Junior National Curling Championship. And I was fortunate to attend and bring greetings at the opening and closing ceremonies with teams in attendance from other provinces and territories across Canada. Now I was very appreciative of the efforts by the Chair of the host committee, Bryan Rindal, and his 300 numerous volunteers in attendance to make sure this went smoothly. This championship featured the top male and female curling rinks from across Canada vying for the national title and the right to advance to the World Junior Championship that will be held in Liverpool, Nova Scotia.

Now as a note of interest, the Saskatchewan champion woman team was skipped by Sara England, daughter of the 1998 Olympic gold medallist Sandra Schmirler. Now 14 men and 14 women teams competed to the Canadian titles, and at the end of this, the provinces' champions were Alberta women's and British Columbia men's. But the economic spinoff for the event was over 1.5 million for Prince Albert and over 2.2 million provincially.

Our government will continue through this budget to support and invest in communities, delivering services for both rural and urban Saskatchewan, all the while with no tax increases, with business tax rates among the lowest in Canada.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government is pleased to work with our partners to help make long-lasting differences in the lives of Saskatchewan citizens. Home ownership is very important to all people of the province, and by partnering with the Government of Canada and the Government of Saskatchewan, Habitat for Humanity has worked with two new Prince Albert families to provide them with safe and secure homes.

And I was able to meet with these two wonderful families who were very happy to partner with and help build their homes. Observing their joy and satisfaction as homeowners, proud to invest in their new homes, was a great feeling for all of us there as we could visually see the real difference our government is making to Saskatchewan citizens. I shared in their joy that day as I brought greetings and admired the little touches in their new homes that make it a home: the handcrafted wall and large aquarium teeming with colourful fish. So I could see the love and the pride brought to this home.

[20:30]

Affordable housing agreements have enabled many families and communities in Saskatchewan to own their own homes, paying interest-free mortgage payments and helping make a better quality of life. Our contributions are making a difference to the families who might not be able to secure loans, and we are investing in people and we are investing in brighter futures.

This budget contains no new taxes, making life affordable for Saskatchewan families while balancing a growing infrastructure and a growing economy. Mr. Deputy Speaker, municipal revenue sharing will increase by more than 10 million for this budget, bringing the total amount to 251 million next fiscal year. This results in a predictable and sustainable formula that enables our rural municipalities to continue to invest in the local priorities. And this makes sense: to cultivate potential innovation ideas that can improve services at home that are so important to everyone's quality of life and benefit the families in rural Saskatchewan.

Our municipal partners will invest in ideas that support good governance and regional planning. And the RMs that I represent of Buckland, Garden River, Canwood, Big River, Torch River, Paddockwood, and the District of Lakeland will continue to provide great services to the ratepayers, residents of Saskatchewan. Rural municipalities will receive over 71 million to grow and support these projects.

I've been inspired by those who face challenges with resilience. Adversity can be an opportunity to find solutions for themselves and to help others. Standing up for Saskatchewan is the Saskatchewan way, and I'm grateful to call Saskatchewan home as we continue to stand up for others and find solutions to make Saskatchewan continue to be a great place to live and work.

In our budget we have the right balance for Saskatchewan people, the right balance to remain healthy both physically and mentally. The budget has the largest ever investment in mental health and addiction services — over 140 new beds for addiction and mental health, rapid access to addictions for the Prince Albert area. Earlier this spring, close to 20 of us MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] attended the grand opening of the new Saskatchewan North Battleford hospital, which is state of the art and will help relieve the suffering of the mentally ill.

The right balance of investing in the people of Saskatchewan and giving a better quality of life. Treatment and care through more staff, more social workers, pediatric nurses, more walk-in clinics across Saskatchewan, more vocational programs will all expand capacity to deliver services to children, youth, and adults in need. The Farm Stress Line received 25,000. Government-wide mental health funding increased by nearly 30 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I was also very fortunate this year to be able to speak with several schools in my Saskatchewan Rivers constituency, and I'm always amazed at the young people, these students who challenge me with interesting questions and great dialogue. I wish to thank the teachers and staff at Red Wing School, Spruce Home, and Meath Park, who welcomed me with warmth and open minds. Those were some of the coldest days of this winter, but I found warm hearts and engaging conversation with these young minds.

With six grandchildren at one particular school, I'm also able to observe first-hand the excitement involved with holiday concerts, walkathons, and dedication of the education staff. Grandma, can I have some money for the walkathon?

Our budget continues to support the education system, families and children of Saskatchewan with our budget by investing over 95 million in infrastructure, including new schools and maintenance. Saskatchewan's 27 school divisions will receive 1.9 billion in school operating funding, and KidsFirst will be continued in funding of over 15 million.

I love to read and continue to read to the elementary school children in their classrooms, and I was pleased to see in our budget the support from K to grade 12 in the way of libraries and literacy funding.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the community grant programs are valuable to our smaller communities by providing much-needed services to our youth. White Fox School received funding for its White Fox afterschool program, and nearby Nipawin Oasis afterschool at-risk youth project was also a beneficiary. Now these investments in our children continue to strengthen our province. Saskatchewan Rivers investments in our education system in the Sask Rivers School Division increased by 14 per cent from the last budget. Notable capital investments were new roofs for Meath Park and Christopher Lake schools and an air handling unit for Choiceland school. We were not left behind; I'm very grateful.

The '19-20 budget also invested 728 million for post-secondary institutions, continuing to provide high-quality education for Saskatchewan students. And there's 7 million in scholarships ensuring students have funding for their tuition costs. Saskatchewan needs graduates to live and work in our beautiful, growing province.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm going to use a quote from a man I admire, Stephen Harper, politician and former prime minister of Canada:

We got into a recession because the global economy went into the recession and we're a big exporting nation. I think because we're such a trading nation, Canadians understand that first and foremost we are part of the global economy.

In regard to our government's former budgets, we were able to strengthen our economy in the tourism area by providing over 350,000 for Prince Albert National Park destination. Plan for the Destination West project, including tourism infrastructure and value-added forestry, was another 2 million. Today our government's budget has added SaskTel access network infrastructure in the communities of Big River, White Fox, and Paddockwood in Sask Rivers riding. And through the parks, Candle Lake has benefited with multi-use trail improvements and the visitor reception centre replacement.

As Saskatchewan values its pristine lakes and parks, this is one way our Saskatchewan citizens and indeed our global visitors and tourists can enjoy our beautiful province and enhanced tourism in the economy. Local businesses will thrive and grow in these communities. Why I'm very grateful to live in Saskatchewan in Sask Rivers riding where we have so many beautiful lakes and

tourism and businesses that thrive because of our budget and what our government's vision is.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in conclusion, this balanced budget, as I have defined how it applies to the constituents of Saskatchewan Rivers, presents clear opportunities and renewed optimism to continue to raise your family and work in the best province in Canada. The confidence of the farmers, business people, and entrepreneurs reflects on our government's investments in health care, investments in infrastructure, and investments in education, and investments in people.

Saskatchewan is strong. And based on our government's excellent vision and leadership, I will be supporting the budget but not the amendment. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's good to take my place in this debate and join the discussion from my feet. I'm already putting the member from Wood River to sleep. I don't know what's up with that. He's going to have to save up; that's along about the 10-minute mark.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is good to take my feet and, you know, also to join the debate in this part of the rotation, coming after the member from Saskatchewan Rivers. I think at the end she was talking about the great work that her government has done around the lakes, which we found interesting, Mr. Speaker. We, you know, we're all pro-creation and the beauty of nature on this side. And then my colleague from Nutana said, you know, I guess, what about the mosquitoes? You know, if the Sask Party's responsible for the lakes, what about the mosquitoes? And possibly an NDP legacy thing to hear a cheer, Mr. Speaker.

But you know, I guess I bring that forward as one sort of example of just the way this debate goes. And you know, it's kind of like *Groundhog Day* in some regards, you know, because here we are, each side dutifully or in some cases less than dutifully hitting their talking points, and meanwhile outside the world is going on. And you know, the highs are never quite as high as they're portrayed in here and the lows, to cop to the truth, Mr. Speaker, are never quite as low as they'd be portrayed in the criticisms of the budget. And somewhere between those two things you find what's the actual fact.

So, Mr. Speaker, in terms of where I'm at right off the top here, sign me up. I've got a lot of people to say thank you to, Mr. Speaker. Certainly I want to say thank you very much to the good people of Regina Elphinstone-Centre. It's a community that is incredibly diverse and has some of the finest people you'd find anywhere, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the different neighbourhoods, in terms of the different things going on in the constituency. You know, I am very, very blessed to be able to try and do my part as their Member of the Legislative Assembly. And as I've said on occasion in past, Mr. Speaker, that's where I was born and raised, where a lot of people know me and yet they still vote for me. And it's quite humbling, in all seriousness, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to say thank you very much to my colleagues and the folks that work in the caucus office in terms of what we get to do on

behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. The job that's been assigned to us of course is to be the official opposition, Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, and to hold the government to account.

So, Mr. Speaker, again in terms of the work of opposition, one of your first jobs, and it's been set there for you by the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is to hold the government to account. And sometimes, you know, that gets in the way of the Kool-Aid chugging contest that can break out on the other side, Mr. Speaker.

And sometimes they accuse us of being mean-spirited or negative or, you know, because we're not joining in on the amen chorus, Mr. Speaker. Because I guess . . . I don't know if it's misery loves company or what the deal is over there, but of course anything other than, you know, join in the Kool-Aid chugging in terms of what the members opposite expect for every blessed action of their government, Mr. Speaker, is somehow portrayed as mean or nasty or some darn thing. But, Mr. Speaker, I would remind them that the job that has been set out for us is to hold this government to account, and that is something that we shall do.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the folks that I get to work with in the constituency office, again there I am very blessed in terms of working with a guy named Tim. And you know, after many years, Mr. Speaker, we're going to be moving the location of my constituency office. There's a new purpose for the building where we've been for these past 18 years if you can believe it, Mr. Speaker.

It's going to be one heck of a spring cleaning, but we're going to be moving over to Dewdney Avenue, Mr. Speaker, between Cameron and Robinson. And again, Mr. Speaker, we're going to be beside Happy Jack's Pawn Shop. So I've been teasing my co-worker Tim that we're going to be branding our office as Happy Tim's, but I don't know if he's very happy about that, Mr. Speaker.

But just a bit of a preview for the folks, because in terms of the work that we get to do on behalf of the many different people in Regina Elphinstone-Centre that have different problems with this government, Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to be there to serve, to do the work that is counted on. And for that, Mr. Speaker, again we are very thankful.

[20:45]

I guess this is as good a place as any, Mr. Speaker, to — it's like to confess to having human emotions — to say thank you very much to my family, Mr. Speaker. This is not a . . . None of these jobs are solo acts, and I know that we all count on so many. And, Mr. Speaker, in my life I am again very blessed to have people who love me, people who I love and who I count on in so many different ways.

And first in that, amongst that rank is my partner, Theresa. And I am so lucky to have her in my life, Mr. Speaker. And I know that, you know, sometimes life will put things in front of you that drive those points home all the more so, and that has been the case for us in the McCall-Sabourin household this past winter season, Mr. Speaker. And I know for darn sure just how lucky I am to have her in my life and how thankful I am for her.

As well, Mr. Speaker, my father just celebrated his 85th birthday on March 8th, International Women's Day — great feminist that he is. He was like first wave. Mr. Speaker, again we had some interesting passes with what we affectionately like to call the big McCallski in the McCall family: Doug McCall, head of the clan. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm very fortunate to have such a great father, as are we McCall kids and McCall grandkids. And, Mr. Speaker, that he should take some of those curves in the road, hit some hard patches, and bounce back from them is a testament to his spirit. And, Mr. Speaker, we couldn't be luckier and more fortunate to have one Doug McCall in our life and I know in our neighbourhood's life. He's someone that gives so much.

So, Mr. Speaker, in terms of . . . I guess this is also sort of a, you know, I think I'm succumbing to Stockholm syndrome. But I want us . . . This is the first time I've had a chance to get up on one of these kind of occasions to remark on some of the folks that have announced that they're going on.

And as I was reminded not too long ago, Mr. Speaker, for example, the member from Cannington, longest-serving member of this Assembly. And I'd just like to wish him all the best on what's to come for him. You know, certainly we've had our differences, Mr. Speaker. There aren't many things that we agree on, Mr. Speaker, but one thing I know for certain is that this is a guy that passionately believes in his principles, in his ideas, and in serving the folks he represents. And you know, when we're not busy disagreeing or bickering about this, that, or the other . . . There was that one time he wanted to nationalize the rail industry. I thought that was a bit of a . . . He'd gone so far right, Mr. Speaker, he'd come back left. But I do want to wish him well in terms of his next plans.

And I know that there are other members that have made those announcements as well. I think the member from Martensville, again she keeps bringing me these gifts of T-shirts and things like that. You know, if you say something a little bit wrong in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, you can count on her to never let you forget about it. But been there, done that, got the T-shirt, I guess we'll say. I guess we'll say.

Anyway so to the folks that are heading on, on that side, Mr. Speaker, and as well to colleagues on my side that have made that announcement — and far be it from me to involve the Deputy Speaker in the debate, Mr. Speaker — but to yourself as well, we say thank you for the service. And you know, now maybe we'll have a shot at Last Mountain Touchwood. We'll see how that goes. But, Mr. Speaker, indeed, thanks to the folks that are moving on. And . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . You know, now that I've said all the nice things, there's my friend, the member for Martensville.

Anyway, so back to the trenchant critique. Mr. Speaker, in terms of a budget that has been branded as the right balance, again I'd refer you to where I started in the remarks. And again there's, you know, the one side hits high, the other side hits low, and somewhere between lays the truth, Mr. Speaker. And it's been my experience that, you know, there's never one side or the other has a complete monopoly on virtue, Mr. Speaker. You look at a budget of billions and billions of dollars, and guess what? You're going to find out that there's some good things being done in that budget, Mr. Speaker.

So I guess for the members opposite . . . And I hear the member from Regina Rochdale chiming in from her seat. And it was interesting listening to her speech earlier this day, Mr. Speaker, where she pinned the problems at St. Pius school here in the city of Regina on Allan Blakeney, Mr. Speaker. On Allan Blakeney. Now I guess that's a bit of an upgrade from the kind of blame that they've tried to put on Tommy Douglas for the mess that they're making of Wascana Centre, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting that, you know, I guess it's a little more current than that. You know, it's referring to 1976 when I was the ripe old age of four.

But, Mr. Speaker, that . . . I think of someone like President Harry Truman in the United States who had a motto on his desk, says "The buck stops here." And it's been my experience, Mr. Speaker . . . And this is why it's kind of hard to take some of these debates seriously. Because when it comes to where the buck stops with this government, Mr. Speaker, it's always, like, over there someplace. Like taking responsibility for things is very hard for these people to do. It's very hard for these people to do.

And so, Mr. Speaker, in considering this budget, Mr. Speaker, where again they've doubled the take on the PST, and you've got a bunch of members puffing up the chest and saying, oh, there's no new taxes in this budget. Well, you know, you front-end loaded one whole heck of a lot of tax increase in last budget. So you're riding on the avails of that.

But when it comes to the debt, Mr. Speaker, I guess, you know, there's no Tory government quite like an old Tory government. And I guess, you know, like they can talk Sask Party all they want, but the way that they get their marching orders from conservative central and the way that they, you know, can work in concert with other conservative governments around this country, Mr. Speaker, it's pretty plain what we've got here. And it's a conservative government.

And you just don't know them by the talking points that they hit, Mr. Speaker. You'll also know them by the fact that when this government gets the four-year done here, they'll have tripled the debt. They'll have tripled the debt, Mr. Speaker, to \$23 billion — pardon me, 26. Mr. Speaker, again, that's what we expect from Tory governments in this province. But you know, it's so sad to have them live down to our expectations like that.

So they'll talk about different things in this Assembly and it's like, you know, we went through the 2016 election, which proved to be a bit of a charade in terms of what the real situation was with the books, Mr. Speaker. And they brought in that quick budget after the election and, you know, tried to buy themselves some time with the transformational change agenda. And they even had a committee. They had a star chamber set up for that.

And then of course the real budget hit in 2017, Mr. Speaker. And again, so we'll go through all these, you know . . . And as these budgets were going on, you'd have various of the members opposite dutifully getting up and giving the, you know, the kids are . . . We no longer have to buy the kids luggage for their grade 12 grad, and they're all staying home, at a time when . . .

[Interjections]

Here we go, Mr. Speaker. That's the applause of a bunch of champion Kool-Aid chuggers. That's what you hear over there,



Mr. Speaker, in terms of, you know, hitting talking points like that. And again, they did it one after the other, you know, one after the other in terms of their speeches.

And what was happening with out-migration, Mr. Speaker? Well guess what? The kids were leaving Saskatchewan, you know. So again, it's one of these things where it's sort of like, you know, a reverse machine, Mr. Speaker. If this government says it's a priority, check your wallet. If this government says that it is something very important . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . New schools, yes. And then we hear the member from Saskatoon Northwest, again someone who said that he's been out there doing a lot of talking with folks, a lot of listening.

So I guess, Mr. Speaker, one of the things, like I don't know if they're operating with a different dictionary or what's going on. Because when they talk about consultation, when they talk about partnership, when they talk about valuing something like education, Mr. Speaker, I wonder where that was when, you know, the day after the budget when all the fanfare subsides, we get the calls saying that Cornwall Alternative School is going to be closed, that they couldn't be counted on for the third year of the three-year agreement that they'd signed with this school of last resort, Mr. Speaker.

And again, you know, I live in hope. I live in hope, Mr. Speaker. Being opposition this long, you've got to be hopeful. Some days it's harder than others, Mr. Speaker. But my hope is this: that when the minister says that he went to meet with those people in earnest, and that he's going to go talk to them on Thursday and meet with the board, that he's going to do the right thing. He's going to do the right thing, Mr. Speaker. It's never too late to do the right thing. So here's hoping, Mr. Speaker. Here's hoping. Here's hoping.

And I guess the thing is, Mr. Speaker, the other good time to do the right thing is before you make the big mistake. Before you say education is so important to us, Mr. Speaker, and then you slip something like that into the budget. So for all the talk about school closures from the members opposite, you know, how is it that they are all on board for closing Cornwall Alternative School? How does that work? How does that square with the rhetoric that they've got on the agenda?

And, Mr. Speaker, in terms of how the budget itself plays out as it goes across the sector after the lights fade and the billboards, you know, go away . . . And again, Mr. Speaker, I've been around long enough for, you know, Brad Wall putting up the, you know, paying-down-debt billboards. I've been around long enough for Brad Wall to say in this Chamber how they were aiming for zero debt, Mr. Speaker, instead of, you know, historic levels of debt that this government has brought upon this province and that — mark my words — will have to be reckoned with by the generation to come. That's the legacy that this government is leaving, Mr. Speaker.

So again in terms of what is said here, what is put forward in the budgets, Mr. Speaker, and the way that it gets hyped up and the parades go on and the Kool-Aid gets chugged, out in the real province of Saskatchewan all of these things are taking effect. So, Mr. Speaker, you'll forgive me for being a bit skeptical when I hear about, you know, there's . . . something like there's no new tax increases in this budget, when in the constituency that I

represent, where in terms of the food service sector, there are people who have lost their jobs. There are people who have lost livelihoods as a direct result of those changes, Mr. Speaker.

And again this comes on the heels of, you know, years of . . . I can remember the pizza boxes coming in from members opposite filled with petitions saying, don't put the tax on food, Mr. Speaker. That was a big cause for these members opposite, until it wasn't. I think the same thing for the blue-collar folks in Regina Elphinstone-Centre that work in construction, and then seeing their livelihoods significantly impacted, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the decisions of this government. This is where it's hard to square the hype and the self-congratulation with what's actually happening.

And again, Mr. Speaker, there's some fine things that have happened in this budget. Absolutely. I don't know if the member from Rochdale is trying to pin St. Pius on Allan Blakeney again. I'm not sure what she's doing there, Mr. Speaker. You'd think she'd have enough to pay attention to with not trying to screw up Wascana Park any worse than she's already contributed to, Mr. Speaker. You know, they took it over and apparently it was for a reason, Mr. Speaker. You think that would be for, you know, that would be enough to keep that member's attention.

Mr. Speaker, there were some good things in this budget, some things that I'm particularly glad to see. I'm glad to see more money for occupational health and safety because, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has a problem like few places in this country, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the kind of year that we've had in terms of worker fatalities.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the expanded SaskTel service, I had the great privilege of being the critic for SaskTel. We're glad to see the people's telco working for the people, expanding connectivity which is necessary for this 21st century economy, Mr. Speaker.

[21:00]

But again we look on with some worry as this government works through the Crowns to increase the debt limits on all of the Crowns, Mr. Speaker. And we've got a bill in front of this Assembly already where they want to raise the SaskEnergy debt limit to \$2.5 billion, Mr. Speaker. And you know, like how do these things all add up?

And again, Mr. Speaker, there have been some historic moments of reckoning in the history of this province. Mr. Speaker, I think of the work of the Gass Commission after the 1991 election where they looked at the Crowns, where they looked at executive government, where they looked at various of the deals that the Devine government had done and tried to make some sense of that, Mr. Speaker, in terms of righting the ship.

And, Mr. Speaker, there were people that got to pay the price for that. And you know, I as a nicely started off at university student, Mr. Speaker, I know I certainly got to pay some of that in terms of what folks had to pay the cheque for in terms of what had been passed on. And what's going on in the Crowns right now, Mr. Speaker, is the way that these ladies and gentlemen like to pass on the cost of their mistakes to the people of Saskatchewan.

So they want to have a line item in the SaskPower bill, Mr. Speaker. You know, I've got a few other ideas on line items that they could put in there. One, the Bill Boyd legacy penalties. You know, that would be one place to start, Mr. Speaker. But we'll see if there would be someone else say a bit more about that. But, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes. No. Well I'm just getting going.

Now I appreciate that the Minister of Education has had a long day. It's been a long day for that member, you know, and hopefully he's got some long thoughts to be thought as well. And hopefully he's working as part of a government that when they say education is important, it's important for everyone . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, well you know, save us the self-congratulations for after when you do the right thing.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, yes . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Okay, and now I hear the member from Regina Pasqua, Regina Pasqua weighing in on Scott Collegiate. And again, Mr. Speaker, if you want to look at the different games that this government has played, where there was \$1.5 million put up for planning in February of 2007, and then the way that this government screwed around with that project for the next decade, Mr. Speaker, and again, like you know, if they want to talk what the record is, we can talk what the record is. The money was there in February of 2007, Mr. Speaker. And then again, it got announced in 2011, got announced in 2016. And you know, if that's the thing that they hate, Mr. Speaker, they must have been some angry with themselves, the games that they played with Scott Collegiate. They must have been some angry. Or the way that, you know, they've got the Health minister chirping from his seat.

**An Hon. Member:** — Absolutely.

**Mr. McCall:** — Yes, absolutely. Health was a partner in that project until they got walked away from that project by that government. And you know, maybe someday, Mr. Speaker, that project can be fully realized. But for now I live happy, Mr. Speaker. I live encouraged with the fact that we've got a first-rate high school for the students of Scott Collegiate to attend, Mr. Speaker, and what that means for the neighbourhood. I just wish that they'd pay attention to the rest of the piece in terms of what's happening with housing, what's happening with justice, what's happening with the gangs, Mr. Speaker.

And again, you know, so we've got what happened with Cornwall Alternative School. This comes on the heels of . . . You know, two years ago I think it was, the member from Battlefords was out talking to folks about crime. And I know for a fact, Mr. Speaker, there were folks that talked to him about what's happening with gangs in the inner city of Regina. And you'd think, if that message had gotten through, if the listening had been sincere, Mr. Speaker, then a decision like they made with Cornwall Alternative School would have been the last thing they'd be doing.

Mr. Speaker, if they want to keep giving the gangs the upper hand, if they want to keep giving addiction the upper hand, you know, decisions like the one they made with Cornwall Alternative School is . . . and that God willing they overturn, Mr. Speaker. God willing they come to their senses. You know, if they want to give the gangs the upper hand, if they want to give addictions the upper hand, those are precisely the things that do

that, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, again out in the world their decisions have effect. Their decisions have consequences. And I just wish you'd hear more about those consequences and effect in an open and honest way from this government, Mr. Speaker, instead of the relentless Kool-Aid chugging contest that goes on over there. But, Mr. Speaker, these are the reasons why and it's not hard to see past things like, you know, tripled debt and doubled PST take and the impacts that they're having, Mr. Speaker, to know that this is a government that, I think, has gone out of touch. It's a government that believes its own hype instead of what's happening right in front of their very eyes. And, Mr. Speaker, for those reasons and many more, I'll certainly be supporting the amendment, and I'll be voting against that budget and that government.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

**Mr. Cox:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly a pleasure to be able to rise here today and the bar has certainly been raised in this Assembly, so I'm just going to have to have a sip of my Kool-Aid here before I start. Mmm, maybe now I can.

Mr. Speaker, like all my colleagues, I'd just like to seize this opportunity to say some very sincere thank yous to some people that have been very important to me as I have been on this journey and here in this Assembly. First and foremost to my wife, Linda, thank her for looking after affairs back home, and I guess you can say keeping the home fires burning while I'm down here. Certainly to my family, three kids and their spouses and most importantly five of the most wonderful grandkids that anybody could ever ask for.

And I didn't think I would every say this, Mr. Speaker, but I agree with the Leader of the Opposition's comments last Wednesday when he said that what we're doing here today is all about the kids. It's about the generations that are going to follow us and that's why we're here and we're going to continue doing that. I'm not sure that harnessing them with a \$2.5 billion deficit as was his campaign platform is the right way to do it, but anyway, we'll agree with that. And I guess I also agree when he talks about young people. I'm sure he's not referring to the member from Cannington when he talks about them.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to thank my party executive back home and certainly, Bart Wood for all the great work that he's doing there. My two constituency assistants, Lil Robinson and Debbie Zayac-Sheppard, who do a great job. Very compassionate ladies, very professional, very knowledgeable about helping the people in The Battlefords. And I think very importantly, the constituents of The Battlefords, I thank them. I'm honoured every day that I have the opportunity to attend this Assembly, and I pledge to them as I did when I got elected that I'll continue to be their voice here in this Legislative Assembly.

Treasury board and the Finance minister, we cannot ever thank them enough. It is a job that goes on almost, you might as well say, 12 months of the year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they continue to do a great job and bring in budgets that work for the people of this province.

So now a few comments about our budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You know, we've heard comments about this balanced budget from my colleagues, and this balanced budget is one of only four in the nation. And I'd like to suggest that it's not only a balanced budget, but it is the right balance. And to me that means not only the numbers are balanced, but we maintained our commitment to continue to provide services to the citizens of Saskatchewan and not harness them with a huge deficit going forward.

And this is a plan that was formulated two budgets ago, a plan to get to this point. And we have achieved our goal set out in that plan. But, Mr. Speaker, I submit to you that this is a journey, not a destination. Yes, we have reached balance this year for our 2019-2020 budget. But we are not going to stop here. This budget, with no new taxes or tax increases, highlights total revenue at \$15.03 billion, up approximately \$780 million from last year, an increase of some 5.5 per cent. On the expense side, expenses have risen by 2.6 per cent or 382 million to 14.99 billion.

And I'm going to make a slightly different comment here, Mr. Speaker, than some of my colleagues. But I'm very pleased to see that our expenses have increased. Expenses increase as we increase the services to our citizens of this province. As the population grows, we need to provide more services. And basically is that not the purpose of the growth that we have seen here in Saskatchewan? The purpose of that growth is to enable us to increase supports where needed, and I'd just like to highlight some of those initiatives in a few moments here.

Now I mentioned earlier that this is a journey, not a destination. Just like three years ago when we formulated this plan to get to balance after having to absorb a \$1 billion hit in our lost revenues, we will continue to provide a balanced budget to the people of Saskatchewan and maintain our AAA credit rating and in fact our annual surpluses will continue to grow. Next year our surplus is forecasted to be \$49 million. The following year we'll see a \$72 million surplus and three years out, our surplus is forecasted to be \$84 million. Mr. Speaker, we've had to make some tough decisions along the way, but we've had a plan and we've stuck to it, and now we can see the results and we're going to continue to see them.

On March 8th of this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was privileged to attend the official opening of our Sask Hospital North Battleford. Again that has been a journey that I am very proud to have been part of. I think back to a sunny day in August — I think it was about six or seven years ago — when then premier, Premier Brad Wall, and the then Health minister, the member from Indian Head-Milestone, made the announcement in the cafeteria of our old Saskatchewan Hospital up there. And we've been through the new hospital several times since that. And I was happy at our opening that we held on March the 8th that the former Chair of the Prairie North Health District, David Fan, thanked sincerely that Health minister from Indian Head-Milestone. He also thanked the Health minister that follows him, the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy, and then our current Health minister, the member from Rosetown.

I had other opportunities to attend at that hospital. The next time we were there it was for the sod-turning. And that was a bitterly cold day in September as I remember and there was about 200 people gathered to see that sod-turning. And the Minister of

Corrections and Policing was there. I remember we're sitting up on a little platform stage that they put up out on the middle of the prairie and it was so bitterly cold, but we were all happy that day. It was a great announcement for The Battlefords, the largest infrastructure ever built in The Battlefords at that time.

Mr. Speaker, after that time we had opportunities to tour the hospital on several different stages of construction. And it was an absolutely beautiful building to tour, as I said, the single largest infrastructure budget item ever in mental health in this province. But until I went there and attended the announcement that our local fundraising for the New Beginnings campaign had reached its target and had in fact had exceeded its target, that was the first time I'd been through that building when it was occupied.

And, Mr. Speaker, it became more than a beautiful building on that day when I was through there and saw the looks on the faces of the patients, the clients in that building, and the great work that the staff was doing, how pleased they were with that new building, some of the details that were put into that building, some of the things that they had asked for in the 3P [production preparation process] processes that we went through to get to that building. It was just, all of a sudden it became a home and not just a beautiful building.

So that's why I was pleased to see in this budget \$13.7 million for the health care professionals that are going to work at that Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford. And that 13.7 million is just part of the nearly \$402 million in our mental health budget this year, and that's an increase of \$30 million over last year. And I think, most importantly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that \$30 million increase, it allows us to increase in a lot of other ways — for example, the autism individualized funding benefit for children under the age of six from \$4,000 to \$6,000 — because we realize the importance of early help for these young children.

[21:15]

Mr. Speaker, I know how important our new Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford was to our community. So that's why I was pleased to see in this budget we were also providing \$5 million worth of funding for preplanning and design work for hospitals in Weyburn and P.A. [Prince Albert]. And I know that those new facilities are going to be equally as important in those communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, last Friday I had the privilege of bringing greetings on behalf of our Health minister at the announcement of the launch of our North Battleford community recovery team. This team is composed of 10 individuals, including an assessor/coordinator team lead, six mental health nurses, one social worker, one continuing care aid, and one addictions counsellor. This is one of only eight CRTs [community recovery team] and centres around this province that will provide intensive supports for people living with complex, persistent mental health challenges. And most importantly, they can get this support right in their own community.

Another important launch that I was pleased to be part of was last fall when the PACT [police and crisis team] initiative was announced for North Battleford. This has already proven to be very successful, not only in the initial centres of Saskatoon and Regina, but now it's active in The Battlefords, Yorkton, Prince

Albert, and Swift Current.

This initiative now involves a mental health worker accompanying the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] on a call that has been determined to be an incident involving someone with mental health issues. And the advantages of this initiative are three-fold, I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Firstly, RCMP no longer have to attend. If an incident is identified as involving someone with mental health issues, the member would normally have to sit in the waiting room at the emergency department, waiting for this person to get attention, sometimes four to five hours. It would tie up that RCMP member.

Secondly, it also relieved some of the patients from going to the emergency room, freeing up the staff in those departments to handle other cases. And I think, most importantly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the individuals involved were able to get care much more quickly and efficiently. And I know that our staff sergeant in The Battlefords, Staff Sergeant Woolfitt, was very pleased with results, as he had stated in a report to the city. In the first month alone, 17 incidents have been diverted from our emergency room in North Battleford.

Another initiative in our Health budget, Mr. Speaker, that is very near and dear to my heart of course is an increase of funding to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency. We've increased funding by \$8 million to an amount of 178 million. That's an increase, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of 127 per cent since 2007. Part of that new funding is going to go to support 18 new oncology drugs for our formulary. That's something that anyone with cancer issues will be happy to hear about, I'm sure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, not only have we seen an increase in the funding for our health budget, but as well in education we see an increase of \$26.2 million, bringing our total funding to \$2.48 billion. We know the value of providing the best educational opportunities for our young people, and that is why we've hired some 925 more teachers and 177 more student support teachers. In fact we have increased K to 12 education funding by 34 per cent while our enrolment has only gone up by some 14 per cent.

Included in that budget this year is \$72 million for child care, providing 16,700 child care spaces. That's an increase of 7,000 since 2007-2008. Funding for education pre-K to 12 [pre-kindergarten to grade 12] will total that amount of \$2.8 billion, an increase of 26.2. And that will allow us to do such things as provide, for example, 1.9 billion funding for our school divisions, fund \$3 million for planning and design of joint-use schools in Regina and Moose Jaw. And that's on top of the 40-some schools we've already built. I need another touch of my Kool-Aid here, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I've talked a little bit about our Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford earlier, but as you may know this is an integrated facility, one of the first of its kind, with both a hospital and a secure side providing services to offenders living with significant mental health issues. In this budget we've provided \$7 million for the operation of this very important secured-site facility, one of the first of its kind.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a former member of our crime reduction committee, I was pleased to see continued investment in our protection response teams by providing 258 new and repurposed

peace officers as well as our combined safety services Sask initiative. As well, the new CRT [crime reduction team] teams, the crime prevention team in North Battleford and P.A. have been instituted, and those are each five-member teams with two support people. And these are specialized forces that, although stationed out of North Battleford and Prince Albert, they respond to hot spots wherever criminal activity may be occurring.

We're also seeing developments in technology to help make rural residents feel more safe. Two of these are a Be Secure initiative that involves a tracking component that can be attached to one's property like quads, snow machines, farm equipment, or other personal property, and allows the owner by a cellphone to track that property and notify the RCMP exactly where the missing property is. And newly announced was a communications system to allow the RCMP, in a secure platform, to instantly notify rural crime watch or individuals of criminal activity in their area.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government values the partnerships we have with our municipalities — urban, rural, and in the North. And that is why we have increased our revenue sharing with those municipalities by \$10.5 million this year to a total of \$251.6 million. And if you factor in all of the other direct provincial supports, these municipalities this year will receive some \$431.7 million. That's an increase of \$25.4 million or 6.2 per cent over the last year. I know that municipal governments all across this province, and certainly in my own constituency of The Battlefords, have appreciated having that predictable and sustainable funding that has increased by 124 million or 98 per cent since we've had the honour of forming government, Mr. Speaker.

For example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in North Battleford alone, the revenue sharing they received in 2007-2008 was 1,158,000. Today in this budget it is \$2,608,000. That's an increase of 125 per cent, higher than the provincial average. The town of Battleford has seen a similar increase at 122 per cent, from \$407,000 they received in '07-08 to the 905,000 they will receive in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, as has been mentioned several times already, this balanced budget, with the right balance, did not get to balance on the backs of taxpayers. That was a commitment we made. In fact, Mr. Speaker, there are no new taxes and no tax increases. More notably, we have actually added one new tax credit in this year's budget, and that is the \$3,000 tax credit for firefighters and medical first responders with 200 or more hours of volunteer time.

Fact of the matter is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this just adds to the tax reductions, the very significant tax increases we have implemented, such as removing some 112,000 people from our tax rolls completely, or such things as offering a \$20,000 tax credit under our grad retention program, various student loan programs that are available, and many others.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, just a few comments about this balance, the right balanced budget. It seems some of the members opposite are having trouble differentiating between a deficit and a debt. Well I'd like to add my assistance to help them understand.

I look at it this way. My wife Linda and I were fortunate enough

to be able to build three or four homes before we moved into our present home, which we have occupied for the past 32 years. And you know, each time we had to take out a mortgage for that capital investment, just like we would take out for the government for infrastructure. But when we did, we made sure that we had income to make the payments and take care of the other necessities of life, just as we've done in this budget. We've balanced it.

We didn't want to run a deficit, just as this government doesn't want to run a deficit and it has committed three budgets ago not to run that deficit. Yes, this government has debt, but for the most part that debt has been for infrastructure spending, and a good per cent of that was to fill the infrastructure deficit that was left to us by the former government.

Mr. Speaker, for those reasons and many others that have been highlighted by my colleagues, I will be supporting our budget moved by our Finance minister, seconded by the member from Indian Head-Milestone. And I certainly cannot support the amendment.

**The Deputy Chair of Committees:** — I recognize the member from Rosetown-Elrose.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise and join in the debate on the budget, a great budget that's balanced and is the right balance, Mr. Speaker. At this point in budget debate, often colleagues historically will thank their staff, will thank their families. Tonight, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be no different. Mr. Speaker, I'll speak to some of my colleagues later.

To start with I want to mention, Mr. Speaker, that my office staff and the office staff of the Minister of Rural and Remote Health work very closely together. We work as one. It's basically one big office, Mr. Speaker, and I just want to acknowledge the staff that work there. But first, Mr. Speaker, I should acknowledge my constituency assistant at home in my community of Rosetown: Kathie Parry. She's been with me for many years now, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank her for all her service over the years.

I mentioned the staff in my office and the Minister of Rural and Remote Health's office. That includes my chief of staff, Christopher Thresher; the Minister of Rural and Remote Health's chief of staff, Adam Nelson; admins Cheryl Verhelst and Abby Rutko; and ministerial assistants, Brett Boha and Callan Kimber, in my office, and Whitney Kelsch and Carter Zazula in the Minister of Rural and Remote Health's office.

Mr. Speaker, our staff do a great job for us every day. And it's been even a little bit more difficult lately, Mr. Speaker, because we've had some staff changeover. People have moved on to other things, brighter futures, Mr. Speaker, and we congratulate them for that. And so I have a number of other people that I'd like to thank that have worked with us recently. That's Elias Nelson, Kathryn Cooper, Selena Beahm, and the calm, cool, and collected Brayden Fox, Mr. Speaker. He's unflappable. Mr. Speaker, I should stop now before I have to withdraw and apologize, Mr. Speaker. He's none of those things. He is nervous and anxious and stresses all the time, Mr. Speaker, but my staff thought it would be funny if I said that. But he is a great chief of staff, and he did yeoman's work for us. And I just want to thank

him for that.

Mr. Speaker, I have a number of colleagues sitting around me tonight. It's great that they're here. I don't know how many people are watching at home. It's going on to 10 o'clock on a Tuesday night. Mr. Speaker, I would think many people are watching *Big Bang Theory* reruns and NHL [National Hockey League] hockey. Mr. Speaker, hockey season is starting to wind up, and the playoffs are going to start very soon. Mr. Speaker, for sports fans, it's an exciting time, Mr. Speaker. And people around here, all our colleagues, everybody cheers for a different team, Mr. Speaker.

My friend, my good friend, the Deputy Premier, Mr. Speaker, he cheers for the Montreal Canadiens. Mr. Speaker, he has for many years; I don't know why. Other than that, he frequently shows good judgment.

But, Mr. Speaker, he and I have been friends for many years, and we used to bet on hockey. Mr. Speaker, we've been betting on hockey back when I think the Habs were playing in the old Forum, Mr. Speaker. That's how long ago it was. Mr. Speaker, we had a number of bets over the years. The most recent one, again many, many years ago, we bet every time Boston and Montreal played. Mr. Speaker, the Habs played the Bruins. The Bruins won. And I'm still waiting to collect the bet. Mr. Speaker, it was at the Deputy Premier's suggestion — it was a bucket of chicken and refreshments — and I'm still waiting for him to pay that bet, Mr. Speaker.

And speaking of Habs fans not paying bets, Mr. Speaker, the House Leader is a Montreal Canadiens fan. Mr. Speaker, I used to have bets with him as well. Many of us did. Mr. Speaker, I stopped doing that because it was a no win proposition, because every time I lost, he collected quickly but every time I won, he had an excuse why he couldn't pay his bet. It would be, well Carey Price didn't start, so somehow I was responsible for that, Mr. Speaker. So I stopped having bets with him, Mr. Speaker.

Other colleagues cheer for different teams. We have the Minister of Central Services. His brother is the general manager of the Winnipeg Jets, Mr. Speaker, so of course he's a Jets fan. We have the Premier who cheers for the Edmonton Oilers, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure why. I think he's convinced that all they need is one fast-skating, goal-scoring draft pick, Mr. Speaker, and that'll put them over the top, I think, is why he's feeling that way.

[21:30]

Mr. Speaker, but the best one possibly is my friend, the Minister of Social Services. Mr. Speaker, he's a bit of a jinx when it comes to cheering for hockey teams. Mr. Speaker, ever since I've known him, for years he's been a Calgary Flames fan. And, Mr. Speaker, every one of those years they were terrible. So he decided to be a bandwagon jumper this year, Mr. Speaker, and he started cheering for the Vegas Knights, because they had a good year last year. Mr. Speaker, the Calgary Flames are near the top of the league. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm hoping at some point in time, he'll decide to cheer for the Boston Bruins, Mr. Speaker, because when he deserts them, that'll put them over the top and they'll win another Stanley Cup.

And, Mr. Speaker, speaking of the Bruins, we have a number of

Bruins fans here. We've got the member from Canora-Pelly. He's a great Bruins fan, Mr. Speaker. He's got some outstanding shirts, Mr. Speaker, Bruins shirts. And, Mr. Speaker, my friend and colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, he's also a Bruins fan. Mr. Speaker, he says he's related to Cam Neely. I don't know if that's actually true or not, Mr. Speaker, but he says he is.

So, Mr. Speaker, last summer when the Minister of Agriculture was still the minister of Highways, he and I had an opportunity to go to Delisle and tour the highway project there, which is a great project for my constituency. Mr. Speaker, west of Delisle there's passing lanes in that have just been an enormous benefit, improved safety, Mr. Speaker. And it's being twinned from Delisle to Saskatoon and that's a project the Minister of Agriculture and I looked at. And while we were there, we had an opportunity, thanks to the mayor of Delisle, Dave Anderchek. He introduced us to a gentleman named Jack Norris from Delisle, who . . . Long-time hockey fans will know that name. He's famous for a number of reasons in hockey, Mr. Speaker. He was involved in a huge trade between the Chicago Blackhawks and the Boston Bruins many years ago. Mr. Speaker, he played in the NHL for a number of years with a number of teams — with the Los Angeles Kings, with the Chicago Blackhawks, and of course with the Boston Bruins.

We had an opportunity to meet him and chat with him, just a very nice gentleman. And I want to acknowledge him here tonight because just a few months ago, Mr. Speaker, the community of Delisle named a park after him for all his community work he did. And I just want to recognize that and thank him for all the good work he's done in his community.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to move on to the budget now to keep the Minister of Social Services happy. Depending on time, I'll probably just focus on health care, Mr. Speaker. That's the file that I have the privilege of serving in right now. And it was, I believe, a tremendous budget for health care.

There's a number of things that I want to just touch on briefly, Mr. Speaker. There's funding of over half a million dollars which will support, amongst other things, the creation of a provincial organ donor registry, Mr. Speaker. For far too long in this province, we've had amongst the lowest rates of organ donation in the country. We need to do better, Mr. Speaker. We took some action last year that's starting to help, and we believe that the organ donor registry will move that along to a great degree.

Mr. Speaker, also my friend and colleague, the member for Meadow Lake, some good news in his constituency, Mr. Speaker. The long-awaited long-term care facility in Meadow Lake is advancing this year, Mr. Speaker. So we're looking forward to that.

And on capital funding also, Mr. Speaker, we're going to be . . . both the Weyburn hospital and the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital redevelopment project, there's been money budgeted there, Mr. Speaker — two and a half million dollars each — to prepare both proposals to enter the final stages of approval. So good news for those communities, Mr. Speaker.

We're also in the final phase. There's a \$23 million increase for doctors, nurses, and staff to provide the best possible care for the children in this province, Mr. Speaker, that will be using the new

Jim Pattison Children's Hospital, Mr. Speaker. I am so looking forward to the ribbon cutting in that facility. It's a huge project, a long time in the making. So many people have played a hand in that, Mr. Speaker, including the foundation there. I just want to thank them all for their good work. Next fall will be a very exciting time when that project moves forward, Mr. Speaker.

I mentioned Meadow Lake. There's also the creation of a satellite dialysis service in Meadow Lake, Mr. Speaker, so a lot of good news for that community in this budget.

Another thing I should touch on, Mr. Speaker, is there's more than a million dollars in funding is being provided to the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan to expand their First Link services to northern and eastern Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank them for all the good work that they do there.

So that's just a few highlights in general of the health care budget, Mr. Speaker. But probably I would say the major point, the major focal point of the health care budget this year was on mental health and addictions. Mr. Speaker, we had the largest commitment to mental health in Saskatchewan history this year.

Mr. Speaker, it's across many phases, in fact in the current fiscal year actually. Mr. Speaker, a number of my colleagues and I had an opportunity just two or three weeks ago to attend the ribbon cutting for the largest single investment in mental health care in this province's history with the new hospital in North Battleford. Mr. Speaker, it's a tremendous facility and I know it's going to be helping patients a great deal.

Mr. Speaker, we also have a number of other things for mental health and addictions. There's just over \$8 million is going to be used to create somewhere in the neighbourhood of 140 beds of various types, Mr. Speaker. There'll be residential support beds. There'll be both pre- and post-addiction treatment beds for individuals who are transitioning between detox and in-patient treatment. Mr. Speaker, there'll be 10 new in-patient addiction treatment beds in Pine Lodge, which is located in Indian Head. There'll be six new addiction treatment beds open in Calder Centre and, Mr. Speaker, the list goes on.

There's also funding for three rapid access to addiction medicine — they're referred to as RAAM — clinics in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker. Those clinics have been tried in other jurisdictions, most notably I would say in Manitoba where they've been met with great success. So we certainly hope that that's going to help us as we move forward dealing with the very difficult addiction crisis in this province, Mr. Speaker, just as other provinces are attempting to deal with that.

There's any number of other projects around, Mr. Speaker. There's \$300,000 in new funding to provide 24-7 nursing supports at the La Ronge detox centre. There's new funding to increase the number of nurses available to provide mental health support in the Regina General Hospital emergency department, and the list just goes on and on, Mr. Speaker.

So you know, Mr. Speaker, I've listened to a number of the speeches tonight. There's been some tremendous speeches from this side of the House, and over the last couple days there's been some very negative speeches from the opposition side of the House, Mr. Speaker. So it probably starts with, you know, I

wonder what the Leader of the Opposition has to say. And I read with interest a news story from last week, the day of the budget, which the Leader of the Opposition said we, and I quote, “stole” his ideas, Mr. Speaker. So somehow on this side of the House, he feels like we stole his ideas and implemented them in the budget. But yet he criticizes the budget. So I’m assuming that means he thinks his ideas are bad ideas.

Mr. Speaker, I’m not following his logic there. To the point of stealing the ideas, Mr. Speaker, that’s the Leader of the Opposition’s opinion, but yet Jim Farney, who’s the head of politics and international studies at the University of Regina, here’s what he had to say about it. He said, “I think these are conversations we’ve been having for [quite] a while. It’s not simply stealing ideas.”

And, Mr. Speaker, on the part of mental health he goes back to talk about the fact that it was a significant issue during the leadership race, Mr. Speaker, when . . . And I would add that both the Premier and the Deputy Premier committed to improving the situation here, Mr. Speaker, and they’re obviously delivering.

So what else does the Leader of the Opposition say? Mr. Speaker, this is one of the things he said in Thursday morning’s question period, which I can’t help but laugh when I see. He said, this was a budget with a huge deficit, maybe not an accounting deficit.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I think back to a number of years ago. Those of us who have been around here for a few years will remember. I can’t remember the exact issue, but the member from Athabasca was waxing on eloquently about his knowledge of accounting. Only he was completely wrong, and the member from Rosemont completely threw him under the bus, completely threw him under the bus, Mr. Speaker, made comments about how he’s terrible at accounting. Mr. Speaker, I think the member from Rosemont should probably help his leader with accounting as well because, Mr. Speaker, he’s having trouble with this.

So what about the member from Rosemont? What did he have to say about the budget, Mr. Speaker? He said, and I quote . . . This was in his speech immediately following the tremendous speech delivered by our Finance minister, Mr. Speaker. This is what the member from Rosemont said as Finance critic. He said:

If there’s a ray of hope within this budget, it’s the additional funding we see to address mental health and addictions, the crisis within our province. This is something that we’ve been calling for, something that we’ve had families joining us to do so, advocates calling for, and particularly my colleague, the member for Saskatoon Riversdale, who has served as our party’s and our province’s first mental health critic for the past year, who has worked tirelessly to hold the government to account on this front and for years to fight for a better way forward.

Mr. Speaker, so he’s saying that that was a bright spot of the budget, mental health and addictions, and he’s giving the credit to the member from Riversdale. So go figure the NDP logic there, Mr. Speaker. But he’s saying it’s a good thing. And then what did he say shortly after to the media? He said:

When we look at addictions, (that’s) an area we’re disappointed on that front because it was an inadequate

response to the crystal meth epidemic that . . . [ravages] lives, families, and communities across our province.

Mr. Speaker, that’s a very serious issue and it’s one that I think should be above partisan politics, Mr. Speaker. But what did he do? He’d just praised it. Then he turned around and criticized it. But, Mr. Speaker, what did the experts say about it?

I have a letter that I’d like to read, Mr. Speaker. It’s from Dr. Peter Butt, who’s the associate professor in the department of family medicine and is a well-known expert on mental health and addictions, Mr. Speaker. He addressed it to me, and he said:

I would like to convey my profound appreciation to you for your advocacy and commitment to mental health and addiction within the 2019 budget. We now have the honour and responsibility to not only bolster the current system but also close the gaps, improve access, and address the quality of care throughout the province. This investment will spur that activity and leave a legacy of an improved system of care. If it does not, we will have failed to take full advantage of this opportunity. Thank you once again. We now have substantial work to do.

Mr. Speaker, that’s an expert in this field that I’ll take the advice of from before the member from Rosemont any day, Mr. Speaker.

And what about the Mental Health Commission of Canada, Mr. Speaker? On Twitter they said:

We applaud Sask government and the Premier on their historic investment in mental health and addictions. Mental health and addictions get \$30 million funding increase in Saskatchewan budget.

So, Mr. Speaker, the experts in the field completely disagree with the Leader of the Opposition and the member from Regina Rosemont.

That being the case, Mr. Speaker, you’ll understand when I say — because the NDP want us to spend more, they want to cut revenue, they want to eliminate the debt, and not borrow any money, Mr. Speaker — that the NDP math just doesn’t add up. And so, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the amendment, but I will proudly support the budget.

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

**Mr. Steinley:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It’s a pleasure to rise and respond to my last budget of 2019-2020, and it’s a very happy opportunity for me to rise and respond to a balanced budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And this budget strikes the right balance for the people of the province of Saskatchewan for this next fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, as is custom, there’s a few thank yous I’d like to do before we get into the meat of our budget response. First and foremost, I’d like to thank our constituency assistant for Regina Walsh Acres, Heather Howell-Shiplack. She has been our assistant since the beginning since 2011, and I have been very honoured to be able to work with her. I believe she is the best

constituency assistant in the province, bar none.

She has kept me on task which is no easy thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it has been a very . . . we have had a great working relationship. She has become a good friend and a trusted confidant and I'm very happy that she's been able to stay with us and make sure our office responds to all the people that have been calling in to it. And she does an amazing job responding to the people of Regina Walsh Acres when we are sitting in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, during session. And she does great work. She has been able to build contacts with ministry officials in the ministers' offices throughout the province and it's been a very good job. She does a very good job for our constituents, and I think everyone feels that she has been very, very well suited for this job, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

A few other thank yous . . . This has been now eight years I've been able to stand in my place and represent the people of Regina Walsh Acres. And it's been an honour, and I wouldn't get here without having a great constituency association. I'll run through a few names. They've been able to help us in two campaigns in 2011 and 2016. And I hope I don't miss anyone out, but I want to thank Eric and Shauna, Chris, Rhys, Lance, Kate, Mark, Raeleen, Barry, Linda, Alicia, Chantelle. We've had a very good team in Regina Walsh Acres, and it's been a pleasure to work with them all and had a lot of fun, and there's been a lot of hard work. But it's been, so far, the greatest experience of my working life as being the MLA for Regina Walsh Acres.

[21:45]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one thing that's been very important to us as a government is putting our three-year plan in place, first under Premier Wall and then under the Premier, the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook, to ensure that we follow through on our three-year plan and make sure that we got the balance in 2019-2020. And that's exactly we did. We made a commitment to the people of our province and we followed through on that commitment.

It really goes along with some of the things that the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford said is promise made, promise checked. I remember a few years ago that was part of our campaign in 2011, and I think it still holds true today that the people of the province know that what the Saskatchewan Party government says is what we're going to do. And I think that's something that this side of the House can be very proud of going forward is that we follow through on our commitments. And it's been a fantastic job so far by our Finance minister and treasury board to ensure that we get to balance.

It's a \$34.4 million surplus. It's a thin balance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it's taken a lot of work to get there. And there's been some tough decisions made to ensure we get there, by each and every minister, who's done a great job ensuring that our team came together to meet this challenge.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a few things that have happened in our great city here in the last couple years that we're very proud of looking forward to completion. One is the Regina bypass. I think this is a fantastic infrastructure project, the biggest one in our province's history, and it's all about safety. And when that opens on October 2019, people are going to know how big

this project was around our city to ensure that we get traffic off of the streets, ensure we get heavy traffic off of Lewvan and off of Dewdney, which we heard countless times from the member from Rosemont, to ensure that the traffic going through his constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I think he's going to be grateful once this project's done to ensure that there's less traffic and he will no longer . . . well he hasn't done a petition for a while, so there's no longer heavy-haul truck traffic going down Dewdney.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've been able to make our commitment to our revenue sharing with our municipal partners. I know the Minister of Government Relations has done a lot of work to ensure that has gone through and there is a stable formula in place to ensure that all municipalities know what's coming forward in the budget year. Mr. Speaker, I know the mayor of Regina had some complimentary comments about the revenue sharing moving forward, and I look forward to continuing to work with our city partners in Regina to ensure that they have a stable funding formula in place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a lot conversations going back and forth — I listened to my friend from Regina Elphinstone — about young people in our province. It's one of the reasons we got involved in politics, from my standpoint, was growing up in Rush Lake there wasn't a lot of opportunities in the late '90s and early 2000s in our province. And I think one of the big things, and I've heard the member from Rosetown talk about it a time or two, is getting involved in politics because our province had so much opportunity and it wasn't being taken advantage of, and young people kept on leaving our province in droves for 16 years under the NDP.

And what we did is we made a commitment in government in 2007 that we were going to ensure there's more opportunities for young people in our province. And that's called a plan. And it's something that we planned for, and we brought in the most aggressive graduate retention program in the country. And there's been tens of thousands of people that have taken advantage of that program and started to build a life right here in Saskatchewan and that's something . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Minister of Agriculture knows two. I think they might be related, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And that's something when we formed government was very important to us. And going down this road, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not sure what's important to the opposition right now. I'm not sure they have a plan for anything. Right now, they've said in their budget speeches — and we've listened to them — they've said we want more spending. We want more spending in education. We want more spending in health care. We want more spending in social services. We want more infrastructure. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they don't want deficits and they don't want debt. And that can't all happen. And they don't want to raise taxes. We hear petitions all the time about taxes from the members opposite.

So I've never once seen a concrete plan brought forward from any one of those members of . . . If they would ever, God forbid, have the honour of being on this side, what would they actually do differently? I know there's an article in the *Leader-Post* saying pick a lane. Telling the Leader of the Opposition, you've got to pick a lane because you can't criticize everything but say,



I want more, more, more, but not have a plan of how to get there. And my friend from Saskatoon Sutherland is probably right. He probably picked a ditch, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I think he isn't sure, he isn't quite sure where he wants to go. And I think that's showing in some of our data we've seen recently.

Mr. Speaker, the words "out of touch" came from the member from Elphinstone about this side of the House. I know there's one issue that we've talked about and we'll, under our Premier, stand up for Saskatchewan constantly, and that's on the federal Liberals' carbon tax. There isn't a policy or a position that is more out of touch with the people across Saskatchewan than being in favour of Justin Trudeau's carbon tax. It's completely irrelevant in most of our province. Right now, Mr. Speaker, we've seen that 80 per cent of the people of the province are against a federal carbon tax, and those members across are still saying there needs to be a price on carbon. Mr. Deputy Speaker, how much more out of touch can you be with the people of our province?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a lot of other topics that this budget has shown as moving forward, moving our province forward on health care, on social services, on infrastructure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, building more schools. There's another school being built in Regina, St. Pius. My friend and colleague from Regina Rochdale spoke about it at length and she has a lot more knowledge on it than I. I wasn't quite around in 1978, so I wasn't sure about . . . '76, sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But I'll take her word for it that there were some issues then. And I'm happy to say that we're with the government being able to bring forward a new school for the people in that area of our city.

I'd like to talk about how, Mr. Speaker, there's been some . . . And I believe I'm going to take a sip of my Kool-Aid. I believe the member from North Battleford spoke about it for a couple of seconds of how the decorum in this building sometimes has been lowered a little bit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I think in this beautiful Chamber we should be able to discuss policies, ideas, but not so much talk about people and do personal attacks.

And I hope that changes in the next couple weeks because I think it's really incumbent among all of us to raise the level of decorum and make sure that some people that send us here do it to represent them. So I think when we're standing in our spots we should be thinking about what the people of Walsh Acres or Cut Knife-Turtleford or Swift Current, how would they want us to react in this Chamber, respond to questions and to answers. And I think we should take that moving forward.

I guess I'm getting a little . . . Mr. Speaker, we lost a great lady in my auntie a month ago, Adeline Steinley. She was very important to me. We grew up on the farm. And every now and then I think, what would auntie be saying, if I'd have some comments. I know she visited this place a couple times my first term, and believe it or not, I was a little more partisan than I am now. And now every now and then I think, if auntie is looking down I would hope that she'd be smiling instead of shaking her head, because she had that head shake whenever she knew I was up to no good.

So maybe it's just me and I'm getting a little bit older and little bit more mature — let's hope that's the case — but maybe, as my friend from Canora-Pelly was saying, maybe I'm getting a little

bit soft in my age. But I think we should try a little bit harder to ensure that we're doing our jobs with the utmost respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I know that there's some other members that want to join in this evening yet, so I'll close with, I think, a statement that . . . You know, I never thought I'd do this but I'm going to quote the member from Athabasca. And this is my last budget response. The budget is balanced so don't you guys screw it up. Okay, colleagues? I believe in you all and you do a wonderful job, but I hear that from the member from Athabasca all the time.

And I'm believing we're going to continue balanced budgets now into the future. I look forward to seeing how our province continues to grow under a steady, strong Saskatchewan Party government. I'll be supporting the budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and not the amendment.

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

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's always an honour to join in with regards to budget debate and I'm looking forward to having my opportunity to put some remarks on the record.

First of all, as customary, I'd like to thank some important people in my life, especially my family, because as we all know that we wouldn't be able to do what we do here without family support. And so that's very important. And Darren has always been a very supportive person in my world, and even this evening he's watching our grandson which generally is what my duties would be if I was at home, but he picks that up while I'm here. And they're enjoying each other. They gave me a phone call between our sessions here today, and they were having some ice cream after they had supper, so they do indulge while I'm not around.

And they enjoy it but my grandson now understands that I'm in Regina. And he's been here before and he always wants to come and visit. He's like, Grandma, will you take me to Regina? And I told him I don't have any ice cream at my apartment here, and he said, well we'll just go to the store and pick some up. So he's a problem solver already, so it's wonderful. We have three grandsons, and they're growing up and they're really some people we really enjoy to spend a lot of time with. As you might know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, grandchildren really make you appreciate all the work you went through with raising children, so we have a lot of fun with them.

And also my siblings, I've spent quite a bit of time in the last couple weeks with my siblings. I had a brother who turned 60 just last week and my sister turned 50 this past weekend, and we had big celebrations for them. And they're always encouraging me with regards to this type of employment. They know it's tough to be away from home. And they know that I really was passionate about the kind of work I did previously and sometimes I miss some of that front-line work. But this work is also very important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they remind me of what my passion was with regards to being in this role.

I also have a lot of supportive friends that I keep in regular contact with. We know that with our busy schedules it's sometimes tough to manage workplace, work-family,

work-friend balance. And so we always make sure that we dedicate some time together and I really appreciate my time with them as well.

And extended family of mine would be my constituency executive, which they are always very supportive as well. And they'll watch while proceedings are on and send me texts to congratulate me on a well-done speech or a member's statement. And so I always have their continued support and I appreciate it. And they do a lot of work at home with regards to the work that we need to do to continue our role here.

And also my CAs: Rose is my full-time CA and Craig is my part-time CA. And they both work so hard within our office to make sure the office is running smoothly. I know they have large caseloads and very serious issues that they deal with, especially with my role as the Social Services critic. We oftentimes get cases across the province of individuals who are struggling to make ends meet or struggling with the programs, and I know Rose and Craig are really sensitive with regards to those issues and I appreciate the work that they do. And I know a lot of things are happening in the background while I'm doing this work here. And so I want to thank them for everything they do and I really, truly appreciate their support.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm honoured to represent the people of Prince Albert Northcote. It's a privilege to have their support with regards to electing me to be in this position. It's almost been three years now. It's going to be three years soon, in about a week or so, and so I always feel very privileged to be able to speak on their behalf and represent them in this legislature.

Prince Albert is an incredibly beautiful city, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When Darren and I had a discussion a long time ago about where we wanted to live and raise our family, there was no question in our minds that Prince Albert was where we wanted to do that. With our professions, we could have gone a lot of places, but we chose to live in Prince Albert because it has all the amenities that anyone would want in an urban setting, and you can't beat having the forest and the lake country right outside your back door.

[22:00]

We have so much there, but I think the biggest thing that we appreciate with regards to Prince Albert is the residents. Prince Albert residents are known for being incredibly friendly and dedicated to their community. And we've had some national events that have happened this past year that really indicated that. They were quite successful, and we had the community come out and support these events. And volunteers — sometimes they even had to turn down volunteers because they had so many people offer. So it's incredible to live in a community that has so many generous residents.

But oftentimes the residents in Prince Albert feel like they're on, oftentimes, on the back burner with regards to this government. Although Prince Albert is the third-largest city in the province and plays such an important role with providing supports for the residents of Prince Albert but the surrounding area and the North, oftentimes we feel that we're not getting the services or the support from the government that we should to provide those supports.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my previous employment was within mental health. I was a mental health counsellor. And so that is still obviously an issue that's near and dear to me, and I pay a lot of attention to the services that are available. And although we really appreciate the added supports that are being put forward with mental health and we know that there's going to be different services that are offered and we're happy to see this, but we also know that we have such great issues that . . . Well I guess the days will come to see how successful these programs are with addressing some of these issues.

And I kind of want to talk a little bit about some of those issues that are pretty severe within Prince Albert, one being the high suicide rates. And we've talked about this quite often, about the rates of suicide in Prince Albert and the northern area. They're much higher than the provincial average and so that's very concerning.

And when I think about the services for mental health and some of the level of concerns that people have with receiving services, I think about some of my previous clients. And it's been three years since I've been away from mental health, and as far as I'm aware, I had three previous clients that have died from suicide, two who have died from overdoses, and one that was murdered. And so we know that in a short three years . . . And again that's the only ones that I've seen in media because I don't have access to any of that information anymore. But we have a lot of people who are struggling, you know. And oftentimes this is issues that have been ongoing, you know, and systemic, and so it's going to take a lot of resources to be able to address that.

So with regards to some of these additional supports, I'm really hoping that the plans that are being made are long-term, that the positions that are being put forward will have long-term funding provided for it. Because I know the federal government gave the provincial government a substantial amount of money. And we know how governments change or their priorities change. I don't know how regular that funding was going to be, if it was more short-term or if this was going to be a long-term funding, but I hope the provincial government decides to maintain that level of funding and any of these new positions that are being implemented, and again I really hope these are new positions.

I did hear of some positions just being reallocated. And so if you're taking away from some of the front-line staff and potentially putting them someplace else, there's going to be caseloads that are going to build up there as well. So again it'll be about trying to find some of the details behind the additional funding.

Also we know in Prince Albert we need more mental health beds. And so I hope with the additional funding — and I know there was some announcements that there'll be increased beds — I hope Prince Albert is considered as one of those places.

But we also need to upgrade then our adult unit. Our child and youth unit is relatively newish, I think, if I can remember right, seven, eight years ago. So that is a much better place. You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when people are struggling with mental health, depression, anxiety, having a place for them to be that is appropriate, that is well maintained, that shows some sense of worth is very important. So I hope there's some consideration with regards to updating that adult ward.

Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was really sad to see that there was no mention of bringing back the spiritual care in the hospital settings. I talk to people on a regular basis about how there's still concern that there's no provincially funded spiritual care provided in Saskatchewan. I believe we're still the only province in Canada that doesn't provide that.

And we know how important the spiritual care was in those hospital settings. They helped patients that were dealing with grief and trauma, but they also helped the staff and provided that level of self-care supports with the staff when they were dealing with a traumatic incident. So I think this was an incredibly backwards move when we're talking about promoting mental health in our province. And I'm going to quote Philip Weaver from the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care. He said:

Without addressing these kinds of spiritual needs around connection and meaning, the physical body may heal but the spirit remains damaged. By ignoring this whole dimension of human existence, people are going to have prolonged distress, longer hospital stays, more expensive hospital stays.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we see that investing in spiritual care reduces hospital stays and expense of hospital stays and helps individuals heal. So I hope that gets reconsidered in a timely fashion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another issue in Prince Albert is addictions. Alcohol is still the number one cause of addiction-related issues in our community with regards to assaults, domestic violence, impaired driving, medical services being required. And this is information I've been getting from city council, front-line workers, and police officers. And our police chief himself, he said that was the number one issue.

It's very easy to access. There's a lot of stores and even more stores coming up and longer hours. And we've said that the province could . . . If they really wanted to address addiction issues, if they really wanted to address the issues with domestic violence, assaults, impaired driving, they should look into our availability of alcohol and how that impacts communities.

And also, like a lot of people have been speaking about, crystal meth is becoming a bigger issue and getting worse. We know it's inexpensive and easily accessible as well, and it provides a longer high for individuals who are seeking that out. And so it's highly addictive and it's very damaging to your brain system, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it causes much more issues with regards to functioning. And hospital staff have been having an issue with managing individuals who present there that are under the influence of crystal meth. And with talking to the police chief, we know that there's an increase in crime rates when there's a lot of use of drugs such as crystal meth. And that increases the property crime because people are looking for quick ways to get money so that they could get their next fix.

And when we're talking about crime, also crime has been a big issue in Prince Albert, and this past week has been a very difficult one for the people of Prince Albert. We've had two homicides, one involving a two-year-old and the other a 22-year-old. This makes four homicides in 2019 alone, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we're not even at the end of March. This is not a normal

occurrence. The police chief has indicated that having four or more homicides within Prince Albert hasn't happened since 2003. But it's very concerning when we had two in February, two in March, so many close together, and it's definitely an indication that individuals are struggling.

And we know that crime won't be reduced with adding more police officers on the street. If we want to really address crime, we have to address the root causes of crime, which is poverty. And so poverty is something that is another topic that I am really passionate about, especially with my role as the Social Services critic.

But we know poverty has increased in Prince Albert, and that is due to the fact of increased unemployment. There's increased utilization at the food bank because of the unemployment rates. And the food bank, individuals who are working at the food bank say that a lot of the people who are accessing food there, if they are working, they're working minimum wage jobs and they're having a hard time putting food on the table. So that's very concerning.

When we look at job losses within Prince Albert, over the course of the last few years we've had quite a few. We've lost laundry workers at the hospital, food services at the correctional facilities, custodial services in government facilities. There's been cuts in education and security services at the courthouse, and much more, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So these are hundreds of jobs that have been lost due to cuts from this government.

Also, the PST, the increase to the PST, adding it to the construction industry, that has had a big impact in Prince Albert with costing the municipalities more. The mayor and council have been very vocal about that. And like it completely stalled the construction industry, which also has a trickle-down effect on other businesses. And when I've talked to other business owners, they've talked about, they had to . . . They might own businesses where you could buy, like flooring or other things when you're wanting to do renovations or new build, you know. And so they said that it's been such a decrease that they've had to lay off staff. So we know that there's been even more jobs lost there. And we've been on the record saying that this is a job-killing tax, and that's exactly what it is, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Also I was disappointed that there wasn't much in this budget for seniors. We know the senior population is growing in this province, but the government is not investing in the services that they need. So there's nothing to address the excessive costs of prescriptions, the increased costs of living, the long wait times for long-term care, mental health support specific to mental health services, and there's no investment in having a seniors' advocate or a minister that's responsible specifically for seniors' issues. We know the federal government has went that direction, and it would be nice to see the provincial government do that as well. We need to do a much better job looking after our seniors, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[22:15]

The hospital is always a contentious issue within Prince Albert. Residents expected a better financial commitment from this government. This hospital has been studied to death. I know that we received, I think it was \$5 million about six years ago, so that

they could make a redesign of what a new hospital would look like. And so they had all of these higher level manager people sitting and making designs of models of what that would look like. And they came up with a design and they worked with people who are experts on designing things like hospitals and so they already had this.

And the hospital has been studied to death. It's been studied for years and years and years. The ability to build higher, to build onto — you can find all these studies, and they haven't been done very long ago. So this is simply a delay tactic, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Having \$2.5 million invested, it's just hush money so that the residents of Prince Albert don't talk more about the fact that the Premier promised a fully funded provincial hospital. Then that would be the next major infrastructure project in this province, and now he's backpedalling on this important major infrastructure project that means so much for the residents of Prince Albert, the surrounding area, and the North.

I know there's been talk about how they're looking for some federal funding, which would be a bonus, for sure it would be a bonus. But the Premier should honour his promise and then send the bill to the feds if need be. We know there's extremely long wait times at our hospital. The beds are full. I hear from nurses that they don't know when patients approach their ward and they're like, well we have no rooms available, we have no beds available, but we have this patient that needs services. They oftentimes have put beds in the hallways or had to discharge someone early so they can free up a bed. That's not good services, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I've had a lot of people contact me about having to travel to Saskatoon for services like dialysis and cancer treatment. And although those services can be offered in Prince Albert and some are, there's long wait-lists to be on the Prince Albert wait-list to receive those services. And so some people have to travel to Saskatoon to receive services for a few years before someone else . . . There's a . . . the wait-list gets shorter and they get on the list for Prince Albert.

We think Saskatoon is close, but going there and back that's three hours out of your day. And when you have to go three times a week, and then you have to sit there for four hours for your treatment, that's a long period of time. And I've had people who say that they've just refused to get treatment for their cancer because they can't make the drive anymore. They don't want to ask their family to drive them three times a week. And when they do drive to Saskatoon, they're in no shape to drive back and so they just chance not having services. And so that's not the kind of province that we want to have. Medical services should be available to everyone, no matter where you live. And it's not like we can't provide those services. It's just if we had a bigger facility we would be able to provide more services.

And again no second bridge for Prince Albert. I don't know if it was a shock for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but you know, it's not a shock anymore for people in the city. They think it's going to appear the same time the hospital does. But again it's really important to state that this is, this is important. People in Prince Albert really need to have a second river crossing. They need to have two accesses across the river because of safety concerns. We need to have a safe goods route.

Right now we have all these major trucks going through the city. If something ever happened that would be devastating. If we could find a way to get them around the city, that would be the safest route to have. And we know that there's a lot of trucks that go through because we're the Gateway to the North. And what if something ever happened and we needed to close down the bridge? That would be devastating; I don't know how people would manage.

So I hear stories all the time about people having medical distress and being stuck in long lineups on the bridge. There was an individual that gave birth on the bridge because they couldn't get to the hospital in time. And so we need to have two river crossings for safety. And that's important as well.

But my critic with Social Services, I want to start with some of the positive points with the budget. I have to admit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with child and family services I was happy to see that there's a focus on preventative programs. I think that's where we need to be working on, is providing supports for families and helping them get what they need so that they can be together, you know.

And I was happy to see that there's going to be more supports for high-risk children, and foster parents are getting an increase. These are all going to be questions I'll be talking about in committee — I'm sure it will be no surprise to the minister — in wanting to find more details with regards to that.

Disabilities is getting more funding with adults with intellectual disabilities. That's wonderful to see.

And the income exemptions that are being increased, the earned income exemptions, that's something that individuals working on the front lines have been asking for, saying that this is something that's important for people who are on income assistance programs. I'm interested to see what the minister has planned for that, but hopefully it's exactly what they were asking for because it's a wonderful plan to get people more independent. But again we know the devil is in the details, so we'll find more information about that.

We know there's cuts to employment-readiness programs. There's been a decrease in the provincial training allowance. There's employability assistance for persons with disabilities has been decreased. And I know that all of that is from Immigration and Career Training, but that has an impact on Social Services as well. And I wonder how much the two ministers talk with regards to these changes and the future direction that the government should have. So it seems like their priorities aren't really working well together, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some concerns would be a substantial increase with disabilities services but a decrease in the disability program delivery, concerns with changes in the income support program. They made some substantial changes in the budget with regards to reducing funding for programs but very little in the way of details with regards to what the new program will look like. So that worries me because it seems like a repeat of last year with the cut to the rental housing supplement and no plan to replace it, and so thousands of families have fallen through the cracks. So again no reversal with regards to the rental supplement.

And a big concern is one in four children live in poverty in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and almost half of the people who access food banks are children. This should not fare well with anyone in this room.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know my time has run short. I have a lot more I would like to have said, but I think I put everything that I really wanted to on the record with regards to my role as the representative for Prince Albert and the critic for Social Services. So I don't think it comes as a surprise that I will be supporting the amendment put forward by my colleague, the member from Regina Rosemont, and I will not be supporting the budget. Thanks.

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

**Hon. Mr. Hargrave:** — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Obviously they're anxious to go home. So I will scoot along as quickly as I can, Mr. Speaker.

I will thank my family as well and the people that I work with: my wife, Fran, who's the love of my life and who was here for budget day and it was very nice to have her here — she wouldn't miss the days like that there; my oldest son Trent and his wife, Lisa, and their son Elias; my daughter Angela and her husband, Joe, and their two kids, Noah and Layla; my son Colby and his wife, Becky, and their two kids, Hannah and Myles; and my youngest daughter Jill and her partner, Greg, and their daughter Madelyn.

Now three of the kids live right in Prince Albert, and they love Prince Albert as I do, and it's wonderful to have them, wonderful to have all our kids there. The hardest part of this job of course is being away from your family. And I find that very difficult, and my family finds that very difficult. But it's something that we choose to do to give back to our province and to do what's best for our city and our province and not only our constituency, but our whole area up there.

I want to thank my assistant, Joy, in Prince Albert, a wonderful lady who works very, very hard for me, and I appreciate everything she does. I want to thank the Finance minister and treasury board for all the hard work that they do all year long, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to thank the member from Shellbrook, our Premier, just what a wonderful individual that he is. Personally I've known him for a long time, Mr. Speaker, and he's as down to earth and as regular and cares and stands up for this province like nobody else. So I am very, very proud of him. I'll tell you that right now, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm proud that we brought in a balanced budget, a real balanced budget, and a budget that's right for the people of Saskatchewan. And I'm very pleased to hear about that, Mr. Speaker. And I'm sure the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, if they actually just cared to give it a little bit of a listen and looked at it with non-partisan eyes and ears, Mr. Speaker, that they'd realize that this budget is actually a good one. The member from P.A. Northcote just said, well I'll tell you about the positives, and then she went right back into negatives. So I didn't really hear any positive, Mr. Speaker.

But before I run out of time, I'll just make some corrections for her, Mr. Speaker, as she was talking about Prince Albert, about the hospital, Mr. Speaker. This Premier is committed to the hospital. We're investing another two and a half million dollars in pre-construction design, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if they remember, if she was even living in Prince Albert at the time when . . . But I visited with the sisters, the nuns in Prince Albert just last week, Mr. Speaker, who used to run the Holy Family Hospital and Rivier Academy.

Mr. Speaker, under the NDP they decided, they decided they'd knock that hospital down, Mr. Speaker. I don't know. I know they think it's funny. You know what? The people of Prince Albert don't think it's funny, Mr. Speaker. That was a hospital that was well utilized, well run. And talk to the nuns about it. It was extremely well maintained, and that hospital was good.

Mr. Speaker, we have, you know . . . And then she goes on about the second bridge. Well let's not, let's not borrow any money; let's pay for it out of cash. But I don't think they're anxious for a tax increase. I know they were really comfortable with that when they were in power, Mr. Speaker. They would increase taxes, I don't know, seemed last count is about 21 times. They criticize us constantly about that, Mr. Speaker. But you know what? They're not prepared to pay more taxes and the people of Saskatchewan are not prepared. They ran the PST up and they think nothing of that, Mr. Speaker, to 7 per cent. They don't really care about that, Mr. Speaker. That is what we're doing, Mr. Speaker, is to balance the budget. People of Saskatchewan know that and they're quite comfortable with what's happening.

Mr. Speaker, I know all the contractors in Prince Albert. Most of them are friends of mine. Mr. Speaker, they know it's not because of the PST that it's slow, Mr. Speaker. Because guess what? It's slow across the country in the construction industry, Mr. Speaker. So you know, if they would actually maybe ask the right questions and maybe listen, they would actually get that figured out, Mr. Speaker. Had there not been a stress test, we'd still be building houses; we'd still be selling the used houses. When you talk to the realtors, which I talk to in Prince Albert, they're not selling the used houses, Mr. Speaker. So who would be, who would be buying the new houses? So, Mr. Speaker, it's the used houses; used housing market is not happening either, Mr. Speaker.

Again nothing for seniors. I find that hard to believe. You know what, Mr. Speaker? I was at an announcement, Mr. Speaker. It's not necessarily for seniors. I was at the announcement and I spoke at the announcement for a new hospice for Prince Albert. You know, the first stand-alone hospice, Mr. Speaker. We announced \$2 million in funding for that. And I'm very pleased. Both of my parents, Mr. Speaker, passed away in a hospice in BC and the care that they took of people, the patients and the families, Mr. Speaker, was exceptional. This hospice here, Rose Daschuk passed away a number of years ago and her husband and her daughter have worked tirelessly, tirelessly to get this new hospice going, Mr. Speaker. And I've supported them since day one and I've worked hard with them. And the generous donation of Malcolm Jenkins, he started out with \$500,000 to get this hospice built. And we've committed to funding that hospice, Mr. Speaker. It's an incredible thing.

I should mention about a couple of other things, Mr. Speaker. I know time's running really short here but that's okay; I'll finish tomorrow.

Revenue sharing, Mr. Speaker, under the old guys, under the old regime here, Mr. Speaker, 2.999 million. And you know, in '19-20 we're up to 6.547 million, Mr. Speaker. That's an incredible increase of 118 per cent, yet they say we're not really doing anything for the city of Prince Albert. I think an increase of 118 per cent is pretty darn fine and, you know, Mr. Speaker, I'm pretty proud of that. But we have some other things, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — It now being 10:30, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:30.]

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**SPECIAL ORDER  
ADJOURNED DEBATES  
MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY  
(BUDGET DEBATE)**

<b>Beck</b> .....	5553
<b>Doke</b> .....	5556
<b>Dennis</b> .....	5559
<b>Wilson</b> .....	5562
<b>McCall</b> .....	5565
<b>Cox</b> .....	5568
<b>Reiter</b> .....	5571
<b>Steinley</b> .....	5573
<b>Rancourt</b> .....	5575
<b>Hargrave</b> .....	5579

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