



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

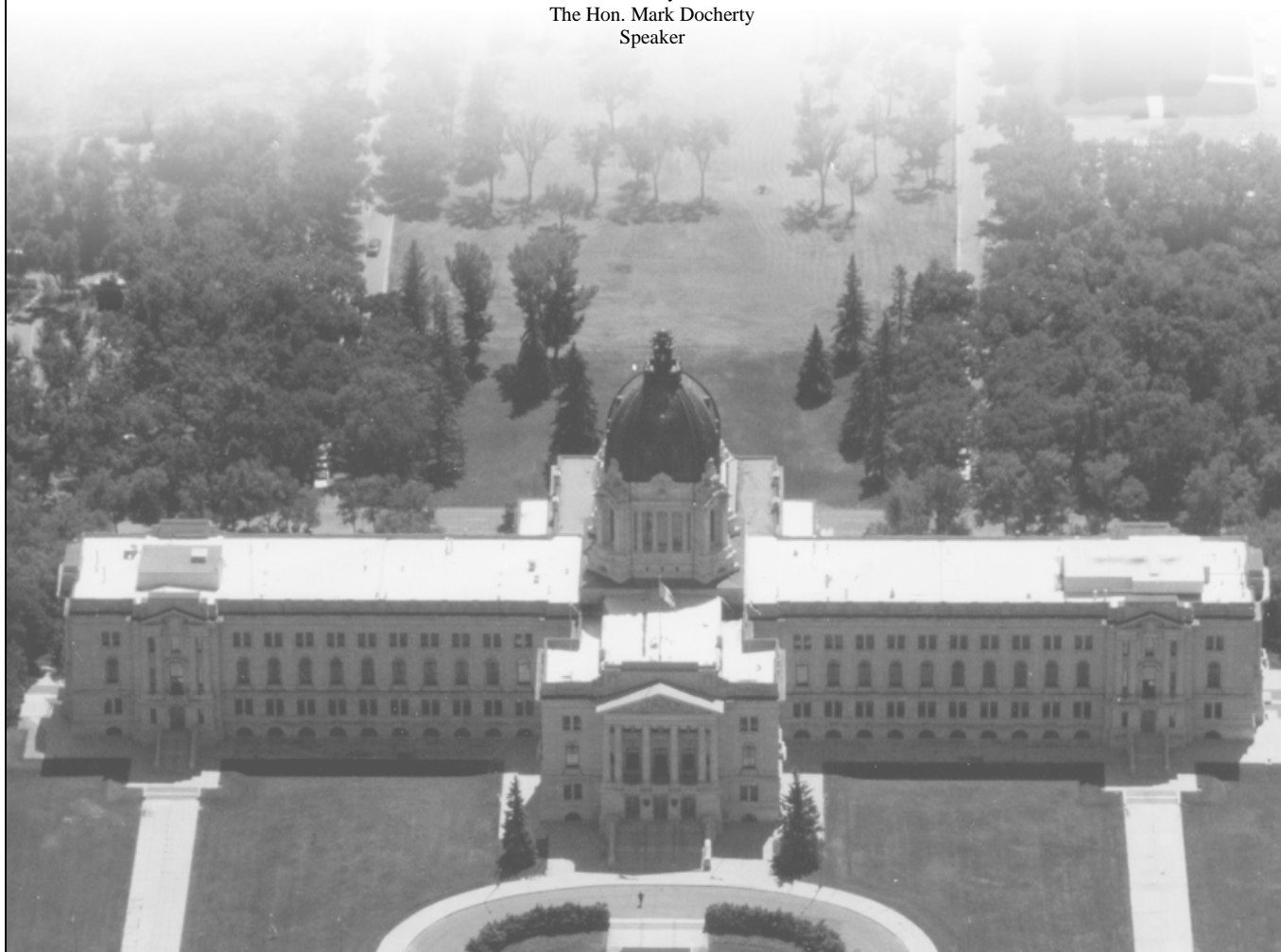
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Mark Docherty
Speaker



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

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Leader of the Opposition — Ryan Meili

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

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

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave for an extended introduction.

The Speaker: — The minister has asked for leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce a group of very dedicated volunteers, the Ministry of Agriculture's crop reporters. They are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, above me. Saskatchewan crop reporters include a mix of producers, agrologists, and other individuals interested in agriculture. I had the pleasure of meeting them at lunchtime, Mr. Speaker, and for me it was kind of like going back to the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention. A lot of them are our council members and things like that, so we had a great visit.

So these are the eyes and ears of what is happening in the farming community, Mr. Speaker. From spring to fall this network of volunteers provides invaluable information on rainfall and moisture conditions; seeding, haying, and harvest progress; crop and hay yields; as well as livestock feed supplies and pasture conditions. Many people and institutions rely on this information, Mr. Speaker.

Having accurate and timely crop reports available each week, from spring until harvest wraps up, allows international traders to better predict market trends. It allows local producers to plan during the growing season to make strategic business decisions, business decisions that are crucial to strengthening our economy. There are currently over 200 volunteers spread across the province, with many having contributed information for several decades. Each year we celebrate those volunteers who have offered their time for 25, 30, 35, and 40 years, Mr. Speaker. I want to recognize and thank each of the volunteer crop reporters here today. As I announce their names, I ask that they give a wave.

For 25 years' service, Richard and Celine Wawro, RM [rural municipality] of Wellington; Glenn and Lynda Yale, RM of Wallace; Allan Polegi from the RM of Garry. And for 30 years' service, Terry Macfarlane, RM of Mount Pleasant; Bruce and Eleanor Durie from the RM of Pense; George and Delores Riche from the RM of Dufferin; and Terry and Helen Helgason from the RM of Emerald; and Neil and Joanne Manson from the RM of Mildred. For 35 years' service, Mr. Speaker, Brett and Rana Meinert from the RM of Bone Creek; John and Norma Slabik

from the RM of Gull Lake; and Delwyn Jansen from the RM of LeRoy. And 40 years' service, Mr. Speaker, Lloyd and Ruth Wagner from the RM of Kelvington.

I want to thank all of them, Mr. Speaker, and we appreciate what they do. Your dedication and volunteerism is an example of what makes Saskatchewan a great place to live. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Pedersen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming all these crop reporters to their legislature. It's incredible that they do so on a volunteer basis. It's a very valuable service to our province that you do. And you know, in some cases that has been for decades of service, and that is very commendable. For nothing more than the thanks of a tour in the legislature and a Bluetooth speaker, I understand.

So, Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to be able to walk around the building with them as they got a tour of this building. And I would like everybody to join with me in welcoming them to their legislature.

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

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly, the mayor of the great city of North Battleford, His Worship Ryan Bater, seated up in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. Give us a wave, Ryan.

Ryan was first elected to council in 2012 for the city of North Battleford, and in 2016 he became our mayor. He was in the legislature this morning, Mr. Speaker, as MC [master of ceremonies] of a very important funding announcement for several communities and municipalities around this province. Ryan is also the executive director of Destination Battlefords, which does great work in promoting our area of the province. Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members to help me welcome Ryan to his Assembly.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member opposite in welcoming Ryan Bater to his Assembly. Certainly Ryan is a great leader within our province and within his community. I've known Ryan for many years, both through his involvement in provincial politics but also as a friend. And he's somebody who certainly has always been very active to build the economy of our province and specifically the community that he represents. So it's an honour, on behalf of the official opposition, to welcome Ryan to his Assembly.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure this afternoon to rise and introduce a number of guests seated in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker. We have with us a number of supporters and staff and board members from Cornwall Alternative School here in Regina, Mr. Speaker. Of course this is a school that has been servicing some of the most vulnerable kids

in our city for over 47 years. And they of course are here today because they are concerned with the budget decision to cut funding to their school.

With us today, Mr. Speaker, we have Eunice Cameron, former principal and current board member; Jamie Struthers, Vice-Chair of the board; Ken McCaw, former board member and administrator; Richie Hall, board member and former counsellor; Keith Jorgensen, who has worked with learners, adult learners in Saskatoon, has made the trip down to offer his support today; Michelle Amyotte-Kupusa, board member of 19 years; Debbie Hill, board member; Delia Delorme, former student; Cheyenne Dubois, supporter of Cornwall Alternative School; and Tara Amyotte-Ring, former student and soon-to-be graduated social worker, Mr. Speaker.

I'll have more to say about this delegation later, but I would invite all members to thank them and welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, in welcoming these supporters of Cornwall Alternative School to the legislature, members of the board, students, staff, and alumni who've joined us today, Mr. Speaker. I'm hoping they will have time after question period to sit down with me and have a conversation about the issues that's obviously very important to them, Mr. Speaker; talk about their experiences, talk about the path forward with respect to Cornwall, Mr. Speaker. So I'm looking forward to having that conversation after question period. So I'd ask all members to join me, Mr. Speaker, in welcoming these individuals to their legislature.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I would like to welcome some guests that are seated in the west gallery today from the Student Medical Society of Saskatchewan's government affairs and advocacy committee. Many folks on our side of the House had an opportunity to meet with these future doctors this morning in honour of the annual advocacy day. And we would like to ask all members to join us in welcoming them to their Assembly today.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the member opposite in welcoming the students from the Student Medical Society. I had the opportunity to meet with some of them last week. We had what I think was a great discussion, and I would ask all members to please join with me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Hon. Mr. Makowsky: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just briefly I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce someone who is well known to many, I'm sure, in this House and in this province: Mr. Richie Hall. He's a long-time Roughrider coach.

He was a coach of mine for many, many years. He played, of course, with the Riders.

He is currently employed elsewhere. I might not want to mention that at this point right now but, Mr. Speaker, he still makes his off-season home right here in Saskatchewan. He's given back to this community for decades, Mr. Speaker, and he's a great individual and I'm so happy to see him here today. Welcome, Richie.

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — I've also got some guests in the gallery. So sitting in the west gallery, I've got a group of 27 grade 8 students from Harvest City Christian Academy, knowing full well that this last weekend, they are the 2A provincial basketball champions, knowing full well. Accompanying them today is their teacher, Tara Yemba.

And I will be taking a meeting with them and taking their questions a little later today . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, I'm looking for some donations of ice cream . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, order. And while I'm on my . . . Yes, no more orders.

But while I'm on my feet, I'd also like to welcome my old partner at Paul Dojack Youth Centre, Richie Hall, welcome him as well to his Assembly.

And yes, welcome everybody and thanks for joining us. All right.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again today to present petitions from people, communities, local businesses all across Saskatchewan as it relates to the imposition of the PST [provincial sales tax] onto construction labour. Of course, this has really hurt our economy. It's hurt households, Mr. Speaker. Households that through the increase to the PST are now paying more than \$800 a year more than they were just four years ago. That's a 70 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker.

And of course, this choice has really hamstrung our economy, Mr. Speaker. Retail sales are flat and, in the construction industry specifically, Mr. Speaker, permits are down. Thousands of Saskatchewan workers have lost their livelihoods, that employment that they so value. In fact many of them have been forced out of the province that they know and love, Mr. Speaker.

The prayer reads as follows:

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

These petitions today are signed by concerned residents from Saskatoon, Hanley, and Weyburn. I so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood.

Ms. Lambert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to present a petition from citizens who are opposed to the federal government's decision to impose a carbon tax on the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, four out of five Saskatchewan residents oppose the carbon tax that goes into effect here on April 1st. I would like to share a part of the speech that was delivered by Jason LeBlanc, an Estevan farmer and auctioneer, at the rally on Parliament Hill on February 19th:

The carbon tax is not a price on pollution. It is a price on industry . . . The cost of living will increase dramatically. This tax will be applied to almost every product I use on the farm, including gas and home heat. This is what will happen to me, and I assume will be reflective of everyone right across Canada . . .

As a farmer I have no one to pass my added expenses to, but you better believe that once products leave the producer or manufacturers that you will all pay for the added cost of a carbon tax . . .

This tax will continue to put Canada in an unfair trading position, and is forcing our industries and jobs elsewhere, where the environmental regulations are inferior to ours. This tax will not only phase out the fossil fuel industry here but also phase out the very standard of living that Canada is admired for.

[13:45]

I'd like to read the prayer:

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens of Radisson and Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition calling on the Government of Saskatchewan to restore funding to Cornwall Alternative School.

Those who have signed the petition wish to draw our attention to the following: that Cornwall Alternative School offers unique programming to students in grades 7 through 10 who are experiencing difficulty in the regular school setting. Cornwall Alternative School provides additional supports for students to stay in school and help with personal issues in the form of counselling.

Cornwall Alternative School has an outreach worker to help students transition back to regular classrooms, as well as to provide services to students and their families. Cornwall Alternative School offers breakfast and lunch programs to ensure students can learn with access to safe and healthy food. Ninety-five per cent of Cornwall Alternative School students

report that they would not be in school at all if it were not for Cornwall Alternative School.

And I'm going to read the words of one parent that has written in to me: "Please, please, please don't close down this amazing school, and let other disheartened children learn to their full potential."

Mr. Speaker, I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Sask Party government to immediately reverse its decision to cut funding from Cornwall Alternative School and honour the three-year agreement that it signed back in 2017.

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

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

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

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

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

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Sask Party government to overhaul Saskatchewan's campaign finance laws to end out-of-province donations, to put a ban on donations from corporations and unions, and to put a donation limit on individual donations.

Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition come from the city of Prince Albert. I do so present. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise in my place today to present a petition calling for a public inquiry and a forensic audit into the Regina bypass land scandal.

We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring to the attention the following: thousands of people were impacted directly and lost their lands, homes, businesses,

access, life's work, health, and history and future as a result of how this government handled the Regina bypass. The cost of the Regina bypass exploded from 400 million to now over \$2 billion, Mr. Speaker.

And the prayer reads as follows:

Respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan call for a judicial public inquiry and a forensic audit into the entire Regina bypass land scandal.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed this particular petition have come from all throughout Saskatchewan. And on this particular page, Mr. Speaker, they come from Saskatoon. They come from Regina. They come from all throughout . . . Raymore. They come from all throughout the province, Mr. Speaker, and I so present.

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

Mr. Pedersen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for real action to fight climate change. The residents that signed this petition want to bring to our attention that Saskatchewan produces the highest greenhouse gas emissions per capita in all of Canada; that the Saskatchewan Party government has failed to tackle climate change; that the Saskatchewan Party government has failed to reduce emissions to the province's own targets; that slashing programs and funding for the environment have set the province on a backward course; and that the Saskatchewan Party government's inaction on climate change is reflected by per capita greenhouse gas emissions in our province that are more than three times the national average.

Mr. Speaker, in the prayer, the petitioners:

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

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Purple Day Supports Epilepsy Awareness

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I'm wearing a purple pin in support of epilepsy awareness. Purple Day was created in '08 by a young girl from Nova Scotia who has epilepsy named Cassidy Megan. The Epilepsy Association of Nova Scotia helped Cassidy develop her idea and a year later teamed up with a New York-based foundation to launch Purple Day internationally. Now Canadians and people across the world wear purple on March 26th to show support for people with epilepsy.

Mr. Speaker, more than 10,000 people in Saskatchewan have epilepsy. Currently Saskatchewan has two dedicated telemetry beds at the Royal University Hospital and two more beds are planned for the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital. Last fall the Minister of Health announced that \$50,000 in planning money had been allocated to support planning for the eventual creation of a dedicated telemetry unit in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan also employs 22 adult neurologists, four pediatric neurologists, and two dedicated epileptologists. We thank all medical professionals that contribute to providing care to patients with epilepsy and other neurological conditions.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in recognizing Purple Day and show support for Saskatchewan residents with epilepsy.

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

Gala Luncheon at Advocacy Centre

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 7th I had the pleasure of attending the fifth annual Seniors Gala Luncheon in Prince Albert. The yearly event is organized by the Prince Albert Seniors Advocacy Centre, under the direction of John and Hannelore Fryters.

The luncheon is followed by a keynote speaker who speaks of the interests of seniors. This year's speaker was Councillor Don Cody, who encouraged the audience to keep active, help each other, and to share a daily laugh. He quoted Charlie Chaplin who said, "A day without laughter is a wasted day."

Mr. Speaker, each year the Advocacy Centre uses this occasion to present the 70-Plus and Still Going Strong Award. The recipient is not aware that they are about to receive this recognition until the announcement is made following the keynote speaker. This year's recipient, much to his surprise, was Don Cody. Don has been an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly], a cabinet minister, the mayor of Prince Albert, and now is a Prince Albert city councillor. He has sat on many boards and committees and is very active in the community and his church.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in congratulating Don Cody on this well-deserved award and commending the Prince Albert Seniors Advocacy Centre and John and Hannelore Fryters for their good work on behalf of our seniors.

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

Friendship Bench Installed at Sask Polytechnic

Mr. Olason: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On January 29th I attended the launch event for the very first yellow Friendship Bench at Sask Polytechnic. The Friendship Bench was inspired by Lucas Fiorella, a university student from Ottawa who studied robotics.

While living in dorms for his first year, Lucas was always surrounded by his friends and was quite active within his community. He was the go-to guy for many people in his group if you needed a friend. He seemed to be a happy young man, but

many did not know that he was suffering from depression.

Mr. Speaker, Lucas took his own life on October 12th, 2014. His passing was a shock to many in his community but has also inspired those who have been suffering in silence for far too long to speak up. The yellow bench is a destination where secondary and post-secondary students who are struggling to connect with others or find it difficult to ask for help can talk with someone or even lend an ear to someone in need.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank Sam Fiorella, the co-founder of yellow benches, Dr. Anne Neufeld for her donation, and Dr. Larry Rosia from Sask Polytechnic. I thank them for their advocacy and installing this important bench, as I know it will change many lives. This bench is a positive step in the right direction. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Family is Part of Regina's Cultural Fabric

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Partly in recognition of International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which took place just a few days ago, I would like to recognize a local family who's become a major part of the cultural fabric of Regina.

Bruce Tran and his family left their home in Vietnam 40 years ago. I know Bruce because he's active in the community, because he's a fixture at Viet Thai, the restaurant where I and many of my colleagues have enjoyed so many fine meals over the years. And I also know the Tran family because one of the first places where they lived here in Regina was just down Elphinstone Street from my grandma, Olive McCall.

When the Tran family left Vietnam, they feared for their lives. It was not a given that they would end up in Regina, but it is our good fortune that they did. Heading into the unknown with nothing but courage and the hope of a better life, the family spent six hungry days at sea in an overcrowded boat and 13 months in a refugee camp on a Malaysian island, waiting and wondering what would happen. And they revisited that island this past winter, Mr. Speaker.

The Tran family was eventually chosen to come to Canada. According to them it was the best thing that ever happened to them, and I'd have to say that the feeling is mutual, Mr. Speaker.

I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking the Tran family for their courage and for their extraordinary contributions to the community of Regina. We thank them for helping Saskatchewan to realize something of its motto, "from many peoples, strength."

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

Women Who Care Help Local Charities

Hon. Ms. Beaudry-Mellor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, according to a study done last year by Bloomberg, women are the world's most powerful consumers, and their impact on the economy is growing every year. That statistic is what fuelled the creation of 100 Women Who Care.

This is an organization of women that uses their purchasing power and leverages it to help local charities. Mr. Speaker, the approach builds on the power of 100 — 100 women who donate \$100 quarterly, resulting in \$10,000 per quarter for local Regina charities.

At each of these quarterly meetings, three nominated charities make their pitch to 100 women, and the winning charity receives a cheque for \$10,000 raised that night. This means that here in Regina a group of women is responsible for putting \$40,000 a year into the hands of local charities.

The recipient of this quarter's donation is Hope's Home. With this donation, Hope's Home will be able to provide respite for 13 families with children who have high and complex medical needs.

I want to thank all the women, past and present, who have contributed to 100 Women Who Care's mission of empowering and highlighting the wonderful charities in our vibrant community of Regina. Thank you so much.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Yorkton.

Patriotic Dinner in Yorkton

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 14th I was pleased to attend the Knights of Columbus's ninth annual Patriotic Dinner in Yorkton. Along with special guests such as Mayor Bob Maloney, Member of Parliament Cathay Wagantall, I enjoyed an evening of prayer, great food, and great company.

Mr. Speaker, the Knights of Columbus do great work in the communities that they serve, including volunteerism, community involvement, and other charitable work. This annual event is an opportunity to celebrate patriotism with a direct focus on the flag, promoting good citizenship, obeying laws, and protection of freedoms.

I was especially inspired by guest speaker Father Gregory Hrynkiw who gave a detailed presentation on patriotism with a focus on history and personal experience in regard to those of strong religious conviction being strong patriots. Mr. Speaker, Father Gregory spoke of historic patriotism thousands of years in history, specifically during the time of Christ when the Holy Land was occupied by Roman forces. In more recent times, Father Gregory spoke of his time in Italy and also in communist-controlled Ukraine prior to 1989, with the observation that those with biblical views remained very patriotic.

[14:00]

Alongside patriotism, the program expanded on other themes of the evening, including the importance of protecting freedom of religion, speech, and conscience. There was also a conversation on how laws have historically been based on moral truths. However, as time goes on, we're seemingly drifting.

In closing, I would like to thank the Knights of Columbus for having me and commend them on all their good work. May God bless and guide them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Producers are Ambassadors for Agriculture Industry

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In October I stood in this House to proclaim October as Agriculture Month, Mr. Speaker. And throughout the month, people were encouraged to learn more about Saskatchewan agriculture through stories and conversations about modern food production.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share a story about one of those producers from my constituency today. Caroncrest Farms, owned by the McLeod family at Caron, is a mixed dairy and crop farm that has been operating since 1967. Mr. Speaker, in 2010, to properly meet the needs of a growing farm, the family began the process of expanding and renewing the farm yard. The McLeod family sought approval under Saskatchewan's agricultural operations Act before beginning the expansion. Significant construction was done to build new barns and even a new lagoon system, all the while ensuring the needs of the cattle and nearby water sources would never be jeopardized.

Mr. Speaker, the McLeod family are fantastic ambassadors for Saskatchewan's strong agriculture industry. Their commitment to preserve the land and the environment and to ensure the sustainability of the farming industry should be applauded. Agriculture is the backbone of this province. And as farmers and ranchers, we know that it is imperative that we take care of our environment today to ensure that everyone in the industry and beyond has a prosperous and sustainable future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Funding for Education

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we'll continue our new tradition of bringing forth questions that we're receiving from around the province. We've been hearing a lot about education from people around the province wondering why this government is more concerned about the next election than they are about the next generation.

And today's question comes from a teacher right here in Regina who asked, when will this government restore the per-student funding that has fallen since 2013? And when will they properly resource classrooms to deal with the growth in number of students, the growth in diversity, the growth in complexity in our classrooms?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I mentioned in this House yesterday, Mr. Speaker, and for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, we don't fund on a per-pupil basis. Our funding formula is quite complicated, takes into a number of factors, Mr. Speaker. But I can tell you this: that over the last year, Mr. Speaker, I've been out talking to teachers and trustees. I've been talking to parents, Mr. Speaker. Our commitment to public education . . . Our commitment to public education, Mr. Speaker, was reflected in last year's budget with the addition of

\$30 million and in this year's budget by another \$26.2 million, Mr. Speaker.

Now we know there's more work to do. There's more work to do in terms of having conversations to find out what the right solutions are, Mr. Speaker, to deal with the issues that we're seeing in our classrooms. And I've talked to a lot of teachers. The member opposite knows that, Mr. Speaker. And we've heard some of those challenges in the classroom. The question is, how do you deal with those? Even the members opposite have already acknowledged money's not the answer, Mr. Speaker. It's finding reasonable solutions to deal with the challenges that our teachers are facing, Mr. Speaker. That's why in this year's budget we have half a million dollars, Mr. Speaker, to embark on a process to talk about innovation, to talk about how we can improve the results in our classrooms, Mr. Speaker. And we're committed to public education. We're committed to taking that forward.

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

Support for Advanced Education

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For years this government's talked and bragged about the per-student funding. Now that those numbers have fallen off, they've changed their tune and that's no longer a worthwhile measure, Mr. Speaker.

If you want a weak economy 10 years from now, if you want a weak economy 10 years from now, the best thing to do is not invest in early childhood development, not invest in education, and cut advanced education . . . Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you want a weak economy, you cut early childhood development. You cut K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12]. You cut advanced education. And that's exactly what this government has done: advanced education in particular, a 5 per cent cut two years ago, zero last year, zero this year.

We heard before this budget came out from the president of the University of Saskatchewan that they would require at least 5 million more just to keep things as they were. What did they get? Nothing. And as a result what will we see? Job losses, program cuts, and tuition hikes, just like we've seen before.

Why is this government so committed to undermining the foundation of our future? Why the repeated failure to invest in advanced education?

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

Hon. Ms. Beaudry-Mellor: — Well I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I would say to the member opposite that he doesn't quite have his facts right. We've supported the University of Saskatchewan extremely well, including the College of Medicine, Mr. Speaker, which this year between the Ministry of Advanced Education and the Ministry of Health has provided \$172 million to the College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. That's more than the entire budget of the University of Regina, Mr. Speaker. So we are very committed to the University of Saskatchewan, and particularly the College of Medicine, especially with the number of health facilities that we have growing across the province.

But I'll also say this, Mr. Speaker, that over the last decade our government has increased operating funding to our institutions by 53 per cent. During this same period, Mr. Speaker, the consumer price index rose by 25 per cent and enrolments by 22 per cent, Mr. Speaker. I think the provincial government is doing its part to fund post-secondary education in the province.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A drop of 4 per cent in advanced education spending since 2016. This government likes to drive by trying to look out the rear window, but they've not noticed there's a big blind spot. The last four years have seen a significant decrease in investment in what matters most for our future.

Mr. Speaker, when you don't spend in education, you wind up spending those same dollars and more in health, in social services, and in justice, because you see increases in illness, in poverty, and crime. The human cost, the social cost, the financial cost of failing to invest in education is huge. And we see that in this year's budget.

Since 2016 the health budget has increased by 4 per cent, corrections and policing by 9 per cent, social services — which is an indication of how much poverty has grown — has increased by 18 per cent. When it comes to education, education, zero per cent. Advanced education, a drop of 4 per cent. Mr. Speaker, why is this government so allergic to investing upstream? Why the unwillingness to invest in what makes the biggest difference for our future? Why do they want to spend more on poverty, illness, and crime?

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

Hon. Ms. Beaudry-Mellor: — Well, Mr. Speaker, again I want to thank the member opposite for this question because it gives me an opportunity to highlight an upstream investment, to use his words, that I think is really great. For example, in this budget again we've invested 17 million in direct supports for indigenous students and Métis students across the province, Mr. Speaker.

And here's how that is translating: more students have been enrolling, which is a 34 per cent increase since we had the privilege of forming government, Mr. Speaker, have been enrolling in institutions across the province. More indigenous students feel welcome and supported as a result of the efforts of our institutions to indigenize campuses that aren't already indigenous institutions, Mr. Speaker. More indigenous students are receiving a credential, Mr. Speaker, 49 per cent increase across the province. More older indigenous students are receiving a credential. And this one's really important, Mr. Speaker — more indigenous graduates are employed.

There's been an increase of 10,700 indigenous students receiving a credential and entering the labour market since 2007, Mr. Speaker. That is an incredibly impressive number.

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

Funding for Alternative School

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday I joined with members on

this side, community members, and students of the Cornwall Alternative School to stand up against the closure of that institution and to realize that there's a pattern going on here with this government and with this Premier. A Premier who, when he was minister of Advanced Education, halfway through the year took half of the increased funding back from the colleges and universities.

And then — you want to talk about indigenous enrolment — NORTEP, this successful program for training teachers in the North, he signed a five-year agreement to expand and extend that service. One year later he shut it down; shut it down one year later. And now Cornwall. Cornwall, which had a three-year extension. And now halfway through, this government is telling them the deal's not on. Why does this Premier think that the people of Saskatchewan will trust him when it's so clear that his signature isn't worth the paper it's written on?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, thank you. Mr. Speaker, at the heart of this issue is this government's desire to provide the best possible options for students in our system, the best possible options for students in our system, Mr. Speaker. We know, we've learned, we've heard from students, Mr. Speaker; we've heard from members of the community how important this program is.

And that's why I'm pleased to tell you, Mr. Speaker, and members on the opposite side of the House, that I'm prepared to revisit the decision. I'm prepared to engage in a consultation process, Mr. Speaker, with former students, with current students, with members in the gallery, Mr. Speaker, about how we can best deliver the programs that kids need to ensure their ultimate success in our education system, Mr. Speaker.

And that consultation, that conversation needs to be done fairly quickly, Mr. Speaker. It's going to start this afternoon. I've already extended an invitation to members in the gallery, Mr. Speaker, to meet with me right after question period to start this very important conversation to make sure that at the end of the day we're providing the best options and the best solutions, Mr. Speaker, for the students that are in our province.

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

Ms. Beck: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear that from that minister. But it does defy belief that the consultation happens now, after the cut is announced, after they put the school and all of the people who have joined us here into turmoil. Mr. Speaker, I hope he endeavours to do better next time. And with that said I will not let him forget what is at stake here.

Yesterday the minister stood in the Assembly and claimed that he knew what was in the best interests of students attending Cornwall School. He said that kids coming out of Cornwall, "... aren't very good at making the transition into grade 11." Well, Mr. Speaker, here's what some of those students that the minister chose to speak for had to say about the support that they've received at Cornwall Alternative School: "I wouldn't be the person I am today if not for Cornwall." And another student, Tara Amyotte, who's here with us today: "I probably would have ended up dead if it wasn't for their support. It gave me my culture. It essentially gave me my life."

Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to hear that the minister is listening but I want to caution him against thinking that he actually knows better than those with lived experience, students who have thrived at this school. I'd like to hear more details about this consultation.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well, Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, it's the desire of this government, it's my desire as the Minister of Education to make sure we provide the best possible options for kids, Mr. Speaker. And that's why I want to have conversations with parents, with students, with alumni, with the board Chairs, Mr. Speaker.

I reached out to the board Chair of Cornwall this morning to arrange a meeting. We'll hopefully have a conference call a little bit later on today to talk about our path forward, Mr. Speaker, always keeping in mind that we want to make sure that the programming that's delivered is in the best interests of kids, Mr. Speaker. There's lots of options. There's lots of alternative delivery models, Mr. Speaker, in this province.

Cornwall may well be, at the end of the day, after having some further conversations, Mr. Speaker, the best option for these kids. But we want to have that discussion, Mr. Speaker. So I'm pleased to be able to open up a dialogue with stakeholders in this area, Mr. Speaker. Because at the end of the day — and I've said this before — we just want to make sure that we do right by the kids that are in this program, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, hopefully you will allow me a little confusion because that is so far off what that minister stood up and said yesterday. I'm glad that the pressure of those who are here in the gallery today and those who have been calling in has got to the minister, but I am not going to let this go until we have confirmation that he has actually . . . [inaudible].

Mr. Speaker, Cornwall offers specialized, individualized supports, ones that the minister knows are in short supply across our school system due to that government's cuts. The minister claims that these kids will thrive in the mainstream schools. Does he understand that their lack of success in these schools is the reason that they were referred to Cornwall Alternative by the public and the Catholic school system in the first place?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

[14:15]

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — We're very proud of our record as a government, working with school divisions, dealing with at-risk kids, Mr. Speaker. We see different models around the province in different school divisions, Mr. Speaker, and we're pleased to be able to support children that are at risk, Mr. Speaker.

And as I have mentioned, and I don't think I have to say it too many more times, we want to have a conversation to make sure that what we're providing to the children, to the kids, and the students at Cornwall is the best possible option for them so that they can not only proceed in terms of their educational opportunities, their academic achievements, Mr. Speaker, but

also pass their academic role within the school division, Mr. Speaker.

So I'm glad that she said she's not going to let me off the hook, Mr. Speaker. I think that's good. I'm certainly prepared to continue to have these conversations to ensure that the decisions that we make as a government, Mr. Speaker, are made in the best interests of the kids.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, that minister likes to have conversations and conversations and conversations, but what we want to see is some action. So here's a very simple question. The least that the minister can do is commit today to honouring the three-year commitment to Cornwall Alternative School through to the end of March of 2017. Will he commit to that today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not prepared . . . Mr. Speaker, I'm not prepared to stand on my feet today and rule out any options, Mr. Speaker. As I've said, we want to make sure the programming that is provided to at-risk kids in this community and around the province is the best possible option for those kids.

And I'm not sure how the member opposite can complain about that, Mr. Speaker. She thinks that Cornwall is the be-all and end-all and she doesn't want to have any further conversations about enhancing programming for children at risk, Mr. Speaker. I think that's irresponsible. She's a former . . . Mr. Speaker, she's a former school board trustee. And we've been having many conversations, Mr. Speaker, about the future of public education in this province. We're making some progress. We're going to continue to have those conversations, and this is part of that conversation.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, I'm going to model some behaviour for that minister. I just spoke and made a mistake, and I said to 2017. What I meant: will he honour the contract to 2020? I made a mistake; I'm going to correct it. Will the minister do the same and honour that contract to the end of 2020?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, as I've said, we're not going to rule out any options, including the ongoing funding of this particular alternative school, Mr. Speaker. I think that that's in the . . . I think that's in the best interests of kids, to make sure that what we're doing is best practices, Mr. Speaker. And if the member opposite is worried about a review, if she's worried about the conversations might lead to something . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Okay. Order. There's enough crosstalk. Let's listen to the answer and listen to the questions. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — If she's worried about having conversations, Mr. Speaker, then I don't understand that. It seems

to me that she's going to want to make sure that the programming that is provided to at-risk kids in this community is the best possible programming, no matter where it's delivered, Mr. Speaker.

But we want to have a clear and honest and respectful conversation. That's why we're going to start that this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. And I'm happy to have a conversation this afternoon. We're going to sit down and have conversations with the board Chair, Mr. Speaker, with the Chairs of the other two school divisions to do just that.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, maybe the minister would have considered having the conversations before he made the decision to cut a contract. Yesterday the minister was casting aspersions on the people who have dedicated themselves to the students at Cornwall. He also drew in the school divisions, Mr. Speaker. He said — without evidence, I might add — that the school was failing and needs to be closed, adding, "We've heard this not only from people at Cornwall, Mr. Speaker, but we've heard it from people in the school division."

It's time for the minister to show his work, because frankly, I don't believe him. Will he table today any correspondence with school divisions that back up the statement that school divisions were the ones who asked for Cornwall to be closed?

The Speaker: — It's important that you're on the line here for, you know, unparliamentary language. Right? Knowing full well that everyone here is honourable and everybody's telling the truth. So I give you the opportunity.

I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm a little bit taken aback. At no time did I cast aspersions upon any of the professionals that work in our school division, Mr. Speaker, that work in the education sector. I have great respect for them, Mr. Speaker, and if I didn't, I wouldn't be engaging in ongoing conversations, many, many conversations with hundreds and hundreds of people in this province, Mr. Speaker.

But I repeat, Mr. Speaker, we will do what's in the best interests of the kids, children at risk that are in our communities. We're going to have those dialogues with the school boards, Mr. Speaker, with the Chair and the trustees of Cornwall Alternative School, Mr. Speaker, make sure that the decisions that are made with respect to the best interests of the kids are followed through, Mr. Speaker. And that's my commitment on the floor of the legislature today.

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

Ms. Beck: — I'm going to make this very, very easy for the minister, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday he suggested that it was the school divisions who asked for this cut to Cornwall Alternative School. I'm going to ask him to provide any backup documentation that he has or to withdraw that comment.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to withdraw any comments. Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, the conversations that I've had with my ministry, Mr. Speaker, who have had conversations with school divisions, Mr. Speaker, was that these children can be accommodated within the regular stream to ensure there's a continuity of their educational journey within the school system, Mr. Speaker, that there are adequate supports within our school system to support them.

And as I've said, we're not ruling out any options, Mr. Speaker, in terms of how we proceed. And that includes the continuation of the programming at Cornwall. But, Mr. Speaker, conversations that I've had with my ministry officials in terms of ensuring that we're providing for the best interests of the kids, Mr. Speaker, I stand by those comments.

But I think it's important — and I've said on the floor of the legislature when I opened with my first question — that we're prepared to continue to have a dialogue, to have a conversation with people just to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that we have all the information that we need to make the proper decision. I think that the conversations that I've had, Mr. Speaker, have been very fruitful with respect to my ministry officials, and I want to make sure that the programming is in the best interests of the kids. And we're going to do just that.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister stood in that place and suggested that the reason for this closure was that students from Cornwall were having difficulty transitioning into the regular school system. And he said that not only did his ministry believe that, but "We've heard this not only from people at Cornwall, Mr. Speaker, but we've heard it from people in the school division."

What I'm asking him for is any sort of evidence that he has that he had those conversations with either Regina Public or Regina Catholic school boards that they asked for Cornwall to be closed because they were not doing the job of properly educating students and preparing them for the transition to grade 11.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, this whole issue is about transitioning kids. It's not about the boards, Mr. Speaker. My ministry officials have had conversations with officials within the school boards, Mr. Speaker, about the challenges in respect of transition, and that's the basis upon which the decision was made.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if there's more information that I need to have, and that's why I want to have these conversations, make sure that I have all the information. That's why I want to revisit the decision, Mr. Speaker. And so the member opposite can complain all she wants but at the end of the day, we're going to make the decisions that's in the best interests of these kids.

And as I've said, if that means the continuation of the program at Cornwall, then that's what the decision will be. But it will be based on the information that we're going to get, not only from Cornwall, Mr. Speaker, but from the school divisions and from other programming options that are available within the

province.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, plainly put, that minister is putting these children in peril. If he's interested in conversations and best practices, I suggest you have decades of experience sitting up in the gallery who would be very delighted to tell you about the efficacy of this program, Mr. Speaker.

And in terms of, Mr. Speaker, the fact that these students are having difficulty transitioning back into the regular school system, I'm not sure what part of this the minister doesn't understand. These are kids that were having a lot of difficulty in the regular school system, who were referred by the regular school system for this specialized programming. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? They're still in school and that is thank you to the good work of the people up there in that gallery.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'll ask him one more time. Will that minister stand up today and commit to honouring his word, to honouring the contract of Cornwall Alternative School through to 2020, and commit to having more of those conversations with the people who are here with us today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure how many more times I have to repeat this for the member. I'm not ruling anything out, Mr. Speaker, including the continuation of the programming at Cornwall.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to have those conversations. I'm glad that the people are in the gallery today so that I can have an honest conversation with them, a respectful conversation, and get some messaging, Mr. Speaker, hear the experiences of the students that are here today so that we can move forward with this.

But at the end of the day, what we want to make sure of on this side of the House, and I'm sure that the member opposite wants the same thing, that we want to make sure that we provide the best possible programming for the children in our school system, no matter where they are, Mr. Speaker . . .

An Hon. Member: — Are you saying they don't?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — No I'm not, Mr. Speaker, I'm not saying that they don't now. I'm just saying, Mr. Speaker, that we need to explore all the options.

There's many, many models in this province about how children at risk are dealt with. We want to talk about that. We want to have conversations. I want to have the experiential comments from students who have been there, Mr. Speaker. But I'm not ruling anything out, Mr. Speaker, including the continuation of the programming at Cornwall.

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

Coverage for Prescription Drug

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, we know our province recently

took a step forward in expanding access to abortions when government added Mifegymiso to the Saskatchewan drug plan in 2017. This is a good first step, but we can do more.

Of the pills that were prescribed in Saskatchewan, less than 30 per cent had any portion of the cost covered by the plan. These costs can be a barrier to access, especially for women in rural and remote communities who can't access surgical abortions and would need to incur additional travel costs if they were unable to afford the pill.

To the Minister of Rural and Remote Health: what measures are being taken to ensure equitable access to Mifegymiso for women in rural and remote communities? And will the minister commit to providing universal access to Mifegymiso in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned during the introductions, I had an opportunity to meet with some of the medical students last week on this very issue. Mr. Speaker, they made a very good presentation and I assured them that we would review this situation, as we frequently do with different drugs on the formulary.

Mr. Speaker, as far as access in rural and remote Saskatchewan, the simple fact of the matter that physicians are able to prescribe this pill now lends itself to greater access across the province. The question here is whether or not universal coverage would be provided.

Mr. Speaker, there's a number of things we need to weigh before we make those kinds of considerations, not the least of which is when you provide universal coverage for a drug. Currently right now people with private insurance or work insurance, it would then defer the costs from the insurance companies, Mr. Speaker, to the taxpayer. So before we make any of those kinds of decisions we review it very carefully, Mr. Speaker. That's what we'll do in this case.

The Speaker: — Why is the Government House Leader on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Brkich: — To make a point of order.

The Speaker: — What's your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Mr. Brkich: — The member from Regina Lakeview, and I quote, said, "I didn't believe the Minister of Education." We've always taken members at their word in this House so I would ask that she apologize and withdraw that remark.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, I apologize for that remark and withdraw it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moose Jaw

Wakamow.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the answers to question 64 and 65.

The Speaker: — Order 64, 65.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Harpauer that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Wotherspoon.]

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

An Hon. Member: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Beaudry-Mellor: — Thank you. Thank you, Paul. Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege and honour to stand and speak with respect to the budget that we tabled last week.

[14:30]

As is customary, I want to start with a couple of opening comments. The first is, you know, Mr. Speaker, I'm really grateful that I have this job. I think I have one of the best jobs in government and certainly one of the best jobs out there. I get to work in Advanced Education every day. I get to work with Innovation Saskatchewan and the Status of Women and a really strong team, and I feel very privileged to have that opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to say a few words. You know, a lot of the public sees us on the outside but they don't see a lot of the things that go on behind the scenes, Mr. Speaker, to help us be successful or help us correct mistakes when they've happened. And I want to take a minute to talk about the unsung heroes behind us and beside us, especially when things go wrong either in our private lives or publicly.

So with that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank my kids, Kayman and Montana, who have always been great champions of mine, as I am of them. We've certainly had some rough years with being teenagers, but on the whole I think we have a very strong foundation. And I feel really proud of the young people that they're becoming, Mr. Speaker, and I can't wait to see what they're going to do next.

Obviously, my parents. It's been spoken about by many members of this House before but for those of us, especially with families, my parents have played a really critical role and enabled me to keep all the balls in the air, Mr. Speaker. And so I'm grateful very much to my parents as well for helping me do that, and just for instilling in me a couple of values that I think are really important: one, the value of hard work, of honesty, of loyalty,

and care for others.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't be where I am today if it wasn't for the team that I have here in the building. And I want to give a shout-out to my ministry team up in the office: Tessa, Dawn, Michelle, Dan, and Ashley, who just do a tremendous job keeping me organized. And I really have the best supportive team that anyone could ever ask for. My CA [constituency assistant] Wendy keeps me in the loop about things that are coming into our constituency office and makes sure that I'm abreast of everything that is going on, and that people who come into my office feel like they were heard and that they will get a response and that we will handle the things that we need to be handled.

I also want to thank, Mr. Speaker, my colleagues. I have so many incredible supportive colleagues, and of course a great leader in Premier Scott Moe, and I'm really grateful every day to be part of a team of people that are professionals, that are good at what they do, and that raise the bar every single day.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank leaders in the community and good friends. I've been really blessed to have a number of good friends that I would call friends in the community who are leaders in their various capacities, and just good people who have always supported me and make my life great and push me to be better every single day, I think, Mr. Speaker, which is really important. You know, when times are good, everybody's great. But when times are hard, you know, the power of a kind word or a text really means a lot. And I'm really grateful to have had the opportunity over the last little while to have a lot of friends reach out on a number of fronts, and I just want to thank them for that.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we've invested in mental health in this budget, but I think we need to remember that we all play a role in looking after each other's mental health in this place as well. I think we have to do more than wear pink on anti-bullying days and broadcast slogans. I appreciate a really thoughtful and sharp political critique — I'm a partisan after all — and hope I'll be providing one here in moments, but I think we can still treat each other with the respect and dignity we each deserve and honour the office of parliamentarian that we are all called to play. And, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't cost us a thing.

So in terms of the budget, Mr. Speaker, the issue at hand, it's been said many times I think, and it will be said many more, that three years ago we committed to a three-year plan to get back to balance. And we've delivered on that plan, Mr. Speaker, but what I don't think has been said enough was that this commitment was made by our former premier and then duly accomplished by both the former and the current Premier.

And I think it is this consistency and steadfastness in achieving our collective obligation that has made a leadership transition seamless for our government. In fact I would argue that we are stronger as a team than we have ever been before, and for that I want to thank both former Premier Brad Wall and Premier Scott Moe for the conviction to achieve . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — I'd like to remind the member that members are to be referred to by either their constituency or the position that they hold. And I know members receive some assistance from staff who perhaps write some of the things for

them, so I would just like to remind members of how they are to refer to one another.

I recognize the minister.

Hon. Ms. Beaudry-Mellor: — My apologies, Mr. Speaker. I know better than that, and I somehow missed that. I apologize . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Kick me out? Geez, good friends. That's good friends.

I want to thank them for their conviction, Mr. Speaker, to achieve a goal that sometimes really required some difficult choices. And I think that is real leadership, Mr. Speaker.

Over the last two years, we've put hundred of thousands of kilometres on engaging with Saskatchewan people. I've done that and certainly the Premier has done many, many more than that, and so have many of my colleagues. This budget responds to the things we have heard about most across town halls, forums, bear pits, and business round tables. It responds to the things we have heard from most in our conversations over coffee, in our constituency offices, in meetings with stakeholders, and around our own family supper tables. We cannot do everything, spend on everything, and balance our budget. Like so many households out there, when the budget is stretched we make choices about where to spend based on where our greatest needs are, and that quite frankly is what good, hard-working folks all over this province have been telling us to do.

So what did citizens tell us the greatest needs were? Mental health and addictions supports. This budget has record investments in health with a special focus on mental health and addictions. In total, 349.4 million has been directed into mental health care initiatives through the Ministry of Health, just bringing us under the goal of 7 per cent.

On family farms, on reserves, in workplaces, and around our own dinner tables, we have all heard first-hand accounts of people struggling with mental illness or addictions. Mr. Speaker, mental health doesn't discriminate. It affects wealthy and poor, indigenous and non-indigenous, young and old, male or female, rural or urban. The magnitude of this issue is overwhelming, really. It is no longer a matter of if we know someone. It's a matter of how many.

As a government, I am very, very proud of our investment into the Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford. That facility is critically important because it not only speaks to the care of those with our most intensive needs, it also speaks to our understanding that sometimes crime is a by-product of mental illness. We will never as a government fully address all of the mental health and addictions issues across the province. For that we truly need a village, Mr. Speaker, but I'm very proud that our government is doing its part.

Intersection safety. In the wake of the Humboldt Broncos tragedy, we also heard a lot about truck driver training and intersection safety. I am very proud of the work that my colleague, Minister Carr, has done to work with the federal government . . . I did it again. I need to scratch it. I'm so sorry. It's a rough week and it's only Tuesday, Mr. Speaker. It's a rough week, Mr. Speaker, and it's only Tuesday. To work with the federal government on mandatory training for truck drivers. I'm

also very proud of our efforts to continue twinning highways, the completion of the Regina bypass, and our multi-year strategy on enhanced intersection safety, Mr. Speaker.

These are critical investments in health, but also in the economy of the province and the safety, and obviously also recreation.

Wireless coverage. Our agricultural sector, Mr. Speaker, is one of the biggest drivers of innovation in this province, whether we're talking about genomic research or the application of artificial intelligence to create autonomous tractors through Dot Technology. Modern farm equipment is increasingly capable of enabling precision agricultural practices, from seeding to spraying to harvesting, which enables our producers to control costs, increase yields, and curb emissions.

But continued advancement in this sector, as well as others, requires digital infrastructure. And that's why I'm very proud of the \$321 million investment SaskTel is making to upgrade wireless and wireline networks across the province, as well as the addition of 41 new cellular sites. This latter investment is part of a two-year initiative to bring 100 new sites to small communities in the province by 2020.

In terms of domestic violence and interpersonal abuse, Mr. Speaker, we have added capacity to the Status of Women office to coordinate the work on the domestic violence death review recommendations and the inter-ministerial committee. And I'm very proud that there are other initiatives that are coming along. We have also been the first province in Canada to institute Clare's Law, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very proud of the work that is being done on this file. We know that there is more work to do, and of course it is something that we will continue to work on.

In my own constituency of Regina University we've heard from parents of young children with autism who are struggling to make sure that their kids have all the supports they need to get the best possible start in life. These conversations have happened on the doorsteps in my own constituency. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to supports for children on the spectrum, and it can be very expensive. And that's why I'm very proud of the increase in individualized funding for children with autism in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

As a Regina MLA, I also heard a lot about St. Pius School, not only from the Regina separate school board but also from concerned parents and teachers about the state of that facility. Mr. Speaker, we've committed to a consolidation and build for Argyle and St. Pius schools in this budget as part of our government's education capital plans, Mr. Speaker, which is coincidentally located right in Regina Lakeview constituency of the Education critic.

These are the issues we have heard about the most, Mr. Speaker, as we have travelled across the province, and certainly that I have heard personally the most as I have knocked on doors or met with folks in my constituency and in this city. Most of them, as you can see, are investments in people and in what some might call matters of the heart. And it is precisely those targeted investments into areas where we need them the most, while still delivering on a balanced budget, that makes this the right balance.

But we cannot afford any of these things, Mr. Speaker, if we don't grow the economy. And on this we have the single greatest contrast between the members opposite and our government, Mr. Speaker. First of all, we recognize the magnitude of the headwinds — the federal imposition of the carbon tax, the competitiveness challenges associated with US [United States] tariffs, the latest challenges around canola exports, federal regulations that serve as a constantly moving goalpost on building pipelines, Bill C-69, and the list goes on and on. We export 70 per cent of what we make in this province, and I know that people in Saskatchewan trust our Premier and our government, not only to fully comprehend the magnitude of these challenges. They also trust that we will marshal all of our abilities to meet those challenges head on.

That's why our Premier and relevant ministers have been aggressively building relationships with our largest trading partners, not just at national levels, Mr. Speaker, but also at subnational levels. And that is why we have been using our voice to amplify important conversations around Bill C-69 or canola exports or pipelines or the carbon tax. Saskatchewan people trust that we don't just talk about these things or make passing reference to them. They don't hear us say we support the energy industry while we speak out at rallies against it. We fight on behalf of the people of this province and we will stand shoulder to shoulder with families and communities whose livelihoods and industries are at stake. Saskatchewan people trust us to do that and we will, because standing up for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is standing up for our economy.

And when we stand up for our economy and seek solutions to problems outside of our control by building relationships or seeking alternatives, we also stand up for families with kids with autism, who will be getting additional supports. We also stand up then for families at St. Pius school, and we also then stand up for the hundreds and thousands of people who are struggling with mental health and addictions. Nothing, I repeat, nothing about that is off balance, Mr. Speaker.

What is off balance is the members opposite's readiness to govern, Mr. Speaker. And this starts with a basic and authentic understanding of the headwinds I talked about but also several others.

[14:45]

One of the ways we have been able to keep our economy going and create employment, Mr. Speaker, is through record investments in infrastructure projects over our time in government. Those infrastructure projects have benefited many, many companies and our citizens with improved safety on highways, more efficient transportation routes for our exported goods, and better care for children, seniors, and the most vulnerable. And that list is long, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure some of my colleagues will go through it, but it ranges from long-term care beds to new schools to the children's hospital, the Moose Jaw hospital, the Victoria Hospital in Prince Albert, the Regina bypass, and so on and so on.

And when businesses and investors see these projects going on, they feel confident about investing in Saskatchewan, not only because we have low and competitive personal and corporate income taxes, Mr. Speaker, but because they trust that our

Premier and our government has our finger on the pulse of the people and the businesses in this economy, Mr. Speaker.

We see this in the approval ratings of the Premier, two of them now which show him as the top in the country. We see this in the approximately 2.5 billion in building permits a year since we have formed government, Mr. Speaker. We see this in our population numbers. People are moving back home. Nine out of ten of our graduates are staying here. Almost 70,000 of them have taken advantage of the graduate retention program.

And as the Minister for Immigration and Career Training has often noted in this Assembly, we have a highly successful Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program here. And that is why our allocation keeps going up, from 3,400 in 2009 to 5,750 in 2018. And do you know, Mr. Speaker, who the Conference Board of Canada ranked second in terms of newcomer intake as a share of its population among the provinces? Saskatchewan. That's right, Mr. Speaker — Saskatchewan.

I realize that these are inconvenient truths for the ugly narrative trying to be shaped by members opposite, Mr. Speaker, but they are truths and they are facts. Just under 1.2 million people believe in Saskatchewan, believe that our best days are ahead of us, and we agree.

I'm proud that we delivered this budget and invested in the things we heard mattered most while still upholding our commitment to balance. But I am really even more excited about what lies ahead. We have a new growth plan to work on, and it will be a critical opportunity for us to share our vision for the future with the people of this province.

We are seeing the first technology commercial spinoff company from the Canadian Light Source in the Canadian Isotope Innovations corporation. Medical isotopes, Mr. Speaker, have played a very important role in reducing wait times for medical diagnostics and situates the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] as a leader in medical physics and accelerator technology. This is also being furthered by their partnership with the Fedoruk Centre, whose dedicated hot cells will provide much-needed dedicated space. I am really excited and supportive of this work.

The University of Regina is a leader in mental health and wellness research, particularly around PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder], which we will need to draw upon as we look to continue to expand our impact in mental health and addictions work. The U of R [University of Regina] also hosts not one, but two research chairs in artificial intelligence, one of whom is working on constructing intelligent systems to monitor and control carbon capture and storage.

We have incubators and accelerators in both Regina and Saskatoon helping to build our entrepreneurial ecosystem, both of which are aided by thriving undergraduate and graduate business programs and aided yet again by relationships with Innovation Place. Our investments in Co.Labs, Mr. Speaker, at last count resulted in incubation and acceleration of 64 start-ups and leveraged in millions of dollars in small-business investment.

The Regina scene, Mr. Speaker, is gaining momentum under the Cultivator accelerator. Just a couple of weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, I attended a packed house of investors and companies in the

ag-biotech space to connect with investors in this province and also to network with and see the opportunities leveraged in the protein supercluster which will be located right here in Saskatchewan. We're going to take advantage and amplify those opportunities, Mr. Speaker.

Our government has made conscious policy efforts to help build this momentum by offering the most aggressive angel investment tax credit in this country. At last count, 68 tax credits have been issued to help boost 12 different companies. And we continue to push, with the help of SaskTech, to make sure our young people learn the skills of the future by including coding and robotics in the K to 12 curriculum.

Innovation Saskatchewan has also done coding and robotics on First Nations reserve and we have hackathons and women-in-tech events being supported in all of our key centres around the province to make sure that people are not left out of the digital revolution.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I'm pretty excited about these developments, and I felt the buzz at last week's packed Audacity event here in Regina. The room was absolutely full of young, energetic entrepreneurs mixing with the more seasoned ones. But all exuded optimism and passion about the art of the possible, right here in our province.

I share that optimism, Mr. Speaker, and believe in the art of the possible, and I think all of us on this side of the Assembly do. And this budget, this budget which is the right balance for Saskatchewan will help us get there.

And for that reason, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the amendment and I am very, very proud to support the budget delivered by our esteemed Finance minister. Thank you so much.

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

Hon. Mr. Kaeding: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you for allowing me the privilege to enter into our discussion on the 2019-20 budget.

This is a monumental time really in our government, as we've been able to weather the storm of declining resource sector value issues. We've been dealing with international trade issues that we're caught in the middle of, and really working with a federal government that's having difficulty dealing with issues west of Ottawa, unfortunately.

This budget is the right balance, providing support for our residents while looking out for the future of our province.

Mr. Speaker, like others before me, I too want to thank the tireless efforts by our Minister of Finance and her staff in the incredible work that they really put forth into finding the right balance. Starting from Brad Wall to our Premier, I don't believe the residents of this great province will ever understand the planning, the preparation, and the prayer that went into making this budget and ending up with the result in such short order. Thank you, Minister, Premier, and colleagues for getting us to this moment in time.

Mr. Speaker, I've been blessed. I've been blessed to be able to represent the great people of my constituency. I thank the residents of Melville-Saltcoats for continuing to support me and this government in our efforts to make life better for them, their families, and their businesses.

My wife, Carla, continues to be my personal rock to support, help me through some of the rough times and the long days. Really I find a couple of minutes on the phone every day makes a world of difference in putting things back into perspective. And to help remember why we do the sometimes difficult job, a quick visit with our almost four-year-old granddaughter Brynn makes it easier to focus on continuing to make this a better place for her to grow up in. I find that her relentless questioning as, "But why, Grandpa?" really helps provide a lot of motivation. Because I believe that if we can convince a four-year-old that it's the right thing to do, we should be able to convince the opposition that it is.

My constituency assistant, Rick McIntyre, is a tremendous asset to the constituency. It's his ability to communicate and his steady hand has been able to navigate many unique and interesting issues that come into the office. As well, I think I have the best ministerial office staff with Grant McLellan as chief; Tennille Olson, our senior admin assistant; Michael Young and the soon-to-be new mom, Kelly Deck, as our admin assistants; and Donna Rybchuk, our senior admin assistant who consistently makes all of our stakeholder meetings really happen in what appears to be an effortless manner.

Not to be outdone, our ministry has and is being served by many outstanding people, from Greg Miller as our deputy minister to Keith Comstock, Duane McKay, Giselle Marcotte, and Laurier Donais, incredibly talented ADMs [assistant deputy minister]. And surrounding them, our very talented, enthusiastic, energetic group of people that I'm very proud to say help make the Government of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to personally thank Keith Comstock for his over 40 years of service to the Government of Saskatchewan, as he's announced his retirement to take effect a little later this spring. He and many others in the ministry have dedicated a lifetime really to make life better in the province of Saskatchewan. And for them, we are truly thankful.

Mr. Speaker, I've attempted to undertake the tradition of the constituency of Melville-Saltcoats. Every major event such as the Throne Speech or budget, since I've been provided the privilege of sitting here, I've brought students in from one of the seven communities that have schools in our constituency. On Wednesday, budget day, I had the privilege of welcoming Saltcoats teacher Candace Baron and students Sara Switzer, Edward Baron, Kyla Farquharson, Isabelle Easton, Mikaela Sorono, and Liam Baron. These students are our future.

One young lady wants to do something in tech innovation. She believes the Minister of Advanced Ed is really her personal hero. One wants to be in business. Another a teacher, a couple aren't too sure yet, and one is sure that he wants to be a politician. Mr. Speaker, these students are really the motivation of why I come to work every day. These students represent why this budget, this balanced budget, is so important.

Mr. Speaker, this budget provides the right balance between investing in our children's future and keeping the economy strong. Investing in education in this budget at 3.28 billion will provide increased operational funding while keeping the education property tax mill rate at last year's level. In this budget, you will continue to see capital investment in constructing more primary school facilities in Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Weyburn, and Rosthern.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to try and keep up to the infrastructure deficit legacy of the previous government. That infrastructure deficit has also affected our Crown corporations. This government continues to invest significantly in our Crown infrastructure.

SaskPower has planned an \$873 million investment in planned capital which will connect more customers and expand electricity generation assets. And SaskPower will continue to invest in upgrading its distribution and transmission systems as it continues toward its goal of achieving a 40 per cent reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2030.

SaskTel is investing approximately \$321 million in 2019-20. They are continuing to update their wireless and wireline networks, adding to their internet service and adding to the rural cellular services. They anticipate adding over 40 new cellular sites this year, with the goal of adding 100 new cell sites by March 2020. Some of those towers will be for the benefit of my constituents of Melville-Saltcoats, which they are anxiously awaiting.

Mr. Speaker, growth requires investment. This province has experienced population growth at record levels for this province, levels never anticipated or really even welcomed by the opposition. Mr. Speaker, there were over 11,000 more people coming into this province just in 2018 alone, according to Stats Canada, and over 160,000 in the previous 10 years.

It was interesting talking to educators in Esterhazy last year, where they identified over 50 different dialects being spoken at their school in rural Saskatchewan. It's fascinating going to a grocery store in any major centre in this province and trying to guess what the dialect being spoken is in between the fresh produce aisles. In fact it's interesting guessing what some of the fresh produce is in a number of these stores, as the store managers are trying to keep up with the changing demographics.

Infrastructure investment in education has been over \$1.7 billion since 2008, including 46 new schools such as Langenburg, having a new one found in my constituency. There's 23 major renovation projects throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, investing for the future also includes investing in highway infrastructure. I know the residents of Melville-Saltcoats are especially thrilled to see the commitment for passing lane construction between Melville and Yorkton and the planned upgrades for the 26 kilometres of No. 10 Highway upgrades between Balcarres and Fort Qu'Appelle. As well, my constituency and many others will benefit from this government's focus on intersection safety. With population and economic growth comes increased highway traffic. Since 2008 this government has spent over \$9 billion in highways infrastructure, improving more than 14 000 kilometres of

Saskatchewan highways.

This balanced budget provides support for municipalities with consistent and predictable funding. My ministry has spent the last year working closely with the municipal stakeholders from urban, rural, and northern municipalities to strengthen and improve our very enviable municipal revenue-sharing agreement. We're able to announce that overall funding will increase for 2019-20 to \$251.6 million: 161.3 million goes to urban municipalities, 71.7 to rural municipalities, and 18.6 going to northern municipalities.

[15:00]

Since 2007 municipal revenue sharing will have nearly doubled, providing over \$2.6 billion of revenue sharing to our very important municipal stakeholders. In addition I am proud to support a \$250,000 increase to the paratransit capital grant program. This should help partially fund the purchase of up to 15 new paratransit vehicles in the province per year. This will provide improved mobility and accessibility to those who need it the most.

This budget also includes 230 million for municipal infrastructure funding, an increase of 23.4 million or 11 per cent over last year. This isn't a very sexy area of government funding, but if you don't fix the pipes in every community it's going to be hard to make the poop run downhill.

So this includes 89.4 million in provincial infrastructure funding through the New Building Canada Fund. I just came from an announcement this morning where we announced over \$27 million of new provincial funding for the New Building Canada Fund projects in Martensville, Melfort, North Battleford, Yorkton, Blaine Lake, Maple Creek, and a couple of other communities. We're providing 25 million in provincial funding for the new Investing In Canada infrastructure program. We just opened the expression of interest intake on March 15th.

Since 2008 this government has provided almost \$1.8 billion in municipal infrastructure projects. As well our Government Relations ministry is continuing to provide resources to our public safety agency, which will be tasked with providing more efficient and responsive emergency services to all of Saskatchewan communities.

Mr. Speaker, within the First Nations, Métis, and Northern Affairs portion of our ministry, we were able to achieve many milestone accomplishments. On January 7th of this year we were able to assist the Premier in his apology on the province's behalf to those affected by the Sixties Scoop policy. We have facilitated many meetings with our indigenous partners, discussing issues that are of mutual benefit to all of us.

In this budget, Mr. Speaker, we have \$211 million in targeted investment that will benefit indigenous communities, businesses, and organizations. This is a 4.7 per cent increase over last year. This includes \$72.4 million in gaming agreement transfers to First Nations and Métis organizations and \$45 million to First Nations and Métis community-based organizations that deliver individual and community supports to the First Nation and Métis people. Mr. Speaker, since we formed government, we have provided over \$121 million into infrastructure in northern

communities. There is more work to be done, but we are on the right path.

Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize this government's support of agriculture, certainly a key contributor in the constituency of Melville-Saltcoats. This budget fully funds business risk management programs and sustains investment in agricultural research. Our ag sector will continue to grow in this province and continue to contribute significantly to the economy of this province.

Previously announced value-added supports are continuing to make this province an attractive location to develop value-added businesses. Companies like Hauser's Machinery of Melville, Bridgeview Manufacturing of Gerald, Morris Industries of Yorkton, and our canola and food processing plants such as LDM [Louis Dreyfus Mitsui] and Richardson Pioneer in Yorkton and Grain Millers in Yorkton are encouraged to continue their production and expansion plans for the area based on the attractive investment environment that this government has developed for companies like them.

Mr. Speaker, this budget provides the right balance, the right balance to encourage students like Liam, Sara, Edward, Kyla, Isabelle, and Mikaella to continue to flourish, to learn, create a business, develop a technology, start a family, and be very proud of the province that they are from.

Mr. Speaker, I will support the budget presented by the Minister of Finance and will not be supporting the amendment put forward by the member for Regina Rosemont. Thank you.

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

Mr. Goudy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in the House to speak to the budget today. It's hard to imagine this is a year for me, and two others on this side of the House. Second budget, and I must say that I've enjoyed every day since taking office here, other than the parade. I think those are a little unnatural. But I have appreciated every day here, and I think it's a lot because of the kindness of the people on both sides of the House.

I wanted to speak just a little bit, before I go into the budget, about my family back home. They've very much supported me since I've been here. And my wife last night, she was asked to speak at a baby shower for one of our friends, and it was interesting. She's not a public speaker. She doesn't like speaking publicly very often, and so she was on the phone with me last night and said, Todd, I think I did a lousy job. We have one daughter who's very encouraging no matter what, and she said, even Sara had a hard time coming up with something good to say. But you know, Mr. Speaker, I told my wife well done is much more important than well said. And I just want to honour my wife today and just recognize her as the mother that has allowed me to be here serving my constituents. And what an honour it is to be married to a lady like her.

We've got six kids. Two of the ones that are graduated have been home helping me. One travelled for a year and was working. So Joel, my oldest son, he's going to be heading off as a power engineer to Manitoba. He's not too impressed with our Prime Minister with all the negative influence on oil these days. He's

having a harder time finding a job in the oil field, as he thought it would be. My daughter Mary, she travelled for a year and worked, and now she's going to be heading off with her younger sister, Sara, to college this coming fall. And Sara and her sister, Rachel, are looking forward this summer to volunteering at camp, Mr. Speaker.

The next child that I have is David. He's going to be moving from the little school to the big school this year and playing basketball and football. He's pretty excited about that. And my little girl, Hanna, who I hope never grows up, she's going to stay home with her dad. So I look forward to this year that's coming.

Mr. Speaker, I didn't realize that probably the most important aspect of being an MLA is choosing the right CA. And I can certainly say that the CA that was there before I arrived on the scene is an amazing lady. And Peggy Gordon has been looking after things at our office, and she's taught me a lot.

Tomorrow we're looking at taking the office on to the road, and I wondered if that was something that's normal. And I saw our MP [Member of Parliament] for our area, Randy Hoback, he sends his CAs to the local communities and don't just stick around in P.A. [Prince Albert]. So Peggy's been enjoying going to a lot of the communities and RMs around Melfort in our constituency. And so she'll be in Naicam and in Lake Lenore tomorrow. I appreciate her very much. Also Carole Gantefer and April Phillips are also part-time CAs. So I get a lot of great advice, and hard to live up to the standards that those two ladies have for me, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I've got a lot of good friends and advisers back home helping me serve in our constituency. And I'll talk about them a little bit later on but, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the balance, the right balance, which is the right balance for Saskatchewan, this year's budget.

Mr. Speaker, I asked the member from Kindersley, I asked him have you ever milked a cow, the other day. And he was able to say, to my surprise, yes, I've got a fair bit of experience milking a cow. And so I said, well that's just great. How many legs in a stool for milking cows, Mr. Speaker? And I don't know if you know that, but it's three. If you google it, I guess it shows a stool with three legs.

So I was over in Brazil running some meetings, and I was going to bring some gifts back for my family and found my wife some nice gold earrings. And I bought some three-legged stools for my kids. Got home, I don't know why I bought them. They looked neat. And, you know, they wondered, Dad, what's this? But you know those are stable stools and that's why the milk stool's got three legs, Mr. Speaker.

So as our Finance minister was putting together this — not just the right budget but the right balance for Saskatchewan budget — I looked at three different legs to that budget, Mr. Speaker. If you have ever built a house or dug a basement you use a transit level, and those transit levels have three legs as well. And so in our budget I believe there's three areas that they had to look at: finance and infrastructure and human services. So it's not just balancing expenses and revenue, Mr. Speaker, but there's a lot involved.

And there was a lot of good work that they put forward to give us the right budget for Saskatchewan. So in finance: taxation, economic development, trade, the Crowns, ag, natural resources, and industry, Mr. Speaker. In health for human services: health, education, social services, and justice. And then in infrastructure, we have clearly a lot of the transportation. But SaskBuilds has done a great job to work together with the Finance minister to get a healthy balance.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take just a minute to talk about the deficit that was there before our Sask Party came along. And I don't know if you've experienced the idiom, but there's an idiom that says, that's a tough row to hoe. And so I don't know about you, Mr. Speaker, but when I was young, my dad, he wanted to teach us character. And we lived in the city in my younger days, but then he bought a little hill at the edge of Melfort. And that hill was about 80 acres overlooking the city, and he said, we're going to build a house and plant trees.

So I was about an eight-year-old boy, nine-year-old boy. I had two older brothers, and so we got our shovels and a whole bunch of trees and we started planting rows, Mr. Speaker. And so we planted 10 rows of probably between 100 metres to 1500 metres. And I thought at first, boy, those trees look pretty spindly. They're far apart. But as the years went by, those trees grew and they began to fill in. But the character lesson for me, Mr. Speaker, was hoeing trees.

So my father came home with three sticks, and on the end of those sticks had a piece of steel, a little blade, Mr. Speaker. And I hadn't seen a hoe before, but I was going to learn that many good qualities in a young man come from standing at the end of a hoe. And so there I was. My brothers and myself, we learned what it is to hoe trees. But as we were young men, we enjoyed many other things. Ten rows, you know, to keep on top of it through the summer. Weeds just seemed to grow, Mr. Speaker, whether you water them or not. They just seem to keep coming back. And as I got older, I started to realize that, you know, there was many attractions to go here or there, so sometimes you'd leave those rows unattended. And a hard row to hoe, Mr. Speaker, is one that's been left unattended for a while.

And so when this government came into power over 10 years ago, there were many rows that had been unattended, Mr. Speaker. From what I see, it's been a hard row to hoe and to bring the budget back to balance. Our Finance minister has done a great job. She's a country girl herself and, you know, I'm sure she spent a few long hours on the end of a hoe learning what it is to hoe a difficult row. But as they and the budget committee have worked together, they have been able to establish that balanced budget, balanced for Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I look at some of the things that were deficient, that were left . . . When I was young, we had three elementary schools, and we had one called Broadway School in my younger days. Under the NDP [New Democratic Party] that school was closed down along with 175 other schools, Mr. Speaker. But since this government came into power, they have built 46 new schools.

The hospitals, 52 of them. The one that I, and I think also the Premier, were born in, in Prince Albert has since been torn down with 52 other hospitals. And since the Sask Party has come in,

there's been three new hospitals built, Mr. Speaker, 14 new long-term care facilities. We've had to hire a deficit of doctors and nurses and teachers: 925 more teachers in the province, Mr. Speaker, 177 more student support staff, 900 more doctors almost, and 3,700 more nurses.

Mr. Speaker, it was a hard and long row to hoe, but our Finance minister and the committee have worked hard to get good balance. You know, I'm on the health committee and we like to ask for money and that's kind of our role. We like people. We hear all these issues that are facing . . . And we know. We have them in our own families. We have them in our own communities. We all can use more money, Mr. Speaker. But the balance for Saskatchewan is a three-legged tripod. And you know, though that had to be extended in the area of infrastructure to manage the deficit that was already there to deal with the past neglect, Mr. Speaker, in the area of human services, there's continually more to do, Mr. Speaker.

And you know, I was listening today to the question period and our Education minister was getting questioned fairly serious. And I stand wholeheartedly with our Education minister. I was on the school board for the last seven years. I've seen how budgets come and go, and how students are still educated. And you know, teachers, they do a great job, an unbelievably important role in our society. But, Mr. Speaker, this year's budget was the highest in Saskatchewan history as far as operations budget goes. And so I'm pretty impressed with a minister who's able to balance the infrastructure with the finances and the human services, and is able to deliver the kind of money for the classrooms that we saw.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I'm most excited about in this budget is a small number, compared to some of the billions, but \$500 million, Mr. Speaker, for innovation and education — 500 million.

[15:15]

You know, when I was a school trustee, we worked through the ESSP [education sector strategic plan], and the Saskatchewan government of our day challenged the people of the province to say let's come together and let's make a plan for education.

An Hon. Member: — 500,000.

Mr. Goudy: — Did I say million? Wow. It's a half a million, 500,000. Thank you so much for good friends. So \$500,000, Mr. Speaker. It sounds like a small number, but when you consider that it's on top of all of the budget, the \$1.9 million, or \$1.9 billion for operations, Mr. Speaker, and all of the budget for structures, for the schools, and for maintenance. Mr. Speaker, we are not putting this \$500,000 on number seven and letting it ride. We are putting that \$500,000 together with the principals and the teachers and the parents and the school boards, the trustees, the directors of education, the CFOs [chief financial officer], and we're bringing those people together and saying, how can we work with the budget that we have to move forwards in education.

Because we are being faced with very difficult problems, Mr. Speaker. There are a lot of things that we face in education today that when I was in school, they just weren't there. And so we

need to be supporting our teachers and our support workers in the classroom, and we are doing that, Mr. Speaker. I am very proud to be able to say that our Education minister came to our school division, since I've been a MLA, and sat down and heard from our appointed trustees, elected trustees, to hear what are the issues facing the North East School Division and Horizon School Division. And he and the secretary of education have been throughout this province hearing from the people. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm excited to see the kind of budget that was presented, a balanced budget that considers all of the things, the different three areas that we need to as we make a healthy budget for the people of Saskatchewan.

Some of the other things I'm pretty excited about in the budget was the \$3,000 tax credit. Some of these are . . . All of our friends are these volunteer firefighters, these people who are first responders, the community recovery team, Mr. Speaker, I was able to be in P.A. to hear the announcement of one of the CRT [community recovery team] groups. What a great thing for somebody who's struggling with mental health and addictions to know that you're not alone. You don't have to even make it to the hospital at times, Mr. Speaker, but that team, those highly trained, compassionate individuals will come to you where you are, rather than expecting you to come to where they are. We've built the hospital for mental health, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to be a part of a government that has found a healthy balance for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned before that I'd come back and note a few people that are . . . they've been very encouraging in my life. But sometimes the biggest encouragement, the biggest support that they've been to me was a critic. And, Mr. Speaker, when I sat through and listened to the budget, I was excited about it. And then we had a response to the budget from the other side, and I honestly sat here wondering, what does my wife think. You know, this sounds like there was two completely different budgets.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to offer a little bit of criticism for the official opposition, the critics on the other side, and I would encourage them from practical life. And in my life, Mr. Speaker, people who are going to be my critic had to have a few things in their life for me to accept that criticism, for it to be healthy criticism.

One, Mr. Speaker, is that they had to care about my success. And so I think for every healthy government, the official opposition, the critics of each ministry, they need to realize that our success is their success. Our success as the Government of Saskatchewan benefits the people of the province. And it's important that we keep that in mind, Mr. Speaker, because sometimes the people that are criticizing you, that are helping you to see things from a different perspective, are very important.

I've noticed the member from Regina Elphinstone a number of times since I've been here has done that very well, and I want to commend him on that. He has humbly said . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Hey, he doesn't like accolades, Mr. Speaker. But yes, to be a good critic is such an important thing.

Another point to be a good critic is it needs to be constructive, not destructive. And you know, I would strongly . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Hey, where are you from? There you go, the

member from Regina Rosemont. He's not always the most constructive; sometimes he will be though. Here we go. Am I going to get called for that? He's got his eye on me here, okay. Okay.

So the third one, it's not for selfish interest or to boast your own qualities. So, Mr. Speaker, when we say white, being a good critic isn't just saying it's black. When we say it's black, being a good critic isn't just saying it's white. We need some help over here. We've got 50 . . . We are a strong caucus with 50 people, and sometimes, you know, when you have such a strong government, it's important that we have good criticism.

And so I would challenge the members opposite that I am going to be supporting the budget that was delivered, the balanced budget. I believe that our Finance minister found that balance in our Saskatchewan budget, and so I'm going to be supporting her motion. But, Mr. Speaker, I would challenge the members opposite to drop their amendment. So wouldn't that be fun, hey, if you just dropped the amendment and said, hey, we're all together; we're one big happy family? But if that doesn't happen, I just want to say that I won't be able to support the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter into the debate on the budget. And I do want to thank the member for Melfort for some of the things he said. You know, he was talking about the three-legged stool and that's interesting. I should have shouted that out but it was a good metaphor. But what I would say, you know, when he's . . . And I appreciate his last comments about how we could work together.

But it reminds me, as a teacher we used to have these interviews, and it was the parent-teacher interview. And it was just the two people there and often or sometimes they weren't as positive as they might be, you know. And then we went to this bringing in a third person. And who do you think the third person might be? Well it was the student, and all of a sudden we realized who we were talking about. We're talking about the student.

So I appreciate what the member was saying, that we should work together for the betterment . . . but it's not of their side or our side, but it's for the people of Saskatchewan. That's who we're working for, the people of Saskatchewan. And you know, and I was taking some classes on that and sometimes it's hard. When you're a parent or a teacher — and I've been both — sometimes you get your back up and you're feeling like you're not really understood. And then when you realize that both sides are working for the student . . . And I think that's what we need to do.

And so some of our . . . And you know, I have to say, sometimes that it's not easy being critical all the time either, but that's our job and that's what we have to do. And there's fewer of us, so it's what the people of Saskatchewan chose for us to do and so we will do it as effectively as we can. But I appreciate his thoughts on that. I thought they were well said and well thought.

But I also do want to say that he says there's continually more to do in the human services area and there is. But I think the point is this, and what we're seeing generally in this budget is the

thinking that they're not thinking about upstream. They're not thinking about how can we prevent some of these costs. You know, it's like the Social Services' budget has grown and grown and grown. In one way the government says, well that's a good sign that we're being more compassionate. But at the same time, are we working to resolve the issue of poverty in Saskatchewan?

In one way it doesn't matter what the stats say because we can have duelling stats, but we know, especially the people who represent . . . I think everybody has this in their communities. Whether you're rural or urban, you have poverty, people who go without, who make difficult choices particularly when it comes to rent or housing or food or those essentials. So I think we've got to shift this thinking. We've got to shift this thinking and think more upstream. I think that's a more effective way to be and I think the . . .

I appreciated when our leader said today, well you know, we have to invest in our next generation, not in the next election. And we've often heard — I think both sides have heard that — that our time frame seems to be four years at a time and then becomes three and then becomes two, and then now all of a sudden we're down into pre-election. And we're thinking in those terms; we're not really thinking necessarily what's best for the province. And I think we need to think in more longer terms, bigger frames, and think about what's right for the next generation, what's right for our province, what's right for the landscapes, and particularly when I think about climate change, that type of thing.

And things we're working through, whether it's truth and reconciliation or, you know, we were dealing with the Sixties Scoop, which continues to be an issue that we have to resolve because of the impact of that, the negative impact on people. And while we may have had a start to that, it's not clearly enough.

And so, Mr. Speaker, when they've talked about this budget being the right balance, and what we've seen over the past 12 years is a government careening from some very good times to some very rough times. And they call them headwinds in some sort of benign, you know, soft way of describing the situation, some very poor choices that they've made to where we are today.

So I'm not sure. You know, last year they called it the right track as if somewhere they were working on a straight line. And I think these folks here, they careen from one thing to the next. And really this may be a snapshot but we'll see a budget . . . And the question is, what time next week or the week after, the month after that, will it not be in balance? Because we know that they haven't . . . And I appreciate what my colleague here from Saskatoon Nutana pointed out, over the last five years Social Services has come back each of those years with a request for supplementary costs and the average was some \$50 million. So right away somebody should have been planning that. You know, somehow in Social Services either they're not planning very well, or maybe they are planning very well. And the question is, why is it that certain departments always come back wanting more money? And we've seen the trend. It is a trend that we see every year, so we really have some questions.

Mr. Speaker, when I think about my riding, and I just want to take a moment to reflect on Centre, a beautiful part of Saskatoon. In many ways we have, as I've said, the wealthiest people

downtown in some of those condos. We used to have the president of PotashCorp living down there, the highest paid CEO [chief executive officer] in Saskatchewan — when the CEO of PotashCorp lived in Saskatchewan; no longer lives in Saskatchewan. We know the top brass, many have moved to Calgary or still remain in Chicago. The deal was that they were supposed to be here and that deal seems to have been forgotten.

But we have the working class in Caswell, Riversdale, Westmount. And this budget really impacts them in terms of the PST that they're going to see, that they're paying more this year, more than ever — \$800 a year more. And this is just not right. It's not their fault this government did not take care of the resources, the revenues that they had when they had record revenues. So here we have this situation that is unfair and unjust for those people who are trying to make ends meet.

And we have the lowest minimum wage in the country. Mr. Speaker, we've raised that issue that we should see it increased. And we're talking about a \$15 minimum wage, which I think goes a long way so that people who are working get paid a fair wage for their work. And we talk about . . . And this is the kind of thing that I've heard. You know, in fact I was talking to some people last night, where people are forced to have two or three jobs because they're paid so low.

What kind of impact do you think that has on your mental health when you're not with your family, but you're working 12 or 14 hours a day just to make ends meet so you can pay the rent, you can pay the groceries, you know? So we should be able to have somebody who's making \$15 an hour. That's \$30,000-a-year jobs; they're working full hours, full-time hours. That's only reasonable and fair, but yet instead we have the lowest minimum wage in the country. That's not a good thing.

And we've seen that, thousands of jobs that have been lost to construction because of PST on construction labour. That's not right either, Mr. Speaker. And we've seen retail sales that have been flat for five years and fell last year.

[15:30]

And, Mr. Speaker, this is an interesting one. We've seen, since the Sask Party has taken power, a 200 per cent spike in home foreclosures. Now, Mr. Speaker, I asked for an update yesterday on written questions. You may notice that many are getting ordered. That was one that got ordered. They don't want us to know. The numbers are pretty straightforward. They have the numbers. This is not complicated numbers to get. We got them one time and we got them through estimates the other time, but this is something people need to know — that people are in dire straits, many are close to losing their homes. And we've seen a 200 per cent spike in home foreclosures.

And as I say, greater debt, tripling the debt in the next few years, adding \$1.8 billion. And yet they've doubled the PST take, nearly a billion dollars and adding that on to many, many items that were not there before.

And, of course, education. Only 14.5 million more for the classrooms, which really amounts to a cut, since it fails to keep pace with inflation and rising enrolments. And we've heard from different divisions that this is just not, not, just not enough.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about one of the areas that I have a special interest in, and that's around disabilities. And there's two areas that I do want to take a minute and just reflect on. One is around, of course, the impact of STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] cuts. We cannot let that go. We will not let that go. That is a huge impact, particularly on people who live with disabilities. And then coupled on that, the paratransit. And we'll be looking forward to hearing more about the federal money that flows through Government Relations. But we hope that it is fair and consistent across Saskatchewan. We're hearing that's not the case. We're hearing that some cities are treated . . . or are much more effective in how they use their money as opposed to others. So we need to talk about that.

And then the other issue that I have raised is around, actually around the government numbers in terms of how many people are working for the people of the province of Saskatchewan. Now, Mr. Speaker, the minister did reply to my letter, and I appreciate that. But what we really need to see are the real numbers. How many more people are working for this government in terms of actual disabilities? It was ironic that a couple of days after I asked that question about a week ago, the minister and I had a chat and he said, the letter is here. And I appreciate that and I thank him for that, but unfortunately the answers were also ordered the following week. And so if the minister can fix that up, I would really appreciate that. Because we really need to get to the bottom of that.

But, Mr. Speaker, one of the other things that I want to talk about, and this is sort of one of the hidden things, and the member from Melfort might . . . This is what we do. We take a look at the budget to find out what are the hidden things here. On budget day we hear the best things. We often don't hear of some of the things that aren't so great.

We made some questions about employment . . . or employable assistance for persons with disabilities. And we see this year, in the 2019-20 estimated spends, it's going to be 9.4 million; \$9.393 million. Mr. Speaker, that is a cut of 15 per cent for a cut of \$1.7 million since 2016-17. And I don't even know if 2016-17 was the high point in terms of that funding. But, Mr. Speaker, people with disabilities are bearing the brunt of what's happening in this province in this downturn. And they should be getting help in terms of employment assistance, but instead, their programs are being cut some 15 per cent or \$1.7 million. That's just not right, Mr. Speaker, and we need to do something about it. Because this government has said that this should be the best place to live and work and raise a family, for everyone. And they've made a lot about people with disabilities. And so let's focus on that.

Let's get STC back. Let's make sure paratransit's working. Let's make sure that we get people working in the province of Saskatchewan. And let's support those who are going to work in the private sector.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just take a moment and just make sure that we recognize the good work or the work that needs to be done. And I appreciate the good work of the critic here for labour who's raised the issue of fatalities in our workplace. And we had that question last week. Very important. We've seen 48 people who've died in 2018, an increase of 78 per cent. And this is something that we need to take seriously, and we urge the minister to take a look at that.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of things that I want to also talk about. Mental health, now there has been an increase and this is a positive, a great, a good start. And this is important that we recognize that this is an area that we need to fund more. And so part of that's coming. But this is a crisis within our province. So I also want to recognize the member from Riversdale and our leader for recognizing this as an important area that we need to focus on. And her work as the mental health critic is so, so critical.

But, Mr. Speaker, we can't let go of the crystal meth crisis, the opioid crisis that's happening, that's ruining families and people in the province. We need to make sure we address that. And we're not seeing an appropriate response.

And, Mr. Speaker, and I want to say that actually several of us were at this national world . . . or the World Suicide Prevention Day last fall. The member from Churchill-Wildwood was there. The member from Riversdale was there. People wanting to see a suicide prevention program in Saskatchewan. And that's very, very important.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to cut really quickly to the area around parks, culture, and recreation. I think this is very important. One area that I'm really disappointed in is the park fee increase that was announced last December. And of course you won't necessarily see how it's laid out in the budget. It's part of the Commercial Revolving Fund, I understand. It's an increase of \$1.45 million that's going to be added on, or collected more. We think this is an area that, again, it's like a tax, Mr. Speaker. We see people who are going to the park for their holidays, a very important thing. This is an important area that we keep costs as affordable as possible. It was announced in December just before Christmas, an early Christmas present I think for the Minister of Finance.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we have real questions about that. We think that's a real problem. And so we see an increase. Park entry fees are going from 65 to \$75 for a year. Weekly permits are 35 to \$40. Getting rid of the three-day pass. And so, Mr. Speaker, this is a real problem. And we think that school groups, the working poor, people who can't afford it, will be hard hit by this. And so we'll be raising a lot of issues about that.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I also want to raise the issue . . . And this is one that there is a news story and, Mr. Speaker, you're familiar with this story. Seven years ago when the film tax credit was cut, and we were hoping to see that revived, because if there was ever a mistake that was made by this government, was the idea that it would be better to cut the film tax credit. Mr. Speaker, we see the results. And actually I have a hard time with the . . .

You know, the minister here of parks, culture, recreation, he's a pretty competitive guy. And he usually does well in that. But when his deputy minister said, wave the white flag, and said, this is too competitive for us, I'm not sure if the minister was in the room when that happened. He could have rose, you know, he could have stood up to the occasion and said, hey, we can do well in this province. We were beating Manitoba in 2007. We were doing much better then. We've got a class A sound stage here. And I understand in BC [British Columbia] they're using grocery stores for sound stages because they just don't have the space. We have the space here. And so some of the numbers . . . And

what the talk was at the time, just a month or so ago, was around Netflix spending \$500 million in Canada. And we're not going to get any of that. We're not going to get any of that because we don't have a film tax credit.

And so we see that our revenue is about half of what it was in 2007. But some of the numbers are staggering that we see across Canada — \$100 million in Manitoba because of their film tax credit. That's what the activity is now, 103.7 million. Alberta is \$162.8 million of activity in there. And so in Saskatchewan it's 21 million. We used to be the leader. We were ahead of Alberta and Manitoba, but now we're not even in the same field. And of course when you talk about BC and Ontario, that their work, their revenues are in the billions. So, Mr. Speaker, we've got to do something about that.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that we have some real, real issues with this budget. But I was sort of inspired by the Minister of Central Services yesterday when he had a trivia contest last night. And I thought, well, let's have a question here: what are the three things you're not going to hear this government talk about in the budget? What do you think the three things are these guys won't talk about?

An Hon. Member: — I'm guessing climate change.

Mr. Forbes: — Climate change, that's a good guess. They won't talk about climate change.

An Hon. Member: — Big money?

Mr. Forbes: — Not about big money. No, that's not one of the three.

An Hon. Member: — Equity stripping in the Crowns?

Mr. Forbes: — How about that? Yes. No, but nobody's guessed Enterprise Saskatchewan. Enterprise Saskatchewan, where did that all go?

Well here is the top three. They're not going to talk about Billy Boyd, the DNA of the Sask Party, and his imprint when things were so good in Saskatchewan. Not one of them is going to talk about Billy Boyd, Mr. Speaker, well . . . or who else is the flip side of the DNA? And I just heard this from the guy from Melfort. But they won't talk about, they won't talk about Grant Devine. They all of a sudden . . . abrupt appearance in the 1990s. Nothing happened in the '80s in this province. How'd that ever happen? You know, the member from Melfort was talking about a tough row to hoe because of the deficit. But talk about the deficit from the '90s. Now what about that?

But you know, this is the number one thing they won't talk about. They come very close to it. They won't come . . . They come close to this, but they will not talk about record revenue and what happened to that money, Mr. Speaker. They will not tell us what happened to that money. Where did that money go? Where did that money go?

So, Mr. Speaker, obviously I will agree with the amendment and not support the main motion. Thank you.

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

Mr. Michelson: — Mr. Speaker, there's a lot to cover in this budget and I want to get to it, but I want to also express some thanks to the people back in Moose Jaw North. Most notable is my wife, who's constantly been a very strong supporter of us and the career that I've chosen here, and my family, my grandchildren, my children. It all affects our families when we're sitting here and going late nights, early mornings, and it certainly isn't without appreciation. So thank you to them.

Thank you also to my constituency assistants, Judy Hatfield and Rosalie Boots, who look after the office diligently. I'm quite a stickler about being there in business hours and when we say we're going to be there, that they are. And these two ladies are very good at keeping the office running, keeping things in motion. It's not like the constituency office is something you would need if there was a death or if there was a robbery or, you know . . . If you need the police, you go to the police. If you need a hospital, you go to the hospital. You don't necessarily go to the constituency office. But being there for the people is important to me and I appreciate that the office is open when we say it's going to be.

Mr. Speaker, there's such a lot of information in this budget that it's hard to cover a lot of it in the short time span we've got. You know, being a balanced budget is of the utmost importance. There's no new taxes, no tax increases, and the education property tax remains unchanged. There's investments in health care and mental health and addictions, increased support for home care, the Meadow Lake's new long-term care facility, the new hospital announcements for Weyburn and P.A., increases to the Alzheimer Society and the autism funding, new school replacements in Saskatoon and Regina and Moose Jaw with a joint school. There's increased funding for classrooms and safety improvements for intersection safety enhancement and twinning passing lanes.

Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of it. And the nice thing about coming in to talk on the budget speech a few days after the budget was presented, especially after a weekend, it gives you an opportunity to talk to a number of people. And on the weekend it was very busy in Moose Jaw with a lot of things going on. A lot of people feel very comfortable coming up and expressing their concerns or their appreciation.

[15:45]

And that's what I heard over Saturday and Sunday in the conversations with a number of people. We were having coffee at McDonald's and people were mentioning the budget. I attended the Sukanen Ship Antiques/Collectibles Show. It attracts a lot of people into the Moose Jaw area, and again people would come up and say how appreciative they are with the budget that we brought down.

I took my two grandchildren to the Moose Jaw Thunder Creek Model Train Show on Sunday at the Western Development Museum. And the same thing, there's a lot of people there and they feel free, and I appreciate that, of them coming up and expressing their appreciation for what this government has done to bring in a balanced budget with no tax increases. And it's all that, and that there's no tax increases but it keeps the province's triple credit rating right up there like we've never had before, before we were in government.

And it's all good, Mr. Speaker, it's all good. There hasn't been a local resident that has come to me with any negative words about the budget. It's a right balance, the right budget for this province that was presented by the Minister of Finance, the member from Humboldt last week.

I heard comments like, the budget is fair and reasonable; it's a good budget; it'll keep our economy stable; the integrity of the government is appreciated through fiscal responsibility while maintaining a growth agenda; again you did what you said you were going to do — balance the budget in three years; no tax increases, that's good to hear, while achieving a balanced budget.

The Moose Jaw Chamber of Commerce is happy with the way the new provincial budget was presented and feels that it's moving Saskatchewan in a good direction. CEO Rob Clark says, "Our economy is slowly improving; the needle is moving in the positive direction." Rob Clark said that overall they're very happy with the achievement of a balanced budget and applauds the government for getting us there.

One of my favourites was an email that came to us from Sean Chase. Sean was one my guests that we invited on budget day. And it says, and I quote:

On behalf of the Holy Trinity Catholic School Board and trustees and administration and the communities of Sacred Heart School and St. Mary School, please accept our sincere thanks for years of advocacy which resulted in the exciting news of a new school for South Hill. I was honoured to be present as Finance Minister Harpauer shared the announcement in today's budget release.

Sean Chase was one of my guests and he's the director of education for the Holy Trinity Catholic School Division.

Mr. Speaker, the 2019-20 budget has so much to offer. And for the citizens of Moose Jaw, the announcement of that new joint school is the most appreciative comments in the budget, the announcement in the budget. A joint school, Mr. Speaker, combining four schools — St. Mary's, Sacred Heart, Empire, Westmount School — located in two school divisions, the Prairie South School Division and the Holy Trinity Catholic School Division.

Mr. Speaker, they've been planning and strategizing this for a number of years. And we appreciate the fact that a few years ago, the Holy Trinity Catholic School Division gave up the proposed major renovations in order to consider the construction of a new facility. It's probably taken a couple years longer than either they or we realized. But they understand the challenges of our government and they have been very patient for a number of years, working in these aged facilities. And I know at least one of those schools is well over 100 years old.

So it's another new school for Saskatchewan students, as well as the planning for schools in Saskatoon and Regina. This brings the number of newly constructed or planned schools to well over 40 — I think it's 44 — in the 11 years that we've had the opportunity to form government in this province.

You will recall that there was 176 schools closed by the NDP in their 16 years of ignorance and depopulation of the province. One

of those schools, Mr. Speaker, was in Moose Jaw North, the Ross School. This stately building still stands in a prime residential area. In fact, there's new residential construction on the north side of the schoolyard, and it's only a block from the Happy Valley Park. There it stands empty and unused. But, Mr. Speaker, that was the mindset of the NDP: decline, trying to manage decline, accepting the premise that we will always have decline. What a pessimist attitude.

So you can see why the people are so appreciative of the turnaround, the growth, the optimism developed by our government with a plan, and a government that truly cares. The right balance, part of the plan is the right balance, and we're there. We're growing. We're getting better, and a better living will be provided for all Saskatchewan people. And it starts with this budget.

You know, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on it, during our government mandate since 2007, may I remind of the advances that we've seen in the past 11 years in Moose Jaw. We've got Mosaic Place, arguably the nicest arena in the WHL [Western Hockey League]. Mosaic Place is the home of course of the Moose Jaw Warriors and it also hosts the Moose Jaw Ford Curling Centre. It also has the Moose Jaw Sports Hall of Fame and with meeting facilities, and it's located right in the heart of downtown Moose Jaw. In the past years we've seen the construction of the Yara Centre, an indoor soccer field, the walking track, gymnasium facilities, and meeting areas — all during the governance of our Saskatchewan Party government.

And of course I'm most proud of the Dr. F.H. Wigmore Hospital. Mr. Speaker, this state-of-the-art health facility was developed and built right in Moose Jaw. And you know, I receive compliments on the service provided in this hospital, serving Moose Jaw and southern Saskatchewan. In fact, after the budget presentation, one of the ladies who found out that I was from Moose Jaw came and specifically thanked me for the care that her son got while he had an operation in the Wigmore Hospital. It has the first MRI [magnetic resonance imaging] outside of our two major centres and the only hyperbaric chamber between Edmonton and Toronto. Another facility constructed under the Saskatchewan Party mandate.

A reminder: when there were two cabinet ministers with the NDP in that government and a premier from Moose Jaw who did nothing, they didn't get it done. It was the Saskatchewan Party government that made the investment in health care for the people of Moose Jaw and southern Saskatchewan. And while the NDP had closed 52 hospitals during their time in office, our government continues to provide better health care with the new hospital in Moose Jaw and of course improved health care facilities across the province.

The new children's hospital, the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital in Saskatoon, will be opening this year. The recently opened Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford and funding announced in this budget for planning hospitals in Weyburn and Prince Albert. Mr. Speaker, six years ago I had the opportunity or the misopportunity of visiting the hospital in Weyburn where my sister passed away. And walking in the facility at that time, I realized that there was a need for a better health care system, a better health care facility. And I'm glad to see that it is announced in this budget.

So health care is very important to this government, and this budget increases spending on targeted mental health and addiction initiatives including \$13.7 million for care professionals in their recently opened Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford. Mr. Speaker, it was a great day for Saskatchewan at the grand opening of the new Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford. It was a landmark achievement in mental health for our province. It takes a unique approach to mental health and allows us to better treat and care for people with mental illness. Representing the single-largest investment in mental health in the history of this province and communitive efforts and vision of many people, the new Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford is now among the most advanced medical health treatment centres in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I recall the former minister of Health under the former NDP government, Len Taylor, the member of Battlefords. He couldn't get it done. He didn't get it done. And after the government had changed, he sat on the opposite side of the aisle where he rightfully belonged and would actually petition the government to build this hospital. Well right after the following election, he was nicely dismissed as he should have been, and the new member for The Battlefords worked with our government and was able to rightfully assist in getting a new state-of-the-art mental health hospital for Saskatchewan people. And kudos to the member from Battlefords.

You know, our government is aware of the needs for more mental health. I venture to say that everyone is affected by someone in their family or their circle of friends that is affected by mental health issues, including my own family. In this budget, there is more focus on mental health and in delivery services directly to those who need them most through the police and crisis teams, the community recovery teams, and our new mental capacity building pilot project in Saskatchewan schools.

Health care is a concern in many aspects of Saskatchewan citizens and has an effect on not only those who suffer but the family and the friends around them. We realize there's more that needs to be done and we have increased support in a variety of areas such as home care, \$660,000 increase in Alzheimer Society, individual autism funding for children under six years of age increased to \$6,000. It's all part of a growing Saskatchewan and fulfilling what was the detested needs caused by 16 years of NDP neglect, trying to manage decline.

And, Mr. Speaker, they still can't get it right. They're still out of touch with Saskatchewan people. They just don't get it. You know, on the first day of the spring session, the very first day when it came to the very first question period, the very first question that came in the very first question period, it wasn't about the economy. It wasn't about manufacturing. It wasn't about mining. It wasn't about our natural resources. It wasn't about education or health. The very first question was about the film tax credit. What was that about? They just don't understand Saskatchewan, and they should sit on that side of the aisle for a long, long time.

Mr. Speaker, our province has grown and continues to grow. With growth comes the need for more services. It also provides greater work resources and greater revenue. It's all about people. Saskatchewan's population has grown by 11,459 people in 2018. Our population now sits at 1,168,423 according to new figures

released by Stats Canada. And Saskatchewan has grown by nearly 160,000 people since 2007. Mr. Speaker, that's an average of just over 1,000 new residents per month since we took office.

You know, last week I had the privilege of attending the citizenship ceremony held in Moose Jaw. There were 76 new Canadians sworn in. Mr. Speaker, I was so welcome and so pleased that I could be there to congratulate them as new citizens of Canada, as residents of Saskatchewan, and as neighbours in our community. They bring with them their talent, their expertise in many areas to help build our land and improve our lifestyle.

You know, I can't imagine having to leave my country and my home and my friends and relatives to go to a new land where there's new ways and a new society without, at many times, not even knowing the language or the culture. And yet they came here; they did that. So we too can gain from these new Canadians as they teach us their talents and they influence us with their culture, making us richer and more knowledgeable.

[16:00]

Mr. Speaker, it's all part of growth, of balance, of having a better living for everyone, with more people developing more jobs and more businesses, more opportunities for everyone, growing a society and growing a province. It's the planning, the growth, the balance of investing while providing services to people without adding taxes, and keeping a balance of service and revenue.

Mr. Speaker, safety is an important part of Saskatchewan living and this budget includes funding to improve safety on highway intersections. Our government has introduced an enhanced intersection safety program that will provide signage, sightlines, and lighting, and added safety features like rumble strips at intersections throughout our province. This budget also includes more than \$60 million of twinning and passing lane projects. Overall the budget provides funding to improve about 1000 kilometres of highway network in 2019-2020.

And for rural and urban citizens, this budget will assist in improving services. It includes efforts to improve wireless services in rural communities with the announcement of eight more small cell site towers to help improve coverage. Better coverage for our communities helps connect everyone from the farm to the city, and we are going to keep working to improve our wireless networks in Saskatchewan.

A balanced budget means stable funding for Saskatchewan students in assisted programmings. There's \$26 million to support the student loan program which will provide repayable and non-repayable financial assistance for more than 18,000 students, upfront grants of up to \$4,000 per year in combined federal and Saskatchewan assistance for typical first-time students, and \$7 million for scholarships such as the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship and the Saskatchewan Innovation and Opportunity Scholarship. In addition, Mr. Speaker, students continue to receive benefits after their studies through the graduation retention program, providing Saskatchewan income tax credits of up to \$20,000 for tuition fees paid by graduates who live and work in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the budget is a good document. The 2019-20 budget strikes the right balance by maintaining a growth agenda with

key investments in health, in education, in social programs, infrastructure like schools and highways and hospitals. The right balance, building a bigger province for the good of all Saskatchewan citizens.

I will not be supporting the amendment, but I will support the budget as presented by the provincial Finance minister. God bless Saskatchewan.

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

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise in the House today and speak in support of our provincial budget. But before I get into the details of the budget, there are some people that I would like to thank.

I would like to thank my husband, Terry. He's been my biggest champion and a long-time supporter. I really appreciate the . . . just the constant reminder of the work that I do that he gives me.

It's each and every one of us have the opportunity to spend time in the community talking to people, and a lot of times we sort of feel like we've short-changed our family. And I know I was elected in 2007, but I've always made sure that my husband . . . He's number one, because he's been my biggest champion.

I also would like to thank my constituent assistant, Kelly Zazula. Kelly's been with me since 2008 and I know my constituents always feel that they are very well served by her response. She's just such a capable, competent young woman who has the ability to really connect with my constituents of Regina Rochdale.

And I'd like to also thank the constituents of Regina Rochdale for electing me, selecting me to represent them. And I've had the pleasure of doing that since the election of 2007.

Regina Rochdale is one of the most vibrant constituencies in the city of Regina. It's growing in leaps and bounds, and it's really an honour to have the opportunity to meet so many young families that are moving into my constituency.

We're very well served by the joint school that was built within Regina Rochdale. The school is located on the northwest corner of the city. In fact, there's nothing between that school and Lumsden except prairie and bush. So it's kind of a . . . it really speaks to the optimism that we have for Regina and for the constituency of Regina Rochdale because we know it's a vibrant, growing community.

And I'd also like my . . . I'd like to thank the colleagues that really rolled up their sleeves, our colleagues here in the government, when the decisions were being made on some of the tough decisions in regards to the budget. When the Finance minister comes to caucus and asks our opinions and advice, she's very open to the suggestions we make, and because of that, we've managed to strike the right balance.

Just this past weekend, I had the opportunity to go out — it was a fabulous spring day; I think it was plus 14 — to go out and door knock in my constituency. And the reception that I received on the door was absolutely . . . It was warm. It was inviting. But also people were so positive, and they thanked us for being fiscally prudent but also striking the right balance, making sure that

money was being invested in education, in health care. But what they said to me over and over again, thank you very much for no new taxes and no tax increase.

Each and every one of my constituents works very hard to live within their own household budgets, and so they appreciate that, in fact, as government representatives, when putting together a budget, that is foremost in our mind. It was a commitment that we made to ensure that we had a balanced budget. And thanks to the hard work of the Finance minister, she was able to deliver, just a week ago, a very well-received budget.

I must say that this year was very different than last year. Last year was a very difficult time, with the Humboldt tragedy. And this year, there was still . . . I know there was a lot of people that came and attended were still reminded of that horrendous accident. And yet the strength and the perseverance of our Finance minister . . . You could just say she's just a strong leader for the government but also for the province of Saskatchewan.

It was also a real pleasure to see the Finance minister's three daughters in attendance because, you know, I guess we can all realize and appreciate the leadership of our Finance minister, and as a strong female leader, she sends a very strong message. And having her three daughters here really just magnified, one, that she's very capable and competent in her role as a Finance minister but also as a mom, as an MLA who looks after her constituency. This is a woman who does triple duty in fact, but does an absolutely incredible job. So I think we can all be very proud to have a female Finance minister who knows how to get the job done.

And I was pleased to see that education played a very important role in this budget. We have planning dollars being put aside for St. Pius and Argyle schools here in Regina. Now I know the member from Lakeview from the opposition should be very pleased because those sit within her constituency. So we don't play politics when it comes to education and in fact what we do is we ensure that the job is being done and our students are being put . . . are foremost on our mind. I had the opportunity to talk to my neighbour about the St. Pius School. My neighbour is an architect, Harry Jedlic, and it was interesting because in 1976, Jedlic Architects did an assessment of St. Pius School. So that's 1976 and they said at that point that school was in need of major repair. And that was under the Allan Blakeney government. That was an NDP government, and what did they do? Absolutely nothing.

1976 was also kind of an interesting year in Saskatchewan. It was when the NDP chased out a ton of business — K+S was one of them — because they took over the potash industry. So it was a very dark day in Saskatchewan. It wasn't just the deplorable situation of St. Pius School in 1976 but in fact it was what happened with the potash industry. But there was one bright light, in fact. In 1976 the Sherwood Credit Union opened up a green machine, so it was the first ATM [automated teller machine] in Saskatchewan. So there is a bit of a bright light there.

I really wish the opposition would take some time to listen to some of the things we have to say because, you know, I think each and every one of us, when we come here, we come here because we want to serve. We want to be able to do the best we can for the people of Saskatchewan. So sitting across and

heckling and shouting, you know, when we're talking about really important issues — such as the planning of two new schools within the city of Regina — you know it's really kind of sad because it shows a lack of respect for this place, but it also shows a lack of respect for the people of Regina. So I just wanted to kind of remind them that one of the reasons why we're here is to serve the people of Saskatchewan.

I'd also like to talk a little bit about why we work hard to be fiscally prudent. We do it for future generations and we do it for the people of Saskatchewan here today. I am so proud of so many of the young people that I have a chance to meet that are stepping up in leadership roles.

And I know within my own family, I have some nieces that absolutely are . . . they're leaders in their own right and they set such a fine example for the people around them. I have a niece, Julie Stiglitz. She's the principal of Bert Fox High School in Fort Qu'Appelle. Last night she went home from being a principal and went over to the curling rink, and in fact she curls in the mixed league and they won their championship. So congratulations to Julie for the leadership role that she plays to her students. She's very committed. She's a mom. She's got two beautiful young kids. But she absolutely is committed to our education, and so I appreciate the work that Julie does in their community. But also she does a lot of coaching in their youth in curling. So she is very invested in Fort Qu'Appelle but also into their students, so I commend her for it.

I also have a niece, Jennifer — so this is Julie's younger sister — and I have to read a bit of an article that was written about Jennifer. We are all so proud of her because Jennifer is an engineer with Husky. I'm just going to read a bit of an article that was written about Jennifer and that "She first dabbled in engineering as a summer student doing research on pipeline flow." Well you know, that's kind of . . . When you say "dabble" that's an interesting thing because she absolutely, she's brilliant. But she really is committed to ensuring that the oil industry is well served by very smart, upward, young engineers and female engineers.

[16:15]

So she had the opportunity to work in the Husky upgrader in Lloydminster. And so she's been there for 15 years, and she has now been selected . . . She's now the senior manager of planning and optimization. And she leads evaluation and planning development opportunities that maximizes the profitability of this upgrader. Now Jennifer works between Lloydminster and Minnedosa, Manitoba, because she's also working as the plant manager for their ethanol plant. So there's a young woman that we can be very proud of, a Saskatchewan young woman, an engineer. She also leads a group within Husky that is encouraging young women to take leadership roles. And so, like I said, I'm so proud of those two nieces.

I also have a niece, Glenna Potzus, in Yorkton. There's a young entrepreneur. She owns two businesses, a Benjamin Moore paint store and a clothing store. And there's this young single mom who's going all out and ensuring that Saskatchewan is well served by young women in leadership roles.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is what we see all over. I have the

opportunity as the Chair of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians to meet young women from across this province. And I must say that I am just so excited to see that so many of these young women are considering a life in public service. Because that's one of the roles that I play, is to encourage them to think about sitting on school boards, city councils, RMs, provincially or federally. Because you know, we know when we talk about the right balance in the budget, we also look to having the right balance in elected positions. Because we know that once we have more women sitting at the decision-making table, good decisions are being made, such as was made by our Finance minister.

Got to say, she shows absolutely incredible, strong leadership. And I'm encouraging each and every one of us to go up and visit her office here in the Legislative Assembly. And guess what? All of her whole staff within her ministry in that minister's office is women. So that shows strong leadership that we have young women stepping up, knowing that in fact Saskatchewan is the right place for them to be.

And, Mr. Speaker, we didn't take this budget lightly because it was a commitment to ensure that we had the right balance for Saskatchewan. People have told us over and over again they wanted to make sure that we were fiscally prudent and socially responsible. And, Mr. Speaker, this budget is just that.

We ensured that revenue sharing, for example with the city of Regina, since we formed government in 2007, the increase of revenue sharing is 149 per cent. Now that is something that the members from the opposition should really pay attention to because it's something they absolutely just ignored.

And so in order to have a good working relationship with our cities, with our municipalities, we have to make sure that in fact we treat each other respectfully. And so this is something that I know as Regina MLAs on the government side, we have the opportunity to sit down with our Regina City Council, and we go through different issues and concerns and we have an open dialogue. And you know, it's through fruitful discussions that good governance is put in place. So, Mr. Speaker, with that I am going to make sure that any further discussions we have with the city is open, is positive, and the people of Regina will be best served by a Saskatchewan Party government.

And, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the budget, but I will not be supporting the amendment put forward by the NDP. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It really is an honour for me to stand and reply to the budget presented by our colleague, the Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker. And I do want to obviously give some thanks to the minister and her entire team over at Finance for the work they did in presenting this budget, but there's also some others I'd like to thank on that as well, Mr. Speaker.

I do want to thank my colleagues that sit on treasury board. I had the privilege of sitting on treasury board for one year. It's a long ordeal and it's a lot of work. And you sit there and all the cabinet ministers come in and they present their budgets and what they

feel is important to them and program what they want to bring forward. And then obviously treasury board makes a final decision on what will be brought forward and what not. So they're making some very tough decisions, Mr. Speaker. And I just want to take this opportunity to thank them as well.

I have some staff I would like to thank. I also want to take this opportunity to thank the constituents of Wood River constituency for giving me this opportunity to serve them here in this great facility, in the legislature here in the province of Saskatchewan.

And I want also take this opportunity to thank the Premier for giving me this opportunity to serve as Ag minister in the province of Saskatchewan which really is, to me, the greatest reward a person could ever get, especially a farm boy from Fife Lake, Saskatchewan could be given this opportunity to serve as Ag minister here in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some staff I really have to thank, back at home, for a number of reasons, Mr. Speaker, that I will probably take a little time on it. I have two very capable young women looking after the office in Assiniboia, Sandy Kuffner and Wendie Yorga. But I really have to . . . We had some tragedy here this year in our office in January. Sandy was in a very, very bad accident. She's still recovering and recouping through that process now and will be for a few months yet. And Wendie has really just stepped up and filled in for Sandy. And I know they're in communication every day, talking about the day-to-day operation of the office there. But I really want to acknowledge both of those young women for their work they do in my office to keep it flowing through. And there's always challenges with cases coming forward, but I did want to take this opportunity to really thank both Wendie and Sandy for the work they do in my constituency office.

And I also want to spend a few minutes thanking my team in my office here at the ministry. They're just an amazing team led by Ashley and with Brady and Amanda and Jolene and Courtney there. It really is a very professional team. They're very knowledgeable in agriculture issues and ag files. That really helped me transition into the ministry. I do want to take this opportunity to thank them for the work that they do on my behalf and, in many cases, making me look pretty good, Mr. Speaker.

So at this time I also, of course like every other member here, have to acknowledge our family members, and I'm no different than my colleagues. I want to take this opportunity obviously for thanking my wife, Lois, for tolerating me and for all these 40-plus years that we have been together and giving me this opportunity to serve the people of the province of Saskatchewan. And she's made a huge sacrifice on that part. Many lonely nights at home when she's alone, and I'm here in Regina.

And I do want to also thank our two children. Our daughter, Katie, is married to Darrel here in Regina. She's a social worker working here for an NGO [non-governmental organization] here in the city of Regina. She and Darrel have blessed us with three beautiful grandchildren: two daughters and, most recently, a grandson. So we're obviously very thankful for that. They have both decided to grow their careers here in the province of Saskatchewan and have stayed here.

Our son, Jordan, is just finishing up his second fellowship in medical residency, and he will be finished that in July. And, Mr.

Speaker, I'm very proud to say here in this Assembly that our son will be returning to Saskatoon as a specialist physician at the Royal University in Saskatoon, has accepted a contract there. So once again a youth coming back to the province of Saskatchewan to work and build his career. So we're very happy about that. But it also speaks well of a program that we started with the graduate retention program and gives those graduate students opportunity to work here and also recapture some of that tuition fee that they did also receive, Mr. Speaker.

And now I do want to also obviously talk about the budget, and what I feel obviously is the right balance, obviously. And it's a balanced approach, Mr. Speaker. And I think that leads me to a thought that I had that this budget really does speak of the people of the province of Saskatchewan. And to me it's almost like this is a character budget of the province of Saskatchewan and the people of Saskatchewan.

When you look at what we did with no tax increases for the hard-working people of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, no new taxes, that is something that is very appreciated. And I'll touch on that and some of the budget proposals that are out there that we brought out, and some of the new programs that we have, especially in the social services side. And we're not penalizing them there for the hard work that they do, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, we also, in the budget, we do obviously look after our children through health care and education funding and continuing to see that also grow, Mr. Speaker. And I also think this is an important thing, when you look around Saskatchewan, the one thing that Saskatchewan is very famous for — when you look at telethons that we have like with the Z99 one for the children's hospital, Telemiracle and things like that — what you really see is the generosity of the people of the province of Saskatchewan. And that's part of our character, Mr. Speaker, and I think that is very evident in this budget. When you look at the health budget, you look at education, you look at social services, Mr. Speaker, the one thing that we really, really have put into this budget and one emphasis that I think that stands for every community here, we really look out for the most vulnerable. We really do, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan people are known for it. We will continue to do that. And I think this budget reflects that, that we have those opportunities to do that.

I will highlight obviously some things in the budget that I think are things that I really do want to mention, obviously agriculture. I want to talk about the increased funding in agriculture and really what that does mean. Mr. Speaker, we're enhancing crop insurance, some of the programs there, when you look at forage and hay and the pasture lands and giving the ranchers an opportunity to insure that. We think it's important.

And obviously when you look at the rat control program here in the province of Saskatchewan, we increased funding on that. We heard it pretty loud and clear that it was important to the people of rural Saskatchewan that we really look after that side of it. And we're seeing those numbers drastically reduce and continue to do that.

When you look at \$271.9 million to fully fund business risk management, Mr. Speaker, I think that's an important thing to say. We're fully funding those programs under the

federal-provincial agreement, under the CAP [Canadian Agricultural Partnership] program. So you look at higher coverages for tame hay and grazing land. Another thing that we're very proud of is just under \$32 million this year in our budget for research projects, Mr. Speaker. I think that really tells a lot about what our government's commitment is to continuing to see research happen here in the province of Saskatchewan so that we can attract the very brightest minds from around the world that really want to come here to do research in the agriculture industry, in all aspects of it.

We continue to see increased funding and funding into other groups, Mr. Speaker, like Ag in the Classroom, which I had the privilege a few weeks ago in attending a class here in Regina, grade 3 students, got to speak to them and had an exciting visit with them. And they had a lot of questions. Obviously also the Saskatchewan 4-H Council. I had the privilege on Saturday of attending the awards there in Saskatoon for 4-H. It's a great program to see. And when we see the numbers increasing in the enrolment from 4-H students — we're well over 3,300 now enrolled in 4-H across the province — it's good to see. And of course the Farm & Food Care of Saskatchewan.

[16:30]

It's good to see when we're seeing what's happening in agriculture here in the province with value-added processing growing and growing at a phenomenal rate. We're the highest growing jurisdiction in Canada for value-added processing and what is happening here. And of course we did harvest another record crop again here in 2018. It was over 35 million metric tonnes harvested. For the sixth year, we've had well over 30 million metric tonnes over the past six years.

So when you look at our exports in the agriculture and what it means to this province, it is vital. It is probably the key driver when you see exports of \$13.4 billion, which is almost an increase of 60 per cent since 2010, Mr. Speaker.

I want to also talk, and that's why my theme was when I . . . when I talked about how we help other entities and what we're putting into the budget. And obviously corrections and policing is one that's obviously near and dear to many of us here in this Assembly when you see crime and what was happening. But when you see \$15 million in new funding for 128 municipal police positions and targeted policing initiatives across the province, it's important to us when we see those kind of engagements and that kind of commitment by our government to assist in funding so that we can reduce crime in all parts of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And it's really important.

And I think when you talk . . . I wanted to talk a little bit about education if I can. When you see increased funding in education like we did see . . . it's, what, over \$26 million? I mean, that is record funding, Mr. Speaker. That is record funding for the province of Saskatchewan for education this year. And I think it's important that we see that when you see . . . And I know many of my colleagues have talked about new schools that are going to be built in obviously Weyburn, Moose Jaw, Saskatoon. It's great news.

And I think that just leads into where I want to have a chat about capital funding and what's going on in capital. I think it's

important that we talk about that. When you look at 103 million investment for health care infrastructure, including 12 million to begin construction of a new long-term care for the Northlands Pioneers Lodge in Meadow Lake, Mr. Speaker, something that is much needed and greatly appreciated. And my understanding is that even through the health budget, they're looking now at even dialysis out into the Meadow Lake area, which is really important. And I can relate to that, Mr. Speaker. My father, I know, had kidney failure and virtually had to move into the city for dialysis. So when you can have it in smaller communities like that so people can stay at home and don't have to travel for dialysis, it's important to them and it's important to the communities. So it's good to see those kind of things.

And I mean also the 5 million for the new Victoria Hospital planned for planning in Prince Albert, and planning design for a new hospital in Weyburn. These are great projects that are going to move forward on capital plans, Mr. Speaker, and I think it's important that we see that.

And I just wanted to talk obviously about the new Canada infrastructure plan, which will give opportunity for municipalities to access funding, always has been something near and dear to my heart. And obviously when you look at boil-water advisories we have in rural Saskatchewan in smaller communities now, that's obviously something that is much needed when you look at it. You look at all kinds of funding opportunities that municipalities and communities have to get together to work on regional projects and do things like that. So that is important.

And just on the revenue sharing, I do have to touch on it, Mr. Speaker. I think it's really important when you look at it. When you look at the commitment by this government on municipal revenue sharing, it is something that really doesn't get out to the public a lot that we really should talk about. Because this is, Mr. Speaker, this is one program that really is the envy of every municipality across this country outside of the borders of this province. It really is. In my travels in my former life across this country, talking to municipal sectors, I could not believe that we had a government that was dedicated to municipal revenue sharing the way this one was. And it was given to them on one factor that every municipality across this country was the envy of, asked about, and it was unconditional. It meant that they could use that money where they best felt it had to be spent in their community.

And we've seen it from all kinds of things, whether it was water projects, whether it was street paving, whether it went into a facility in the community, whatever. And in some cases in rural, it went into gravel crushing or purchasing equipment. But when you look at that funding and you look at \$161 million to urban municipalities, unconditional money, unconditional funding that they can do whatever they want, \$71 million for rural municipalities, Mr. Speaker, and \$18.6 million for our northern communities to use that money in what they feel is important to their communities, I think that is no . . . There is no underlying line saying, you have to spend it here or you can only spend it here. It's saying, you have the power to decide where that money should be spent, Mr. Speaker. So it's important for that.

So I could go on and on and talk about health, but I think I'm getting close to the end of my time. So I think I could talk it out.

I want to give some time to my colleague from Warman Martensville because she's got a big, long speech that she really wants to get at.

But I think when you look at health care and you look at what we did for mental health and addictions and the funding we put into that, that's where I'm talking about where we really looked after our most vulnerable and the people that really do need our help. And I think when you look at that, when you look at autism and funding for that, I think it's important to recognize that.

And I think when you look at . . . I did want to touch on one and that's my colleague in Social Services. I think it's amazing when you look at bringing a program in that'll actually allow people that are on social assistance to actually make more money without being penalized for it. What a great . . . I mean, that's something we really should be doing. Let's give them the incentive to work more and not be penalized for it, and reward them for doing that. And they gain value for that, and everybody does. And I think it's important that we recognize that.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I said, I could go on and on and I really would like to, but I will wind it up by saying this: that obviously I will be supporting the motion put forward by the Minister of Finance, seconded by my good friend, the MLA from Indian Head-Milestone, and I will not be supporting the amendment, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, *The Right Balance* is the proper name for this budget that was presented by the Minister of Finance. You know, if you look back over the last number of three years, which I have sat on treasury board along with a number of other colleagues, it's been a time of tough decisions, that we had to choose between this good project and that good project and only one of them could happen.

So, Mr. Speaker, this year we have come to a balanced budget which we needed to do to protect the future of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, although this is probably the 29th budget that I've had the pleasure of sitting through and debating, Mr. Speaker, this one . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I think there are some members behind me who want me to buy ice cream by saying I don't look anywhere near old enough. But there are days when I think I'm not old enough and days that I know I certainly am.

Mr. Speaker, this, as I said, is the most satisfying budget presentation that I have seen and witnessed in this House, satisfying because of the sacrifices that the people of Saskatchewan made and the responsibility the members of this side of the House were prepared to accept to ensure we got to a balanced budget.

And, Mr. Speaker, if you look across the Canadian landscape, political landscape, there are very few jurisdictions with a balanced budget that do so without equalization. And Saskatchewan is one of those few, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to next year's budget being even better than this one.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the people of Cannington for their support in allowing me to represent them. I'd also like to thank

my two staff people in the office in Alida. Jeannie Ball who has been there as well and has received the papers for more than 29 budgets, Mr. Speaker, she has been in that office working on behalf of the constituents of Cannington just as long as I have, Mr. Speaker, as well as Bonnie Farr who has probably been there 10 years or more now, Mr. Speaker.

So things are going well in Cannington. We would like to see the oil economy pick up a little more. We would like to see China back off on their restrictions on Canadian canola and other grains. But those are items that are both out of our control, Mr. Speaker, as far as the province of Saskatchewan goes. We can certainly try and do our part to influence changes, but we do not have the direct control.

We have to look to the federal government for that kind of support. And, Mr. Speaker, while on the oil side we sometimes receive lip service, we don't receive any real action. The fact that our pipelines or the need for pipelines continues as an ongoing major crisis in the oil patch is an example of the ineptitude of the government in Ottawa at present.

Mr. Speaker, the issues with China and canola really has nothing to do with the canola or its quality. It's excellent canola that's in excellent shape. This is all about politics and an individual that was arrested and held in Vancouver for extradition to the US, and for some reason is still here in Canada. That needs to be resolved and moved ahead, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, most of the snow is going in Cannington. We still have snow in the sloughs and there was some on the fields on the weekend when I was home, but it's finally warmed up, Mr. Speaker. Spring is finally here and people are generally happier when that's happening, Mr. Speaker. People across Saskatchewan are happy with the budget except for the 13 members opposite.

And, Mr. Speaker, it was really quite illuminating listening to the Leader of the Opposition and a few of the other MLAs there on budget day with their questions. It was basically 24 minutes of you aren't spending enough money in these areas. And they had a list of areas they thought more money needed to be spent in. And then the last minute was you shouldn't be . . . Okay let's step back a bit. In the 24 minutes they also suggested that we needed to reduce taxes. So we need to increase spending; we need to reduce taxes. And the last minute was you shouldn't be running a debt.

So not even Keynes could square that circle, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is no economist in the world that could make that circle go into a square hole, Mr. Speaker. Because you can't spend more, decrease taxes, and not have a debt, Mr. Speaker. And that is what the members opposite were promoting as their philosophy, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you know, there was some discussion about the debt by the members opposite and by the members on this side of the House. Now since I've been here, Mr. Speaker, for one or two decades, maybe almost three, I do remember when the New Democratic Party won government in 1991, and Ed Tchorzewski was the Finance minister at that time. And like the member from Athabasca, he kept saying at that time that the debt was all Grant Devine's fault. But before he left the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, he

finally admitted, Mr. Speaker, that when the Allan Blakeney government was defeated in 1982, the provincial debt was \$6.4 billion, Mr. Speaker. It's in *Hansard* if the members opposite don't believe it. He finally admitted it.

[16:45]

So, Mr. Speaker, when you think back to the 1980s that the member for Athabasca likes to talk about, interest rates were running 14 to 24 per cent. It doesn't matter how good your revenues were, there was debt accumulating very fast in that time period.

So, Mr. Speaker, the difference is, today there is more Crown debt than there was in 2007. But why is that debt there? In the NDP's era, when they were in . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the member for Athabasca finally got it right — infrastructure. During the 1990s and early 2000s, the members opposite didn't build infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. I had power poles falling over on my farm because they would not allow SaskPower to rejuvenate their assets, Mr. Speaker.

You know, they wouldn't fix up the nursing homes. The fact is they put a moratorium on nursing homes. They didn't build a new nursing home in 16 years, Mr. Speaker. We have built 15 new nursing homes, Mr. Speaker, 16 new nursing homes. The member for Athabasca was a part of the government that closed more than 52 hospitals across the province. We have built hospitals, Mr. Speaker. We have built hospitals and that's where some of that debt has gone to, Mr. Speaker.

You know, I remember it was the member for Rosetown, the NDP member for Rosetown, that wanted to turn all of our highways into gravel because they weren't fixing any highways. In 1991, the budget for highway construction was 210 million. Under the NDP in 1992, when they came in, it dropped down to 160 million, Mr. Speaker, a 25 per cent reduction in construction of highways across the province. And it never really recovered for the entire 16 years they were in government, Mr. Speaker.

Since that time, since we formed government in 2007, we've spent \$8.4 billion in repairing and rebuilding 13 000 kilometres of highway in this province. And I'm happy to say, I have another highway that is getting some work done on it this year, Mr. Speaker. It's been a long time waiting but I'm getting . . .

An Hon. Member: — Two in a row. Two in a row.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, it's the same project that the previous minister of Highways was working on, and now it's going to get done this year, Mr. Speaker. So, yes, we wore out one minister trying to get it done. So you know, there are many examples of such, Mr. Speaker.

You know, today the member for Regina Lakeview stands in the House demanding that this government keep Cornwall School open, Mr. Speaker. Well when I looked back in the histories of my own constituency, I would note that the following schools were closed under the NDP: Gainsborough; Frobisher; Storthoaks; Alida, my home town; Kisbey; Creelman; and Corning. And since we formed government we built a new joint high school-elementary school in Oxbow, Mr. Speaker, even though that Oxbow High School had been on the B-1 list, which

is the build list. It was number one on the list under the former administration, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — Is there such a list now?

Mr. D'Autremont: — I don't know if there's a list now because we've been building so many schools, Mr. Speaker, that it's . . . We look after it. There's two or three more schools being built, new schools, Mr. Speaker, 3.3 million planning and design for three new schools, including two joint-use schools in Regina and Moose Jaw; and the replacement of St. Frances school in the member for Saskatoon Centre in Saskatoon, St. Frances; continued funding for major school consolidation projects in Rosthern and Weyburn, Mr. Speaker.

So our record is building schools, Mr. Speaker; the NDP's record is closing 176 schools across the province. So when they stand up to criticize, Mr. Speaker, they need to think about their own history. But I know that accepting responsibility is not something that you need to do when you're in opposition. Your job is to holler and scream and squawk and make noise and not accept responsibility.

I had commented, Mr. Speaker, on the renovations and the renewal of Crown assets. I remember that the members opposite had a Crown renewal tax on SaskPower and SaskEnergy and SaskTel bills at one point in time. And the reality was this was simply a tax that went into the General Revenue Fund and didn't go to the Crowns for any renewal, Mr. Speaker. And finally the NDP government admitted it and took that tax off the power bills and energy bills and phone bills of the province, Mr. Speaker.

You know, for 16 years they didn't build any long-term care facilities, so a lot of the long-term care facilities in the province were getting to be in very poor shape. We've replaced 15 of them across the province, including one in my own constituency at Redvers, Mr. Speaker, and we're looking at replacing more of them.

When I became a minister in 2007, I asked my ministry, Central Services, what is the worst building in the government's fleet? The very worst. And that was the North Battleford hospital, Mr. Speaker. And now we have a brand new hospital built and just opened this past fall, Mr. Speaker. Brand new hospital, first time in over 100 years, that facility, Mr. Speaker, and that was because the members opposite had placed people into that facility and forgot about them. They didn't have a constituency that was arguing for their benefit.

But we recognized, Mr. Speaker, that this could not continue, and so we put forward the capital to build that facility. Now the members opposite really disliked the fact that we did it because we did it, Mr. Speaker, with a P3 [public-private partnership]. And it was successful. It was on budget and on time, Mr. Speaker, which is why we used P3s, because it saves the government money and gets the job done on time.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other issues that I think the members opposite and the public needs to be reminded of. We have been building hospitals like the North Battleford facility. I remember the members opposite when they were in government would stand up and proclaim, we're going to build the Humboldt hospital; we've got a sign there and it's going ahead. And the

signs wore out, Mr. Speaker. They had to replace them because they never got around to fixing them, Mr. Speaker.

They did the same thing with Preeceville. I remember the former member from Canora-Pelly would raise that issue over and over again because it kept getting more expensive. The size of the facility kept shrinking because they never went ahead and built it. Mr. Speaker, we are going ahead and building those. North Battleford, Swift Current, Leader, Moose Jaw is coming up, Weyburn, Mr. Speaker, facilities that are long needed. And we are proceeding with building those.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is a good budget for the people of Saskatchewan. We are replacing the infrastructure across the province. We have assets that we're building to offset any debt that is being placed upon the province to cover those expenses, Mr. Speaker. Our power poles aren't falling over because we're not replacing them.

And we also have 116,000 more people in Saskatchewan that have chosen to make Saskatchewan home. Instead of a shrinking population, we have a growing population. That all adds to the well-being of Saskatchewan. But it also adds costs, and that is the reason why we need to continue to fortify and strengthen our infrastructure across the province, to deal with those new Saskatchewanians that are living here, Mr. Speaker.

It takes new roads. It takes new schools. It takes new power. And we have been adding new power sources with SaskPower. We have been providing more electrical capacity but also more gas capacity to support Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And we've also been doing that as well as lowering the corporate tax regime to encourage people to come to Saskatchewan. We have the lowest tax, corporate taxes. We also have the lowest personal taxes, Mr. Speaker, equal to those that the members opposite would like to brag about perhaps of Alberta, Mr. Speaker. They're not ahead of us; they're equal. Mr. Speaker, all of that helps to build the province of Saskatchewan, and we need to continue to do that.

Mr. Speaker, we're a nation of traders. We need to be able to trade our goods outside of our jurisdiction. When roadblocks are placed in the way of us doing that, it harms our economy. We export 64 per cent of our production, be it grain, be it oil and gas, whatever the case may be, Mr. Speaker — uranium, potash. We utilize very little potash in this province because we have so much potash in our soil. So we need to export it because we have 30 per cent of the world's supply of potash, Mr. Speaker. So we need to be able to get that to market.

We need to be able to get our oil and gas to market. And not just one market, Mr. Speaker. We're seeing the disruption right now of having China as our largest canola market. We need to be able to market that to other locations around the world. All that takes is railroad for potash and for grain. If the oil is moving on the rail because there are no pipelines, that means something else is diverted off and can't move.

And unfortunately what we have seen at times, it's been our agricultural products, as a lower value commodity to potash and oil, that have been sidelined. And fact is we've even seen grain commodities from other jurisdictions being utilized on our tracks because there's more profit in hauling somebody else's than there is hauling Canadian grain.

So, Mr. Speaker, we need to be conscious of how all of these things impact our province, how they impact the people living and trying to earn a living in our province, and how they impact the Government of Saskatchewan. If people aren't working, if we're not selling our products, it reduces the amount of taxes that we have available to support those things that everybody wants.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very good budget for the people of Saskatchewan. I congratulate the Minister of Finance for the budget that she has presented.

The Speaker: — It now being 5 p.m., this House stands recessed till 7 p.m. tonight.

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

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Premier

President of the Executive Council

Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Tina Beaudry-Mellor

Minister of Advanced Education

Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Minister Responsible for Innovation

Hon. Lori Carr

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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Water

Security Agency

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Power Corporation

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