



FIRST SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

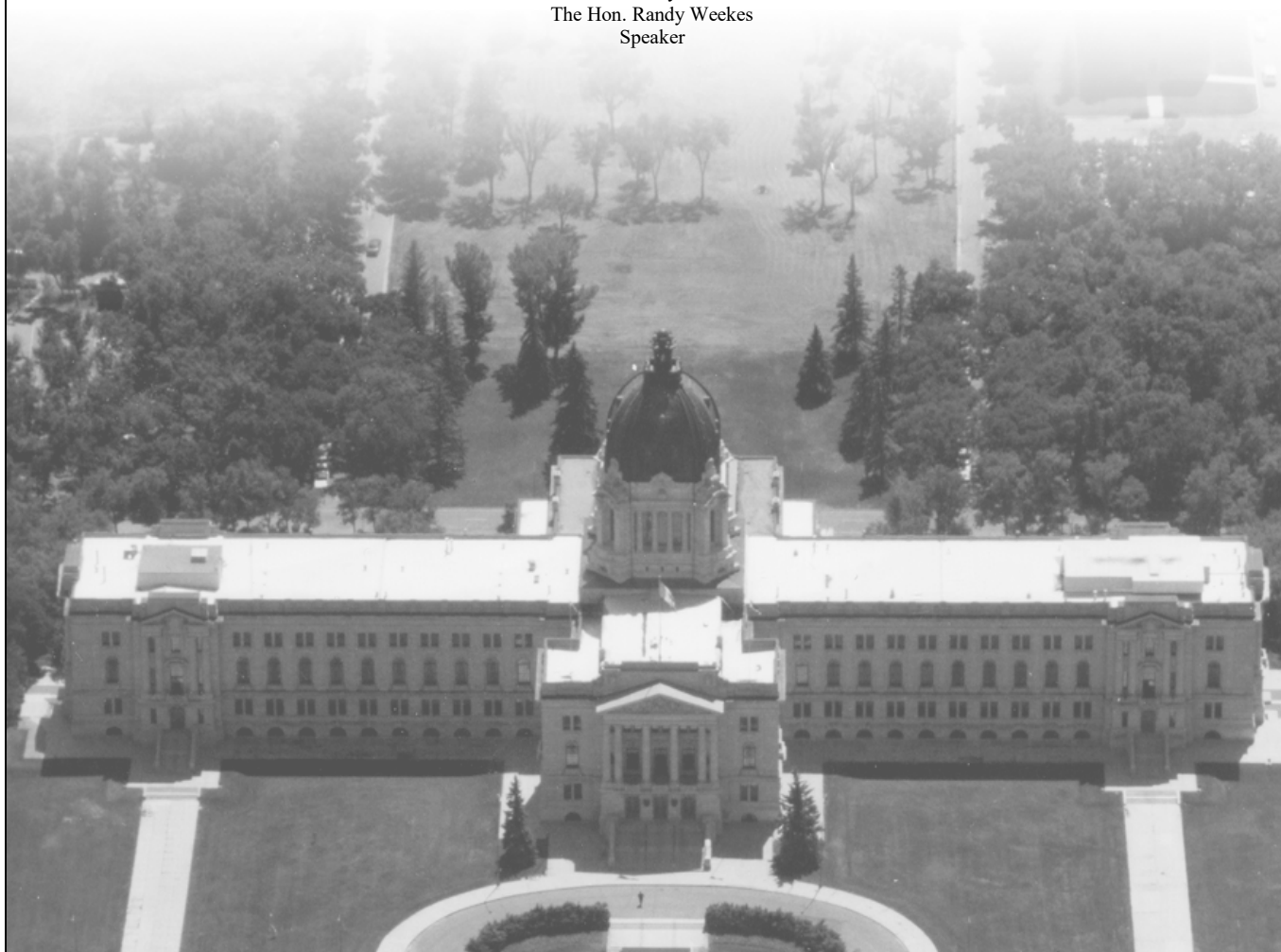
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

(HANSARD)

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authority of
The Hon. Randy Weekes
Speaker



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
1st Session — 29th Legislature

Lieutenant Governor — His Honour the Honourable Russ Mirasty, S.O.M., M.S.M.

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Leader of the Opposition — Ryan Meili

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

The Speaker: — Members of the Legislative Assembly, it is with profound sadness that we learned today of the death of His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh. We join with all citizens of Saskatchewan in sending our sincere condolences to Her Majesty in her bereavement, as well as to the members of the Royal Family.

I now respectfully ask that all members rise for a moment of silence as a sign of deep respect for His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh.

[The Assembly observed a moment of silence.]

The Speaker: — Thank you. Please be seated.

In relation to the moment of silence, I recognize the Premier.

STATEMENT OF CONDOLENCE

His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my great honour to rise to make a statement of condolence on the passing of His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

I join with my colleagues and all of Saskatchewan in mourning His Royal Highness. Today we send our love and our condolences to our Queen and to her family, and we will be thinking of them in days ahead.

Mr. Speaker, there may be more than a few of us in this Assembly who were surprised by this news that we heard today. Prince Philip was a strong and steady presence beside Queen Elizabeth for more than 70 years now. He seemed like one of those people who would just go on forever. Indeed this was a man who retired from his royal duties at the age of 97 after carrying out more than 22,000 solo engagements, more than 600 overseas visits, giving almost 5,500 speeches, and serving as a patron, president, or a member of more than 7,800 organizations. He retired after visiting Saskatchewan eight times, with his last visit to commemorate our province's centennial in 2005.

Mr. Speaker, more than a century ago, the renowned British journalist Walter Bagehot said this about the monarchy: "The occupations are grave, formal, but never exciting." Well Walter Bagehot did not have the pleasure of meeting Prince Philip. In attending to his duties, Prince Philip was rarely grave, often informal, and capable of creating excitement wherever he went. Mr. Speaker, Prince Philip had character and actually he was a character. He possessed a rough charm and an undeniable charisma. In fact it was that charisma that caught the eye of the Queen all so many years ago.

According to *Maclean's* magazine, the Queen's parents expected her to marry a British aristocrat. Instead she fell in love with a foreign prince with a brusque manner and a habit of saying things that were inelegant or at times even blunt. Prince Philip was a

genuine person. There was no artifice about him at all. Yes, he was a traditionalist but he never came across as haughty. He was a royal who was a real person — someone who could connect with people instantly, putting them at ease with his sense of humour and with his empathy.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, His Royal Highness visited Saskatchewan eight times, and there are many fond memories of each of those visits. A few years ago a journalist, Roger Currie, wrote about meeting Prince Philip at Agribition in 1978. At the reception, Roger introduced himself as the news director at CKCK. The Prince shook Roger's hand and he said, "You're the people with the lousy picture on channel 2." Was Roger Currie offended by that comment? No, not at all. Roger thought to himself, "Wow, he's just like me; when I check in to a hotel, I see what is on the television as well."

Mr. Speaker, this is a sad day in the life of our province, in our nation, and indeed a sad day for the Commonwealth. But it's also a day to celebrate a remarkable life — a life guided by duty, by responsibility, and by loyalty. Prince Philip was active. He was engaged. In the words of Queen Elizabeth:

He has quite simply been my strength and stay all of these years, and I and his whole family, and this and many other countries, owe him a debt of gratitude greater than he would ever claim or we shall ever know.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, we wish to join the Premier, the members opposite, the Lieutenant Governor, and all the people of Saskatchewan in expressing our sorrow at the passing of His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh.

As has been noted, His Royal Highness visited Saskatchewan on numerous occasions. And it's part of our family history that on his last visit here with Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, my mother happened to be attending a course at The Hotel Saskatchewan. And she and her fellow attendees were lucky enough to be invited to be part of the procession that was welcoming Her Majesty and Prince Philip into the hotel. And she recalls with delight her brief brush with royalty and witnessing in particular, Prince Philip, his bright eyes and bright smile as he met, with apparent joy and enthusiasm, with Saskatchewan people.

We are grateful for his friendship, for his service, and we wish to convey our sincere condolences to Her Majesty, to the entire Royal Family, and all those whose lives were touched by His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education

Hon. Mr. Makowsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nav Canada

is currently reviewing the air traffic control tower at the Regina airport. While it's a private company, the federal government has three elected members on the board of directors and the Minister of Transport will have oversight to the fate of this tower. The aviation industry has been one of the hardest hit during COVID, but of course will play an important role in the economic recovery of the province.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the federal government to advise Nav Canada to reconsider its position on closing the airport traffic control tower at the Regina International Airport and to halt any final decisions until the global pandemic has subsided.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens of Regina. I so present.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition to the Government of Saskatchewan calling for pay equity legislation. And while I'm very pleased to rise today and to present this petition, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very thankful for the support that it's garnered to this point. It certainly falls into the category of things that I can't believe that we still have to fight for.

I'll read the prayer. We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring your attention to the following: Saskatchewan is one of only four provinces that does not have pay equity legislation. Saskatchewan has one of the highest gender wage gaps in Canada, which is the result of systematic gender discrimination in compensation for work, that must be corrected with pay equity legislation. The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission has recommended proactive and comprehensive pay equity legislation, which has not been pursued by the Government of Saskatchewan.

And while *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* prohibits gender-based compensation discrimination, the complaint-driven process puts no positive obligation on employers. And further, while pay equity advocacy primarily seeks to address gender-based wage discrimination, it must also be mindful of ability-, age-, identity-, and race-based wage discrimination.

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 Government of Saskatchewan to introduce pay equity legislation.

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

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

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition to the Government of Saskatchewan to save the Battlefords Lighthouse and provide core funding to emergency homelessness shelters across the province. Saskatchewan is one of the only provinces in Canada that still uses a per diem model where emergency shelters for a person facing homelessness is provided only for social assistance recipients per bed, per night. Other provinces use a block funding model where the shelter is funded by providing core funding and the shelter is open to anyone needing it.

The Lighthouse serving The Battlefords was opened in 2015 to fill a need in the community for people facing homelessness, addictions, and mental health challenges. It faced a cut of 90 per cent of its core funding from this government only one year after its opening. The funding has yet to be restored.

Core and block funding to shelters provides financial stability for organizations serving Saskatchewan's most vulnerable people. It prevents staff from asking intrusive questions, promotes access to shelter housing, and encourages a Housing First approach, reducing stress in staff and clients.

Before I read this prayer, I will say I had the pleasure of meeting many of the people that rely on this shelter just a few months back. Many of them have fell on hard times and need that shelter for housing. Others came to rely on it only to get back on their feet and find a job and move forward.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately provide stable, guaranteed core funding to the Lighthouse serving The Battlefords, and to expand supports for emergency shelters across Saskatchewan by moving to a core funding model.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The signatories of this petition are from The Battlefords. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Vimy Ridge Day

Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today, April the 9th, marks Vimy Ridge Day. And today we honour the heroic determination of our Canadian soldiers who left their families behind and answered the call to protect our nation and defend our freedoms. Mr. Speaker, the Battle of Vimy Ridge marked the first time in our history that all four Canadian divisions stood together.

Mr. Speaker, I have personally travelled to Vimy Ridge to visit the monument, and it is not lost on me how impactful this co-operative effort was and how much it has shaped our country. Because on that day, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't just four divisions coming together; it was Canadians coming together. And they may have come from all different places and fought many different battles before that, but their actions were a sense of unity for their units, their communities, and our beloved country.

And, Mr. Speaker, as our country faces a very different battle today, we can honour their legacy by unifying together. Because together, Mr. Speaker, we are stronger, and together there is no task we cannot accomplish.

Mr. Speaker, on this day and every day, we will remember their efforts, their pain, and their sacrifice. We will think of the families who may have lost loved ones on that historic battlefield at Vimy Ridge. They're a part of our history. And on this day and every day, we will remember them, lest we forget.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Vote for Lumsden in Kraft Hockeyville Competition

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan is a strong province because of our sense of community. Today we have an opportunity to support and celebrate Lumsden by voting for them in the Kraft Hockeyville competition. On March 20th the beautiful town of Lumsden was celebrated for making it as one of the top four finalists in the Kraft Hockeyville competition. And today I want to remind each person in this Assembly to go vote for Lumsden, and once you've voted, vote again. I know I did this morning. Because you see, voting opened up at 7 a.m. and closes tomorrow at 3 p.m., so we don't have a lot of time.

Hockey is at the heart of our community here in Saskatchewan, and it seems to be one of those things that we can put our differences aside for. And I'm sure that all members here can agree that if Lumsden won, Saskatchewan would cheer loud and clear. Let's work together like I know we can, and make Lumsden the first Saskatchewan town to win Kraft Hockeyville. Hockey is a critical part of our cultural fabric. Hockey produces jobs and builds an opportunity for community engagement.

I ask all members to join me in supporting Lumsden in their bid. So let us vote early and let us vote often to bring home the money and an NHL [National Hockey League] game to boot. Thank you.

[13:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Carrot River Veteran Celebrates 100th Birthday

Hon. Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, it's fitting to do this member's statement on Vimy Ridge Day. Mr. Speaker, Alf Sauder was born on February 21st, 1921 in Lockwood, Saskatchewan. Six years of poor crops and drought forced the family to make the move north, walking off the farm with all they could load on two railway cars.

Alf graduated from grade 12 in 1940 and enrolled in technical school to study aeronautics. January 27th, 1941 he enlisted in the RCAF [Royal Canadian Air Force] as an airframe mechanic. Along with 4,000 other troops, Alf departed Halifax on the *SS Louis Pasteur* for Greenock of Scotland. From there he was posted to the Shetland Islands with the squadron 413 RCAF.

In March 1942, they left England with a convoy of 32 ships accompanied by an aircraft carrier, two battleships, and 10 destroyers. They reached the island of Ceylon, and from there

took the train to the base at Koggala where they would stay for two and a half years.

After being discharged from the army on June 15th, 1945, Alf moved to the Battle Heights area northeast of Carrot River where he farmed and owned and operated a sawmill. In 2002 he received the Burma Star. In 2005, the Year of the Veteran, Alf began making headstones for the unmarked graves of veterans from the Carrot River area — 20 in total.

Alf has received an honorary lifetime membership in the Canadian Legion. He's a proud member of the community of Carrot River and made many valuable contributions throughout his life. Please join me in wishing Mr. Alf Sauder a very happy 100th birthday.

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

Recognizing the Canadian Forces

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, 104 years ago, and to recognize all Canadian Forces members who have taken up the torch and continue to serve our country today. At Vimy Ridge there were nearly 3,600 deaths and over 10,000 casualties, but the Canadians prevailed where so many of our allies had failed before them. The battle was an important milestone of the First World War and in the history of our nation.

The commitment to service that was forged in the trenches of Vimy Ridge continues today across all branches of the Canadian Forces. Members of the Canadian army, the Royal Canadian Navy, the Royal Canadian Air Force, and the Canadian Forces Rangers continue to serve all across our province, our country, and around the world.

Over the course of this pandemic, Canadian Forces members have answered the call like their forebearers did 104 years ago, to serve in remote northern communities, in long-term care homes, and in coordinating the logistics of this life-saving vaccine. I ask all members to join me in recognizing the 104th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge and in thanking today's Canadian Forces members, who continue to keep people safe at home and around the world.

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

Remembering Warren Woods

Mr. Meyers: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan people are known for their benevolence, their kindness, and their selflessness. That is a Saskatchewan that a young broadcaster from Sudbury, Ontario found when he landed in Regina some three decades ago. Our province had an instant impact on Warren Woods, and he had an instant impact on the people of this province as the fun-loving sports guy on STV's [SaskWest Television] Sportsline and on Global TV and finally on the radio at CJME.

Mr. Speaker, I had the chance to work side by side and learn much, much more than the business of broadcasting from

Woodsy. I learned the value of friendship. Woodsy was a friend to all. That's what made him so beloved by his dedicated followers. The guy you saw on TV was the same guy that you saw at the rink. The Woodsy that was always quick with a laugh on the tube was quick with a laugh in the patch afterwards.

Early this year Warren Woods passed away with COVID, leaving a hole in our community; however, his impact is lasting. Regina and Saskatchewan were lucky to have this adopted son leave such an impact on our community. The University of Regina and Rawlco Radio have joined forces and over the next three years, 12 scholarships are to be awarded to University of Regina School of Journalism students in Woods's name.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to ask all members of the Assembly to join me in recognizing the memory of Warren Woods, a life very well lived. Thank you.

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

World Down Syndrome Day

Mr. Buckingham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm pleased to rise in the House to talk about the importance of mismatched socks. On March 21st, many around our province and country joined together by putting on a pair of mismatched socks to recognize World Down Syndrome Day. This day is to raise awareness and celebrate those with Down syndrome, as they play such a vital role in our communities. Mr. Speaker, I am thankful of how my daughter Deanna has helped me to be a kind and more grateful person in my life.

The date of Down Syndrome Day is also very significant. The 21st day of the third month was selected to signify the uniqueness of the triplication of the 21st chromosome which causes Down syndrome. And this year, Mr. Speaker, though we may not have been able to sport our mismatched socks at work or in gatherings like we usually would, we still saw that many local businesses, sports teams, and organizations in our province shared pictures of their socks over social media.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank everyone in this House and all of the Saskatchewan people that helped celebrate the gifts and contributions of people with Down syndrome by putting on some mismatched socks. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

New Employment Numbers

Mr. Dennis: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today's labour force survey for March 21, released by Statistics Canada, shows that while we are still facing some challenges, there also is plenty of good news on the employment front. The numbers show that Saskatchewan women are leading our economic recovery. The number of women employed increased by 3,400 compared to March of 2020, and the unemployment rate for women was 5.7 per cent, the second lowest in the country with a national average of 7.3 per cent.

The situation for our younger people has also improved with 5,400 more young people employed in March of 2021. Our

off-reserve Aboriginal population also saw improved employment with 2,900 more people employed compared to March of 2020, an increase of 5.5 per cent. And despite the doom and gloom from the members opposite about the state of our construction sector in our province, employment in that sector is up, increased by 3,000 people or 7.9 per cent compared to March of 2020, and 2,800 or 6.5 per cent compared to February of '21.

While there is more work to do, our government remains focused on ensuring our province's economy continues to recover from the pandemic. The members opposite — or on my side — can continue to spread fear and smear on these efforts, but every day it is clearer and clearer why the people of Saskatchewan made the decision last October.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Employment Numbers and Government Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan families were struggling before COVID-19 with the province already in a recession. Those same families are paying the price even more today for the Premier's failure to fight the pandemic and to protect Saskatchewan's economy. The evidence is clear. If you look at today's StatsCan jobs numbers, zero jobs created since February of this year, 23,000 jobs lost since February of 2020. Mr. Speaker, from the beginning of the pandemic to today, we have the worst job-creation record in the entire country.

These are devastating numbers, Mr. Speaker, and my heart goes out to all of the families who are wondering how they're going to make it through without work. Does the Premier care to explain once again why he wouldn't change a thing, why he's satisfied with having failed to control the pandemic or protect Saskatchewan jobs?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition is correct in the fact that we have lost a number of jobs over the course of the last year. In fact at the height of the economic impact of the measures that were put in place to address the COVID-19 pandemic, we were down about 70,000 jobs in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Saskatchewan businesses, Saskatchewan people have had the opportunity in many cases to get back to work. About 50,000 of those folks have had the opportunity to get back to work. Mr. Speaker, there are still 20,000 jobs that we need to get back to work as soon as we exit this pandemic. We're fully aware that we are still down those 20,000 jobs, Mr. Speaker. We're going to do everything we can to ensure that we get them back, get them back very quickly.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All week the Premier has been telling us that we have to accept his failure on COVID-19 and all of the sickness, all of the lives lost. That was necessary to protect jobs. Well it turns out he failed at that too. This Premier

has no plan. He's in over his head. He's flailing, and he's failing Saskatchewan people. And he doesn't seem to care that under his watch we've had the worst COVID-19 numbers in the country for most of 2021, and we have the worst jobs record with 23,000 jobs lost in this province.

Will we finally see some humility from this Premier? Will he finally accept that, yes, his plan needed to change and needs to change now?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, priority one throughout this pandemic has been doing what we can as a government to support those families, support those businesses, Mr. Speaker, that have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic measures that have been put in place, significant measures put in place by this government. That's why various ministers have introduced a number of programs, including the small-business emergency payment, the tourism sector support payments. The training and innovation dollars have been made, Mr. Speaker. We have participated with the federal government on wage subsidies as well as top-ups.

And we did that, Mr. Speaker, as the budget title indicates, to protect Saskatchewan families and to protect our livelihoods in communities. As we exit this pandemic, we do have the opportunity then to build and to grow our communities, Mr. Speaker, to build and grow our opportunities in our communities.

And that is starting already with some significant investments that have been announced. A fertilizer investment just to the west of Regina here, Mr. Speaker, as well as a significant investment by Richardson in the community of Yorkton, doubling their canola crush capacity. All creating jobs over the course of the next few years.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All of this was avoidable and it was predictable. The Premier saw it coming. He had the modelling and he had every opportunity in November, as he saw the second wave hitting our province, to introduce a short-term circuit breaker to get that virus under control. He ignored the experts then, as he's ignoring them now.

So what do we have instead? We have an interminable slow-motion lockdown for months now, all winter, all spring. And the result? We didn't get the pandemic under control. We didn't prevent the third wave. And we have 23,000 people out of work, Mr. Speaker; the worst jobs record in the country since the beginning of the pandemic; the highest percentage of jobs lost since the beginning of the pandemic; Saskatchewan the only province losing jobs year over year. And we've been leading in COVID-19 cases and deaths. What an abject and total failure.

Mr. Speaker, does the Premier finally get that this isn't working and, as a result, neither are Saskatchewan people? Will we finally see a jobs plan? Will we finally see a plan to get this third wave under control?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, a number of questions in there. But I think what I would do is just read a couple of quotes, Mr. Speaker, from some recent investments that are going to create jobs and are creating jobs in our communities. The first from Richardson, with their doubling of their canola crush capacity in Yorkton. It goes, and I quote:

Construction will begin immediately with no disruption to current operations and is expected to be completed in early 2024. During the construction phase, there will be significant opportunities for employment within the area and upon completion, the company expects to add full-time positions to the plant.

Those are jobs, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with respect to the plan and the growth plan that this province has, the Saskatchewan mining and minerals investments out at Chaplin here in Saskatchewan said this:

"Through this incentive [provided by the provincial government], the provincial government has directly recognized the importance of sodium sulphate and sulphate of potash to the future of Saskatchewan," says [president and CEO] Rodney McCann . . . "The government's support for our industry provides invaluable momentum to the SOP project we recently announced. We are [very] proud of our Saskatchewan roots and are committed to contributing to the recovery and growth of this great province."

[14:00]

Mr. Speaker, we have an investment attraction effort that is happening here, Mr. Speaker. It's having success here. And it's going to continue to create jobs over the course of the next number of years, like it has over the course of the last decade.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we see today is entirely predictable. We called for action on COVID-19. We called for a jobs plan in this budget as well, a plan that would work for people and get people working, including removing the PST [provincial sales tax] from restaurant meals and construction, to kick-start those key local industries, Mr. Speaker.

Would the Premier . . . And his member behind him keeps saying to pick a lane, Mr. Speaker. Well I know what lane we're in. We're in the lane that will fight the pandemic, create jobs, and support Saskatchewan families. The question is, will the Premier pick a lane? Will the Premier get on track, or will he stay stuck in the middle of the road with ineffective half measures, too afraid of his Buffalo wing to do anything meaningful? Will he continue to just watch as the vaccines lose the race to the variants because of his actions, as Saskatchewan families are struggling and sick because he constantly puts politics ahead of people?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said, this is the governing party in this province that put forward a plan for growth for this province out to the year 2030. Yes, we have had a COVID-19 pandemic challenge

with the measures that have been put in place, the measures that we have worked very hard to balance, Mr. Speaker, yes, with people's personal freedoms and the ability to keep those folks safe in our communities, but also allow them to continue to work and work safely. And many people and many business places across this province have been working safely for more than a year now, Mr. Speaker.

That balanced and measured approach has allowed 50,000 of those jobs to return over the course of the past year, Mr. Speaker, as I said. At the peak of this pandemic, the measures had caused the loss of about 70,000 jobs. Fifty thousand people have been able to return to work because of the balanced and engaged and measured approach that this government has taken with businesses that are providing those jobs in our communities, Mr. Speaker.

We're going to continue to do that, Mr. Speaker. We're going to do it because it isn't that long ago that people of this province voted, Mr. Speaker. They voted on a jobs plan in the last provincial election, and they chose the opportunity to move forward with a Saskatchewan Party government to continue to grow, to prosper, and create opportunities for that next generation.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, since that last election over 400 people have died. Thousands more have been sick, and we have 23,000 people out of work. The arrogance to point to the election as somehow proof that you haven't failed this province in an extreme way is incredible, Mr. Speaker. A complete failure on the pandemic, a complete failure on jobs. You must be so proud.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure I heard a question there, so maybe I'll take the opportunity to just respond to a question earlier today, and it has to do with some correspondence that was sent by and signed by a number of physicians here today.

And I'd just like to start by thanking, Mr. Speaker, not only our physicians but all of our front-line health care staff that are working so very hard across this province in addressing and caring for folks in our facilities and ensuring that we have the supports across the health care system, the public health system, that the people of this province do need to access at this time as we manage our way through what will be, I'm quite certain, the last number of weeks of this pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, as we are continuing to work through this pandemic we are also rolling out the largest vaccination effort in the history of Saskatchewan, and we are leading the nation with that effort. I credit and attribute to all of those folks that are working so hard on the front lines. I'm hearing we are north of 11,000 vaccines delivered yesterday, another record-breaking day, Mr. Speaker. 1 per cent of our population . . . Pardon me, on Wednesday. 1 per cent of our population received their vaccinations on Wednesday, and we're going to continue to ramp up with the use of our pharmaceutical capacity, Mr. Speaker. We're going to find our way through this pandemic. All roads lead through one of these vaccination centres. We again ask the people of this province to take your opportunity to get vaccinated. Let's all stick it to

COVID.

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

Creation of Green Jobs and Support for the Energy Sector

Ms. Ritchie: — Mr. Speaker, this government keeps talking about a balanced approach to COVID-19. They claim to balance our lives and our livelihoods by protecting jobs and our health. But this budget showcases that while the government claims to have a balanced approach, this approach is not as advertised.

This budget has no plans for green jobs. We all know that climate change is a real threat and it presents us with an existential need. But this government is neither acting to protect Saskatchewan people or acting to allow them a chance to rebuild our economy with green jobs. Mr. Speaker, I ask, when will we see a real plan for our environment and economy, one that will jump-start our economy and protect our environment?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would reiterate the jobs report today, because I think if you're just listening to the members opposite that you would probably have a misconstrued view of the numbers that came out today. The reality, Mr. Speaker, is this: Saskatchewan has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the entire country. Saskatchewan has had one of the lowest unemployment rates — if not the lowest unemployment rate — in the country through the majority of the COVID-19 pandemic.

And, Mr. Speaker, there are some very, very positive points coming out of this latest job report: female employment up 3,400 compared to March 2020, the second-lowest rate of female unemployment in the entirety of the Dominion of Canada; youth employment up 8.3 per cent, 5,400 more jobs compared to just one year ago; off-reserve Aboriginal employment up 5.5 per cent, 2,900 jobs compared to March 2020 for four consecutive months of year-over-year increases.

Mr. Speaker, this party and this government has a job, the party that put the plan before the public, the government that's implementing that plan since that election result, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue on that path and it's going to continue to lead Canada.

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

Ms. Ritchie: — Mr. Speaker, we hear from the member opposite cherry-picking of facts. This government's plan is not working. Our emissions continue to rise. We're losing jobs and we're losing people. Saskatchewan people are out of work and this government continues to close doors on opportunities for jobs in new industries for ideological reasons. We've lost 23,000 jobs over the course of this pandemic, with the worst jobs record in Canada. Instead this Premier killed the solar industry and has blown opportunities to lead in geothermal and biofuels.

When will this government build a better plan to action, one that

takes climate change seriously and creates good, sustainable jobs?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I could tell you what would be terrible for jobs in the province and that would be a New Democratic government. I have a challenge to put to the members opposite and a query, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I, in this House, presented the resolution that's coming forward to the NDP [New Democratic Party] convention from the Regina New Democrats and from the Saskatoon University NDP, of which those members opposite are members and are delegates and are going to have the opportunity to vote.

Mr. Speaker, that convention says, as I quote, "... oppose all carbon-intensive energy projects, including the Coastal GasLink pipeline." We know those members don't support pipelines. We know those members don't support the energy sector. Are they even going further now, Mr. Speaker, and saying that they would oppose existing industries like Evraz steel and like the Co-op upgrader? How are they going to vote? They have a chance to say right now that they are going to oppose this resolution from their own members that's wrong for Saskatchewan.

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

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we've heard from the member opposite is a load of nonsense. Yes. A government's job is to protect people and create jobs. But this government's budget doesn't get the job done.

We need to get people to work with SaskPower to pursue options in things like wind and solar, geothermal, battery storage, and other technologies. We need to develop a program to allow homeowners, renters, and businesses to invest in renewable power and energy-efficiency retrofits. We need to foster innovation at our colleges and universities to find creative solutions that reduce emissions and create good jobs. Green jobs protect our environment and build our economy. Why won't this government implement a real jobs plan with a green job strategy?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — No response, Mr. Speaker. They had the opportunity to stand up and say that these resolutions at their convention of their party of which they are members and of which they are voting delegates ... How are they going to vote on this, Mr. Speaker? They refuse to say. I think, Mr. Speaker, that tells us everything we need to know about where they stand on shutting down carbon-intensive projects. We know they oppose pipelines. We know they oppose the energy sector.

Mr. Speaker, I'll give that member another opportunity. Here's a great opportunity going forward, something that we are very supportive of: the nuclear industry, Mr. Speaker. We see a huge opportunity for small modular reactors here in Saskatchewan with uranium mined right here in Saskatchewan and even hopefully, Mr. Speaker, processed right here in Saskatchewan. What does that member have to say about that?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Support for Safe Consumption Sites

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party budget doesn't get the job done for Saskatchewan people. It doesn't support the most vulnerable people in our province. This government has decided it doesn't want to invest in harm reduction to save lives. For the second year in a row, the Sask Party has refused to fund Prairie Harm Reduction in Saskatoon.

Their own documents show that funding this program would save lives, reduce crime, and save money. Why do the minister and his government refuse to fund the safe consumption site in Saskatoon?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an area of government that we take very seriously with respect to the supports that we are providing for the people across Saskatchewan. There is a record \$458 million into mental health and addictions being invested in this budget year, Mr. Speaker, into a number of areas, including into harm reduction where this year, Mr. Speaker, we are investing \$2.6 million into harm reduction, an increase of \$1.4 million since 2020-2021 and over six times the amount from before.

And, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the question and Prairie Harm Reduction, the Government of Saskatchewan does fund Prairie Harm Reduction through the ministries of Health and Social Services, a combined amount annually of \$900,000. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, people are dying; 336 people died from overdoses last year. The most ever. And more than 100 have already lost their lives this year. It doesn't have to be this way. Things could be different if this government would make different choices. The Sask Party could have chosen to invest in services that save lives, but they chose not to. How many more people need to die before this government will act and invest in harm reduction to keep more people from dying of overdoses? Families losing loved ones want to know.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I extend my condolences to all the families and loved ones of those who have lost family members as a result of overdose, as a result of addiction, as a result of mental health challenges. And that is something that affects each and every one of us in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, and across this province I think. And we all take this issue very, very seriously.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we are trying to provide as much funding and expand supports as much as we can across this province. Prairie Harm Reduction is one of five HIV/AIDS [human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome] CBOs [community-based organization] that receives funding

directly from Health. We fund a number of other organizations as well, Mr. Speaker. There's a number of groups and organizations that do very valuable work in this province.

[14:15]

Another one of those as an example, Mr. Speaker, is the Saskatoon Tribal Council, which receives \$150,000 annually. It's part of a multi-year agreement with the Government of Saskatchewan. And the Saskatoon Tribal Council does very, very good work through their harm reduction program, as well throughout the core area of Saskatoon. It's just another example of another area where the Government of Saskatchewan is investing in mental health and addictions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Resumption of In-Classroom Education

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, the failures and the excuses keep piling up over there, and it's costing people their lives and their livelihoods. This government failed to plan for a safe return to classrooms last fall, and as the years go on they're missing in action again, putting the burden of making tough decisions onto school divisions across this province.

As variant cases spread through younger and younger people in Regina and Moose Jaw, schools had no choice but to send staff and students home early. Now variant numbers in Moose Jaw remain high and students are set to go back to school on Monday. Parents, teachers, and staff have questions and concerns. What is this minister's plan to make sure testing and other supports are in place when students and staff head back to school next week in Moose Jaw?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank the member for the question, Mr. Speaker. So many things that need to be corrected in the premise of the member's question, but I would just say this: for the most part, by and large, our schools have been a very safe environment for teachers and staff and students for the entire school year, Mr. Speaker.

We do have a number of areas in the province at various times throughout the last year where school divisions, working with their local public health officers, have made the decision to move schools to a different level. But, Mr. Speaker, as the member indicated, Moose Jaw school divisions have decided, in concert with their local public health officer, that it is safe to return to school at level 2 on Monday, Mr. Speaker.

In fact when schools return after the Easter break on Monday, 80 per cent of schools will be at level 2, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, I think that what this shows is that we've given the ability and we've given the resources for local school divisions to make the most appropriate decisions at the most appropriate level — the local level.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina

Lakeview.

Ms. Beck: — Again as I was saying, Mr. Speaker, leaving the heavy lifting to school boards. I'd like to read a letter, Mr. Speaker. In a letter dated March 24th, the Prairie South School Division told parents, and I quote:

You may have read in the news that the Government of Saskatchewan has provided COVID rapid testing kits for every school division in Saskatchewan. Prairie South has received these kits, however at this time will not be deploying them.

This is really no surprise, Mr. Speaker, given that the tender for conducting rapid testing posted by this government doesn't even close until April 30th of this year. What is the Minister of Education going to do to ensure that teachers, staff, and students in Moose Jaw are safe when classrooms reopen in just a few days?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, I know that there have been some groups in the province that have, in the past, have called for the province to step in and make a province-wide decision. But the member opposite to my knowledge has been pretty silent on that. On one hand she speaks of the need for local autonomy and local decision makers to make decisions, but it appears she's now asking the province to step in and ask the province to make a decision when it comes to which schools will be open and which schools would not be, Mr. Speaker. So I would ask the member to be clear in terms of what she's actually demanding of the government, Mr. Speaker.

I think school divisions and their local public health officers can or cannot, at their discretion, use the resources that have been made available by the provincial government, whether that be the over \$155 million that have gone into any number of areas, including sanitation, additional staff, Mr. Speaker, or the testing kits that have been sent out by the Ministry of Health, Mr. Speaker. So we'll continue to work with our local school divisions and assist them in making the best decisions for students at a local level.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Wascana Plains.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm sure that my colleagues are thrilled that I'm back up, but I can

assure you I will not be speaking for very long. I need to start off . . . again even though I've covered off some of these in my speech yesterday, but in order to give context to my further comments.

Last spring our government announced our intention to appoint our own Chief Firearms Officer, something that had previously been done by the federal government. This was to allow Saskatchewan citizens a much greater voice in how firearms legislation is administered in our province. Our government is following through with a \$2.175 million investment into our new Chief Firearms Officer program. In the last few years, firearms rules and regulations have become increasingly more important to Saskatchewan citizens, especially responsible firearms owners.

The federal government has announced several bills, most of which are aimed at penalizing law-abiding firearm owners like Fred, for the purpose — sorry — of addressing rising crime rates. The federal government's approach to this issue will not result in significant changes to violent crime in our province. The investment of 2.175 million is to open staff offices for the provincially appointed Chief Firearms Officer.

Our provincial CFO [Chief Firearms Officer] will build strong relationships with the firearms community, interpret firearms legislation with a Saskatchewan context, and be a strong voice for Saskatchewan people on the national stage. The CFO will also provide greater administrative control regarding licensing, transporting, carrying, and transferring of firearms while still following the federal *Firearms Act*. With this budget, we intend to create an office that both respects law-abiding firearms owners and ensures laws surrounding firearms are enforced fairly and equitably.

This year we are making a \$92.4 million investment into the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency, an increase of more than \$7.1 million or 8.4 per cent increase. There are many programs within the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency that help maintain public safety in our province, especially in this past year while dealing with COVID-19. The SPSA [Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency] is prepared and is ready and willing for any natural disaster that should occur in our province and will also assist with other unplanned emergencies. We are confident in their ability to do what they say they can do.

One of the most notable investments our government is making into SPSA is a \$4.175 million capital investment in the air operations program. This includes a \$3.59 million brand new Turbo Commander bird dog aircraft and \$1.345 million in avionics upgrades. These investments are a part of our government strategy to modernize the province's aerial wildfire suppression fleet.

Mr. Speaker, I am so very proud of the work we have done and the investments we are making into our province as a whole, but also into corrections, policing, and public safety in Saskatchewan. This budget will greatly benefit Saskatchewan people by providing an investment into crucial areas of corrections, policing, and public safety. This year's budget reflects the times we are living in by protecting Saskatchewan residents, but also looks towards growth in the future. It provides the hope that is very much needed in our province and in our

country.

I am very proud to support this budget because it is the right budget for Saskatchewan, and I do not support the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A strong recovery, Mr. Speaker — that's what was promised the people of Saskatchewan. That's the slogan that was plastered across billboard after billboard during the election campaign. It was repeated in November's Throne Speech and here it is again, recycled as the foundation of this year's budget. It's been uttered in this Assembly more times than I care to count, but saying it doesn't make it so, Mr. Speaker.

And the truth is, this province is not in recovery at all. It's in relapse. It's experiencing a nosedive, in fact, that has put us in the national spotlight, leading the cases in COVID-19 throughout 2021, with the preventable loss of far too many lives. Not to mention it solidified our claim to some of the worst social outcomes in the country from HIV rates, domestic violence, child mortality, foreclosures, you name it, Mr. Speaker.

Under this budget the mental health, poverty, and addiction crises that feed our expensive and dead-end criminal justice and social services systems and strain our front-line health care system will go unaddressed. Even on its own metrics for success, the Sask Party government is failing. People are fleeing this province and tens of thousands have lost their jobs.

So let's take stock. School shutdowns in Regina, Moose Jaw, and across the province because this government failed to keep teachers, staff, families, and children safe. The indispensable front line in Regina's ICU [intensive care unit], they have not been vaccinated. The unit dealing with patients brought in suspected of having COVID, they have not been vaccinated. Folks without transportation, folks with disabilities, they have not been factored into this . . . It is true. The Minister of Health is saying it's not true. Porters, unit clerks, they have not been vaccinated in the Regina ICU, and I stand by that statement. And I wrote you a letter about it and you didn't respond.

Front-line workers having to go to work at the mercy of an aggressive variant and still don't have access to paid sick days. Some are making the lowest minimum wage in the country to boot, Mr. Speaker. Many of those same workers are single moms without access to child care, one small step that would jump-start our stagnating economy, not to mention close the dismal pay gap and address the unacceptably high child poverty rate in this province. No one should live in poverty, Mr. Speaker, but to have so many working parents raising their kids in poverty in a wealthy society like ours is a disgrace.

Twenty-three thousand workers have been laid off and there is no plan to get them back to work, no commitment to use Saskatchewan workers to build Saskatchewan projects. Many small businesses have been shuttered while others are on the cusp. They have just completed a stunning balancing act, Mr. Speaker, after being told to stay open while people have been told to stay home. Now I see this new budget has zero additional

dollars committed to the emergency small-business payment program, Mr. Speaker.

This government just finished promising not to raise taxes. It is now increasing a highly regressive property tax that will hit fixed-income seniors and struggling families hardest, people that have already seen the cost of living climb without mercy. And now we're seeing cuts to education, Mr. Speaker, and election promises to fix our long-term care system broken. Those chronic issues have not only been put on the record time and time again, we saw them play out in terrifying real time.

So I stand before you today pretty angry because I rose to give my first speech in this Assembly not three months ago, and I joined my colleagues on this side of the House calling for action. As this government flirted with disaster, we stood here and we begged you to intervene. But this government ignored the calls of experts, it ignored the calls of front-line workers, and it ignored the calls of this opposition. And it stuck to its script and kept preaching that stale gospel of strength. And apparently it will continue to do so, come what may.

It's really impressive, guys, the commitment to the message. But what I'm wondering is, when will you raise your voice? When will the members of Moose Jaw . . . Moose Jaw North, Moose Jaw Wakamow, why did you not speak up when your government did not intervene to protect your community while it could have? Members from Regina Coronation Park, Regina Pasqua, Regina Northeast, Gardiner Park, Regina Rochdale, Wascana Plains, the member from Walsh Acres, who had so much to say about my tweets the other day but says nothing about his own community.

[14:30]

The situation here is grim, and your government is ignoring the calls of experts. Speak up because whether it's the COVID-19 pandemic or the overdose pandemic, the member for Rosemont could not have been more right when he said this government is failing in its most basic and sacred duty, and that is to protect the well-being and lives of its people.

And there is nothing in this budget that will break from a status quo that frankly is choking us, a status quo that wasn't working before this pandemic, let alone in the middle of one. The Sask Party is growing the debt but it's not spending smart. The current approach guarantees ever-bloating deficits like the ones we've seen from this government over and over with no fundamental improvement to the overall picture. They're not positioning Saskatchewan for the future economy. They're not tackling the looming challenges we face as a community: climate emergency, growing inequality, an aging population, an addictions crisis.

One in four children still live in poverty. They're mainly between the ages of zero and six, Mr. Speaker, so we've already condemned children to a second-class life in this province by their fifth birthday. How will that build a strong recovery? Those children will cost us so much as they struggle to thrive in the classroom, struggle to stay out of trouble, struggle to maintain their health, struggle to join the workforce.

Missing from this budget is anything for the 96,000 workers making minimum wage, or the thousands more making a few

bucks more. Those workers have demonstrated their worth. We know now just how crucial they are to the functioning of our communities, and we have rewarded them with paltry wages despite evidence that increasing them would improve their lives and stimulate our economy. How are we going to build a strong economy if a job is no guarantee that poverty is not knocking at your door?

Missing from this budget are real supports for women who have felt the brunt of this recession worst of all. Women in Saskatchewan making minimum wage do not qualify for the child care subsidy if they have one or even two children. Let's do some math, Mr. Speaker. Minimum wage, that's less than 2,000 a month. I pay 650 a month for regulated child care — one child. If I have two children, that's between 30 and 65 per cent of my take-home income. A two-bedroom in Regina is worth 11,000. That's all of your money right there. No money for food. No money for clothing. No money for utilities. No money to, God forbid, get off that economic treadmill for a minute and enjoy your life.

How are we to build a strong economy when every month, every year, we seem to set a new record of deaths by overdose and the Premier ignores the evidence showing that safe consumption sites save lives? This epidemic has cut through our communities like a scythe, and we refuse to recognize the demonstrated track record of an organization like Prairie Harm for their efforts on the front line, trying to stem the tide of suffering.

How are we going to build a strong economy when those who are tasked with serving and protecting our communities break their oath with impunity, treat victims like criminals just because they're Indigenous? Can you imagine losing your son, being treated like a drunk, a liar, being reduced to ugly stereotypes in the moment you're asking for help? That just wouldn't happen to me, Mr. Speaker. There would be hell to pay. Your ministers would be tripping over each other trying to take action. Why not for Debbie Baptiste? Why not? This government won't acknowledge this kind of ugly, entrenched racism that is alive in our province, in some people, and in our institutions. Well how nice for you because there are so many who don't have that choice, and live it every day.

This year will mark the largest Ministry of Social Services budget on record. No doubt this will be touted as a big success. But so was last year's, Mr. Speaker. And last year this ministry also set the grim record of the highest number of deaths in the child welfare system in recent history. Our state-sanctioned facilities are making headlines for children like Elijah, found naked and scared and confused in a public parking lot. A child . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Wow. Really? A child found to be malnourished at the state-sanctioned houses that this ministry pays for. And that same for-profit company from Ontario is still operating two houses in Saskatoon. There is money in this budget for that company. Their neglect was rewarded, Mr. Speaker.

And while the government lauds the new income assistance program for its move to greater choice and responsibility, choice connotes freedom, Mr. Speaker. And as the member from Regina University pointed out, a free and democratic Saskatchewan needs freedom from fear and freedom from want. And our most vulnerable have neither.

How are we going to build a strong recovery when emergency shelters see an overflow every single night like the Lighthouse in The Battlefords, a facility I toured not two months back, are at risk of shutting their doors? Where will these people go? If they're lucky, they'll end up in the emergency room at greater cost to the public. In addition to being cruel, it's just plain irresponsible.

This government has tabled legislation that will actually make it easier to evict people during a pandemic. You'll find it in their bill where they're claiming to help sexual assault survivors. Wow. This government is not only actively making it more likely that people will be homeless, they are aggravating the problems of today instead of solving them.

How do we recover when this government is the only jurisdiction I'm aware of actively undermining the transition to a green economy? The world is changing, and this government is not just dragging its feet. It's actually making it easier to pollute and harder to take action on the climate. GM [General Motors] says it won't produce gas-fuelled vehicles by 2035, Mr. Speaker. Our largest trading partner is ending subsidies to oil and gas, and has just announced \$174 billion to advance the transition to EVs [electric vehicle].

Why not make Saskatchewan a welcome home for blossoming green industries instead of throwing every possible barrier up like a petulant child? This government is so blinded by its right wing ideology, it fails to see the climate emergency is a powerful opportunity to reduce emissions, spur innovation, and guarantee good, sustainable jobs in the future.

We cannot recover if our ICUs are at capacity, if people are dying, if front-facing health care workers aren't even vaccinated. Meanwhile, I'm not sure if you've noticed, but these same health care workers are speaking up in greater numbers, whether with open letters or through Twitter. Just imagine being them, Mr. Speaker, calling repeatedly, patiently, consistently for stricter, smarter measures and then being the ones to bear the worst brunt of this government's refusal to act.

This government continues to propagate misinformation that intelligent restrictions, or circuit breakers, would hurt the economy more than its inaction. And the world has borne out that falsehood. The false dichotomies this government loves so much — lives or livelihoods, the economy or the environment — they're not just falsehoods designed to keep us chasing our tail; they are actually dangerous. Because it's not either-or; it has to be both.

So here we are more than one year into this pandemic, and it's hard not to think about what could have been, Mr. Speaker, if this government hadn't squandered the boon by shamelessly picking winners and losers, using the treasury board as a personal payroll, rewarding friends and donors without apology. Even before COVID, this government managed to triple the debt and impose cuts to health care, to education, to our most vulnerable. It's the worst of both worlds, Mr. Speaker.

So how is this a strong recovery? Because that is what was promised to the people of Saskatchewan. A balanced budget — another broken promise in this budget. No tax increases, said the Minister of Finance, who in the same breath called the NDP

stimulus plan a reckless spending initiative. Well that promise has been broken as well. It's plain hypocrisy. This government has not kept its promises.

And yes, the NDP [New Democratic Party] does support deficit spending during a pandemic. Spending makes sense when it involves key investments that will have long-term effects on our communities; when it's about thinking ahead about how to build a robust and sustainable economy, and when it will support us for generations to come; and when it will furnish people with the tools that they need to embrace the autonomy they desire and that they need.

The other difference is not just how you spend it, but where you get your money, Mr. Speaker. The NDP campaigned on a platform that would impose a wealth tax on the richest; a platform that would see more money coming in to the public coffers by increasing wages; child care, so they can join the workforce; bringing back industries like the film industry that this backwards crew chased out of the province out of spite. By investing in diversification, young people, the arts, the innovative green technologies of the future so that we can all prosper meaningfully, sustainably, not just for this generation, but for the next.

The other difference, Mr. Speaker, because I'm hearing a lot of heckling from the other side, the Minister for Education in particular. The other difference is we campaigned on this. We looked people in the eyes and we told them that this is what we were going to do. We told the truth, and we will continue to tell the truth about this government's failures. This budget will not meaningfully stimulate the economy. It will pour more resources into the wrong end of the system. It will keep rearranging decks on a sinking ship. And this government will point to it as a strength. But, Mr. Speaker, there is no weakness in false strength. And for that reason, I will be supporting the amendment put forward by the member from Regina Rosemont.

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

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I was trying to figure out how to address you, since this has been one of the first times I've done that, but welcome to the Chair.

And if I get an opportunity, I also wanted to congratulate Mr. Speaker and Madam Deputy Speaker for their elections. I think that they're going to do an absolutely marvellous job, and I want to make sure that that's on the record.

But again, I'm pleased to join my government colleagues and speak in response to this year's budget. I'd also like to thank the Clerks and the Clerks' Table. I had the opportunity to work with them for more than two years, and it's amazing the efforts and just the knowledge base that they have, and just how much support they were, not only to me, but to this whole Assembly. And we should remember to thank them every chance we get. So thank you.

I'd also like to thank the Sergeant-at-Arms. I see that he's made it in. And sir, I'd like to thank you and your staff for everything that you've done. It was a pleasure to work with you, and thanks for all your service. Thank you.

Also the Legislative Assembly staff completely, you go unrecognized and under-appreciated, and you've done an absolute marvellous job not only for all of us in this building but for everyone in this province. And we owe you all a debt of gratitude, so thank you again, all of you. And any chance we get as colleagues to stop and thank them, please do that. They do a marvellous job.

But before I begin my discussion of the budget, I'd be remiss if I didn't express my deep gratitude to the people who made it possible for me to continue representing the constituents of Regina Coronation Park. I didn't have the opportunity to thank these folks during the fall sitting of the Assembly, so I hope my colleagues will forgive me if I seize the opportunity to do so now.

My first thank you, as always, is to my partner, Lisa, my campaign manager for the last two elections. So you know how awesome and formidable she is. We marked our ninth anniversary last month, and I can't imagine what the last decade would have been like without her in my corner. So thanks. So thank you, Lisa.

[14:45]

Next, I want to thank my mom, Margaret. I literally would not have been here today without you. That's the truth. Thank you for all your support over the years. And I'm looking forward to when we can get together in person again.

To Kristy Shaw, my extraordinary constituency assistant who has the daunting task of keeping me on track, on schedule, and in line. You're a rock. To do what you do while going to school, raising a young family is truly incredible. I'm proud to be part of your journey and grateful that you're a part of mine.

To the core team of volunteers who walked many kilometres, knocked on more doors, and made more phone calls than I thought humanly possible, thank you. Thank you also to our wonderful behind-the-scenes crew who kept our office running. I'm sure I'll miss someone, but I want to specifically thank Jeremy Eng, Michelle Chyz, Luke Rilling, Amy Spelliscy, Nulee Menegbo, Nidhi Verma, Samuel Ojukwu, Sarah Abbas, James Hoeft, Kevin Pierce, Lisa Mann, Allie Mann, Terina, Rhonda Parisian, Bob VanCise, Jamie Eng, Abdi Guri, Mustafa, Sandeep, Hassan, Giry, and Roberto, Elmer Eashappie, Nenita and Sammy Anonas, Keith Pratt, Kevin Schiller, Dan Rasovich, Tom Gardner, Nelson and Shirley Eng, Ercoph Bongomin, Candace Hourie, Bonnie Malakoff, June Draude, and many of my colleagues on this side of the Assembly who came to the city, who helped throughout the campaign, and that includes the ministers of Health, Education, Environment, Government Relations, Agriculture, SaskBuilds, Social Services, and the member for Melfort.

I also want to thank a dear friend who has sadly been taken from us too young, Brenda Barootes. Brenda was the epitome of fierce determination coupled with kindness and deep empathy, a rare combination anywhere, let alone in politics. She made every room she entered better because she made everyone in the room want to be their best selves. I will be forever grateful for her support, her wisdom, and her wicked sense of humour. Thank you, my friend.

Mr. Deputy Chair, it is all thanks to these folks that I'm able to stand here today to discuss this year's budget, a budget that's been crafted to protect, build, and grow this province. This budget will protect our province's people through the pandemic by funding the fight against COVID-19 while also providing record investments in health care, education, social services and assistance.

Mr. Deputy Chair, here in Regina this includes 447 million for the University of Regina and affiliated colleges; 164 million for Saskatchewan Polytechnic, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, and Dumont Technical Institute; more than \$240 million in total operating funding for Regina Public School Division; and more than \$114 million in total operating funding for the Regina Catholic School Division.

I think some of the sector's key stakeholders said it best when describing these investments. "It's a good news budget for education," Saskatchewan teachers' association, Patrick Maze, president, said when interviewed by CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation]. "It helps with inflation and helps with enrolment increases. We're looking at it as a positive."

"The University of Regina applauds the Government of Saskatchewan for having recognized the need to work toward a sustainable future by providing this incremental funding," said Dr. Thomas Chase, interim president and vice-chancellor for the University of Regina in a university news release.

This budget builds for our future by making infrastructure investments that create jobs, help our economy, provide needed infrastructure in communities across the province. This budget includes \$3.1 billion in capital spending across government and the Crowns. Here in Regina this includes \$5.7 million in funding for a new urgent-care centre here along with one in Saskatoon. Half a million in planning dollars for the placement of long-term care beds in the city. Critical preventative maintenance and renewal funding for school divisions including more than \$5.4 million for Regina Public, more than 2.4 million for Regina Catholic, and more than 2.4 million for Prairie Valley School Division.

This budget also provides more than 101 million to support 21 ongoing capital projects to build 16 new schools and renovate five existing schools. Here in Regina that includes beginning construction on a new joint-use facility with two elementary schools in Regina to replace Argyle and St. Pius elementary schools; completing design and beginning construction as early as next spring on a new francophone elementary school; a new joint-use elementary project in Harbour Landing; and a project very near and dear to my heart, a joint-use facility with two elementary schools to replace St. Peter, St. Michael, Imperial, and McDermid elementary schools in Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Chair Speaker, I can personally attest to the significance of this project. We all know that a replacement school breathes new life into a community, and I know that will be true in Coronation Park. Families, neighbourhood, and community associations are excited about the opportunity this school project will offer — a new state-of-the-art learning environment for the community's children and a gathering place for families and community. I also know that everyone is looking forward to the day when we can remove a school zone from the

busy Broad Street North, improving student safety and easing traffic pressures on one of our city's busier streets. I had the opportunity to join the community this past fall to celebrate the addition of McDermid School to this project, and I can't wait to celebrate future milestones on this exciting school-replacement project.

But there's no need for the members opposite to take my word for how important these infrastructure investments are. Let's listen instead to what some of our province's industry leaders have to say about our government's commitment to infrastructure. The Saskatchewan Construction Association tweeted that, "In a year where the pandemic shook the economy like no other since World War II, the Government of Saskatchewan's budget announcement provides the necessary flexibility to flow funds where they're most needed." The Saskatchewan Heavy Construction Association's president, Shantel Lipp, agrees, saying in a news release that, "In a time when our provincial economy is sluggish, our industry is thankful for the provincial government's continuation of spending in our sector."

This budget will also grow Saskatchewan through important incentives and investments, and by keeping life affordable for families. I'm proud to be a part of a government that has already tripled the seniors' income plan, and we will quadruple it by 2024. This budget alone increases it to a maximum of \$360 per month.

We've removed, as we've done in the past here, in the past number of years, we've removed 112,000 low-income people from the provincial tax rolls. We've ensured our personal and corporate income tax rates are among the lowest in the country. We increased the personal, spousal, and child exemption amounts twice in the past decade. We implemented a one-time average rebate of \$285 for Saskatchewan drivers, introduced a 10-per-cent rebate on SaskPower electricity charges, ensured Saskatchewan customers will pay the lowest rates in the country on the utility bundles in 2021 thanks to those rebates, our largest Crown utility rebate ever.

We introduced the home renovation tax credit to save homeowners up to \$2,100 on home renovations that'll add value to their homes and provide work for local, skilled tradespeople. We created and enhanced the low-income tax credit by \$100 per adult and \$40 a child. We implemented one of the highest tax-free thresholds in Canada by ensuring that a family of four in Saskatchewan will pay no income tax on the first \$52,250 of income this year. We restarted the community rinks affordability grant, a \$2,500 grant that I was proud to be a part of presenting to the Highland Curling Club here in Regina.

Here's how one of Regina's strongest voices for economic recovery and growth has responded to the incentives and measures in this budget. The Regina & District Chamber of Commerce responded to the budget by indicating that the budget really reflected the government's election commitments, like the home renovation tax credit, the SaskPower reduction, and the active families incentive. In addition, the budget reflects the environment that Saskatchewan people and businesses are facing, the continuation of COVID-19. That's the Regina & District Chamber of Commerce.

This budget also includes record investments in mental health and addictions. It should come as no surprise to my colleagues that this is an area of particular interest to me given my work in this sector. I'm proud that this year's budget includes \$2 million to establish up to three locations for youth-focused initiatives to integrate mental health and addictions, physical health, and community and social services with an emphasis on community partnerships and youth and family engagement.

A million dollars to implement actions outlined in the Pillars for Life, the Saskatchewan suicide prevention plan. \$750,000 to establish and equip three innovative buses to provide mobile harm reduction services in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert. \$440,000 to improve access to harm reduction supplies and expand the take-home naloxone program and make naloxone kits available in more pharmacies and co-locate kits with AED [automated external defibrillator] machines in more locations around the province. And half a million dollars for mental health and addictions public awareness campaigns that are crucial to encouraging open conversations and reducing the stigma.

I sort of lost where I was at, Mr. Deputy Chair. Oh, I've got a little more. This budget — I've got a little more — this budget also includes investments that focus on working to make Saskatchewan the best place in Canada to live for people with disabilities, including a \$19 million increase for the Saskatchewan assured income for disability program and more than \$9 million to address current and anticipated needs of people with intellectual disabilities. Mr. Deputy Chair, those investments build on the Saskatchewan disability strategy which I had the incredible honour of being the Legislative Secretary for, and Co-Chair in the assistant consultation team that developed the strategy.

As many members know, I've spent much of my career working with and supporting at-risk children, youth, and families. And I am proud that this year's budget includes key investments to ensure the protection and well-being of vulnerable children, youth, and families. An increase of \$8.2 million for new residential care spaces to support children and youth with developmental and complex behavioural needs; \$1.6 million increase to implement parent resources for information, development, and education, or as it's known, PRIDE [parent resources for information, development, and education], a specialized training program that supports foster families to care for children with intensive needs; \$3 million increase to support more extended family caregivers in the crucial work they do to help children in their care stay connected to the culture and community; and a \$1.4 million increase for services that are aimed at parenting children from coming into care, such as in-home family supports.

Mr. Deputy Chair, I'd be remiss if I didn't talk about this province's growing diversity. Our immigration streams have led to our population growing but also led to our diversity. I've met and got to know so many newcomers that have come from all over the world. They want what every parent wants — to have a better life. But most important, a better life and future for their kids. And you know what? You know what resonates, Mr. Deputy Chair? They're grateful, grateful to be here and wanting to contribute to Saskatchewan. They make us better. Thank you for choosing Saskatchewan.

[15:00]

Mr. Deputy Chair, this budget also charts a course for a post-pandemic future that we can also build by getting vaccinated. I'm proud to say that I'm doing my part to stick it to COVID, thanks to the drive-through clinic at Evraz here in Regina.

As someone with a parent in long-term care, and myself with an underlying . . . well not so underlying all the time, but an underlying health condition of my own, I want to thank all the front-line health care workers who are the backbone of our pandemic response. You're going above and beyond in fighting this pandemic, and now it's our turn to step up and stick it to COVID by getting vaccinated when we can to protect ourselves, to protect our families, to protect our neighbours, and to protect the perfect strangers we might never actually meet but whose lives we can save by signing up, showing up, and getting our shot when it's our turn.

Also, as I end my comments — well I've got a minute; I'm going to say it anyways — in the last couple of days we've got three birthdays. I'd like to wish a happy birthday to Elder Larry Oakes. I'd like to wish a happy birthday to Chief Cadmus Delorme, and I'd like to wish a happy birthday to Chief Mark Fox. Thank you for all you do, especially around File Hills Qu'Appelle and in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Chair Speaker, I'll not be supporting the amendment. I'll be supporting the budget as tabled by the Finance minister and seconded by the member from North Battleford. Thank you.

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

Mr. Grewal: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I'm very happy for you to see you sitting in that Chair, sir. I feel honoured and privileged to rise in this Chamber again today. Again I would like to thank all my constituents of Regina Northeast who gave me this wonderful opportunity. They are constantly in touch with me by phone and via email. Some phone calls are very intense and some are pretty long ones with a great conversation.

Mr. Deputy Chair, I would like to thank my wife, Seema, and my children Simran, Indu, and TJ for their contribution to help me reach where I am standing today. I am thankful to my constituency assistant, Cheryl Spencer, for being so patient and caring with each and every person living in Regina Northeast and for always working so hard to assist everyone who needs our help. I would also like to extend a thank you to the caucus office for their guidance and support, and to the Legislative Assembly Services for making sure things are run in a very efficient manner. And lastly, as a new member, it's great to have your fellow MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] be so friendly and helpful and to have a leader who is so approachable as our Premier.

Mr. Deputy Chair, it is my pleasure today to provide a reply to the budget speech that was given by our Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance on April the 6th. I want to commend her on this budget that makes record investments in health care, education, social services, and the protection of people and

property. It is a budget that gives people in our province the tools that they will need to start recovering from this pandemic that we are still fighting.

Mr. Deputy Chair, before the election, I spent months . . . I should say three years door knocking and speaking with the residents of Regina Northeast. The concern that I heard repeatedly from both homeowners and local businesses were worries about the debt coming out of this pandemic. I am so proud of our government's commitment to use calculated measures to work towards returning to a balanced budget by the '26-27 fiscal year. We are providing the help our constituents need now while maintaining regard for our province's economic recovery.

Under the wise guidance of Dr. Shahab and with the swift actions taken by the Minister of Health, we were able to provide great support and guidance to our residents to help during this pandemic. Mr. Deputy Chair, in this budget we are providing 1.5 billion in COVID-19 response, building on a 2 billion previous investment last year, and another 1.3 billion over the next two years. That is a total of 4.8 billion that our government has dedicated to help protect our constituents' lives and livelihoods.

Our government's comprehensive COVID response included mass vaccination rollout, the purchase of more PPE [personal protective equipment], supporting contact tracing measures, expansion of testing and assessment sites, additional provincial laboratory capacity, supports for long-term care, and coverage of added physician cost. This is a strong recovery plan.

Mr. Deputy Chair, several economic COVID-19 supports have also been included in this budget, including 488 million in capital spending, 174 million SaskPower rebate, 285 million for SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] rebate, and 200 million to clean up inactive oil wells. Mr. Deputy Chair, thanks to the strength of leadership shown by our Premier, our economy was not shut down completely by this pandemic.

Mr. Deputy Chair, I will not be telling the stories here, but the facts, facts with the numbers. Mr. Speaker, this budget also provides the Saskatchewan Health Authority with a 3.96 billion grant this year, up nearly 6 per cent compared to last year. Mr. Deputy Chair, as we have learned from this current pandemic, domestic vaccine production is vital to protecting Canadians through future pandemics. More than 4 million in operating funding is being invested for growing the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization. An additional 4.2 million for vaccine development and construction of a new vaccine manufacturing facility has been allocated. This will make Saskatchewan a leader in the nation for research, development, and production of new vaccines.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Regina Northeast has a very diverse population. There are many people who live in my constituency who will benefit from this budget through the incentives and investments announced to create jobs, save them and their businesses money. And that will strengthen our pace of recovery and growth.

While on Facebook one day, I found community groups in my riding of Regina Northeast, so I joined them. From these groups

I was able to learn about the concerns of my constituents, such as street lights were out, park maintenance that needed to be done, etc., just to name a few.

So firstly we contacted SaskPower and were able to get several street lights fixed. Next by working with the city councillor, we were able to bring concerns such as adding benches, play equipment, pedestrian crossings, etc., to the attention of the city council. One pending issue remains to be addressed in Uplands. That is the paving of a small section of grid road called . . . [inaudible] . . . that is regularly used as the east service road to Highway No. 6, which provides a shortcut to many amenities in the Regina northwest corner for the people living in the Uplands area.

Specifically, Mr. Deputy Chair, we have seniors who live both independently and in care homes. This budget supports low-income seniors with the maximum benefit under the seniors' income plan increasing by \$30 a month, effective July 1st, 2021. Mr. Deputy Chair, the 6.2 billion Ministry of Health budget, the largest health investment in Saskatchewan's history, goes a long way to support our seniors. With the government's commitment of 500,000 for the replacement of long-term care beds in Regina and 6 million to hire an additional 100 continuing care aids to work both inside long-term care homes and in people's private homes under the home care system, clients will receive assistance with personal care, meals, and medication.

Mr. Deputy Chair, the election promise to reduce ambulance fees will provide an additional savings of \$135 per trip for our seniors, while the 6.6 million increase for emergency medical services will provide for more ambulances in Regina and Saskatoon and address delays when transferring patients, along with other improvements.

Mr. Deputy Chair, the additional 7.6 million for the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency will bring its annual grant to the highest amount ever provided at 204 million, allowing them to help even more residents in their battle against cancer, which continues to be the leading cause of death in our country.

Mr. Deputy Chair, STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Service] air ambulance will also be receiving 1.4 million for a helicopter. In total, the Saskatchewan government has contributed 11.88 million to STARS in funding since December of 2018. STARS has been working to replace its aging fleet of BK117 and AW139 helicopters with nine new medically equipped H145 Airbus helicopters.

Mr. Deputy Chair, we have many families, some just starting out and some who have several generations living in one home. By restarting the active families benefit, which offers \$150 per year per child or 200 per year for children with disabilities, for families with less than 60,000 in annual income, kids can get back into the recreational activities which keep them healthy and happy. Mr. Deputy Chair, a family of four will also save by paying no provincial income tax on their first \$52,250 of combined income.

Mr. Speaker, families will also benefit from the advancement in learning facilitated by the 11.6 per cent increase in education spending. This includes the largest ever budget for school divisions, who will receive 1.96 billion in operating funding for

the '21-22 school year. It will also fully fund the 2 per cent salary increase in the teachers' collective bargaining agreement. Mr. Deputy Chair, in response to this the president of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, Patrick Maze, stated the following: "It's a good news budget for education. It helps with inflation and helps with enrolment increases. We are looking at it as a positive."

He went on further to say:

There are always resource challenges in schools and we always hope for funding increases beyond inflation and enrolment increases. However, these are difficult times for citizens and for government. A budget always requires tough choices to be made and the pandemic has increased financial pressure on the provincial government.

He even said that: "This budget essentially holds the line for education. Given the circumstances, this is a realistic approach."

Mr. Deputy Chair, an investment of 735 million will go into the post-secondary sector, with an additional 60 million to support and grow post-secondary institutions, as well as 3.6 million increase for the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship to help with tuition cost, another campaign promise being met. This was supported by Dr. Peter Stoicheff, University of Saskatchewan president, who stated:

The past year has been challenging for all universities, and we are very grateful for the government's support . . . The University of Saskatchewan and the government of Saskatchewan have proven to be partners to the benefit of our province, that has never been more evident during the past year of the pandemic. Together we were able to advance our teaching, learning and research mission for the benefit of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Chair, the child care funding increase of 2 million to create 176 additional licensed home-based spaces and 51 new licensed centre spaces also goes towards our four-year commitment to provide 750 new licensed child care spaces.

Mr. Deputy Chair, for our most vulnerable constituents, this budget provides a 4.5 per cent increase to social services. This includes a 90 million increase to the Saskatchewan assured income for disability program; increased funding of 6.7 million to community-based organizations with support for people working with those who have intellectual disabilities; and for people supporting at-risk children, youths, and families.

Mr. Deputy Chair, to support children and youth with developmental and complex behavioural needs through private treatment and group homes, this budget also includes an increase of 8.2 million for new residential care spaces. Mr. Speaker, to support more extended family caregivers, a 3 million increase has been included, and to help prevent children from coming into the care of Social Services, there is a 1.4 million increase for in-home family supports.

[15:15]

And to support high-risk expectant mothers with enhanced outreach and coordination of services, Mr. Speaker, an additional

500,000 has been added to Sanctum 1.5. Mr. Deputy Chair, this budget also invests a record 458 million for mental health and addictions programs and services, up to 23.4 million from last year. Targeted mental health and addictions services will receive 7.2 million of these total funds and includes expansion of harm reduction and addictions treatment, as well as youth-focused treatment and suicide prevention. Hospital-based mental health and addictions services, physician visits, and prescription drug costs are being allocated 16.2 million.

Mr. Deputy Chair, there are also many civil servants who make sure that our province operates safely and efficiently. This budget supports more than 17,500 jobs by providing 3.1 billion in capital investment, including 190 million for educational capital projects. This includes 60 new schools in our province and renovations to five more.

There is also an investment of 162 million for health care capital, including 5.7 million for urgent care centres in Regina and Saskatoon. This budget invests more than 324 million in government services infrastructure. Mr. Deputy Chair, the budget includes many incentives for our residents, including 66.4 million for the home renovation tax credit. That provides a 10.5 per cent tax credit on up to 20,000 of eligible home renovations and for business owners, including 64.6 million for the small-business tax rate reduction, as an example.

Mr. Deputy Chair, in a positive response to the many business supports outlined in this budget, Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce CEO, Steve McLellan, stated:

The businesses of this province are very aware of the impact the last year and this one has had on the financial health of Saskatchewan. Moving forward, it is only through continuing to support business growth and building a competitive environment that the Province can return to its pre-pandemic fiscal position.

Mr. Deputy Chair, the budget also delivers a 287,000 to the Public Complaints Commission to develop a serious incident response team for investigating incidents involving police officers in the province. This will help eliminate the current practice of having police investigate police which has been criticized from experts and families of people who have been injured or killed in situations involving Saskatchewan police officers.

Mr. Deputy Chair, immigration and career training supports in Saskatchewan has been allotted 27.3 million, which includes funding for workforce development, the employability assistance for persons with disabilities top-up, the Canada-Saskatchewan Job Grant, and the newcomer and settlement program. Over 143,600 immigrants have arrived in our province since 2007. These newcomers from 181 different countries have settled in roughly 445 communities in all corners of our province.

Mr. Deputy Chair, as part of the 15 million commitment announced last summer to fund Saskatchewan's global leadership in the ag tech sector, this project invests 3 million into an agricultural technology venture capital fund.

Mr. Deputy Chair, the increased funding for international offices by 5 million, bringing the total to 9.3 million, that means the

Ministry of Trade and Export Development can start expanding Saskatchewan's presence overseas by doubling the number of international trade and investment offices, ensuring the growth of our export markets. Four new trade offices will be added this year, complementing Saskatchewan's existing offices in India, Japan, Singapore, and China.

Mr. Deputy Chair, I am proud that our government is providing more than 22.7 million through the Investing in Canada plan. Through this project, we will be providing our communities with reliable, eco-friendly, and sustainable infrastructure. Mr. Deputy Chair, our government is showing their commitment to protect our citizens by allocating more than 800 million in investments that will make our highways safer.

Over half a billion of those funds will go towards safety and efficiency improvements on key highway corridors. We will improve 1 350 kilometres of provincial highways in the second year of our 10-year growth plan with the goal to build and upgrade 10 000 kilometres of highways. Mr. Speaker, this provincial budget supports the return to work for all of these people and provides reinforcements to the kind of work that they do and how they live.

As we all know because of this pandemic and the uncertainty caused by it, nobody can predict with certainty or truly forecast the future of our province in the next few months or years to come. Mr. Speaker, this budget provides relief to this uncertainty by including incentives and investments that will create jobs, conserve Saskatchewan people and businesses' money, and strengthen the pace of recovery and growth in our province.

Mr. Speaker, our government has implemented the largest utility rebate ever through the Crown utilities. Due to this rebate, our constituents are entitled to the lowest utility expenses in all of the nation.

Mr. Speaker, to improve fairness in tax, our government is adding a vapour products tax, VPT, with a rate of 20 per cent on the retail price of all vapour liquids, products, and devices to begin in September 2021. In response to this, Jennifer May, who is the vice-president for health promotion and government relations at The Lung Association of Saskatchewan, has stated, "We know that vaping taxation can help prevent youth initiation and reduce consumption, which of course means it also reduces harm for our health care system." To maintain tax equity between different types of tobacco products, a heat-not-burn tax on tobacco sticks will be added at 20.5 cents per stick coming into effect June the 1st.

Mr. Speaker, there will also be an annual \$150 tax for passenger electric vehicles. There are currently over 400 electric vehicles in the province that will now be contributing to highway maintenance as the rest of our residents currently do through the provincial fuel tax. Though the new tax will only apply to passenger vehicles for now, we will continue to study collecting the tax at charging stations and applying it to the commercial vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan technology start-up incentive, which offers a non-refundable 45 per cent tax credit to Saskatchewan investors, will encourage investment in technology, bring new products to market, and create jobs. This

incentive has already attracted 22 million in investment, benefitting 62 tech companies, and creating 144 new jobs.

Mr. Speaker, thanks to our Premier's balanced approach, the Saskatchewan economy is surviving this pandemic with continuing high levels of employment and growth in housing starts, wholesale trade, and international exports.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say on behalf of all the residents of Regina Northeast that this budget is very important for them and their community. And this particular budget is making sure that their jobs, their businesses, their livelihoods, their continued growth through education, and the recreational things they do that make their life full, will continue.

Mr. Speaker, I have been delivering information on the business supports put in place to help with the impacts from COVID-19. By doing so, we were not only able to bring awareness of the measures in place to aid them, we were even able to assist some of them with the process of applying. This has given me a great opportunity not only to get to know various business owners in my constituency, but to also find out how much this pandemic has affected them directly.

Mr. Speaker, I am so thankful to businessmen in my constituency like Moni Minhas, who is investing millions into our economy during these tough times, and to exporters like AGT Foods, who buy from farmers here in Saskatchewan then process and export their products to over 120 countries around the world — are vital to keeping our economy going.

Mr. Speaker, due to our Premier's great foresight, Saskatchewan's net debt-to-GDP [gross domestic product] is the lowest in Canada, and our credit rating is the second highest in the country. Mr. Speaker, any successful business person in this province knows that you need measurable goals and objectives to succeed. This budget has provided not only the means for recovery but also the capacity for measurements to know we are on the correct path.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister of Finance deserves recognition for tabling this budget in the economic conditions that the entire world is faced with today due to the pandemic. I know this budget is fiscally responsible, and it is targeted to the priorities of our government and fulfills the promises that we campaigned on last fall during the election. In this time of economic upheaval, Mr. Speaker — not just in our province but throughout the entire world, and with the probability that every other province in Canada is going to be running massive deficits this year, placing financial burden on future generations — this Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance ensured that Saskatchewan stands as a prudent example of fiscal responsibility while still addressing the needs of our people.

Mr. Speaker, I am very thankful for the hard work put into this budget by the Ministry of Finance and the cabinet members. Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to say that I will be supporting this budget presented by the Minister of Finance and seconded by the member for The Battlefords. I will not be supporting the amendment from the member for Regina Rosemont. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melfort.

Mr. Goudy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a bit of a sobering day with the loss of His Highness, Prince Philip. And this morning when I woke up, a friend phoned from Melfort and informed me of that. And so afterwards I had a bit of a prayer time for the Queen, and it was strange because for the first time in my life I thought of the Queen as a person rather than the Queen. And her family was a little different in my mind, you know, as praying for somebody who lost a husband and a father and a friend for the people there.

It's kind of a neat building to be in — you know, you walk in and you see the Queen and the King who came to visit. When we're sworn in as members, it's through the LG [Lieutenant Governor] who is the representative of the Queen. And really we have a lot of connections to her throne. And so anyways, today I just thought a lot about her, and our prayers and our thoughts are with her and her family.

I appreciate the work that goes into the budget. The Finance minister and her crew do a lot of work in the background. I was oblivious to all the work that goes into not only deciding where the money is going to go, but where it's going to come from. You know, one of our guiding principles is gradual reduction in taxation and spending while keeping a constant eye on balancing the budget. That's a tough one. You know, if you think that the budget is just going to balance itself, it's not so hard. But when you have to realize that every dollar that we spend, we have to take, it's a big deal. And I know that our Finance minister, it weighs on her every year. And treasury board, it's a big job, all the ministers arm wrestling for their own ministries. And sometimes people on this side of the floor may not see that, that there's only so much money to go around.

Mr. Speaker, there is a couple of people that serve in this House that aren't on either side politically that I sat down with, and I asked them, I said, you know, sometimes it seems like, you know, it's quite a battle going on in this House and there's not a real love for the people across the way from each other. And so I had said, you know, is there any advice that we could get? And they said something very interesting. And I'm going to speak more from my heart, Mr. Speaker. I hope I have a job in the morning. My wife's probably sitting at home thinking, oh no.

But you know, this is one House. And in a house sometimes you have people that don't agree, but in a house is a family. And I would say that on both sides of this House, I appreciate the people that serve here. And you know, the member from Rosemont — I'm going to quote him a little bit later — he'd be a great brother-in-law, you know. I just don't like his ideology on some things. He'd be a great guy to go on a canoe trip or five rounds in the ring with. But he has a different perspective.

[15:30]

And one of the things that I heard from these two wise men is that, you know, when a group has been serving in government and hasn't had the experience of being in opposition, you know, you don't quite understand what the struggles of opposition are. And when you're in the opposition and you've never been in government, you don't understand what those struggles are. And honestly, to tell you the truth, I read what our jobs are. I went on our website and saw what's the job of an MLA, because, you know, you kind of get a little . . . you kind of lose sight of maybe

what we're about. And:

Members are elected to represent the specific interests of their constituents, but they're also representatives of the province of Saskatchewan and must consider the province's needs as a whole. Whatever their political outlook, and regardless of which side of the Assembly they sit on, members' duties and obligations are considerable.

So I would say to the opposition that I've watched the government, my government, and they work very, very hard to serve the people. And I find it so hard to watch when people say they don't care, because my goodness, they do. When people say stuff about my Premier on Facebook or whatever place, I think they don't know him. The job of these people and the duties are considerable on both sides of the House.

It goes on and it says a little bit about the opposition party, and I don't want to be your critic. I'm sometimes a very poor critic. I can share with you a little bit about my own . . . Two weeks ago, my son, he's 14 years old . . . I love basketball; he loves basketball. After school, he'd come home and he'd practise for a little while. And in the evening, just about every night, we play basketball together.

And it used to be that I'd have to, you know, kind of stroke his ego a bit and get him going because I want to play at this point. And then it got to the place where it's no longer . . . you don't have to stroke his ego. So I thought, you know, I'm going to be his critic a little bit. And so my oldest son Joel was home because he was changing jobs. He happened to be home that particular evening, and we, like, we were playing hard against each other. And Joel went, and David and I stayed behind.

And I noticed something about my son's shot, and I just thought, you know, I thought I was going to criticize him a bit. And the crazy thing is, he didn't take it very well. And I, like, my ego got, like, whoa, I'm your dad. I think I can still beat you in a game, and you should listen to me. And so I tried to explain that to him, and then he didn't really take that as I thought he maybe should have.

So then I, being the good father that I am, I you know, just launched into a big lecture, and my son stood there, and I said, why aren't you saying anything? And you know, Mr. Speaker, I bullied my son. And I . . . It was kind of awkward. My wife called me and we both went into the house part and we didn't really hang out that night.

And after that it was time for him to go to bed, and I went to bed, Mr. Speaker, and didn't sleep. I couldn't wait for the morning. And I'll tell you, the first thing in that morning I went into my sons' room and I opened the door and both my boys were in there and I said, you guys, I'm such an idiot. I'm so sorry. It's not my job to criticize you, to tear you down. It's my job to encourage you, to build you up.

You know, this province, the people that have elected each one of us, they chose the government because they like our guiding principles more than maybe yours — you know, the majority — because we have more people on our side than yours. But it's not to say that people in your side don't have guiding principles that people who voted for you believe in.

And we represent some of your people in our constituencies, and you represent some of our people in your constituencies. But your job is different than ours. It says here, "The opposition is the party with the second highest number of members. Its job is to propose alternative policies by placing its views before the Assembly in debate."

And you know, both sides of the House, Mr. Speaker — I've seen it since I've been here in the last three years — we've had to apologize. Both sides. But you know, funny, like that MLA from — where is it here? — Regina Rosemont, after he had finished saying something was a pile of rubbish — which I was surprised he got away with, but I guess that's parliamentary language — but then it says, "Budgets are about values, and the investments we make reflect our priorities. On this side of the House, our priority is prosperity with the . . . jobs of Saskatchewan people." As if that's not what ours is.

We have the same desire to bless the people of our province and of our constituencies. And yet we really need to see that we have a role to play, us on the government side and you on the opposition side, for the betterment and the blessing of our province. Not to tear each other down and, like, go after each other like it seems like sometimes we do.

One of the statements that the opposition made was, this budget eliminates our ability to grow; this budget does nothing to build for the future. That's so hard to say. You know, we've got \$17 billion. Is there not something there? Like, wow. It's like, if we have any more, I think some people are going to start saying well, you're supposed to . . . are you guys not trying to balance taxation and spending? But you know, like this is important stuff. Seventeen billion. If we're not happy at that point, if it's not a yes, we can find something there . . .

You know what my biggest fear is as an MLA? Honestly it is when somebody in my constituency doesn't trust me, doesn't think that I care about them. So that they can phone my office and say, Mr. Goudy, Todd, I've got a problem and I'm just wondering if there's anything that your province can help me with in this area. I don't want them to feel that, you know, the government has nothing for me.

You know, I try to advertise to everybody in our area to say, we've got a good government, lots of policies in place to serve the people that . . . What a beautiful thing — protect, build, and grow. That's what we're trying to do, to put the money out there.

We've almost personified the budget as if it does it on its own. The budget has to engage with the MLAs and the people that do the work. You know, a budget can't change a diaper or run a piece of heavy equipment or swing a hammer or, you know, venture out in some new business opportunity. Budgets don't go to your grandpa and grandma's senior home and visit them and love them and wipe their nose or do whatever else or cheer your son on at the football game. Budgets don't do that.

But budgets are kind of like . . . In my part of the world, Mr. Speaker, the way I look at it, is that the people are seeds. We love to grow grain and oilseeds in Melfort, Saskatchewan. Like it's all about that. When I was a little boy, my dad, he developed Treflan. And wild oats were a big problem. Canola wasn't quite yet, and it was rapeseed. So rapeseed was the big thing that Japan wanted.

They wanted their oil from rapeseed. And so 30 bushels to the acre was a big deal. And I remember seeing the signs when I was little boy. It's still on my mind, these little triangle things; it said rape yield 30. And if you got 30 bushels per acre rapeseed, you got your name put in for a draw for a trip to Japan. And my mom and dad went to Japan a number of times to take these farmers there.

And I remember, you know, going out into the fields on the big day of the test plots that Dad would put out, and all the farmers would show up at our yard and I'd be able to hand out the Pic-a-Pop out of the horse trough to all the farmers. It was a big day and everybody would be watching. And we were all shooting for increasing the yield. It was all about trying to get rapeseed to produce more or, later on, canola to produce more.

You know, it's amazing. You put one seed of canola into the ground. If a plant comes out, how many seeds you got now? I had to re-phone the . . . What's his, what constituency is Lyle Stewart? Am I allowed to . . . I don't know. Anyways, texted him. How many seeds come out? Nine hundred, I said? Well it might be a little bit high; 750, that's more safe. Seven hundred and fifty plus; that's just amazing. You put one in; you've got 750 out. You know, that's more along 50, 60 bushels. So since I was a little boy till now, we've increased 30 bushels to the acre.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I look at the seeds, those are the people. Those are the people in our constituency. Those are the people in our province. The budget is the fertilizer that can come along beside, and the different practices.

So Gerry Bourgault, great guy, good friend of mine. And you know, you ask him about . . . I always think he's about growing more grain but he's about people. It's funny. His employees, his stakeholders, his customers, that's what he wants to improve — their lives. But his engineers and everybody else, I guess they'll figure out how to grow more grain.

So they've got this seeder. You go out to their test plots and you see what . . . They're always developing new and better and stronger, and they're trying to get that seed so that it's at the right depth at the right time, and so that that fertilizer can be brought in right to the right distance, the right amount, the right timing, the right place so that when that seed germinates . . . Because that life, it's in the seed; it's not in the fertilizer. Life is in the seed. Life is in the people, not in the budget. And so when we put that seed in there and that seed germinates and comes out, depends on how much fertilizer and the quality of fertilizer and the placement of the fertilizer and the timing, how many seeds will be on that plant.

So this budget, \$17 billion, it can't do anything on its own. It takes people to do it. And one of the roles of an MLA is to be able to take the government's programs and policies and that 17 billion and make sure that it gets to our people. You know, what really broke my heart was the whole area of . . . I lost a friend to suicide. I just lost a young, a young . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, another one. And you know, it's not an easy thing. Nobody on either side of the House wants to see someone take their life or a parent to know that happened.

You know, we have a member across . . . I don't know what side I'm on here. I'm kind of over there still, but I'm here. Anyways,

the Minister of Remote and Rural Health, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, he's got half a billion dollars to put in beside the people working to serve our constituents. I don't know if that's a problem or what's good or bad or whatever. Almost half a billion dollars — that excites me. As a pastor, I used to have a \$180,000 budget, and my salary came out of that and heating the building and everything else. And we've got half a billion. Honestly that's a good start. And I'm just thinking, but that's not the deal. It's the people that we invest that half a billion in because they're going to reach out to those individuals.

You know what? Sometimes we don't even take budget money. I got some buddies in Melfort, said to them, could you guys not start a support group for mental health? Kind of like AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] is for . . . They've been running it for six months now. The things that they're able to do for free. We don't even have to pay the budget, but the budget comes in beside those people. You see, we want to grow the yields of what the people are able to produce in this province, and that's what this \$17 billion budget does. It gives us hope. We don't hope in the budget; we hope in the people.

And that's why I think we've got to, you know, quit fighting so much with each other and maybe more focus on what do we have and how can we develop it, because one of the roles of the opposition is to propose alternative policies and not tell us how bad we're doing all the time. Because you know what? We're not always bad. There's a lot of great things that are being done in Saskatchewan today and these are good friends of mine, just like I'm sure appreciate you on this side of the House.

So I know it's important we debate, and it's important we all the rest, but I think it's a great day honestly. How much time have I spent? I don't know. I have no idea. Three minutes? . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Less than three. Oh my goodness.

So one of the other things, one of the other men in my life, it's talking about Gerry Bourgault, who was pretty successful with zero-till, you know, getting the maximum capacity out. My dad was an interesting fellow. See, some of the guys, buddies of mine moved here from Africa, they called him chemical Ken. It was just funny because he loves to spray and kill weeds. He was the guy who developed Treflan, and later on I remember farmers that said, I've never used a litre of Roundup on my farm and I never will, but my dad had. He and his boys, they'd show up. Roundup's going to be the big ag chemical.

[15:45]

So anyways, Dad loved to kill weeds. And you know, weeds I would kind of equate because they choke out the seed. They take the nutrients out of the soil that the seed can't get, and they kind of don't let it yield as much. So it was a big deal to have Treflan work because you wanted to increase production for canola. You needed to deal with wild oats because they're a big deal on the prairies. So as you killed the wild oats, those seeds could do better.

You know what the weeds are? Weeds are doubt and fear and fighting. You know, my family had to live — we tried; we always joked — a champagne lifestyle on a beer budget. But that meant we had to get along and we had to not always be fighting with each other and fearful of this and fearful . . . You had to have a

can-do attitude like we've heard before, you know, so we need to get rid of the fearmongering and the hey you can't do that.

He's not here right now but I would like to challenge him a little bit. Or no, wait a minute. She is here. Look at that. What was said there? Your budget can't . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . It eliminates our ability to grow. I would challenge that and say, you know what? If \$17 billion eliminates your ability to grow, I think we're just a little short-sighted and a little too fearful to step out and say that I think we can grow. When it comes to \$17 billion, we can grow on both sides of the House.

So I don't know if it's early or what, but rather than ramble on longer here . . . Shoot. Can I say a few more things? Three really good things. That minister across the way, he's going to come. Norma Weber, mayor in Watson, unbelievable lady, just would not . . . Like, we're going to get a new long-term care facility. Fought, fought, fought, might have insulted maybe even some people once, but great to see her fight and say we're going to get that long-term care facility. And you know what? Announced in the budget. We're going to get a long-term care facility.

And so there's some of that. I went to Saskatoon because my buddy from high school said, Todd, you've got to come and see our organization and what we do. It was called Str8 Up. And I first went for lunch with he and one of the gang members who had come out of the gangs and was getting a job and all the rest, and sat down with them, ate lunch. Went from there to their facility. Went to the wrong building, walked into a house, went to take off my shoes. It was kind of quiet, so I called out, hello, and when there was silence I looked. I'm in the wrong place. So I went a block over where the actual Str8 Up facility is, went into there, and sat down with a fellow whose name was Stan Tu'Inukuafe.

And I thought Stan was the employee here, working for the group. So I get to the end of the conversation. Stan Tu'Inukuafe had been volunteering his time — he's a teacher — for 15 years. And I'm like, I can't believe I was having a conversation. I felt like going over there and, you know, washing his feet or shining his shoes or whatever I could do. I felt like a no one in front of Stan Tu'Inukuafe. He's the kind of person, that's the kind of thing, that's going on in this province. He would say, can this budget not grow? Can it? We've got people like this that we're investing in. We've got things like this that we're doing across the province. This is the kind of thing that excites me.

So, Mr. Speaker, we've got a CAT [computerized axial tomography] scanner coming to Melfort we've been looking forward to. We've got some great things so I would challenge the opposition. I'm going to support this budget that was delivered by our Finance minister and seconded by the MLA from The Battlefords. And I'm going to challenge the opposition to withdraw your amendment and to join with us. Wouldn't that be a nice thing for your constituents to know, that this government stands for your people as well? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — miigwech, Mr. Speaker.

[The hon. member spoke for a time in Saulteaux.]

I am grateful to be given this opportunity to speak. One thing that I see today, and really not surprising at all, is the respect given in this House and the leadership — or their lack of — that's shown. We have small children. I have grandchildren that are watching me. We all have children and grandchildren that watch us. And when we're cross-talking, and when we're disrespecting our own members while they're talking, that's disrespectful and showing our little kids, our little ones.

And then it goes to show, the member before me, how quiet you guys were. Yet the member before him, who's a minority, you were all talking. You were all walking around. And you know what that shows me? It shows me how we don't respect our colleagues, whether they're minority or not, for you guys to be doing that. And as a grandmother, as a kohkom, I have to be able to be a good leader to show my people, to show my children, my grandchildren to be a leader.

I got elected here to represent my community and that is what I'm going to do. For the member before me: my First Nation is in your riding, yet my First Nation has to argue with the RM [rural municipality] to have that municipality cleared every summer. And every year, raw sewage gets dumped into our little stream where my people, where my family goes and fishes. So I ask you, go to Kinistin Saulteaux Nation. Go and talk to them and say, hey, your member who's an MLA here talked about this. Go. I invite you to go there. I'll even take you when it's safe to do so.

I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to my sweetheart, Ivan, for his love and his support and for stepping up to be there for our children and our grandchildren. He is a great papa to Colby, Ciannah, Ava, Nova, Noah, Ellie, Kaiden, and Mateo. Tootoo loves you. I know you're watching me.

I also want to thank my CAs [constituency assistant] for their hard work in keeping up with the smooth functioning of my office. And thank you to my community back home for understanding that I'm not able to come to the ceremonies back home and cook at the ceremonies. So I thank you.

As an MLA for Saskatoon Centre and opposition critic for First Nations and Métis relations; truth and reconciliation; and Public Service Commission, I will continue to serve my constituents of Saskatoon Centre and the citizens of this province by holding this government to account.

Mr. Speaker, what Saskatchewan needs right now is leadership. The budget is not an example of government showing strong leadership. Thankfully we have examples of true leadership. We've seen leadership from our chief medical officer, Dr. Shahab; small businesses; teachers; First Nation communities; health care workers. And we've seen leadership from countless citizens who have taken it upon themselves to ensure that their neighbours are staying well. These leaders have stepped up to meet the challenges that COVID-19 presents.

When COVID-19 hit the First Nations community, many First Nation leaders closed their borders to their communities. They conducted contact tracing. They had daily communication with their members. They had colour-coded signage on people's front doors indicating if food, cleaning supplies, medication, etc., were needed. When individuals left the community, they were

required to document which store they went into, and record what time they went in, and what time they exited the stores. Mr. Speaker, this is an example of true leadership. Perhaps this government ought to have hired First Nation communities to secure the Regina borders to ensure that COVID-19 variant does not continue to spread in this province.

One crucial area where we've seen a notable lack of leadership throughout this pandemic is from this side of this House, from that side of this House. And yes, and I say this side because we also have your members on this side. The Premier has consistently put off implementing life-saving measures until things got so bad that he had no other choice. He refused to implement a three-week circuit breaker, instead chose to do nothing while Saskatchewan's COVID cases skyrocket to the worst rate in the country.

This Premier has even gone so far as to refuse to wear a mask in this Chamber, and continues to speak moistly in this legislative, putting our members of this House and legislative staff at risk. I do not want somebody spitting on me as they speak. And I do not want to be . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well spit travels fast, and far. True leaders need to lead by example, Mr. Speaker. What sort of example is the Premier setting by not even doing the most basic of measures, wearing a mask while we are gathered here in Regina, a current hot spot for COVID-19 variants? This refusal to keep his mask on is not leadership. It is selfish and it's very dangerous.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, my constituents in Saskatoon are left behind by this government. The most recent budget fails to offer adequate supports and investments that would positively impact the people of Saskatoon Centre. People are dying from drug overdoses. People are living in bug- and rodent-infested homes, even if they have a place to sleep. Low-income housing units that used to be available are now being sold.

This budget offers nothing by way of affordable transportation. Many of my constituents rely on public transit and also utilized services such as the STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] before it was sold off by this government. Working people need affordable modes of transportation throughout their community as well as across the province. We are a vast province with a population that is quite dispersed. It is time for investments that reflect this reality.

Saskatoon Centre is also home to a vibrant arts community, a community that adds so much to our province's culture and yet, once again, this community is overlooked by a government that fails to recognize the value in artists and their work. Let's not forget that during these isolated times, it is often art that brings us some solace. Whether it is through film and television, listening to our favourite musician, or taking in awe-inspiring visual art, Saskatchewan artists offer us so much and yet they receive so little in support from this government.

In my short time as an MLA, I have had the pleasure of speaking with a number of seniors within my constituency. These are the folks that helped to build our province. They have worked hard and now are looking to enjoy their retirement years. They are parents, our grandparents, and our elders, and our anishinaabe old people, our old people. They deserve our respect and thanks for what they've contributed to Saskatchewan.

Unfortunately this Premier's vision of thank you is not properly investing in long-term care homes, despite the horrors that have been exposed by COVID-19. These are the places that have experienced the worst outcomes of this pandemic. Mr. Speaker, Porteous Lodge in my riding at one point had one bathroom being shared by 16 residents. This is simply unacceptable and must be corrected. We've known for years about the challenges in long-term care homes and seniors' facilities throughout the province. Now is the time to properly address these concerns, but instead we see more Sask Party half measures in this budget.

[16:00]

As the opposition critic for First Nations and Métis relations, TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission], I'm concerned with the complete disregard of this government's responsibility when it comes to reconciliation. We all know reconciliation means action, not just words. Just to give you an example of how out of touch this government is and how much they do not have a pulse of the community it serves, I want to share this example. I went to the location where a monument for the residential school survivors is going to be installed. It is going to be installed at the Government House, where the average Indigenous person does not visit, nor do they know where that is. Had meaningful engagement and consultation happened before the site was decided upon, you would have known that this site for this monument on Government House is right beside a church. Is this the intention of this government, to perpetuate the trauma we as residential school survivors have endured by church-run schools? I certainly hope not.

And by the way, how much is this monument costing? You know, it's probably a pretty penny — half a million, maybe a million. That could be disbursed to the community programming. And really we should actually be investing in reconciliation, and we should be addressing reconciliation. And this monument should be really looking at the institutions that we are operating in and how systemic racism is so infiltrated in the system. We should be addressing that, not to have a monument that is a feather in someone's hat.

If true reconciliation was a goal, survivors would not have chosen a place that is hidden and unknown to them. They would have chosen a monument to be installed right here on the front steps outside of this legislative grounds, because these grounds are recognized by Indigenous people. And I would go further to say, you know what? I heard from a residential school survivor who said, have that monument right next to the Queen on that horse.

There's no budget line for meaningful truth and reconciliation and education or ceremonies. At the opening of this session, I arranged for a traditional pipe ceremony to take place so that our time in here in this session will carry on in a good way. I also asked for prayers to be said for all of us in this House. This is the time. This is the first time in this province's history that a traditional pipe ceremony was conducted before the legislative session begins.

And yes, please note, Mr. Minister from First Nation-Métis relationship — this is important for you. This is an example of reconciliation. And this pipe ceremony that was conducted here before we began this session should be part of our legislative protocols. This wouldn't be a big-ticket item but it would be

going a long ways towards reconciliation, involving Indigenous and Métis peoples in the provincial government.

Truth and reconciliation shouldn't fall under the miscellaneous category in this budget. Treaty education for all MLAs, legislative staff, and senior ministry staff would be an example — another simple yet meaningful action towards truth and reconciliation. Saskatchewan is treaty territory. Mr. Speaker, this very House sits on Treaty 4 territory. My great-grandfather was one of the signatories to the adhesion to Treaty 4. We need to invest in treaty education for MLAs, legislative staff, and senior ministry staff. This would be an investment in ourselves so that we may finally begin to honour treaties in this province.

I also wonder, Mr. Speaker, where missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls fit into this budget. We know that Indigenous girls and women are far more likely to be murdered or go missing in Canada and in this province. When I lived here in the early '80s, I was repeatedly stalked by old white men circling around me in their cars when I was out shopping or taking my baby for a stroll. I was even chased by one when I went shopping to Shoppers to buy Pampers for my baby.

Mr. Speaker, times have not changed. Young Indigenous women and girls are still being stalked and stolen. As beautiful as the walking paths are here, to walk around here in Regina by myself, I'm afraid to walk by this area because you know what? I'm afraid to go missing. My family fears that I'd go missing because I'm a visible Indigenous woman, and this is what happens in our own province. What is this government doing to protect us Indigenous women, especially our most vulnerable? When will this government commit to protecting our women and our girls?

You know, Mr. Speaker, there was an announcement in this budget about modest increases in funding to community-based organizations. Well time will tell where exactly this funding will go, but it's certainly that community-based organizations are struggling to get by. And that \$150,000 you guys are touting that you give to the Tribal Council? That's peanuts.

You know what? I went to that Tribal Council last year because I went to get help to deal with the racism that I was facing. That program at the Saskatoon Tribal Council Health Centre helped me a lot, but it takes more than \$150,000 a year. Mind you, you've given . . . This is the fifth year, \$150,000 that you've given. No increase during COVID.

There's a lot of programs that give life-saving supports. Prairie Harm Reduction. I see all the time. I've been to funerals of many, many people that have died from drug overdoses that live in poverty, that have no hope. I've gone to them. While you guys were out golfing last summer and going out fishing, I was attending funeral after funeral because people were dying in our province.

You know, I just want to say that we all take the time and we're all stuck down here and we're all leaving our family. And I'm so blessed to have a loving and supportive family and community that's behind me. And I'm grateful for the many First Nation leaders, chief and councils, councillors that reached out to me and have said, "I'm proud to see an Indigenous woman sitting here voicing our concerns."

And I'm grateful that, for me, I'll always . . . I can't change the colour of my skin. I cannot change that. But I will always speak up for Indigenous people because first and foremost, I'm First Nation. And as a mother and a grandmother, I have to carry on those traditions and I have to be a good role model and be a good legislator for our people.

And you know what? I'm proud to have . . . I'm proud to not be the only Indigenous person in this House. This is the first time in my professional career that I have had two other colleagues that were Indigenous. And you know what? I thought, wow, right on.

So I say, that \$150,000 you guys give to Tribal Council to take care of us Indians, whoop-de-do. Peanuts. That's peanuts. You know, there's people dying. There is people dying in this province. And you know what? We need to be there for them. We need programs for grief support. That's great that there is somebody volunteering to do grief programming. We don't fund those programs. We rely on volunteers to carry out those grief support programs, and we actually should have them funded. They should be funded and this government needs to invest in that.

miigwech.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Willowgrove.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and it is indeed an honour to rise in this Assembly, I believe for the 18th time, to respond to a budget. And each and every time, it is indeed a special privilege to be able to do that and to address the budget and the many things that it does to improve the life of everyone in our province.

Before I get into the budget speech, though, it is an auspicious day today, and I want to address . . . It's the day that we recognize those Canadians in Vimy Ridge that gave their lives. April 9th, 1917, 3,598 men lost their lives. They said it was Canada's most momentous victory, but it was also Canada's bloodiest day. So today we remember those men in 1917 and the descendants of those people that are Saskatchewanians and Canadians, and we thank them for giving the ultimate sacrifice.

It's also a day that our hearts dropped when we woke up this morning and heard of the passing of His Royal Highness Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh. I had the opportunity to meet the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh, partly because I was an MLA and partly because of the opportunity I had to win a scholarship back in . . . earlier, but I met them in 2005. It was indeed an opportunity that I relish. His personality shone through, and again, we want to wish Her Royal Highness the Queen all the very best and our good wishes.

Mr. Speaker, I want to begin, as many MLAs do, thanking our constituency assistant. Mine is fairly new, Brianne Toupin. She's a mother of three and she's had an opportunity to work for a Member of Parliament and now working in an MLA's office. And she does an excellent job, so I want to thank Brianne for the good work that she does.

I want to thank my family, of course, for their support, and all the volunteers. I'm blessed to have so many volunteers in my

constituency that help in so many ways. Yes, with politics, but also with volunteerism, and I want to thank them.

I want to talk a little bit about the Saskatoon Willowgrove constituency, Mr. Speaker. It's one of the fastest-growing areas of the province. It's neighbourhoods like Brighton and Aspen Ridge and Evergreen, are home to young families and people who have decided to make their home and their living here in Saskatchewan and in Saskatoon. And it is such an invigorating place to be when you're there and you have the opportunity to go door to door and to door knock and to learn about the stories of each one of them, many of them coming from other places in Canada and around the world and coming to Saskatchewan and making their home here. So it is so encouraging.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you it wasn't always like that in Saskatchewan. When I first took my place in the Legislative Assembly here, I was the opposition critic for Post-Secondary Education. And back then, members will remember and members — those that follow history — will know that in that period of time that if a minister wanted to leave the House, he had to take his or her critic with him because the House was so close and they couldn't have a member on one side not in the Chamber if one member on the other side.

So it enabled me to go with the minister and to go to the University of Saskatchewan convocation and sit beside him and sit beside the president of the university. And at that time we had the opportunity to thank all of the graduates and to give them their diploma and to wish them well.

Well the president of the university, Peter MacKinnon, at that time, you know, he had a bit of a sense of humour to him, and he was a guy that wanted to do his very, very best. He said to the minister and I, he said, okay, I'm going to ask the person if they're staying in Saskatchewan and you guys close the deal — the minister and myself. You guys, you know, tell them what a good idea it would be if they stayed in Saskatchewan.

[16:15]

So that was our number one goal back then, making sure . . . And it was the president and the minister and myself, and we were doing that. And we had a lot of fun with it. But sadly many, many were choosing to leave to Alberta and to other places and they weren't calling Saskatchewan home. And I wouldn't hesitate to say that that has changed greatly now that we have Saskatchewan young people choosing to stay in Saskatchewan, choosing to build their homes in the Brightons and the Aspen Ridges and the Evergreens of Saskatchewan and many other communities and constituencies as well.

So it is indeed an honour to represent that area. And I always believe that Saskatoon Willowgrove is a microcosm of the entire province. It's a place where people are choosing to make their homes and to grow, and we certainly are very, very pleased that they are able to do that. Saskatoon Willowgrove is home to many entrepreneurs, to small-business people. Saskatoon Willowgrove is home to one of the most successful venture capitalists in the entire country. Saskatoon Willowgrove is home to many philanthropists, people like Merlis Belsher, for example, who have done so much to enhance the lives of people in Saskatoon and our province.

We also have many, many volunteers in Saskatoon Willowgrove, volunteers like Craig and Bonny and Shea Stevenson, who volunteer their time for MADD [Mothers Against Drunk Driving] because the loss of Mr. Stevenson. Along with Lou and Linda Van de Vorst and Allan and Melanie Kerpan, those that spend their time ensuring that the Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, for example, is something that we strive to have in Saskatchewan, and do through their good work.

We also have many volunteers like Baseball Saskatchewan, for example, Greg Brons and the good work that he does. He's a resident of Saskatoon Willowgrove. Brad Sylvester and his team, the Saskatoon Optimist Hill, what they've put together in Diefenbaker Park, working so hard to improve the lives and families of people in Saskatoon and across Saskatchewan, just wanting to make sure that they are able to participate in outdoor activities during this COVID period.

And you know, on a sombre note — and I do want to work this into my speech — I want to note the passing of a couple of good friends of mine. It's been mentioned before in the House, the passing of Jason Duke. I believe the member from Regina Wascana Plains talked about this wonderful individual who had a bright smile that just lit up the room and he left us way too early. I know his good friend Trevor Lakness is somebody that wanted to make sure that his memory is not forgotten.

And members on both sides of the House will know Brenda Barootes. And Brenda left us not too long ago. She had friends on both sides of the House, and again she was a person that just loved politics but loved people. And sure we do miss her as well.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to spend some time highlighting the budget. It's an important budget. It's a budget that does so much for Saskatchewan people. I want to talk about health care, for example: \$6.12 billion, an increase of \$261 million. The money that this government has spent on health care is up some \$2.7 billion over the '07-08 period, some 78 per cent. It includes \$90 million for COVID response and mass vaccinations.

I'll talk a little bit about that later, talk about the extreme efforts that the Premier and the ministers of Health and all the work that Dr. Shahab and others have been doing. And the money is going again to enhance lab capacity at the Roy Romanow laboratory.

And of course money for mental health and addictions support. Investing \$458 million, a 5.4 per cent increase in the mental health and addictions support, something that is very, very needed. We realize it always seems like it's never enough, but again, it's money that is very well spent. And further support for the Pillars for Life, the Saskatchewan suicide prevention plan, again an area that we can never spend too much time on and we want to make sure that we have the dollars behind the efforts to ensure that we can do our best in that prevention plan.

Also \$1.2 million to address wait times for diagnostic imaging and services. And it's important for us to remember that even in this COVID time, there are other health challenges that we have. And this budget addresses those as well. We continue to fund the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital, and you know, this is a good opportunity to thank all of those front-line workers and the doctors and nurses and health care workers that are at the children's hospital and are on front lines in our province.

My time is limited, so I want to go quickly. I want to talk about my home city of Saskatoon and the many benefits that that city is realizing because of this budget. When we talk about revenue sharing, revenue sharing back in '07-08 was \$18 million in the city of Saskatoon — \$18 million. Fast forward to today, it is almost 50 million. \$49.5 million, 178 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker. And that's money that's given to the municipalities of the province, and Saskatoon receives its largest share for the mayor and city councillors to decide what they want to do with, and I think that they're all very appreciative of that. And this budget goes on to do more and more.

In health, the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] will receive \$3.6 million for a four-bed intensive care unit expansion, an ICU expansion at the Royal University Hospital, and two beds at St. Paul's Hospital. \$5.1 million additional to further establish a 48-bed acute care unit as well. Money well spent in the city of Saskatoon.

Advanced Education. I remind all members we haven't talked about it a lot this year — I see the Minister of Advanced Ed here and I congratulate him on the work that he's done — but \$447 million to the University of Saskatchewan, \$164 million to Saskatchewan Polytech, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, and the Dumont Technical Institute.

And more than \$4 million, Mr. Speaker, is something that is very, very timely to support VIDO, the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization, and Dr. Volker Gerdt's and his team over at VIDO and the good work that they do. I had an opportunity to know Dr. Lorne Babiuk, who was Volker Gerdt's predecessor as well, and the innovation and the vision that they've had for many, many years in our province, and now the work that they're doing on the COVID situation and the money that they're receiving. And we hope that the federal government is listening as well, as we continue to fund that very worthwhile organization.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education. And in the Saskatoon Willowgrove constituency it is a very, very important part of the money that this budget has spent. The Saskatoon Public School Board will receive \$245 million, the largest ever. Also St. Paul's Roman Catholic will receive \$189 million, again the largest ever. And the school boards are very, very appreciative of all the funds that they've received.

And Saskatoon Willowgrove is the beneficiary of four brand new schools in the last couple of years. And I know that that's a lot, but that's certainly needed in reflection of the growth that's taken place — the Sylvia Fedoruk School, a joint-use school, \$33.7 million; the St. Nicholas Catholic school, joint-use in the Evergreen neighbourhood, and you know, an area that we share, with the Minister of Health and myself, in both of our constituencies, 30.7 million; Holy Family school, joint-use facility, 11.6 million; Willowgrove School, joint-use, \$13.2 million.

\$89.2 million spent in one constituency on four new schools over the last couple of years, and that's not just to say we focus on new schools. There's been roof replacements at Father Robinson, for example in an existing school, for \$1.1 million. And you know, before members of the opposition say, you're only funding Sask Party constituencies, I want you to remember that the

consolidation of Princess Alexandra, King George, and Pleasant Hill school, there's a million three there for the planning of that, and the St. Frances elementary school, which the member from Saskatoon Nutana will know well, has received \$1.3 million as well.

In the area of Parks, Culture and Sport, that's something that's near and dear to my heart. Saskatchewan residents, you know, in the constituency of Willowgrove and others across the province, they work very hard but they want to make sure that they play hard as well, that they have an opportunity to take advantage of our beautiful parks and to travel our beautiful province.

And again, we have the largest capital budget in provincial parks in the history of Saskatchewan and money going into parks that are near Saskatoon and others across the province, but specifically Pike Lake and Blackstrap in the Saskatoon area.

Very happy to see as well, on behalf of my constituents, the active families benefit re-established. Hundreds of families are taking advantage of it — \$150 per child, 34,000 children that are eligible. And you know, I have a family that benefited greatly from sports and activities, and my son, Carter, and my daughter, Paige — Carter had the opportunity to go to the Canada Summer Games, and Paige is on the McMaster swim team right now — had an opportunity that was afforded to them because they had the benefit to play sports. And this will ensure that more children have that opportunity.

The community rink affordability grant. When we had to step away from that years ago, we said that's one thing — and I remember talking to the Premier and others about that — that we would bring back as soon as we possibly could, as soon as we could afford it. And here it is, \$2,500 per ice surface, 350 communities, 600 ice surfaces, and it's money well spent.

I want to spend a minute or two just talking about something that, you know, maybe people don't think urban MLAs talk about all the time. But highways, for example, our wonderful highways in the province — \$830 million, multiple passing lanes. And that's something I did hear about from my urban constituents as I went around door knocking and talking to them about, you know, what they've seen different in this province. And they have seen a big difference in our highways. And that's not only to say that, you know, that they're nicer and they're easier to travel, but they're safer as well. And so that's money well spent.

And also, you know, I want to just spend a minute on agriculture as well. We are all just one step removed, it seems, from the farm, and agriculture is so important in our province. And we saw that in the last year, and you know, money to improve crop insurance and other programs are so important not only for rural Saskatchewan residents but for those in urban Saskatchewan as well.

Mr. Speaker, I'm always interested to hear what other people have to say about the budget, not just what people in the legislature have to say. And it's always interesting to hear what those in Saskatchewan and those outside our province have to say. And I have to quote Jason Aebig, the CEO of the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce:

Today's budget extends many of the measures announced

through the COVID-19 pandemic to support business activity and position us for recovery starting in 2021. After a year of economic uncertainty, Saskatchewan businesses now have the clarity and predictability they need to build their recovery plans and rehire, reinvest, and get Saskatchewan growing again.

Jason Aebig, Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce — so well said.

Although the 2021-22 provincial budget did not balance the books, the budget tabled by the Finance minister strikes the right balance between short- and long-term measures to stabilize and grow Saskatchewan's economy.

Again, the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce. We have the CEO of the Saskatoon & Region Home Builders' Association:

I have no doubt this is one of the most challenging budgets to compile. Kudos to . . . [the Premier and the Finance minister] & team for a solid plan forward. We are not out of the pandemic yet, but the positivism and the potential on the horizon is growing.

We also have the Saskatchewan Construction Association:

In a year where the pandemic shook the economy like no other since World War II, the Government of Saskatchewan budget announcement provides the flexibility to flow funds as they are most needed.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on. I want to touch on some of those that are outside of our province, like the Royal Bank for example. And the Royal Bank talks about the Royal Bank economic fiscal analysis:

The government's medium-term path is prudent with the deficit set to decline over the next three years by containing spending growth and committing to balance the budget by 2026-2027. This careful approach to balancing the books is appropriate to ensure a sustainable recovery.

Well, Mr. Speaker, there it is. There's other comments that I could go on, but I'm mindful of time. The CIBC [Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce], the Bank of Montreal, BMO also talking. So many of the major banks weighing in and congratulating the Finance minister and the Premier and the government on the good work that's been done.

[16:30]

One statistic, you know, one financial metric, if you'd like, that really stands out is the projected net debt as a percentage of GDP by The Conference Board of Canada. Saskatchewan leads the country: 18.2 per cent net debt-to-GDP ratio — the best in the country. We were neck and neck with Alberta and BC [British Columbia], and we've certainly moved ahead of them and well ahead of other provinces like Manitoba, for example, where they're at 38.4 per cent. So again, it's a metric that's very important as we look at this budget.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know that my time is limited, but last fall I had the opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne and, you know, let's face it. Not a lot of people here watch the

session after question period. Or you know, maybe in the afternoon or the evening there's a few, but one thing that I did talk about last time and I did introduce was a little bit of fun with the *Jeopardy!* game. We played a little *Jeopardy!*. And this is an audience participation game, so I want members on both sides of the House and the NDP members as well to bear with me and play a little game here. I don't think we're a Ken Jennings or Aaron Rodgers or Katie Couric or anybody like that are going to be worried about losing their job.

But let's start with a few short snappers. Under the category of "what government was in power in Saskatchewan when the following happened," under the "population" category, what government was in power when the population dropped by 22,000 people?

Some Hon. Members: — NDP.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — The answers I'm hearing are the NDP. Do we know the years? 1996 to 2007. Job creation. What government oversaw the worst job creation record in Canada from 2000 to 2007 in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: — NDP.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — This is getting a little easy. In their 16 years in office, how many times did the NDP raise taxes?

Some Hon. Members: — 21.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Oh, members do their reading very well. The correct answer was the NDP raised taxes 21 times in 16 years, including raising the PST four times and raising the gas tax twice.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have our daily double. This is the one where we want to make sure. There's a lot riding on this question. What was the highest rate of the PST ever in Saskatchewan, and who was the Finance minister that introduced it? Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to give the NDP an opportunity to answer the question.

Some Hon. Members: — Nine per cent.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well, I do hear some answers coming forward and they are the correct answer. Nine per cent, and the NDP Finance minister was Andrew Thomson.

We are moving into health care now, Mr. Speaker. Which government lost 450 nurses, 173 doctors, and had the longest surgical wait times in Canada, all while closing 52 hospitals, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — NDP.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well I need the years as well. 2001 to 2006 and, yes, it was the NDP.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is one that's very interesting. I know some members here, former ministers of Environment will know the answer to this. During which time period, and who was in government, when Saskatchewan saw the greatest increase in greenhouse gas emissions? Well to the surprise of many

members opposite I'm sure, that was in 1996 to 2007, which saw a 25 per cent increase.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we're moving on to seniors. Which government closed 1,200 long-term care beds while at the same time providing no increase to the seniors' income plan benefit for 16 years? . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well, Mr. Speaker, it was the NDP.

And it's getting too easy, so we're going to change it up a bit and say under "population," which government grew the population of Saskatchewan by 170,000 people while sustaining 55 quarters of growth?

Some Hon. Members: — Sask Party.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, it was this Saskatchewan Party government. Which government established the highest tax-free threshold in Canada for a family of four who don't have to pay tax?

Some Hon. Members: — Sask Party.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, that was the Sask Party as well. A family of four in Saskatchewan pays no tax on their income on the first \$52,250 of income. That is amongst the highest in the country.

We're getting to the end here. I know time is getting short. The category of "health care." What government has hired over 900 more doctors, over 4,000 more nurses, while at the same time doubling investments in hospital projects including the new children's hospital in Saskatoon and hospitals in Moose Jaw and North Battleford?

Some Hon. Members: — Sask Party.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I need an answer, and I got it. The Sask Party as well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for my colleagues for playing along. I think you got all of the answers right so you are making sure you're doing your political reading as well.

Mr. Speaker, in all seriousness, the NDP never talk about their record. They come in here and they talk about and they criticize us. And I know that that's part of their job, and I realize that they're doing it. But part of their job is also to own their record of that time period and very rarely do I hear members talk about it in such a way. And that's one reason, Mr. Speaker, that I'm so pleased to be on this side of the House. Because we have a record that we can be proud of yesterday; we can be proud of our record today, and we can be proud of our record in the future tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, we have a vision and we have a duty to protect, to build, and to grow. And when all is said and done, we have to have a record that we can be proud of. So we have a record of building schools, hospitals, sports stadiums like the beautiful Mosaic Stadium, highways, and infrastructure. We have the opportunity to oversee some of the most trying times in the history of our province.

I want to close, Mr. Speaker, by thanking front-line workers and

all health care workers in the Saskatoon Willowgrove constituency and more importantly across the province. The men and women in our police services, all the firefighters, professional and volunteer, and the grocery store workers, all those that help us do our jobs and help our families live their lives each and every day.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to talk about the Premier and the Health ministers, Dr. Shahab, and the tireless efforts that they have been putting forward since day one of this. For over a year now I have to say they have done an excellent job, and on behalf of the constituents of Saskatoon Willowgrove, I want to thank them and others for all the work that they've done. Earlier today the Premier said that yesterday we vaccinated over 11,000 people in our province, over 1 per cent of the people, and for that day the percentage was higher than the United States of America. And we know how well that they're doing compared to Canada right now, but for that one day we were ahead of them all. So congratulations.

Mr. Speaker, it's about protecting, it's about building, and it's about growing. And that's what this budget does. Before I sit down, I just want to do a little PS [postscript] here. If everyone at this particular moment can take out their phones and vote for Lumsden in Kraft Hockeyville, I think that would be a well opportune time to do that and help Lumsden get over the top.

Mr. Speaker, I will be most certainly supporting the budget and voting against the amendment. And again, thank you for this opportunity to stand in my place and represent the people of Saskatoon Willowgrove and support a budget that enhances the lives of all Saskatchewan residents. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Government Relations, First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs, and the Provincial Capital Commission.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That introduction may be as long as my speech. Anyway it is always a privilege to stand in this Chamber. Of course we're on Treaty 4 ground, home of the Métis. And how fortunate we are to live in such an amazing province and share this province with Treaties 8, 10, 5, 6, and 2, Mr. Speaker.

I do want to, before I get into kind of the meat of my remarks and the budget, I do want to talk a little bit about what I've heard in the Chamber over the last three or four days. Some absolutely amazing speeches for people who have been here for just such a short time — and veterans, one that we just heard, of course — absolutely amazing speeches. Great content, great delivery, you know, and for some of us that have been around for quite a while, it does make you a little nervous to stand because you don't think you can compete.

And I'm just going to quickly use the analogy. I have a son that does some competing at a pretty high level. He's 27 years old and he's at the end of the age group. And he always continues to say, these young guys, I can't keep up. I can't keep up. I know exactly what he feels like, Mr. Speaker. I can't keep up with some of the deliveries and content that we've heard through so many speakers on both sides of the House. I'll absolutely say on both sides of the House. The content may be different. I may not agree with the content on both sides, on a portion of that side of the

House, Mr. Speaker, but I can tell you that there is passion and there is intelligence and there is amazing ability to deliver. And that is extremely important.

I do just have to address one thing before I go much further, and it was two speakers ago. And the passion, absolutely. And you know, I can't imagine living her life, Mr. Speaker. I have not been a part of that at all and I really admire her passion. Her content, however, Mr. Speaker, I just have to correct one thing when she was going on about the memorial, to the residential school memorial that is being talked about in this province.

I am the Minister of Government Relations, First Nations and Métis Relations, as well as the Capital Commission, so it falls pretty much in the centre of most everything that we're doing within my ministry. And I want to tell the member opposite where the idea came from, who is going to be leading the consultation, who has shown me where this monument is going to be, who suggested where this monument should be.

And I would just say to that member opposite, I think she would be well served if she would talk to the person who came up with the idea, who has identified the location, who has consulted with so many communities, who took the time to show me the location and what he had envisioned through consultation that he's already had. In fact, the first thing that he said to me, he said, I don't know if this is where it should be. I just kind of floated it through so many different avenues. And he said, not a person has disagreed with me. Not a person has thought this is a bad location.

And it's His Honour Russ Mirasty, who attended a residential school, who I think has probably his finger on the heartbeat of that community as well as anybody else. Not everybody's perfect. I mean, not everybody's going to agree. But he has done consultation, and for that member to stand in the House and go on a rant — I understand the passion — but I just would ask her just to take some time and visit with His Honour Russ Mirasty and what he has thought around the monument, because I can tell you when I toured where he suggested it be, I was taken aback on what an excellent location this would be. Because you know, it was said that it was going to be hidden, that it was trying to be hidden away, and what His Honour had said to me, he said, you know, this is going to be a monument that people are going to feel huge emotion. And so do you want to have this huge emotion out in the middle of a high-traffic area?

No. You know, and so you know, and I can hear her hollering from her seat and that's fine, but I just want to tell the rest of the province where the idea came from and who will be leading the consultation. It's a residential school survivor. It isn't the Government of Saskatchewan. It isn't a bunch of elected officials. It was the appointed Lieutenant Governor of this province, Mr. Speaker, and I think he deserves credit for that.

The 2021-22 budget, it's an interesting number because that's about how many budgets I've responded to. This is my 21st or 22nd response to the '21-22 budget, Mr. Speaker. And this one, you know, you could say that all budgets after a while are the same. This one is different for me, big-time different, because I had the privilege to serve on treasury board.

So the Premier, for those that don't know, the Premier picks who sits on treasury board. And I've been lucky enough, when the Premier's looked around the room, I've ducked. I've come to meetings late. I have done everything in my power to miss being appointed to treasury board because I know how much those members have met in the past and, you know, the work that goes into building a budget. I happen to . . . Not that I kind of . . . I guess I didn't duck near low enough.

But I got appointed to treasury board, and it was one of the best experiences I've had in my 20-some years of being elected. Of course didn't get asked to be on treasury board too often in opposition for eight years, but in the 14 years that we've been in government . . . Is it 14? Yes, 14 years that we've been in government. Not quite, because that was a November election, but close to 14 years. It was such a huge learning experience, and I would not duck if the Premier is looking to put somebody on treasury board. In fact, I'd put up my hand because you sure do learn a lot.

And you know, there's a member sitting behind me who was just recently elected and has gone through the treasury board process, and I know that will serve him for many years into the future very, very well.

And so it is a different perspective that you have on the budget after you see every ministry come in front of treasury board and defend their budgets. I have only been in front of treasury board defending, and I could never understand why they said no to me. It just was so frustrating until you're on treasury board and you realize you have to say no because it's never — again, and we've said it so many times — it's never a choice between a good decision and a bad decision. I mean a good idea and a bad idea. No, I'll leave that alone. It's a choice between good idea and good idea, Mr. Speaker. And I felt like that member opposite sometimes when I was trying to defend my budget and they were saying no. I think I let a few squeals like that out myself. Anyway, it has been a great experience.

I also want to quickly . . . And I've been blamed for this before. When I get into thanking people within my constituency, that takes up my 20 minutes and then they say, well, you didn't talk anything about the budget. So I'm going to keep it very short today. I just am going to thank Nicole who is my constituency assistant, who is . . . again for all of us, you know that . . . and for the new members I think we all . . . and if they asked any of the experienced members they would say, take your time and get the best constituency assistant you can, because they are the voice to so many of the concerns that come in. By far, you know, if I've had any success and had the opportunity to represent Indian Head-Milestone through six elections, that has been a large part because of the work that the constituency assistants do. They really are so very important to all of us, and so I can't thank Nicole enough.

I also want to thank a number of the people that have worked in the office of Government Relations. You know, the one thing that you also remember or learn very quickly, and especially maybe in the minister's role, is how quickly things evolve in this building. You are introduced to staff and you meet your staff and you think, oh, this is good; we're going to be together for four years. You're usually pretty lucky if it's four months, Mr. Speaker, because there is continually evolving . . . And in my

office that has already happened. I had Clint Fox as my chief of staff and Bonnie as my senior admin. They've both moved on to different job descriptions here in the building, but I'm very lucky I have Max and Andrea and Hillary and Melissa working in my office right now. Max is my chief of staff and they do great work. Looking forward to being with them for the next three and a half years. Not sure that's going to happen, but looking forward to that.

I also want to quickly touch on the officials that work within the Ministry of Government Relations, First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs. I think that's the one thing, and you know, it's interesting when I hear the opposition speak and certainly, you know, question sometimes decisions that are made and sometimes will kind of go after some of the bureaucracy. And you know, maybe when I was on opposition side, not having a chance to serve in government originally, you don't maybe realize how dedicated the public service are to trying to make sure that we as elected officials can see our agenda through.

They really do. They protect us, you know. We may have some ideas. We'd like to go this way and they tell us why we can't because of logical, rational arguments. And I am very, very blessed with great officials within my ministry — within the ministry, it certainly isn't mine — within the ministry that I happen to get to work with, and have done just a great job getting me up to speed on so many different files in Government Relations, First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs. And so I just can't thank them enough.

And you know, it was mentioned I think by the member from Melfort, I think he was mentioning about we all come from a different perspective. But you know, some of us have had opportunity to serve on the opposition side and now on the government side, and there are a few . . . Actually there is only one member on the opposition side that actually ever served on the government side. The other 12 have only served in opposition.

On our side, it's hard to believe there's only six of us left, Mr. Speaker, you being one of them, that served on the opposition side before we came to government. So that means there's 42 members in this House that have only served on the government side. And that does bring a different perspective for sure, not that it's good one way or the other, but it's good to have as many perspectives as we possibly can.

So the budget. See, I didn't take very long on my thank-yous. That was probably the shortest one in 21 or 22 years, actually. So the budget is protect, build, and grow, and you know, I'll maybe start a little differently than everybody else because I really do not like our budget. It's a deficit budget. Everything that we should do in our power in the next four years or five years is get back to balance because deficit budgets are not okay. They never have been and they never will be.

And when I hear a government, maybe the federal government that really has no idea when they're going to get to balance, and when the opposition, you know, stands and talks about spending more, and you know, that's what the opposition does each and every time, they have no idea how they would ever get to balance.

And so if there is one thing that is really . . . And it's, you know,

the first budget that I've been on treasury board, and I have to say I don't like the budget very much because we're in a deficit position and I don't want to be in a deficit position. We should never, ever think it's okay to be in a deficit position, even though the times dictate it. Absolutely they do.

And if we go back a number of years ago, five or six years ago, when we were in a deficit and our government did everything that we could do to get into balance, and we were literally two weeks away from being in balance until COVID hit, and it changed everything. But there were tough decisions, and tough decisions made by those treasury board members I know, that had to make those decisions to get us back to balance because balance is where we have to be in this province.

Deficit budgeting is not okay. Deficit budgeting because of a pandemic is a different beast, and I guess it's one that we're going to have to put up with. As the Minister of Finance I think said, and it's been mentioned a couple of times — hard to believe — but not since World War II has Saskatchewan, has Canada, has the world had an impact like what we are seeing with COVID-19. And so we've had to adjust and we've had to accept the reality that we are in. We've had to fund certain programs to make sure we get to the other side of this in relatively good shape, Mr. Speaker.

The very first part of the budget, it talks about protecting. So when I look at protecting, you know, there's many ministries that worked towards protecting us through this COVID-19, but no more two that are front and centre than the Ministry of Health, and Trade and Export Development, because it is those two ministries, more than anyone else I believe, that are kind of in the middle of the whole piece around protection.

You know, it is a record year for health care. It's the highest budget. Every year it goes up, but it's the highest budget by far — health care. I thought I was a big spender when I was . . . [inaudible] . . . and in fact I was. But this budget is extremely high, but it has to be.

I had the opportunity to — and if you haven't and you're of age, I was kind of glad when I wasn't of age, wasn't old enough but now I'm more than old enough — to go and get my COVID shot on Tuesday. I went through the drive-through. And for anybody that's been through any of the clinics, whether it's the walk-in clinics or the drive-through — amazing, absolutely amazing. I've heard more positive . . .

You know, it's funny because I've listened to most of the opposition speeches. I haven't heard a positive word about anything, but if they were to find at least one positive . . . And I know they're younger. Maybe the member from Cumberland has been vaccinated and, you know, maybe he would have something positive to say about the vaccination clinics because they are amazing and the amount of money . . . So you know, the health budget is going to support those clinics so that we can get vaccinated on a timely basis as quickly as we possibly can. How impressed I was of that.

I often wonder, and the last member was doing a game of *Jeopardy!* and it was great, and it talked a little bit about the NDP's record and it talked about the government's record. But I thought different times about . . . kind of loud over there, but I

thought different times about, how would we be in this pandemic? Because this pandemic, nobody knew when it was coming. Can you imagine if we were in this pandemic in 2006?

What would have happened in 2006? We had 1,000 less doctors. Think of this. In Saskatchewan we had 1,000 less doctors. We had 4,000, 4,000 less nurses working in this province, and a pandemic hits. We had long-term care facilities, and I toured a bunch of them because . . . When we first became government, I'll never forget going to Rosetown where we built a new long-term care facility. And it was two levels. And you'd think ground floor, second floor. It wasn't. It was ground floor and basement. And they had an old elevator that would take those patients up and down, and the second outlet for those people living in long-term care under the NDP was a spiral staircase. Can you imagine people in level 3 and 4 using a spiral staircase if that elevator didn't work? Unbelievable.

We've replaced 13 or 14 or 15 — this list is growing — 16 long-term care facilities in this province. We have a lot more to do, absolutely. We'll never say that the work is done because it isn't. And there are situations that are unacceptable in this province under our government, and I will say, absolutely. But what I haven't heard is a member on the opposite side look at what would have happened if they would have been in government with 4,000 less nurses, 1,000 less doctors, and facilities that had seniors living in the basement, Mr. Speaker, in multiroom conditions. Unbelievable, Mr. Speaker. And so when we hear some of the rhetoric that comes from that side, they need to look back. And I know some of those members weren't elected, but they stand for the same principles as the party that was in power in 2006 and before, Mr. Speaker.

The other organization I really wanted to talk really briefly about is TED, the Trade and Export Development, because under TED is the business response team. And the business response team has been incredible through this time. Some very, very tough decisions, and I can tell you in my constituency one of those tough decisions they had to make was, do they keep the ski hill open. And at the start they weren't going to. And they had said that, you know, they could only have 150 people and the place wouldn't operate at 150 people. And then they looked at it further as it got closer to the season and they gave them the green light to operate.

Now I know at that time the opposition was calling for a, probably I think it was a circuit breaker, which would have ruined the season for them absolutely. Close it down for a month, and then maybe we'll see whether you can open up in January. Well you can't do that on a ski hill. And thank heavens the business response team looked at it because people just naturally when you're on skis and poles, you're probably six feet apart or a snowboard you're on six feet apart. You've always got masks on, you've always got gloves on. The restaurant and the bar area have all the precautions put in place. That was the busiest season they ever had. This past year has been the busiest season they ever had. And do you know how many cases through there? They had a zero record for cases in that . . .

And you know, the interesting part is so yes, it gave great recreation for a lot of people — absolutely. But what it did, there was 180 people employed through that ski hill through the winter through part-time. One hundred and eighty people would have

been out of work just in that area if we would have listened to the Leader of the Opposition. Because I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, if it comes to listening to the Leader of the Opposition, who is a doctor, or listening to Dr. Shahab and his recommendation, I'm taking Dr. Shahab's recommendation every day of the week, Mr. Speaker.

That's the protect, the build, Mr. Speaker. How does this budget . . .

The Speaker: — It now being 5 p.m., this Assembly stands adjourned till tomorrow at 10 a.m., 10 a.m. tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.]

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

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President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

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Minister of Highways
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Water Security Agency

Hon. Lori Carr
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Minister of Energy and Resources

Hon. Donna Harpauer
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Minister of Finance

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Minister of Immigration and Career Training
Minister Responsible for Innovation
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