



FIRST SESSION — THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE

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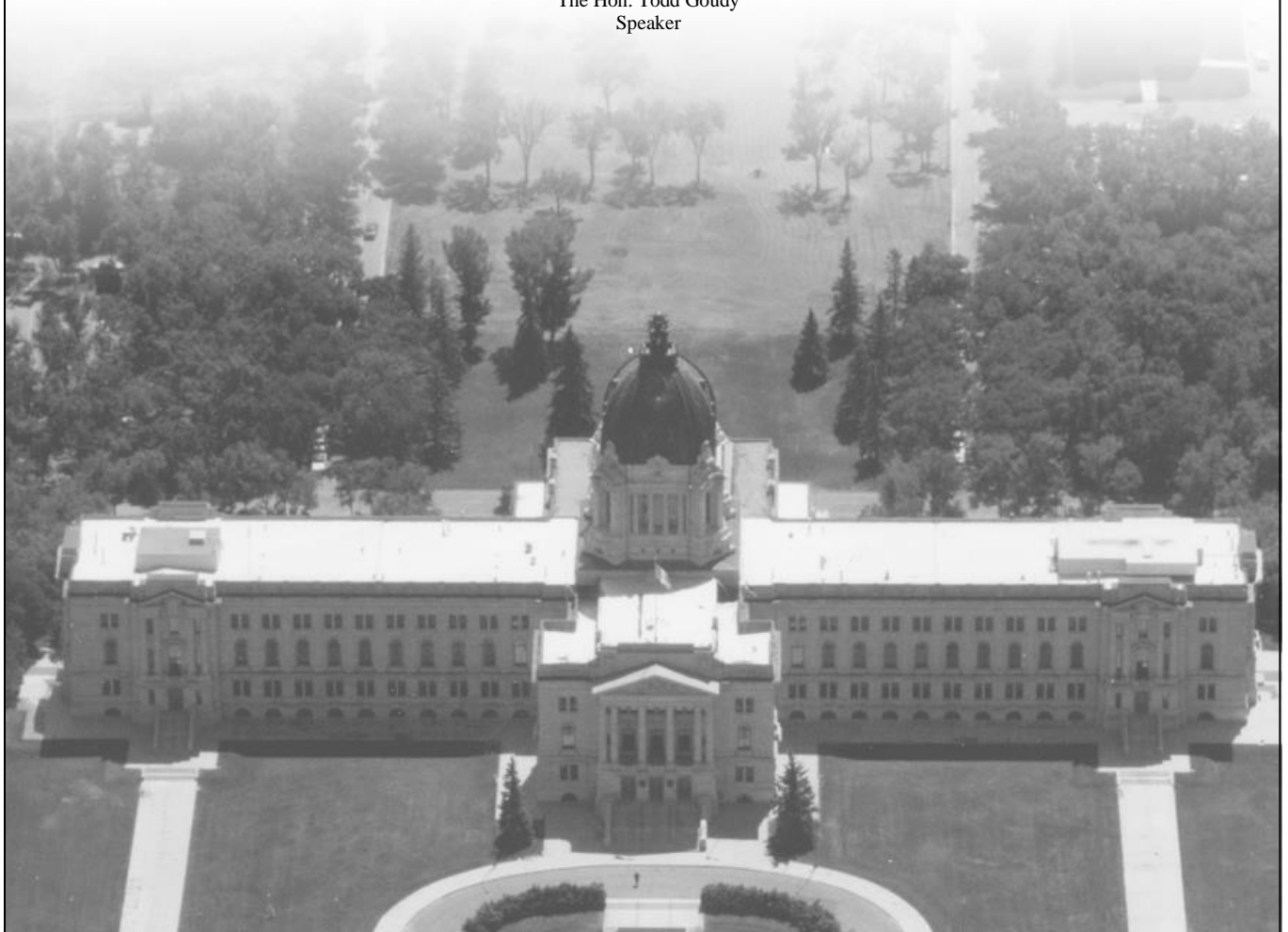
**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

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**DEBATES  
AND  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)  
Published under the  
authority of  
The Hon. Todd Goudy  
Speaker



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**  
**1st Session — 30th Legislature**

**Lieutenant Governor** — Her Honour the Honourable Bernadette McIntyre, S.O.M.

**Speaker** — Hon. Todd Goudy  
**Premier** — Hon. Scott Moe  
**Leader of the Opposition** — Carla Beck

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**Standings**

Government Caucus: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 34; Opposition Caucus: New Democratic Party (NDP) — 27

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**Clerk** — Iris Lang

**Deputy Clerk** — Kathy Burianyak

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[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

**EVENING SITTING**

**Speaker Goudy:** — It now being 7 o'clock, we'll resume debate.

**SPECIAL ORDER**

**ADJOURNED DEBATES**

**BUDGET DEBATE**

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

**Speaker Goudy:** — And I recognize the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford.

**James Thorsteinson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm truly happy to be able to rise once again and deliver the remainder of my response to the budget.

I touched a fair bit on health and education. Started getting into some of the things that we are doing around keeping our communities safe, making sure that people are safe in their communities, whether they want to go for a walk or take their kids to the park. And that's really something that we are very, very focused on as a government.

We're adding more officers — 100 new municipal officers, 14 safer communities and neighbourhoods personnel — to reduce crime by targeting the nuisance properties. I can think of a number in my constituency that are a problem. So that's going to help in that. As well as 50 new officers in the marshals service beginning this year, a full year ahead of schedule, which is phenomenal. And thank you to the work of the people behind the new marshals service and getting that up and running this much ahead of schedule.

But one thing also that we know, Mr. Speaker, is this government knows a significant portion of crime in our province is related to drug addiction and mental health. And we also know that no illicit drug is safe to use. And that is why we're focused on a recovery-based system of care by adding additional treatment beds across the province to help those who are struggling with addiction to make their journey towards recovery.

We're also providing \$6 million in new funding for the expansion of complex-needs emergency shelters in new communities across Saskatchewan. This will allow more people to access these services when they are in crisis, providing them a safe place to stabilize and protect themselves and others in the process. They then receive follow-up support, access to programs and services to take the necessary first steps on the road to recovery.

Mr. Speaker, all these initiatives I've spoken on and more are proof that the Saskatchewan Party government is delivering for you in this budget no matter where you live in this, the greatest province in the country.

But I'd like to focus now on a few things that are more impactful perhaps for the great people of Cut Knife-Turtleford, the constituency I am . . . [inaudible] . . . to represent. As most are aware, the two main economic drivers in my home constituency are oil and agriculture. If you don't work directly in either of those two industries, you are more than likely serving someone who is. Now these industries sometimes get overshadowed at budget time by some of the larger items contained within the budget, but I'd like to put on the record that our government is delivering for those who work in these important industries that help drive our economy.

The announcement of the low productivity and reactivation oil well program will incentivize resource companies to invest in turning low-producing or non-producing wells into highly productive horizontal wells. With a large number of wells that fit this criteria in my area, this is a benefit to the company, their employees, oil field service companies, and the entire province.

Mr. Speaker, this budget also delivers for our hard-working agriculture producers across the province. Agriculture leads the province in exports, and through the work of our nine trade offices in countries around the world we continue to grow our exports, providing food security to those countries around the world who rely on our world-class products. Our government continues to invest in research to develop the best genetics in crop, forage, and livestock to assist not only our producers here at home but those around the world.

We're also putting over \$480 million into the existing suite of business risk management programs, including crop insurance and AgriStability. This continued commitment ensures that our Crop Insurance Fund remains intact and able to help producers in the face of difficult growing conditions which may occur.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm nearing the end of my remarks, but there is one thing I would like to touch on. Our government has received some criticism, mostly from the members opposite, that we have no contingency plan built into this budget to deal the potential effect of tariffs imposed by our southern neighbour. While it's true that some other provinces have included these measures in their budget process, they have done so by increasing deficits. We're taking a different approach, a reasonable approach. Instead of borrowing now just in case we need it later, we have delivered a budget that is balanced.

Mr. Speaker, we are able to do this because of a strong and growing economy built by the hard-working men and women of this province. If we need to support those hard-working folks because of external pressures caused by tariffs or anything else, we are able to pivot quickly to do so because of our strong fiscal position, just like we did recently when steel tariffs were introduced. Our Crown corporations ordered 10 000 tonnes of product from Evraz — three years of procurement — to assist them through this time and help avoid layoffs.

Our agriculture sector is also being hit hard, both by Chinese tariffs and the threat of US [United States] tariffs. Our ag producers can rest assured that we will support them and their families with both crop insurance and AgriStability, and I encourage those not already enrolled to do so soon, as the deadline is fast approaching.

On the livestock side of things, I feel I need to once again correct the record. While I don't want the member from Regina Mount Royal to feel like I'm picking on him, he does bring it on himself. He's mentioned multiple times on the floor of this Assembly that feeder cattle prices have plummeted in the face of US tariffs. Now I don't know where he would market his cattle if he had any, but as a livestock producer myself I pay very close attention to the markets and what they are doing.

Over the last two weeks the price of feeder cattle has actually gone up 10 to \$22 a hundredweight two weeks ago, another 4 to \$9 a hundred last week. Slaughter cows are up. Slaughter bulls are up. Replacement heifers are through the roof, and breeding bulls are selling at record highs. That doesn't sound like plummeting to me; that sounds like optimism for a very strong industry.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say I am proud of the budget our government has presented and the many ways it delivers for the people of Saskatchewan. I will be voting against the proposed amendment and voting in favour of the budget presented by the Minister of Finance and seconded by the member from White City-Qu'Appelle. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker Goudy:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Stonebridge.

**Darcy Warrington:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to continue this budget debate on behalf of the residents of Saskatoon Stonebridge. And to my son Miles watching at home, keep the water in the tub for the sake of your mom's sanity. Hi, Miles.

I am also honoured to present on their behalf, these constituents, how this budget fails the people of this province and how it completely ignores the challenges of the people and families of Saskatchewan. To do so I'd like to share my experience growing up on the farm. As an urban MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] with rural roots, it will always be important for me to highlight small-town and rural Saskatchewan, and my farming experience over the last few decades will never be taken for granted.

I was at Canada's Farm Show with our Sask NDP [New Democratic Party] caucus last Monday and Tuesday, and seeing the 1959 84-horsepower 830 John Deere on display — an impressive, reliable, game-changing tractor on the Prairies — had me feeling nostalgic about my grandparents Roy and Annie Warrington, who farmed in west central Saskatchewan from 1939 in the constituency of the member from Kindersley-Biggar.

Their story is one about continuous adaptation and openness to new ideas and investing in those ideas with the promise that their family would reap the rewards and a good life, partnered with hard work. They bought that same tractor for their farm the year it was released.

But I need to enlighten you all about the augers of their farm. One of the earliest augers on the Roy and Annie Warrington farm near Loverna, Saskatchewan was a 5-inch auger. It would roughly take an hour to move 500 bushels of grain into a bin. Years later when the farm increased in size, efficiency became crucial. My grandfather was keen to innovations in agriculture and

recognized that in order to continue to make a living and support his family, additional investment needed to occur throughout.

So they moved on to a 10-inch auger, allowing the same amount of grain to get into the bin within now only five minutes. This allowed for a faster return to the field to bring the inevitable bumper crop back to the bin. You see, Mr. Speaker, farms went from roughly 300 acres to 3,000 acres in many instances. This was required to maintain a good standard of living and was only possible through valuing technology and innovation. It also took hard-earned dollars to be churned back into the farm and reinvested to ensure that growth and prosperity continued.

My Grandpa Roy tragically passed away in 1995 suddenly of a heart attack when he was extinguishing a fire to the family home on their acreage south of Loverna. If he were still with us beyond that year, there's no doubt in my mind he would have invested in a 13-inch auger to again cut the time significantly to get that grain in the bin. And if he were still with us, he'd have seen the newest model of the 830 John Deere on display at Canada's Farm Show — not \$4,000 to purchase, but 1.25 million. To justify such a purchase 3,000 acres wouldn't cut it. A machine like that is only justified if you farmed tens of thousands of acres.

Mr. Speaker, I say all these things for a reason. You see, I'm a teacher. Teachers understand that when a student doesn't understand a lesson we must adapt to the circumstances and try something new. People learn in different ways through different, multiple intelligences. Finding the strengths in everyone is crucial to presenting material to a variety of students successfully.

So to this government, a government as blessed with farmers as our side is blessed with teachers, I suggest that this budget is a 10-inch auger and it's falling behind. They try to tell you about the ghosts of the 5-inch auger to get you to forget about the possibilities of an even better piece of machinery. We need to invest in the 13-inch auger or the grain — Saskatchewan's prosperity — isn't going to make it into the bin, and we won't be able to get the rest of the crop off. That beautiful \$1.25 million 830 John Deere will be sitting idle without it.

The Sask Party government has overseen Saskatchewan's fall to last place in many areas, including education and health care, yet they continue to shirk the responsibility of meaningfully investing in this province and its people.

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party isn't setting up health care and education to get their grain in the bin fast enough. Without a generational investment into our education and health care staff to dig us out of this hole that this government has planted us in, we won't be able to get our goals and our dreams to market.

Before I talk about our schools, I would like to compliment the Minister of Education. In all of his responses during question period since November 28th regarding education funding, he has strictly avoided the words "per capita" to describe student funding. Great job, but odd. This has me believe that he recognizes at least subconsciously "per-student funding" is the more accurate terminology to describe anemic funding in our classrooms. Perhaps he's learned from the 13,000 teachers across the province who heard the current Minister of Health use "per capita" over and over and over to describe education funding.

I was one of those teachers standing up for the learning conditions of students. I can attest it was like nails on the chalkboard hearing “per capita.” As soon as our 80-year-olds in retirement homes and infants in the cribs start attending school, the Sask Party government can refer to education funding as “per capita.”

However despite this small step, I would recognize the '24-25 Ministry of Education forecast when compared to this year's budget indicates that more learning must occur. The federal Jordan's principle funding was a band-aid for a cut to a major artery. Don't get me wrong — that funding and the positions it provides are incredibly important to the students that are able to receive EA [educational assistant] support, but those positions are too few and often overextended. So when it was recently removed, 80 EAs lost their jobs, and so many more students lost valuable one-on-one support or even small-group support in their Saskatoon classrooms.

Recently the members from Saskatoon Silverspring, Saskatoon Eastview, and myself spoke with a local parent, Erin Gerwing, about what an EA means to their son Luca who was potentially scheduled to lose his educational assistant. She told of how Luca and any student with disruptions to their routines, with learning disabilities, might naturally experience undue stress when they have their educational assistants, who have been supporting them for extended periods of time for years, removed from their classrooms. It adds undue stress for families and for the educational assistants themselves because they might not only find themselves unemployed like many in Saskatchewan, but also take on unnecessary guilt for the unsupported situation that that student is left in.

[19:15]

It's undignified to kids. Let's not forget we are talking about the children of our province. This government is ripping away our children's support, but this is consistent with how this government has taken away the social supports and not invested in them in this province. And if this government tries to suggest that it's the feds' fault — like they do with seemingly many problems — they should read a book about what Jordan's principle is all about and do the right thing and make sure this carelessness is discontinued immediately.

Without the support of these hard-working, underpaid support staff in schools, not only will specific students suffer; every student in that class suffers. There's an expression in education that 20 per cent of the students get 80 per cent of the teacher's attention. Resources are already spread so thin because of this government's long-standing refusal to prioritize properly funding education. Suddenly removing these EAs means that teachers will be stretched broadly, that even less of their attention can be focused on each and every deserving member of their already overcrowded classroom.

And does this government know that our school boards are even tasked with paying for nurses? My Sask NDP caucus colleagues and I met at a school in Saskatoon recently with nursing staff on hand for the students with great medical needs in their building. You know who pays for those nurses? It's not the Ministry of Health. It's the school division footing the bill for the students' medical needs. The moment an empathetic and thoughtful

minister of Health or minister of Education came across this realization, it should have been remedied.

I could go on about education as a former teacher, but I'm curious what the most common email the members of this House have been receiving from constituents lately. Could it be tariffs and this government's lacklustre response to the upcoming trade war? That would be a good guess. Could it be the health care crisis in the running? What about \$10-a-day child care? That's the one. Our Sask NDP caucus have collectively in the last several weeks received hundreds of letters about the federal child care agreement that 11 provinces and territories have already signed on to while this government has neglected to.

How many emails did the members opposite receive? What will it take for this government to care about those whose concerns aren't being addressed through this budget? I'd wager a guess that combined, both sides have received way more than 17 letters. If that was the threshold for drastic action from this government in the past with Bill 137, we better do something about this.

So not only does the budget cut an underfunded education program in our province, the same can be said about health care. Despite a \$17 million cut — and it is a cut even if the members opposite won't admit it — the Minister of Health would have you believe that building additional emergency care facilities is the number one solution to stop the bleeding of our urban emergency rooms.

People in Saskatoon are seeing a daily reduction of five hours to the emergency room every day at Saskatoon City Hospital until June, this despite the fact that emergency rooms at places like RUH [Royal University Hospital] and St. Paul's are already routinely at or above 200 per cent capacity. People like registered nurse Stephanie Fehr and Dr. Adam Ogieglo have indicated that until we can fully staff the facilities we already have in urban areas, more hospitals and emergency care facilities won't get us out of this health care crisis. What good are hospital beds if there are no attending physicians to be there with them?

Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you why this government thinks new facilities are the solution. It's because the Sask Party government likes the idea of a ribbon cutting more than they care about the health of the people of Saskatchewan. It is because the Sask Party government cares more about headlines than they do the health of the people of Saskatchewan.

I hate to break it to the Speaker, but as nice as the hypothetical headline “Sask Party government opening additional ER facilities” looks, it's slightly undercut by the line below it reading “with no new health care workers to staff them.” Quit chasing headlines. Listen to the advice of actual medical professionals. The nursing staff task force should have been activated years ago. Stop the cuts. Invest in our health care system.

There is already a generation in this province that was born under the government, completed their schooling under this government, and have already left the province for other opportunities because of this government.

I spoke with an emergency room doctor in Saskatoon recently. During a friendly conversation, what we were watching on streaming services came up. I mentioned *The Pitt*, an emergency

room drama in Pittsburgh. He said he loved it despite it giving him, as he said, PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder]. I asked him how true to life the show is, as it's received high critical praise. He said, honestly I would say it's worse here. I encourage all the members opposite and my colleagues to check it out and to see if they could fathom a situation that's worse and sit idly by with a \$17.1 million cut to our health care system as proposed in the budget.

Again I'd like to bring up Stephanie Fehr. She's a health care professional, a registered nurse who spoke about the challenges in our emergency rooms. She told it straight, unedited. The overcrowding. Not only not being able to sit in the waiting rooms, but having nowhere to stand. The beds in hallways when people are at their worst moment, being told the worst news they've ever heard in their entire lives. No privacy, no dignity. The ambulances waiting in the loading dock unable to move to the next emergency as there's no space in the ER [emergency room]. The burnout. The feeling futile. They wish to help as many as they can, but they're burdened by not having the resources in place to do so.

Agriculture is the foundation of this province and for good reason. We are great at it. We have, and have had for many decades, an incredible world-class agricultural industry. Yet President Donald Trump calls what we produce dirty and uninspected. Mr. Speaker, the Premier was called upon by the Leader of the Opposition to condemn these disgusting comments from the American president on our agricultural industry, and he refused to do so.

This is weak behaviour but honestly it can be expected. We can't rely on this government to stand up for our children, our health care, for the women of this province forced to go to Calgary for mammograms. Why would we expect them to stand up against Donald Trump?

**Speaker Goudy:** — Sorry. I have heard a number of people mention “weak,” but when you start speaking about an individual as “weak,” that's offside. Thanks.

**Darcy Warrington:** — This government has failed to include meaningful plans regarding tariffs and is not future focused.

They certainly aren't focused on debt problem in Saskatchewan either. The term “fiscal conservatives” is often floated about by citizens of this great province. Would those people be comfortable knowing that our provincial debt has grown from roughly \$10 billion to \$38 billion over the last 18 years? I don't think so. This debt will cost taxpayers \$1 billion annually just to service. And that number will only grow by over \$100 million every year for the next three budgets.

Shame on a government for claiming to be fiscally responsible when these are the results.

I'd like to close with some remarks of gratitude outside of the analysis of this budget. The Leader of the Opposition has bestowed upon me the privilege to serve as our caucus's shadow minister for Parks, Culture and Sport. As a former phys ed teacher, music teacher, band teacher valuing the mosaic that is our classrooms and our province, it's a privilege and an honour to go to so many events like SMPIA [Saskatchewan Media

Production Industry Association] banquets, Globe Theatre's production of *Peter Pan*, Persephone performances.

There's just so many things, whether it's meeting with the executive director of Hockey Saskatchewan or meeting with Steven Turner in Kindersley during the Prairie Pinnacle and the Tankard. It's truly an honour to work with people in this community and try and highlight the good things that they are doing in terms of community-based organizations.

I'd also like to offer my appreciation for our constituency assistant Levi Nilson. Levi helped us win the election in Saskatoon Stonebridge in October, and he had such a good time here we actually transplanted him from Calgary to Saskatoon. So that's going to help with the government's interprovincial migration. Levi, you keep me in order. You know what I need to be doing, and I appreciate all of your guidance. Our office not only . . . with the member from Saskatoon Southeast and the member from Saskatoon Eastview, we're all pleased and so happy to have you guiding us each and every day on Taylor Street in Saskatoon.

And last but not least, a closing anecdote about the value of Canadian citizenship and patriotism. I had the honour of attending, with the member from Saskatoon University-Sutherland, a citizenship ceremony on March 11th at TCU Place in Saskatoon. Ninety-six citizens from twenty-four countries, with myself and various other dignitaries welcomed these people to join us in our citizenship and to value the country that we live in. The pure joy and excitement on the faces of every single person in that room, whether they just became citizens or witnessing the moment, was truly magical, and I'll never forget it. And I'll always go out of my way to attend those ceremonies to be a part of that patriotic moment when they become citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the budget. I will be supporting the amendment moved by the member from Regina Mount Royal. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker Goudy:** — I recognize the member from Moosomin-Montmartre.

**Kevin Weedmark:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to start my response to the budget by thanking the Finance minister, cabinet members, Finance officials, and everyone who had any input into the budget process, putting countless hours of work into the preparation of this budget.

I also want to say, Mr. Speaker, just how much I'm enjoying my role as an MLA and how much I'm learning every day. I've been around this province so much over the last five months getting to know my colleagues, meeting people with various groups, addressing many organizations, dealing with my constituents and people around the province with issues and concerns to discuss, and I've enjoyed every single minute of it.

In my role as Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Health, I'm learning so much from the Minister of Health and the Minister of Rural and Remote Health, Mental Health and Addictions, and Seniors. So at this point my learning curve is approximately 100 per cent vertical. And as I get around the province and settle into my role, there's one thing that I keep learning again and again. Every single day I learn the same lesson, which is that I've got



an awful lot more to learn yet.

I appreciate all my colleagues who are helping me learn my role as an MLA, and I appreciate the Minister of Health and the Minister of Rural and Remote Health for helping me learn the health file which is a large and complex file. And I have a lot of respect for both of them for the way they deal with the issues in that file, and I am learning a lot from them every single day.

Mr. Speaker, I've had such tremendous opportunities to meet people, not only in my riding but right across the province over these months. And at event after event, meeting after meeting, forum after forum, I've met so many wonderful people and heard about their vision for Saskatchewan, their priorities, their hopes for the future, and their fears, their thoughts on the biggest challenges for the province and the biggest opportunities.

And, Mr. Speaker, I've always known that this is a beautiful province full of amazing people, but that impression is made even stronger every single day now. I've been around the province. I've been to Rosthern where I toured the Mennonite Nursing Home. I've been to the Cozy Nest Care Home at Dundurn. I've toured the Yorkton regional hospital with the Minister of Health and the Minister of Rural and Remote Health. I've toured the STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Service] base here in Regina with the Minister of Health. So learning so much and meeting so many people.

But of all my duties over the last few months, Mr. Speaker, I was particularly honoured to be able to emcee the announcement of funding for the Ronald McDonald House here in Regina because over the years I've known quite a few people who have stayed at the Ronald McDonald House in Saskatoon as their children have had medical issues there, and they always speak very highly of that organization. And I know that that facility in Regina is going to make a difference.

A lot of those people want to give back. And the day that that announcement was being made in Regina, Summer Heide from Moosomin was in the midst of an online fundraiser that she organized. Summer had to have a total gastrectomy when she was young because of stomach cancer, and her daughter has the same condition and was in Saskatoon hospital and just a few weeks ago had surgery. And Summer stayed at the Ronald McDonald House in Saskatoon and decided she wanted to give back. So she organized an online fundraiser and through that fundraiser raised \$6,500 for Ronald McDonald House.

[19:30]

And around the same time, Chris MacPherson from Wapella had a herd dispersal sale at Whitewood Livestock, and he donated all the proceeds from two bred heifers to Ronald McDonald Houses. His daughter had been born with a heart defect, and the family spent the first few weeks of her life at a Ronald McDonald House. And the sale of those two heifers, Mr. Speaker, that raised another 14,500 for Ronald McDonald Houses. So that shows you what kind of support there is for that organization. And I'm proud to see that our government's priorities reflect our people's priorities.

And, Mr. Speaker, meeting so many people over the last few months, like those two folks who are making a difference in their

communities, makes me appreciate the tenacity, the drive, the resourcefulness of Saskatchewan people. And, Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to serve those people in this Assembly.

And it's an honour to speak today to a budget that provides these people with the strong and steady plan that manages to do something very difficult, Mr. Speaker, manages to provide improved or increased services in many areas — record spending in health care, record spending in education, record municipal revenue sharing to help our hard-working municipal councils provide services close to home, and at the same time provides tax cuts for every individual, family, and business in this province. And, Mr. Speaker, it combines those things — improved services, increased spending, and tax cuts — and results in a balanced bottom line, which I think is pretty commendable.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance minister delivered a budget that does something very difficult, combining the largest tax cut since 2008 with increased program spending and coming to a point of balance. And, Mr. Speaker, the budget we are debating is a balanced budget that delivers on the priorities of the people of Saskatchewan while keeping our province's finances strong and stable in a time of volatility, uncertainty, and instability around the world. This is a budget that will deliver on the priorities of this province, the priorities of the people of this province; the priorities of the people I've been talking to for the last few months. It delivers on affordability. It delivers on health care. It delivers on education. It delivers on safer communities, and it delivers on fiscal stability.

In my riding, Mr. Speaker, the budget includes funds for the repaving of Highway 8 between Moosomin and Rocanville. This is a highway between the largest population centre in the region and the two largest potash mines in the world at Rocanville and Esterhazy. That's a very busy highway, Mr. Speaker, and I'm glad to see that there is funds in this budget for the repaving of that highway.

Also in my riding, Mr. Speaker, the budget includes \$10 million for construction of the Grenfell long-term care home in addition to the \$10 million committed in the last year. This will be an important addition to the capacity for long-term care in our region and will help build the future of Grenfell and the entire region. And I want to congratulate the members of the Grenfell health care foundation for all their hard work on this project which is important not only to the people of Grenfell but to the whole region.

Mr. Speaker, this budget includes initiatives that will make our communities stronger, including record revenue sharing for municipal governments. Saskatchewan is the only province that provides stable, predictable funding to municipalities to spend how they want on their local priorities, and more will be provided to municipalities this year than ever before.

The budget includes a record \$362 million in municipal revenue sharing, an increase of \$22 million from last year. In total, \$8.344 million in revenue-sharing grants are going to municipalities in my riding of Moosomin-Montmartre this year, a massive increase from the 2.7 million that communities received in 2007.

For instance, Mr. Speaker, the town of Moosomin will receive

\$817,000 this year. The town of Indian Head will receive \$562,000, just to name a couple. The RM [rural municipality] of Elcapo will receive 717,000. The RM of Montmartre will receive 477,000, just to name a couple. So, Mr. Speaker, this increase will make a real difference for our communities.

There are a few new initiatives in this budget, Mr. Speaker. It includes the creation of a new young entrepreneur bursary that will provide bursaries of \$5,000 to some of our young entrepreneurs. Some communities, like my community of Moosomin, are already leveraging that with other programs to focus on young entrepreneurs. Thursday afternoon of last week, a few business folks and community people in Moosomin were in the high school in Moosomin, talking to grade 10 students about the benefits of entrepreneurship, the possibilities of getting into business, and speaking about programs like that young entrepreneur bursary and also local initiatives, like the CBA [Community Builders Alliance] that helps people get into business.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'll just mention that one of those people who was speaking that day was Victor Santos Cardoza, who I had the honour of introducing to this House during the fall session as the youngest person ever elected to Moosomin town council at the age of 20. I'm incredibly proud of him and all the other people in my community who took one look at this initiative of this government and said, how can we build on that? How can we leverage that and create even more supports for our young entrepreneurs?

Mr. Speaker, this budget also includes the creation of a new small and medium-enterprise investment tax credit, which is a new 45 per cent tax credit for people and companies that invest in the equity of an eligible Saskatchewan small business. Initially this is a pilot project for specific industries, including food processing and machinery and transportation manufacturing. And I know that there will be a lot of interest in it.

I was chatting with a constituent on Saturday morning who was expanding his food production business, supplying frozen food to grocery stores in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. And he has just secured a space to expand his operation so he can meet the growing demand. Mr. Speaker, this is a small business. This is a gentleman who came from Ukraine, started a small business, and it's growing very quickly. And he's to the point where he is looking for additional investors, and this is the exact type of situation that that program is aimed at.

Mr. Speaker, this budget includes funding to match community fundraising efforts for school playground equipment, something that will impact many of our communities and leverage local fundraising dollars with provincial dollars, making that community fundraising go so much further.

Mr. Speaker, this budget includes strong support for agriculture, which really is the backbone of our economy in this province. I have the deepest respect, Mr. Speaker, for our farmers, who are in a business where so much is out of their control, and now face the added pressure of tariffs imposed on our agriculture products in response to tariffs imposed by the federal government on Chinese EVs [electric vehicle].

The budget includes a low productivity and reactivation oil well

program that will encourage industry to make new capital investments in the oil industry. I know that that's going to have a large impact in my region of the province and other oil-producing regions.

Mr. Speaker, this budget helps ensure Saskatchewan remains the most affordable place in Canada to live, work, raise a family, and start a business. The budget reduces income taxes for every resident and family and small business in the province and makes life more affordable for seniors, families with children, people living with disabilities, caregivers, new graduates, first-time homebuyers, and people renovating their homes. The taxation changes provide over \$250 million in tax savings to Saskatchewan residents this year — \$250 million, a quarter billion dollars. This includes raising the basic personal exemption, spousal exemption, dependent child exemption, and the seniors' supplement by \$500 a year for the next four years over and above the impact of indexation to account for inflation. Mr. Speaker, that's the largest personal income tax reduction in Saskatchewan since 2008.

This budget also delivers better patient access across Saskatchewan. The Ministry of Health is receiving a record \$8.1 billion, an increase of \$485 million. The Saskatchewan Health Authority receives an increase of \$261 million for a record \$4.9 billion budget. And the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency receives \$279 million, an increase of \$30 million or more than 12 per cent. These increases will lead to real improvements.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, this budget includes \$10 million for the Grenfell care home in my constituency. Mr. Speaker, when you look through the budget documents, number after number and project after project, sometimes what doesn't come through is the human element. That care home, Mr. Speaker, it isn't just a budget item. It is something that will make lives better for individuals. It will mean that people can enter care in their home community rather than having to move to another community at one of the most vulnerable stages of their lives. These numbers, Mr. Speaker, have human implications. These line items improve lives.

One way this budget will improve lives is through the expansion of glucose monitoring coverage which, Mr. Speaker, will improve the lives of 10,000 Saskatchewan people who are living with diabetes. Ten thousand people, Mr. Speaker.

Another way we'll be improving lives in the health space, Mr. Speaker, is with the opening of the breast health centre in Regina, which will provide a full range of services and wraparound support for women who are living with a breast cancer diagnosis. Mr. Speaker, this new centre will make a difference for women living with breast cancer. And, Mr. Speaker, I think we all know someone who has lived with the diagnosis of breast cancer, so we all know just how important this is. I have a friend who right now is in a tough battle with breast cancer, and I'm so happy this facility will be here for her and for all women battling breast cancer in the future.

Mr. Speaker, wait times are being addressed in this budget, and an additional investment of \$15.1 million will help plans to perform 450,000 procedures over four years and reduce surgical wait times. This includes the introduction of robot-assisted

surgery at Pasqua Hospital in Regina and enhancing other services. And, Mr. Speaker, reducing those wait times will improve people's lives.

Changes at Saskatoon City Hospital will also help address capacity pressures in Saskatoon with a multi-phased approach to open more than 100 acute care beds. This \$30 million investment will support physical space upgrades to expand acute care.

Mr. Speaker, dollars are one thing, but our health care system is built on people. And I have learned so much meeting with physicians and individuals who work in the health care system over the last few months, across my riding and across the province. I've toured nursing homes around the province. I've toured Yorkton regional hospital, met with the Saskatchewan Medical Association board of directors along with the Minister of Health and Minister of Rural and Remote Health. And I appreciate every one of those tours, every one of those meetings. I've learned something at every single one of them. I appreciate all those people I've met who work in our health care system and what they contribute.

And I understand the complexities of our health care system. But the most important thing that I've come to understand is that our health care system is built on people. These investments in this budget give those people who are the foundation of our health system the tools they need to serve the people of this province. Training close to home is very important, Mr. Speaker. I've seen the benefits of the southeast family medicine residency program in my area. I've seen the difference it's made for family medicine. And our government is creating more training spaces close to home.

Mr. Speaker, the College of Medicine will add 10 more in-province physician training seats for family medicine, anesthesia, plastic surgery, and other specialties, for a total of 150 provincial seats. The budget also includes supports for 65 new and enhanced permanent full-time nursing positions in 30 rural and northern locations across the province.

Mr. Speaker, over the last two years more than \$5 billion has been invested in K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education. This budget provides \$3.5 billion to the Ministry of Education, an increase of \$184 million, and school operating funding will be increased 8.4 per cent to a total of \$2.4 billion.

Expansion of child care spaces is also important for growing communities. In my constituency we have 474 regulated child care spaces currently and another 164 under development — 90 in Moosomin, 40 at Cowessess First Nation, and 34 in Indian Head. And I'm glad to say that construction is going to start soon on a new building for PlayFair Daycare in Moosomin to add those additional 90 spaces there.

In post-secondary education, the budget creates 60 new training seats this year for nurse practitioners, registered psychiatric nurses, and medical radiologic technologists. As well four new training programs will be ready to accept students this fall in the physician assistant program and next fall in speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, and respiratory therapy. And, Mr. Speaker, those investments will pay dividends for our province for decades to come.

Mr. Speaker, this budget delivers safer communities by adding to the presence of law enforcement across Saskatchewan. There is increased funding for the municipal police grant program, and increased funding for the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police], and even 16 positions to work at weigh scales to free up highway traffic officers for work on highways and along the border.

[19:45]

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be part of a government that has delivered on fiscal stability. This surplus in this year's budget puts Saskatchewan in one of the strongest financial positions among provinces. This province has the second-lowest debt-to-GDP [gross domestic product] ratio among Canadian provinces at 14.6 per cent, and Saskatchewan has the second-best credit rating among all the provinces. And the importance of that cannot be overstated.

The reason that fiscal stability is so important is that we are vulnerable to tariffs and the threat of tariffs, and that's partly because of decisions made by the federal government in recent years that have limited our export options for some of our products.

Imagine, Mr. Speaker, imagine how much stronger we would be as a country, how less dependent we would be on exports to the United States if say Energy East had been built, if Northern Gateway had been built, if we had LNG [liquefied natural gas] export facilities on the east and west coasts.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little about one lost opportunity, Energy East, which a few people in this Assembly had a role in trying to revive a few years ago. And let me explain briefly why Energy East would have been important to Saskatchewan. The original proposal from TransCanada Pipelines included a 1.05-million-barrel tank farm at Moosomin, at the Moosomin compressor station, so three massive 350,000-barrel tanks. And these would have been fed with a feeder pipeline that would have been built from Cromer, Manitoba to Moosomin and another feeder pipeline from the Bakken oil field into Moosomin.

And Moosomin would have served as an on-ramp onto that pipeline system. That was the plan, providing a direct link for southeast Saskatchewan oil to world markets, to export markets, which would expand our export markets and make us much less vulnerable to tariffs and the threat of tariffs.

So a few years ago, Mr. Speaker, I was part of an effort in southeast Saskatchewan to bring back the proposal for Energy East. We called the project Energy East 2.0. It was a multi-pronged effort. We tried to get everyone on board for this. We had the town. We had the RM. The town of Moosomin went to SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association], got them on board. The RM went to SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], got them on board. We got the local chamber of commerce involved, had the business community, worked with provincial and national groups. And the point was to try to start a national conversation on pipelines and try to bring this back on the national agenda.

Sinclair Harrison was involved in this project along with me, and you will recall, Mr. Speaker, we brought Sinclair into this

Assembly during the fall sitting. And I want to thank all the members. That day was very important to Sinc. He received a standing ovation from members on both sides of the House. I want to thank everyone for that. That really did mean the world to Sinc and his family.

But six years ago Sinc and I were working on Energy East 2.0, and actually we were in this building a few times for meetings, and we were up in the Speaker's gallery being introduced in the House on a couple of occasions. And my work on this project included speaking with energy industry and pipeline industry CEOs [chief executive officer] and directors. We set up a web page for the project, and support grew from the oil industry to the manufacturing industry, and we got more and more support.

And we wanted an event to concentrate the support, to bring everyone together and have an event where we could try to, again, put this on the national agenda. So we organized an event in February six years ago. We planned a major event at Moosomin where we had hundreds of people from across the country to come to Moosomin for what we called a resource rally or a resource forum. We wanted this to be non-partisan because we knew that we all had to work together to make this a success. So we invited the prime minister and the federal opposition. We invited the Premier and the provincial opposition and of course industry leaders, provincial leaders from across the country.

And I remember that day very well, Mr. Speaker. We had hundreds of people in the newly built IJack manufacturing plant in Moosomin. IJack is a company in Moosomin owned by a couple of very brilliant engineers, Dan and Olga McCarthy. Their products are engineered in Moosomin, designed in Moosomin, manufactured in Moosomin, and shipped all around the world. And at the time they had just built a brand new 24,000-square-foot manufacturing plant, and they had not moved production in there yet. So we used that building for the resource rally. And just as an aside, Mr. Speaker, it's a few years later and business is so good for IJack that they're actually adding a 36,000-square-foot addition as we speak. The steel is going up right now.

So that day, Mr. Speaker, there were people from across the country at that event. We had national media there. We had provincial media. Part of my job was arranging the media for that event, and we had people actually from the Ottawa press gallery come down because we had a federal leader coming. And it was broadcast live on the two national news networks, and we actually got very good coverage out of it.

But as if to underline the importance of pipelines — and one of the reasons for people in small communities in rural Saskatchewan that pipelines are important — that very day of that rally, that very morning, there was a major oil car derailment 30 miles from Moosomin at St-Lazare, Manitoba. An oil spill that could have been much worse if an explosion or a fire had broken out.

So we had people there from across the country that day in Moosomin, Saskatchewan to show their support for a project that would have made such a difference for that project. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that the Premier was there that day in Moosomin, Saskatchewan, speaking to the event and showing his strong support for this important project for the province and the country. I'm grateful for that. He gave an amazing speech that

day.

And some other members in this Assembly were there that day. The member from Melville-Saltcoats was there that day. The member from Cannington was there. He wasn't an MLA yet at that point, but he was there. And we had several other MLAs there and several MPs [Member of Parliament] from across the country. We had senators who came from Ottawa with the federal Conservative leader, Andrew Scheer. He accepted our invitation and he attended. And, Mr. Speaker, we had the Premier of New Brunswick come from Fredericton, New Brunswick to Moosomin, Saskatchewan that day to show his support for this important project.

And, Mr. Speaker, do you know who did not come that day? Who did not show up for this important national event, to support an important Saskatchewan industry? As I said, we invited the federal government and opposition and also the provincial government and opposition because we wanted everyone on the same page. Mr. Speaker, the prime minister of Canada declined to attend and, Mr. Speaker, the provincial opposition failed to show up at this important event. Failed to show up for this event promoting a project that would have been so good for our province and would have strengthened our country. That was a missed opportunity, but as the Minister of Finance pointed out last week, the opposition was opposed to pipelines for 18 years and it took 18 days for them to finally understand the importance of pipelines.

Mr. Speaker, that event was six years ago. The Premier showed leadership by being there in Moosomin, Saskatchewan that day. And I'm glad that the opposition has finally come around because not only would that pipeline have created tremendous job opportunities in our area, not only was that pipeline going to provide export access for energy products, not only was that going to help the provincial economy and strengthen the national economy, but it was also a matter of safety, of getting oil into a pipeline and off of the trains.

And the missed opportunity that was the pipeline to the East Coast is just one example of why we're in the situation we are today, Mr. Speaker, vulnerable to tariffs and the threat of tariffs. And I keep hearing the opposition say now that they're now in favour of pipelines, now that we're finally in a crisis that shows just how exactly dependent we are on oil exports to the States.

But to decide that at this point, Mr. Speaker, that's like me deciding at this point in my life I'm going to start training with the hopes of a career in the NHL [National Hockey League]. If that was important to me, I probably should have done something about it a little bit earlier. But the fact that we are vulnerable to tariffs and the threat of tariffs is why we need a balanced budget that demonstrates fiscal strength. And I am proud, Mr. Speaker, that the Finance minister has delivered precisely that.

So to sum up, Mr. Speaker, the Finance minister has delivered a balanced budget that delivers on the priorities of Saskatchewan people. It includes initiatives that will make our communities stronger, including record revenue sharing for municipal governments. This budget, Mr. Speaker, delivers tax savings, reducing income taxes for every resident, family, and small business in this province. Mr. Speaker, it delivers better patient access for Saskatchewan, with record funding for health care.

This budget delivers for students with increases in education funding and school operating grants.

And, Mr. Speaker, this budget delivers fiscal responsibility. It puts Saskatchewan in one of the strongest financial positions among provinces. And all of this is possible, Mr. Speaker, because of the strong state of the provincial economy, and that is thanks to the resilience, resourcefulness, and drive of Saskatchewan people. Mr. Speaker, I am so proud of the people of our province who have built our economy and province in the face of many challenges.

And I am proud of our government for producing a balanced budget that will keep this province on a strong, steady footing. And that is why, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the budget motion moved by the Minister of Finance and seconded by the member for White City-Qu'Appelle, and I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you.

**Speaker Goudy:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Centre.

**Betty Nippi-Albright:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be given this opportunity to offer my remarks to the budget.

Mr. Speaker, before I respond to the budget I would like to thank a few folks. Thank you to my family for your love and continued and ongoing support. Thank you to my constituents of Saskatoon Centre for trusting me to be your voice in this legislature.

Thank you to my colleagues for all your hard work. It is wonderful to see 27 NDP MLAs in this legislature, and I look forward to hearing their responses to the budget.

I want to say a special thank you to our dedicated, hard-working caucus staff. Thank you for pushing us. Thank you for the hours that you put in to make us be the best that we can be. Thank you.

And finally, I would like to thank my constituency assistants for all that they do for the constituents of Saskatoon Centre and the work that they do in my office.

Mr. Speaker, the drug and addiction crisis that is taking a hold in this province and the homelessness in this province is a direct result of this government's mismanagement and underfunding for mental health supports. Mr. Speaker, this government has had 18 years to enable good mental health and well-being for the people of this province. Instead we've seen 18 years of empty promises and underfunding.

In 2023 this Sask Party government promised to open 500 addiction treatment spaces. Mr. Speaker, we see this is the same promise repeated again in this budget. To the people in this province: do not be deceived by this government's regurgitated promises they recycled from 2023.

**Speaker Goudy:** — I hate to call you out all the time, but you can't be using that kind of language. So as you go through the speech, just delete any comments that may look like they're being deceitful or dishonest, please.

[20:00]

**Betty Nippi-Albright:** — Perhaps I could rephrase that. To the people of this province: you've heard over and over again, year after year, the promises to make your lives much better. These have been recycled promises. Think about that.

Saskatchewan currently has only 221 of these 500 addiction treatment spaces open. Again, are these correct numbers or are they inflated? Sixty of those 221 beds were at Willowview treatment centre in Lumsden. Whistle-blowers from the centre came to me in the fall and revealed that the facility actually treated zero in-patients since opening in May of 2024.

Mr. Speaker, 60 of those beds included in this government's counting were sitting empty while this Sask Party government paid — maybe, don't know for sure — \$1.5 million for virtual treatment programs. And when the opposition filed a freedom of information request, this government redacted the total cost of what this treatment centre is actually costing the taxpayers of this province.

So the people in this province don't know what they've paid. Did they pay \$1.5 million, \$800,000, or \$2.3 million for a facility that is only open for 20 in-patients, not 60, but for months was only offering virtual treatment? Mr. Speaker, how is virtual treatment going to work for someone who is detoxing from an opiate addiction with no detox beds available? How is that going to happen? People need human connection. They need peer support, not a computer screen. How is virtual treatment going to help disadvantaged people who do not have access to Wi-Fi, a computer, or a phone? Virtual treatment is like putting a band-aid over a bullet wound, Mr. Speaker.

This government continues to cut corners to address the drug crisis in this province. Will the citizens in this province know how much this budget is going to virtual treatment that best practices state does not work? Mr. Speaker, people are dying while this government doubles down on failed treatment models, recycled empty promises, and builds empty buildings.

And now, Mr. Speaker, this Sask Party government is expanding their complex-needs units across the province. They have already spent \$9.6 million on these units that are sitting underutilized. The only way, Mr. Speaker, for people to access these services in the complex-needs units is that they have to be arrested and charged by the police.

Mr. Speaker, again we see a form of treatment that is inaccessible. People cannot self-refer to these units, and there are reports of patients, individuals not being treated and not being served. And to top it off, Mr. Speaker, the organization receiving these tax dollars for the complex-needs unit is the same private-run, for-profit organization that has failed to fully open and operate the Willowview treatment centre in Lumsden.

\$1.5 million wasn't enough, Mr. Speaker. This government found a way to mismanage an additional 9.6 million tax dollars by investing in an organization that is failing to provide the services it promised to.

Mr. Speaker, this government continues to talk about recovery-oriented system of care and wraparound supports when we actually need a continuum of care that supports individuals addicted to substance use. Individuals that are addicted to

substance use, Mr. Speaker, need access to timely detox and supportive living homes to continue their recovery after they complete in-patient addictions treatment. Mr. Speaker, people recovering from drug addictions need at least a minimum of two years of continuum-of-care support in order to be successful for sustained recovery.

Instead of such a system, this government imposed “measures to protect communities against fentanyl and methamphetamine,” punishing people who are struggling with addictions. This policy, Mr. Speaker, makes it clear that members opposite made no attempt to consult with impacted stakeholders, front-line workers, the recovery community, grassroots community organizations, or experts in the field of mental health and addictions.

Mr. Speaker, citizens, people in this province don’t wake up one morning and say, “Today I’m going to be a drug addict. Today I’m going to be homeless.” They don’t do that. That’s not what people do when they wake up in the morning. Addictions and homelessness, Mr. Speaker, are a result of the lack of investment by the Sask Party government for good mental health and well-being.

One way to visualize substance use from a health promotion perspective is the frogs in a pond analogy from the Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research. So, Mr. Speaker, if we look at this from the frogs in a pond analogy — for example, if frogs in a pond were behaving strangely — and we looked at the health promotion perspective of this frogs in the pond analogy, and we saw frogs were behaving strangely, our first reaction would not be to punish them but to ask what is causing them to behave the way they’re behaving.

We wouldn’t label those frogs. We wouldn’t punish them. We would ask what is happening in their environment to make them behave the way they’re behaving. Mr. Speaker, we all need to apply this analogy from the Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research when it comes to individuals suffering from substance use addiction.

All leading experts, Mr. Speaker, will tell you addictions are a direct result of poor mental health. Let me repeat that: all leading experts will tell you addictions are a direct result of poor mental health. This government spent 18 years ignoring mental health supports, and we are witnessing the effects.

Saskatoon alone experienced 374 overdoses between March 1st and March 18th. By March 6th, the Saskatoon fire department reported a 400 per cent increase in overdose responses, and as of March 18th, Saskatoon had already seen a total of 680 overdose incidents.

Mr. Speaker, this government waited for the tsunami to hit before preparing for the storm, and it is this government’s mismanagement and disinvestment that has created the addictions epidemic we see today. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert are the only locations with child and youth in-patient mental health units, while this budget has no plans to expand these supports in other areas of the province.

The members opposite have been boasting about their record

level of investment in mental health and addiction services for years. Mr. Speaker, then why are people falling through the cracks? Why are we having a drug and an addictions crisis? Many of these people who are falling through the cracks are young people. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan still reports the highest rates of anxiety disorders, the second-highest rate of substance use disorders, and some of the highest rates of suicide and self-harm hospitalization in Canada.

Only 15 schools have the mental health capacity-building program available to them. Meanwhile, there are 27 school divisions in Saskatchewan. Schools without that program are being forced to lean on the ones that do. Mr. Speaker, in what world would that ever be considered effective or accessible? Our adults, our youth, and our children need more from this government.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is greatly concerning for all citizens, all people that live in this province. As the shadow minister for Mental Health and Addictions, I have watched many people in this province disproportionately suffer from addictions and mental health issues because this government is not properly investing in mental health services for all people in this province.

This Sask Party government is not prepared to deal with this drug and addictions crisis that it has created. Mr. Speaker, I won’t be supporting the government budget. Instead I’ll be supporting my colleague’s motion to amend.

Mr. Speaker, if this government is not prepared to invest in meaningful health and addiction support, then we will continue to lose an entire generation, and this government may as well invest in expanding our cemeteries in this province. Miigwech.

**Speaker Goudy:** — I recognize the member from Batoche.

**Darlene Rowden:** — Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this Chamber this evening to speak in response to the 2025-26 budget, a budget that reflects our government’s unwavering commitment to the people of Saskatchewan and in particular the hard-working families, businesses, and communities of the Batoche constituency.

This budget is about affordability, about ensuring opportunities, and about making life better for the people who call Saskatchewan home. It is a budget that builds on our strengths, invests in key areas, and ensures that the prosperity of our province reaches every corner, including Batoche.

[20:15]

Mr. Speaker, the ’25-26 budget continues to ensure Saskatchewan remains the most affordable place in Canada. Every resident, family, and business will benefit from reduced income taxes. Our province is growing, and this budget includes measures to make life more affordable, measures such as raising the personal, spousal, and dependent child exemptions; raising the seniors’ supplement by \$500 a year for the next four years; increasing the disability tax credit and caregiver tax credit; doubling the active families benefit to \$300 per child and doubling the income threshold to qualify to make children’s sports, arts, and cultural activities more affordable; and reinstating the home renovation tax credit.

Education property tax mill rates will be reduced to absorb property assessment increases. This will save property owners over \$100 million each year. These measures are all in addition to the Government of Saskatchewan extending the carbon tax exemption on home heating. Mr. Speaker, this government is delivering for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, health care remains a top priority for our government. This budget provides a record investment of \$8.1 billion in the health care system, reducing surgical wait times with a plan to perform 450,000 surgeries over the next four years, increased funding to accelerate the hiring of health care professionals, and connecting every resident with a primary health care provider.

We are taking decisive action to address capacity pressures in our hospitals. An additional \$15 million was invested in the '24-25 fiscal year to accelerate capital renovations, equipment upgrades, and operations at Saskatoon City Hospital. This includes the addition of over 100 acute care in-patient beds. This funding builds on the \$30 million previously allocated, ensuring patients receive timely, high-quality care. Mr. Speaker, this budget sees a \$140 million increase in health capital spending for a total of 657 million to deliver major health infrastructure projects, projects like the Victoria Hospital expansion in Prince Albert on the border of my constituency.

Seniors are the heart of our communities, and our government is committed to supporting them with dignity and care. This budget provides more than \$43 million in targeted initiatives to help seniors live independently in their communities. This investment ensures free home nursing services, subsidized home care and long-term care, increasing the seniors' supplement amount, reduced ambulance costs, and a prescription drug cap of \$25 for eligible medications. Additionally seniors aged 65 and older who require continuous or flash glucose monitoring for diabetes management will now receive government support.

Furthermore our government committed \$10 million to Ronald McDonald House Charities in the '24-25 fiscal year to support families with children undergoing medical treatment. This includes six and a half million for Ronald McDonald House in Regina and three and a half million for Ronald McDonald House in Prince Albert, ensuring families in our region have access to compassionate care close to home.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to make investments in mental health and addictions with an increase of \$20 million for targeted initiatives. This includes continued progress on the multi-year mental health and addictions action plan and delivering on the commitment to add 500 addictions treatment spaces, doubling the public health system's capacity.

Planning is under way for urgent care centres in Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, and North Battleford, building on pilot projects in Regina and Saskatoon. Complex-needs emergency shelters will be expanded in new communities, and this year's budget accelerates the hiring of health care professionals through our health human resources action plan.

Mr. Speaker, education is the foundation of our future, and our government continues to make the necessary investments to ensure that Saskatchewan students have the tools and resources

they need to succeed. The additional 29.5 million investment in relocatable classrooms brings our total commitment for relocatables for the 2024-25 school year to \$58 million. This funding will provide new relocatable classrooms across the province, ensuring that schools facing capacity challenges have the infrastructure to accommodate our growing student population. This is welcome news for families and school divisions in the province, and it ensures students have adequate learning spaces and a supportive educational environment.

The '25-26 budget delivers increased funding for kindergarten to grade 12 learners, parents, and teachers. School divisions will receive 2.4 billion in operating funding. This includes an increase of \$168 million to the operating funding; 130 million to fund the new teacher collective agreement; funding for 50 additional specialized support classrooms this year; funding to help address support staff salary increases, transportation, and inflation.

Two million dollars has been dedicated to improving kindergarten to grade 3 reading levels and 190 million for school capital budget to address student enrolment, along with an increase of 15 million to the PMR [preventative maintenance and renewal] funding to maintain existing facilities.

Further our government remains committed to supporting post-secondary graduates as they build their futures right here in Saskatchewan. Through the graduate retention program, eligible graduates will now be able to benefit from up to \$24,000 in tax credits. This is one of the most generous retention programs in Canada and it directly supports Saskatchewan's labour market strategy and economic growth plan. By keeping talented graduates in this province, we are strengthening our workforce and creating opportunities for the next generation.

Key capital investments to advanced education include expanded space for new occupational therapy and speech-language programs at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan]; additional seats in medical lab technology, medical radiologic technology, and respiratory programs at polytech's Regina campus; planning for the University of Saskatchewan's Western College of Veterinary Medicine expansion project, among others.

**An Hon. Member:** — Right on.

**Darlene Rowden:** — You bet.

Additionally Saskatchewan's energy companies are stepping up to support student learning with a combined investment of \$160,000 over two years to develop new courses and facilitate student work placements in the oil and gas industry. This initiative is an exciting opportunity for Saskatchewan students, particularly those in the Batoche region, to gain hands-on experience and develop skills that will help them build long, successful careers in our province's energy sector.

Mr. Speaker, our government listens when constituents and municipalities speak to us about community safety. Over the past two years, \$2 billion has been invested into community safety, and this current budget delivers an enhanced presence of law enforcement. Increases to the municipal police grant program will help officers respond to more calls for service.

Increased funding for the RCMP and the RCMP First Nations

program will support operations in the province. Previous commitments for 100 new municipal police officers, 14 new safer communities and neighbourhoods personnel, and training for more officers at the Saskatchewan Police College are also included in this budget. This budget also includes funding to improve safety for correctional staff, offenders, and the public and to alleviate capacity concerns at correctional centres.

Additional investments will be made in domestic violence programs and services and also second-stage housing. Funding for a more accessible court system and ensuring cases are ready to move to trial are also included in this budget.

Our government continues to invest in infrastructure that supports economic growth and improves the quality of life for our residents, Mr. Speaker. The Ministry of Highways '25-26 budget is \$777 million. We are investing in strategic infrastructure and enhancing driver safety to sustain our export-based economy.

Municipal revenue sharing will reach a record 361.8 million in '25-26, an increase of twenty-one and a half million dollars from last year. This reliable and predictable funding allows local governments to invest in the priorities that matter most to their communities.

In rural Saskatchewan, our government is investing \$34.4 million in road, bridge, and culvert projects. Through the rural integrated roads for growth program, we are ensuring that farmers, ranchers, and industries have the transportation networks needed to move goods efficiently and remain competitive in global markets. Additionally our new pilot framework for firefighter training exercises will provide municipalities with a cost-effective and practical way to safely dispose of problem structures, benefiting rural communities across the province.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's agriculture sector is the backbone of our economy, the backbone of Batoche and my family. The Water Security Agency has finalized an agricultural water stewardship policy, with \$1 million allocated over the next three years for research and monitoring. With input from over 80 stakeholders and Indigenous organizations, we are ensuring that our policies are effective and sustainable.

Additionally Saskatchewan's Agriculture Development Fund will receive \$7.2 million to support livestock and forage research, while crop-related research will receive 14.8 million in funding. These investments in innovation and best practices will help our producers remain competitive in international markets and advance sustainable agricultural practices.

The 2025-26 budget includes funding for programs to strengthen competitiveness and innovation in our ag sector. This funding supports a wide range of initiatives, including work on pest biosecurity, disease surveillance and invasive weed control, farm safety research, and an agriculture mentorship program. This government continues to support the ag sector and its world-class producers. Long live cowboys and farmers, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, attracting new investment and growing our existing business continues to be a key priority for our government. Numbers demonstrate that Saskatchewan is the best place to

invest in Canada. Our investment attraction strategy provides a road map for achieving our growth plan target by building a competitive business environment with low taxes and utility rates, a transparent and predictable regulatory environment, enhancing red tape reduction, strong incentives, and a network of nine international trade offices — woo-hoo — that connect Saskatchewan to the world.

Saskatchewan's economic indicators tell a clear story of growth and opportunity. Our province ranks second in year-over-year retail trade growth and continues to see strong investments in building construction. These are signs of a province on the rise, driven by a government that believes in hard work, smart investments, and the resilience of its people.

Over the last few months Saskatchewan has consistently ranked among the top three provinces for growth in building permit values — Regina up 54.9 per cent and Saskatoon an unprecedented 189 per cent increase. This continued growth shows investor confidence in Saskatchewan's economy and the strength of our communities. More building permits means more jobs, more development, and more people calling Saskatchewan home.

[20:30]

Saskatchewan started 2025 with the lowest unemployment rate among provinces, at 5.4 per cent below the national average. Full-time employment has increased by 3,000 year over year, with significant job gains in the construction sector. Our government's Building the Workforce for a Growing Economy strategy ensures that Saskatchewan remains a leader in job creation and investment.

Private capital investment, super important. Private capital investment in Saskatchewan is expected to grow by 10 per cent in 2025, reaching \$16.2 billion. Saskatchewan continues to lead the nation in investment growth, supported by our competitive tax environment, predictable regulatory framework, and strong international trade connections. We are ensuring that Saskatchewan remains the best place in Canada to do business.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is a province built on innovation, resilience, and commitment to growth. As we look to the future, our government continues to foster an environment where groundbreaking ideas turn into real-world solutions, strengthening our economy and creating new opportunities across key industries.

Our government is taking bold steps to support emissions reductions and innovation. With more than \$50 million available through the second intake of the technology fund, Saskatchewan industries will continue to lead the way in sustainability while maintaining strong economic growth, protecting jobs, families, and businesses.

With Saskatchewan's largest trading partners, the US and China, putting tariffs on Canadian products, it is more important than ever that we have open trade within Canada. I want to recognize for a minute here, Mr. Speaker, the greatest tariff threat our province is facing today is the 100 per cent tariff coming from China on our canola products, which has a direct impact on the oilseed producers and value-added industry in this province, a



fact that our federal Liberal-NDP coalition government choose to not acknowledge.

Saskatchewan remains an advocate for open and free trade and has always been a national leader on this front. Saskatchewan aims to further reduce exceptions in the coming days and weeks along with other provinces and territories.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan remains a jurisdiction of choice for workers, having the fastest turnaround times for credential recognition in Canada. Under *The Labour Mobility and Fair Registration Practices Act*, Saskatchewan now enjoys some of the best labour mobility rates in Canada and has significantly reduced red tape for international workers and Canadians from other provinces seeking employment here. This means residents are finding jobs and getting into those jobs faster.

Mr. Speaker, we are not just planning for today; we are securing the next decade of growth. Through our Saskatchewan labour market strategy and investment attraction strategy, alongside the launch of investsk.ca, we are ensuring that businesses continue to invest, jobs continue to grow, and families continue to thrive. These initiatives will further amplify growth and solidify Saskatchewan as the best place to do business in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is about affordability. It is about ensuring that every Saskatchewan resident has access to quality health care, strong education, reliable infrastructure, live in safe communities, and have a thriving economy. It is about strengthening our communities and building a Saskatchewan that continues to lead the nation in prosperity and opportunity.

For the people of Batoche this budget delivers real, tangible benefits, improved educational spaces, strengthened health care services, enhanced infrastructure, and continued job growth.

Mr. Speaker, I am supporting this budget and the vision it sets for our great province. Together we are building a stronger, more prosperous Saskatchewan for today and for generations to come. I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker Goudy:** — I recognize the member from Regina Douglas Park.

**Nicole Sarauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today and enter into the debate on this budget. Before I get started into the meat and potatoes of the budget, I do want to take a moment first of all to thank my constituency assistant.

Since I had the opportunity to speak in the House, my CA [constituency assistant] Aiden McMartin is moving on from my office after working for me for a few years to come over to caucus office. So he's not moving very far. Instead of having one MLA as a boss, he's choosing to have 27 MLAs as a boss. But I do want to take the opportunity to thank him for all of the work he did in my office. I received nothing but words of thanks and praise from constituents who often would talk to him. And he always lent an understanding ear to them and worked very hard to address their issues, and I feel like represented me very well in his role. And I know he will continue to do a fantastic job serving us as a larger team, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank my family for always

being supportive, and as well as our team for the support that they give, that we give each other each and every day. In particular I want to highlight last week, last Thursday, Mr. Speaker. My daughter was sick, but not too sick that she couldn't really stay home, but she was too sick to go to school. So I brought her to work because we really had no other option. My husband was busy at work, so I brought her here.

And it was a very busy day, in case you remember, Mr. Speaker, Thursday. Some of it was self-inflicted, absolutely, and some of it was not. But it was an incredibly busy day. And I just want to take the opportunity to thank the staff on our side who stepped up and helped keep an eye on her and the team who very much also helped, understanding what was going on. And I just think that we all do a fantastic job of putting family first and supporting each other when we most need that support, Mr. Speaker. I think that's indicative of a very strong team, and I'm very grateful to it. And I've been lucky enough to be served by great teams over the last two terms, Mr. Speaker.

I think I've mentioned this before, but when she was first in the House she was three months old and I snuck her into the gallery on Thursday. She's five and a half now. It's kind of crazy how quickly time goes in life, Mr. Speaker. And I just wanted to express my thanks to everybody who helps keep the home fires burning, Mr. Speaker.

On to the budget. This is a budget that we've been talking about for a while now. Still lots of speeches to go. It's a budget that's not focused on the future, Mr. Speaker. It's a budget with the government, who we've heard lots of self-congratulations already from government members about the surplus, the \$12 million surplus, Mr. Speaker. And I've been around long enough that I've seen this government sneeze and blow through more than \$12 million in the matter of a few days, Mr. Speaker. So forgive us if we see that \$12 million surplus and that self-congratulations as a little bit interesting, a little bit . . . We wonder how long it's going to take before that \$12 million gets eaten up.

I just wanted to highlight, I was thinking back about how many times we've been through the process of supplemental estimates, Mr. Speaker. And in case you don't know, supplemental estimates is when the government has to come back to the legislature because they've spent more money than they originally planned, Mr. Speaker. And so supplemental estimates happens quite often actually.

And I just wanted to highlight how much money has been spent in supplemental estimates just in portions of my critic area. So this is not the entirety of, for example, Justice supplemental estimates or Corrections and Policing supplemental estimates. This is just a portion of the areas that I've covered over the past two years.

So in 2023, there was a \$40 million ask, Mr. Speaker, for unfunded emergency fire response. So that was, again, a little bit more than \$12 million, Mr. Speaker. And that is just a portion of one ministry that overspent and needed to because of the fire. But government, as it often does, failed to plan, failed to create a contingency for themselves.

It's something that we've been talking about already that this

government does not seem interested in being focused in reality of the economic situation that Saskatchewan is facing today, that other jurisdictions have built in contingency plans for themselves. And this government made a choice that instead of doing that — they could have done that — instead of doing that, they wanted to make sure that they were able to talk about having a surplus budget when we know that in reality, it's going to be maybe a hot second before that \$12 million gets eaten up, Mr. Speaker, and we're back into yet another deficit budget.

Another supplemental estimate example, Mr. Speaker. This is more recent. This is 2024, December 9th. Now the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety asked for 45 million additional dollars to support the operation of the province's correctional facilities. Now, I'm not great at math — lawyers are notoriously not great at math — but I can tell you that I'm pretty sure \$45 million is a little bit larger than \$12 million, Mr. Speaker.

So again I would caution members to not wave the mission accomplished banner too aggressively about the surplus budget that they're presenting here. And I do hope that those members who are speaking so proudly about the surplus budget are going to, you know, ensure transparency with the people of Saskatchewan, and when that surplus gets eaten up that they are going to speak as loudly about their deficit spending and why they ended up having to spend more money than they originally planned, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm just going to speak — there's lots that can be talked about in this budget, and I know all my colleagues are going to do a fantastic job of doing that — I want to speak very specifically and very narrowly about a few portions of the budget to which I am the critic of, Mr. Speaker. And I do want to give credit to the government where credit is due, Mr. Speaker. Call it my little rose in the thorns that will be my overall budget, Mr. Speaker.

I was very happy to see the planned expansion of the bylaw courts. Now this is something that stakeholders have been talking to me about. I know that there were two RMs who tabled resolutions at SARM about the need for better access to bylaw courts and bylaw court expansion throughout the province. RM of Estevan and the RM of Wallace particularly were speaking about it.

It's very important for RMs to be able to have an ability to enforce bylaws, Mr. Speaker. There is no point in these RMs to be able to hand out bylaws if they can't therefore enforce them, Mr. Speaker. So there's been some frustration amongst RMs who aren't able to do that. And there is a great project that was created in the Kindersley area.

And now this expansion is very much welcomed. And the devil will be in the details; we'll be watching it closely to see how it all rolls out. But that's very important, access to the courts is a very important thing. Access to the judicial system is incredibly important, having faith. It helps to grow faith in our justice system.

And I will digress a little bit from the budget because I have been watching really closely some of the rhetoric that's happening south of the border with the president, Mr. Speaker. And there's

a lot of different things that can be raised as some alarm flags that we're seeing south of the border. But I wanted to highlight one in particular that's been happening over the last few days, and that is the commentary being made by the president about the judiciary and the decisions that the judges are making south of the border and the calls he's making to impeach the judiciary.

Mr. Speaker, we live in a very fragile ecosystem. Our society is actually quite fragile, and the words we say as leaders and as legislators very much matter. And it's very important that we use our words and our language to not tear down the systems that exist in support of our democracy and in support of our society. And a properly accessible and strong and independent judiciary is one of those key pillars of our society, Mr. Speaker.

[20:45]

And that is why we were quite negative about the comments the Premier had made back in 2023 about a judicial decision that happened at that time. And granted, what he said at the time was small potatoes compared to what we are seeing happen south of the border right now. But it is important that when we are having these conversations, and that we're talking about the rule of law and the judiciary, that we choose our words wisely and that we work to not undermine public trust in the institutions that support our democracy, Mr. Speaker.

Another piece of ensuring that we're not undermining our democracy is ensuring that there is public confidence in the judicial system and in the justice system at large. And the work of government plays a role in that. So I'll be watching that very closely to ensure that the ministry is working hard to ensure access to justice at all levels, Mr. Speaker. And the bylaw court expansion is a positive step in that.

At the same time we're hearing concerns about circuit court points and the accessibility of those facilities, the ability of timely justice, Mr. Speaker. So all of these are areas that the ministry needs to continue to work on and advocate for.

Now in addition, Mr. Speaker, this is largely a budget that is weak on crime and weak on the causes of crime. And I'm going to speak about one area of crime in particular, because if you blink and you miss it, you won't see it talked about in the budget. Now I've talked about this issue from many different angles. I want to talk about it from a public safety angle because I think it's really important. When we talk about access to police and reducing crime, there is an area that I think is getting largely ignored and something that government needs to be addressing in a more fulsome way.

Some stats from last year, Mr. Speaker, in policing: in Saskatoon for the year ending 2024 there was a 4.7 percentage increase in sexual violations and an 8.3 per cent increase in assaults. In Regina there was year-over-year increases in sexual assaults, sexual interference, and non-consensual distribution of intimate images; a 22 per cent increase in reported sexual assaults, and an 80 per cent increase since 2015; 63 per cent increase in reported sex crimes. RCMP, Mr. Speaker, reported the average number of reported incidents of intimate partner and family violence is 700 incidents per month, Mr. Speaker, in the Saskatchewan RCMP jurisdiction.

Now what do we see about that in the budget? It says, “Additional investments will be made in interpersonal violence programs and services, including second-stage housing.” That’s it, Mr. Speaker. From what I understand so far, that amounts to about a 3 per cent increase to CBOs [community-based organization] who provide gender-based violence support services in the province. We’re glad to see that, but it’s not nearly sufficient, Mr. Speaker.

Let’s talk about the domestic violence death review report. Now I’m very glad to see that work was done, that the report came out. For some reason I understand it sat for about a year before it was made public, Mr. Speaker. It is something that we think should be ongoing work. Other jurisdictions like Ontario has a standing domestic violence death review panel that doesn’t break and then get back together and then break like we see happen in Saskatchewan. We’ve had two reports so far, two groups. There’s a lot of work that needs to be done in terms of breaking down privacy barriers so that better information can flow, so better recommendations could be made, but I do want to applaud those who did the work on this report. It’s a very great report.

But I want to talk about a recommendation from the 2018 report. This was the original one. They said one of the recommendations was to “develop a comprehensive program that focuses on building education and awareness about healthy relationships, and how to prevent and respond to situations of domestic violence and abuse.”

Now that mirrors something that you see in the 2025 domestic violence death review report. One of the recommendations, Mr. Speaker, is to: “Implement ongoing public awareness campaigns to educate communities about domestic violence. Develop youth-focused educational programs on healthy relationships,” Mr. Speaker.

Now what happened over a year ago in this province, Mr. Speaker? In 2023 the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education decided to remove healthy relationship and consent education from our schools, Mr. Speaker. In a province where we have the worst rates of intimate partner violence in the country and the second-worst rates of sexual assault in the country — and I just went over the stats from last year, Mr. Speaker — why was this decision made? There is no other reason than ideology.

What has happened since then? Nothing, Mr. Speaker. There was an announcement that a framework was going to be made. Nothing has been made. It has been over a year now where we have not had consent education or healthy relationship education in our schools in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Prevention education is helpful. Prevention education is one of the pillars of the national action plan to end gender-based violence, so this is something that the Minister for the Status of Women should be working on and advocating for in this province. This work is funded by the Ministry of Justice, so this is something that the Minister of Justice should be working on to ensure gets back into our schools, Mr. Speaker.

When we have the worst rates in the country, we need to be doing every single thing we possibly can to reduce those rates. When we make decisions based on ideology that harms children and harms women, we need to be reversing those, Mr. Speaker. Full

stop.

I’m going to read a quote from the Saskatchewan association of sexual assault services. They have a policy brief and they say:

Eliminating community-based educators has created a significant gap in violence prevention education, disproportionately affecting students in rural and remote areas, where resources, expertise, and access to specialized support are already limited. The absence of subject matter experts in schools not only weakens student protections but also places an undue burden on teachers, who lack the specialized training required to deliver trauma-informed, evidence-based education effectively. Reinstating community-based educators will ensure that all students, regardless of location, receive comprehensive, age-appropriate, and culturally responsive education that empowers them to recognize and prevent abuse while fostering safer learning environments across Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, to be able to tackle intimate partner violence, human trafficking, and child sexual abuse, we need prevention education back in our schools, Mr. Speaker. This is an important topic. This is a public safety issue.

If we want to talk about reducing the rates of crime in our province, if we want to talk about having the public have better and quicker access to policing services, we need to talk about preventing crime in the first place. And one of the ways we prevent crime is prevention education, Mr. Speaker. This is an easy fix, and this wouldn’t cost the government any money, Mr. Speaker.

I’m going to end on one story. I’m almost out of time, so I’m going to end on one story and then I’ll wrap up, Mr. Speaker. But I think it’s a very powerful story. It’s something that a stakeholder shared with me when I was talking to her about this issue. And I bring this up because this is something . . . In doing work, I know that the critic for Status of Women, who’s been talking to stakeholders in this area, and I have also been talking to stakeholders in this area. They bring this up all the time. We ask what their number one concern is. Of course they want to see more funding but that’s quickly followed by, we’re really worried about this: kids don’t have access to this education anymore. And it’s a problem, Mr. Speaker.

So here’s a story someone sent me, and it comes from the Minister of Justice’s riding. She said:

I want to tell you a true story that took place years ago in Moose Jaw. A woman had been living with an abusive partner. They had two children together. She ran a home-based daycare, and her ability to look for and receive support was limited by this.

One day her eight-year-old son came home from school and said, “Mom, some ladies came to school today, and they can help us.” Her son went on to say that the ladies would pick him up after school to take part in the children-exposed-to-violence group and drive him home after the group was over.

She agreed, became connected with the shelter herself, and

left the abusive partner. Years later, she would go on to be a staff member at the same shelter that had supported her in her own time of need. She always credits the impact of that presentation in the school and her then eight-year-old son for helping her get free of her abusive partner.

We believe that information about preventing sexual violence, including language around consent, is crucial education for our children. They also need to know that violence in the home, either directed at them or between their parents, is never okay. If children don't receive this message, they don't even consider telling anyone or asking for help. They're also more likely to be victimized or perpetrate abuse themselves when they get older.

End quote, Mr. Speaker.

And with that, I will not be supporting this budget, and I will be supporting the motion, the amendment from my colleague, the member from Mount Royal. Thank you.

**Speaker Goudy:** — I recognize the member from Estevan-Big Muddy.

**Hon. Lori Carr:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to be able to stand here today and speak to the '25-26 budget. This budget delivers for you and the people of Saskatchewan. The budget priorities reflect the priorities Saskatchewan residents said were most important to them: affordability, health care, education, safer communities, and fiscal responsibility. *Delivering for You* is the theme of this year's budget, and I could not think of a more fitting theme.

Having the opportunity to serve the past eight years in the constituency of Estevan-Big Muddy has been an honour, and I look forward to serving them for the next four years. The entire goal of being an MLA is meeting the needs of my constituents, delivering for them. And I wanted to say thank you to them for having faith in me and supporting me in the election in October of 2024 so that I can continue to serve.

Being an MLA is not for the faint of heart. Sometimes even when best efforts are made, there are times when the goal you're trying to achieve is not achievable at that point in time. Mr. Speaker, one thing I do know is I've always made the best efforts to achieve those goals on behalf of my constituents. One of the requests I've been making virtually since I was elected is resurfacing of Highway 18 west of Estevan. I'm happy to report that this summer the Department of Highways will finally be completing resurfacing of Highway 18 from Estevan to Outram. This is delivering for the constituents of Estevan-Big Muddy.

When we talk about affordability measures that this year's budget delivers on, I believe it's important to first look at the measures that are already in place. In each and every budget leading up and including this budget, there is an annual affordability measure of approximately \$2 billion, items that we have come accustomed to and maybe even taken for granted, forget that they're even there.

Items such as the second-lowest utility bundle in Canada; reduced education property tax; child's drug plan; \$10-a-day daycare; autism individualized funding; low-income tax credit

for families; tax reductions for people, removing 166,000 people off the provincial tax rolls. And this is just to name a few, Mr. Speaker. So for those of you listening, don't buy any of the rhetoric or lines being fed to you by the members of the opposition.

We have been delivering on affordability and will continue to do so. Some of the measures we're bringing forward in this budget are: raising the basic personal exemption, spousal and equivalent-to-spouse exemption, dependent child exemption, and seniors' supplementary supplement by \$500 a year for the next four years. This is over and above the impact of indexation, which makes for the largest personal income tax reduction in the province since 2008.

Increasing the disability tax credit and caregiver tax credit by 25 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Doubling the active families benefit refundable tax credit from 150 to \$300 per child, and doubling the threshold that the income qualifies for to \$120,000 to make children's sports, arts, culture, and recreational activities more affordable for more families.

[21:00]

We're reinstating the home renovation tax credit which allows homeowners to save up to \$420 annually in home renovation expenses, while seniors undertaking home renovations can save up to \$525. I know many people who are homeowners and they are continually renovating their homes, meaning that this should help virtually everyone in my constituency who is a homeowner.

And increasing the graduate retention tax program benefit by 20 per cent to a maximum of \$24,000. This actually is not so much an affordability measure, but a retention and a growth tool for the youth in our province, Mr. Speaker. There are so many students who have decided to take advantage of this program and choose to stay in Saskatchewan, build their careers, and set their roots down here. I have two daughters that took advantage of this program and now they're living and working in Saskatchewan. And the bonus for me is I have five grandchildren who are close to home.

As well, we are maintaining the small-business tax rate at 1 per cent, benefiting more than 35,000 small businesses in Saskatchewan and saving them over 50 million in corporate income taxes annually.

We are in an assessment year this year, which means our property values may go up and likely will go up. Your Saskatchewan Party government has decided that your property tax mill rate will be reduced to absorb the increase of that property assessment value and ensure that this assessment year is revenue neutral for the province in each property class.

And just as a reminder, your Saskatchewan Party government extended the carbon tax exemption on home heating again this year. Hopefully by this time next year we won't have any type of carbon tax at all.

All of the items I have just listed above truly are delivering for you when it comes to affordability. Delivering for all of those across the province, in Estevan-Big Muddy as well.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what else keeps life more affordable for the people of Saskatchewan? A strong economy. And what is one of those things that helps with a strong economy? Our agriculture industry. And that's why we will continue to support this industry. Agriculture is the backbone of our economy. Our government will continue to deliver on the programs and services producers need while investing in the long-term success of the industry. This budget supports ranchers, farmers, and agribusiness in the challenges they face while continuing to meet the rising global demand for sustainably produced, nutritional food.

The member from Regina South Albert says we are doing nothing for our economy. Well if it were up to the members opposite, they would shut down all of the trade offices we have around the world. It is those trade offices that are working directly with several different countries to ensure that we have a direct line with all of them. This government has created an environment for trade to occur, and the only thing we see out of the members opposite is supporting a federal Liberal-NDP coalition that has only brought in policies and legislation that directly hurt our agriculture communities. This government delivers for agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, this year's health budget delivers on critical supports and investments, making services more accessible and helping people get high-quality and reliable care when they need it. Now this is going to be the longest portion of my speech, not just because I'm the Minister of Rural and Remote Health, Mental Health and Addictions, and Seniors. It will be the longest because it takes up a third of the provincial budget, a budget that delivers for you.

When it comes to mental health and addictions, we know how important it is to access the right treatment at the right time. That is why nearly 8 per cent of our health budget is allocated to mental health and addictions services. We are providing significant funding towards our action plan for mental health and addictions by expanding access to addiction treatment spaces, getting us closer to our goal of doubling provincial capacity by adding 500 spaces and continuing our transition to a recovery-oriented system of care. Mr. Speaker, we're at 221 of those 500 right now. We have another 100 allocated, hoping that they open up soon, and we're going to continue with that goal of getting to 500 beds.

Do you know what's not helpful, Mr. Speaker? Closing beds. We used to have a first-class addictions centre in Estevan under the opposition when they had the privilege to serve this province and lead. And what did they do to those beds? They closed them. But I'm happy to report, we opened them and we have added to them, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Centre seems to be just a little bit confused on how ROSC, recovery-oriented system of care, works, so I just want to briefly explain that. What happens is an individual will go into a facility or treatment, and it's not the traditional 28-day program anymore. That individual is treated for what they are ailing from, Mr. Speaker. And if it takes 28 days, fantastic. But we all know it could take longer. So if it's 60, if it's 90, they work with that individual.

And when it's time for them to move on, they may spend time in

a sober-living facility where they will have wraparound supports and learn how to integrate back into a community, Mr. Speaker, with the whole goal of getting them back into employment, getting them into recovery, Mr. Speaker, so that they can live safe and healthy lives back with their families and back with their communities, Mr. Speaker.

These beds that we're providing across the province, it's also important to note that they're not all the same. There are some 24 in-patient round-the-clock care. Some people only need intensive day services, where they come to a facility during the day but then at nighttime they may go back to their home, but they always have access to a counsellor or someone they can call if they are in need. And then we also have something new as far as virtual care goes, Mr. Speaker, and that may work for some individuals. It is not one-size-fits-all, Mr. Speaker.

We're expanding our complex-needs emergency shelters into more communities. We have seen success with the pilot project in the last year. Over 1,300 patients have been admitted to both Regina and Saskatoon locations to date. Each of these patients get connected with various community supports, ranging from health services to social services, and are discharged with a care plan, or they get to a community-based organization, they go back to family. Mr. Speaker, best case scenario, they choose to go into recovery and take advantage of the recovery-oriented system of care that we have to offer.

By getting people who are facing mental health and addictions out of the streets and into these shelters, Mr. Speaker, we're able to increase public safety and help them get the right supports to recover from any addictions or mental health challenges. And when we say community safety is a priority, we mean it. Not like what the member from Saskatoon Centre had to say earlier. We are investing dollars and, Mr. Speaker, it is expensive. It's not cheap to provide these services for individuals. So what price would the member from Saskatoon Centre put on the services that we're providing so that we can get these individuals into recovery? We are only trying to help, Mr. Speaker.

The member from Saskatoon Centre said individuals who are taken to the complex-needs emergency shelters get arrested and charged. Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the facts. Mr. Speaker, yes, these individuals are picked up by police officers in these communities, but they are not arrested and they are not charged. We know that the right place for these individuals is not a jail cell, Mr. Speaker. It will just agitate them more. But when they do present a harm to themselves or a harm to the community as a whole, they are picked up and they are taken to these shelters, Mr. Speaker.

In these shelters we provide a warm meal, a hot shower, a bed for them. There are supports there for these individuals — social workers, nurses, counsellors — with the whole goal of getting them into recovery, Mr. Speaker. And when they're let go the next day, they're not taken to a police station, Mr. Speaker. They're let go at a community-based organization who can help them. They're let go to family, Mr. Speaker, people that truly care about them and want to see them do better, Mr. Speaker. I would also note that this is avoiding people from going to the emergency room as well, so we're providing some space there while these individuals are getting the help that they really do need.

Our plan is to keep people safe in their communities and to help fund that path to recovery. The NDP plan in BC [British Columbia] promotes more drugs and makes it less safe on the streets, Mr. Speaker. We can see how well that has worked for them, and it hasn't worked very well at all. In fact they've decided to back up on some of those policies that they've decided to put in in the past, and hopefully they can see some of the successes that we're having with some stuff that we're doing, and maybe they'll go down that road.

The Saskatchewan Party government will continue to fund a path for recovery so people who suffer from substance abuse can live healthier lives with their families back in their communities. We're expanding access to addictions treatment through a new virtual access and addictions medicine program. This program will increase access to legitimate addictions medication provided through the opioid agonist therapy program. These legitimate addiction medications alleviate cravings and manage withdrawal symptoms for patients facing opioid addictions. By increasing this access, we ensure that all Saskatchewan residents, whether they live in the far North or in a rural area in southern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, can receive the addiction treatment they need when they need it.

We continue to invest in our children and youth in this province. We provide a number of supports designed specifically for youth to make sure we are addressing mental health and addictions issues when they start and enabling our youth to recover from such challenges.

This year we're making significant investments to support multiple integrated youth services sites, as well as two additional group homes. In collaboration with the Ministry of Social Services, by investing in our youth, we can provide them with the proper tools to build a stronger future for themselves and the province as a whole. We all know the youth is our future, and we're going to deliver for them as well, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that the hard-working seniors who built this province deserve safe, reliable, and high-quality care that they need in order to age with dignity in their homes for as long as possible. That is why we continue to make significant investments in seniors initiatives in this year's budget.

We have annualized funding for our previous commitment of adding 300 continuing care assistants to the home care program and we have added those assistants. This funding increases access to home supports, which can vary from supportive services to nursing services, depending on the level of care required. We're also investing in senior-serving organizations and community groups that develop innovative approaches to support seniors in their homes.

To ensure seniors can access long-term care when it becomes necessary, we continue to make significant investments in long-term care. This year we are investing in multiple major capital projects as well as our affiliate long-term care providers. We have many long-term care projects currently under way, including in rural and remote areas such as La Ronge, Grenfell, Estevan, and more.

There are \$2.5 million to continue with the detailed design of the new Estevan Regional Nursing Home. This is another exciting

milestone in this new build for not only Estevan but surrounding communities. And we continue to reduce expenses specific to seniors who may live on fixed incomes. We heavily subsidize the cost of long-term care by covering over 80 per cent of the overall cost.

Through the senior citizens' ambulance assistance program, ambulance trips are capped at \$135 per trip for ground ambulance services. We have increased the personal care home benefit by \$1,000 to a maximum of \$3,500 per month. As a part of our 2024 campaign commitment, we are expanding access to flash glucose monitoring for seniors age 65-plus. This will benefit over 9,000 seniors, Mr. Speaker. We are delivering for them as well.

Mr. Speaker, delivering high-quality and reliable health care to our rural and remote population is also a priority. To ensure that reliable primary care is available across the province, we continue to invest in our ambitious health human resource action plan. We introduced this action plan in 2022 to recruit, train, incentivize, and retain more health care professionals in this province. We have invested over 460 million to support numerous action items under the four pillars. This includes \$156 million invested in this year, Mr. Speaker.

We continue to create more opportunities for health care professionals to find meaningful work in the province of Saskatchewan. We have annualized funding to continue the support of 250 new, enhanced, full-time, permanent positions that have been filled in 54 rural communities across this province. We will continue to support an additional 65 new and enhanced positions in rural and remote communities through a \$4.8 million investment this year.

[21:15]

Having reliable access to ambulance services is critical in rural and remote areas. That is why we are investing 8.8 million to support ground and air ambulance services this year through our multi-year EMS [emergency medical services] stabilization plan. This is on top of their regular funding, Mr. Speaker.

To retain more health care professionals in rural and remote communities, we introduced the rural and remote recruitment incentive that offers \$50,000 to hard-to-recruit positions in over 50 communities, one of them being Estevan, Mr. Speaker. Through this program we have filled over 400 hard-to-recruit positions and continue to recruit more health care professionals every day. Similarly we support the rural physician incentive that offers up to \$200,000 to physicians that practise in rural and remote communities. In addition to these incentives, physicians in remote communities can receive a new rural and northern practice recognition premium. These efforts allow us to remain an attractive province to live, work, and raise a family, Mr. Speaker.

Accessing primary care doesn't always require a physician that may not readily be available in a rural or remote community. That is why our government is expanding the scope of practice for multiple health care professionals, including nurse practitioners. We have expanded the scope of nurse practitioners through a long-term care pilot project that allows nurse practitioners to select long-term care sites to take on more responsibility and fully apply their knowledge to their work. Pharmacists' scope of

practice has also expanded recently through pilot projects. At select locations, pharmacists are able to perform more advanced examinations on patients, such as testing for strep throat.

Mr. Speaker, increasing access to primary care through innovative approaches and ambitious retention initiatives also allows us to deliver the right care at the right time to the people of Saskatchewan. All of this is to help us achieve our goal that every Saskatchewan resident should have access to a primary care provider.

And before I close on the topic of health, I would be remiss if I did not mention the MRI [magnetic resonance imaging] services that will be coming to Estevan. Emmanuel Health and St. Joseph's Hospital have been actively fundraising for the capital equipment and renovations. I am so happy to update everyone today that in less than one year, they have managed to raise 5 million of their \$6.5 million goal. That \$5 million includes the generous donation from Elaine Walkom that kickstarted this project. And I can't wait to see the day when we can actually get those services up and going.

Thanks to the hard work and tenacity of Lori Gervais at the hospital foundation. She has reached out far and wide to individuals and communities that this investment will benefit. Every time I look at social media, there's another rural municipality giving \$100,000 or more.

The constituency I live in is one of the most generous I've ever seen, and the donations flow from other constituencies. And this is happening because this is truly a regional investment. So I'd like to take the opportunity to thank all of those to date who have donated to this project. Thanks to the individuals, the families, the businesses, and the municipalities. From the bottom of my heart I say thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I've talked a lot about the investments we're making in health care, the largest budgeted item in this budget. The only way we can afford to pay for these services is through a strong economy, which brings us to our energy and resource sector, the sector which continues to move our economy forward. That is one of the reasons we are delivering a new incentive to support the goal of increasing oil production to 600 barrels per day by 2030.

The low productivity and reactivation oil well program is an incentive program designed to encourage industry to make new capital investments in low-producing and inactive horizontal oil wells. The goal is to create incremental oil production and revenue from existing wells. Once again, Mr. Speaker, delivering for you.

Now let's talk a little bit about education. We're focusing on delivering increased opportunities and supports for kindergarten to grade 12 students, parents, and teachers across Saskatchewan. This year there is a 5.4 increase to the Ministry of Education, which includes an 8.4 increase in school operating funding, monies that will go directly to supporting our students.

Last year we had a pilot project in eight schools across Saskatchewan. These were the specialized support classrooms set up throughout the province. We have heard these classrooms have been very successful. That is why this year we're going to

build on those successes and provide funding for 50 additional specialized support classrooms. These classrooms help reduce interruptions by providing additional supports to students who need them.

We're also emphasizing student literacy. Learning to read is one of the most valuable skills during childhood and sets the foundation for lifelong academic success. For this reason, this year's budget provides additional funding to improve kindergarten to grade 3 reading levels in Saskatchewan.

Getting there, Mr. Speaker, I'm just about done. In the '25-26 budget we deliver safer communities across this province by enhancing the presence of law enforcement in Saskatchewan. We are delivering for you by increasing the municipal police grant program, which helps front-line officers respond to more calls for services while increased funding for the RCMP will support operations in the province.

In Estevan we will continue to receive funding for the PACT unit, or better known as the police and crisis team. The aim of this team is to help individuals and families struggling with mental illness. The police officers pair with a registered social worker to attend and diffuse crisis situations. Then they will connect individuals with the appropriate supports they need.

As well there's an additional investment being made in interpersonal violence programs and services including second-stage housing. The budget also delivers funding to create a more accessible court system for municipal bylaw officers and ensuring cases are complete and ready to move to trial more quickly.

And the last topic, financial responsibility. Mr. Speaker, the surplus forecast in '24-25 budget leaves Saskatchewan in one of the strongest financial positions among provinces. Non-renewable resources account for 12.8 per cent of the total expenses in this year's budget. Another sign of Saskatchewan's strong financial position is the province's net debt position, which remains the second-lowest debt-to-GDP ratio among Canadian provinces at 14.6 per cent.

Our government's prudent financial management is also reflected in the province's credit rating. Saskatchewan currently maintains the second-best credit rating among provinces when the ratings from the three major agencies are considered.

And just to touch on a couple of other things before I wrap up. We know we continue to have a strong economy that is reflected in our municipal revenue-sharing numbers. There is a 6.3 per cent increase for all municipalities, and because this is based on the amount of provincial sales tax that is generated, it shows that our economy is growing.

And to remind everyone, these dollars are predictable, stable, no strings attached for our municipalities, not like when the members opposite had the opportunity to lead. They made municipalities beg for money and would choose what they thought their priorities were, not the government. Mr. Speaker, we know that municipalities are best suited to understand what their needs are, and we will let them choose what their priorities are.

We also continue to work with our community-based organizations, all of whom received a 3 per cent increase in this year's budget. Food Banks of Saskatchewan will also receive funding in a two-year commitment our government made to help families and food banks with high food costs.

A commitment was made during the 2024 election to create a new Saskatchewan young entrepreneur bursary, which is an annual grant of \$285,000 for a maximum of 57 bursaries to support young entrepreneurs in this province. Supporting our entrepreneurs will keep this economy moving forward and delivering for all of us, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I started, *Delivering for You* is the theme of this year's budget, and I could not think of a more fitting theme. The budget priorities reflect the priorities of Saskatchewan residents. That's what they said was most important to them: affordability, health care, education, safer communities, and fiscal responsibility.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this budget, and I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you.

**Speaker Goudy:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

**Vicki Mowat:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Glad to have a supportive colleague. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to engage in the budget debate once again this year.

As is customary, I will start by giving some thanks in particular to my constituency assistant Twyla Harris Naciri, who's been with me through thick and thin for the past seven and a half years, aside from a couple of maternity leaves which brought her some beautiful baby boys. We've been through quite a lot together and I wouldn't be able to do this work without her, so I want to say thank you even though I hope she's not watching this right now. I hope she's taking some time with her family.

And I also want to talk a little bit about the role that family plays in all of this. Often I'll talk about my spouse in this place. I feel like he has no idea how much I speak about him here and everyone kind of knows more about him than they might care to. But I want to talk a little bit about my folks because I'm pretty close with my parents as well and it's been a rough month for them. My father had two emergency back surgeries this month, spent at least a couple of weeks in the hospital, and then my mom also had a knee surgery that was planned this month. So they're both recuperating at home right now and have heavily relied on in particular my brother, who's taken some time off; me for the odds and ends, times that I can provide supports; and for my partner and his partner for helping them figure out how to get around and be mobile.

My dad is an accountant, so the tax season was a terribly bad time for all of this to happen. But it sure has been a reminder for me of how grateful I am to have them in my life and to have them supporting me, and to know that as family we support one another. So I want to thank my colleagues, who've been very supportive throughout all of this, and our staff team for always knowing what's most important. Even though we dedicate quite a bit to this work, we also know at the end of the day that our families need to be the centre of our lives. So I want to thank all

of them for that as well.

I'll turn my attention to the budget. As we have canvassed already, this is a budget that's not focused on the future and doesn't meet the reality that we're facing right now. In fact it denies the seriousness of many of the massive challenges that we face today, including having a substantive plan for tariffs, the single greatest threat to the economy that we've faced and absolutely the main topic of discussion over the past few months, Mr. Speaker, something that we repeatedly called for the legislature to be called back to discuss before the tariffs were implemented. And it was greatly disappointing to see this government make the decision not to resume the legislature so that we could have those conversations while they were unfolding.

In addition to not having a plan for the economy or for tariffs, pretending these last three months haven't happened, there are no measures here to protect workers, producers, businesses, or industry from Donald Trump's trade war. Instead what we see in this budget is only cuts to health care and education, which are already both ranked dead last in Canada. So let's talk about some of these areas here in particular, Mr. Speaker.

Starting to hear some grumbling over there. I think we're waking some people up.

Mr. Speaker, what people want to know right now is that they have some protection over their lives and their livelihood. They want to know that their jobs are protected. They're worried about their future. And that's what they want, is a government that's going to be representing them and providing that protection.

And I was really disappointed to go through the budget and see some very flimsy content on tariffs, like 12 paragraphs discussion in broad strokes what was happening with tariffs when this has largely monopolized all the conversations we've been having with stakeholders over the past several months, implications over our economy which is largely export driven. It felt weak and it felt like a flimsy response to the very serious threat that is in front of us today.

[21:30]

And we also know, of course, that the Premier was very slow to respond, the slowest premier to respond in the nature of these at the time of the tariffs, Mr. Speaker, and very reluctant to make any kind of statement condemning Donald Trump as we have canvassed with our emergency motion last week as well.

We know the cost of living is a really big challenge right now, and for anyone who doesn't know that, you know, I think you'd have to be living under a rock at this point. But it was one of the central issues that was raised by my constituents during the campaign.

You know, I heard the minister opposite talking about how all of her constituents who are homeowners are renovating their homes and so of course this is going to be helpful for them. My constituents who are homeowners, some of them are renovating their homes, sure. But some of them are worried that they're going to lose their homes because every month the cost of everything just keeps going up and up and up and wages haven't



kept pace with that. So that's a very real circumstance for the people of this province that also needs to be acknowledged.

We need to meet people where they're at, and cost-of-living challenges are where they're at, Mr. Speaker. And these people need relief now, not waiting for savings that they won't see until 2026 under the tax cuts that have been promised. And I know that this government had to have heard those concerns while they were door knocking. And it's really disappointing to see that those needs are not being met and people are not being listened to when they're facing taxes on essentials like groceries and children's clothes. Those things are not optional and can't be omitted, as we all know very well.

It's also really, really discouraging to see \$26.7 million being cut from education, Mr. Speaker. And over the last year that we've seen, you'd think that now might be a time that the government would wake up to the idea that we need to invest in education. Over the public outcry we've seen, over the rallies with thousands of people that have been at this Legislative Building, Mr. Speaker, after seeing the teachers' strike and the support for teachers and parents and students that came out in the thousands, Mr. Speaker, you'd think that this would be a year we would see investments.

And of course it's encouraging to see the arbitration ruling that is going to mean that class complexity can be included in negotiations. But it is really discouraging to see this government once again not putting education at the forefront, not putting our kids first.

I do want to speak about health care as that is the shadow ministry that's my portfolio, Mr. Speaker. I do want to identify that our health care workers feel like they are in a war zone right now, Mr. Speaker, and that's not hyperbole. They tell us they feel like they're in a field hospital in a war zone. The amount of devastating stories that I hear on a daily basis from health care workers cannot be overstated.

Even in connecting with people after the budget to find out their reactions to things — because as much as the members opposite might like to think this, we don't just make this up — there's a lot of conversations that inform our criticisms. And connecting with health care workers after the budget was hard. A lot of folks are feeling let down by this government, completely discouraged. You know, health care workers in tears on the phone — like you know, "I just don't know what else to do" — who feel like they don't have any relief in sight.

And to see a cut to health care this year was unbelievable, Mr. Speaker. It was unbelievable to see that. And I've been asked, like well you know, wouldn't you believe it if, you know, you're criticizing the government? No, I really thought that this government would do better, Mr. Speaker. I really thought that we would see more money in the budget this year than they spent last year. And that simply isn't there and that's a cut, Mr. Speaker. No matter what way this government would like to frame it, that's a cut to health care.

And this comes at a time where this government can't keep one of our largest hospitals in Saskatoon, Saskatoon City Hospital emergency room, they can't keep it open for the hours that it has been operating at. And we've seen closures happen at that facility

due to staffing and this government's inability to retain health care workers.

It's alarming. It's definitely not due to lack of need. We know that the need is there. In fact Saskatoon City Hospital emergency room has one of the longest wait times in Canada. And so when you're waiting between 55 and 68 hours for a bed, something's got to change. That can't be the norm for people, Mr. Speaker.

So we have full emergency rooms. We have emergency rooms that are not able to operate because of staffing. We have closures on a daily basis, not that the government would let us know. That's something that we rely on, you know, citizen reporting and health care worker reporting because the government has taken a lot of that information off of its website. So you have to drive to the facility and look at the door to find out that the emergency room is closed and you need to keep moving to the next town.

But one of those citizens let us know about an emergency room that's closed right now, Mr. Speaker, in Biggar, from 8 o'clock this morning till 8 o'clock tomorrow morning. They don't have emergency services right now. And I wish I could say that this doesn't happen very often, but this is every day.

And this is why we talk about closures and why we talk about access to ambulances and paramedics and why we fight. It's to make sure that people know that we're on their side and advocating to make sure that they can get access to health care when and where they need it.

And what that doesn't look like, Mr. Speaker, is the practices of this government that include sending women to Calgary to get diagnosed with breast cancer. You know, I haven't been in that situation myself, but one of the most vulnerable situations you can be in in your life is when you're waiting to find out whether you or your loved one has breast cancer. And we're telling women they have to go to Calgary to get that information. Go to a facility, go out of province to get that diagnosis, if they can afford it.

And that's the type of insensitivity that we're hearing about here. Women giving birth on the side of the road because they can't access birthing services in Meadow Lake. These are the types of closures we hear about, Mr. Speaker. This is what health care looks like under the Sask Party government. So of course we didn't want to see cuts. We wanted to see real investments.

You know, where is this nursing task force that they've promised, pinky-swearing, agreed to in the eleventh hour of the election campaign on a Facebook post? The then minister of Health says, yeah okay, we'll do a nursing task force. Well it's five months later and there have been some letters sent out to invite people.

Mr. Speaker, I thought this was supposed to be an emergency. You know, I thought that retention of health care workers was supposed to be an emergency situation in this province, treated with the urgency that it requires, Mr. Speaker. No retention strategy; a plan to get everyone a family doctor or nurse practitioner for \$5 million, Mr. Speaker, with a patient medical home model — I don't know how that's going to work.

Obviously team-based care has been something that health care

workers have been calling for for some time, we've been calling for for some time. It's good to see the government acknowledge that. But you have to put the necessary resources in place.

And for those who say, oh, they just keep asking us for money over and over again. Well it's also how you spend the money and what you choose to do with that money, Mr. Speaker. And when you're paying 10 times the amount for a mammogram that's happening out of province that you would be paying — if you were able to sort out getting care — in our own province, Mr. Speaker, that's a funding decision. When you're paying a contract nurse two to three times the amount that you're paying the other nurse, who you're going to have a hard time retaining, that's a funding decision, Mr. Speaker.

And it's absolutely incorrect to say that, you know, we would just cancel these things, and that's the hyperbole that the members opposite will go to. We need to fill in the gaps. And we understand that these things have a role, but they add up. The AIMS [administrative information management system] system, the ballooning cost of the AIMS system, there are so many costs within the health care system that could be cleaned up, Mr. Speaker.

As I expected, I've spent most of my time just talking about health care here. I do want to say a couple of other things. When it comes to mental health and addictions, this government's not doing enough, Mr. Speaker. Someone dies every day in our province. We've had 350 overdoses reported this month alone, since March 1st.

This is a crisis and for this government to say, steady as she goes, we're going to keep the same plan in place that we've had — it's not working. You know, something has to change. And that should start with listening to the front lines and people with lived experience rather than thinking that you know better.

And nothing for mental health. I don't know if anyone else noticed that, but there's absolutely nothing about mental health in particular in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, I want to spend some time talking about some issues that are near and dear to my heart, to my constituency, and my city. And those issues are homelessness and addictions, Mr. Speaker. We had the chance to meet with the Saskatoon city council recently. Periodically we'll have these meetings to find out what their priorities are. Homelessness and overdoses were the two top issues that they were hearing about, that they were concerned about.

And I can certainly understand why. Being MLA for Saskatoon Fairview, we have a great deal of overlap with the old riding of Saskatoon Riversdale, and that included in this past election, inheriting an area that was fraught with controversy over the opening up of the STC [Saskatoon Tribal Council] wellness centre. And part of that boundary line includes my riding and includes the member for Saskatoon Riversdale now.

So I've been actively engaged in consultations for the past couple of years, talking to my constituents about these issues, the lack of consultation that happened with government. It's not the first time I've raised this in the House as well. This past week I followed up with the third letter that I've written to the Minister

of Social Services on this issue — new Minister of Social Services, same issue, Mr. Speaker — requesting a meeting on behalf of my constituents because they've been waiting long enough and haven't had that opportunity. I look forward to the minister's response.

I do want to work collaboratively with this government, but it's time for them to take leadership on this issue and not simply say that it is up to municipalities to make all of these decisions, because they have a role. And last time I checked the Constitution, they have a responsibility for the social services and well-being of the people of the province. So I'd like to see them step up and take responsibility for that.

[21:45]

I'm running out of time so I won't include the text of the letter here, Mr. Speaker, but I also just want to say that in the news this week — and it was referred to today by the member from Saskatoon Centre — our main library is closed in Saskatoon, the main branch downtown. Another library on 20th Street is also closed for a month right now. And this is because of the overwhelming amount of homelessness and overdose crisis in our city.

Didn't think I'd see the day where our main library would close, and for this reason, which is just really heartbreaking to hear the stories of the library workers and what they've been dealing with, and heartbreaking to see that homelessness has tripled in Saskatoon in two years. Something they're doing is not going right, Mr. Speaker, and they need to look in a mirror and ask themselves what they need to change because it needs to change now. This trajectory cannot continue.

Mr. Speaker, I have allotted a couple minutes above my time here. I just want to highlight the fact that I won't be supporting this budget. It doesn't meet the moment of where people are at right now. It's not focused on reality right now and it's not focused on the future moving forward. And that's what we need from our government.

So I will not be supporting this budget. I will be supporting the amendment brought forward by my colleague from Mount Royal. Thank you.

**Speaker Goudy:** — I recognize the member from Kelvington-Wadena.

**Chris Beaudry:** — Good evening, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to start as some of my colleagues have, with some thank yous. Firstly, I'd like to thank my CA who actually just texted me. She stayed up to watch me. Nancy, go to bed. You're not missing much. She keeps the lights on, the heat going, the mail coming in and out of our office, and allows me the flexibility to do this job in the manner I see fit. So thank you, Nancy.

I want to thank my board, extremely supportive board. I appreciate every single member, the ones who have been there before my time and the new ones who have just joined. So thank you to all of them.

And second last, I'd like to thank the constituents. The interactions we've had the last few months have been humorous,

have been fun, and have also been difficult at times. And I appreciate every single one of them.

And lastly I want to thank the crew at home, and probably most importantly them. To Richelle, my wife: I think you keep the ship afloat while I'm gone, even though when I return I may turn some of the shipmates into pirates with my shenanigans. And she has to deal with the fallout of that when I escape on Sunday. I apologize for the mutiny you have to deal with.

And to the pirates: thank you to my three pirates at home. The ability that they have to transition in life to this different lifestyle we have now has made it so much easier on dad, and I truly appreciate that. So thank you to my family.

Now I've always been a fan of etymology, and I took the time to research the etymology of the word "budget." Now before I seen the word "budget's" etymology, I thought, how neat would it be to use that as a framework for my reply. Well here's the said etymology of the word "budget," and you can see why I changed my mind.

Budget: late Middle English; from Old French bougette, diminutive of bouge or leather bag; from Latin bulga, leather bag or knapsack; of Gaulish origin. The word originally meant a pouch or wallet, and later its contents.

Mr. Speaker, I am not near bold enough to use a leather bag or the contents of such as a framework for my reply, but I am bold enough to try to speak for 20 minutes on the contents of the Minister of Finance's bougette.

In my reply to the Throne Speech I talked about service and how I've seen great acts of service in this province. Today, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about responsibility. My definition of responsibility is having the ability to respond and not become reactive when internal tensions arise.

We have a shining example of this, Mr. Speaker. Our Minister of Finance delivered to us a responsible budget. This responsible Saskatchewan budget delivers for the people of Kelvington-Wadena. This responsible Saskatchewan budget makes life in Saskatchewan more affordable.

One of the titles of a talk I do is named "What is Power?" In this talk I describe the relationship between power and responsibility. Through 60 minutes of exploration we discover that power and responsibility go hand in hand. Now I understand I do not have the floor for the next 60 minutes, but I could go 40. We'll see.

But I'll summarize this talk in a few sentences. What is power? Power is the energy we bring to our lives, the energy we bring to our choices. Power is both the energy that comes from being in reality, being in reality and being in a state of acceptance of that reality and the energy that fuels our ability to act in accordance with that truth.

It takes a lot of power to be responsible. It takes a lot of power to make responsible decisions. I want to thank the Premier, the Minister of Finance, and all those involved in this budget. There are many responsible decisions that were made. Looking at this budget I can see the immense amount of power it must have taken to create a budget like this. Helping make life more affordable

was the responsible thing to do. Investing in our strong economy was the responsible thing to do. This budget is going to help the families of Kelvington-Wadena in many ways.

I'm particularly excited for the graduate retention program increasing by 20 per cent. During a rec hockey game this winter, Mr. Speaker, I was discussing this program with two young players on my team. One of the players hadn't heard about this at all. He had to find out from his accountant. He didn't know for two years after graduation, who hadn't heard about it — not a sound at school, not a sound in university. Why wasn't this promoted more in our schools and our post-secondary establishments? The other one, he knew about it. He said that's why he stayed. That's why he's working here. It's why he's contributing to the Saskatchewan economy.

Again I want to thank those involved in this budget. I thank them for expanding access to fertility treatments. My wife, Richelle, and I both know the difficulty of having to go through the process of trying to start a family and not being able to. It warms my heart to know that other individuals may be able to not have to go through some of the painful moments that Richelle and I did. The worst parts of going through those experiences for myself was coming inside from a long day of work once a month and finding my wife in tears on the floor again when the treatment did not work, then having to decide if we can financially and emotionally try again. I'm proud that this government is offering this level of support to young families trying to have children.

Kelvington-Wadena is full of young families, Mr. Speaker. The families in my constituency are active. They are out and about. Some families' children are in three or four different sports and activities at once. Most of these sports and activities take up a lot of time and a lot of kilometres. The doubling of the active families benefit tax credit isn't just going to help parents today. This is an investment in our children and their futures. We know, and studies have proven, that youth sports improve physical health, improve mental health, promote social connections, teamwork, healthy competition, good sportsmanship, and empathy. Youth sports improve academic performance. They teach life skills like goal setting, time management, and leadership.

The skills learned in youth sports and activities don't stop in childhood. Being active has direct links with neuroplasticity. For those who don't know, neuroplasticity explains the brain's ability to change and adapt through our lives. It's the process by which our neural networks reorganize themselves in response to new experiences, learning, and even injury. This concept challenges the long-held belief that the brain's structure is fixed after childhood. This cognitive flexibility is a continuous remodelling that allows us to learn, adapt, and recovery from brain injuries in ways previously thought impossible.

So in a summary, having the financial ability to be more active has a direct correlation to allowing individuals to be more responsible and more powerful. You can literally change your mindset, change your brain structure, and change your reality by being active. And the Saskatchewan budget offers that.

This winter I seen so many active families. Three youth curling bonspiels we were able to witness, well over 100 children participating in one of our best winter activities. I counted nine

poker rallies that were situated in Kelvington-Wadena or travelled through Kelvington-Wadena. I believe the Minister of Environment may have gotten stuck on one on the groomed trail. I don't know how that's possible, but it might have happened.

Mr. Speaker, we started a weekly update on events happening in the constituency, and it's growing like wildfire. You don't have to go far from home to be entertained. Our post that went out last week mentioned six events including minor hockey games, the Clair snowmobile rally, the Greenwater wildlife club fish derby, the Wadena and District Museum escape room fundraiser, the Wishart firemen's steak fry, and the Foam Lake spring recital. We got more comments on other events in the area than we could fit on a poster. It's amazing to see how much happens in our communities and how you don't have to travel far for quality entertainment.

The highlights don't stop though. The Foam Lake Flyers senior hockey club, this weekend, won the provincial C final over . . . He's not paying attention, Mr. Speaker, but we'll just say over Wilkie, and we'll leave him be. The Drake Canucks and Foam Lake Flyers are right in the middle of the Long Lake Hockey League finals right now. I'm going to be impartial as both teams are in my constituency.

You know, Mr. Speaker, our economy is supported greatly by the oil and gas industry. My family has been supported by the oil and gas industry my entire life. My dad's still working overseas in the oil and gas industry, 50 years into his career. The low productivity and reactivation oil well program, in my opinion, will support Sask families for this and the next generation.

I was fortunate enough to travel to the Canadian Association of Energy Contractors luncheon with the Premier last Friday. It was an opportunity to speak with industry leaders, but to speak on many of the advantages of Saskatchewan's oil industry.

A highlight of the day was a quote from CAOEC's [Canadian Association of Energy Contractors] president, Mark Sholz. And this quote was said twice: "Everyone in the room knows the diplomatic and advocacy work that Premier Moe has done is directly related to the reduction of the energy tariffs we faced." Once again, "Everyone in the room knows the diplomatic and advocacy work that Premier Moe has done is directly related to the reduction of the energy tariffs we faced."

Mr. Speaker, I have a soft spot in my heart for humour. One of my favourite things that came across my desk this winter happened to be a letter sent to me by two young athletes. My colleagues may remember this letter, and they may remember how desperate these young men were for funding for their trip to La Ronge. Even though these two may not be Shakespearean poets, they are determined, hard-working individuals. That has shown this winter.

Dylan and Ben, along with their Park Posse teammates, are not only in the league final but also, sadly, they lost the provincial final last night. The aforementioned league final has me in a bit of a sticky situation. The Park Posse from my constituency is playing the Naicam Vikings from your constituency, Mr. Speaker. Now I played all my minor hockey in Naicam and I went to school in Naicam. I also coached there for six years.

I'm going to stay neutral on this one as well, but what makes me more proud about this is the community rink affordability Act and the benefit it's going to have on today's Naicam Vikings, Park Posse, Porcupine Blues, Kelvington Wheat Kings, Lanigan Pirates, Leroy Braves, Drake Canucks, Foam Lake Flyers, and more. And you know what? I think it's even going to have a little bit of benefit on some of the fellas and myself on the Archerwill Swampers.

I could not get through this reply without a quote or two.

[22:00]

Mr. Speaker, one of my favourites is Viktor Frankl. And Viktor Frankl once said:

Ultimately man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather must recognize that it is he who is asked. In a word, each man is questioned by life, and he can only answer to life by answering for his own life. To life he can only respond by being responsible.

I attended multiple events this winter, but one that stands out to me is the community and unity event in Porcupine Plain. This event brought together all the cultures and backgrounds in the Porcupine region. This event really showed me the interdependent nature of all of us. By coming together and sharing food and culture, I was reminded how we rely not only on ourselves and our loved ones, but on our community and the communities at large. We all play a part or have a role in making this province what it is and what it will become.

Now the second quote, by Erik Erikson. Erik Erikson said:

Life doesn't make any sense without interdependence. We need each other, and the sooner we learn that, the better for all of us.

We need each other, Mr. Speaker. That quote reminds me of the Premier's great video on the interdependent nature of agriculture. Mr. Speaker, as we're speaking about ag, I was lucky enough to attend the Crop Production Show with our Minister of Agriculture. It was just over two months ago, and the environment in agriculture sure has changed. At multiple events that week, farmers were upbeat and positive about the farming season. Today that's changed. There's a level of fear in the ag sector. But even though there is fear, there's an immense amount of resilience and responsibility. Our Sask farmers are preparing for the season, and they're backed up by some powerful and responsible individuals. Our Minister of Ag, our Minister of Trade, and our Premier have been some of the loudest voices for our farmers. When others have fallen quiet on the canola industry, they speak up. They speak up and they speak loudly. They face these times without reaction but with a power and responsibility that we need from our leaders. As a farmer, I'm ready to face this growing season knowing I have the right leaders on my team.

The focus on K to 3 literacy is something I'm very proud of. Reading is foundational in our home. Every weeknight, outside of the evenings my girls have sports, they read to us. Currently my oldest is fascinated with graphic novels. Sophie, our middle child, her favourite book series is *Wings of Fire* — I'm glad we

can get those books at Costco, makes it easier because she goes through one every week. And she's always extremely eager to correct and teach her younger sister. Our youngest, who is in grade 1, is reading at a more advanced level than her sisters were at this age. I think it's from being able to learn from those in front of her.

I was lucky enough to attend two school events this winter. I went to the Rose Valley School and I travelled to the Drake School to read to the entire school and staff — 29 students and 6 staff — I read *What Do You Do with a Problem?* This book taught an important lesson about responsibility. When problems arise it may feel uncomfortable, it may cause difficult feelings, but if we hide from our problems they don't go away. They only get bigger. In the end, the child musters up the personal power and responsibility to face the problem head-on.

The students had some great examples of the problems they faced in their lives. I've seen first-hand the power that sharing your personal experience has on others. They were a shining example of how sharing your story and facing your problems with responsibility, instead of reacting, can benefit you and others around you.

One of my greatest teachers, Mr. Speaker, Dr. Gabor Maté — who we may have the opportunity to hear online as a guest at SUMA — says:

The Buddha said the mind creates your reality, but I think that's an unfinished statement. The mind does create your reality, but before that, your reality creates your mind. From the ages of zero to seven, your reality creates your mind.

I've said this quote many times, and I've found that it is true. The experiences that individuals have in their formative years help develop and form a person's mind. Your perception of reality can be influenced by the books you read, by the sights you see, and by what you're taught.

And again, I'll state that I'm proud to see a focus on K to 3 literacy so our young minds can develop and grow in a healthy, responsible way. I believe this is a step in the right direction to create strong children who will become strong adults, have the ability to respond and not react, who will have empowered, proactive, and accountable mindsets.

To me, Mr. Speaker — and this is a close, important topic — addictions is about pain. It's about the management of the internal pain and suffering we face as humans. The increase in mental health funding will be felt for years to come in a positive way. I've worked in the mental health and addictions field for years, Mr. Speaker. I have seen first-hand the benefits of multiple levels of group therapy, be it grief groups, men's groups, addiction groups, or one-on-one therapy.

Living rurally, I know the difficulties of attending meetings or therapy sessions, be that for myself or the individuals I've worked with. I've found that there are so many modalities for healing, and I'm happy to see our Minister of Mental Health and Addictions offer more than just one path to recovery. What I heard from her was options, multiple options for recovery. I know first-hand how beneficial having a multitude of options can help someone in their recovery. I've personally worked with

folks by phone, by Zoom, or in person and in group settings. Having virtual options is going to save lives. We need all the options available. When individuals have options, it raises their chances at recovery. Thank you, Minister, for all these options.

Mr. Speaker, our actions can be the agent for stability and responsibility. This budget delivers stability to the Saskatchewan people. The actions of the Minister of Finance and his team deliver. This budget delivers, period, Mr. Speaker. It delivers.

And to close I leave you with a poem by Mary Oliver:

You are young. So you know everything. You leap into the boat and begin rowing. But listen to me. Without fanfare, without embarrassment, without any doubt, I talk directly to your soul. Listen to me. Lift the oars from the water, let your arms rest, and your heart, and heart's little intelligence, and listen to me. There is life without love. It is not worth a bent penny, or a scuffed shoe. It is not worth the body of a dead dog nine days unburied. When you hear, a mile away and still out of sight, the churn of the water as it begins to swirl and roil, fretting around the sharp rocks — when you hear that unmistakable pounding — when you feel the mist on your mouth and sense ahead the embattlement, the long falls plunging and streaming — then row, row for your life toward it.

I'm ready to row towards whatever the future has to offer with this team behind me. This responsible team. This team that delivers for Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the budget as seconded by the member from White City-Qu'Appelle, and not supporting the amendment.

**Speaker Goudy:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Riversdale.

**Kim Breckner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was about 8 minutes and 45 seconds ago that the House leader informed me we sit until 10:30 and not 10:00, so I just need a minute here.

I want to start off by acknowledging my husband, Paul, whose love and support keeps me grounded in this crazy world of politics, and my parents and brother who continue to cheer me on and are always there for me. I would also like to thank my constituency assistant Ezra for all her hard work helping me and the constituents of Saskatoon Riversdale.

Today I rise to express my profound disappointment with the 2025-26 budget presented by the Government of Saskatchewan. This budget fails to address the most pressing issues facing our province and in particular the people of Saskatoon Riversdale. It is a budget that ignores the realities of our time and abandons those who need support the most.

Firstly this budget does nothing to address the looming threat of tariffs imposed by the United States under the Trump administration. In introducing the budget, the Minister of Finance said it was not possible to build in the exact impact of tariffs, which is true. No government in Canada can foresee the exact impact of tariffs.

So some of those governments utilized this novel idea called contingency planning. For those who might not be aware, the

Oxford dictionary defines a “contingency” as a future event or circumstance which is possible but cannot be predicted with certainty. A contingency can also refer to a provision for an unforeseen event or circumstance.

But I get it. It’s hard to plan for and prepare for the impact of tariffs, and this government doesn’t really do hard things so instead they did nothing. These tariffs could devastate our agricultural and resource sectors, which are the backbone of Saskatchewan’s economy. Instead of preparing for this economic uncertainty, the government has chosen to bury its head in the sand, leaving our farmers, producers, and workers vulnerable to the fallout. This is a failure of leadership and a missed opportunity to protect our province’s economic future.

The member for Regina Mount Royal remarked, in response to how poor this budget is, that the Sask Party government was phoning it in. And I certainly concur. But the Sask Party government doesn’t stop at metaphorically phoning it in. When the other premiers gathered in Ottawa last Friday with Prime Minister Carney to address the threat of tariffs, Premier Moe couldn’t be bothered to show up in person. But at least he showed up over a video call. The fine people of Saskatchewan did not get that same courtesy on March 4th when tariffs came into effect, leaving this province and this country bewildered and looking for leadership.

They needed to know that their leaders were with them, that they had a plan. Instead the people of Saskatchewan received a social media statement that the government was considering its response — considering. While premiers across the country were reaching out to their constituents and announcing their plan, the Sask Party government was still trying to come up with a plan to a threat that has been ongoing for months. And today it’s still not clear what exactly the government’s plan is. Meanwhile in talking to stakeholders, people are already feeling the economic pressure brought by the uncertainty and need support.

Secondly, as the member for Saskatoon Riversdale, I would be remiss if I didn’t comment on health care. My constituency is home to St. Paul’s Hospital, which frequently experiences dangerous overcrowding. I know this first-hand. This is where I live. This is the emergency room that I’ve sat in for hours upon hours. It’s where I’ve received incredible care, recovering after donating a kidney despite the subpar conditions.

At a time when our hospitals are already under strain and wait times are unacceptably long, this government has decided to slash resources rather than invest in the well-being of Saskatchewan people. Health care is not a luxury. It is a fundamental right. These cuts will hurt families, seniors, and vulnerable populations who rely on timely and accessible care. The people of Saskatoon Riversdale deserve better.

Thirdly, the cuts to education funding are a direct attack on the future of our children and their province. By underfunding our schools, this government is undermining the quality of education and limiting opportunities for young people to succeed. Education is the foundation of a strong and prosperous society, and these cuts will have long-term consequences for our communities. We cannot afford to shortchange our children’s futures.

And I know the budget promises millions in school infrastructure investments, but just ask my constituents about Sask Party government promises. They will tell you that a Sask Party promise is as empty as the lot on Avenue H, where a new school was promised two elections ago.

Fourthly, this budget completely ignores the homelessness crisis in Saskatoon. Every day we see more and more people struggling to find safe and stable housing. This is a humanitarian crisis that demands urgent action, yet the government has chosen to turn a blind eye. Affordable housing and support services are not optional. They are essential to building a compassionate and inclusive society. This budget fails to provide any meaningful solutions to this problem.

Fifth, the overdose crisis in Saskatoon continues to claim lives, yet this budget offers insufficient initiatives to address this urgent public health emergency. Families are losing loved ones and our community is in pain. We need expanded access to harm reduction services, mental health support and addictions treatment program. This government’s inaction is costing lives and is simply unacceptable.

[22:15]

In Saskatoon Riversdale the Freda Ahenakew library has had to temporarily close its doors due to ongoing lack of funding and support for Saskatoon’s most vulnerable people, for shelter facilities and for adequate response to address the current opioid-poisoning crisis. This is one of two libraries in Saskatoon that have had to close its doors because they have been forced to fill a treatment and care role that is the responsibility of the Sask Party government.

Lastly, this budget continues to underfund the SIS [Saskatchewan income support] and SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] program. The SAID rate for a single person is 1,129 per month. This is supposed to cover food and shelter. I don’t know where you’d even find a place to rent for under \$1,000 a month, and that’s not just me. That’s the many people in Saskatoon Riversdale that I talked to on the doorstep, people who told me that they cannot afford their rent increase, that they don’t know where they’re going to live next month, or that their child is turning 18 and now they can’t afford the home they live in.

These numbers, these decisions, they aren’t just lines on a spreadsheet. They are real lives. Real people in constant fear of ending up on the street. Real people barely able to feed their families.

In conclusion, the 2025 budget is a missed opportunity to address the real challenges facing Saskatchewan. It is a budget that prioritizes short-term political gains over the long-term well-being of our people. The government has failed to protect our economy, our health care, our education system, and our most vulnerable citizens. The people of Saskatoon Riversdale deserve a government that listens, cares, and acts. This budget proves the current government is not up to the task.

I will not be supporting the budget, but I will be supporting the amendment moved by the member from Regina Mount Royal. Thank you.

**Speaker Goudy:** — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

**Megan Patterson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to respond to the '25-26 budget presented by the Hon. Minister of Finance. I would like to thank him and his team for delivering this budget, as it would be very difficult in such a volatile time. I'd also like to thank our Premier for his astute and steadfast leadership through these challenging times.

I also want to thank my family, thank my husband, Sean, who is at home with my boys tonight. I had three boys going three different directions tonight, so with the help of my parents, my mom and dad, you know, we were able to get everyone where they were supposed to be. But without their help I wouldn't be able to do this work.

I also want to thank the constituents of Moose Jaw Wakamow for electing me and giving me the opportunity to represent them in this Assembly. It has been a privilege over the past several months to get to know our members in this House better. I am so impressed by the kindness, experience, and knowledge that this government possesses.

When I gave my maiden speech at this Assembly, I spoke a little bit about my life experience. I spoke about my injury, the years of recovery that followed. I spoke about my work, education, and the successful career I had out east, but that I chose to come back to Saskatchewan because of the quality of life it offers.

Being close to my family, giving back to my community, and having the opportunity to impact lives in a meaningful way is important to me. I mentioned that I wanted to inspire and enable people to achieve their potential. I wanted to make Saskatchewan an even better place to live, work, and raise a family and start a business, as does every single one of my colleagues.

I spoke about my vision for a respectful Assembly. In a few short months my desire to contribute and make a positive difference has not changed, but unfortunately my perspective on the dynamics of this Assembly have. The members opposite talk a great deal about our government's plan, but they lack a coherent one of their own.

They have a lot of great hockey analogies — over the boards, stick on the ice — but when it comes to the very real threat that tariffs imposed by China and the United States present, the only reasonable measures that they suggest are actually already a part of our plan. Despite the many hockey analogies, they're missing one important analogy: taking penalties, posturing, hurts your own team.

For the member from Regina Mount Royal to say that this government lacks a plan and the fiscal foundation for the challenges we are currently facing is simply not true. This government has been planning for growth and diversification for years, planning to expand in the markets we're already competing, and expanding the number of markets that we compete in. This government has opened nine additional trade offices and grown our export market from 17 billion to almost 50 billion.

This Premier and this government has spent the last several

weeks engaging with people and businesses who can actually influence US policy. This government has the second-lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the country, the second-highest credit rating, and is poised to be a leader in national growth and financial strength.

In contrast the opposition actually did mix up the revenue and expense columns when they published their budget during the election. It is very clear which side of this Assembly should be managing this province's budget especially during these challenging times.

But the opposition wants to know what this government is doing specifically to address the tariffs from foreign governments. Well for starters, we're aligned with all other provinces in the need to take targeted measures, including the stopping of purchasing of US alcohol and prioritizing Canadian suppliers in government contracts.

Here in Saskatchewan that means real measures, like the recent announcement from Saskatchewan Crowns to procure steel from Evraz in Regina. But what we don't do, Mr. Speaker, unlike the members opposite, is we don't take unnecessary penalties or score on our own net. That means we will continue to work alongside other premiers, ministers, and businesses to engage with the US government at all levels to reinforce the harm that these tariffs are causing on both sides of the border.

Unlike the members opposite, this side of the House has long stood on the importance of vital infrastructure projects like pipelines, ports, and railways. We're certainly glad to see the NDP finally wake up to the importance of pipelines and the energy sector, not only here in Saskatchewan but for all of Canada. Maybe they could take a moment to let their own party leader know.

With a federal election under way, it will be interesting to see who the members opposite endorse and campaign for. Will it be the same two federal parties that not only impose a costly and ineffective carbon tax but have also spent the past decade blocking every major pipeline project in this country?

Now I'm not sure how many members opposite have partaken in true, serious negotiations, but here's a hint: insulting and condemning the other party, whether or not they are on the other side of the Assembly or in another country, is not an effective strategy. I am relieved and surprised that the members chose to pass our amended motion and support the Government of Saskatchewan's tariff response plan. I look forward to a future of reasonable debate and collaboration.

This budget, titled *Delivering for You*, is one we can be proud of. Delivering for you means strengthening our economy and growing our province. It means advocating for Saskatchewan's economic interests so we remain the best place to live, work, raise a family, and start a business in Canada. This budget prioritizes affordability and fiscal responsibility while delivering on the programs and services that Saskatchewan people need and deserve.

This government delivered a balanced budget with a surplus of \$12 million. Forecasted revenue is 21.1 billion, and total expenses are expected to be 21 billion. I will repeat: we have the

second-lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in Canada and the second-highest credit rating. These measures are important because they allow us to access additional funds if and when needed and earn us a lower interest rate on borrowed funds.

Now this budget is focused on affordability. In December we introduced *The Saskatchewan Affordability Act*. Thirteen commitments from that Act are being funded through this budget to reduce taxes for every resident, family, and small business in the province. Saskatchewan has one of the highest tax-free thresholds in Canada. A family of four pays no taxes on their first \$63,000 of income. Under the NDP, a family of four started paying income tax at just \$26,150.

We are delivering the largest personal income tax reduction in the province since 2008 by increasing the personal exemption, spousal and dependent child exemption, and seniors' supplement by \$500 per year for the next four years. These changes will allow a family of four earning a combined income of \$100,000 to save more than \$3,400 over the next four years, while two seniors with a combined income of 75,000 will save more than \$3,100.

We are increasing monthly income benefits by 2 per cent for Saskatchewan income support and the Saskatchewan assured income for disability. This government also increased the allowable income earned by persons with disabilities, an initiative very close to my heart. Our SAID program ranks among the top five nationwide for residents living with a disability. This budget also delivers a 25 per cent increase to the disability tax credit. These measures are a part of this government's ongoing efforts to enhance financial support and affordability for individuals with disabilities in Saskatchewan.

This budget makes life more affordable for seniors, families with children, persons with disabilities, caregivers, new graduates, first-time homebuyers, and people renovating their homes. This budget also delivers on our commitment to support access to fertility treatments by offering a refundable tax credit of 50 per cent towards the cost of eligible fertility treatments.

In this budget we have also delivered on our commitment to permanently maintain the small-business tax rate at 1 per cent. This change will benefit more than 35,000 small businesses, saving them more than 50 million in corporate taxes annually.

**Speaker Goudy:** — Thank you, everyone. It now being 10:30, this Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30. Have a good evening.

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:30.]





# GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN CABINET MINISTERS

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**Hon. Scott Moe**  
**Premier**  
**President of the Executive Council**  
**Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs**

**Hon. Lori Carr**  
Minister of Mental Health and Addictions,  
Seniors and Rural and Remote Health

**Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff**  
Minister of Advanced Education

**Hon. Jeremy Cockrill**  
Minister of Health

**Hon. Daryl Harrison**  
Minister of Agriculture  
Minister Responsible for  
Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation  
Minister Responsible for  
Saskatchewan Water Security Agency

**Hon. Jeremy Harrison**  
Minister of Crown Investments Corporation  
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission  
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated  
Minister Responsible for  
Saskatchewan Government Insurance  
Minister Responsible for  
Saskatchewan Power Corporation  
Minister Responsible for  
Saskatchewan Telecommunications  
Minister Responsible for  
Saskatchewan Water Corporation  
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Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority  
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First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs  
Minister Responsible for the  
Provincial Capital Commission

**Hon. Colleen Young**  
Minister of Energy and Resources