



FIRST SESSION — THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE

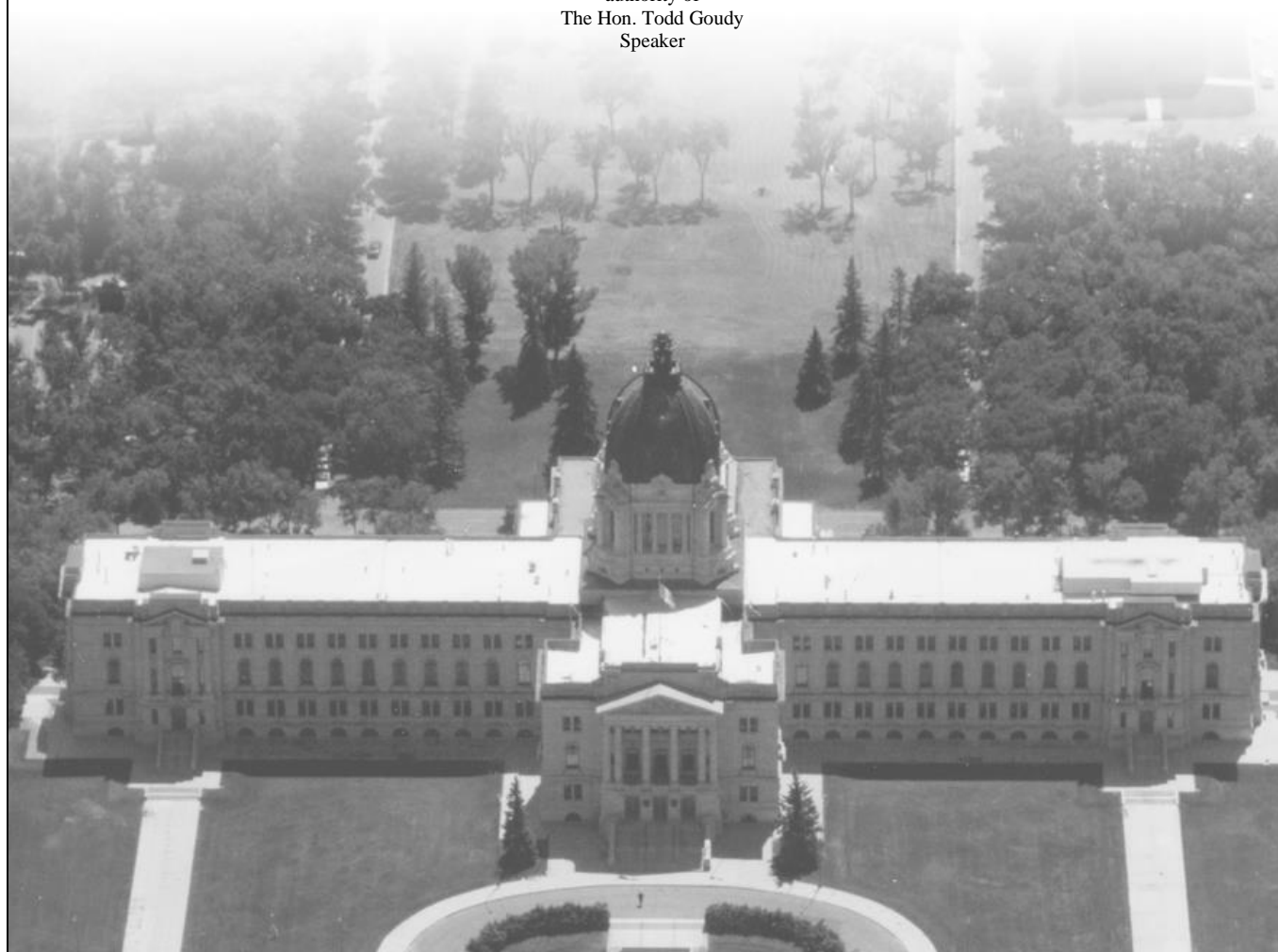
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
AND
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Todd Goudy
Speaker



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
1st Session — 30th Legislature

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Premier — Hon. Scott Moe
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Standings

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

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[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

Speaker Goudy: — Well it now being 7 p.m., 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: — I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Travis Keisig: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And before I get started, I really want to thank the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's for a wonderful reception, a great meal, and good conversation. Those cattle producers are entering into the calving season, Mr. Speaker. They're going to be working very hard, and we thank them for all the hard work they do all across the province.

In my response to the Throne Speech in the fall, Mr. Speaker, I talked about my wife and family. But I talked about it a little bit later, so I wanted to talk about them at the very beginning of my speech, Mr. Speaker.

My wife is very busy with her work at the RM [rural municipality] of Tullymet, and she's also serving as the president of the RMAA [Rural Municipal Administrators' Association of Saskatchewan]. And at this year's SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention she addressed 2,500 SARM delegates as the president of the RMAA. She had a great speech and did a very good job. It was very well done.

I've got two wonderful daughters, Mr. Speaker. My oldest one is a nurse working in Regina and Fort Qu'Appelle. She works very, very hard and really enjoys her work. There's always some challenges with the nursing field, but she's a good person, Mr. Speaker, and she really cares for what she does.

My other daughter, Sharlize, is a veterinary technician working at a veterinary business in Yorkton. And she started with a new veterinarian team, and she's really enjoying the team and really enjoys all of the work she does out there.

I want to thank all of the staff in the Minister of Environment's office, Mr. Speaker. It has been a real whirlwind since being sworn into cabinet and taking on those duties and the incredibly hectic pace that we work in there. But my chief of staff, Kenneth; my communication, Kielle; my caseworker, Kris; and my admin, Jessika, do absolutely fantastic work. And you know, I'm really proud of them. Like they really go above and beyond in some really short timelines, and unbelievable work ethic that they all have. So I'm very happy for having the opportunity to work alongside them.

My constituency assistant, Tina, we've worked together for over five years now, Mr. Speaker. She is just an exemplary person that I have the privilege to work with. She's always doing something for the benefit of the constituency. And she is, you know, really dialled in to what happens in the community, Mr. Speaker, is a good way to put it. So she is an excellent part of the team.

And I mean, we always have to thank the constituents of Last Mountain-Touchwood. We might serve in cabinet in different positions, but we are elected members of the Legislative Assembly for the constituency that we serve. So I always keep it top of mind, Mr. Speaker, that we will always represent the people in our community.

Listening to the debate speeches, budget debate speeches, Mr. Speaker, has been really, it's been really interesting. And last night the member from Saskatoon Fairview said that we're not talking about tariffs enough. So I went home and I rewrote my whole speech, and I'm going to spend a little bit of time talking about tariffs. And I really enjoy history, Mr. Speaker, because if you can look into the past you can always see the future.

So this is not the first time the United States has imposed tariffs on Canada. In 1890 the McKinley Tariff raised import duties to nearly 50 per cent. And it's very important to note, Mr. Speaker, that the McKinley Tariff was also an attempt by the United States to use tariffs to annex Canada. We know that this effort was unsuccessful. At the time, United States recognized how dependent Canada was on the US [United States] market. And the US truly hoped that Canada would become increasingly reliant on American markets, potentially leading to its eventual statehood. Initially tariffs started at 25 per cent and were later increased to over 50. I don't know about you, Mr. Speaker, but this sounds eerily familiar. But it didn't work. We know that, and we're all very happy to be Canadians and proud Saskatchewanians.

So during the Great Depression, as the global economy declined, the Smoot-Hawley Tariff was enacted. This was another attempt by US government for protectionist measures for their producers, and we know that that did not work out well for the global economy at all.

In 1982 the softwood lumber dispute emerged when the US lumber industry expressed displeasure with the low stumpage rates in Canada, claiming there was an advantage over the United States. Canada proposed to increase the rates by 10 per cent; however the United States proceeded to impose a 15 per cent duty on Canadian lumber.

In 2018 the United States placed tariffs on steel and aluminum imports from Canada. And we saw the Trump administration's attempt to protect American industries. These tariffs were in place until 2019 when Canada and the US decided to remove all the tariffs. We can work together, Mr. Speaker, and that is the message I want to get out tonight. There's always challenges and different negotiations, but we can work together.

And the important . . . the one thing about tariffs, Mr. Speaker, that is not getting the media coverage that it should be is the Chinese tariffs are far more damaging to Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan industries than the 25 per cent from the

Americans.

The important thing to understand, for each and every person on either side of the border wherever they are, the truth about tariffs is that they reduce jobs, do nothing for economic growth, and the consumer is the individual in the end that is hurt the most by all of these disputes. We need a plan where both countries see balance and fairness, leading to more jobs and an economic win for both nations.

And the opposition, Mr. Speaker, is always running around with a lot of hyperbole and exclamations. We need stability, we need professionalism, and we need diplomacy, Mr. Speaker. And we're always thankful that Saskatchewan has elected a government with a proven track record since 2007 of having a solid plan, a plan that allows for thoughtful decision making rather than knee-jerk reactions.

It's crucial for governments to carefully consider our next steps, knowing that the decisions will have a lasting impact on their citizens. We need elected representatives to look past four-year election cycles and truly embrace the big picture, and that's what this government has always provided for Saskatchewan people. Whether it's our nine international trade offices, horribly criticized by the members opposite, or our long-standing support of energy infrastructure that the members opposite have also stood against, this government has always had a long-term vision for projects that benefit all Saskatchewan people.

With the recent struggles with our closest trading ally, the pipeline debate is front and centre on a national stage, and the need for more access to tidewater for the most sustainably produced energy products could not be more evident. This is the party that has always supported the pipelines and our world-class energy sector. I want to thank the member from Moosomin for doing a very good job last night, Mr. Speaker.

Now there's many naysayers across Saskatchewan and across Canada that say pipelines take too long. They're too expensive to build. But let's take a look at that, Mr. Speaker, and let's look back at a little bit of history. Enbridge Mainline was started in 1950. It runs from Edmonton all the way to Superior, Wisconsin, 1600 kilometres in length. Was completed in 150 construction days, had over 1,500 tradesmen working on it. Completely privately funded.

Trans-Canada pipeline runs from Edmonton to Montreal. Started in 1956, took two years to complete, 3500 kilometres long. Carries natural gas from Western Canada to Eastern Canada. Primarily privately funded. The federal government did step in under John Diefenbaker and provide a little bit of backup funding to it, Mr. Speaker, but once it was completed and operational the government stepped back.

Now I want each and every one of us here today, and watching on TV, just use your imagination and think about how much our technology has improved since 1950s. I mean we have GPS [global positioning system] now to assist the digging equipment, the trackhoes and everything else. We have new welding techniques. We have non-destructive testing tools in place that weren't available in the '50s for higher quality control and a better result. We should be able to build these projects faster and more cost competitive, but the reality is we aren't.

And why is that? There's a myriad of factors, but one thing I feel strongly about, Mr. Speaker, is government overreach. We need elected officials at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels to move with a sense of purpose and urgency and actually build infrastructure that will benefit all Canadians over the long term.

We will always continue to tell Saskatchewan's story, Mr. Speaker. It's imperative. We have that strong economy that attracts people, investment, talent, and businesses. I'm very proud of our government, and we will always advocate for Saskatchewan people and Saskatchewan industries.

I'm going to talk a little bit about the budget now, Mr. Speaker. And the environment budget, it's very good. The investments in this budget will ensure sustainable habitat for fish and wildlife and advance a lot of innovation as well. This government works to promote industries and sectors across the province that allows for economic growth while leading in environmental stewardship. We know our decisions will have a lasting impact on our future generations, and we're planning for a future that supports resilient, biologically diverse landscapes. We know that Saskatchewan is blessed with abundant natural resources and world-class producers that provide the food, fuel, fertilizer, and forestry that the world needs.

As the Minister of Environment I'm very proud to support efforts that balance conservation with opportunities for hunters and anglers to truly enjoy our great outdoors. By promoting sustainable practices, we will continue to ensure that future generations enjoy the opportunities that we all have had.

This is one of the reasons why the Ministry of Environment has allocated 1.89 million, an additional 933,000 into Saskatchewan's 20-year habitat management plan. This strategy will balance development with conservation, using science-based solutions to ensure sustainable fish and wildlife habitats all across the province. The HMP [habitat management plan] emphasizes maintaining biologically diverse landscapes, which aligns with the growth plan with environmental stewardship. This government understands the importance of balancing healthy forests, landscapes, and wildlife.

Engaging and supporting our communities is essential for achieving our environmental goals. Sustainable landscapes and resilient wildlife populations are crucial for our natural resource economy. That's another reason why, Mr. Speaker, this budget contains one and a half million for woodland caribou habitat restoration. This work will help create jobs in northern Saskatchewan and will help achieve our goal of doubling the growth of the forestry sector by 2030.

I had the opportunity this winter, Mr. Speaker, to tour the great work that Sarcen does in their facilities in Regina. The 2025 budget for Sarcen was \$37 million, an increase of nearly \$600,000. This grant is collected through the beverage container collection and recycling program.

Sarcen is truly a leader in environmental protection, job creation, and economic growth through its provincial-wide recycling network. And when you tour the facilities, Mr. Speaker, you not only see the good work that they do in recycling and everything else, but you also see the good work they do in the community of creating opportunities for so many people all across the province.

You know, I have the opportunity of representing Last Mountain-Touchwood, Mr. Speaker. It's a rural riding and I'm very proud of what this government has done for so many communities in rural Saskatchewan. We see record funding through the municipal revenue-sharing program, which provides no-strings-attached funding to communities to spend on local priorities.

Three-quarters of 1 per cent of the PST [provincial sales tax] goes to municipalities all across the province. And it's a very important message that we have to get out to every person in Saskatchewan because it really involves municipalities in seeing the economy grow. Because as the economy grows, the spending and the PST will grow, and the municipalities will reap the benefit of that. So as our economy grows, every level of government throughout the province also sees an increased revenue.

[19:15]

One great project in the budget, Mr. Speaker, we've increased funding for the community rink affordability grant. Our government is doubling that amount to offset the costs of operating skating and curling rinks. This program supports about 600 ice surfaces across the province, and in my constituency alone, Mr. Speaker, there's over 21 facilities that will be supported through this grant.

Another great item in the budget, Mr. Speaker, is some of the funding through our provincial parks. We are truly fortunate to have some of the best campground sites and truly hidden gems all spread out throughout the province, with breathtaking scenery. Twelve-and-a-half-million-dollar investment for capital projects and infrastructure upgrades for provincial parks is going to make for a great camping season this summer, Mr. Speaker.

One million dollars awarded to regional parks is going to be very well received all across the province. This funding is going to be used to build new seasonal campsites at regional parks all across the province. These are sites that are leased for the year and open for the entire summer season. You know, it's very important as a government, Mr. Speaker, that we continue to enhance quality of life for each and every citizen all across the province.

There's something I want to talk about here, Mr. Speaker. It's a pilot program I had the privilege of announcing at the annual SARM convention. This is something that SARM and SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] have been asking for for a long time. And in this pilot that I announced, Mr. Speaker, it's going to allow municipalities that have a fire service agreement with their volunteer fire department to use any derelict buildings — that the municipality deems is a derelict building — to be able to use them for volunteer firefighter training scenarios. This is a great pilot, Mr. Speaker, very popular at the SARM convention. I'm looking forward to talking about it again at the SUMA convention. And hopefully we will see it all rolled out in November.

Health care is always a huge part of the budget, Mr. Speaker, and improving access is truly a priority for this government. This budget allocated 8.1 billion to the Ministry of Health, an \$88 million investment to enhance access to acute health care services for safer and more responsive patient care. And this initiative also included improving kidney health programs and

dialysis services by adding 30 full-time positions. These additional resources will help meet patient demand closer to home in Meadow Lake, North Battleford, Tisdale, Moose Jaw, Regina, Saskatoon, and Fort Qu'Appelle, which is a community just outside the constituency of Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Something that is very popular across the constituency that I represent, Mr. Speaker, is the diabetes glucose coverage. We're expanding also no-cost coverage for glucose monitoring systems and supplies for seniors and young adults aged 25 and under who use insulin to manage their diabetes. This expansion is a testament to our commitment to the health and well-being of our residents, particularly those living with diabetes — a life-altering and costly disease for many all across the province. Improving the lives of those living with diabetes is another way our government is delivering for the citizens of this province.

The budget also includes an investment in education. It is another huge spend of the provincial budget, Mr. Speaker. But there's a couple of points I want to make in the overall budget: 191 million in education capital, and the preventative maintenance and renewal, PMR, funding of 65 million to allow school divisions to maintain their existing facilities. This budget also includes 15 million for minor capital renewal projects that allow school divisions to address structural repairs and renovations to prolong the life of schools all across the province.

This PMR funding is going to be really huge for rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and many people in the Last Mountain-Touchwood constituency. Horizon School Division is going to see an increase from last year's 2.3 million and Prairie Valley School Division will see an increase from last year's 2.4 million. These are real results, and we're delivering a budget that has real impacts on our next generation. We are seeing record growth in our province but this party, and only our party, is standing up to meet the needs and these challenges, Mr. Speaker.

On budget day, Mr. Speaker, we had many conversations with many people and met with many of the colleagues and different people. But I had a very good visit with the Saskatchewan school board president, Shawn Davidson and Prairie Valley School Board Chair, Janet Kotylak.

They really talked about how grateful they were for the PMR funding and how impactful it's going to be for their communities and the schools that they represent. This funding allows them to continue to be able to keep maintaining these existing facilities. And they're in the best position to make those decisions, Mr. Speaker. And it's a simple program but it's very effective.

Now there isn't a rural MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] that should ever stand up and talk about a budget speech, Mr. Speaker, and not make a couple notes about highway infrastructure. Highways are absolutely critical for each and every rural person ... [inaudible interjection] ... Yeah, absolutely.

But one of the very exciting things in the budget was the passing lanes on Highway 10 from Fort Qu'Appelle to Melville. These passing lanes have been incredibly successful all across Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. The first ones built were from Fort Qu'Appelle to Balgonie as a pilot, and they worked really well, like they're affordable to build and the flow of traffic is seamless.

I've driven that highway thousands and thousands of times, Mr. Speaker, and before those passing lanes, particularly in the summer rush, I mean it was a virtual death sentence between people going to the lakes with campers and boats and the tremendous flow of traffic into the city and everything else. And now it's just another relaxing drive with every 7 miles there's a passing lane, so you just wait your time. And people have been very respectful and very knowledgeable on how passing lanes work — an incredible success story all across the province.

One thing that the budget showed . . . And these are statistics that, you know, economists talk about and political figures talk about, but not a lot of ordinary people talk about, Mr. Speaker. But I want to put it in a kind of a different context. So we talked about our AA credit rating which is very good, and we talk about the second-lowest debt-to-gross-domestic-product, GDP, across the country. But there's a very interesting statistic I want to talk about the economy, Mr. Speaker, and it's a record-setting statistic and it truly shows how strong and growing economy Saskatchewan is going.

This winter, Mr. Speaker, we had an absolute record-breaking number of snowmobiles registered across the province of Saskatchewan — 13,226 snowmobiles registered in the province of Saskatchewan. Record-setting year. And it shows how much faith Saskatchewan people have in the economy and their ability to provide for their families and have a little bit of extra money for some wonderful time spent in a family setting outdoors.

So I'm almost out of . . . Oh, I am over the time, Mr. Speaker. As I wrap up my speech, there's a few things I want to talk about. Saskatchewan has the food, fuel, and fertilizer that the world needs. In our platform we were the party that had a plan for growing our province and growing our economy. On this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we are committed to protecting the competitiveness of Saskatchewan businesses, and on this side of the House we believe environmental stewardship goes hand in hand with the economy. We need a growing and strong economy to provide for that, as the Minister of Finance said, "for the things that matter — health care, education, community safety." Saskatchewan products are the solution to the problems we see interprovincially and globally, Mr. Speaker.

We are currently in a federal election, Mr. Speaker, and this question needs to be posed to each and every member of this Assembly: who are we going to support in the federal election? Are we going to support individuals that want to see this country brought together, see us succeed, see infrastructure built all across the country? It's a very important question, particularly to the members opposite.

I want to thank the Premier for his leadership in these challenging times, for all of his work and truly his dedication to the province of Saskatchewan. I want to thank the Finance minister for preparing the budget and all of the members on treasury board for doing their due diligence and bringing forward a balanced budget.

Thanks to this government, we've made this province a place people are truly proud to call home. Saskatchewan's the best place to live, work, and raise a family. I'm very proud of our government's record of building a strong economy and strong communities, and we always have to protect that, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very proud to support this budget. I will be supporting in favour of this budget seconded by the member from White City-Qu'Appelle, and I will not be supporting any amendments. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Silverspring.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As one of my colleagues on the opposite side said, it is a privilege to stand in this Chamber and to address the people of the province. Before I start I think it's also relevant that I say thanks to my wife, Kim, who has assisted me greatly and supported me greatly in this endeavour, this new job. We're still trying it on for size. And for my family, for providing that stability for me to do this.

I also want to say thank you to my constituency assistant Alana Wakula, who through her hard work and enthusiasm has helped me get my office up and running and assisted me greatly in serving the people of Saskatoon Silverspring in this capacity.

Before I start though too, Mr. Speaker, you know, I want to thank the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood for his words on tariffs. It wasn't a lot of words on tariffs, Mr. Speaker, but there was certainly more words about tariffs and he certainly contemplated tariffs a lot longer than the Finance minister did in this budget.

And may I humbly suggest, maybe they consider switching roles. And as my colleague from Saskatoon Southeast had mentioned — very pointedly and very true — that old adage applies very well to this budget that those who fail to plan, plan to fail. And in every major area, whether it's health care, education, cost of living, and on tariffs, that is true. This budget fails to plan, and it plans to fail. The member from Humboldt-Watrous said, "Keep calm and stick to the plan." And whether it's on tariffs or on infrastructure, that's great, but you've got to have the plan first.

This is a government, Mr. Speaker, clearly that's mailing it in. This is a government, Mr. Speaker, that has gotten too long in the tooth, too tired, and quite frankly, too arrogant to put in the kind of hard work required in order to meet the challenges that this province faces today.

How so, Mr. Speaker? Well this is a government that tries to tell the people of the province that they're such good fiscal managers that not only have they balanced the books, but also there's going to be a \$12 million surplus. You know, much like last year's not-so-balanced budget that somehow managed to add three and a half billion dollars to the provincial debt.

In fact this government's been so good at balanced budgets, they've managed to nearly quadruple the provincial debt in the time they've been in office. And as this government gives itself a high-five and all the self-congratulatory accolades for their balanced budget, their history of fiscal incompetence has shown that this \$12 million surplus is nothing more than a mirage. It's a ruse. Indeed nothing more than a haphazard . . .

Speaker Goudy: — Okay, I don't know if you realized how many words you've used there in the last minute, but there were a number of them. So I'd just ask . . . "ruse" and yeah. So please, moving forwards, no accusations and non-parliamentary

language. Thanks.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So it really makes one wonder, Mr. Speaker, who's going to pay for that balanced budget that no doubt will plunge this province further into debt? The tooth fairy? The Easter Bunny?

[19:30]

And I know the minister will say that's a lot of money; that's nothing to sneeze at. But it's not as much money, apparently, as the amount of money we will now be spending foreseeably for decades to come on the interest payments on this debt which, Mr. Speaker, for the first time in the history of Saskatchewan will be over \$1 billion a year. And according to the government's own budget numbers, that is more than 29 government departments and agencies are planning to spend this year alone. So if this government really wants something to crow about, how about that? How's that for an infamous fiscal marker for this government?

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't put it past this government to start a brand new ministry called the department of debt servicing. And why not? It's going to spend at least as much as every other government department this year, and the beauty of it all is that its budget will continue to grow and grow every year. Heck, maybe they could get some of their friends from all their failed projects and all their big spending donors, right, to run it for them. Maybe then we'll finally get some value for all the hard-earned taxpayer dollars this government has wasted.

But that's not the story the Finance minister and the Premier wish to weave, but it is the fiscal track record of this government. So for them to say they're good fiscal managers is laughable. I heard the Premier rise in the Assembly last week to brag about their record and the plans that they started way back in 2007. Well, Mr. Speaker, I remember 2007 too. I remember it very well. That was the year the Saskatchewan NDP [New Democratic Party] under Premier Lorne Calvert made Saskatchewan a have province. It was the year they presented its 14th, 14th consecutive actual balanced budget, like for reals.

It was a budget that paid off \$158 million in provincial debt, and a budget that cut business and personal taxes that year — not the next year, not the year after — for that year. And it was a budget that put more money into health care and education and in training, where we weren't last place in the country, and it was a budget that introduced the graduate tax exemption program. You're welcome. And a budget that did all that as the government reduced the PST and didn't increase it and then slap it onto everything that walked, crawled, or breathed.

And I most certainly remember when, in 2007, the Sask Party government inherited a debt under \$8 billion. My oh my, I wonder what happened to that? So when this government, this Premier, and this Finance minister rise in this Assembly to wax poetically about all the great fiscal things they've accomplished since 2007, I'm left to wonder what the heck are they talking about? It seems that this government's forgotten all the lessons on proper fiscal management that our party had instilled into government.

And what has been the result, Mr. Speaker? Taxes, spending,

fees, more spending, more taxes, yet more spending. Never before have we seen the PST apply to so many things than ever before. And I mean the PST has now intruded into just about every personal economic aspect of this province. In fact there's very few things they don't want to tax. Who knows what's next? Their plan has always been — it always will be — tax and spend, apparently.

But I love how they come out for one day — and for one day only, apparently — to say they have a balanced budget. But seeing as how the Finance minister said a week ago a budget is just a snapshot in time, seeing how it's been a week, I think it's pretty safe to say they've probably already blown that and now we're running a deficit. And that is why, Mr. Speaker, this government's become so addicted to taxes and fees, to pay for their mismanagement.

So what this budget has devolved into really is just some kind of rose-glasses, desperately optimistic, pie-in-the-sky, grasping-at-straws thought experiment. That's really all that it is. The numbers? How can we count on the Finance minister's numbers? He said himself the budget is just a snapshot in time. It's not supposed to forecast medium- or even worst-case scenarios, despite the fact that that is actually his job. So what's his snapshot today? Has it changed? How does he know? It's just a snapshot.

So when he tells this Assembly there's going to be a surplus this year, he's saying that he did not and absolutely will not take into account the amount of money his government spent on health care and education last year and how those two items alone continue to increase, let alone attempt to get us out of last place in per-student funding and fix the health care crisis. He will not take into account any potential effects of climate change and how that impacts our costs for fighting forests or for crop insurance liabilities.

And la pièce de résistance, monsieur le Président [Translation: Mr. Speaker]: he absolutely sees no need to incorporate, plan for, account for, anticipate, let alone guesstimate what impact the Trump tariffs and the Chinese tariffs will do to our economy and ultimately to his great big beautiful \$12 million surplus. Because there is no plan.

It's almost like the Finance minister and this government finds the whole exercise of drafting a proper budget is just too much darn work. That's right. It's just too hard, so why bother, right? Why do what pretty much every other province in this country has done, including the Finance minister's friends next door in Alberta, who rightly contemplated the effects of tariffs on their budget. And good luck to anyone else other than the Finance minister to take that plan to a bank and get a loan for it. If he did that, he'd be laughed off the premises.

And businesses and workers are asking this Finance minister what their plan is to mitigate the effects of these tariffs. They're rightly worried about this, and this government has essentially plugged its ears and closed its eyes and pretended that this is just a bad dream. But, Mr. Speaker, this is a bad dream that is other people's realities and it's happening right now. So for the member from Humboldt-Watrous to liken this tariff threat to some kind of Chicken Little scenario is both insulting and tone-deaf to the hundreds of business owners and the thousands of workers in this province who are feeling the impacts of these

tariffs right now.

The Premier said their plan started in 2007, but our oil industry wasn't facing tariffs in 2007 and neither did our potash, our uranium, our canola, our trucking, and our manufacturing sectors. The Premier also said that the official opposition was calling for the closure of trade offices, and that is categorically not true. During the election this side made the commitment to restructure our trade offices and to do away with high-priced consultants.

I see the government is still spending over \$30,000 US a month, more than a year's salary for most people living in this province, on a US-based consultant. This was the same government that spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on trade junkets to Dubai and to France. And so business and workers want to know, how many trade deals did the former minister sign while galivanting around the Parisian countryside at their expense?

We also see a premier who is failing to stick up for Saskatchewan and failing to stick up for Canada. Like some weird incarnation of a Harry Potter movie, this Premier can't even bring himself to say the name of he who can't be named when talking about his response to tariffs. Well, Mr. Speaker, let me help the Premier out just a bit. The Voldemort who's attacking Saskatchewan is Donald Trump.

This is the same Premier who, when questioned by a journalist about our emergency motion last week calling on this Premier and this government to denounce the words and actions of Donald Trump, said he couldn't remember if his name was removed from his government's own amendment to it. He couldn't even correct Donald Trump when he called our agricultural products dirty and uninspected. He tried to say those were just words and that they didn't matter.

Well words or lack thereof, Mr. Speaker, have a profound impact, like words used to attack a sitting MLA's children, like words from this government to help out people who can't get . . .

Speaker Goudy: — Okay, we had mentioned before that that would not be mentioned again, talking about our Premier attacking another person's children. I would ask you to apologize and withdraw.

Hugh Gordon: — I apologize and withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — Thank you. Please carry on.

Hugh Gordon: — Like the words to help out people who can't get into a care home in their final, dying days, and like workers and businesses who are genuinely scared for their livelihoods. And I can almost certainly assure this government, like us, have been hearing about this in spades from stakeholders right across this province.

This is the same Premier who said this was the time to de-escalate the situation. Well that boat has sailed. And the people of Saskatchewan have a question for this Premier: how's all that de-escalation working out for you? Because they are the ones who are paying the price for this government's narcoleptic reaction to the Trump tariffs.

The only thing Trump understands is strength. The only thing he respects is people who demand respect in return, and that this government will never do. So I don't know how the Premier's plan to kowtow to the president of the United States is actually going to get us anywhere. So, Mr. Speaker, this government is playing with fire as they pat themselves on the back for an imaginary surplus without contemplating the effects of tariffs or ever-worsening health care crisis.

The people of this province deserve a serious plan from a serious government that takes into account all the economic and fiscal pitfalls that lay before us. They need a government that has a contingency plan to help them out when things go off the rails and not some kind of shoulder-shrugging, ad hoc approach. They want to hear how their government is going to support them in these trying times to help them weather the storm so they don't lose their businesses and their jobs. They want to hear how this government is going to help the province expand trade routes outside the United States, and they want to know what meaningful efforts their government is going to take to build the infrastructure needed to make that trade possible.

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, the people and the businesses in this province work too damn hard not to get a credible plan from their government. This Premier and this government have no problems picking fights with Ottawa or with us. News flash: the threat isn't coming from us; it's coming from outside the country.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is built upon a house of cards and literally on trumped-up fairy tale stories about revenues and expenses. And when they hit, this government will be running around like chickens with their heads cut off to figure out a response to these tariffs, but for many businesses and workers it will be too late. And to say there's a \$12 million surplus when someone loses their job or has to close their business is no consolation. Gee, wouldn't those 60 jobs at Shercom sure come in handy right about now, Mr. Speaker? How about this for a challenge to this government: how about tearing up any current US-sourced contracts and give that work and those jobs to the people who actually live here?

And for the Finance minister to say there's no contingency plan because they don't like to borrow, I have to ask, like since when? Since when did this government ever say, you know, we think we spend a little too much? Or when have they ever asked, who's actually going to pay off that \$38 billion debt?

But when they say how great our finances are or how low the debt-to-GDP ratio is, etc., etc., what they're really saying then in that case is that if any province is in a position to factor in the effects of these tariffs, it should be this one. Apparently not though, as the Finance minister says there's too much uncertainty to factor in tariffs. Once again, Mr. Speaker, that is literally his job.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I remember during one of the first few days of the fall session when the Premier got up in the Assembly and he told us the people of Saskatchewan had voted for change. And I wondered then, as I do now, what actions the Premier would take to show that he and his government actually got that message. The result? Real cuts to health care, real cuts to education, no cost-of-living relief today, and no help for the people in industries affected by tariffs. I guess, Mr. Speaker,

when the Premier said that, they were just words.

So I'm pretty sure, Mr. Speaker, and it's going to come as a great surprise to my colleagues opposite, I will not be supporting the budget and I will be supporting the amendment by the member of Regina Mount Royal. Thank you.

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

Sean Wilson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we've been at this now for about five months or so. I'd like to give you and my constituents a five-month summary of how things have been going. In my first speech I made a clear commitment to be accessible, honest, and dedicated to each of you. I said I would actively listen to your concerns and advocate for your needs, whether that means responding to a phone call, text, or email.

In the last five months I've spent a lot of time in the constituency, making it a priority to respond to your inquiries as quickly as possible. I've attended numerous local events, including carnivals, hockey games, pancake breakfasts, wildlife banquets, and various fundraisers. Each event I was able to attend has not only been a chance to socialize with the people of Canora-Pelly, but it has also provided opportunities for me to gather insights about the unique interests and concerns of Canora-Pelly constituents.

Our constituency office provides a central station for the constituents to access government information, support, and guidance that they require. The Canora-Pelly constituency office had started at the train station museum right in Canora. The town of Canora was kind enough to rent us the station on an interim basis until our new office was ready on January 1st. We were all very excited to move to this brand new, permanent office. So on December 31st, which just so happened to be my birthday, we did our big move.

All was going great, until it wasn't. Initially I thought all new desks were made of compressed wood and were junk. But one of the desks wasn't. It was actually quite heavy, and I got these to show for it. I don't know if you can see them. This one's pretty much healed up.

[19:45]

And my fingers have healed up quite well, and I'd like to say in addition to having two excellent CAs [constituency assistant] with Clarissa and Keri, I also have two great first-aiders and blood cleaner-uppers.

As most of us new MLAs have figured out by now, our CAs are important to keep our offices running smoothly, and try their best to keep our constituents happy. I would like to take a minute to thank my two CAs for all the great work that they have done to date to help me out. I admit that sometimes I can be a little bit much, but these two manage and try hard to keep me in check, which is apparently challenging most days.

Clarissa has been with me since the spring of 2023. She's an extremely hard worker and a very good friend. Over two years of campaigning, she never refused or skipped an event with me. Thank you to Clarissa for all you have done and continue to do to support me in my new role. There will never be enough words

to thank her, so thank you again, Clarissa, for being my co-pilot.

She's only made one mistake so far. At a pancake breakfast, she did not get extra food on her plate for me. Rule number one is always get more food on your plate if you are with me so I can eat it after I'm done my plate. I had Renee brief her after that event.

I also hired Keri Gardner, who is currently the part-time administrator for the village of Buchanan and is now a part-time CA for our Preeceville satellite office. Keri is also an extremely hard worker. I met her in 2021 when I was the mayor of Buchanan and we were hiring for a new administrator. She is always quick to remind me that out of the three applicants, she was not my first nor my second pick for our administrator. But fortunately for me, I had two councillors who knew better than I did. I find it interesting to sometimes see that I am not always right. She was the one who helped with the desk, by the way. So she's okay, but that really hurt.

Last month, we made a deal to run a satellite office in Preeceville two days a week. Preeceville has not had an office since the MLA for Canora, Lloyd Hampton, occupied an office in the 1982-1986 years. During door knocking up there, a lot of people knew me, but not for the reason of being a Sask Party candidate. So many of them held me as a baby because my mom had to pawn me off on them while she was curling at the Preeceville rink. Most of them had made it clear that they appreciated seeing somebody at their door, but having an office in town would be something that would be a great addition to the community. I would like to acknowledge special thanks to Dr. Takra for giving us a great deal on our current office space.

All three of us have had a great time representing the Canora-Pelly constituency, and I hope all of my colleagues in the House have just as good CAs as I do because it truly makes it fun to come to work every day. I think we're doing a good job, and I'll tell you why, Mr. Speaker. All three of us have never done this. Sure, we have great guidance through colleagues here and other CAs, but none of us really knew what we were doing when we started. All we knew is we wanted to do the best job we can.

This is just like a paving job from 2011. Our entire crew had no idea what we were doing. All we knew was that we wanted to do a good job. And wouldn't you know it, it was a perfect job. I will not tell you where this job is because it may not be perfect now, but a hint is it was in the Finance minister's constituency. That is something that for 15 years we could always come close to but never quite hit.

So what I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, is you do your best work when you have the drive to do it. So the coin is in the air, as they say, but hopefully when it lands in October of 2028 the people in our constituency will approve of our performance.

So on to the 2025-26 budget and what it means to my constituents in the Canora-Pelly constituency. Having served on a municipal council for 15 years, I understand the value that municipal revenue sharing is and what it brings to council tables. For those who don't know, municipal revenue sharing is predictable funding — by the way, my CA told me to give the definition of "revenue sharing" so everybody understood what it was — predictable funding for municipalities with no strings attached.

The funding is based on the performance of the economy and made up of three-quarters of 1 per cent of the PST revenue.

This revenue sharing keeps municipal taxes at a low, reasonable rate. The 6 per cent increase in municipal revenue sharing is such a crucial budget item for Canora-Pelly. A known, no-strings-attached revenue-sharing program is something that's value can't be understated, and it is the envy of other provinces. This money can be allocated to capital upgrades such as sewer, water, streets, or sidewalks.

Budgeting in rural communities can be difficult, as the main source of revenue for municipalities is property taxes. In order to increase revenue, of course property taxes have to increase. Municipal revenue sharing aids in the revenue for municipalities, keeping property taxes affordable for all people in Saskatchewan. As well, municipalities can continue to offer the services that are expected by ratepayers.

To my council colleagues and ratepayers in Saskatchewan, this is a program that all municipal councils and ratepayers can count on. To be fair, I never knew a time when municipal councils didn't have a known revenue-sharing program that was presented in this manner. But I've spoken to folks that were there prior to this program, and the sheer uncertainty of what was going to be allocated to councils made it extremely difficult to budget properly.

Unfortunately I do not have enough time to highlight all of the funding increases the communities in my constituency will receive for 2025, so here are a few examples of how this government is supporting you in the Canora-Pelly constituency. Canora, you will see a municipal revenue-sharing increase of 199 per cent since 2007; Kamsack, 183; Preeceville, 106; and Buchanan, 189. And to just kind of drill that down to what type of savings and what type of affordability measure this actually is, in Buchanan, if we wouldn't have had the revenue sharing this past year, our taxes would have increased approximately \$500 per household for the council's budget to be balanced. That's substantial.

So on to highways. The Highway 5 corridor from Humboldt to Saskatoon may very well not be in our constituency, but it is a road that directly affects my constituents. They use this highway to get to and from Saskatoon, so safety is so crucial. Prior to the construction of Highway 5 and what I call the 40-mile stretch, it looked like a rickety, skinny road up to a castle.

Over the past number of years this stretch of highway has been rebuilt, and let me tell you something, Mr. Speaker. As a former road builder, yeah, I know people don't like to be delayed on roads when they're travelling to and from destinations, but that specific job and the road itself is fairly unique. Having to excavate a road and lower it to get the width is fairly rare in road builds in Saskatchewan. Dropping a road to get the width and to add passing lanes is a major feat within itself, but to achieve that while also accommodating traffic is very difficult. Most highways that are built in that manner are being twinned and built right from scratch, so the part of accommodating traffic is virtually non-existent. Doing it while there's traffic on the road, well let's just say the next time you go over that piece of road, I hope you appreciate the work that goes into something like that, work that's being done by a number of Saskatchewan

contractors.

But while we're on highways, I'd like to comment on an ad that the NDP have out right now that reads that they believe the Trans-Canada should be twinned from coast to coast. Well here's an article from 2008:

Trans-Canada Highway now double-lane route across Saskatchewan.

Government officials held a celebration Friday to mark the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway across Saskatchewan, making it a double-lane route in each direction. This province is now the second province in Canada, after New Brunswick, to completely twin Highway 1 and making vehicle passing easier.

So when it comes to the NDP and our highway system, they're one lane short and 17 years behind.

This budget you will see an increase to the monthly threshold for residing in personal care homes; lowered ambulance transfer; costs of most medications just being \$25; and nursing services and the majority of home care services being covered by the Sask Health; and most importantly, an increase to the senior income plan.

During my travels throughout the constituency, I've heard from multiple senior constituents that have stated that they simply don't have enough money to get through the month. This government has listened to the concerns from our seniors and is offering a 360 per month top-up. These most recent top-ups reflect our dedication to the well-being of seniors.

Canora-Pelly, I truly care about the well-being of our seniors, and I'm committed to continuing to advocate to provide support and services that can make a difference in your lives. During my five months in office I have visited all of the licensed care homes and nursing homes in Canora-Pelly on a regular basis. This is one of the more fun parts of being an MLA, being able to visit with these seniors and personally bringing birthday greetings to my constituents that have contributed so much to their province over the years.

Health and safety in communities is a priority of this government. Derelict buildings in rural municipalities are not only a safety concern; they bring unwanted visitors into the communities, as well as becoming eyesores in our small, rural communities. This derelict building pilot project that has been brought forward by our Ministry of Environment is a very beneficial program, especially to the people of Canora-Pelly. The costs of a demo of one of these derelict buildings are often tens of thousands of dollars. Prior to this announcement, in order to demolish one of these buildings it was a budget line in municipal budgets. Previously I delved into municipal revenue sharing and the tight budgets these councils have. This pilot project will impact small rural communities tremendously, and best of all, ratepayer's property taxes will not go up in order to see these buildings come down.

This will also have the ability to provide practice training to all of our volunteer firefighters, increasing their knowledge and upgrading their skills to ensure community safety. This pilot

project is something that I personally am very happy our government has provided. I have knocked down a lot of buildings throughout my time, Mr. Speaker, and I am very proud to say that I always had the right house and never made a mistake and knocked down the wrong one.

I have also met a number of individuals that share the same first name as you, Mr. Speaker. I have met Mr. Raccoon, Mr. Skunk, and Mr. Badger. Fortunately through the encouragement of a 220 Komatsu trackhoe, they all decided that Buchanan just wasn't for them and they moved to the country.

When it comes to health care, this budget represents a significant increase of 6.4 from the previous year, and it reflects this government's dedication to improving health care for everyone. This funding will help ensure Saskatchewan patients have access to the latest oncology, drugs, therapies, and treatments, providing hope and options during these difficult times. The Saskatchewan Cancer Agency is set to receive an investment of \$5 million, marking a 2 per cent increase to a record budget of 279.3 million.

eHealth provides invaluable support by improving access to your health records, which helps you become more engaged in your own health care journey. In recognizing the challenges that many face, eHealth will receive an increase of 9.3 million or 6.1 per cent. This additional funding is essential for addressing system growth and pressures and providing the necessary resources to help health care providers meet the needs of their patients effectively in Canora-Pelly.

We recently had an upgrade to our lab system, which now means lab results are posted on eHealth. This is not only beneficial to constituents in that they have access to their medical information, they can also make informed health decisions. It also ensures that doctors in different communities can access your health information when you need it most. I've heard how stressful it can be for patients who visit a rural ER [emergency room] in an emergency then must be transferred to a city hospital in those situations. It often meant the tests had to be repeated because the receiving doctor didn't have access to prior lab results. Thankfully with the recent upgrade to our health system in the area we are now able to overcome these hurdles, providing a smoother experience for all patients.

In Canora-Pelly, accessing 811 is an essential enhancement to health care for people living in Saskatchewan, and it's staffed by experienced and specially trained workers, including RNs [registered nurse], registered psychiatric nurses, and registered social workers. Canora-Pelly can look forward to accessing a mobile mammogram bus in the near future, the second in the province. This second bus will enhance services already offered and will ensure that women in rural and northern Saskatchewan have greater access to these essential screenings.

[20:00]

This government is committed to an early detection of breast cancer, and it recognizes that early detection is crucial for effectively combatting breast cancer. This proven method is the most dependable way to identify the disease and save lives in a significant move to support women's health.

My wife, Renee, was actually one of the two first nurse

navigators at the breast cancer centre in Saskatoon when I started dating her the second time. She told me that she loved her job there a lot, but I think she must have loved me more because she moved to Buchanan. I think.

I've ran across so many people, not only in the constituency but in the province, that Renee has helped. And I would like to say that I know what she puts into her job and that this province is lucky that they have her and so many other nurses that work hard for all of us.

I'm very proud of the secondary schooling in Canora-Pelly that constituents can access while managing to be able to stay at home and work and live in the constituency. Back in 1997, post-secondary education in Canora-Pelly was like this: you sat in an old classroom in an old building that smelled really bad and was more than likely one of the 52 schools that the NDP closed. You watched the satellite feed of an instructor from the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] talk about anthropology. Back then you didn't even have texting to keep you busy. You just had to pay attention.

Now with Suncrest College in Yorkton, people have the ability to get a great education in a state-of-the-art facility. Suncrest College, established in Yorkton last year through a merger of Cumberland College and Parkland College, is making an impact on our communities in Canora-Pelly. While this college is outside of the Canora-Pelly constituency, it serves as an amazing prospect for many of my constituents and their children. During my visits throughout my constituency, I've met many students from Canora-Pelly that have completed their education at Suncrest, all while living at home and contributing to their communities.

This includes graduates in various fields, including nurses who have earned their four-year nursing degree, early childhood educators, and vocational trades, including mechanics and apprenticeships. Most of these students then gained employment in their home constituency. The impact of Suncrest College on local education and workforce development is exceptional and deserves recognition.

To assist post-secondary students with the rising costs of education, graduates of approved post-secondary programs, including programs offered at Suncrest, are now eligible for up to \$25,000 in tuition rebates through the graduate retention program, an increase of \$5,000 from the prior budget.

Saskatchewan: one of the most affordable places to live in Canada for a family of four when taxes, utilities, and housing costs are combined. In all of Canada I'm proud to say that Saskatchewan has the second-lowest utility bundle cost, which includes power and phone, and the lowest vehicle insurance in Canada.

In closing I would like to point out that since 2007 our government has introduced and enhanced a number of programs to make life more affordable for every citizen of this province. I understand that during tougher times people are struggling, and I am pleased that this budget contains almost \$2 billion in affordability measures for Saskatchewan residents.

An example of the affordability measures is that Saskatchewan

has implemented one of the highest tax-free thresholds in Canada. This year a family of four pays no income tax on their first 63,200 of income. Going back to the NDP era, a family of four started paying provincial income tax at just 26,150, if they stuck around and didn't head west for work.

One of the things in politics you can never do is go backwards, as much as I'd like to. I'd like to serve with people like Ken Krawetz, June Draude, Paul Merriman, and Nancy Heppner. But going forward I have been so lucky here. Being able to be the Legislative Secretary to the Minister of CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] is something I've never expected, and to be able to learn from him is great.

This Whip spot has been pretty good too. I've gotten to know a lot of you, and every one of you are fairly unique. I know you all by your highway number. Minister of Social Services, you're Highway 11 and Highway 305. Moosomin-Montmartre? Highway 9 and Highway 1, a.k.a [also known as] the Trans-Canada Highway that has two lanes. And the member for Kelvington-Wadena is 49, 38, and 23.

And if you would have told me that my very first budget would be delivered by the member from Rosetown-Elrose, I wouldn't have believed it either. He is still a fairly young gentleman who has served in three separate decades of government. His experience shows through. Just a number for the Finance minister: he has served 41.8 times as long as all of us new MLAs have. Also the iPad was not yet invented when he was first elected. He was in government for one year before the Trans-Canada Highway was fully twinned. And for each one of us new MLAs, he has served 1.12 years in this building.

I am going to support the budget put forward by the Minister of Finance, seconded by the member from White City-Qu'Appelle. I will not be supporting the amendment.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon University-Sutherland.

Tajinder Grewal: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to start my budget response by saying thanks to a few people that deserve it. Firstly, to the good people of Saskatoon University-Sutherland for giving me this opportunity to represent them in this Chamber. It's already been a very humbling experience, and I will strive to represent them to the best of my ability.

Secondly, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Saskatoon University-Sutherland NDP constituency executive committee. We have a very strong executive committee. When I got my nomination in September 2023, our election planning committee Chair, Bob Eaton, came to me and told me, "Tajinder, your job is door knocking, meeting and talking to people, and we will take care of the rest of it." I did my job and they did theirs. It really worked. I would like to mention that our executive committee is still very active, working very hard. Thank you, folks, for your dedication, commitment, and hard work.

Third, thanks to my constituency assistant Sebastien Marchand. Sebastien and I have been working together since June of last year. He was hired as a summer organizer for our campaign. Then he worked as a worker contact organizer for our campaign during the writ period. In December of last year I hired Sebastien

as my constituency assistant. Sebastien has a bachelor's degree in political science. He's young, energetic, and a very ambitious individual. We have a very good chemistry together.

Our constituency office opens Monday to Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Yes, we are open six days a week to serve our constituents. This is happening because I share my office with my good friend, the member from Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood. Michael Turner is his CA, and I would like to say thanks to him as well. One additional bonus, Sebastien and Michael are very good friends. They cover each other whenever they need to, so our constituency office is working very well, thanks to Sebastien and Michael.

I would like to thank my family. My wife, Ravinder Grewal, is very supportive of whatever I do. Even if she doesn't like politics herself, she supports me wholeheartedly in this role. Thank you very much, Ravinder.

And also my son Ravtej who works in New York, but he's always supporting me and showing up when it counts. He came all the way to Saskatoon during the campaign to help me in the last two weeks of my campaign. My daughter-in-law Celina, she was also there during the writ period, door knocking and pulling the votes during election week. Thank you Ravtej and Celina for your support.

Special thanks to my aunt, Jaswinder Sidhu. She came all the way from BC [British Columbia] to help me during the campaign. She cooked all the food for the volunteers, campaign staff, and for the family. Thank you, Auntie.

Last but not the least, thanks to our team, my colleagues in the official opposition, my new family, and our leader, a very hard-working, committed, and caring leader. And also thanks for the members opposite. Some of them are very nice to me, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm a scientist. I learn every day. Looking at the budget is a very good learning experience. My first impression? This is a very poorly designed experiment, a very poorly designed financial plan. I worked part-time in the financial sector for 18 years. I know a thing or two about money and finance.

Let's talk about the budget. While door knocking for 13 months, the main issues I heard at the doorsteps were health care, education, and affordability. In the Throne Speech, this government said that they have heard the people of Saskatchewan, that they have heard their concerns. But looking at this budget, it seems like they haven't.

Education doesn't stop at grade 12. We need a trained and educated workforce for the bright future of this province. When I say trained and educated workforce, that means health care workers; educators; trade workers; professionals in agriculture, mining, oil and gas; and anything and everything in between. Post-secondary educational institutions are extremely important to provide the required training. The Ministry of Education is extremely critical, but somehow this is not the priority for this government.

We are last place in health care. To fix the health care crisis, we need more health care workers. One of six people in

Saskatchewan doesn't have a family doctor. We lost 21 per cent of nurses to the last six years. The government is focused on opening a new urgent health care centre, but there is no plan to staff these health care centres. Instead they have cut \$17 million of funding to health care.

Similarly we need more teachers and educational assistants to provide good education to our students. This is the time to get out of the last place in education in Canada, Mr. Speaker. We need more tradespeople to meet the demands of our industry sector. There is a waiting list for two to three years for many trades at the Saskatchewan Polytechnic. We do need more investments in post-secondary education.

The best investment you can make is in the education of the youth and young adults entering the workforce. The current budget is disappointing for the post-secondary schools. There is less than 1 per cent increase. I'll say it again: there's less than 1 per cent increase. When you look at inflation, it's about 3 per cent. So basically post-secondary educational institutions will have 2 per cent less money in their budgets as compared to last year. This is just simple math, Mr. Speaker.

In the last three months I've had a chance visiting and meeting with several post-secondary educational institutions, which include University of Saskatchewan, University of Regina, Saskatchewan Polytechnic, First Nations University of Canada, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, Great Plains College, and many more. I had a chance to talk to their management, staff, and students.

There are a few issues which are common to several institutions. One of them was that multi-year funding agreement which is ending this year in April. They were and they are looking for another multi-year funding agreement to have some stability and certainty to plan ahead. However this government is not listening, Mr. Speaker. The budget shows that the budget provides only a one-year extension to this agreement.

I worked in a university setting for a better part of my life. You always have three- to five-year plans or longer term plans. You cannot plan anything based on a one-year agreement. There is already so much uncertainty and instability, and this government is not helping, Mr. Speaker. They are aggravating the situation.

[20:15]

It's very frustrating for the post-secondary institutions in Saskatchewan. This government's excuse is that we do not know the impact of international students. When you talk to the management of any institute — and they do know the impact — they will tell you how much it's going to impact their revenue due to the lack of international students. If they want to know whom to contact, I can provide you their contact information.

It's always good to have international students. They provide diversity and enrich the experience of other students. The majority of them stay here after their education to provide requisite workforce. But our education institutions should not be dependent on international students for their revenue, which is the case right now. Some of the institutions will be struggling — I will say it loud — some of the institutions will be struggling to survive financially without international students. This is simply

just not right.

Mr. Speaker, you may ask why it's happening. This is mainly because of underfunding of our post-secondary institutions for many, many years. I can provide you with some numbers here. Almost 20 years ago the provincial government was providing about 60 per cent of the operating budget, and now these numbers are less than 50 per cent. So there is a gap of 10 to 15 per cent, basically 10 to 15 per cent less funding to the post-secondary institutions. And these institutions are working very hard to fill the gap, and the revenue from the tuition fees from the international students is one of them.

The other excuse for this government not to provide multi-year funding is tariffs from the US. The budget has no plan to defend against tariffs. The Sask Party government is asleep at the wheel. They can't just close their eyes and hope our problems magically will go away. Every other province has a contingency plan to deal with the tariffs, but not this government, Mr. Speaker.

Now I will talk about some specific numbers. There's a more than-30 per cent cut to the capital plan for advanced education. Capital plans were \$59 million during the last year budget, and this year it's only \$41 million. Mr. Speaker, you can check on page 60 in this budget. It will reflect a 30 per cent reduction in the capital plan budget for post-secondary education. If you see all the regional colleges' budget together, there is a funding cut of 0.2 per cent, basically a funding cut of 3.2 per cent if you count inflation.

Let's check out Southeast College. It has campuses in Estevan and Assiniboia. Members from Estevan-Big Muddy and Wood River, please note: cut of 11 per cent to its training program and services, cut of 5 per cent to its total funding. Another example, Suncrest College, campus in Melville and Yorkton, a 47 per cent decrease in capital funding. Last year's budget was 116,000 and this year only 62,000. Another one, North West College, is receiving an 18 per cent decrease in its funding for scholarships. For Saskatchewan Polytechnic, 61 per cent cut to the international nurse training budget, \$1.4 million cut to the student accommodation grants. I can go on and on and on, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party government should have listened to the people, should have invested money in education and health care and cut their brutal taxes on everyday essentials like groceries and children's clothing. Why would they continue to pile costs onto families who already can't make their ends meet?

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

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to the 2025-2026 provincial budget, Mr. Speaker, that my colleague, the Minister of Finance, presented here in this legislature last week. Before I make any comments, I'll just offer a few thanks to those who helped me get here, help me do the job that I do here in Regina as well as back home in my constituency of The Battlefords.

First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, would be my wife, Meagan, and our little boy Bennett. I miss them greatly when I'm down here in Regina every week, so it's always the best part of the week to drive home and make it home in time for bedtime on Thursday night. Sometimes I don't get there on time, but that's the goal every Thursday: get home in time for bedtime. I love them very much and they just offer me a great deal of support in my work, you know.

And beyond that, you know, both of our families — I've talked about this before — they offer a great deal of support to Meagan and I as, you know, we're new parents finding our way, learning how to do that. And you know, in both of our respective careers, our families have just been so incredibly supportive from a career sense and from a family sense as well, and we're very grateful for that.

You know, I'd like to thank my two constituency assistants, Gail and Claudette. They just again do an incredible job for the people in our constituency in terms of trying to find them answers, in terms of helping them access different services or, you know, if there's little misunderstandings here and there along the way, helping sort those out, and again delivering for the people of Battlefords really on a daily basis.

You know, the staff that I get to work with in this building are truly fantastic. You know, first of all, in the caucus office, so many folks there that do great work each and every day. But in our ministerial office is Clint and Hillary and Lisa and Megan and Dan and Savanna and Franz and Erin and Leona and Stephanie. Really just a great team to work with.

You know, I talked about this before with other groups of staff I get to work with in this building. You know, it's important that we do our job well but like to have fun along the way. And so we like to laugh in our office and that helps keep the day short and, you know, helps us have fun along the way.

You know, most importantly though, the reason that I get to sit in this seat every day and get to stand and speak to important things happening in our province every week — and you know, like the provincial budget here tonight — I really have to thank the people of Battlefords, the people in the community that I call home and am proud to represent, you know, thank them again for returning me to this opportunity last October. I'm very grateful for that.

And you know, it's really my honour to work on behalf of them, to speak on behalf of my communities to provincial priorities and how important our community is to the province and really talk about how the important things that we're doing, you know, as a provincial government affect the people back home in my constituency every day.

You know, but now that I've been doing this a few years — not as long as the Minister of Finance, but I've been in this role for a few years — I have to say, one of the most fulfilling parts of this job, you know . . . And I think all of my colleagues will feel this as well: there's so many good ideas in our province, Mr. Speaker. There's so many good ideas. You know, we had a reception with the cattlemen's tonight, had some good discussion there about several different topics with a few different producers in our province, but really from border to border to border there are

some fantastic ideas.

And so it's really fulfilling, Mr. Speaker, when you hear feedback from your own constituents in your community or you get good ideas from them. And you bring it here and you speak to the right people here in Regina and you say, hey, here's something I heard from somebody in my community and this is something we should do; how do we make this happen?

And you know, when you start to see those things come to fruition, Mr. Speaker, that is the best part of the job. That is the part of the job where you can say, you know what? This guy or this woman came and spoke with me. They say, hey, this isn't working very well or — you know what? — hey, this is working well but we could do this better. And then you can go and make that better. Boy, as an MLA, very little better than that quite frankly, I think.

You know, and I was just thinking about a few of those examples as I was driving down here on Sunday. I was thinking about some recent changes that the Minister of Government Relations announced to how we're treating the National Building Code and, you know, thinking about specifically a gentleman named Ryan in my constituency who works in the construction sector, who's had many meetings with me over the last 12 months.

And this gentleman's a building inspector. He works all over the Northwest of our province. He raised some of these issues with me, you know, about a year ago and spoke with the previous minister, has spoken with the current minister and his staff about it. And so it's incredibly thrilling to be able to tell Ryan, hey, we're going to make this change. And then to have a conversation with Ryan last week, you know, where he said, yeah, that was a really smart thing for the people of this province; that was a good thing to do. It's going to positively impact the people in our community and the people in our province.

I think about the changes that we also made last year to add presumptive cancer coverage for volunteer fire departments, for volunteer firefighters in our province, you know, and many people, certainly on this side of the House, will have fantastic volunteer fire departments in their communities. You know, we have a great professional paid department in North Battleford, but we have really an impressive volunteer department in the town of Battleford, and then another volunteer department in the RM in North Battleford, 437.

These are incredibly dedicated men and women who go through an incredible amount of training, who raise money in their communities to purchase equipment, to build fire halls that are impressive and, you know, make sure that they can offer service to people in our own communities but also people that might be travelling through and get into a bit of trouble on the highway.

And so you know, when you think about being able to recognize the good work of volunteer firefighters in this province, that was a big move to add presumptive cancer coverage for those volunteer firefighters. And that came directly from volunteer firefighters from all across the province, including my community that was so grateful to see that come to be.

I think about the changes that we made, what we committed to in the election platform and then funded in this budget around

increasing the disability tax credit, Mr. Speaker. And thinking about the many CBOs, community-based organizations, that I have the pleasure of interacting with in my own community on a regular basis, but more importantly the people that they serve — adults living with disabilities — and being able to make life a little bit more affordable for those folks and their families, it makes a huge difference. It makes a huge difference to see a 25 per cent increase in the disability tax credit. You know, I'm proud that I could take that forward on behalf of my community and then see that come to fruition as part of this year's budget.

Mr. Speaker, one that's even more recent is the investment that this government has made into the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Saskatchewan, you know, a \$10 million contribution to get us to a point of construction on the new Regina house. Twenty rooms there for families whose kids will be receiving care either at the General, probably the General most primarily, but could be at the Pasqua as well, Mr. Speaker. And then the new house in Prince Albert, 12 rooms there for families from all over the North.

And Ronald McDonald House — I've said it several times in the last couple months — if you're ever having a bad day, go visit Ronald McDonald House. You walk in the house. First of all, it smells great. Your appetite . . . You know, all of a sudden you have an appetite because it smells fantastic and you know there's home-cooked food. And the staff there are just absolutely incredible in terms of how they not only care for the children that are going through a difficult health care journey but the families. And again, this comes from families in my own community who have walked incredibly difficult health care journeys with their children. Some have even stayed at the Ronald McDonald House in Saskatoon. Some have had to go to Edmonton or Toronto for care and stayed in Ronald McDonald Houses in those communities, Mr. Speaker.

And so when the opportunity came for this government to partner with Ronald McDonald House and make those important investments that are really going to serve families in all corners of this province, Mr. Speaker, we couldn't pass that up. We couldn't pass that up. And it was an honour to be able to make that investment.

I'd like to talk specifically about the budget, and then I guess I have some observations on how members on both sides of the House are interacting with the budget over the last few days, so I'll share that at the end.

[20:30]

But you know, when it comes to this budget and the specific impacts it makes in The Battlefords — obviously I've already referenced a few different things — and members on this side have really done an impressive job in communicating all the things in this budget and the positive impacts for their communities. You know what? A lot of things that members have said on this side of the House certainly ring true in the constituency of The Battlefords, so I'll just highlight a few quick things.

You know, a lot of people have talked about municipal revenue sharing. The member from Canora-Pelly just talked about it. You know, and again, this year is a 6.3 per cent increase over last year.

But it's easy to lose sight that the reality is, over the last 15 years, municipal revenue sharing has nearly tripled to communities across the province.

That is not insignificant, Mr. Speaker. Whether that is so that municipalities can keep property taxes affordable, whether that means that municipalities can take those revenue-sharing dollars and put them into infrastructure investments, or programming that might be offered in those municipalities, Mr. Speaker, that makes a big difference. It has for the town of Battleford. It has for the city of North Battleford. And so again, it's really important that this program has continued to increase this year.

Community safety is absolutely a crucial topic in my community. It's important that people feel safe where they live. This government has made many investments into the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] over the last decade. We already have the largest RCMP detachment in the province, Mr. Speaker, and one of the larger ones, I dare say, in Western Canada.

You know, we've made investments on targeted teams to target specific criminal activity that is affecting people both that live in the urban municipality, out in the country, and then on many First Nations reserves all around our community. We're starting to see some really good results from that.

But there's more investment in this year's budget, Mr. Speaker. Fourteen new SCAN [safer communities and neighbourhoods] officers around the province. SCAN is safer communities and neighbourhoods, is a unit that spends time in my community, and I'm looking forward for them to spend more time in The Battlefords with this investment and this budget, Mr. Speaker.

Something as well that's been debated in this House, the Saskatchewan marshals service. And in this budget 50 new positions are funded for the Saskatchewan marshals service, Mr. Speaker. This is going to make a big difference. It's going to make a big difference.

And some people think, oh it just helps rural Saskatchewan. And you know, I've maybe talked about it before but at the risk of repeating myself, again having Saskatchewan marshal capacity being added in the province will mean that our RCMP members in The Battlefords will have more capacity to spend time in the urban municipality. This is a good thing for all of Saskatchewan. Wherever you live, the addition of the Saskatchewan marshals service is going to ensure that people in our communities, whether they live in a large or small community, feel safer where they are.

When it comes to health care, Mr. Speaker, you know, some really encouraging investments I would say made specifically in The Battlefords, increasing capacity in the dialysis unit. We have a very busy dialysis unit at Battlefords Union Hospital. A very dedicated team of health care professionals that work in that unit. By adding an extra run every day we're going to be able to help 10 more people in that dialysis unit at Battlefords Union Hospital.

In Meadow Lake we're also adding capacity every week to help 12 more patients in Meadow Lake. So if you take that Highway 4 dialysis corridor, we'll call it, we're adding 22 more patients that we're going to be able to serve on a weekly basis, ensuring

that they can access care closer to home. They don't need to go to Saskatoon. They don't need to go to Lloydminster. They can get their care right at home, Mr. Speaker. That makes a difference.

Also important, Mr. Speaker — and I'm really excited about this one — expanding the family medicine enhanced skills program with a specific focus on emergency medicine at our hospital. And, Mr. Speaker, what this enhanced skills program does is it basically adds additional training to family doctors in the province and adds to their skill set, helps them take on more responsibility, or different responsibility, in their community. And so we're really excited in our community that we can offer more of that training locally in The Battlefords. It's going to be good for whoever decides to take that training opportunity, but even more important, it's going to have a positive impact on our community and really access to patient care for people in our community.

You know, I love to boast about this. We, and it gets said often in this House, we do have the most ambitious health human resources action plan in the country. Bar none, the most ambitious plan is in this province. And it even gives me more pride to say, Mr. Speaker, that my community has actually been one of the most successful communities in being able to attract health care workers through that incentive — 84 full-time positions filled over the last two years in The Battlefords. That makes a difference. That makes a difference in terms of those young people, some of whom are moving to our province for the first time — \$50,000 incentive over three years, Mr. Speaker. That's going to help them buy a house, get started in our community, Mr. Speaker. But more importantly, it ensures that we have fewer disruptions in our community. Again, better access to patient care.

You know, we continue to have planning dollars in this year's budget for a future urgent care centre in The Battlefords, a replacement of Battleford's district care centre, Mr. Speaker. These are going to be important investments in the future for our community.

I'll speak more generally I guess on some of the health care investments in this year's budget and the impact that they're going to have for people, not only in The Battlefords, but all across the province, Mr. Speaker.

You know, one thing that we . . . And the credit goes to the previous Health ministers on this — expanding the scope of pharmacists in this province, Mr. Speaker. Adding the ability to test for strep throat and ear infection, Mr. Speaker. Again, when we talk about access to primary care in this province, it doesn't necessarily need to be a family doctor. It doesn't necessarily need to be a nurse practitioner. In fact in many smaller communities, Mr. Speaker, they might not have a family doctor that's there every day. They might not have a nurse practitioner. But there's a good chance they have a pharmacist, Mr. Speaker. And so as we have expanded the scope for pharmacists, that is going to make sure that more people in this province have access to good primary care and timely primary care for them and their families.

The expansion of coverage for continuous and flash glucose monitors, so for those living with diabetes in our province, Mr. Speaker, increasing the coverage age up to age 25 and then

65-plus. You know, that's going to ensure that people who maybe aren't in the prime working years of their lives get a little bit more affordability help in terms of helping them manage their diabetes, but also help with their pocketbook as well. That is a very key investment that's funded in this year's budget, Mr. Speaker.

I talked in The Battlefords specifically about the family medicine enhanced skills program, Mr. Speaker. But also in this year's budget, 10 more residency seats in the College of Medicine. And you know, one thing that I've really noticed just in the last few months is I look at how we're training doctors in this province. It is so important that we have more training opportunities because there is a really strong correlation with physicians from where they train to where they end up practising. So adding more residency seats in family medicine and anesthesia, it will allow us to train more doctors here at home, Mr. Speaker, and make sure that we have a better chance at keeping those doctors in our communities, large or small.

You know, we've talked a little bit about the Saskatoon City Hospital investment. That's a significant investment — 109 more acute care beds in our province's largest city. Mr. Speaker, that is like adding another hospital in the city of Saskatoon. And you know what? This makes a lot of sense, evaluating the services that we offer within one of our large tertiary hospitals and saying, what needs to be in the hospital and what can be out in the community? And, Mr. Speaker, we believe that our hospital buildings, especially in our two larger centres as well as in Prince Albert, they need to be focused on the most acute care that patients need.

And so again, realigning these services in Saskatoon City Hospital, absolutely key investment for the city of Saskatoon. Improving patient flow in that city, improving wait times at the emergency room or your ability to stay in the city of Saskatoon. But it's also good for people all across the northern half of our province, Mr. Speaker.

I'd also just quickly, before I move on, just talk about the additional investment in more addictions treatment spaces. Mr. Speaker, this cannot . . . And you know, given what's going on lately in the city of Saskatoon, and not just the city of Saskatoon but other communities around our province in terms of more people suffering from tainted drugs, overdosing, Mr. Speaker — this happens in my community; it happens in many communities all across the province, Mr. Speaker — this government is focused on treatment. This government is focused on ensuring that we can help those people find a path to recovery so they can return to their families, return to their communities, and be engaged in society, Mr. Speaker.

So now I'd just like to offer a few reflections on the budget. I've given you the details. I've given you the numbers. Let me offer some reflections. And you know, this is the first budget after an election, okay? And I'm not going to talk too much about the election from October, Mr. Speaker, but you know, the opposition doesn't build a budget, right? So all we really have to go on is what they proposed in the election platform, Mr. Speaker. So we really have to say, okay, here's what you proposed in October. Here's what we proposed in October. Especially because this budget, Mr. Speaker, makes good on every single campaign commitment that was made in October. It's in this budget.

So if we use that rule of thumb, Mr. Speaker, let's compare the two documents. And you know, I'll be charitable and leave out the \$800 million hole in their platform that was in the fiscal year '28-29. I've already canvassed that previously so I won't go there, but I'll just focus on what they would've put in their '25-26 budget, Mr. Speaker.

You know, there's been some barbs thrown across the floor about a lack of investment in health care, Mr. Speaker. So this provincial budget, delivered by this Finance minister, added \$485 million for health care in this province. Again, focused on many of the things that I've already talked about — improving access to primary care, increasing the number of surgeries we do.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you what the other guys had in their platform — \$115 million increase. There's a big difference there, Mr. Speaker. We wouldn't be able to increase the number of surgeries that we're doing, Mr. Speaker. We wouldn't be able to increase the number of primary care providers, Mr. Speaker. We wouldn't be able to offer more physician training in more communities all across the province, Mr. Speaker. There's a difference there. There's a difference.

Mr. Speaker, I'll also note that the election platform, it forecasted deficits for several years going out into the future for the other guys, Mr. Speaker. And you know, that's important to note because when we talk about finding stability in a time of worldwide uncertainty, having a budget surplus matters. It does. It lowers our cost of borrowing. It gives the province flexibility should we have to deal with extended tariffs, Mr. Speaker. It gives us flexibility. A deficit budget would not do that, Mr. Speaker. So I guess I just wanted to provide, you know, a bit of background there.

You know, I heard a member opposite say something interesting the other day, talking about how this budget, the provincial budget '25-26, it's not focused on the future. I thought that was an interesting comment because, you know, as I think about it, Mr. Speaker, what made it interesting to me is I find that the opposition is stuck in the battles of the past. They don't know anything about the future. They're stuck in the battles of the past.

And let me give a few examples of that. Let's think about some of the things the opposition has said in recent weeks: "We should build pipelines." Yeah, no doubt we should build pipelines. Mr. Speaker, we've been talking about that for decades, Mr. Speaker. We've been talking about — decades — let's build them, Mr. Speaker. But you know, it's interesting because you're stuck in the battles of the past when you have members that call that industry a bleeping nightmare, Mr. Speaker. So what actually is the position, Mr. Speaker?

You know, I think about my neighbour at home. He works in the oil and gas sector. He gets up pretty early in the morning. Him and I sometimes leave the house at the same time. I go to my office to sit at a desk and answer emails. He gets in his truck, he commutes half an hour north, and he helps pull oil out of the ground that's going to be transported to the Gulf Coast and help building our provincial economy. Mr. Speaker, to look him in the eye and say that the work that he does every day is a bleeping nightmare, that's disgusting. Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, I would find that offensive, Mr. Speaker. And so, you know, again it's these battles of the past.

You know, another thing I've heard: we should engage internationally. Absolutely. Look at what we've been doing, Mr. Speaker. You know, there is no better advocate for this province internationally than our Premier. Nine trade offices around the world. We've had several ministers on this side of the House out engaging internationally, Mr. Speaker, over the last couple of months, knowing that in the face of American tariffs we need to continue to diversify an economy that is already diverse compared to many other provincial economies in this country.

[20:45]

But, Mr. Speaker, we see opportunities. And we see opportunities because we've actually put the time in to build those relationships, to have access to those markets on behalf of the people of this province. On behalf of our producers, whether they grow crops or whether they pull potash out of the ground or whether they raise cows, Mr. Speaker, we are working to engage internationally on behalf of them.

But you compare that . . . I'll go to page 297 of *Hansard* from the last legislature, Mr. Speaker. April 7th of 2021, a quote from the member from Regina South Alberta: "... the government is spending nine and a half million dollars more to establish four international trade offices, cushy foreign patronage postings with little to show for the shrouded work." Shame.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I guess I don't even want to think about condemning international leaders when we have people condemning our own public servants. We should be cheering on the people that are working on behalf of this province to speak on behalf of our producers, Mr. Speaker.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the other one: get rid of the carbon tax. Well we've been doing that. We've been doing that. We've been advocating, Mr. Speaker. Again our Premier has been probably the most vocal opponent of the carbon tax. And I would say that this Premier and this government are not going to rest until the carbon tax is taken off of everything for everyone.

So you know, you can put on that Team Canada jersey you bought three weeks ago and you can yell "elbows up" until you're red in the face and it matches your jersey. But where have you been? Where have you been for the last 10 years standing up for our producers, Mr. Speaker? That's what matters. That's what matters to the people in that room with the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association, Mr. Speaker. That's what matters to the people who are questioning if they should put canola in the ground in a few weeks, Mr. Speaker. That's what matters to the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, just getting back to the budget, this budget delivers so much for so many people. Seniors living with diabetes, this budget delivers for them. Young families building a home or looking to grow their family, this budget delivers for them. People who pay income tax in this province — the largest income tax in this province since the year 2008 in this provincial budget — this budget delivers for them. People that grow stuff, the people that mine stuff, the people that raise animals in our province, Mr. Speaker, this budget delivers for them.

Mr. Speaker, I'll just say this budget and this government delivers for you. I am proud to support this budget. I look forward

to voting in favour of the budget on Thursday afternoon. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Jordan McPhail: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And can I just say for the record, nice tie, Mr. Speaker. Before I get into my formal remarks I did notice a friend of mine up in your gallery here, Mr. Speaker: Rosalee Longmoore, a retired nurse here in Saskatchewan. And I just want to thank her for her service to the province of Saskatchewan. And proud to fight to make health care a place that maybe she would want to go back and work. I don't know; it would be tough to convince at this time.

Also before I go into that, I do have a few folks watching at home. My mom is celebrating . . . She no longer celebrates birthdays. She celebrates anniversaries of her 29th birthday, and today is her 26th anniversary of her 29th birthday. So happy birthday to my mom.

My girls and my family watching here tonight, thank you so much. And to my colleagues, buckle up.

It gives me great pride to rise from my seat to enter into debate on this year's provincial budget on behalf of the good people of Cumberland. Before I get into my formal remarks, I'd like to thank the countless people who have reached out to our team, my office, our staff, and have instilled a level of trust to deliver their thoughts and desires here on the floor of this Assembly.

I would also like to thank my family who have supported me in these first few months of our new life. My wife, Marlette, our daughters Lily and Penelope, have certainly had change in their weekly dad-time schedule. And I thank them for their sacrifices so that I am able to do this job that I love and honoured to be able to do.

Now as I have only been in opposition in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, I have plenty of experience at the municipal level in government, where I have had to sit with colleagues and manage the fiscal position of our municipality while managing airports, municipal roads, animal control, recreation centres, business and economic development, water and sewer infrastructure, community planning, and many, many more line items which I won't go into great detail explaining. But suffice it to say I know the position that some of the members opposite would be going through while making this document before us today.

I know that there are many people asking for changes to respond to the world around them, to help them achieve successes in their hometown, and to attract new people to their hometown. I know that not all things can be achieved and tough decisions need to be made to ensure that fiscal responsibility is upheld. I also know that there are bare minimums that are to be expected from budgets, and that is that your core function of government is operational, that you operate and maintain your current infrastructure, that you treat your staff with respect, and that you are responding to challenges to ensure your future successes.

I also know the capital planning, strategic planning, and thought processes it takes into creating the document that is here today. Regardless of the politics surrounding the budget, I'm sure that the ministry staff have put a great deal of work to take the

priorities of their government and try and put them into action, and for that, I thank them for the service to this Assembly.

As a municipal councillor I had the honour to work on and deliver eight budgets. I was proud to deliver multiple surplus budgets, invested in capital projects, created economic development in the region through a revitalization plan, building incentive plans to build new homes in our community, and help foster good governance alongside many municipal leaders.

When I left my seat just a few months ago, our fiscal reserves were in a healthy condition and our budgets were balanced not only when we tabled them, but when we delivered on them throughout the year. I know that the experience on this side of the House — from municipal tables, school boards, non-profit organizations, community organizations — that we know what balanced budgets look like while responding to the challenge that is front of us. I can say with full confidence that this budget will not deliver for the people of my riding as its title is implying.

Now as I turn my focus to this year's provincial budget, I think of my constituents, the good people of Cumberland, and the challenges that they face daily. I think of the budgets that they have to maintain to make ends meet. And then I look at the provincial budget here that was presented last week and is before us here today.

Over the last few months I took the opportunity to visit so many great northern communities and meet with the leadership that serves them. My colleague the MLA from Athabasca and our staff took a road trip up the only highway north of my hometown, La Ronge. And I know the members opposite need to hear that last part one more time. We took a road trip up the only road north of my hometown.

Well let me tell you, that road looks a lot different when you're not flying over it from 25,000 feet. When I look to the budget — no investment. When I think of the good people of Cumberland House who humbly came to this building asking their government to fix the road which they have dubbed "bobblehead road" — again, the only road that services their community where they have to transfer patients needing health care, where they access the economy, where they travel to visit family, or where industry needs to access to provide the local grocery store the goods that they need in the community — no investment.

I think of the budgetary impact it has on families, their vehicles' maintenance bills when this budget doesn't invest in their highway infrastructure. The people of the North deserve a safe highway, Mr. Speaker, a highway that is passable when they need to be transferred out of their community when their health care needs can't be met in their hometown.

While I'm speaking on health care, in the Saskatchewan Health Authority's own documents — this government's policies — in their land acknowledgement it states, and I quote, "The Saskatchewan Health Authority is committed to addressing impacts of racism, discrimination, and trauma, and closing the gap in health outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples."

I will then question their actions in this budget. The people in the North just this past fall were being diagnosed with scurvy, a clear

indication of food insecurity in northern Saskatchewan. Not only that, there's clear indications of tuberculosis in Sandy Bay, where overcrowded houses and the effects of poverty are pertinent. Yet we see no action in this budget to provide these folks with relief, nothing to close the gap between non-Indigenous and Indigenous populations. Shameful.

In fact we see boarded-up houses in communities that have 13 to 15 people sharing the same roof. I'm going to repeat that line for all the members opposite — 13 to 15 people. Three families in a single household. Show me that in your communities. And if you don't believe me, I've got a passenger seat in my vehicle, and I invite you to join me on the broken northern roads and go into those communities to see it for yourself.

Mr. Speaker, I have had receipts brought to me: \$20 for grapes, \$18 jug of milk, \$168 turkeys, \$10 for four tomatoes, \$140 in gasoline alone to get to the grocery store for residents of Sandy Bay. With prices and access to healthy food, would the members opposite think that this is acceptable and follows their own policies of "closing the gap"? I am fully convinced that the only \$20 grapes any member on that side of the House has seen had to be pressed, fermented, filtered, and then bottled first.

In regards to the long-term care facility in La Ronge, I'd like to quote the chief of my nation, the Lac La Ronge Indian Band, Chief Tammy Cook-Searson, when they unveiled their conceptual plan of the long-term care in La Ronge. She did not mince any words, Mr. Speaker. She ensured everyone in that audience knew that this project was a project of the people, not a project of the government.

As members opposite would know, or at least some of them that were here in the last session, know that the former MLA that held this seat before me, MLA Doyle Vermette, delivered thousands of petitions from this seat to the floor of this Assembly. He organized many people to come to this place and drag the government over the finish line to commit to this build.

This is true for almost any northern project, Mr. Speaker. It took northerners dying on broken highways to get investment. It took a suicide crisis for the members opposite to pass a suicide prevention bill, which the government passed the bill and has done nothing since to address the challenges so many people are facing here in Saskatchewan.

It still hasn't delivered on their promises made in that bill. We still have the highest vacancy in the North for mental health professionals. Northerners have earned their projects from blood, sweat, and tears of the many years of advocacy, and I will not stand in my place and thank the members opposite for returning the money to the North after billions of dollars of resources are extracted year after year and my constituents are begging for change so that they're able to feed their families.

When the initial project in my own hometown, La Ronge, announcement came, it stated that the project would be completed in 2022 or 2023. Here we are, Mr. Speaker, 2025 and the project is still not complete.

If I haven't heard it a thousand times, I haven't heard it once. If this government can't staff its current facility, how can they even begin to staff the new facility in La Ronge? A long-term care

facility without staff is just a mattress storage unit, Mr. Speaker.

This budget, as many previous budgets, fails to address that the North is far and away from the rest of the province when it comes to retaining and recruiting staff in the North. This is a failure to the patients, staff, and the organizations in the North. It is past time that the government differentiates their incentive programs for northerners to even the rural Saskatchewan incentives.

[21:00]

In the North, it's clear to see health care systems failing when we see vacancy rates in our northern positions in mental health and addictions, dental programs, just to name a few. I hear time and again from nurses in the North, from La Ronge to Creighton to Sandy Bay, that due to staffing challenges it's been hard to offer services at all.

What I will say, Mr. Speaker, is the nurses, the care providers, and staff at this government's local hospitals deserve respect. They deserve a round of applause, and they deserve some relief. They deserved to be brought out of last place in this budget, and they were not.

The nurses in the North, the health care providers in the North, they are constantly facing situations that no other rural area has to do. Due to the isolation factor, there isn't an option of just putting a piece of paper on the door and being on bypass. They can't just close the door and turn away patients like they've seen in some parts of southern Saskatchewan, due to this government's inaction.

They are burning out. They are in must-do, can't-fail situations every single day. And it is downright shameful that this government will now look those members in the face and say, we cut health care this year. Northern health care workers and their patients deserve better than what this government has offered them in this budget.

I've had the honour to meet with many lands and resources teams from local First Nations and Métis leadership, who have made it clear to me that this government's approach to working with them is more of a duty-to-insult rather than a duty-to-consult.

The North is rich in resources, Mr. Speaker. The government ought to know this. And the one thing that it is absolutely rich in is culture. There is a strong connection to the land. We in the North know that it is responsible to remember that we are people who are one of the land, not ruler of the land.

This budget offers a big, fat goose egg to the First Nations and Métis peoples and their duty-to-consult. I will repeat the word "duty." Duty-to-consult. In this budget, the amount allotted to help ministry engage with local leaders on their traditional territories remains at the same levels as last year, when local leadership has been humbly asking this government to take their local knowledge, their experts, and industry leaders to listen to their perspectives, not only in the North but across treaties 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10.

This government needs to take duty-to-consult seriously, not only when it comes to resource management but when they are selling Crown lands as well. This budget fails Indigenous and

non-Indigenous peoples alike when they don't take their duty-to-consult seriously.

I will also make mention, while discussing the leadership of our great Nations here in Saskatchewan, who have been doing community consultations to establish a community policing force . . . And in this budget I do find it interesting that the government will invest an additional \$2 million in this budget for policing, the second largest investment in the file.

Helping address education outcomes: next to nothing. Helping address health outcomes, like their own SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] land acknowledgement states that they should: next to nothing. Helping families who have family members missing or murdered: nothing. Helping Nations with the duty-to-consult process that this government, in my opinion and in the opinion of many other Nations, aren't funding enough: nothing. Interpersonal violence supports: nothing. Victim services: nothing. Crime prevention: nothing. Trade and export development and Indigenous relations: nothing.

And I'll agree with the member that just laughed. That's laughable. It's shameful that that's what our provincial budget has for First Nations people and Métis Nation. What is blatantly clear in this budget — lays it out in black and white, Mr. Speaker — is that the Sask Party government will only listen to Indigenous leaders when it aligns with the Sask Party government's politics.

We need more investments across the board — health, education, child care, and yes, policing — to keep communities safe. They will only add investments when it comes to helping the policing of Indigenous peoples of this province. Nothing more, nothing less. For the rest of the items in the file, better luck next year. Actually I don't even think they said, better luck. Absolutely shameful.

When I look to my former employer, SaskTel, I think of the missed opportunities that people in rural and northern Saskatchewan have missed due to the lack of broadband. SaskTel could be expanded to help their broadband challenges.

I think of my time driving across the beautiful North and hearing the stories from rural Saskatchewan, where people are looking to the competition, some of which are tied directly to the Trump administration. Starlink has brought faster broadband to rural and northern Saskatchewan before Saskatchewan's own Crown corporation could deliver for them. It's shameful that this government won't invest in the infrastructure to help all of these industries meet the challenges of tomorrow and allowing Trump's top advisor to profit off of their negligence.

In previous years there were commitments, in words alone, to double the forestry industry here in Saskatchewan by 2030, yet nothing in this budget meets the demands of their own words. They have said what they want but refuse to help the industry succeed. They recycle promises of opening pulp mills near Prince Albert, yet have stepped up to the plate to deliver. The Premier stood in his place and spoke about this budget delivering all of their campaign promises. So I'll ask the Premier, the members from Prince Albert, maybe the member from Sask Rivers, where is the pulp mill?

In Prince Albert there was a campaign pitch: a vote for Darryl Hickie is a vote for the P.A. [Prince Albert] pulp mill. That pitch was delivered in 2007. And so I ask, do we roll out the mission accomplished banner? Do we dare use the words "on time" and "on budget"?

I will close by saying that we are asked in this House to discuss the priorities of our constituents, of our stakeholders, of our families. I know they're making impossible decisions to feed their families or pay the power bill. There are 13 people living in a house, Mr. Speaker. They didn't need a tax break to reshingle their house or to add a hot tub to the backyard. They needed relief from a \$500-a-week grocery bill. They needed relief from the hardships that this government has created for them.

I know that this is not what this budget delivered. I am fully confident in saying that when they titled this document *Delivering for You*, it was not the northerners that they had in mind. I've seen a balanced budget before, Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, as a town councillor. And if this government calls this balanced, then they look like *The Cat in the Hat* holding the book, the fishbowl, the umbrella, and standing on an exercise ball. If one thing happens, it all comes tumbling down.

If anyone believes that this budget will stand the test of time this year and remain balanced, boy, do I have some magic beans to sell you. They can grow beanstalks right to the sky, Mr. Speaker. This budget is akin to asking me to believe in many fairy tales. And I'll be a good father, Mr. Speaker, and I'll make sure that some fairy tales are told for many years to keep some stories alive. But this budget is telling a fairy tale story that I just can't support.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I did hear that there was a fable told this afternoon by the member from Humboldt-Watrous. While it was quite loose on keeping consistent with the facts, I do recall hearing about an owl. So if you and the members opposite will indulge me for just a few minutes, I will also tell a small tale. The only difference between mine and the member's opposite is mine might be a little bit more consistent with the facts.

Now I don't know if you know this, Mr. Speaker, but I found out while on a trip into our province's beautiful North that the member from Regina Walsh Acres is actually a professional birder. He can identify the species of a bird sometimes just by the way that they sound. And I had a discussion with him earlier this spring session, and we believe that we have made a discovery here in Regina that the very rare blind owl of Saskatchewan is in fact still around. We have counted at least 33 so far this session, Mr. Speaker.

You can tell the blind owl of Saskatchewan apart from the other owls because they don't give a hoot about Saskatchewan businesses, Saskatchewan industry, or Saskatchewan families. In fact they can't even see who really is giving a hoot about Saskatchewan families, Saskatchewan businesses, and Saskatchewan industry.

Speaker Goudy: — There's tales on both sides, but maybe rethink the level you're going to on the blindness and not giving a hoot. Why is the member on her feet?

Meara Conway: — Mr. Speaker, earlier this afternoon we heard from the member for Humboldt-Watrous. She told a fable, quite a lengthy one, where she made many comparisons of the members opposite to birds. I would ask that you not find this point of order well taken. This was a gentle fable from my colleague, nowhere near what we heard earlier today. It's concerning to us, and I'd ask you to take that into consideration and allow the member . . .

Speaker Goudy: — I would ask the member talking about the blindness of the owls . . . Great points as you've come along. Please finish up without any more fable about blindness and intentionally ignoring. So appreciate it. Continue on.

Jordan McPhail: — I will say, I guess it's time to open your eyes. With that, Mr. Speaker, I will say that I am proud to stand with the members on this side of the House because I know we give a hoot for Saskatchewan. And therefore I will not be supporting the budget, and I will be supporting the amendment put forward by the member from Regina Mount Royal. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Carlton.

Kevin Kasun: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me first begin by acknowledging the constituency I represent, Prince Albert Carlton, and its location on Treaty 6 territory. And today I speak on Treaty 4 territory, both the homeland of the Métis people.

Mr. Speaker, this fall we said that this is a new beginning. What an appropriate title for the start of the 30th Legislative Assembly. And with everything that has happened since, a new beginning is more appropriate than ever. And now with that new beginning, our government is, with this budget, delivering for you.

Mr. Speaker, our government is reducing income taxes for every resident, family, and small business in Saskatchewan, delivering more than 2 billion in affordable measures in every budget in addition to more than 250 million in tax savings introduced in this budget.

Education property tax mill rates are being reduced for all property classes. Introducing and maintaining made-in-Saskatchewan tax credits. Incentives and programs designed to encourage investment and diversify the provincial economy. 8.1 billion to deliver better patient access and safer, more responsive care for Saskatchewan residents. Increasing funding to accelerate the hiring and growth of health care professionals through the human resources action plan, the most ambitious program of its kind in Canada.

If the opposition would stop criticizing the shortage of staff, and maybe with their connections to different groups, their words could actually help fill this gap. We could all bring our staffing levels to what is needed in this province. We both say that we love this province and care about its people, but who is actually doing something about it?

Last month the opposition MLA for Saskatoon Riversdale held a press conference beside Prince Albert's beautiful Saskatchewan River asking the question, where are all the Prince Albert MLAs hiding? Well, Mr. Speaker, eight MLAs that included the

Premier, the Health minister, both MLAs from Prince Albert, Batoche, Saskatchewan Rivers, Carrot River Valley, and Kelvington-Wadena were all serving the people of Prince Albert just blocks away from where she asked that very important question. That day our government put 3.5 million to the P.A. Ronald McDonald House. Mr. Speaker, that day where the opposition MLA asked where is everybody hiding, we were standing right in front of the people of this province, helping the people that need help. That's where.

To expand on that, Mr. Speaker, the Ronald McDonald House is being built to support families whose children are undergoing treatments at nearby health facilities. The design includes 12 bedrooms, a smudge room, communal kitchen, dining room, living room, play space, and family games room.

Further, in our health care, Mr. Speaker, in '24-25, 898 million was awarded to PCL in a construction contract and an additional 180 million funding for the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital redevelopment project. For the '25-26 budget, 322.4 million has been allocated to the continued construction of the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital.

[21:15]

How strong is our community in health care? Mr. Speaker, last Saturday I, as well as the MLA for Prince Albert Northcote, attended the Med Gala in Prince Albert. Mr. Speaker, this event is put on by the Boreal Healthcare Foundation to honour the exceptional work done by different people, departments in the medical field in Prince Albert.

This year in Nursing Excellence, Andrew McLetchie — Andy — with over two decades of nursing experience has been instrumental in expanding health care services in rural and northern communities. Andy continues to shape Saskatchewan's health care landscape with his vision and leadership.

The Prince Albert home care team was also celebrated. The Prince Albert home care palliative team is dedicated to providing high-quality, compassionate care to palliative patients within the community, supporting approximately 190 individuals.

And for the Outstanding Achievement in Healthcare, Roses Stewart-Stevens, who has recognized the need for customized medication and joined the Professional Compounding Centers of America. She brought in pioneering means to deliver to the people of Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker, these are just a sampling of the pioneering spirit that is within my city and in this province. Mr. Speaker, my city of Prince Albert will benefit with a revenue-sharing increase from 2.9 million in 2007 to over 9.4 million in '25-26. That's a 214 per cent increase.

In community safety, Mr. Speaker, I was also excited that in this budget, 50 new positions for the Saskatchewan marshals service, a service that will be headquartered right in the city of Prince Albert. A service which is expected to be up and operational in the next couple of months, a full year ahead of schedule.

Mr. Speaker, having the opportunity to speak to so many people in Prince Albert Carlton, hearing their concerns, listening to their

suggestions and their passion for the future of their province, I spoke to many people who are concerned with the global situation that we are dealing with and concerned how this government is dealing with the situation.

I digress for a bit. Careful, thoughtful planning has to be put into place. I believe that this is what Saskatchewan people asked this government for. Not a quick, dramatic move. Slight adjustments to keep things moving forward for all the people of this province.

In saying that, Mr. Speaker, our government has always advocated for stronger interprovincial trade. Times like we're in now show how important that trade is, especially in our energy sector. We all know that Saskatchewan has what the world needs, and it shouldn't be our own federal government that is blocking or delaying such important projects. That is why in my member's statement today, I said that our Premier posted that all pipeline permits in Saskatchewan will be considered pre-approved going forward.

What a great province we live in. Here are some reasons why I say that. By increasing the first-time homebuyers tax credit, a 50 per cent increase allowing more people to achieve home ownership. And if you have a home, the reinstating of the home renovation tax credit allows for people to keep their home and fix those things that every house needs fixed.

For families with young children, this budget doubles the active families benefit and also doubles the income threshold so that more families qualify for this benefit. For seniors who live in a personal care home, this budget delivers a \$1,000-a-month increase to the personal care home benefit. For persons living with a disability, this budget delivers a 25 per cent increase to the disability tax credit.

The changing of tax brackets, coupled with the largest personal income tax reduction since 2008, will allow the people of Saskatchewan to spend their own money on products and services that they need and they want to spend it on, not what the government tells them to.

Let's go back to health care, Mr. Speaker. It's exciting to know that this government will work with all levels of health care providers to come up with a recovery approach to health care. Since I received my diagnosis of cancer, I have learned that doctors and nurses and all health care staff must work as a team to come together on an individual's health care plan. Not just a one-size-fits-all approach, but work as a team for the same end result. That is what this government is doing.

With the expansion of the Victoria Hospital in Prince Albert and opening additional urgent care centres, we are taking the pressure off emergency rooms across this province. And of course with these expansions, we're continuing to increase the number of doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals, as well as all the support staff that is needed to run these facilities.

Mr. Speaker, I am also excited about our plans for education, with a focus on improving reading levels specifically in kindergarten to grade 3, but even before the start of kindergarten providing funding for 12,000 additional new child care spaces. Mr. Speaker, over the last two years our government has invested more than 5 billion to deliver increased opportunities and support

for K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] students, parents, and teachers across Saskatchewan. More funding for post-secondary education to provide opportunities for students to pursue post-secondary studies close to home while focusing on programs that meet the needs of Saskatchewan labour force and the provincial economy. And that, again, helps them get their first home.

Mr. Speaker, this government truly cares about Saskatchewan and its greatest assets, its people. The children are our future and this government will be there to help them succeed at this journey in life. I truly believe that this government has listened to the people of this province. I believe that the people of Saskatchewan have trusted this government to keep our economy strong and growing but has also trusted us to bring in the changes that need to be brought in to bring our province to the next level.

Mr. Speaker, I enter into this Assembly every day, my desire to stay focused on making our province, our communities, a better place to live, work, and play. Over the past two years, 2 billion has been invested into community safety; more accessible court system for municipal bylaw offences; record municipal revenue sharing of 362 billion, an increase of 22 million more; and 284.9 million in funding our First Nations and Métis people and organizations. Those are the reasons why I put my name forward, why I knocked on the doors and made myself known to the people of Prince Albert to be their representative in this House.

As I enter this majestic building every day and as I enter into this Assembly, I tell myself that those are the same reasons that all the members in this House are here, as we on both sides debate our views on what we believe to be the best for our province. To quote the Minister of Finance:

Saskatchewan is and will remain a strong province with a strong economy and within a strong and united Canada. Our future is bright, and our province has a history of delivering when it really counts. That's what this budget is doing — delivering for you.

Mr. Speaker, I'd be amiss if I didn't thank our Premier and the ministers that are directly involved with this ever-changing world. I want to thank their families as well as all the MLA families for the sacrifices that they have made. And I thank my constituency for allowing me to speak here today. God bless Prince Albert, God bless this House, and God bless Saskatchewan and Canada.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, let me repeat what others have said and that I will be supporting the motion put forward by the Finance minister and the member of Rosetown-Delisle and seconded by the member of White City-Qu'Appelle. I will not be supporting the opposition amendment. Thank you.

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

Brent Blakley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to be standing in these Chambers to present my first response to a budget presented by the government opposite.

But as is the custom, I would like to give a shout-out to a few people first. The past five years have certainly flown by, and a lot has happened in that time. Ending 2024 in December, I

participated in my first session of the legislature, albeit quite brief. Along with the MLAs from Regina Northeast and Regina University, we opened our constituency office on Assiniboine Avenue and, with the help of our CAs and my flair for decorating, have made significant improvements to that space.

This is a good spot to recognize and thank my constituency assistant Stephanie Logan. Stephanie has done a great job providing services to our constituents. She is committed, hard-working, and energetic. Organization is one of Stephanie's strengths, which coincides quite nicely with my sometimes lack of organization. Along with Stephanie and the other two CAs in our office, Alex and Daisy, we three MLAs work to provide the best representation, services, and care for our constituents.

Another group I'd like to recognize and thank is the constituency executive of Regina Wascana Plains: Holly Bradley, Gina Rozon, Maynard Sonntag, Greg Fingas, Christopher Adams, Brett Estey, and executive president Abe Mejia. All spend their volunteer time to develop their community and the constituency.

I want to express my sincere thanks to the Leader of the Opposition for her leadership in valuing and listening to numerous communities and organizations throughout the province. People trust her for her caring attitude, for being their voice and hope. Thank you to my colleagues sitting with me in the opposition for their guidance and support and patience, lots of patience. My children have been very supportive in Dad's second career. As previously mentioned, I retired as a teacher after 35 years, and I guess retirement wasn't challenging enough, so here I am.

Our oldest daughter has a master's in journalism and is part of the communications team with the RCMP's "F" Division here in the city. Our son is an aspiring lawyer in Edmonton, just finishing up a clerkship with the Court of King's Bench, and will move on to article in a law firm next month. Our middle daughter has a master's of criminal psychology and works in the foster care system in the city. Our youngest daughter lives in Edmonton with her partner, Sidney, and is a schoolteacher.

I especially couldn't see myself doing this job without the support and encouragement of my wife, Carla. Last June while I was preparing for a soon-to-be-called election as a candidate, my wife was elected bishop of the Eastern Synod in the ELCIC [Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada], the Lutheran church in Canada. She maintains a home in Kitchener, Ontario and represents the Lutheran churches and pastors of Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic provinces. It's been a difficult five months.

We connect almost every day by video chat over morning coffee. We have in-person meetings for a few days almost every month, but again, it's not been an easy five months. But these opportunities came into our lives and we felt a responsibility to take them. For my wife, Carla, a responsibility to the churches and people she represents. And for myself, it is a responsibility to do what I can for my community and the people of Saskatchewan. But we're making it work and I thank her for that.

I have four schools in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, two pairs of public and Catholic schools together in joint-use buildings. Jack MacKenzie School and St. Gabriel School opened in September 2000, and École Wascana Plains School and École St.

Elizabeth school opened their doors in September 2017. I'd like to thank the teachers, staff, and students, parents of these schools, for doing the best they can with a bad situation — years of overcrowded classrooms and understaffing. They have soldiered on admirably.

Last week I was sitting listening to the presentation of the budget by the Finance minister with eager anticipation, hoping that the government would open up their purse strings, stop the death grip on that wallet of theirs, and provide the funds that Saskatchewan people so desperately need just to live comfortably. To bring us out of last place in education and health care, I eagerly awaited the announcements of something that would elevate my spirits a little.

I was hoping there was something that might be beneficial to my constituents, something like the announcement for two schools out in The Towns area of Wascana Plains that they announced in the 2024 budget. At the time of the announcement of the location of these new schools in September, representatives from both boards indicated that they had been advocating for the new schools for more than a decade. In a conversation with one of my constituents, she mused that she hoped it didn't take another 10 years before the construction begins. I told her it would probably be about four years, right after the next election, Mr. Speaker.

[21:30]

My eager anticipation was scuttled when this budget dropped in our laps. It was a cluster of creative and inventive accounting, pulling numbers out of thin air, a game of hide and seek, if you will. The government presenting their numbers for health care and education, social programs, and hoping the people of Saskatchewan wouldn't go seeking too deeply.

Well my colleagues here sitting in the opposition also like playing hide-and-seek in this budget, but the government did their best to disguise the fact that they intend on spending less than they spent last year on health care and education. I would characterize that spending less is not an increase in spending, as the Sask Party government touted in the budget. Spending less, I would characterize as a cut. This didn't take a great deal of seeking on our part.

I've sat here for the last couple of days listening to all the responses to the budget, listening to the members opposite reflect and wax poetic. Watching and listening to the government members' responses made me reflect on some of the mobility issues I've had in the past few months. Now I can see where people might not get the connection, but I'll get there. As the lawyers say, I promise.

Around the beginning of January I was significantly slowed by sciatic nerve pain running down my hip and down my left leg. There were days the pain was excruciating. There were times when it was difficult to walk. I even limped into Shoppers Drug Mart and bought a cane. The one saving grace was the work of my massage therapist. He has hands of gold. He was able to alleviate my pain to make it bearable. Paul, my massage therapist, has magic hands. I will gladly give a referral to anyone on the government side because after the last couple of days their shoulders must be sore from patting themselves on the back.

I'm not sure what all the patting was all about. Perhaps they think they've engaged in quite a successful game of hide-and-seek with the people of Saskatchewan. Well I'll tell you this: the people of Saskatchewan are much more astute than they give them credit for. I have trouble understanding, after putting forward a budget that plans to spend less than last year in crucial areas, how they can still stand here and pat themselves on the back.

In this budget that was presented by the Sask Party government, right there in black and white on page 27, we saw a cut to health care spending of \$17.1 million. Oh, the government has lofty goals for health care. They have lofty goals. But how will these goals be accomplished when they planned on spending a lofty \$17.1 million less on health care than they did last year?

In the budget the Finance minister presented last week, again on page 27 in black and white, we see a cut to education of \$26.7 million. With a steady stream of incoming students, and the government plans to spend \$26.7 million less on education than they did last year, the question is, how do we get our education out of last place in the country in per-student funding? The short answer is, we can't.

If folks have ever seen the movie, the Sask Party government reminds me of Edward Scissorhands. Remember him? Just cut, cut, cut, cut, cut. That was Edward Scissorhands. That was my best Edward Scissorhands.

However I was pleased to see an increase in social services spending on the budget. After all, an increase is an increase, no matter how small. Some will tell you that size doesn't matter, except in this case size matters.

Let's examine. Income assistance payments are scheduled to increase slightly — \$23 per month to SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] recipients, \$20 per month to those on SIS [Saskatchewan income support] — not nearly enough considering that groceries are projected to cost \$800 more for a family this year. With general inflation thrown in there, those folks on SAID and SIS benefits will actually have less money to spend on necessities. The Sask Party government's little increase fails to even keep up with the cost of living.

For those people on assistance getting the shelter benefit, they will see an increase of 2 per cent or \$13 per month, hardly adequate to keep up with the continued rise in rental rates. With the affordability crisis we see in the province, people have to continue to choose between food and rent.

Which leads to another point of contention with this budget: direct payment to landlords. I was disappointed to see there were no plans to implement the system of direct payment from the government to landlords or utilities. This would have been an easy fix to help a number of issues with virtually no cost to the government. But this budget contains no such provision. I've heard multiple times from the members opposite that this is a budget that benefits all the people of the province. Those folks receiving income benefits might disagree with that.

One of these issues continues to be the houseless rate in the province. For the latest numbers, we see the number of houseless in Saskatoon has tripled. It has doubled in Regina and Prince Albert and a dramatic increase in other centres.

Yesterday my colleague the MLA for Cumberland stood here in these Chambers and highlighted the issues that the folks in the North are facing every day. This past February I took a trip to La Ronge with a few colleagues. I wanted to see and hear for myself from the community organizers that work every day to make things better for the people who live there. I wanted to hear what they had to say, what they needed, and how we could help them. I spoke to some great people doing wonderful things for the people in La Ronge and surrounding area. But these people are continually being asked to do more with less. The groups we spoke to feel abandoned and forgotten by their provincial government.

I invite the members opposite, if they ever have the chance to visit the North, the real North, to take that opportunity. Meet with the people up there. Listen to them, hear what they have to say and what they need. It will be enlightening.

One centre that we visited was an emergency shelter, as mentioned earlier today. This shelter had to move a few times before they were offered the space where we found them. The Lac La Ronge Indian Band gave them a building so they could provide shelter for those who have found themselves houseless in the community. I doubt that those folks having to access this emergency shelter would say this is a budget for all people of Saskatchewan.

As we were leaving that emergency shelter I got a little emotional, and I thought no one in Canada should have to live like that. No one in Canada or Saskatchewan should have to live like that, not knowing from day to day where they will lay their head that night. The government is failing these people.

So for that reason and many others, I will not be supporting the budget, and I will be supporting the amendment by the member from Regina Mount Royal. Thank you very much.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Martensville-Blairmore.

Hon. Jamie Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to stand on my feet tonight. Mr. Speaker, there's things that money can't buy — family, friendship, manners, support, morals, respect, discipline, character, integrity, common sense, trust, class, and patience. I can honestly say that this is what I see in my colleagues every day. And I'd like to add, even though I am a strong woman, I'd allow any one of my colleagues to chaperone me any day. And I'd also like to offer vice versa.

The hard work of our Finance minister along with the treasury board, ministries, and staff, they came through with a budget that delivers for you. There isn't a better way to start the session — a balanced budget, a responsible budget. Another way to start this year off right is staying positive when the clouds of doubt and threats hang over our heads.

A budget for a strong future. Today I am proud to speak about a budget that puts people first. A budget that delivers real relief, strengthens essential services, and secures a stronger future for our communities. We know that too many families are feeling the pressure of rising costs. That's why this budget provides meaningful relief, ensuring that hard-working individuals and families can afford the essentials. Whether it's lowering everyday

expenses or making life more affordable, we are taking action to ease the burden and put more money back in your pockets. And I will applaud this budget. I will applaud it loud and clear.

In Saskatchewan we believe that the government's highest duty is to serve its people, not just for today but the future. Every decision that we make, every dollar that we invest, and every program that we build is guided by one simple principle: how can we make life better for you?

I can only assume — according to the ones sitting opposite of us in this Chamber — this is a thought that never runs through our head. Well if they had the opportunity to sell this province it would fail miserably. According to them, this is the worst place to live, the worst education, health care, government. Who would want to live here after hearing what the NDP have to say about this beautiful province? I can only take it personally, Mr. Speaker, when I hear of such negativity coming from elected officials that are supposed to represent this province.

We as a government are a team. We're committed to strong communities, growing opportunities, and a future where every person, no matter where you live, can thrive. This is why we invest in the future of this province. We invest in the future. We invest in positivity and growth of this province. We invest in municipal revenue sharing so every town and city has the resources to improve roads, enhance emergency services, and build public spaces that bring us together.

It's why we strengthen health care, ensuring families receive incredible care close to home. It's why we invest in education, giving our children the tools to dream bigger, aim higher, and achieve more. It's why we support industries that drive our economy because when Saskatchewan's businesses succeed, families prosper and communities grow stronger.

A great government is not measured by the promises it makes, but by the lives it changes. Our goal is simple — to create a province where every person feels safe, supported, and proud to call this place home. We will always stand by you. We will always invest in your future, and together we will build a stronger, brighter Saskatchewan.

And the blessing of living in this province and country and feeling safe is something that is often overlooked. We live in a country that is not at war. We do not have to worry about sirens going off in the early morning hours and running to our safe rooms. We don't have to worry about others hurting us because of our race or our beliefs.

If you haven't noticed, Mr. Speaker, I wear the Star of David — Magen David, the shield of David — not because I am Jewish but because I have faith and respect the Holy Land. I have belief in my Jewish friends.

Someone who I love dearly said, "If I wear the Star of David necklace and if I go anywhere I would place it under my shirt, just in case." Just in case what? Just in case he is recognized as a Jew. While born and raised in Saskatchewan, I've never had the opportunity to feel unsafe like that because of my beliefs or my values or my culture.

We need to be proud of the people here in our province, be proud

of the very fact that they have our back. That cannot be said without acknowledging that also includes our government. I understand that just because we live in this incredible province doesn't mean we are free and clear of any crimes or that we don't feel safe at all times.

[21:45]

But our government has given more through targeted investments in community safety and law enforcement. We are taking steps to ensure that every neighbourhood is a safe place where families can thrive without fear. By strengthening protections and supporting those who keep us safe, we are building communities where everyone has peace of mind.

We are thankful to the officers of this province, and over the past few days I have had the honour of attending medal ceremonies that recognized our Canadian Armed Forces as well as police officers in this province. And I hope they wear their medals with pride and understand that it is an acknowledgement for the courageous work that they do every day.

We all face challenges. There are moments when we feel like giving up, like our odds are stacked against us. But here's the truth. Every great achievement begins with a simple decision, and that's to keep going. Think about the most successful people in history — scientists, athletes, entrepreneurs, artists. They weren't born with an instruction manual to success. What set them apart was their determination to keep moving forward no matter how hard things got.

Let me ask you this, Mr. Speaker: what's stopping you? Fear? Doubt? The fear of failure? Let me tell you something. Failure is not the opposite of success. It is a part of the journey to success, Mr. Speaker. Every setback is a lesson, every challenge is an opportunity, and every obstacle is a test to our resilience.

We see this daily as a government. We rise to the challenge. So how do we stay motivated? Find your why. Your why is the reason that you wake up every morning with purpose. It's your dream, your goals, your passion. When you have a strong enough reason, no obstacle will be big enough to stop you. My why, Mr. Speaker, is my children, my future grandchildren. It's Saskatchewan, because it is the best province in Canada.

And we remember, Mr. Speaker, that we are not alone. We surround ourselves with people who lift us up, who believe in us even when we doubt ourselves. Because inspiration is contagious. My colleagues give me this inspiration. My children give me this inspiration. My late parents installed this information. Saskatchewan gives me this inspiration.

The Government of Saskatchewan is delivering, Mr. Speaker. We are delivering more to residents by investing 362 million in municipal revenue sharing, ensuring communities across this province have the resources that they need. This funding helps municipalities provide essential services like road maintenance, clean water, emergency services, and recreational facilities, directly benefiting the people who live and work in these communities. By reinvesting tax dollars where they matter most, Saskatchewan is strengthening its towns and cities, improving the quality of life for all residents. This commitment reflects a strong partnership between the province and municipalities.

In my constituency, Mr. Speaker, Martensville will receive over \$2.6 million. Dalmeny will receive \$533,000. Saskatoon will be receiving over \$66 million. The RM of Corman Park, just under \$2 million. These are unconditional funds. These municipalities can put this money to use any way that they see fit.

And today I also want to talk about something that is often overlooked but incredibly powerful — a stable, balanced budget. We hear about it in headlines. We talk about it in numbers, but do we truly understand its potential? A budget, when managed wisely, is more than just a financial tool. It's the foundation upon which we build our future, our goals, and our dreams.

Imagine for a moment, Mr. Speaker, living in a world where every dollar you earn works for you, where every expense is purposeful, every investment carefully calculated. That's the power of a stable budget. It's not just about numbers. It's about visions for our future. Vision for our financial freedom. Vision for the life that we want to create.

We remain committed to responsible financial management. Maybe I understand this the most, managing finances as a single parent. It's crucial, especially when it comes to taxpayers. Every dollar in this budget is invested wisely, ensuring that we not only meet today's needs but also build a stronger foundation for our future. We are securing long-term prosperity for all.

This is a budget that delivers not just promises but real, tangible results for the people that we serve. It is a budget that reflects our values, strengthens our communities, and builds a brighter future for generations to come. This budget delivers to you, Saskatchewan.

At the heart of any strong society is a strong health care system. This budget expands access to health care, ensuring that patients receive the medical attention that they need when and where they need it. From reducing wait times to increasing front-line supports, we are investing in a system that prioritizes people's well-being — our goal of providing every Saskatchewan resident with a primary health care provider as well as the amazing support we give towards women's health. Again I will state that. We give amazing support towards women's health, lowering breast cancer screening eligibility to 43 and building a new breast cancer centre here in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, education is a foundation of opportunity. That's why we are making critical investments in our classrooms, providing students and teachers with the resources that they need to succeed. More supports, better tools, and a commitment to quality learning will empower the next generation to reach their full potential.

And, Mr. Speaker, today we're talking about something truly exciting — tax decreases. Yes, you heard that right. I know, I know that the word "tax" usually sends people running for the hills, but stick with me here. I promise this is going to be good. In fact it might be the best news you've heard all day.

Imagine a world where your paycheck doesn't just get bullied by taxes. We're offering just that. Imagine looking at your bank account and thinking, hey, this looks like the number I was hoping for. Well that, my friends, is the magic of tax decrease. We are offering just that. It's like finding a \$20 bill in the pocket

of your jeans, except this time it's a whole lot more than \$20. And it's happening every single paycheck with the income tax reductions right here in Saskatchewan.

Now I know what you're thinking: but what about all the important things and services like roads, schools, health care? Great question. We will still have those. The beauty of a tax decrease is that it's not all about slashing services to the bone. It's about getting the hard-working people like my constituents and all of your constituents — sorry, I lost my spot — the freedom to keep more of their own money in their own pocket and make their own choices.

Think of it as a financial diet. They're cutting unnecessary stuff — it's those extra taxes — and leaving room for the essentials as well as savings, maybe new bikes for the kids, being able to attend a Riders game, maybe a new gadget that doesn't require you to sell your car to afford it. So let's give a big round of applause to tax decreases because, my friends, we can all benefit.

[Applause]

Hon. Jamie Martens: — A tax decrease is like unwrapping a present and finding exactly what you wanted inside, Mr. Speaker — more freedom, more opportunities, and more room to breathe.

I'd like to thank all of my constituents. Thank you to my late mother and father for instilling in me work ethic, morals, and a drive to do things right. Because, Mr. Speaker, an eye for an eye makes everyone blind.

I will be supporting the budget, and I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you.

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

Noor Burki: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hon. members of Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly and my fellow Saskatchewan citizens, it is an incredible honour to be on my feet to speak to the motion moved by my colleague, Finance critic, member from Regina Mount Royal.

I want to express my heart-lifting gratitude to the people of Regina Coronation Park who have trusted me for this responsibility. I would like to take a moment to thank all MLAs across the aisle for your commitment, dedication, and hard work since you've been elected. The voters of this province have placed their trust in all of us to work hard for the prosperity and developing of our beloved province of Saskatchewan.

I would like to give a special thanks to the Speaker for his hard role in keeping the order of the House. I want to give a particular shout-out to the members of Saskatchewan NDP caucus. I want to say that we have an inspiring and impressive group we got in this election.

I have listened to the entries of each of these members in the fall session. Every new MLA has now up on the floor, whether that's for member's statement, maiden speech, or petition, or question period. I know that each of them recognize that why they are here, who sent them here, and I know that they are going to carry that with them each day to this Assembly. Moreover I am so

pleased that they are here for this important time within our province.

Which, Mr. Speaker, I'm reminded of an incredible support system that has brought me to this Chamber. I would be remiss if I didn't take a moment to acknowledge the unwavering support of my wife, Shamim Mahnoor, whose dedication, encouragement, and sacrifice have been instrumental in my journey to this role. Her belief in our shared vision for our community and her tireless work during the campaign were a pivotal role to our success. Without her, I would not be able to achieve success and I'm very proud of her. She's my rock.

Thank you to all my daughters for their support at each and every step with me and with my wife. And I do understand that as MLAs our life is very busy and we all have very less time to spend with our families. On the other side, it's a pride and blessing for all of us in this Chamber to be focused and committed to the best of our ability to developing of our communities, our constituencies, and our province.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to recognize my leader, the Leader of the Official Opposition for her incredible and inspiring leadership. Her dedication and hard work are truly remarkable, and it is evident in everything she does. Whether it is connecting with people at their doorsteps across the province, or championing the needs of the people, her commitment to serving others shines through. Her leadership not only exemplifies tireless but also a deep passion for making a difference. It's been an honour to see her work first-hand, and I'm continually inspired by her resilience, determination, and the genuine care she shows for our beloved Saskatchewan. To the member from Regina Lakeview, thank you. Thank you for your unwavering leadership and your relentless drive to build a better future for all of us.

[22:00]

Mr. Speaker, as MLA from Regina Coronation Park, I want to recognize my constituency assistant Bre, who has done a great job in the past year by providing services to our constituents. Bre is very committed, hard-working, and an energetic person and has a roll-up-sleeve attitude to get work done — the kind of person who is always willing to support those needing her help.

Mr. Speaker, our constituency, Regina Coronation Park, is one of the most diverse and densely populated constituencies in the province. There are five high schools: Thom Collegiate school, public school; O'Neill high school, Catholic school; Regina Huda School, Islamic school; Harvest City Christian Academy; and Laval high school, francophone school. I'm very proud to be connecting with all those schools from time to time.

I'm very lucky to have been serving my constituency and surrounding area as a driver educator from 2008 to 2023. I know most of the families in the constituency very well before I took the role of MLA, and I'm so grateful for all of their support, advice, co-operation at every moment.

Mr. Speaker, an effective government listens, collaborates, and serves all people with fairness, integrity. It is through listening to our communities and working together that they can find solutions to the challenges we face.

Mr. Speaker, during the general election of 2024 at many doorsteps the number one concerns of the constituents throughout the province was affordability. Most of the people living in Regina Coronation Park are working-class families who are living paycheque to paycheque. The current high rate of inflation, skyrocketed prices of gas, groceries, rent, and utility bills make their life harder than ever before.

Mr. Speaker, people are looking for a second job to put food on the table for their children. Most families can't afford to keep their children in sports and extracurricular activity as the prices of everything has increased. The recent increase in groceries has put a significant strain on our food banks, and unfortunately there is no relief in this budget and as well in the previous budget as well.

Mr. Speaker, seniors are going through a very hard time in their life. They are wondering whether they have to pay for their medication or food. Our seniors should not be in such a miserable situation as they are now. They must have a life of respect and dignity. Seniors have spent all their energy and youth building this province which we call our home. It's heartbreaking.

Mr. Speaker, our beloved seniors, who have spent their lives building this province into what it is today, deserve respect and honour. Last year in my constituency the 60-bedroom Lutheran Care Home was slated to be closed. The SHA was planning to relocate seniors into another care home without consulting seniors, staff, and their families.

As we talked to the seniors at their care home they told us that they called their place their home, some of them close relatives who wanted to stay together, and most of them were friends who don't want to be apart. Thank you to all the seniors, staff, and their families who stood rock-solid, resulting the SHA eventually reversing their decision, which is great. Mr. Speaker, all our seniors who have paid their taxes their entire lives, raised their children, and built our communities deserve much better treatment.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of people have concerns about long waiting times at emergency departments in our hospitals. 200,000 people in Saskatchewan are not able to find a family physician. People are without hope and end up taking patients to hospital emergencies in their vehicles. It is not safe; it is not acceptable.

One family told me that they were waiting for back surgery, but because of long waiting lists they decided to go to Thailand where the patient took place within a week. This speaks volumes on our current state of our provincial health care system. Mr. Speaker, those who can afford to pay out of pocket can get relief in a week, but those unfortunate who can't afford out-of-province or out-of-country surgeries, they will be suffering from agonizing pain for months and months which is not fair.

Mr. Speaker, additionally we have to prioritize our Saskatchewan residents in our professional education. We should be training Saskatchewan people for health care jobs. I think specifically of rural and Indigenous people, people who are going to stay in the communities where they live. The more professionals we have locally, the more our province will be self-sufficient in the labour market, which will be truly a long-term solution.

Mr. Speaker, now is the time to listen to the health care workers — doctors, nurses, first-aiders, paramedics, lab technicians, care aides, and porters. We must handle all their voiced concerns in a way that aligns with the values of our province, and as Saskatchewanians we deserve better. The people of Saskatchewan deserve real results, not empty promises.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize and appreciate the contribution of small businesses in our communities and to the Saskatchewan economy. Small businesses in Saskatchewan are still recovering after the pandemic, not to mention skyrocketing costs and budgetary increase by food, fuel, and rent and the utilities.

On the member opposite side, I heard that small businesses are the backbone of our economy, which is true. Due to these rising costs, many small businesses have been forced to close their doors, with the recent SINP [Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program] pause having drastic impact on the various sector as in retail, food, hospitality, health care, home care, daycare, construction, transportation, agriculture. And the list goes on and on and on. Small-business owners are considering to moving out of province because of uncertainty.

Our office received hundreds of calls and emails from various organizations, companies, employers, and applicants on this abrupt pause on the SINP. If we say that the small businesses are our backbone, then the Sask Party government must remove the SINP pause as soon as possible.

Other provinces like Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia can get a lot of federal immigrants, but our only source of foreign workers is through this SINP program. According to the most recent statistic, five-year retention rate by the province and territory admission, year 2017 Saskatchewan retention is 50 per cent, the third lowest in the country. It will be great if we can retain the skilled workers in our province.

Mr. Speaker, we all know the importance of education. Spending on education is not the cost, but that's the best investment ever. One common phrase is, is that education is always payback.

As a driver educator, I have been working very closely with the high school teachers and administrators. Most of the concerns that I heard from the teachers were regarding to the cuts in education, overcrowded classrooms, and shortage of teacher assistants, language pathologists, psychologists, and ESL [English as a second language] teachers for newcomers. I would be humbly request to the Government of Saskatchewan to fully fund our educational institutions and sign a fair contract with the teachers so that our students are successful lifelong.

In this Chamber I plan to advocate for affordability, health care, education, and senior care as well as small businesses as well.

Mr. Speaker, I'm committed to being a strong voice for Regina Coronation Park and ensure that every concern is heard. I pledge to be accessible, accountable, and transparent as I carry out my duties. I look forward to work with my colleagues across the aisle and in all corners of this House to move Saskatchewan forward.

And so with that, I will wrap up my remarks. I will not be voting in favour of the budget. I will be instead supporting the amendment put forward by the member of Regina Mount Royal.

Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Kindersley-Biggar.

Kim Gartner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin my reply, I want to take this opportunity to thank my constituency assistants. Maxine, Rita, and Cathy share the job. I'm grateful for their commitment to the constituents of Kindersley-Biggar. Every task is met with the utmost privacy and compassion. I am proud to say that my CAs were already living in the constituency and anxious to work with me, unlike the member from Saskatoon Stonebridge who had to recruit from Alberta to have someone work with him.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne delivered a promise to keep our economy strong and deliver on the commitments made in the 2024 election campaign. This budget begins the process towards fulfilling the promise of a new beginning.

As the Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Finance, I want to begin by congratulating the Minister of Finance on the compilation of the 2025 budget. The member of Cumberland stated he served 17 years on municipal council, delivering 17 balanced budgets. Well I served 36 years in municipal government, delivering 36 balanced budgets. And I can tell you, based upon my experience, this budget is no matter of fiction.

Difficult does not begin to define a process surrounded by external events and unknown pressures. This budget provides a strong commitment to the residents of Saskatchewan while further providing the necessary flexibility to respond to trade and tariff uncertainty. Protecting and supporting the residents of Saskatchewan, businesses, and communities of this province during this unprecedented time is a commitment that has been provided a solid base with the 2025 budget.

As any new beginning is grounded in points of reference to the past, and to evaluate sustainable improvement, it must be measured from the past. Communities of this province, both rural and urban, are foundational to the provision of service to the people of this province. That's why this government instituted a revenue-sharing agreement with Saskatchewan municipalities. I know you've heard it, and you're going to hear it again.

[22:15]

That is why an agreement that is nationally held as a desired template and is the envy of every other jurisdiction across this nation . . . Under this agreement, municipalities in the province of Saskatchewan will share an amazing \$361.8 million during this budget cycle. In my constituency alone, that comes to \$7.2 million. The town of Kindersley, over 1.3 million. The town of Biggar, over 630,000. And in my home community in the town of Macklin, over \$365,000.

This revenue-sharing agreement provides our municipalities with revenue that is unconditional and predictable. This revenue-sharing funding comes to our local municipalities unconditionally, to be used towards funding programs, facilities, or infrastructure, and it's decided solely by the local municipal council. The ability to address local issues without discretion or influence from the province is unlike any other jurisdiction in

Canada.

Mr. Speaker, whether you live in the small town of Macklin or the city of Saskatoon, the support your municipality receives through the revenue-sharing program amounts to a very significant portion of the local municipal budget. This new beginning includes building on the past success of the revenue-sharing program by providing 6.3 per cent increase to this unconditional revenue-sharing agreement, having an immediate impact on every resident of Saskatchewan. Municipalities have built into their budgets a consistent, predictable, and stable source of revenue from this provincial government. We as a government are proud to support the local governments through a program like revenue sharing.

The 2025 budget has more provisions that support families and the communities in which they live and raise a family. This budget will double the active families benefit, support the cost of their children's participation in cultural and recreational activities.

There is also a doubling of the community rink affordability grant, which will help to ensure that fees required by these facilities to maintain a sustainable operation are held in an affordable threshold to our families. Without this grant, the member from Dakota-Arm River would have to find another way to pay for his steak suppers.

The implementation of a new school playground infrastructure fund will assist local communities to upgrade, update, and construct new school playground facilities. This government is committed to the promise that all residents in all communities have a safe place to live, work, and raise a family.

This budget begins to address very specific and measurable improvements to our communities' safety network. It provides confirmation that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police are the provincial police service for the province of Saskatchewan. It further commits to the implementation of the Saskatchewan marshals service to augment and assist the RCMP in their duties.

This budget provides funding for an additional 100 new municipal police officers as well as additional investment into the safer communities and neighbourhoods, with a commitment to hire an additional 14 SCAN officers. These SCAN officers will work directly with municipalities, police, community agencies, and property owners to address local neighbourhood concerns. These investments will directly improve protection and intervention in all of our communities.

This budget provides for the expansion of the municipal bylaw court hubs to support the expanded SCAN initiative. This initiative builds on the strong performance of our pilot project located in the town of Kindersley.

There is a commitment to support the deputy sheriff prisoner transport program, designed to free up police officers from transporting prisoners to and from court appearances. This implementation will allow our police officers to dedicate more time to ensuring the safety of our communities.

The commitment to community and to the families that live in those communities continues to be a central theme into the

education budget. Saskatchewan's 27 school divisions will receive \$2.4 billion for school operating for the 2025 school year, an 8.4 per cent increase over last year's budget. This provides an additional \$130 million to address the 2025 commitment towards the arbitration's decision including teachers' salaries and items around classroom complexity.

Mr. Speaker, there is an increased budget allocation for expansion to the specialized support classrooms program, supports for learning, and a commitment to K to 3 literacy, all placed to meet commitments made during the 2024 election campaign. A further commitment of 8.5 million towards school bus replacement and provide school divisions the funds necessary to continue replacement of their bus fleet in a timely manner.

As the government, we recognize that 20 per cent of the life cycle cost of a school building is the capital construction cost. The other 80 per cent of that life cycle cost is related to the operation and maintenance of that facility. The capital cost to build and replace or perform major renovations to our school facility inventory continues to rise at an alarming rate.

The Government of Saskatchewan works with Saskatchewan school divisions to maintain and extend the life of our existing school buildings through a preventative maintenance and renewal program. Within this budget, the PMR funding will increase by 30 per cent to a record \$65 million. This increase of funding will help to ensure all schools in Saskatchewan are maintained to the highest possible standard.

Mr. Speaker, the implementation of the provincial education plan now transfers from a budget process to an implementation process. I believe that this budget begins the process towards a renewed commitment to the families of this province for the education of their children. Criticism is easy. Co-operation and understanding are not.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention at this time the staff at École Lakeview School in Saskatoon, in particular kindergarten teacher Ms. Kaye. You see, Ms. Kaye is the teacher for a very special student — my granddaughter Quinn.

On the very first day of school, Quinn was evaluated and placed with a speech pathologist to correct a linguistic complication due to being born with a posterior tongue-tie that was undetected at birth. Thanks to the committed staff and a very dedicated mother — my daughter — Quinn is well on her way to having a fantastic school experience.

The education of our children is not only a provincial responsibility. It is the responsibility of every person, every family, every caregiver, every school board, and every school board division employee in this province. It is time to put this historic budget investment to work, renew the processes used to apply this funding, review the programming this funding supports, and ensure we use a lens of student success as a measurement.

Mr. Speaker, this budget begins the process towards fulfilling our government's commitment that every Saskatchewan resident will have primary health care access by the end of 2028. Significant investment into physician services and an increased

investment for the College of Medicine all designed to educate, train, and retain physicians in this province.

For many rural communities, the provision of services is a combination of physicians and nurse practitioners. Increased training seats for rural practitioners, physicians, and nurse practitioners throughout the province will encourage practitioners to experience and plant roots in rural Saskatchewan. An expansion to the nurse practitioner program is a lifeline that rural communities are embracing and our government is here to support. Having local registered nurses wishing to serve their own local communities with expanded knowledge and a scope of practice through the nurse practitioner program is admirable and will provide committed primary health care providers throughout Saskatchewan.

Are there pressures on our current health system? Absolutely. The 2025 budget provides significant investment into the provision of both primary and tertiary health care. The recruitment of health care professionals into Saskatchewan will continue to include external recruitment but will also include a renewed focus of training and retaining Saskatchewan-grown professionals. This approach will include co-operation between the ministries of Health, Advanced Education, and Immigration and Career Training. Programs like the practical nursing program offered by Great Plains community college.

I was recently honoured to attend the graduation ceremony for 13 locally trained practical nurses in the community of Biggar. This successful program was initiated to address a local concern and will continue into the future to address the provision of these health care professionals in west central Saskatchewan.

For rural Saskatchewan there is a continued funding for the rural and remote recruitment incentive program, an expansion of the virtual ER physician program, and additional funds for the rural and remote emergency medical services stabilization. There's funding to stabilize and enhance dialysis capacity in Meadow Lake, North Battleford, Fort Qu'Appelle, and Tisdale. Mr. Speaker, our tertiary centres continue to be under pressure. This budget provides an additional \$260 million in operating funding to SHA or a 5.6 per cent increase of funding.

There is an ongoing challenge in the recruitment and retention of health care providers and support staff. This challenge is not unique to Saskatchewan. A renewed focus on expanding educational opportunities for Saskatchewan students is an excellent step, a step that can be controlled from within Saskatchewan. I want to compliment the Minister of Advanced Education for a very proactive approach to expanding the learning opportunities for Saskatchewan students.

Optimizing our health care system, ensuring immediate access when necessary, ambulatory coverage where necessary, and surgical response if necessary is a desired outcome for all Saskatchewan residents. All individual MLAs and the government caucus will engage all stakeholders to assess, improve, and strive to achieve desired outcomes for all residents of Saskatchewan. Once again, criticism is easy; co-operation and understanding are not.

Mr. Speaker, I want to lastly take this opportunity to thank our Premier, or as the members opposite say, that Premier, for his

leadership during these uncertain economic times. I am proud to represent the constituency of Kindersley-Biggar and the many agriculture and energy sector workers and businesses of west central Saskatchewan. Any expansion into the provision of community services — whether it is health, education, recreation, or protective services — are only possible when we have a vibrant economy. This government and our Premier have always been unapologetic in its support for the families, the businesses, industries, and communities that call Saskatchewan home. Thank you, Mr. Premier, for being a champion for this province.

Mr. Speaker, there were choices, difficult choices, in the preparation of this budget. Minister Reiter, by addressing the difficult choices, you have provided leverage to address unknown pressures that may be a result of trade disputes and tariffs. I will be voting in favour of the budget as moved by the Minister of Finance and seconded by the member of White City-Qu'Appelle, and I will not support the amendment.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina Pasqua.

Bhajan Brar: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in opposition to the budget as presented by the Saskatchewan Party government. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the people who have helped me become the MLA for Regina Pasqua and all the people who are helping me in my office and my constituency.

Speaker Goudy: — Thank you everyone for your thoughtful responses. It 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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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
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Hon. Jim Reiter
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Minister of Finance
Minister of Immigration and Career Training
Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Minister Responsible for the
Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board

Hon. Alana Ross
Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan

Hon. Eric Schmalz
Minister of Government Relations
Minister Responsible for
First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs
Minister Responsible for the
Provincial Capital Commission

Hon. Colleen Young
Minister of Energy and Resources