



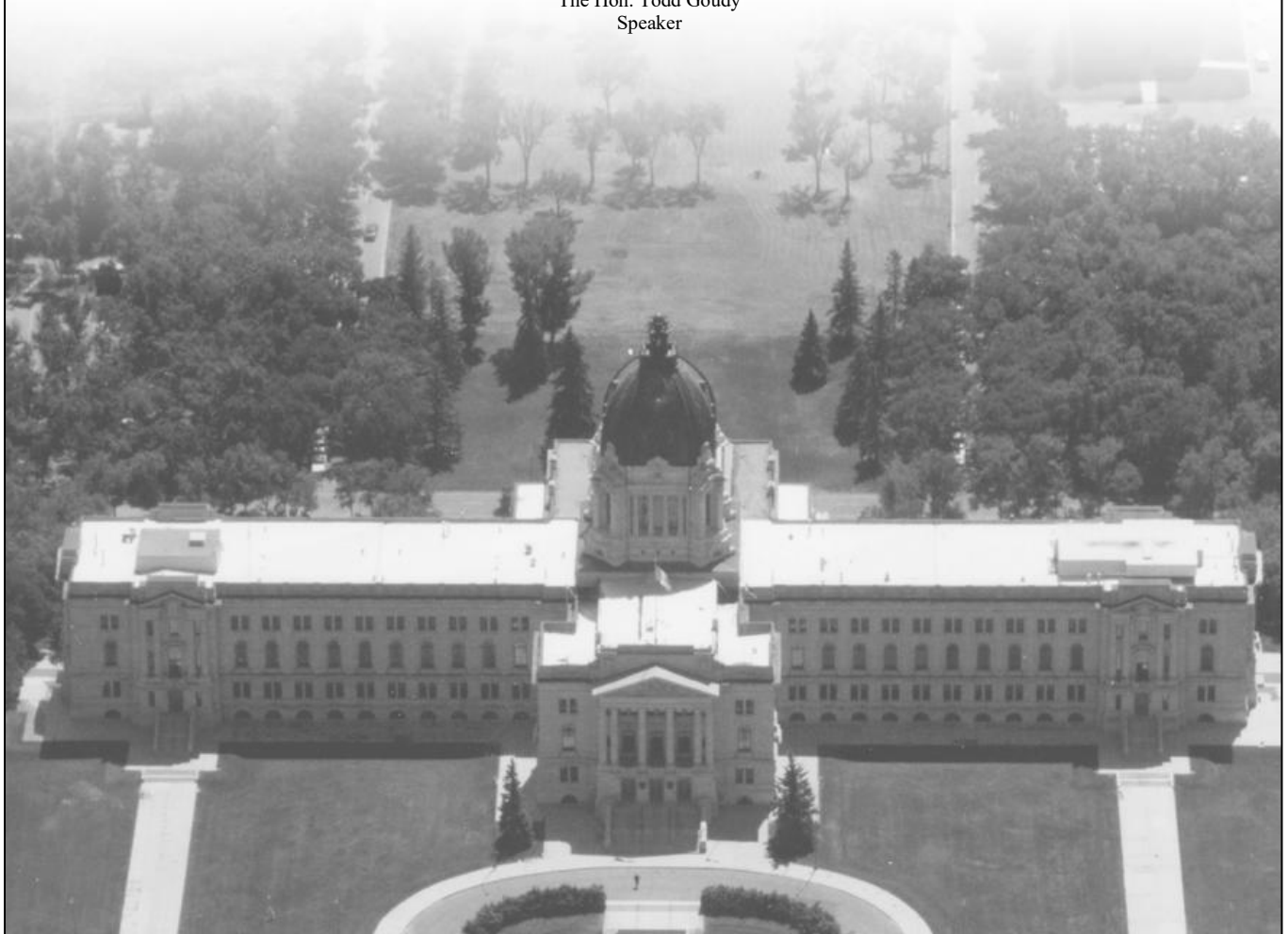
SECOND SESSION — THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
AND
PROCEEDINGS**

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



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
2nd Session — 30th Legislature

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

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

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Harrison , Daryl — Cannington (SP)	Senger , Brittney — Saskatoon Southeast (NDP)
Harrison , Hon. Jeremy — Meadow Lake (SP)	Steele , Doug — Cypress Hills (SP)
Hilbert , Racquel — Humboldt-Watrous (SP)	Teed , Nathaniel — Saskatoon Meewasin (NDP)
Hindley , Hon. Everett — Swift Current (SP)	Thorsteinson , James — Cut Knife-Turtleford (SP)
Housser , Sally — Regina University (NDP)	Warrington , Darcy — Saskatoon Stonebridge (NDP)
Jenson , Hon. Terry — Warman (SP)	Weedmark , Kevin — Moosomin-Montmartre (SP)
Jorgenson , Keith — Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood (NDP)	Weger , Hon. Michael — Weyburn-Bengough (SP)
Kaeding , Hon. Warren — Melville-Saltcoats (SP)	Wilson , Hon. Sean — Canora-Pelly (SP)
Kasun , Kevin — Prince Albert Carlton (SP)	Wotherspoon , Trent — Regina Mount Royal (NDP)
Keisig , Travis — Last Mountain-Touchwood (SP)	Young , Aleana — Regina South Albert (NDP)
Kropf , Barret — Dakota-Arm River (SP)	Young , Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)
Laliberte , Leroy — Athabasca (NDP)	

Standings

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

Clerks-at-the-Table

Clerk — Iris Lang
Deputy Clerk — Robert Park
Principal Clerk — Danielle Humble-Selinger
Clerk Assistant — Miranda Gudereit

Sergeant-at-Arms — Lyall Frederiksen

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[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

TABLING OF REPORTS

Speaker Goudy: — Today I would like to table volume III in *A Report on the 30th General Election* Statement of Expenditures, pursuant to subsection 286(1) of *The Elections Act, 1996*. The Chief Electoral Officer has submitted this report.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Question of Privilege

Speaker Goudy: — So a few statements by the Speaker. A ruling on the question of privilege — misquote or intent to mislead the Assembly. Yesterday, March 18th, 2026, I received a question of privilege from the Opposition Deputy House Leader. In her case she alleged that the Premier deliberately misattributed a quote by a Saskatchewan health care worker to the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre in order to intentionally mislead the Assembly. A copy of the case was provided to the Premier and to the Government House Leader.

In response, the Government House Leader claimed that the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre did not state she was quoting, nor did the *Hansard* include the comments as quotes. Therefore the Premier could not have misquoted the member or misled the House.

I deferred my ruling so that I could carefully review all the matters associated with the case. And I read the *Hansard*. I watched the videos. I'm now prepared to make my ruling.

Central to this privilege case is whether the Premier's statement on March 17th was deliberately misleading and whether he knew that he was misquoting the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre and whether he purposely intended to mislead the Assembly.

I'll remind members that the threshold to prove intent is extremely high. If it is proven that a member intentionally misled the House, it would be within the practice of this Assembly and other parliaments to treat that as contempt. This is a serious allegation against another member.

To address the allegation that the Premier's comment was misleading and the quote was misattributed, although the Deputy Opposition House Leader has provided the verbatim remarks of the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre as evidence to her case, the member did not point to any or provide any further supporting evidence as to the Premier's personal knowledge of the proper attribution of the quote or his intentions in referencing it on March 17th. Intent must be proven with persuasive and substantive evidence.

I want to remind members of the foundational parliamentary principle that all members are expected to be honourable and would not knowingly mislead the Assembly, and also of this time-honoured tradition of accepting a member at his word in the House.

In reviewing the evidence presented and statements made in the House, I do not find there's evidence that the Premier intentionally misled the Assembly. And I find there is no prima facie case of privilege.

Before I proceed to the point of order raised on the same matter, I would like to remind members that privilege is a serious matter that should not be taken lightly. In this case I find it rather curious that before I could rule on her point of order, the opposition Deputy House Leader follows up the next day with the privilege case.

I will now proceed to the ruling on the point of order.

Ruling on a Point of Order

Speaker Goudy: — On Tuesday, March 17th, 2026, the Deputy Opposition House Leader rose on a point of order alleging that during question period the Premier misattributed a quote by a Saskatchewan health care worker to the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

The Government House Leader argued that it was point of fact that the member said those words and asked that I review the record prior to making my ruling. I committed to checking the record and preparing a ruling for Thursday. Having reviewed the *Hansard* and watching the video a number of times and the precedents with respect to this matter, I am prepared to make my ruling.

It is a well-established practice in this Assembly that disputes over facts are left up to the members to debate and not to the Speaker. Previous Speakers have ruled that this is not the duty of the Chair to verify the accuracy of anything said in the debate, nor is it the duty of the Speaker to decide whether the comments of a member have been misquoted or misrepresented.

Moreover, they have clearly articulated that the accuracy of quotes are wholly the responsibility of members, and it has never been the practice nor the duty of the Speaker to authenticate anything said in debate or in question period.

Furthermore the rules account for the possibility of a member's words being misquoted or misunderstood and provides members with a mechanism to correct the record. Speaker D'Autremont ruled on March 25th, 2015 that "Through debate, members have an opportunity to question and explain comments made in speeches and to say when they feel they have been misquoted or misunderstood."

Although rule 54(1) may not apply directly to question period, it has been applied in this way by previous Speakers, and that principle behind it clearly demonstrates the fact that the onus falls on the members to correct misquotes. The matter arising from this point of order is part of the nature of debate.

On these grounds, I do not find the point of order well taken. And to conclude, I want to caution all hon. members to use discretion when quoting from and characterizing documents. So that's the judgment.

I just do want to say though that, you know, we're two years in.

And you know, I've been on one side, not the other. I was told by past Table Officers that sometimes people on the government don't understand what it's like to be on the opposition, and people on the opposition may not understand what it's like to be on the government side. And I would say, in my 54 years of life, offering grace to others and hoping the best in their words is pretty important to be able to go back home at the end of the day.

You all have such a very important role representing the people back home. And the debate and the arguments that we have, putting forward on either side, are very important. And I would never want to take away from the value of your perspectives. But do remember that we have two years ahead of us at this time. And please, if we can offer grace at times and hope for the best from the words of others, I think we would do ourselves, and our families when we get home, a favour.

And so thank you all for your hard work, and thank you for respecting the judgments from this Chair.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Weyburn-Bengough.

Hon. Michael Weger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the member from Lumsden-Morse read a member's statement highlighting the great work that Regina Crime Stoppers is doing. And today, Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce, to you and through you, the president of Regina Crime Stoppers seated up in the west gallery, Kevin Bassendowski. And Kevin's accompanied by his lovely wife, Kristen.

Mr. Speaker, Kevin and Kristen are the proud parents of two children: Emmett, 14, and Bridget, 7 years old. In addition to being busy parents, Kevin is the proud owner of Bassendowski Insurance & Financial Services for the past 21 years, Mr. Speaker. He has been on the Crime Stoppers board for four years and stepped into the role as president in 2024. In addition to this, Mr. Speaker, Kevin also finds time to be a bassist in the band Birthday Cake Trebuchet. So a very busy individual, Mr. Speaker.

But as they say, behind every great man is a great woman, and that absolutely is true with Kristen as well. And I thank her for all she does to support her husband in everything he does. And I would call Mr. Bassendowski a Renaissance man, Mr. Speaker.

So thank you to Kevin and Kristen for being here today. And I would ask every member to welcome them to this, their Legislative Assembly.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina Mount Royal.

Trent Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to join with the minister and welcome two real awesome community leaders within Regina, within our province, Kevin Bassendowski and Kristen that have joined us here today. These are two wonderful people, two leaders within our community on many fronts, certainly in the business community, but giving

back in many ways. Certainly being president of Crime Stoppers and that involvement is but one example of that.

I've watched over the years as well. Those two give back through organizations like India Canada Association and the India Night as well, where these two have put their time and their effort and their dollars into supporting and celebrating community. And we know all of those incredible places, that India Night, they've raised well over a million dollars. They donate those dollars back to very important organizations and charities across our community.

So it's a real pleasure to welcome Kevin and Kristen to their Assembly. And I ask all members of this Assembly to recognize and welcome these leaders, to thank them for their contributions.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, there's a young guy seated in front of the Bassendowskis, just one row forward, a young guy by the name of David Clark. David's 16 years old. It's his final year of school. He's looking to take on studies to be a big-animal vet in Saskatchewan, which is hard work but such important work. And wonderful opportunities in this province. He lives on a farm just north of Regina here. He's very interested in the business of government as well; it's what brings him here today. He's very aware of all the discussions around the budget and debate and whatnot as well.

But I want to recognize through him as well his parents and his dad, who have operated Clark's Shoe & Luggage Repair on 5th Avenue for many decades at this point here. It's an incredible business to stop in. I know they keep my well-worn shoes on the road probably far longer than they should. But incredible skill that they have in leatherwork and some of the custom products that they do — incredible shoe repair, kind of some real old skills, and just a real beautiful business that proudly locates on 5th Avenue. And it's a real fixture to that community as well and a business that gets accessed by all of us.

So a big shout-out to Clark's shoe repair and luggage repair, and a very warm welcome to David Clark here in his Assembly.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And it is a great day in the Legislative Assembly today. It's always a great day here but it's especially great today, Mr. Speaker, because my dear friend and the former MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for Saskatoon Riversdale has joined us on the floor of the Assembly. Marv Friesen is back in the House, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to acknowledge Marv, thank him very much for his honourable service as a member of this Assembly, and for his tremendous friendship as a dear friend and a close friend to everyone on this side and I would suspect on the other side as well, Mr. Speaker.

Marv continues to give back to his community. He's very well known in Saskatoon for the Rides by Marv initiative that gives bicycles to well-deserved and needy children, Mr. Speaker. So I just wanted to take a moment to welcome Marv Friesen back to his Legislative Assembly.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Riversdale.

Kim Breckner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the opposition, I would also like to join in with the Minister of Justice in welcoming the former member for Saskatoon Riversdale and thank him for his service. And also I'd like to thank him for his contribution to the community, his co-operation, and answering my texts when I am questioning why are there a whole bunch of sports cars going around Montgomery. If anybody knows, it would be the former member from MLA Riversdale.

So thank you for being so helpful to me and to the community.

[10:15]

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to this Assembly, I am delighted to have the opportunity to introduce, in the west gallery, an exceptional young person, Mr. Speaker.

Giovana Garcia is otherwise known as Gio. She's like Elvis or Madonna — you go by one name; everybody knows who you mean. Mr. Speaker, she has been — since I've had the privilege of holding this file — she's been a ministerial assistant in the Minister of Finance's office. She's outstanding, Mr. Speaker. She is intelligent. She's articulate. She speaks her mind, Mr. Speaker. In fact I'd like to give you an example of that.

Yesterday was budget day. Big day for everyone in the legislature, including myself obviously, and so I came in early as did Gio. And I had come in — it was kind of windy outside and I hadn't put a tie on yet — and I came in the office and so what hair I do have was probably a little windblown.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to quote what she said when she saw me, because I don't want to misquote this. She said, "Not to be mean, but you will do your hair at some point, right?"

Mr. Speaker, we are going to miss that great wit and just having her around. She is moving on to a different career path, Mr. Speaker. But I just want to show my appreciation for everything she's done for me, Mr. Speaker. And I would like all members to please give Gio a warm welcome to her Legislative Assembly.

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

Meara Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to join with my colleague in welcoming David and giving a shout-out to Clark's Luggage & Shoe Repair, which is located just down the street from my office.

And it's definitely a favourite of my family, although as my mom gets older her shoes get more practical so we haven't been there as much. But I currently have a pair in with him right now, one of my favourite pairs of boots. And they're just such a mess and I'm hoping they'll work another one of their miracles.

So I just wanted to join with my colleague and thank them for all they do for the community, a proud fixture there on 5th Avenue, and welcome David to his Legislative Assembly.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from White City-Qu'Appelle.

Brad Crassweller: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, seated in the west gallery, I want to welcome today . . . we've got 22 grade 12 high school students from Greenall High School in Balgonie, accompanied by their teacher Melissa Marley and of course the bus driver Murray Selzer.

We met earlier out there and had a good discussion already, and I'm going to meet up with them again here in a little bit. And of course, yeah, I've got to have ice cream — support the member from Lumsden-Morse type of thing — but we're going to have a great discussion. But, Mr. Speaker, I've enjoyed going to this class, Ms. Marley's law class, in different times and I'm looking forward to going back there again.

And I was at an event, Mr. Speaker, and a lady that was at the event — Ms. Marley was there as well — she came up and she kind of interrupted and she said, "I've just got to tell you, thank you so much for what you do and for how you teach and how you engage and how you care for our students. Because it's tough, it's tough to get my child to go to school, but they love going to your class. And I just thank you so, so much for what you do."

So incredible teacher. We all love you, Ms. Marley, and I'm sure your class does as well. But thank you very much for what you do. And I'd ask all members to help me welcome these students to their Legislative Assembly.

Speaker Goudy: — And just to make a quick comment and welcome the old member from Saskatoon Riversdale, join in with the current member from Saskatoon Riversdale. As was done for our Minister of Finance, your best friends tell you what you need to hear, not what you always want to hear. And so I can certainly say that as a friend of Marv Friesen, he'll tell you what you need to hear, not always what you want to hear. And sure always have appreciated that in this place. And so, Marv, welcome back to your Legislative Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Chief Mistawasis.

Don McBean: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise and present a petition to the Government of Saskatchewan to step up for Indigenous students in Saskatchewan.

The undersigned residents wish to bring to our attention the following: we, the undersigned, call on the Saskatchewan government to take immediate action to stand up for Indigenous children and all vulnerable students by associating the full restoration of funding previously supported through Jordan's principle. Jordan's principle was established to ensure First Nations children had equitable access to the services they need, including supports in schools.

Recent loss of this federal funding leaves a significant gap in Saskatchewan classrooms, especially for Indigenous students who rely on the inclusive education supports to thrive. Funding cuts by the federal government led to 80 educational assistants being laid off from Saskatoon Public Schools, with more funding

shortfalls ongoing.

Instead of stepping up to fill this gap, the '25-26 budget reduced education funding less than what was actually spent the previous year. It was an alarming move at a time when our schools were already stretched to the breaking point due to chronic underfunding.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan stand up for Saskatchewan and advocate for the restoration of federal Jordan's principle funding to support Indigenous students; commit to sustainable, predictable, and equitable provincial funding for inclusive education across Saskatchewan; and ensure education support workers have the resources and staffing they need to keep the classrooms safe and support every student's learning journey.

The signatories today are from Regina, Cochin, and North Battleford. I do so present.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood.

Keith Jorgenson: — Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to present a petition to the Government of Saskatchewan to open up vacant Sask Housing Corporation units for occupancy.

We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring your attention to the following: that approximately 3,000 Saskatchewan Housing Corporation units are currently vacant across Saskatchewan including 129 in P.A. [Prince Albert], 220 in Saskatoon, and over 700 in Regina; and that the Sask Party government has cut the maintenance and renovation budgets by approximately 40 per cent over the last decade and failed to invest in this housing stock; and that the province's expenditure on emergency hotel rooms, which have risen year over year, is one example of the cost of the Sask Party government's failure to maintain public housing stocks.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately renovate all Sask Housing Corporation units that require renovation and make these units available and affordable, and ensure that all vacant SHC units are made occupied.

The undersigned residents of Saskatoon signed this petition. I do so present. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the Assembly today to present a petition to immediately address crime in our communities.

We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring to your attention the following: that Saskatchewan consistently has the highest crime rates among Canadian provinces; that for 25 consecutive years Saskatchewan has led the country in the national crime severity index with a homicide

rate more than double the national average; that the province also has the highest rates of intimate partner violence and intimate partner homicide in Canada; that Saskatchewan lacks a comprehensive domestic violence strategy despite repeated calls for one; that all Saskatchewan residents deserve safe communities and access to proven supports like mental health care, addictions treatment, housing, community safety programs.

We, in the prayer read as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately develop and implement a province-wide crime reduction strategy that addresses the root causes of crime and prioritizes prevention, safety, and support for all communities.

Mr. Speaker, the signatories to this petition reside in Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

Brent Blakley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the Assembly today to present a petition calling on the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to implement rent control. These residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring attention to the following: that Saskatchewan leads the nation in average rent increases; that Saskatchewan's average rent continues to increase, rising 4 per cent in the last year.

That without rent control, landlords can implement unchecked rent hikes, making housing increasingly unaffordable and unstable; that with rent control, residents can budget more effectively, potentially putting them in a position to save for a down payment on their first home; that rent control becomes even more critical when you factor in that Saskatchewan has the highest rate of child poverty in the nation; that British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and Prince Edward Island have all implemented rent control.

The prayer reads as follows:

We respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to adopt fair and effective rent control legislation that limits annual rent increases, ensures housing stability, and protects tenants from being priced out of their homes.

Mr. Speaker, the signatories today reside in Regina. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Cypress Hills.

Canada's Farm Show Recognizes Outstanding Young Farmers

Doug Steele: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is the last day of this year's Canada's Farm Show. Every year Canada's Farm Show brings together the very best in agriculture. Mr. Speaker, this is one of North America's premier agriculture events with over 300 exhibits. And at this year's show, there's something for everyone to enjoy.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to give a mention out to the 2026 Outstanding Young Farmers, of this year's nominees. Jordan and Keegan Lynch and Chansi Bourke, from Lynch Farm Partnership out of Osage. The Lynch Farm Partnership is a fourth-generation farm encompassed by a 12,000-acre cereal, oilseeds, and lentil operation.

And Beau and Cashe Stevenson from the Hi-Lite feeders out of your community, Mr. Speaker, Melfort. The Stevensons operate a feedlot with a capacity of 4,500 head of feeding cattle and farm land of 5,000 acres of grain alongside of their father, Jeff, and grandfather Danny. Stiff competition for the outstanding farmers, Mr. Speaker.

On behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, thank you to organizers and exhibitors, attendees, for continuing to make this one of the best ag events in the world. Thank you very much.

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

Historic Reesor Ranch Preserves a Legacy

Brent Blakley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past fall I had the opportunity to visit one of the many historic sites that Saskatchewan has to offer. Historic Reesor Ranch is nestled in the foothills of Cypress Hills in the southwest corner of the province. The scenery and geography of the area is breathtaking, and the hospitality that the folks at the ranch provide is second to none.

The ranch was founded in 1904 by William David Reesor and his wife, Alice, who left Ontario to establish a homestead in the Cypress Hills region. Their hard work and determination helped them build a thriving cattle operation that remains active today.

One of the many hikes in the area takes you through the bush up to Kinnikinnick Cliff. So one afternoon I headed up on the trail with the two ranch dogs following close behind. With reports of cougars in the area, I was glad to have them along. Standing at the edge of the cliff reveals a scenic view of the valley below with its evergreen trees, expansive meadows, and rugged geography.

In 2017 Reesor Ranch was officially designated a provincial heritage property. Today the ranch remains family owned and operates both as a cattle ranch and a tourism destination. Congratulations and thanks to Theresa, Scott, and the Reesors that came before for promoting and continuing the ranch's legacy in Saskatchewan.

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

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Hon. Jamie Martens: — Mr. Speaker, this Saturday is International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Observed worldwide, it's a day to focus attention on the issue of racism and the need to promote racial harmony.

Mr. Speaker, Canada was one of the first countries to support this

initiative, launched its first campaign against racial discrimination in 1989. In our province the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan works hard to promote the benefits of a respectful, equitable society and increased sense of belonging to its citizens. They support and coordinate activities in the communities and schools with contributions to many partners.

For 2026 the organization has launched a provincial education campaign, Rise Against Racism. To help people recognize racism gives them knowledge and the tools necessary to help stop it. Our government is proud to support the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan and its efforts to strengthen multiculturalism and address racism.

[10:30]

Mr. Speaker, we all must work together and recognize and reject racism, and make it clear that we will not tolerate hate or racism in this society in any form. To learn more about Rise Against Racism campaign and its work to foster respect, equality, inclusion, and diversity, visit mcos.ca. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

A Better Provincial Budget Is Possible

Brittney Senger: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier's own polling firm reports that his support is dropping, and no wonder why. This budget is brutal. Nothing for health care, nothing to lower the cost of living, no more new schools except in the Premier's own riding. The most vulnerable people in Saskatchewan, well they're getting a loan when they need real relief. And the Premier is spending loads to service the interest on debt — three times what he's spending on police.

This budget is bad news, and it's going to cost everybody in Saskatchewan more. There isn't a dime in gas tax relief. Power rates? They're rising, too. Rent control? Nowhere to be found. There's new taxes on hunting and fishing. I thought these guys liked hunting and fishing. What a joke.

Premier, I suspect this is just the beginning of your free fall, but there's good news. Hope and change is on the way. I couldn't be more proud of my colleagues and the Leader of the Official Opposition. Better is possible in Saskatchewan. It's time for change.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

Alida Drama Club Celebrates 30 Years of Entertainment

Daryl Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today to tell you about the roaring success my hometown drama club had this past weekend. Act One Productions celebrated their 30th anniversary with a comedy-drama production on March 12th through the 15th. My wife and I, along with some family and friends, had a table at the dinner theatre Saturday evening.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to great entertainment, we were treated to a five-course meal, made locally and served by young constituents. The small village of Alida comes together year after

year in a big way, Mr. Speaker, and I'm extremely proud of the entire group of actors and volunteers that make it a success.

The production crew and the actors and all the volunteers ensure that the Thursday and Friday appetizer nights, Saturday's dinner theatre, and the Sunday matinee all run very smoothly. The spectators come from near and far, and their laughter makes it all worthwhile.

Mr. Speaker, 30 years is a long time, and this well-run club has kept things feeling novel for young and old alike. I ask that all members of the Assembly join me in wishing Act One Productions a happy 30th anniversary and congratulating all those involved on a job extremely well done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina South Albert.

Analysis of Electricity Plan

Aleana Young: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, last week I released independent analysis on the Sask Party government's electricity plan. The analysis showed that the plan presented by the Premier and his trusted Minister of CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] will double power rates, increase emissions, and make Saskatchewan more reliant on the United States. It was costed by experts, Mr. Speaker — the same folks who work for the government's good friend Premier Doug Ford and the minister's close friend Stephen Lecce.

And this week it was even validated by the Premier. Reading from a section that was clearly labelled "government plan," he noted how his plan will make life more expensive. Now, I don't want to say that the crack team of Sask Party researchers misled the Premier or that the Premier perhaps didn't understand the analysis because that would be deeply embarrassing, Mr. Speaker. The only kind assumption is that he agrees with the analysis that his plan will leave Saskatchewan people paying 100 per cent more for power.

So I thank the Premier for putting partisanship aside by realizing and sharing the concerns, the impacts of his electricity plan and how it will make life more expensive and less reliable. As I said, Mr. Speaker, we need to take the politics out of power, and we need to just get this right.

So thank you to the Premier. Now, will he take the next step and cancel his 100 per cent hike?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Dakota-Arm River.

Highlights of Provincial Budget

Barret Kropf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday our Minister of Finance delivered a budget that will keep Saskatchewan's economy strong and protect our public services. Saskatchewan is the most affordable province in Canada, and the 2026 budget includes more than 2.5 billion in affordability measures including the highest tax-free threshold in all of Canada at \$65,000.

Unlike NDP [New Democratic Party] BC [British Columbia] — which broke promises and raised taxes — we're keeping our provinces and cutting taxes for our Saskatchewan residents. We're going to protect the businesses of this province by permanently keeping the small-business tax at 1 per cent and investing more into training of our skilled workforce.

The greater Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce that represents businesses in my constituency said, "Today's budget provides clarity and stability for our businesses during a period of economic uncertainty and global volatility."

We're protecting Saskatchewan communities by increasing municipal revenue-sharing funding to nearly \$400 million, the only program of its kind in Canada that delivers stable, no-strings-attached funding. Our patients-first strategy has record funding of eight and a half billion dollars. We are committed to ensuring everyone in Saskatchewan has access to timely surgeries and the care providers.

Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to providing stability for residents and protecting Saskatchewan. And based on all this, Mr. Speaker, I declare that this is the best budget in all of Canada.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Affordability and Provincial Budget

Carla Beck: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people are struggling to pay their bills, but yesterday's budget offered nothing new when it comes to affordability measures. The Premier, well he refused even a temporary cut to his gas tax.

So I have a simple question for the Premier. Why?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday our Finance minister in the province of Saskatchewan delivered the best budget in the nation of Canada. This is the only budget, in very challenging times across our nation and around the world, that is making every effort to make life more affordable for Saskatchewan families and communities right across this province and still retains the smallest deficit in the country — a third of the Alberta deficit per capita, Mr. Speaker, and a quarter of the British Columbia deficit per capita.

A family of four in this province now pays no provincial income tax, Mr. Speaker, on their first \$65,000 of income. 166,000 families, Mr. Speaker, are paying no provincial income tax. That's the highest tax-free threshold in our nation, Mr. Speaker. We have the strongest economy in Canada, remain the most affordable province in the nation, Mr. Speaker.

I would just say that this is the best budget in Canada. And it is very good news for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, but it's bad news for the NDP opposition.

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

Carla Beck: — Well, Mr. Speaker, while the Premier and his

ministers are busy handing themselves gold stars, he might want to know that it's not just members on this side who know that this budget is a disaster.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation says, and I quote, "Money is being flushed down the drain," Mr. Speaker. And the Fraser Institute, they wrote yesterday, and I quote, "Unless something changes, Saskatchewanians and their families will continue to bear the costs of this government's high-spending ways."

Does the Premier understand that even his friends understand and are begging him to stop making Saskatchewan people pay for the mess that he's made of this province's finances?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, as far as the quotes, first of all I'd like to point out that while obviously nobody's happy with the deficit, as the Premier said, it's the lowest per capita in the country, Mr. Speaker. We have the best credit rating in the country, Mr. Speaker, and we have the best debt-to-GDP [gross domestic product] in the country, Mr. Speaker.

But it's funny. The Leader of the Opposition yesterday in this House, during budget day with the galleries full, referred to what she called, and I'm quoting from *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker, "And the Premier is taking in windfall revenues because of this conflict in the Middle East," Mr. Speaker. And she proceeded to explain how we should spend those windfall revenues.

Minutes later the Finance critic gets on his feet and talks about how we spend too much money, Mr. Speaker. You can't have it both ways. They should pick a lane, Mr. Speaker.

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

Funding for Health Care

Carla Beck: — Well I'll tell the Finance minister and the Premier this. I'm not going to pick the lane of spending more and giving the people of this province less year after year because that's how they got in this mess in the first place, Mr. Speaker.

Now yesterday, speaking of this government, the Health minister over there when he was asked how is he going to actually staff the health care facilities in this province, he said, and I quote, "Great question. That is a challenge."

Well no kidding, Mr. Speaker. It's a challenge. But other provinces, they're figuring it out. We've seen other provinces hire dozens of doctors from the United States. That minister, this government, total of three. The Regina urgent care centre is closing early on the regular. Our emergency rooms are a mess. And health care workers in this province are speaking out about this government's failures on front after front after front.

Has the minister decided that he is going to go back to standing still while health care in this province crumbles around his feet?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — You know, Mr. Speaker, what I

appreciate most about Saskatchewan people is they acknowledge a challenge and they get to work to address the challenge, Mr. Speaker. That's what our government has done over the last several years with the most ambitious health human resources action plan right across the country, Mr. Speaker.

So we already have the most ambitious plan. What did we do yesterday in yesterday's budget? Added \$200 million towards the health human resources action plan to ensure that we're training more, we're incentivizing more, we're retaining those workers, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, some in this province may be discouraging people from going to health care. But, Mr. Speaker, this government, we are going to absolutely work hard to make sure there is staffing in place so we put patients first so they can receive the right care at the right time as close to home as possible.

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

Carla Beck: — Well, Mr. Speaker, no one has done more to discourage health care workers in this province than that minister.

But, Mr. Speaker, they are not even investing the money that is earmarked for health care in this budget. The federal government this year increased the health transfer by 122 million. This government, they directed less than 25 million of that to new health care spending. This money is intended to go to the front lines of health care in this province.

So why is the Premier holding back those dollars that are intended to go to health care?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Let's go to the numbers, Mr. Speaker. The increase in the Canada Health Transfer from the federal government is \$122 million, Mr. Speaker. The increase to the Health budget is \$393 million or nearly 5 per cent budget to budget.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite want to compare actuals to forecasts, Mr. Speaker. We're going to compare budget to budget. There's a significant increase, Mr. Speaker, to put patients first. There's a significant increase to put patients first, Mr. Speaker.

You know, Mr. Speaker, what we never hear. The members will often get up and talk about the Canada Health Transfer. They've been silent on the fact that the Canada Health Transfer from the federal government has actually decreased over the last several years, something that our Premier and premiers right across the country have been vocal about in terms of lobbying the federal government. That's where it would be nice to have the members opposite join our voice on that.

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

Meara Conway: — Oh, Mr. Speaker, well you heard it right there. We want to compare actual numbers to budgeted numbers, not fudge-it budget to fudge-it budget, Mr. Speaker. My God,

what a shameful display, Mr. Speaker.

We hear from front-line health care workers every day who haven't had a raise or a contract in literal years. Some are sleeping in their car; others are selling their blood plasma, Mr. Speaker. A front-line health care worker in Saskatchewan today should not have to stop at the food bank on the way home from a 12-hour shift at the ER [emergency room]. It just shouldn't be happening, Mr. Speaker.

Why didn't this Premier and that Health minister use the \$122 million increase from the federal government, meant for health care, for health care?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know my last answer was in response to the Leader of the Opposition, so I'll answer the Health critic this time: \$122 million in increase in the Canada Health Transfer. The increase again to the Health budget — help me out, folks — \$393 million, Mr. Speaker, a significant additional investment into the health care of the people of this province.

\$200 million solely focused on the health human resources action plan, again the most ambitious plan in the country, Mr. Speaker. That's been further bolstered by additional training seats and additional incentives, Mr. Speaker.

[10:45]

Mr. Speaker, we hear nothing but problems from the opposition. This government is going to stay focused on solutions.

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

Meara Conway: — Mr. Speaker, that minister's comments are patently inconsistent with the facts. And anyone at home following along can go to page 23 of the budget and see that they are budgeting a 0.3 per cent in health care funding, 24 million. So where is the other 98 million, Mr. Speaker?

Patients are waiting longer. They are suffering, Mr. Speaker. Rural emergency rooms are closing without notice, Mr. Speaker. Acute capacity here in urban centres is at an unparalleled stage, Mr. Speaker. And patients spend days, like my colleague's mother, days in hallways suffering, Mr. Speaker.

And still this Sask Party government doesn't even take the federal money meant for health care and invest it into health care. Saskatchewan people expect that at a bare minimum, Mr. Speaker. Have these guys seriously just stopped trying?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Mr. Speaker, I've now answered that question twice in terms of how the budget numbers look in the budget presented yesterday by the Ministry of Finance, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker . . .

[Interjections]

Speaker Goudy: — So I let "fudge-it budget" go earlier on, but now I'm hearing this again. I'm going to ask the member to stand up and apologize for . . .

Meara Conway: — I apologize and withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, I've answered that question at least a couple of times already today.

You know, Mr. Speaker, from the members opposite we hear about these big, bold ideas in health care, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, what are these big, bold ideas that have been presented so far? Banning virtual care. Ending the privately delivered, publicly funded surgical program that we have in Saskatchewan that has provided nearly 200,000 surgeries provided in this province. That's 200,000 Saskatchewan patients that had a shorter surgical wait time, Mr. Speaker. This is exactly what is laid out in our patients-first plan, where there's 50 next steps to improve care for patients to ensure they get the right care at the right time in the right place, Mr. Speaker.

This health care budget presented yesterday, significant increase. It's good news for patients in Saskatchewan, but it's bad news for the NDP.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina Mount Royal.

Government's Fiscal Management

Trent Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, this Sask Party government is failing our province through their mismanagement of our finances. Yesterday's budget had an \$819 million deficit — \$1.2 billion just to service the debt within the budget. Now that's three times more than the policing budget, Mr. Speaker, just to put that in context. All a direct result of that government's mismanagement, waste, and chaos, Mr. Speaker.

The costs are piling up. This is a bad-news budget that's going to cost Saskatchewan people more at a time that they can least afford it. How can the minister, that Finance minister, defend another awful budget?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of this budget, Mr. Speaker, and I believe my colleagues are as well. Mr. Speaker, on a per capita basis so far, we look to our neighbours. Alberta, three times the size per capita of the deficit here, Mr. Speaker. In NDP British Columbia, four times that size, Mr. Speaker, plus increasing taxes, which we did not do here. This budget is good news for Saskatchewan families, bad news for the NDP.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina Mount Royal.

Trent Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, in the last election the Sask Party made a promise to the people of Saskatchewan. They promised in their election platform that their deficit for this

budget would be \$46.5 million. The deficit announced yesterday is more than three-quarters of a billion dollars more than that — \$819 million.

A massive deficit. A big-time broken promise. Why is the Sask Party government breaking their promise to Saskatchewan people?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the member opposite brought up the election platform. Mr. Speaker, happy to compare.

We have kept every affordability promise we made in that platform, Mr. Speaker, and proud of it. The NDP on the other hand, Mr. Speaker, in their platform didn't account for almost \$3 billion, which I guess is understandable because that is the Finance critic who developed that platform and, Mr. Speaker, confused revenue with expenditure. I'm not making that up, Mr. Speaker. It's true.

Since the election, Mr. Speaker, \$1.1 billion in promises the members opposite made with no intention on how to pay for it. And yet yesterday the Leader of the Opposition stands in her place and says we're going to have windfall revenue from oil and so we should spend it. The critic stands up minutes later and says, you guys spend too much money. Mr. Speaker, that's why nobody takes the NDP seriously.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina Mount Royal.

Trent Wotherspoon: — Says the guy that blew his budget by \$1.2 billion last year. You know, his promises aren't worth the paper they're written on. Last election they promised a deficit of \$46.5 million. Instead he's delivering one of \$819 million.

Last year of course he claimed in his budget, his budget was going to be a \$12 million surplus. Everyone in this building, everyone in Saskatchewan knew that was nonsense. We called it out. It was a \$1.2 billion deficit for the people of Saskatchewan. We put that budget in the shredder.

Now with a record of broken promises and blown budgets, how should Saskatchewan people have any faith in that Finance minister who keeps missing the mark, mismanaging their dollars, and sticking them with the costs?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to have the debate with the opposition critic at any time, Mr. Speaker. Instead of putting it in the shredder last year, Mr. Speaker, he probably should have read it because it explains the difference between revenue and expenditure. It would be have been helpful to him, Mr. Speaker.

Here are the facts, Mr. Speaker. If people aren't sure who to trust, the member opposite or myself in a debate, fair point, Mr. Speaker. But you know who you can trust? The bond rating agencies. Everybody's familiar with credit ratings, Mr. Speaker. We all have them individually. Businesses have them, and governments have them, Mr. Speaker.

News for the member opposite: which province has the best credit rating in the country? Saskatchewan.

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

Construction of New Schools

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Boy, all this excited delirium on the other side about their bad-news budget. It's amazing.

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party budget cuts school capital by \$67 million, or by 35 per cent. White City and Moose Jaw did not get new schools, but the Premier's home community of Shellbrook certainly did. We have obtained the list of all the schools in the province, sorted from the ones in best condition to the worst. There are more than 200 schools in worse shape that the school in Shellbrook being replaced.

Why did the school in the Premier's hometown get pushed to the top of the list?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There they go again, Mr. Speaker, with another personal attack on the Premier. That's what they do, Mr. Speaker.

We're not building a new school for the Premier of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We are building a new school for the families, the teachers, the people, the residents of Shellbrook, Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Do the people of Shellbrook, Mr. Speaker, do they not deserve a school just because their MLA happens to be the Premier?

Or, as we've seen by the NDP, do they continue to treat rural . . .

[Interjections]

Speaker Goudy: — Okay. I'd like to hear a little bit more of the answer and a little less of the opposition's voice at the moment.

Minister of Education.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does the NDP think that we should treat the citizens of rural Saskatchewan like second-class citizens? Because that's what they think, Mr. Speaker. That is their condescending attitude over there, treating people like second-class citizens. It's earned them exactly zero seats . . .

Speaker Goudy: — Sorry. The "condescending attitude," I don't think that's good words. Would you mind continuing on, but let's lower the temperature here.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Mr. Speaker, the way they approach things in this province has earned them exactly zero rural seats in election after election, Mr. Speaker. And that's going to continue if they keep doing this, Mr. Speaker.

We're going to keep building schools in places like Regina and in Saskatoon and in communities like Shellbrook, Saskatchewan,

Mr. Speaker.

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

Hugh Gordon: — Mr. Speaker, there was no personal attack in that question whatsoever. If there's going to be an attack, it's going to be on the credibility and the priorities of this government and their decision making.

Mr. Speaker, it makes no sense why the Premier's hometown is getting special treatment. The Premier gets a shiny new school in Shellbrook while students learning in more than 200 others get leaky or entirely collapsed roofs. It's unfair to all other communities in the province where school repairs are desperately needed.

Why the preferential treatment for a school in Shellbrook while so many other schools are in greater need?

Speaker Goudy: — Boy, I'm having a hard time figuring out whether that's offside. Can we pause the clock because I just want to think for a second?

To accuse of preferential treatment . . . You know what, we can certainly debate the facts that it is . . . of the location of the school build, but to be calling it preferential treatment? I'm struggling with that one.

Minister of Education.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to read some quotes here from a press release, and it says this: "Students in Shellbrook have much to celebrate today." The school was originally built in the 1950s, Mr. Speaker.

The school division, community members, and provincial government all recognize the importance of these improvements for students in this area. Shellbrook school has served students well for 50 years. However the time has come to upgrade the school to provide a more comfortable and modern educational facility for Shellbrook.

Who said that, Mr. Speaker? It was the Liberal-NDP coalition Education minister Jim Melenchuk on June 22nd of 2000, Mr. Speaker. How come it was good enough for the Liberal-NDP Education minister back in 2000, but it's not good enough for the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker?

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

Funding for Education

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This bad-news budget is a failure when it comes to school capital. But it doesn't stop there. The minister is dropping the ball on school operating funding as well.

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation put out the following statement, and I quote, "Assuming enrolment of an additional 700 students, this allocation represents an inflation-adjusted decrease of \$33 per student compared to the previous year."

This math is simple, and so is my question. Why is the minister continuing to make cuts to our children's education and to our province's future?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Mr. Speaker, the members of the opposition are obviously worked up today because they know this is a good-news budget for the people of Saskatchewan and absolutely terrible for the NDP across the way, Mr. Speaker.

This government is protecting Saskatchewan's future and our education system with a \$3.6 billion education budget: \$2.5 billion into school operating for Saskatchewan's 27 school divisions, Mr. Speaker, a 2.6 per cent increase over the previous year's budget, Mr. Speaker.

When you look at the past three years of operating funding to our school divisions — who we value very much as partners in delivering education to students right across this province — it's an approximate 20 per cent increase in the past three budgets, Mr. Speaker, to operating for our school divisions. We're going to continue to make those investments and protect our Saskatchewan education system.

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

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan people know exactly this government's record on education funding. It's a record of cuts per-student funding year after year after year, and now those cuts are getting even worse in this budget. Teachers, parents, and students know why classrooms are already at a breaking point. More students, fewer resources, well that's a recipe for disaster.

Why is this minister continuing to cut per-student funding in Saskatchewan? Why won't he invest in our province's future and in our children?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll help the members out a little bit here with some of the stats from yesterday's budget. I already talked about some of the information with respect to the operating budget and with respect to the capital budget, Mr. Speaker.

\$436 million into classroom supports, Mr. Speaker, an increase of 10.4 per cent over the previous year's budget, Mr. Speaker. The addition of 50 more specialized support classrooms in this budget, bringing to the total 108 of these specialized support classrooms, which are very, very well regarded by school divisions, by teachers and, most importantly, by parents and students right across this province. That's an addition. Another \$2 million towards K to 3 [kindergarten to grade 3] literacy initiatives in this province, Mr. Speaker, for our education system.

[11:00]

This is a government that believes in our education system and is going to continue to support our students right across

Saskatchewan.

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

Saskatchewan Income Support Program

Erika Ritchie: — Mr. Speaker, years ago the Sask Party ended the direct payment of rent and utilities for people relying on social supports. Everyone knew this would lead to more missed payments, more evictions, and more people being cut off from utilities.

Now they've announced a one-time lump sum payment program to help people get caught up. But when you read the fine print, it's a repayable benefit. These are vulnerable people with no money. That's why the arrears are there in the first place.

How is the minister going to claw back from the people who sign up for this program? And doesn't the minister know he can't pour water from an empty cup?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Social Services.

Hon. Terry Jensen: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. And this is a government that will continue to work with the most vulnerable in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, SIS [Saskatchewan income support] is not just about financial aid. It's about empowering individuals, Mr. Speaker. This is a program that provides skills training, employment connections and pathways, self-sufficiency, Mr. Speaker, and offering meaningful support beyond monthly benefits.

When it comes to the new one-time \$1,000 utility benefit, it is repayable, Mr. Speaker. And the reason it's repayable is, again, we're trying to empower individuals. Our ministry will work with that individual to have that repaid without causing any other undue hardship. We will work with that client to make sure that their basic benefits will continue to be met, Mr. Speaker.

And this is a program that this government is very proud of. And it's the fifth year in a row SIS benefits have increased, Mr. Speaker.

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

Addressing Intimate Partner Violence

Nicole Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, after over 18 years, this Sask Party government isn't listening to what survivors of intimate partner violence have been calling for — stronger laws and training, tailored services in rural areas, improved infrastructure like internet, and emergency transport to keep communities safe. And yet again, another budget and no declaration of the creation of a provincial strategy.

Mr. Speaker, we have the highest rates of intimate partner violence in the country. When can survivors of intimate partner violence expect a real provincial strategy to address intimate partner violence from this Sask Party government?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of the Status of Women.

Hon. Alana Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government recognizes that interpersonal violence is an issue in our society. That is why we will continue to work with our community partners, who are experts in this area, guided by our provincial strategy. We will provide programming under the three pillars of prevention, intervention, and accountability, which will guide and coordinate services to the people of Saskatchewan through these community organizations.

Mr. Speaker, our government remains committed to making these programs available for the people of Saskatchewan so that everyone can live in a province that is free from violence. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of CIC.

Federal-Provincial Partnership Will Link SaskPower Grids

Hon. Jeremy Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today for another exciting and important announcement with regard to our power system here in Saskatchewan — a very, very exciting announcement made today jointly between Minister Tim Hodgson and myself with regard to our transmission grid here in Saskatchewan, officially kicking off the process for the connection of the northern and southern power grids, which we had laid out as far as our plan in the energy security strategy, Mr. Speaker, and our transmission plan, which has led to some remarkable investments.

We've just seen in the last couple of months, Mr. Speaker, two new uranium mines that are going forward. We've seen a potash mine that's going to be coming online and into production in the near future. A copper mine, which is a really new, exciting development for this province, is under construction right now. And just the other day, Mr. Speaker, just this week in fact, a \$12 billion investment from Bell Canada.

All of these announcements made possible only because of the long-term plan that we have in this province for our power generation, prioritizing reliability and affordability and energy security over the next 25 years, Mr. Speaker, something that is really very exciting, that has given the companies confidence to make these multi-billion-dollar investments.

And today is adding to that, Mr. Speaker, as far as transmission. We are announcing that we are going to be connecting, through a 250-kilometre new transmission line, the E.B. Campbell power station and the Island Falls power station, for the first time connecting the northern and southern power grids here in this province, Mr. Speaker. A really exciting announcement.

And this has been in process for a number of months, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank colleagues at the national level. And I also want to thank colleagues across the country who have come together for really detailed discussions about what the future of transmission is going to look like within Canada and within provinces that are going to benefit the national interest.

Because this project is going to benefit the national interest in giving us the capacity to build out our natural resource wealth in northern Saskatchewan by having reliable baseload power generation, Mr. Speaker, for those projects and giving confidence to companies to make investments into developing really multi-billion-dollar assets with the confidence that that baseload power is going to be there.

So I want to thank Minister Hodgson, who is our partner. At this stage of the project, the federal government are partnering with us, contributing \$18 million in this initial planning-and-design stage. And I want to thank Minister Belanger as well, who has been a great partner in this as well. He and I have spoken on a number of occasions on how we move this project forward.

There's some more really exciting news to come on transmission as we strengthen the grid in northern Saskatchewan for the communities that are there, but also for the opportunities that are going to come from that as far as future development as SaskPower makes these really significant, significant and important investments into our grid as we move forward. So thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina South Albert.

Aleana Young: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and respond to the minister's statement, and I thank him as always for providing a copy of his remarks in advance. As the minister noted, this is part of what I believe is the government's second energy strategy, the transmission portion that they rolled out just a couple weeks ago and the minister commented on in great detail for this Assembly.

Perhaps just a couple higher level comments on this, Mr. Speaker. I'll keep it pretty straight here today. It's great to see SaskPower taking seriously the idea of being an exporter of power, Mr. Speaker, and considering the resources that should be put towards it. It's good to see that promoted.

I'm also pleased to see in this plan that resources are going to be put towards developing policies and regulatory frameworks and corporate structures in order to create the condition so that energy and services can flow between jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker. We talk a lot about breaking down the barriers of interprovincial trade. Breaking down those barriers is essential, Mr. Speaker.

This was one of several projects that I believe was already announced and has been kind of in the kitty for several years at SaskPower. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that this project was initially proposed about three or four years ago, I think when Foran came online.

But yeah, this is a great project, Mr. Speaker. It's important. I was happy to see the funding of \$18 million roll out a couple weeks ago from the federal government. Of course we've been crystal clear with the federal government and with Prime Minister Carney and Minister Hodgson on this — and I thank them for their engagement — that we need significant federal investment in Saskatchewan's transmission infrastructure and indeed our electricity sector as a whole, Mr. Speaker. More federal funding for more transmission and more interties is critical, not just for electricity but to our economic future here in

Saskatchewan.

With that, happy to conclude my remarks.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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.]

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina Mount Royal.

Trent Wotherspoon: — Hey, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Applause]

Trent Wotherspoon: — More of that, more of that. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And thank you for the love from colleagues. What a fine bunch, eh? Sharp, you know, standing up every day for the people of this province, Mr. Speaker. They're kind to me sometimes and just an honour to work with them and the leader of this opposition.

I look forward to all the comments from all members in this Assembly on the budget. I look forward to the addresses as well because it gives an opportunity to decide, as a member, where you stand on the issues that are most important to our constituents and those that we serve in this province that we love, Mr. Speaker.

Now just maybe off the top, you know, again we heard it here today, Mr. Speaker, that this budget's all about protecting Saskatchewan people — protecting Saskatchewan people. What are they protecting Saskatchewan people from, Mr. Speaker? Protecting them from more and more taxes that they keep sticking Saskatchewan people with? Are they protecting Saskatchewan people from the health care system that that government has broken, Mr. Speaker? Are they protecting Saskatchewan people from the record debt that they've piled up and the incredible cost to service that debt, Mr. Speaker, taking dollars away from all the other priorities and sticking those costs of course with Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker?

So you know, this whole protecting notion, Mr. Speaker, what they've actually done is left people in a much more vulnerable position than they ever should be, Mr. Speaker. They should have quality of life and cost of living and a health care system they can count on, classrooms that are supported to build the best future as possible for that next generation, Mr. Speaker.

Instead we have a government that's almost going on 20 years, Mr. Speaker, that seems, you know, out of gas, seems all too often just to be mailing it in, Mr. Speaker, but while doing so continues to preside over incredible mismanagement, blowing budgets and sticking Saskatchewan people with the costs, Mr. Speaker.

So you know, as far as their notions of protecting Saskatchewan people, I'll tell you this. We will work to protect Saskatchewan people, we'll stand up and fight for Saskatchewan people, and we'll work to deliver that province that everyone deserves in this province.

As members often do at this stage of their remarks, they will reference some of those people that they get to work with, Mr. Speaker. And I just want to give a really heartfelt shout-out to Jannet Shanks, just one of the finest people you could ever work with in any endeavour, Mr. Speaker. This is a long-serving public servant, Mr. Speaker, who's given much to this province, given much to her community, and who volunteers in so many other ways outside of that to make a difference in the lives of others, Mr. Speaker.

Jannet Shanks is the constituency assistant in my MLA office. She's an incredible leader and teammate, and it's my pleasure to work with Jannet. And I want to say thank you to her for her service to the people of our constituency and many others that reach out, Mr. Speaker, from all across this province, and for the support and advocacy and the work that we get to do together. So to Jannet Shanks, offer a big thanks.

We often will identify our families as well. We don't serve alone in this. Yesterday we saw many members' partners or families joining here as well, Mr. Speaker. I asked Steph, "You want to come to the budget?" She said no, Mr. Speaker. She can't get a sub she said, and plus it costs, you know, a bit of money to take that day off as a teacher. But can't get a sub, Mr. Speaker. That being said, she was tuned in to the debate yesterday.

Steph works hard as a teacher. She gives a lot to her students and to her staff team. She enjoys that work, values what it's all about. Works as a teacher-librarian within the school as well. She's a real great partner in life as well, Mr. Speaker. She's tough as nails. She'll put me in my spot any day of the week, and I deserve it sometimes. And she's an awesome mom as well, Mr. Speaker.

But you know, it's a busy stage of life right now for everyone in here. Everyone's lives are busy across this province. But it's a busy stage. Got, you know, a kid that's super active in activities. She's got her full career. Our work in service is busy as well. But you know, we often say it feels like a bit of a blur right now. But I think in a few more years that in another stage of life, we'll probably look back and say, "Oh, that was a pretty special time." So try not to miss the opportunities we have here right now.

[11:15]

To William. He's a big partner in all this as well. Grade 6. You know, watching a kid grow, it's amazing. You know this, Mr. Speaker. You know, he's 11, almost turning 12. Big year of hockey. He's a big hockey guy. Lives and breathes that preparation for a big game. Lots of extra reps in skating.

And really focuses well on his school. He's a good student, Mr. Speaker. And I couldn't be more proud of him. This year outside of hockey, which is a big commitment for him, he's also committed himself . . . He's pretty excited now he can play for his school teams this year, grade 6. So he's played for the volleyball team. He's played for the basketball team. He's on the soccer team right now. He's trying out for badminton right now,

Mr. Speaker. And he's got track coming up. It's a cool stage of life.

He's my real partner in the field as well. As folks know, I love to fish and hunt and hike and camp and all these things. And you know, it's pretty neat seeing him get to this age. At 12 years old, of course, that means he's been with me since he's been at my ankles out there in the field for the hunts. This year he gets to carry the shotgun and the rifle, Mr. Speaker. He's taking this hunter safety, and it's just going to be his first year on that front. And we really look forward to that as well.

The ice will soon be melted, Mr. Speaker, and you know, hard-ice fishing will be done very soon. I hope maybe this weekend to race out, maybe Sunday morning, and sit on a pail if it's safe enough still, Mr. Speaker. See if we can't land a couple before that's all done.

Mr. Speaker, the good people I represent care deeply about this budget. And it's the lens that I apply to it when I speak about the need for affordability and building up health care and building up education and making sure we have the classrooms that we need and deserve, making sure that we're acting to make our communities safer. Too often, you know, we have a government that's taking us in the wrong direction on these fronts. They care about making sure we have supports and services like those around mental health and addictions that are available when people need it.

And they care deeply as well about just sound fiscal management because they know that if you don't have that, it compromises kind of everything else and comes at a cost to people today, to people that are working real hard, Mr. Speaker, and certainly future generations as well.

I'm proud to represent communities right across the west side of Regina, Mr. Speaker. From McNab; right through Rosemont, parts of Rosemont and Mount Royal which are kind of, work collectively as a community, Mr. Speaker. Dieppe and Westerra and Fairways West and Edgewater and Westhill, Mr. Speaker, Normanview West and Prairie View — really proud, awesome communities, Mr. Speaker.

Very good timing tonight, Mr. Speaker. The Rosemont Mount Royal Community Association is holding their AGM [annual general meeting] tonight, so good timing to be able to join them as they do and bring a bit of an update maybe on the budget as well. And certainly hear of priorities and needs of community.

I wanted to say thank you to that community association and long-serving Chair and leader Alex Tkach who's going to be stepping back from that position as Chair here tonight. But this is somebody who's given an incredible amount to that community association and to our community. And I want to thank him for that service and that commitment. And I want to thank all of the leaders on that community association who work so tirelessly to build community and extend services, and all those of all the other community associations that I've identified as well.

I'm proud to also represent an urban reserve, Zagimē Anishinabēk, Mr. Speaker, just west of Westerra, Mr. Speaker, with some commercial enterprises coming together, some other

opportunities. If you ever want to meet me for, you know, a burger over at The Moose & Bannock, a great elk burger on bannock, a great bison burger too, Mr. Speaker. But really good communities, Mr. Speaker, hard-working people.

And with the melt that's on right now, I came out of budget day yesterday, Mr. Speaker, and I looked at that melt out there. And what I know is that beautiful Devonian path all through A.E. Wilson Park, Mr. Speaker, that connects, you know, this building all the way back — well, right across the city — but all the way up to the northwest corridor, it's going to be a nice weekend to get out even for a bike ride or a run on that path as well, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank all the good people I serve. I get to work with, you know, people at times, sometimes when they're facing crisis, and I get to see them at their best as well, Mr. Speaker.

We had a good one just a couple weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, where we gathered with community and served up . . . It's an annual chili night that we bring together at the rink on 4th Avenue just behind Rosemont School, Mr. Speaker. It's where we host the outdoor hockey league as well and served up hundreds of bowls of chili. But that only comes from the hard work of community, Mr. Speaker, and donations of others.

People like Paul and Peter at Juliana Pizza, incredible pizza, Mr. Speaker, I should say as well; Amber Crawford at No Frills, who always goes above and beyond to support community; Evan's Delivery; Sherwood Co-op; and many others were a part of that. And just the tireless volunteers, the leaders within the community association and some of the SCCs [school community council] as well, Mr. Speaker, and community volunteers.

Mr. Speaker, every year, I think, I put special attention and push in this Assembly in every chance for, you know, proper funding for education, but for Dieppe School as well, Mr. Speaker. And I'd identify, you know, this was closed at a time of big budget cuts by this government, Mr. Speaker, that left school boards in an awful way. And it left Dieppe without their community school, Mr. Speaker. It overwhelmed the population of other neighbourhood schools like McLurg, Mr. Speaker.

And we'll continue to push, I'll continue to push, Mr. Speaker, for proper funding for education for all our kids' classrooms, but to make sure as well that that school board has the resources it needs to be able to properly reopen Dieppe as a full school to the community, Mr. Speaker. There's some changes being made this year that will have new programming being offered out of it, Mr. Speaker, and there's some discussion about that programming. It's nice to see the school being utilized, but the full goal has to be that that be there as a full community school for the community.

I just want to touch on a few items with respect to agriculture. I've been giving kind of the perspective on the finances yesterday on health care and education and on cost of living, but I just want to touch — as deputy ag shadow minister with our team, working together with the Leader of the Opposition — a few important priorities that we've been active on.

This is a world-class industry, one that we can be so proud of, one that has great heritage and roots in this province. There's

many that might not be on the farm, like me today, Mr. Speaker, but we're a step off of that farm. And we think of those proud family histories on those farms and families that continue to farm, like mine as well, Mr. Speaker.

But this industry obviously is dynamic. It's changing, with incredible opportunity for the people of the province. And we can be so proud of the world's best producers who have always been innovators, often out of being real practical and as well being good stewards of the land, understanding their responsibilities to that land, Mr. Speaker.

A few areas that we've been speaking to that are certainly very important, identified yesterday again in my address, but you know, cracking down on illegal foreign ownership of land, which this government has really failed to do so, Mr. Speaker. This is something that we have to step up on. We're going to keep pushing and fighting for producers on this front, Mr. Speaker.

It's a matter of fairness for producers. It's not right, not fair for a hard-working producer — Mr. Speaker, many multi-generational farms across this province — to compete against foreign money or a foreign interest or a foreign business with dollars that are supposed to be illegal, Mr. Speaker, in the acquisition of farm land. It's not in our interests as a province. We have a law in place, Mr. Speaker. The problem is we need to make sure it's enforced, and we need to crack down. And there's very serious concerns that we have to stop, that this government has to stop dismissing these very serious concerns of producers and crack down.

I brought forward a bill, Mr. Speaker, that would actually go a long ways in cracking down. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? From a budgetary perspective, it doesn't cost a penny. So it wouldn't cost one penny for this government to support that common-sense legislation and to get tough and to actually crack down on illegal foreign farm-landownership in this province. Mr. Speaker, we'll keep working with agricultural leaders, producers, and rural leaders on this front.

I want to address as well a big concern in the agricultural community. That was the traceability program that sort of emerged in the last couple months by the CFIA [Canadian Food Inspection Agency], by the feds, Mr. Speaker. These concerns were immediately flagged by the livestock sector as being, you know, just out of touch with the livestock sector and how animals are cared for, Mr. Speaker, how an operation runs. Not common sense, and again big costs and burdens that are placed on producers without a gain, Mr. Speaker.

And it's clear again in an example like that that you have some folks out in the CFIA, certainly not from Saskatchewan, making decisions in the absence of understanding agriculture in this province and the livestock producers in this province. Because if somebody had worked directly with the livestock sector, they would have had a much better understanding of operations.

We worked closely, I worked closely with the livestock sector at that time. I want to thank folks like the Sask Cattle Association, the stockgrowers, Mr. Speaker, many livestock producers for using their voices at that time. We joined them as well. We met with them and worked with them, and we used our voice as well. We wrote directly and reached out directly to the federal

government on this front and called for that traceability program to be halted, to be stopped. Mr. Speaker, laid out the concerns in how it was not common sense at all, how it was burdensome, and how it was driving costs onto producers in a way that didn't present gains for this sector.

I want to also identify a file that's emerged and isn't yet concluded that we've advocated, that producers have stood up on. And that's the potential closure, or I guess the announced closure of the ag research and the research farms, both at Indian Head and also in Scott here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. But big cuts that were announced actually by the federal government to cut agricultural research, crop research in Saskatchewan, and then forcing the closure of incredible operations.

That Indian Head research farm has led the way on seed development and research and has worked so closely . . . The producers are very active in it. The seed growers, the private seed growers are very active in that operation as well. And the return on investment for ag research like this is 35 to 1, as identified by Sask Wheat in this province, Mr. Speaker.

It's an awful thing to cut, and a legacy operation like Indian Head is very important to the future as well. And there's been some suggestion that, well they can just move some of that research up by Saskatoon or something like this, Mr. Speaker. That's not the case. The assets and the continuous cropping and the farming that's going there and the seed development would actually be lost. And you're talking decades that, generations that that work's been going on and incredible developments on productivity and gains that we see.

And you see that when we see the crop reports, right? We see that when we pull off a harvest — the kind of yields that have been built, the productivity gains for producers, the resiliency in seed for things like drought as well. This is very important research, and that work continues to go . . . If anything, this is the kind of area that we need to, you know, kind of put the throttle down and support a bit further because it's very important to the future, not just of our province but our ability to feed the world and be resilient in agriculture.

We wrote right away to the Prime Minister and to the Ag minister and laid out that this is really offside, that it laid out the case of how important . . . Because I suspect these decisions may have been made at some other level and not understood at the highest level, you know, I hope. But we laid out very clearly, Mr. Speaker, how damaging this would be and what a loss it represents. And we'll continue to make that call on the federal government.

We've been working closely with the seed growers and all the commodity groups on this front. I want to thank them for all their leadership. I want to thank them as well for all their resources on this front. But we'll keep pushing and fighting to make sure that we've got that research happening here and those research farms in Indian Head and Scott operating, Mr. Speaker.

I want to touch on drought, Mr. Speaker. You look at some portions of the province, Mr. Speaker, last year was a pretty good crop for a lot of Saskatchewan. But there were still regions in this province that were stuck in really awful drought conditions. Parts in the southwest have been now stuck with that drought last year

for like nine years and counting, Mr. Speaker, a protracted drought. It's really left them devastated.

The business risk management programs that have been put in place by this government just aren't built for a nine-year drought, Mr. Speaker. They work if it gets triggered, you know, maybe two years out of a five-year period, Mr. Speaker. But once you're into a protracted period like this, it's a fairly small area that's affected but a very important area, and very proud producers in that area. And so we're nine years on they're in a situation that's been devastating, Mr. Speaker.

We've had them here. They've stood up in the public. They've pushed for action with the government, Mr. Speaker. And sadly, government has failed to step up on this front. Leaders as well, like those through SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], have stepped up as well, calling for action.

[11:30]

But there needs to be some changes to crop insurance to have the backstop for this region that's very unique now. Nine years of drought, Mr. Speaker. And it's a small part of the province but a very important part of the province, and it should not be abandoned. These producers should not be abandoned by the government. And by the approach of this government to look the other way and fail to act, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what they've been doing.

We'll continue to push as well for a meaningful backstop to livestock sector, livestock producers and to make sure that that includes provincial and federal contributions, Mr. Speaker. A national program, Mr. Speaker, because there's an inequity right now for livestock producers in this province where they don't have that cost-share with the kind of backstop that they need. We've pushed for a long period of time on this front for the province and the federal government to step up, and we'll continue to do so, working closely with the livestock sector on that front.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to livestock again, you know, we can be incredibly proud of this incredible industry. The best beef in the world, Mr. Speaker. Incredible stewardship and grazing practices in this sector plays a very important role as well in stewarding land and, you know, taking care of native prairie as well, Mr. Speaker, and has really great environmental benefits as well.

But there's a shame; we're the second-largest beef producer in Canada, Mr. Speaker, but we only process 1 per cent of the beef here in Saskatchewan. So second-largest beef producer in Canada, best beef in the world, incredible producers, but we only process 1 per cent. What that leaves is it leaves producers beholden to, you know, two out-of-province foreign meat packers, Mr. Speaker, that quite frankly act in anticompetitive ways, Mr. Speaker.

And it's unfair to producers in getting the fair price that they deserve for their cattle, Mr. Speaker. It denies them of choice in markets, Mr. Speaker. It hurts them economically. It also impacts producers, of course, because if you've got these foreign, out-of-province meat packers — two of them, Mr. Speaker, that it's all consolidated at — it impacts consumers and the cost of beef as

well and choice around that as well.

So we're going to really continue to push. This is a project I've been really focused on and passionate about. Big beef lover here, Mr. Speaker. But you know, to make sure we build out meat processing here in Saskatchewan, to make sure that there's choice and opportunity in the value it presents to producers, Mr. Speaker. It also of course creates some good, solid economic development in rural communities across this province and jobs that people can count on, rural and urban jobs, Mr. Speaker, and provides choice and value for consumers as well.

But it makes no sense for us to have, you know, 2 per cent or the second-highest beef herd in Canada and only process 1 per cent of the beef, Mr. Speaker. And there's many reasons why our beef herd's been in decline. Of concern, it's at the lowest level it's been in decades, Mr. Speaker. You know, some of the pieces I'm speaking to are directly related, including making sure we have fair value in market for producers here in the province.

I do want to give a shout-out. You know, we see new projects on these fronts, and then some long-standing ones. But out by Perdue there's a new SDC [Sunnydale Colony] livestock operation that's going to process, they say, 100 beef cattle a day, Mr. Speaker, up to 200 sheep or hogs, so multi-species operation, Mr. Speaker. Which, you know, this is the kind of project that presents value.

As I've worked this file, of course, I've been able to work with and, you know, recognize many incredible operations. I think of, you know, the Moose Mountain processors down in Wawota, Mr. Speaker, a producer organization, producer co-operative if you will, that runs that meat processor. A really good success story.

I think of folks like the Southeast Butcher Block down at Alameda, Mr. Speaker. A good new operation, again a collective of producers that have come together there. Folks like Weyburn prime meats that, you know, play a very important role. An awesome abattoir, Mr. Speaker. These are folks that are doing a very fine job of what we'd like to see more of.

Babco, Mr. Speaker, that's, you know, located up by Bethune, Highway 11. A really nice abattoir; incredible meats that they're offering to the people of the province. I think of Riverside meats and Curtis and Dawn up by Craven. A nice operation there as well, Mr. Speaker. Ranch House Meat is down by Shaunavon. Just some of the best as well. All these are wonderful operations. Quill Creek Farms, Mr. Speaker.

These are all examples of what we can build more of in this province, and I think they deserve our recognition in this Assembly for creating those opportunities for producers, creating good economic development for their very hard work. It's not easy work, Mr. Speaker, but adding value to the product here in Saskatchewan and then creating exceptional products, right, Mr. Speaker. Nothing better than knowing where your meat's coming from, knowing who's processed it, and having their talents to enjoy, Mr. Speaker.

I want to just touch . . . I don't want to look at my Whip right now, Mr. Speaker. He's telling me I'm past time, I know, so I'm going to just keep looking at you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not going to look this way.

Just a couple more points though. As we build out that meat processing, there has to be action taken as well to clamp down, crack down and address the anticompetitive behaviours of those out-of-province foreign meat packers that consolidate the market, Mr. Speaker. Because we've seen before, you know, behaviours on this front that aren't fair, aren't right, and aren't in the economic interests of the livestock sector or meat processing in Saskatchewan or our province or our country when you think about food security, Mr. Speaker, and our food supply chain as well, Mr. Speaker.

I want to touch on transportation. Of course this is something that's super important to Saskatchewan producers. We need a transportation system that's going to get their crop, their products to market, Mr. Speaker. I talked about it yesterday in my budget speech. We haven't seen sufficient action. We didn't see it in the budget around that trade-supporting infrastructure — pipelines, rail, Mr. Speaker, and our ports — making sure that we get our world-class products to market, Mr. Speaker. Address the bottlenecks that exist there.

But no one knows this better in this province than producers, Mr. Speaker, who work so damned hard, so darned hard to take that crop off, Mr. Speaker, and then are often left at the mercy of a rail system that's not performing, that's not getting crop to market. They pay the price when that's happening. They pay it by way of the demurrage, and they also have freight costs that are of huge concern, Mr. Speaker.

And I'd like to identify that, you know, if you look at combining production and distance-to-port results, in Saskatchewan farmers are actually paying 65 per cent of total rail costs for moving grain, Mr. Speaker — 65 per cent. A huge amount, Mr. Speaker, and there needs to be a check on the rail system on this front. There needs to be a fair costing review for producers, Mr. Speaker, who time and time again don't get the performance they need and deserve from that rail system, and you know, I would suggest are paying through the nose, paying more than they should.

And we would call on the federal government. Of course we have the CTA, the Canada Transportation Agency, and the Act as well that governs it, and it's going to be opening up for its review here as well. And it's going to be critically important that we speak with one strong voice out of Saskatchewan — and certainly I'm using my voice here today — that we push the federal government and the CTA to ensure a fair and full costing review of grain transportation, Mr. Speaker, and to make sure that . . . with an eye to provide that information, with an eye for reforms that will provide a fairness and value for producers and a rail system as well that would perform, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously there's many other . . . It's a very dynamic industry, agriculture in this province. Many other exciting areas in this sector. We need to continue to work to have those trade markets open. We still have too many tariffs from too many countries on our world-class ag products, so we need to continue in that work to have those tariffs lifted and to continue to build market access for producers, Mr. Speaker.

We've got to get our beef into the United Kingdom, Mr. Speaker. You know, what a lost opportunity, Mr. Speaker. It's been a long time that that market's been closed to Saskatchewan and

Canadian beef producers. And these are big priorities.

Just in closing, I want to thank all the ag producers and all the organizations I have the privilege of working with across the province. I regularly meet with and work with some of the very best in this province and the kind of values they bring to their operations and the way they approach this province as well, Mr. Speaker.

One last sector before my House Leader . . . I'm not even going to look at her because she's going to just like grab me by my jacket here if I step too far here. She'll sit me down.

I just want to say of course there's incredible opportunity in this province. We have what the world needs. We're excited about that opportunity. We see businesses and industry and workers and innovators and researchers doing their part and more, Mr. Speaker. That's evident in certainly agriculture as identified, but so many other sectors as well.

We have an incredible opportunity, story to tell, but opportunities that must be seized around mining, Mr. Speaker. You know, we've touted ourself as a mining superpower. When you look at the resources and the clout we have within this industry and the history of production — world-class processes, Mr. Speaker, incredible miners and workers, geologists, and all those that are involved in making this happen — we have a really proud history in this province. And we should have an incredibly bright future, Mr. Speaker.

I want to give a shout-out to folks like Cameco, Mr. Speaker, who are supplying the world with energy, the workers who work in those mines that are world-class, Mr. Speaker, that build livelihoods for them and their families out of it as well, but a company like that that's supplying the world with energy here from Saskatchewan. We have an incredibly high-value, high-grade uranium here in Saskatchewan and a whole lot of it, Mr. Speaker.

And with companies like Cameco going out to build, you know, help build market access, securing deals like we've seen recently with India, this is incredible leadership and clout that a global leader brings to the stage. And you know where they're headquartered, Mr. Speaker? They're headquartered in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. You know where their CEO [chief executive officer] lives, Mr. Speaker? In Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

That CEO, he still has a stall at a local hockey rink and plays hockey with his group of buddies that he's played with for years and gives back to the community. That's an amazing thing. That's leadership from top down in that organization, from the CEO through the world's best miners. And that's incredible clout that that brings this province and this nation at this critical time and incredible value as well.

And we see the new opportunities that need to be seized in copper and in rare earth minerals, you know, siting opportunities in around Tisdale with aluminum, Mr. Speaker, as well. So many of these resources that are presenting incredible opportunities. More expansion on the uranium sector that's presented, more on the potash side, Mr. Speaker.

We're very well positioned as a province but we need to seize that opportunity. We need to prioritize this industry. We need to know that it's important to the world to have a democratic country and a very fine place like Saskatchewan with very high standards about how we operate — world's best mining jurisdiction — to get that product to the world. It's important to the world today that we are the preferred supplier of these products, Mr. Speaker. So it's an area we should all be excited about.

The other thing that this should excite us about, those are jobs, Mr. Speaker, jobs that are associated to each of these projects. There's revenues that come from that. That's about building out our tax base for the future. It's about getting us back on track financially, Mr. Speaker.

We have a government that's really stuck us in a hole fiscally as a province, you know, has really struggled to manage, you know, our best interests and manage our finances, Mr. Speaker, which is, you know, why I've spoken against the budget, why I won't be supporting it. How it fails to manage our budget in a responsible way, how it sticks the costs of their mismanagement with Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker, how they've broken our health care system, Mr. Speaker, and how they've failed time and time again to build it back up.

So at this point in time, I want to thank the very good people that I get to work with and serve, Mr. Speaker, for sending me here and for their continued partnership in this work.

And at this point in time, I'll move a motion:

That all the words after "Assembly" be omitted and the following be inserted:

does not approve the budgetary policy of the government because it fails to invest in cost-of-living relief, health care, and public safety while pushing the public debt to unprecedented levels; and further,

That the Assembly has lost confidence in the government.

I so submit.

Speaker Goudy: — It has been moved by the member from Regina Mount Royal and seconded by the member from Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood.

[11:45]

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood.

Keith Jorgenson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to second the motion moved by my colleague from Regina Mount Royal. Mr. Speaker, it's an absolute pleasure to stand today in response to the budget.

I want to start by thanking the Minister of Finance. Although I absolutely disagree with the choices that he's made in his budget, I cannot question the fact that he cares about this province and that he worked many long, hard hours to prepare this budget.

Mr. Speaker, this building always evokes in me a sense of history and our place in it. When we see photos and we walk through the halls, we know that other people walked in the same steps that we have, great men and women who sat where we sit now. Yesterday the Minister of Finance stood opposite and delivered plans to spend money on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. And I don't think this year's budget lived up to the standards set by Scott, Douglas, Romanow, Calvert. It also doesn't live up to the expectations and dreams of the people of this great province.

Speaking of dreams, Mr. Speaker, I have to say, last night I had absolutely the best dream. I was sitting beside my favourite lake. I was listening to the Stanley Cup final, and the Maple Leafs were winning game 7, Mr. Speaker. And then I caught a nine-pound brown trout, an absolutely stunning fish. And for those of you who don't know, the brown trout is probably the hardest fish in Saskatchewan to catch. And I was soaking it all in, Mr. Speaker. I was pretty pleased with myself.

And then, Mr. Speaker, I heard over the radio the newscaster say that the Sask Party had just balanced the budget. And then I realized, Mr. Speaker, it had to be a dream. I mean a trophy brown trout, that's possible. The Maple Leafs winning the Stanley Cup, that could happen. But the Sask Party balancing a budget, totally impossible, Mr. Speaker. It ruined my dream, Madam Deputy Speaker, totally ruined my dream, sort of like the dreams of many people in Saskatchewan that are being left behind by this government.

Mr. Speaker, I want to, in this address, look at the history of how we arrived at a \$43 billion debt in this province, because the roots of that debt run very, very deep, Mr. Speaker. I want to take a bit of a bird's-eye view, so to speak. And I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, even from outer space our financial situation does not look good, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there's several things this government has built that you can actually see from space. It's true. So first of all, metaphorically, our debt. But there is a pile of tires outside of Clavet, Saskatchewan that is so large you can actually see it from space, Madam Deputy Speaker. You know, we have the Walter Scott Building here in Regina. We have the Roy Romanow Provincial Laboratory. Perhaps we should name that mountain of tires too. We could put up a sign — Moe mountain; give me your tires, heaped and massed, yearning to be recycled.

Mr. Speaker, in preparation for this speech I actually checked out copies of the government's previous budgets, every single one of them. And to be honest with you, Madam Deputy Speaker, what a hot mess. It's become a bit of a rite of spring in Saskatchewan — muddy streets, potholes, and another Sask Party government deficit.

And reading through all those budget addresses, it sort of reminded me another rite of spring, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is the first year in 20 years that I won't be lambing, and I truly miss it. I loved heading out to the barn to see what lambs had been born. And as many people realize on the farm, sometimes you need to help mother nature along. Sometimes the lamb or the calf isn't coming out on its own and, Mr. Speaker, there's only one solution: you have to get your hands dirty.

So when I saw that box of Sask Party government budget

addresses — I have to be honest with you — I didn't want to put my hand in there. Sort of like the first time that I had to deal with the business end of a ewe. When I read through all of those addresses and I relived all those opportunities that this government squandered, all the money they wasted, all the debt, and all the people that got hurt . . . I mean I didn't want to but I read through them. And I think I actually learned a thing or two, which I'm going to come back to.

Now for those of you who have never pulled a lamb or a calf, I think it's actually kind of a magical experience. It's hot. It's messy. It's uncomfortable, but it's undoubtedly magical. You know, I've likely pulled 3 or 400 lambs in my time. Once you pull a lamb or calf out, it will allow you to clean its nose off. It shakes its head, and it takes its first few wobbly steps. All that hope and possibility that comes with new life, and something in spite of the mess that I never got sick of.

Yesterday we saw the delivery of the 12th deficit budget from this government. And it was all the mess of calving or lambing with none of the magic and hope of a new lamb or a new calf. And I can tell you the people of this province are sick of a government that can't balance its budget in good times or bad.

So I want to quote from when Premier Gardiner stood opposite in the '34-35 budget address. And he was talking about the challenges of budgeting in a resource-based economy through a depression and then through a war. He said, in three good years the Saskatchewan farmers produce 1.1 billion in wealth. And then in three bad years, with the worst prices in our history, the same Saskatchewan producers only produce \$354 million in wealth. These figures demonstrate that if we had three good years, we could pay off all our debt.

And then he went on to say, when a man gets up in this Chamber and tells me you can never pay your debt back, I tell him that he does not know the facts or he has not lived in Saskatchewan for a long time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, endless debt is not the Saskatchewan way. And so this year we have the Premier, the Minister of Finance getting up here and saying that an \$819 million deficit is a good-news budget. I would hate to see what a bad-news budget is.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I want to also . . . I took out a number of NDP government addresses and I want to read a little section from a budget address that the Hon. Janice MacKinnon gave just right across the Chamber.

In 1995 the Hon. Janice MacKinnon said:

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to present . . . [the people of Saskatchewan] with their first balanced budget in over a decade.

But, Mr. Speaker, what I am presenting here is not . . . one balanced budget. I'm pleased to announce that the budget for the current year . . . will [also] be balanced.

. . . I'm proud to present [the people of Saskatchewan with] our . . . financial plan . . . [for] three more balanced budgets . . .

This is an . . . [accomplishment that we can all take great pride in]. Each and every one of us [from one end of this province to another] has made our contributions to this success.

[And this was all done based upon our] values of caring, compassion, and co-operation.

Mr. Speaker, I remember the crisis that the Devine government left the NDP government. And I remember the collective sense of relief with the people of Saskatchewan when the Hon. Janice MacKinnon stood opposite and told the people of Saskatchewan that the pain caused by the Conservatives' reckless spending was over.

And you know, perhaps I'm being a little bit cheesy here but Janice MacKinnon's words made me think a little bit about new life on the farm — winter was done, financial pain was past, and new hope had emerged.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, I kind of have a bit of a 1989 vibe going on here right now, an old and tired conservative government presenting another enormous deficit without any plan to ever balance a budget in the future. Now I'm going to talk about that box of Sask Party government deficits in a moment.

But first, Mr. Speaker, I saw an ad on Facebook that I thought might be helpful to the members opposite. It was from Credit Canada, and they had a number of testimonials. And one of them read:

I had my assessment today. Randall is going to help me have a brighter future. Having Randall take the time to explain everything to me to make sure that I understood it all. I want to thank Randall for helping me take the first step. From Darlene.

Change is possible, Mr. Speaker. Just ask Darlene.

Looking through those budgets, there's a couple things that really jumped out at me, Mr. Speaker. One was that as you read through those addresses, the government year after year after year promised that they were going to balance the budget and then did not. And the other thing is that the government has articulated no coherent plan to balance in the future.

So I have a quote here from a Sask Party government budget address: it is the circumstances that has given us the opportunity to rethink our approach in governing. And then it continues that the trajectory of spending growth is unsustainable; we must start spending smarter, not just bigger. Mr. Speaker, that was said in this Chamber in 2010 for the 2010-2011 budget address — 16 years and \$25 billion in debt ago.

So my question, Mr. Speaker, for the members opposite: you've had 16 years. When are you going to start spending smarter? Their words not mine, Mr. Speaker.

Thirdly, I want to talk about this government's inability to budget the human costs of their choices and the financial costs of those human choices. Mr. Speaker, I want to . . . I have a short quote from the '17-18 budget address. It says, meeting the challenge required to deliver services, transformational change can be

complex and requires time to take hold. While many of the decisions in the 2007, 2018 budget are difficult, they do strike the right balance.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to remind you that the right balance, according to this government, briefly saw people conducting funerals in their backyards here in Regina. That right balance included massive cuts to supports, just as the addictions problems in our province were on the rise. And many of the addiction problems that we have today, Mr. Speaker, can be directly traced back to that budget in '17-18.

And I just want to give you one quick, little example. Mr. Speaker, I remember talking to the folks at St. Mary's school in Saskatoon about the Aboriginal support workers who were laid off as a result of this budget. And everyone was in tears, not because they were losing their job, but because they knew what would happen as a result of these cuts.

The women who lost their jobs, their job was basically to prevent 11-, 12-, and 13-year-old kids from joining street gangs. Mr. Speaker, there is no better financial return on your investment than preventing a grade 7 from joining a street gang. But sadly young people that those support workers were working with are likely dead, in jail, or in gangs. It's shameful, absolutely shameful.

Mr. Speaker, I started my address talking about hockey, and I want to get back to hockey. Mr. Speaker, another rite of spring is playoff hockey. I think hockey is a great starting point to talk about the myths of the Sask Party government math.

So first of all, let's talk about surpluses and deficits. If we look at the last NDP government, they balanced their budget 11 times and ran five deficits. So let's pretend for a second that they're a hockey team. They would have an 11 and 5 record, or a winning percentage of 68 per cent. So now let's . . . Math is hard for some people, yes. Now the Sask Party government has ran 12 deficits and only managed to balance the budget six times. So if the Sask Party were a hockey team, they would have a record of 6 and 12, or a winning percentage of just 33 per cent, Mr. Speaker. That's horrible.

So let's compare these records to some real hockey teams to really drive home the point I'm trying to make between these two numbers. There is currently no NHL [National Hockey League] team right now that has a winning percentage of 68 per cent, but the team that comes the closest is the best team in the league, the Colorado Avalanche, that has a winning percentage currently of 66 per cent. On the other side, there's only one team in the entire NHL that has a record that is as bad or worse at balancing the budget than the Sask Party, and that's the Vancouver Canucks. Mr. Speaker, it's so plain to see. Would you rather bet on the best team in the league or the worst team in the league?

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about debt now. The Sask Party has governed this province for 15 per cent of our history but has accumulated 72 per cent of our debt. That's horrible. The NDP and CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] has governed our province for 39 per cent of our history, and it has accumulated 3 per cent of our total debt.

So I want you to imagine for a second, Mr. Speaker. You're at a

hockey tournament and there's one team that has had 72 per cent of the goals at the entire tournament scored against them. And you have one goaltender that has had 53 per cent of the goals scored in the entire tournament — scored against one goaltender. My word, Mr. Speaker, what to say. Time to pull the goaltender, perhaps? I don't even know who to compare this record to. Maybe Team Italy, but even Team Italy did better at the Olympics than that. Mr. Speaker, I would personally rather bet on Team Canada any day than Team Italy.

[12:00]

You know, the Sask Party likes to make excuses for their mismanagement, talk about all the challenges that they have faced budgeting. But you know, for the first 102 years of our history, Mr. Speaker, governments have had to contend with the Depression, two world wars, numerous droughts, the first pandemic, the Spanish flu. And all of those governments together couldn't borrow a third of what this government has borrowed.

And that debt has created essentially a structural deficit. So basically, Mr. Speaker, it's like we're a hockey team that starts every single game two points behind. You know, the first billion or \$1.2 billion that we now spend in taxes goes to service the debt. That's almost \$1,000 per person in Saskatchewan that has to pay before one dollar, one dollar can be spent on the things that we actually care about.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to get back to my dream and fishing, as anyone who knows me well knows that I love fishing. I love lots of things about fishing. I love the solitude of a northern lake. I also love — as somebody who sometimes struggles to live in the moment — I love that when you have a fish on the line, Mr. Speaker, everything else disappears. But I also love fishing because it makes me feel connected to my dad, who I lost a couple years ago.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to say how happy I am to be a member of the member from Lakeview's NDP team. You know, we hear the Premier, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Health, and so on compare us to the federal NDP, to the BC NDP, to the Liberals, to various non-profit groups — a whole host of people. They never want to talk about us, and I think that's interesting.

You know, we often hear them talk about what these other groups are in favour of and trying to say that that is the same as us. You know, it's like pipelines. The members opposite say something to the effect of, "But we've liked pipelines longer than you." It's so weird. It's like a kid showing up at the school dance and saying, "But I liked her first." The people of Saskatchewan don't care about that. They just want results.

You know, I would ask the members opposite, in almost the 20 years that they've governed, how many pipelines have they managed to build? How many? You know, I think the reason why they want to talk about other provinces, other groups, is that they know that if people, if the people of Saskatchewan meet the member from Lakeview and meet her team and hear her ideas, that they know that they'll be out of a job.

My dad always used to say when we were fishing and the fish weren't biting, he would say, one more cast and it's time to move the boat. Mr. Speaker, respectfully, I think it's the time for the

people of Saskatchewan to move the boat.

Mr. Speaker, every year, every year we hear that people aren't catching a break from this Sask Party government. Forget about a trophy fish; I think a lot of the people in Saskatchewan would be happy with a tiny perch. Instead this government drags up more debt, more broken promises. It's like snagging a boot, a paint tin, the dock, another boat — everything, everything except for what the people of Saskatchewan actually want, which is good health care, good education, a government that cares, a government that listens, and a government that actually plans out the things that they do before they do them and spends our money wisely.

You know, the people of Saskatchewan have dreams. The people of Saskatchewan dream of patients being treated in beds and not in hallways, of kids learning in classrooms and not in hallways. They dream in the summer of breathing air and not smoke. And they dream of people living in homes and not on the streets.

This budget's priorities do not reflect the dreams of the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. You know, so with that in mind, and thinking of 2028, I say to the Minister of Finance and to the Premier: two more casts and it's time to move the boat.

And with that, I have to say that I will not be supporting the budget. I am proud to second the amendment moved by my good friend and colleague from Regina Mount Royal. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Carrot River Valley.

Terri Bromm: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I acknowledge that I stand here on Treaty 4 territory and the traditional home of the Métis people.

Colleagues, it is my honour to stand before you to second the budget speech from the Minister of Finance, the member from Rosetown-Delisle. I want to begin by expressing congratulations to the Minister of Finance in his budget, for delivering a budget that protects the people of Saskatchewan during the existing geopolitical environment. All provinces have been impacted by tariffs and conflict present in the world today.

Our economy and provincial finances have too been affected like other provinces in Canada. Although our strong and diverse economy here in Saskatchewan has put us in a better position relative to other provinces, careful considerations and decisions have to be made.

Our government is committed to fiscal responsibility and focusing on funding the priorities of Saskatchewan residents while addressing the challenges of a province that is growing quickly. The ongoing requirements for continued infrastructure building must be met responsibly and considered with the operating funds required by our government to continue to provide services that the people of our province deserve and expect.

We are delivering a budget that is, yes, a deficit budget. The forecast deficit is 819 million. And although our total revenue is forecast to be 21.4 billion, an increase of 361 million, our total

expenses are projected at 22.2 billion. In this budget our government chose not to raise taxes and not to renege on our commitments to the people of this province in providing further income tax cuts. We chose instead to protect the people of our province.

Mr. Speaker, today I will highlight investments that benefit the people of Carrot River Valley — the constituency that I am very proud of and honoured to represent — and the people of our entire province. I will answer the question, how does the 2026-27 budget protect the very people of our province?

First though I want to take an opportunity to say thank you to my husband, Ian, Sydney, Logan, and Kailey, along with my extended family and friends. I have made a commitment to work hard and serve the people of Carrot River Valley, which includes some of these very important people in my life. I want to thank them for providing me with the support and love allowing me to honour my commitment.

I also would like to again recognize and thank my two amazing constituency assistants at my MLA office. Shelley Meyer has been diligently serving our constituents for nearly 26 years. Wynonna Mroczo has nicely settled into our great community. Both Shelley and Wynonna are knowledgeable and dedicated to assisting our constituents, communities, and municipalities.

As members of the Legislative Assembly, we engage with people of our constituencies and the province in many ways. We have listened to the people of Saskatchewan, and we have heard the two top concerns are access to health care and affordability. The 2026-27 budget, Mr. Speaker, is a budget that focuses on improved access to health care by investing in the patients-first health care plan. This budget also protects residents, with more than 2.5 billion in annual affordability measures. By continuing our tax-lowering initiatives, the budget does make life more affordable.

The government continues to take measures to ensure Saskatchewan remains the most affordable place in Canada to live, work, raise a family, and start — yes — a business. Mr. Speaker, this budget continues our commitment made in *The Saskatchewan Affordability Act*, implementing the second year of the four-year plan to lower provincial income taxes.

The personal, spousal, equivalent-to-spousal, child tax exemptions, and the seniors' supplement will increase by \$500 each again this year, and the Saskatchewan low-income tax credit will be increased by another 5 per cent — all over and above annual indexation. Tax cuts combined with indexation are providing approximately \$200 million in tax savings this year. A family of four again pays no provincial tax on the first \$65,000 of income, the highest threshold in all of Canada.

As small businesses are the backbone of our economy, we will continue to maintain the small-business tax rate at 1 per cent, supporting our entrepreneurs. This benefits more than 35,000 small businesses. Our budget helps make life more affordable for seniors, families with children, persons with disabilities, caregivers, new graduates, first-time homebuyers, and people renovating their homes. This year will reduce taxes for every resident, family, and small business.

Removing the federal carbon tax charge on SaskPower customers continues, saving an estimated 500 million on their electricity bills this year. These measures are helping with affordability concerns here in our province.

The 2026-27 budget protects health care services by investing in the new patients-first health care plan. Key commitments include increasing the number and expanding the scope of all health care professionals, expanding access to primary care, and increasing the number of and access to urgent care centres.

Other key commitments are continuing to recruit, train, and increase the number of doctors, nurse practitioners, and nurses, and expansion of diagnostic services, like MRI [magnetic resonance imaging], CT [computerized tomography], PET/CT [positron emission tomography/computerized tomography] scans. A record \$8.5 billion investment, an increase of \$393 million, is being provided for health care in our province. People want to access primary care providers — a doctor or nurse practitioner — and improved access to care. They want diagnostics and surgery in a more timely manner.

In our plan are 50 steps outlining our next steps in the patients-first health care plan. I am pleased to highlight some of these with you today. Steps to expand access to primary care include having an unlimited number of nurse practitioner contracts and supporting nurse practitioners to hire allied health professionals for nurse practitioner-led primary care teams. This is the largest nurse practitioner expansion in our provincial history.

Steps to strengthen hospital and ICU [intensive care unit] capacity are ongoing efforts to increase the number of beds available at our Saskatoon hospitals, addressing in-patient capacity pressures for patients, staff, and families. Sixty new permanent, acute in-patient beds between Royal University Hospital and St. Paul's Hospital are funded in this budget. We will complete construction on the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital, adding 57 more beds to provide care to the city and the surrounding area and northern communities of our province.

Better access to acute care programs and services will improve patient outcomes. What this means to the residents of Carrot River Valley and the northeast is that we need to access those acute care facilities. What will happen: faster admissions, reduced delays, and enhanced care for the critically ill patients.

Steps to improve access to surgery will include a targeted reduction in wait times to 90 days. We will expand pooled referral systems province-wide, increasing efficiency and reducing wait times.

There are many steps included in the area of improving recruitment, retention, and training. We are expanding the rural physician incentive program. We are maintaining and expanding the rural and remote recruitment incentive. 516 health care professionals have been hired through this initiative.

Some additional numbers, and there are many, include 2,710 nursing graduates hired since April 2023. A net gain of 2,846 registered nurses since 2020. A net gain of 520 physicians since 2020, which is made up of 223 family physicians and 297 licensed specialists. 392 new and enhanced positions were created to stabilize rural and northern staffing, with 201 new

positions filled, 49 enhanced positions filled, and 65 new registered nurse roles filled across 30 communities.

Strengthening the health care force is the foundation of the Saskatchewan patients-first approach because every investment we make in infrastructure, technology, and innovation depends on having skilled professionals who deliver care.

We are streamlining recruitment by strengthening the mandate of the Saskatchewan health recruitment agency. It was just announced near to home that the community of Carrot River is excited to welcome Dr. Katelyn Postnikoff to the Carrot River primary health care clinic for two days a week, starting very soon in March.

We are adding 20 more undergraduate medical school seats, which will now total 128. The admissions target for these seats at the College of Medicine will be at 95 per cent Saskatchewan residents, prioritizing Saskatchewan students.

We are expanding rural training opportunities by adding new rural family medicine training seats. In partnership with the University of Saskatchewan College of Medicine, five training seats have been added for 2026, where medical residents can complete their family medicine residency. Two are in Nipawin, two are in Melfort, and one in Yorkton. This will expand patient care in our rural communities. I'm excited for this opportunity to have improved long-term recruitment and retention in our area of the province.

[12:15]

Some of the steps for modernizing care delivery and scope of practice include broadening roles for nurse practitioners, pharmacists, speech-language pathologists, dietitians, optometrists, and others, as well as further expanded scope for nurse practitioners, pharmacists, paramedics, and other professions.

Other steps include implementation of virtual primary care for unattached patients, and remote monitoring tools. Also we will work through integrated virtual and in-person care networks, improving patient navigation.

Finally steps to improve safety and quality care will include, among others, a province-wide safety and security review and enhancing security services in at least eight more communities, including Nipawin. By touring hospitals and long-term care facilities, I've had an opportunity with colleagues, including the ministers of Health, to listen to health care workers and administrators, as well as getting feedback from municipal leaders, patients, and family members. We are listening. This plan is a commitment to continue and accelerate what is working, continue to address what is not working, and put patients first. We will create a stronger, more accessible health care system for everyone.

Mr. Speaker, this budget protects those facing mental health and addictions challenges by expanding access to mental health and addictions services. The province has launched virtual access to addiction medication as an option for addiction treatment. Nipawin, along with Lloydminster and Cumberland House Cree Nation and northern villages, are the first communities to launch

the program. Through the supports, the program aims to help reduce substance use and dependence, prevent overdoses, and save lives.

This budget will invest in opening approximately 200 more addiction treatment spaces, fulfilling the government's commitment to create 500 new spaces.

Mr. Speaker, this budget also provides investments into the provincial approach to homelessness and increased funding for Saskatchewan income support and Saskatchewan assured income for disabilities.

This budget protects the education system, students, and schools by investing \$2.5 billion in school operating funding in the '26-27 school year. This year's budget includes funding for 50 additional specialized support classrooms in the province.

Investments into school infrastructure continues to be a priority. The preventative maintenance and renewal program is key to allow boards of education and conseils scolaires to maintain existing facilities. The North East School Division will receive nearly \$2.2 million for this purpose.

We will continue to provide students tax benefits up to \$24,000 through the graduate retention program when students choose to stay and build their futures here in Saskatchewan. In Advanced Education we have our new multi-year post-secondary funding agreement that will provide stability and predictability for post-secondary institutions.

Mr. Speaker, our budget protects Saskatchewan communities by enhancing law enforcement in the province by providing funding to ensure timely access to justice. Investments include funding for a municipal police grant program, an increase of \$50 million for RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] operations and First Nations policing, funding for the municipal police grant program, and the introduction of the new small town and rural policing grant program.

Mr. Speaker, we are appointing four new Court of King's Bench associate judges, three new provincial court judges, six new justices of the peace, and two new Crown prosecutors to ensure timely access to justice.

Our government is doubling the first responders tax credit from 3,000 to \$6,000 in recognition of the incredible work done by our first responders.

We will continue to increase funding to our municipalities. A record nearly \$400 million will be provided in municipal revenue sharing to ensure that rural municipalities, RMs, and urban municipalities — cities, towns, villages, and resort villages — have resources for local projects and services. The source of this predictable, unconditional funding is three-quarters of one point of PST [provincial sales tax] revenue.

This is the only program of its kind in Canada. For example, the city of Regina will receive \$61,062,893. Municipalities in Carrot River Valley will receive approximately \$7.4 million. To highlight a few: Nipawin will receive 1,469,836; the resort village of Tobin Lake, 46,670; and the RM of Connaught, 349,831.

With this budget, Mr. Speaker, the modernization of Saskatchewan's timber royalty system will come into effect. This will ensure the industry remains competitive with other jurisdictions, and this is positive news for Weyerhaeuser in Hudson Bay and Edgewood Forest Products in Carrot River.

The Ministry of Highways budget of 764 million will keep our province's export-based economy moving and connected to the world and keep Saskatchewan drivers safe. Our infrastructure rehabilitation program includes pavement preservation funding, and part of this year's \$213 million budget will include commencement of Highway 9 south of Hudson Bay.

The 2026-27 rural integrated roads for growth plan projects includes \$1 million for bridge construction in the RM of Moose Range and 700,000 for bridge construction in the RM of Connaught.

Over the last number of years, our government has made significant investments to replace aging infrastructure and to increase workforce capacity to deliver vital services required to meet the demands of record population growth.

This year, \$4.3 billion will be invested in essential infrastructure, one of the largest capital budgets in Saskatchewan's history. Eleven million dollars in capital investments are for continued development of 10 new group homes and a new group home in Saskatoon for clients with intellectual disabilities and higher medical needs supports. Of the 10 new group homes for people with intellectual disabilities, one is in Tisdale and a second is in Melfort. Over the next four years, the government will invest \$17.5 billion in capital projects around our province. This includes improvements to health care facilities, schools, municipal infrastructure, highways and roads, provincial parks, and many others.

We now need to ensure those services are sustainable for the long term for those who need them, when and where they need them. It is the strength of our economy that allows us to make these investments in our province.

How have we positioned ourselves to make these investments? Through our commitment and focus on strengthening our economy and through diversification of our trade markets. Our economy: lowest deficit per capita anywhere in Canada, the lowest unemployment rate among provinces, the highest growth in housing starts in Canada.

Our GDP reached an all-time high at nearly \$90.5 billion. We had the highest growth in capital investment. We have an unprecedented 60 large-scale projects with companies investing approximately \$64.2 billion in our province. This will support thousands of jobs and long-term economic activity.

We are protecting our economy and our jobs, despite economic uncertainty around the world. Saskatchewan's economy remains strong and this budget makes investments to protect its future growth.

We are making investments in our economy by developing the province's workforce, ensuring workers have skills and training they need. The budget provides \$125 million for workforce development programs.

We are taking steps to ensure government operates within its means. As retirements and voluntary departures occur over the next two years, the vacancies will be carefully reviewed, allowing us to manage the size of our workforce without eliminating any filled positions and without compromising front-line service.

We are also committed to reviewing programs to ensure efficiencies and outcomes are being maximized. We are managing our finances carefully and continuing to reduce costs where possible.

The 2026-27 Saskatchewan budget demonstrates the government's commitment to maintaining a strong economy, improving access to health care, continuing to lower taxes, controlling spending, and delivering services in a sustainable manner. It is about ensuring a stable and sustainable future for our province while making life more affordable, supporting people and businesses, and investing in services and infrastructure.

We will continue to do the work. We have chosen not to raise taxes; we chose to lower taxes. We chose to protect our people, and we are well positioned to weather this current environment.

In closing, I will second the motion brought forward by the Minister of Finance and I will not be supporting the opposition's amendment. Thank you.

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

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now it's time for a reality check. You know, last year's budget, Mr. Speaker, said there would be a \$12 million surplus, and now unbelievably that surplus has turned into a \$1.2 billion deficit. I noted earlier with some amazement my colleague from Dakota-Arm River, the Premier, the Finance minister displaying a certain level of what I would only term as excited delirium over their budget. You know, excited delirium would be the kind of state, euphoric state a person gets into when they're in the midst of a mental health crisis. And it certainly seems like this government is in a crisis when it comes to this budget.

I'd also like to introduce maybe another word to this Assembly, Mr. Speaker: "centuple." Centuple — that's 100 times, Mr. Speaker. That's the amount that this government and this Premier were off the mark with last year's budget. They were off by a centuple.

Now I remember when the Finance minister said the budget was just a snapshot in time — his words. He was in this Chamber when he said it, and he repeated it many times, Mr. Speaker. That is, by the way, exactly what it is not supposed to be. It's supposed to be an accurate forecast that can be relied on by the people of this province, by businesses, by industry and yes, by our bankers.

And now the Finance minister's announcing a deficit this next upcoming year of \$819 million. So tell me, Mr. Speaker, is that just a snapshot? Knowing the history of this Premier and this Finance minister, we can all be assured that this snapshot deficit is just the floor. Who knows how much higher it's going to go.

Last year we put the Sask Party budget through the shredder, and that's exactly where it belonged. This year I think we may as well just tie a block of concrete to this budget and toss it overboard because, like the province's finances, it'll just be sinking us deeper into debt. Failure to project accurate numbers has consequences, Mr. Speaker, but this government is pretending that there aren't any and there ain't going to be any.

Last year's budget had no contingency, for example, for tariffs. And just like that budget, this year's budget also has no contingency built into it to account for the range of scenarios that could have a devastating impact on this province's fortunes. A passing mention on the potential negative impact of tariffs and a worsening world economy does not constitute a contingency plan.

We see what's happening in the world today and the turmoil being caused in the markets, and this government just says, well we'll worry about that some other time. Well, Mr. Speaker, now is the time to worry about it. Now is the time to contemplate the effects of these things and lay it out in the budget. That's what a budget's supposed to do.

So what we'd like to see in this budget, Mr. Speaker, is some kind of contingency plan, especially in respect to this government's addiction to special warrant spending. That's the kind of spending, Mr. Speaker, that flies under the radar and isn't subject to scrutiny by the duly elected members of this Assembly. It's a carte blanche for this government to go on a wild spending spree with no oversight.

Special warrant spending this past year was some \$1 billion. I think it was about the same the year before and perhaps the year before that. So why doesn't this Finance minister put this contingency in his budget now? Or is he worried that his snapshot of the province's real finances is going to look even worse?

Well how about we just do it for him right now, shall we? Let's just get it out of the way, Mr. Speaker. Let's just add on another billion dollars to his \$819 million deficit for this year. Heck, we'll even gift him a little more wiggle room and we'll call it an even \$2 billion deficit for this next year. There you go, see. What are the odds that my forecast of this government's finances are better than the Finance minister's or the Premier's? I'd say, looking at the history of this government's perpetual inability to balance its books, they're pretty darn good.

This year's budget also shows that spending on health care is flatlining. That adjusted for inflation, this year's budget will actually be a cut. You can't compare this year's budget to last year's budget because that number was totally unreliable. You have to compare it to what this government has actually spent, and the amount allotted for this year is essentially a flat line.

And for the people of Prince Albert who are hoping this Premier and this government were actually going to keep their promise to pay the full costs of the hospital expansion, this budget provides them no relief. What a Charlie Brown move on the part of this government, Mr. Speaker. Make it sound like they were going to keep their commitment to the people of that city but, like Lucy, at the last second they yanked the football away. So much for a new hospital in Yorkton too. I guess they'll keep working on their concept of a plan over there. Don't move with any urgency over

there, folks; I wouldn't want anyone to get hurt. I guess, Mr. Speaker, we'll all just have to be patient first.

[12:30]

Education sees a slight increase from what was actually spent last year. But none of this provides for the current needs in an education system that is yet to recover from the devastating cuts made several budgets ago by this government.

Let's move on to the rising rate hikes at SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance]. Not only is this Premier raising car insurance rates on people who absolutely cannot afford it right now, he's also going to raise the fees for registering vehicles, for driver's licences, and pushing their deductibles for those vehicles to almost \$1,000.

Despite telling us on the floor of this Assembly that this government wasn't contemplating a rate hike at SaskPower, the Premier is raising power rates even before they've put it before the rate review panel.

And I have to wonder, Mr. Speaker. I have to wonder, does this government have contempt for the people of the province? Does it have contempt for the processes that are supposed to be in place to protect them from a government who administers on a whim and by the seat of their pants? Is SaskTel next? Is SaskEnergy next? Who's to say?

The minister of the Crowns can't even be bothered to come to a meeting to account for how our Crowns are being run, never mind holding a committee meeting to review the yearly reports from the last three years. He's also slapped on piles of additional fees, everything from tires to hunting and fishing licences. This Premier and this Finance minister plan to rake in more money from the PST than in the history of this province, and yet their math ain't mathin'.

This is a government that wastes the boom during the boom, and now it's addicted to taxes, fees, ad hoc and special warrant spending, and apparently a whole hunk of debt. Saskatchewan doesn't have a revenue problem, Mr. Speaker. It has a waste and mismanagement problem. This government's become grossly addicted to wasting taxpayer money with private contracts, sole-source contracts, everything from surgeries to exams to diagnostics to nursing, highly paid consultants, and perhaps for water bombers. The debt under this Premier has more than doubled. What's this budget telling the people of this province is, is that it's no longer interested in living within its means.

It's a full-out admission, Mr. Speaker: the math is too hard, spending more than they bring in is okay, that it's all sustainable. Failure to properly manage every ministry has led to out-of-control spending with no oversight or reviews. They don't do or even plan to do a value-for-money analysis in any of these departments.

Now folks on that other side, Mr. Speaker, are all fine folks. No issue with them personally. But I have an honest question for them. And to every minister on that side: what do you guys do for a living? You're collecting the paycheques. You're getting paid the big bucks to run the province, but who's minding the store? Where's the accountability for taxpayer dollars, or at least

getting value for taxpayer money? Are you even trying to prove . . .

Speaker Goudy: — Just going to remind the member that you're speaking through the Chair.

Hugh Gordon: — Are they even trying to improve the health care and education systems? Because it sure doesn't look like it. The sad reality, Mr. Speaker, is we have a government on cruise control.

At what point does this government think the financial train wreck's going to get back on track? What's this government waiting for? Is there some kind of fairy godmother in Ottawa coming to save this government? Federal transfers are the second-largest source of revenue for this government. By the way, if you're planning on separating Saskatchewan from Canada, you might want to ask Uncle Mark if we can afford it.

At what stage does revenue equal spending? There's no diary date. There's no timeline. Quite frankly the commitment is suspect. It's like the Premier and the Finance minister have finally undone the last notch of their belts and are happy to let their bellies flop onto the dinner table. What a relief, never having to worry about paying for their deficits or debt, never to worry about dollars that have been wasted. That's what taxpayers are for. A never-ending line of credit on the taxpayer's dime.

Oops, just dropped another 900 million on SaskPower. Don't worry. The Premier and the Minister of the CIC will just hike your rates to cover the cost. Billions in unscrutinized special warrant spending. Don't worry. We'll just add it to the debt for future generations to pay. Just like this government's so-called carbon tax-free policy — you know, the one where they're just going to stick it to the taxpayer, adding it to the provincial debt. All the while the interest on that debt owed to Ottawa continues to accrue.

Anybody in the private sector knows full well when spending exceeds revenue, what do they do. They go over everything with a fine-tooth comb and they stop the bleeding. They cauterize the wound. They find savings and cut the wasteful spending so they can make fruitful investments in their businesses.

We've all heard the Premier and the Finance minister crowing about how good the province's net debt-to-GDP ratio is. Second best in the country, they say. Well, Mr. Speaker, that might be for now. Remember it's just a snapshot . . .

Speaker Goudy: — I'm sorry. I'm going to remind you you're speaking through the Chair. You may need to shift your wording but please, through the Chair.

Hugh Gordon: — Well, Mr. Speaker, that might be for now. Remember it's just a snapshot in time. But like an addicted gambler they keep going double or nothing at the craps table hoping the ball will land on their number this time.

If we are in such a good financial position, why aren't we at least trying to live within our means? If our credit rating is so good, why do we keep betting the farm on it? Why are we spending more money on interest payments than we spend on most government departments? We spend three times more now in

interest payments than we do on policing. No wonder our crime rates are so high.

The last thing you do when you're in a good financial position, Mr. Speaker, is to make yourself more indebted to the banks, to Bay Street, or to Wall Street. You get them off your back or you at least try to. This is something the taxpayers of Saskatchewan need their government to do, to take control because no one else is going to do it.

Too much is riding on this government to get its priorities straight and to stop the bleeding. A billion or two here, a few hundred million there; \$100 million overpay on a sole-source contract here, a spiteful non-sensical tire contract there; privatization by stealth; millions to high-priced consultants — has all led to \$1.2 billion worth of interest payments for the people of this province. This Premier has to stop gambling with other people's money.

Unlike some members on that side, the people of this province don't want to go into bankruptcy, Mr. Speaker. That almost happened with the last conservative government.

In closing I will say our promise to the people of Saskatchewan is this: when we form government in 2028 we will clean up this mess, we will balance the books, and we will make our vital services the priority. Because, Mr. Speaker, that is what the people of this province deserve, not some government coasting into debt.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the budget. And I will be supporting the motion by my good friend from Regina Mount Royal. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Community Safety.

Hon. Michael Weger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to start, Mr. Speaker, by taking a moment to congratulate the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance on his second budget. And I just want to extend my gratitude to the minister, members of the treasury board, and all the staff that have worked so hard to put this budget together this year.

Mr. Speaker, on December 11th I received the honour of being appointed the Minister of Community Safety and the Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency. I'm very thankful for this opportunity to further serve the residents of Saskatchewan in this capacity, and it is an appointment that I assure you I take very seriously.

With this appointment I have been introduced to a whole new work family, and I want to acknowledge how much they are appreciated. Mr. Speaker, I'll start with my chief of staff, Ryan Bellamy. Ryan and I built a trusting relationship pretty early on, and it was solidified on a drive that we took to Denare Beach on February 5th. When we hit pouring, freezing rain a couple hours north of Prince Albert, Ryan trusted me to keep us on the road as we slid along some of the iciest highways I've ever driven. And I trusted Ryan to just hang on and to not try to convince me to turn around.

Also in my office I have Ariann, Shailja, Isho, and Dustin, and

they offer me great support day in and day out, including some entertaining questions during question period preparation. And I thank them for their commitment and dedication to the ministry.

I also want to acknowledge my deputy minister Denise Macza and all of the assistant deputy ministers for the time and effort they have put into trying to bring me up to speed in this ministry and put me in the best possible position to make well-informed decisions that will protect the people of Saskatchewan.

I also want to thank my family for the extra support that I need to carry out my ministerial and MLA duties. My wife, Cara, is my political sounding board. She keeps me updated on all things politics when I'm in meetings all day or on the road and I can't catch the evening news.

I also want to thank my children for their continued support. If anyone was able to visit my office reception on budget day, they would have been able to witness my daughter Meaghan and Abigail in action as they worked the crowd. And next time I am sure Bennett and Teresa will gladly have their turn.

To my parents, who see me more now on the legislative channel than they do in person, I know you are watching. I appreciate your support and I will keep trying to conduct myself in a manner that will make you proud.

Mr. Speaker, this was my first opportunity to be involved in the budget process as a member of cabinet. And I need to maintain cabinet confidentiality, Mr. Speaker, so I'll spare the specific details. But it is fair to say that I didn't get off to a great start at cabinet finalization. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say that that was the most difficult day I have had in this building. But I learned from that day, and life is all about learning lessons and coming back the next day with the knowledge and experience so you can do your job better.

It is also hard for me to put into words, Mr. Speaker, to explain just how lucky we are as members of government and how lucky we are as residents in the province of Saskatchewan to have access to the experience and knowledge of the two individuals that sit in the middle of this front row. And they sit at the head of the table during budget finalization. So, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Finance and to the Premier, I say thank you. Thank you for guiding us towards a budget that we can all be proud of.

And to all of my members in this caucus, thank you for your hard work, for sharing your years of experience and knowledge during this process. My first cabinet finalization taught me that preparing a provincial budget is a very, very delicate balancing act. It involves weighing and prioritizing all of the good and great ideas that each minister brings to the table from their ministry, and then recognizing that no provincial government has an endless ability to spend money.

This year, Mr. Speaker, the additional difficulty was that the province of Saskatchewan, like all other provinces in Canada, has taken an economic hit as a result of tariffs imposed by the US [United States] and other global economic headwinds. And as a government, we had to make a choice. We could raise taxes and we could cut services, or we could protect Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm so proud to say that we chose to protect Saskatchewan.

Let's talk about why we were able to make this decision to protect Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, we have the strongest economy in Canada, and we are better positioned than most provinces to deal with the US tariffs because much of what we export to the US thankfully doesn't attract tariffs.

We also have the ability to expand our trade around the world. Approximately 65 per cent of what we produce in this province is exported to countries around the world. After the US, our top trading partners for exports are China, India, Brazil, and Indonesia, and the list goes on.

And these trade relationships, they didn't just appear out of thin air, Mr. Speaker. They're the result of years of planning, the establishment of nine international trade offices, and the use of trade consultants that provide guidance, support, and advocacy for our province on the international scale, steps taken by this government that were often criticized by the opposition. But this government had a plan, and the plan has worked.

These relationships are also very much the result of the hard work, experience, and knowledge of both of our current minister of trade, export, and development and that of his predecessor, the current Minister of Crown Investments Corporation.

[12:45]

In Saskatchewan we produce the food, fuel, and fertilizer that the world needs, and we have an exceptional ability to export these products out of province. But, Mr. Speaker, we also have an exceptional ability to attract private capital investment into this province with the expectation that it will grow to the amount of \$13.6 billion in 2026.

And with the recent announcement of the Bell data centre south of Regina, we now sit with a total of 60 large-scale investment projects across this province that have been committed to by private companies, with a total potential investment that exceeds \$62 billion. This, Mr. Speaker, is unlike anywhere else in the world.

Now let's talk about protecting Saskatchewan communities. I'm always happy to review the amount of municipal revenue sharing allocated to each particular municipality and highlight how those funds are directly linked to the performance of our provincial economy. For this year, the '26-27 budget is expecting to see a record \$392.4 million in municipal revenue sharing, which is an 8 per cent increase of \$30.7 million. This funding provides predictable, unconditional funding to Saskatchewan cities, towns, villages, rural municipalities, and northern communities.

I was so proud to be able to attend a city of Weyburn council meeting this past year to present a cheque for \$2.7 million. And I look forward to delivering an even larger cheque this year to Mayor Richards and his councillors. This year that cheque will include an additional \$200,000, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my home community of Weyburn is also celebrating the reduction of the required community contribution for the construction of the new Weyburn General Hospital from 20 per cent down to 10 per cent. Since 2009, the Weyburn & District Hospital Foundation has been working towards a \$300 million fundraising goal. With the community contribution

now reduced to \$14.86 million, the foundation has confirmed that it has successfully raised the amount for the construction and will continue to raise funds to secure essential equipment and amenities for the new hospital.

In response to the reduction of the required community contribution, Mayor Jeff Richards had this to say, and I quote:

We are grateful for the Government of Saskatchewan's decision to reduce the community share for a new hospital construction and make the road ahead more achievable for communities like Weyburn.

And foundation board Chair Jeff Hayward said:

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Premier, cabinet, and the provincial government as well as the city of Weyburn, local municipalities, businesses, and individuals whose support made this achievement possible. Reducing the community contribution from 20 per cent to a 10 per cent cost-share is exciting news not only for the new Weyburn General Hospital project, but for the province as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, the constituents of Weyburn-Bengough anxiously look forward to the opening of the new Weyburn General Hospital. I applaud my predecessor, the Hon. Dustin Duncan, on all of his advocacy and work towards this important capital project. And, Mr. Speaker, when this government commits to building a hospital, this government builds a hospital.

Health care spending is a very high priority for myself and my constituents. I continue to receive calls for strong health care funding, and this year's record investment of \$8.47 billion continues to answer that call. This funding is building on the commitment to ensure every resident has a primary health care provider by 2028, which will be achieved in part through the largest nurse practitioner expansion in provincial history. Nurse practitioners are playing a very important role in providing health care services in my constituency, and I look forward to meeting with a couple of these nurse practitioners in the near future to discuss their experiences.

I have also presented a previous member's statement on WeyStrong, the cancer support group that formed in Weyburn and supports southeast Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, previously, on February 4th, it was my honour to tour the Regina breast health centre with members of WeyStrong, including the founder, Lisa Vick, along with our Minister of Rural and Remote Health. We toured phase 1 and we had a sneak peek of the expansion.

This budget includes a \$397,000 increase to support the operations at both the Regina and Saskatoon breast health centres. This investment supports what the women of WeyStrong continue to advocate for, and that is timely access to breast health diagnostic services, reducing wait times for diagnosis and treatment, and support for better patient outcomes.

The last highlight with respect to health care that I want to touch on is the evolution of the health human resources action plan, which moves into a new phase with ambitious career opportunities for people in Saskatchewan. It is important to recognize that when there are staffing pressures in the system,

the answer is not to discourage people from working in the health care sector. Instead we are empowering and expanding the mandate of the Saskatchewan Healthcare Recruitment Agency. Mr. Speaker, if a young person were to ask me about pursuing a career in health care in Saskatchewan, I would say, absolutely. And, Mr. Speaker, you can quote me on that.

Mr. Speaker, our budget is titled *Protecting Saskatchewan*, and as the Minister of Community Safety, I'm confident that we are making investments in policing that will protect our residents from crime and give residents the assurance that we are committed to keeping them safe.

In this budget the RCMP receives increased funding of \$50 million for a total of \$310 million, which includes \$26 million for First Nations policing. In my role as Minister of Community Safety, I have had some great discussions with the assistant commissioner, Robin McNeil, with the RCMP "F" Division, and I have all of the confidence in the world that he's committed to the RCMP and to this province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I also had the opportunity on February 16th to attend graduation at the RCMP Depot Division. It was a great experience. It started with graduation, it went on to a tour of Depot Division, and it ended with a great celebration and a supper to cap off the graduation. I want to extend my sincere thanks to the commanding officer, Assistant Commissioner Mike Lokken, for the great hospitality that he showed my family and I on that day.

Mr. Speaker, I've talked about this with some of my colleagues, but my son is considering — he's 15 — but he's considering a career in law enforcement. And he was able to come along on that tour of Depot Division, and he's very excited about the possibility of possibly some day attending Depot Division. I think the biggest thing he was excited about was unlimited chocolate milk, Mr. Speaker.

But the tour of Depot Division taught me that we are training first-class police officers. I would put them up against any police officers anywhere in the world, Mr. Speaker. And every police officer with the RCMP is trained right here in Regina, Saskatchewan at Depot Division.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk about community safety in rural Saskatchewan. And what we're doing as a government in this budget is we're supporting the small town and rural police grant program. The support we're providing is \$190,000, Mr. Speaker. That works out to \$10,000 for each officer involved in the small town and rural policing grant program. This program will enable local police services to support the RCMP and expand their proactive community-based policing efforts to respond to the unique needs of rural communities.

And man, was I surprised this morning, Mr. Speaker, when I get to work and on my desk I already have a letter from Chief Robert Duttchen from the Corman Park Police Service, Mr. Speaker. He said great things about what we're doing, Mr. Speaker. And I'll just quote one part of the letter. He says:

We sincerely appreciate the confidence your ministry has placed in local policing partners. You have my assurance that CPPS will continue to work diligently to demonstrate

that this trust is well placed. On behalf of the members of Corman Park Police Service, please accept our genuine appreciation.

So I thank the chief for that letter.

I have so many good things to talk about on community safety, Mr. Speaker, but I want to save some for question period, so I'm going to move on to the ending of my speech.

At the beginning of my speech I briefly discussed that life is all about learning lessons and coming back the next day with knowledge and experience so that you can do your job better. And I hope that the ending of this speech will provide an opportunity for some of my members of this Assembly to learn a life lesson.

Mr. Speaker, I'll start by referring to an excerpt from the Code of Ethical Conduct for the Members of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, which was adopted on October 14th, 2015 and signed by all of us. And as it is my intention to repeat what is stated in the Code of Ethical Conduct, I will follow the standard practice of indicating that I will be quoting the Code of Ethical Conduct.

And the quote goes as follows:

To our colleagues in this Assembly, we owe loyalty to shared principles, respect for differences, and fairness in political dealings.

We believe that the fundamental objective of public office is to serve our fellow citizens with integrity in order to improve the economic and social conditions of all Saskatchewan people.

We reject political corruption and will refuse to participate in unethical political practices which tend to undermine the democratic traditions of our province and its institutions.

Mr. Speaker, I did not draft those words but when I speak them, I mean them and I believe them with every ounce of my being. Mr. Speaker, up until Monday, March 16th, when I have sat in my chair in this room, an honour that I do not take lightly, I have been very confident that all of my elected colleagues in this Assembly, in government and in opposition, believe in loyalty to shared principles, respect for differences, and fairness in political dealings. I have been very confident that we are all in this room with the common goal of improving the economic and social conditions of all Saskatchewan people. We may have differing opinions on how to get there, but we have respect for those differing opinions.

Mr. Speaker, there was a very unfortunate and hate-filled email that was drafted and sent out recently by an employee of the NDP opposition. It is a shocking email, Mr. Speaker, and it is very unfortunate that it has shaken my confidence in my colleagues on the opposite side of the floor.

But I am ever an optimist, Mr. Speaker, so as I look across at my opposition members — previous teachers, small-business owners, lawyers, and a police officer; Mr. Speaker, they are husbands, wives, mothers, and fathers — I have to believe that

these legislative colleagues disagree with the content of that email.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not asking members to publicly oppose a policy of their party. I'm asking them to condemn the specific and clear direction of hate towards fellow elected colleagues of this Assembly, so that we can move forward and improve the economic and social conditions of all Saskatchewan people. And now every member of the opposition will have the opportunity to do just that in their upcoming budget replies.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that I can refer to the Premier, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation, and the Minister of Health as my friends and very highly respected colleagues. And I'm also very proud and it comes with great honour to say that I will be supporting the budget as presented and I will not support any amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina South Albert.

Aleana Young: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Up against the clock here, so perhaps I'll just take these few seconds to recognize a guest who's joined us here on the floor of the Assembly, baby Ian Breckner, who I'm desperate to hold.

Children are something to be celebrated, Mr. Speaker. I know there are many, many members who have welcomed babies and children into their families, including the member from Riversdale. And they're something to be celebrated; they're not something to be attacked in the lowest mark of Canadian politics in an election campaign. We should celebrate and protect children, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — It now being 1 p.m., this Assembly stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.]

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