



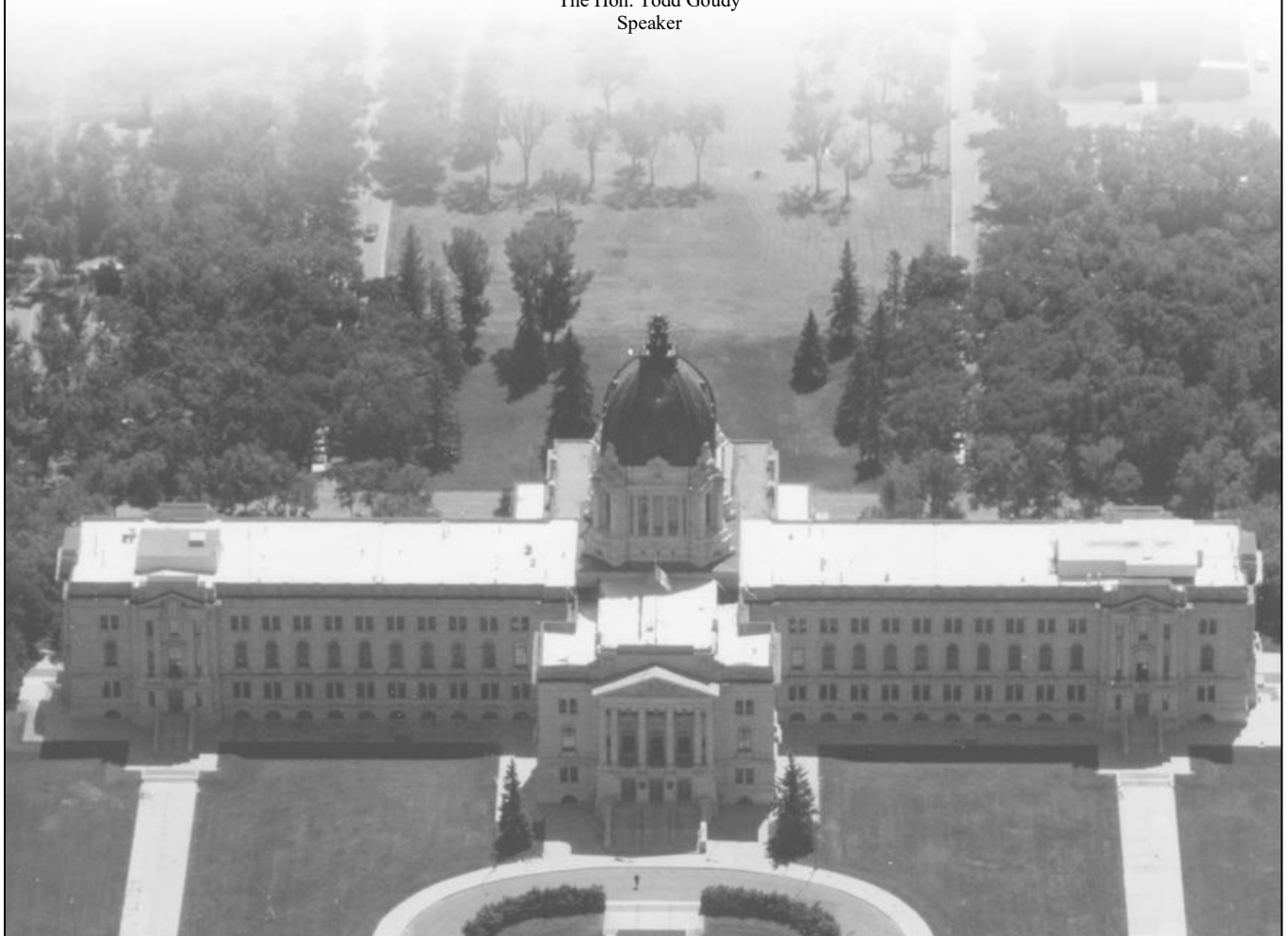
SECOND SESSION — THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE

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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Laliberte , Leroy — Athabasca (NDP)	

Standings

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

Clerks-at-the-Table

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Principal Clerk — Danielle Humble-Selinger

Clerk Assistant — Miranda Gudereit

Sergeant-at-Arms — Lyall Frederiksen

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[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

Speaker Goudy: — All right. It now being 7 p.m., we'll resume the Assembly.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

BUDGET DEBATE

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

Speaker Goudy: — Who's up? Do you go by your town or your . . . I recognize the member from Kelvington-Wadena.

Hon. Chris Beaudry: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Oh, thank you. Thank you. Before I begin, I want to let out some more thank yous I guess since that's how we're starting. And I want to thank my family for their help and their support through not just this year, but probably my entire life. I don't think I'd be here if it wasn't for them. I think that's how the science works.

But first I want to thank my wife because she is the biggest support I've got in my life. I think I even heard last night, "She's a heck of a lot better than you." And I would agree with that, agree with that fully.

And I also want to thank my children, even though I've got to apologize to them for making them cry this weekend for not having the chicken coop clean and for cancelling our ski trip to Fernie. I think the ski trip's back on because I seen that the chicken coop is now clean. So that was wonderful to see over supper that the baby chicks are going to have a place to brood. And that's what I like to see.

I have a few other thank yous though, Mr. Speaker. One is actually to the Rustad family. They're good friends of ours. They're actually on my board. But more than that, when my wife has to take care of the farm, the seed company, and everything while I'm gone, they watch our children for us. And so, you know, it's not only our family, it's our communities as well that keep us supported. It's our community, our province. If we didn't have that, I don't know where we would be.

I also want to thank Nancy out in the office in Wynyard. She holds things down there. Been travelling a lot of icy roads. We've had some wicked weather in Kelvington-Wadena this winter. And she's doing a bang-up job there keeping the people served well.

I also want to thank the folks in the office upstairs. When I came in, Debbie would say to me every day, she's like, "You're really bad. You're really bad." She's like, "More people are organized than you that I've worked with. You're too fly-by-night." And it was really hard to give up control of my calendar and my time to someone else, and so that is . . . I don't know if I'll thank her

again for that, because that was pretty tough.

But to everyone else in the office, to Rushang, Rajen, Austin, and Dan, they've been the best. They've been great to work with and hopefully it continues. Depends if I keep being fly-by-night or not. We'll see.

Also want to thank my DM [deputy minister] and his team. And since that's enough thank yous, I think, we're going to get into 'er.

Now one more time from my wife and Sean, sorry, the Minister of SaskBuilds' wife, because he's coming . . . He has to speak later, but I'm pretty sure he'll forget again this year. So thank you to the Minister of SaskBuilds' wife.

Now last year, Mr. Speaker, I spoke about the Finance minister's bougette. And I think that made him very uncomfortable to talk about a pouch which holds numbers and which holds other content, so we won't talk about the Finance minister's bougette anymore. We're going to get into his budget . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No. Well, only one line.

Now budgets are often framed in numbers. Columns, tables, deficits, and surpluses. But a budget is never just numbers. A budget is a statement of belief. It tells us what a government values. It tells us what a province chooses to protect, and it tells us what kind of future we believe our people can build together. This budget tells a story of confidence — confidence in Saskatchewan, confidence in our workers, in our communities, and in our industries, and confidence in the people who wake up every morning and do the work that keeps this province moving.

But before we talk about dollars, growth rates, projects, and programs, I want to start with something deeper. In this Chamber we often speak about the same ideas: equality, justice, freedom. We all say these words. We all return to them. We all appeal to them, but I sometimes wonder something. Are we actually saying the same thing? Because each of us walks into this Assembly with a different history, a different upbringing, a different set of experiences, a different map of reality. And because our maps are different, the words we use can carry very different meanings, even words that seem straightforward such as partnership, sustainability, fairness, responsibility, opportunity.

We may use the same language, but we do not always mean the same thing. So when we debate a budget, we're not only debating numbers, we're debating meaning. What does equality mean? What does justice mean? What does fairness mean? What does partnership mean? And how do we value the work we do as individuals? Because that's the question that matters, Mr. Speaker. How do we value our work as individuals?

Do we see work simply as a transaction, a paycheque, a line item, a labour input? Or do we see work as something more? A contribution, a calling, a responsibility, a way of serving people around us, a way of shaping our communities, a way of leaving something better than we found it.

For me, those words begin with respect, respect for the people who built and build this province: the farmer seeding a field in May, the mechanic fixing equipment at 2 in the morning during

harvest; the nurse caring for a patient in Wadena; the paramedic answering a call in the middle of the night; the miner working deep underground; the forestry worker far from home; the oil-field worker in the cold before sunrise; the parent driving all winter so their child can play a sport, learn discipline, and belong to something bigger than themselves.

These are not abstract people in an economic model. These are the people of Saskatchewan and they take pride in what they do. That pride matters, because when people take pride in their work, they take responsibility for it. They protect it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, our greatest resource has never only been what lies beneath our feet. Our greatest resource has always been the character of the people above it. And, Mr. Speaker, I do not apologize for the industries that built this province and neither do those who have understood for decades what has built this province. We take pride in them.

Over the past year, I had the privilege of seeing that pride alive and well across my constituency of Kelvington-Wadena. This winter, the Jansen Jets won their first-ever Wheatland Senior Hockey League Championship.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I've spent a good portion of my life around hockey. I know how difficult it is to win. And I know that winning a title in senior hockey is no easy thing. Senior hockey is special because the work doesn't end with the players on the ice. There are people running the gate, people on the boards, selling 50/50s, cleaning the dressing rooms, finding sponsors, making sure the lights stay on and the team stays alive. And on a lot of teams, Mr. Speaker, that's probably one or two people.

Now starting from scratch and building a championship takes determination, culture, and sacrifice. It takes a community that believes the effort is worth it. So congratulations to the players, the coaches, and volunteers. And congratulations especially to the people behind the scenes who do the harder, quieter work that makes a championship possible. That title belongs to the whole community.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I also had a chance to attend the Kuroki Ugly Sweater Christmas Party, and every time I go to Kuroki it's like you're being transported back in time. Mr. Speaker, it's neighbours visiting, families laughing, stories being told across tables. No one pretending that it's too much work to stack chairs and clean up at the end of the night. That old-school Saskatchewan community feeling that needs to come back in more places, because it reminds us that communities are not held together by slogans. They're held together by habits, familiarity, and shared memory.

Mr. Speaker, this winter we were also able to attend two different curling bonspiels — the Naicam Farmers & Friends Bonspiel and the Fosston farmers spiel. In Fosston I saw something remarkable: a community of about 40 people working together to keep the rink open. Forty people. Think about that, Mr. Speaker. That takes pride, pride in tradition, in community, and pride in the work required to keep something alive.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Naicam farmers spiel was also a great time. I had the opportunity to curl with the Minister of SaskBuilds, the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly]

from Carrot River Valley, and the Minister of Trade's chief of staff. Now I'm not sure if we could call what the Minister of SaskBuilds was doing "curling," Mr. Speaker. He put in a valiant effort, a valiant effort, but he couldn't make one game and was shown up by my 10-year-old daughter. Now that being said, she does have good form — which was better than the three of us — when she would throw a rock, Mr. Speaker. But it was good to see someone whose most athletic exercise is watching *WrestleMania*.

Speaking of curling, Mr. Speaker, I also had the chance to watch my three kids curl in youth spiels this winter — one in Archerwill, one in Naicam, and one in Saint-Front. And, Mr. Speaker, the rinks were full. More than 50 kids at each event. I mean, 50 young people learning a sport, learning discipline, and learning how to represent something bigger than themselves.

And when I asked my three girls the other day what their favourite sport was, two of the three said curling. And that tells me something important: that these traditions are alive and well. They are not fading. They're being passed down.

Now my youngest daughter, Mr. Speaker, she decided to play hockey this year, and I found myself back in familiar territory — at the rink. We spent a lot of time at U7 [under 7] tournaments this winter, and I was lucky enough that all the ones I attended were in my own constituency. That gave me an opportunity to connect with constituents for an entire day at a time — in the stands, at the canteen, by the boards, on the bench, and between games, in those moments where people are just themselves. Those conversations matter, Mr. Speaker, because that is where you hear the texture of real life.

Another amazing opportunity to see the constituents and my friends was at the Travis Braaten memorial tournament. The group behind that tournament has raised more than \$40,000 since its inception. All this is a labour of love for a fallen brother and friend, Travis. That's Saskatchewan at its best, Mr. Speaker. Love expressed through work. Grief turned into service.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that story, it reminds me of the story of master Shaku Soyen. And the great master, he loved to take a walk after dinner. As he was walking through town he could hear wailing from a house close by. He went in, and seeing that the grandfather of the family had passed, he sat quietly in the corner and decided to grieve with the rest of the family. When the father turned to him and said, "Even a master like you. I thought you would be beyond this. Beyond this grief, beyond this pain." And master Shaku Soyen said, "It is because I grieve that I am beyond it."

That story, Mr. Speaker, that's what happens at this tournament. We gather for two days, we laugh, we play hockey, and at the end of the tournament we bring out the trophy. And it's in those moments with the family, with Travis's parents, his widow, and his brothers and sisters, that we grieve. As Stephen Levine would say, "We touch the unattended sorrow." A community caring for someone, carrying someone forward by caring for one another.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you also cannot beat a good trade show. Towns big and small host them, and after a while you start to know the vendors by name. That's part of the charm. Our family favourites include the Rose & Pine products, and of course by my belly, Diane's Donuts.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you see the makers, the growers, the bankers, the crafters. The side hustles that become full businesses. The families trying to build something with their own hands. You see pride in work made tangible.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of my other favourite things I got to experience this winter was the snowmobiling season. We had an abundance of snow this year, and I'll admit that I'm ready for a little more yet. And this also means that the rallies have been well attended, from Quill Lake to Kelvington, Clair to Porcupine, and Jansen to Saint-Front.

And, Mr. Speaker, Saint-Front's a perfect Saskatchewan story. A town of about 12 people hosted close to 200 sleds and raised \$24,000 — almost \$2,000 per resident, Mr. Speaker. This is an incredible community effort by any standard. Now with all that snow, Mr. Speaker, it's going to help our agriculture producers. Adequate moisture at seeding is foundational to a strong crop year. It's the beginning that makes later strength possible.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the snow, which makes for a strong start and creates later strength, is very similar to this government — a strong start that creates the space for later growth like you've seen with the hospitals, schools, long-term care facilities, and highways we've built. A strong start matters. A foundation matters because what we build later depends on what we build first.

[19:15]

Mr. Speaker, health care remains one of the most important responsibilities of any government. And through the patients-first program, our government is focused on improving access, building workforce strength, and modernizing care in Saskatchewan. The plan says clearly that the goal is the right care in the right place at the right time.

One of the most important parts of that plan for rural Saskatchewan is the expansion of the nurse practitioner care. Now, Mr. Speaker, just last Friday at a meeting in Foam Lake, a phrase was said that has stayed with me: "this nurse practitioner program is going to revolutionize rural health care." I believe that, Mr. Speaker.

This makes me think of my kids' former babysitter and my girls' current softball coach. Both were going to school to become nurses. The opportunity to have a nurse practitioner, who my children will have known their whole lives, move home and be my family's primary care practitioner is so welcoming. How reassuring to have a local family friend be given the opportunity to come home and serve their community for the next generation. There's something deeper at work in moments like that, Mr. Speaker, a quiet kind of pride. Not pride in the sense of ego, but pride as a sense of belonging, a sense of knowing where you come from and feeling called to give something back.

When someone chooses to return home and serve, it reflects a connection that goes beyond work. It reflects roots, and it reflects a belief that our communities are worth building for the next generation. Patients-first offers that. And I want to thank both ministers of Health — and the blanket that the one minister brought to stay warm — I want to thank both of them for offering this to their community, to the communities of Kelvington-

Wadena. This is beyond a gift. This is a boon for rural Saskatchewan. So again thank you.

We're also strengthening the pipeline for future doctors in Saskatchewan. The patients-first plan is prioritizing Saskatchewan students for medical school admissions, with a target of 95 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's future will be built not only in halls, rinks, schools, and clinics. It will also be built in mines, mills, forests, fields, plants, pipelines, research facilities, and energy infrastructures.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan remains one of the most resource-rich jurisdictions on earth, but resources alone do not create prosperity — people do. People who take pride in difficult work. People who know how to solve real problems. People who can build things, repair things, produce things, refine things, and get them to market. And Saskatchewan is attracting investment because the world sees that. Saskatchewan is leading the country in private capital investment growth.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I was a big fan of ESPN's *30 for 30*. I'm almost certain you have to be as well. Now, Mr. Speaker, I think we may have to get TSN [The Sports Network] in Saskatchewan to create a new documentary, *60 in 60*, Mr. Speaker, to talk about 60 projects with over \$60 billion in private investment. Now there are dozens upon dozens of large-scale projects under way or planned, and this is not happening by accident. It's happening because Saskatchewan is stable, because our policy environment is competitive, and because we listen to industry and because we work with communities. We believe in development done responsibly.

As Minister of Energy and Resources, I made that listening a priority. In 21 days we held 45 meetings with industry partners. That matters, Mr. Speaker, because if government is serious about growth, it has to listen to the people actually doing the work — the engineers, the geologists, the producers, the service companies, miners, the Indigenous partners, the foresters, and the operators. The people who have to make decisions in the real world, not just on paper. Good policy starts with listening, and when government listens, industry invests.

That's especially true in oil and gas. Oil and gas remains one of the most important economic engines in Saskatchewan. It supports jobs, families, communities, public services across the province. And we're not standing still. We're working closely with industry to grow this sector. That's the Saskatchewan approach. Not ideology first; reality first. Not telling industry what it should think; listening to industry about what is actually happening and then shaping policy that gives people room to build.

The official government page on incentives lays out the tools available to our oil and gas industry, Mr. Speaker. The high-water-cut oil well program allows royalty status reassignment for qualifying wells after a qualifying investment has been made.

My favourite program, Mr. Speaker, and for those who like to fish, they'll like it too. The LPRP [low productivity and reactivation oil well program] program, Mr. Speaker, provides a volumetric drilling incentive for low-producing, suspended, or

inactive horizontal wells. And the multi-lateral program, Mr. Speaker, which offers additional volumetric incentives for eligible multi-lateral horizontal wells.

Those are not random policy choices. They reflect something important. Government can either make it easier for people to invest, innovate, and extend the productivity life of assets, or they can make it harder. We chose to protect innovation, we chose to protect jobs, and we chose to protect industry and investment. And we choose to support and protect the communities that rely on this work.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's uranium story is one of the clearest examples of what confidence looks like in real economy. The province is the world's leading uranium jurisdiction, and the momentum in our uranium sector right now is remarkable. On March 5th the CNSC [Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission] issued NexGen Energy a licence authorizing site preparation and construction for the Rook I project. Also, Denison received their licence in February authorizing site prep as well, and Paladin received its environmental assessment registry for the Patterson Lake South project.

Those are not small developments. Those are major regulatory milestones. They mean Saskatchewan is not simply talking about opportunity in uranium, they're moving projects forward and the world's paying attention.

The world is paying attention, Mr. Speaker. On March 2nd Cameco announced a long-term agreement to supply nearly 22 million pounds of uranium to India over nine years, with an estimated contract value, Mr. Speaker, of \$2.6 billion. Now, Mr. Speaker, that's Saskatchewan. That's Saskatchewan uranium helping power one of the fastest growing economies in the world. That's Saskatchewan reliability becoming part of global energy security. That's pride in our work reaching across oceans.

And it doesn't stop with uranium alone. The mining ecosystem in Saskatchewan continues to broaden. In February Eldorado and Foran announced a transaction to combine their businesses, with Foran's McIlvenna Bay project in Saskatchewan forming a key part of the growth story.

Mr. Speaker, when you step back and look at it, the picture is clear: uranium, copper, gold, hydrogen, potash, lithium, helium, oil, gas, forestry, agriculture, artificial intelligence infrastructure. Saskatchewan is not pinned to one single future. We're building several futures at once.

Now, Mr. Speaker, potash remains a huge part of the story. Provincial budget material identifies that mining is one of the single biggest category in Saskatchewan's large-scale private sector capital project list — \$28.8 billion across 13 projects. Potash is a foundational part of that broader mining strength. And Saskatchewan continues to anchor global food production through the fertilizer it produces and exports.

Now speaking of exports, Mr. Speaker, that brings me to trade and to the Port of Vancouver. During a recent trip to Vancouver, Mr. Speaker, I toured the port, and what I saw reinforced something Saskatchewan producers already know: when export infrastructure is inefficient, the cost is not only paid at the coast. It's mainly paid on the Prairies.

The CPPI [Canadian Petroleum Products Institute] rankings, Mr. Speaker, put Vancouver at 347th out of 348 in port efficiency — second last in the world globally, Mr. Speaker. For a province like Saskatchewan, that's not a distant regional issue. It matters directly to our farmers. It matters to our miners. It matters directly to our oil and gas workers. It matters directly to our exporters and to every community that depends on world markets.

And yes, Mr. Speaker, we should say plainly that dangerous policy choices in BC [British Columbia] have made things worse. When government treats infrastructure, energy corridors, and industrial capital as political problems instead of national necessities, they create uncertainty, delay, and inefficiency, and that hurts Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, forestry matters too. Too often, people talk about forestry as if it's a footnote in Saskatchewan's economy, and it is not. It supports northern jobs, northern communities, transportation activity, equipment suppliers, and families that have built their lives around this work. That's staying power, Mr. Speaker. That's an industry that matters and will continue to matter.

Now, Mr. Speaker, another area where Saskatchewan now has a real chance to lead is the emerging intersection between energy, computing, and AI [artificial intelligence]. Earlier this month, Bell and the Government of Saskatchewan announced a new 300-megawatt data centre just outside of Regina. Bell described it as a transformational step for Canada's AI future. Why did that project come here? Because serious data infrastructure needs serious power, and it needs reliability.

That's a lesson for the whole country. You can't build the future on slogans alone. You need steel on the ground and power in the grid and leaders willing to defend that infrastructure and that growth.

Now to close, Mr. Speaker, I don't want this to be misconstrued or misunderstood. And this is probably the most important thing I'll say. This isn't directed at any one individual or any party. This is an offering from my own personal experience. I want to talk about hate.

It's been said that the emotion of anger can lead to the mind state of hate, which leads to harmful action. We all feel the emotion of anger. It's not right or wrong or good or bad, Mr. Speaker. What we do with the emotion can be interpreted as right or wrong or good or bad. Anger can be functioning or unfunctioning. Anger is a state of consciousness or subconsciousness. And it also is a choice. Anger in its purest form, Mr. Speaker, is clarity. Anger's purest form sets boundaries. It's calm. It doesn't hurt me and it doesn't hurt you. Unfunctioning anger though, Mr. Speaker, isn't clear, it's clouded. It crosses boundaries. It hurts me and it hurts you.

Now the antidote for anger, Mr. Speaker, is compassion, kindness, patience, and the understanding of impermanence. When we come face to face with the promotion of hate, we can have many choices.

I truly believe that if we were to touch our humanness — the aspect that interconnects all people — we would be directed

towards compassion and empathy, compassion and empathy for the individual locked in the mind state of hate. We would see another person hurting and see that we too share in that pain. Hatred is never healed by more hatred, only by compassion and understanding.

When we see clearly into suffering both in ourselves and in others, the heart naturally turns from blame towards mercy. What we often call hate is a mind caught in confusion, pain, and separation. This does not excuse harmful action, but it helps us respond with wisdom instead of becoming consumed by the same fire.

The practice is not to deny anger, Mr. Speaker, but to meet it with awareness, to meet it with patience, and meet it with loving kindness so that what arises in us does not harden into something that harms ourselves or others. When we truly understand impermanence and our deep interconnection, compassion stops being an ideal and becomes the most natural response. Thank you.

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

Brent Blakley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to be standing in these Chambers to respond to the budget presented by the government just last week. There's already been a great deal of public response, examination, and scrutiny, but in a little bit here I'd like to put my comments on the record highlighting just why this budget is bad news for the people of Saskatchewan. I'll address the fact that the government had no new cost-of-living relief for struggling Saskatchewan families in their budget, along with other insights I have.

Before I get to the budget, I'd like to take some time to acknowledge some people who've been supporting me and those who help me do this job every day. I would like to acknowledge my colleagues on this side of the House, the MLAs in the official opposition. Each and every day they set the standard for me for what it takes to do this job well. They work their butts off for the people of their constituency and for the people of this province.

Speaking of hard work, there's the MLA from Regina Lakeview, Leader of the Opposition. I tell people in my constituency, in the city, and around Saskatchewan, there is not a politician in this province that works harder than the Leader of the Opposition — the hours she puts in and the kilometres she travels throughout this province. I thank her for her hard work, her leadership, and fighting for people of Saskatchewan every day.

I want to also recognize the MLA for Regina Northeast and the MLA for Regina University. We share a constituency office and it's just nice to operate as a team within a team. We collaborate and bounce things off each other in our respective roles. And I just want to thank them and their constituency assistants, Alex and Daisy, for their teamwork as well.

I want to thank and acknowledge my constituency assistant, Stephanie Logan. Stephanie has done a great job providing services to our constituents.

[19:30]

She's committed, hard-working, and energetic. My sometimes lack of organization is strategically offset by Stephanie's much stronger organizational skills. Along with Stephanie in my office, we have had two practicum students from the U of R [University of Regina] doing placements with us this past year. Harpreet and Mina have been great additions to our office. Talented, hard-working, and responsible are traits that will take them far in whatever career they choose. I wish them both the very best.

The staff in our caucus office just down the hall makes our job as MLAs so much easier. Their commitment to this team is inspiring and I thank them for the work they do. Thank you to all members of this House for their offices, their staff, and their co-operation and support in addressing their issues.

Thank you to the constituency executive of Regina Wascana Plains. We meet each month to discuss issues, ongoing plans, and fundraising; each one of them volunteering their time to give back to the community.

No one here in this House could do this job without a support system behind them, which is their families. And I'm no exception. Although I'm the sole occupant of our house right now, I do not live alone. I have coffee just about every morning with my wife in Ontario over video chat. Our two daughters rent the house right across the street from me, so they're always popping over for a visit or more likely calling me over to fix something in their house.

Another perk is that I get to provide doggy care for my grandpuppy Toby. Our son and our youngest daughter live in Edmonton. Daughter Kayla is a teacher, and our son was called to the bar in December and is a lawyer with a firm there in Edmonton. Our family made the trek to celebrate with him and we couldn't be more proud.

My daughters across the street are both taking the plunge into becoming homeowners. Our eldest just recently purchased her first house and the other is in the middle — and breaking news as of this afternoon — her offer was accepted on a house in Sedley. So it looks like they'll be moving out to Sedley.

My wife, Carla, continues to do her good work in the East while being based in Kitchener, Ontario. Again I could not do this job without her support, advice, and encouragement, and I thank her for that.

Now my constituency of Regina Wascana Plains is a vibrant and diverse community. I've thoroughly enjoyed making connections with the folks in that area and the four elementary schools in the constituency, a pair of joint-use schools, Mr. Speaker. Jack MacKenzie School and St. Gabriel School share a building at Buckingham Drive and Windsor Park Road. And a little further east, École Wascana Plains School and École St. Elizabeth school are at Chuka Boulevard and Green Brooks Way. I'll talk about these school communities just a little bit later in my remarks.

Wascana Plains is an ever-growing community with residential development, new businesses, stores, restaurants popping up throughout the area. Just last week I was able to go to the grand opening and ribbon cutting of a bright, brand new, shiny Safeway grocery store that serves an ever-growing community.

Lots of good things happening in Wascana Plains, and I'm looking forward to going along with them on that journey. But like any journey, Mr. Speaker, there's always the chance that travel plans could be cancelled.

People in my constituency and throughout the province have ideas, goals, and aspirations for themselves and for their families. With this bad-news budget that the government presented just last week, it will be an increasing struggle for families to bring these ideas, goals, and aspirations to fruition. Families in this province, in both rural and urban communities, continue to pay increasing costs day to day with no new cost-of-living relief in this budget.

Now when the Sask Party budget is asked about the cost of food, cost of gasoline, rental increases in this province, they simply try to explain it away saying, well it's like that everywhere in the country. Like we've heard from this government: "Alberta governs Alberta, Ontario governs Ontario. We don't control what goes in other provinces." So why pass the buck as if this government has no control over the situation. Mr. Speaker, this government, Sask Party government, clearly does have control to lower costs for families that struggle day to day in Saskatchewan. They just choose not to make that happen.

Now I hear the government members in their responses listing off their accomplishments, all the while ignoring what is lacking in this budget. Nothing to see here folks, as they say. Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party government often partakes in hyperbole or exaggeration when touting their list of accomplishments. Very often though hyperboles and exaggerations contain some sliver of truth. For example, the Sask Party government likes to boast that Saskatchewan's the most affordable place to live in Canada, which is partially true, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure Saskatchewan is at least in the top 10 when it comes to affordability.

The Sask Party likes to trot out that they have the most aggressive health care recruiting plan in the country. The aggressive part? It's the behaviour and weapons health care workers and security personnel encounter in hospitals every day because the lack of attention from this Sask Party government.

When trying to explain away this bad-news budget and his \$819 million deficit, the Finance minister reasoned that world events like the conflict in the Middle East have had an impact on our economy and provincial finances. Now this is a direct quote from the person who actually said it. "World events like the conflict in the Middle East have [had] an impact on our economy and . . . provincial finances."

The minister presented this budget and these words on March 18th, while the conflict in the Middle East started just three weeks before, February 28th. This is well after this budget was discussed, debated, and delivered to the printers by this Sask Party government. The timeline just doesn't fit to blame the bad-news budget on the Middle East conflict. These bad decisions were solidified well before that.

At the end of his budget speech, the Finance minister brought up the Saskatchewan Roughriders and their Grey Cup win, which we can all applaud. Well since he brought it up, let's talk a little bit about the Grey Cup win. A few weeks ago in a rebuttal to a video that was circulating that was questioning their so-called

accomplishments, this Sask Party government actually touted winning the Grey Cup as one of their accomplishments this past year.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do know a little bit about football, and I know that many CFL [Canadian Football League] teams would be after a big, strong guy like the MLA for Saskatchewan Rivers for their offensive line. He must be beefing up for the draft. But I don't recall that MLA ever throwing a block for A.J. Ouellette on a 30-yard draw play.

I don't recall the Premier lining up behind centre, dropping back, and hitting Noah Picton on a screen pass over the middle. As a quarterback, the Premier was zero for zero with zero yards gained, zero interceptions, and zero touchdowns. A quarterback's performance is judged by the QB [quarterback] rating. The Premier would have a QB rating of zero.

Since the Sask Party government wants to take credit for winning the Grey Cup, let's continue the football analogy just for a little bit here. Now on the football field the quarterback is the leader of the team, the one who calls the shots. Success or failure of the team often falls on the quarterback's shoulders. I guess you could say the Premier is the quarterback of the Sask Party team. The successes or the failures of the government largely fall on the shoulders of the Premier. Fair or not, that's just the way it is. I don't make the rules.

But we do need a scale rating the successes and failures of the Sask Party government. We need a rating scale for the Premier and the government much like the QB rating in football. Let's call it the Sask Party rating or better yet we'll shorten it to the SP [Sask Party] rating. Let's give this Premier and his government an overall rating — an SP rating — on stepping up for the people of Saskatchewan and delivering on affordability measures in this budget.

First category is on rent in this province. Saskatchewan continues to lead the nation in average rent increases. Saskatchewan's average rent continues to increase, rising 4 per cent in the last year. Yet in this budget there was no mention of implementing rent control or instituting direct payments to landlords. So on a cost-of-living relief for renters in this budget, the Premier and the Sask Party government gets an SP rating of zero. That's too bad.

Let's have a look at food security in Saskatchewan. Statistics show that 4 in 10 families are going into debt to put food on the table. Food bank usage in Saskatchewan rose in 2025 with over 55,000 people per month using food banks in this province. This is an average increase of about 45 per cent since 2019. In 2025 nearly 1 in 5 food bank users in Saskatchewan were employed, about 19.4 per cent.

So on providing relief in this budget for the Saskatchewan people that struggle to put food on the table for their families, the Premier and this government again receive an SP rating of zero. If this was an actual QB rating I think that quarterback might be in danger of being traded or even released.

Day-to-day affordability measures in this budget. Affordability measures that were not included in this budget: removing PST [provincial sales tax] from children's clothes, removing PST from groceries, temporary pause on the gas tax for a break at the

pumps. I noticed that gas reached a dollar seventy-six point nine today in communities. Implementing rent control was not in this budget. Direct payment to landlords.

All these affordability measures could take effect almost immediately and give Saskatchewan families some financial relief. Instead the government continues to champion their income tax break as their single affordability measure. We can all agree on and welcome a break at tax time, but how are these people and families that struggle supposed to get through the other 364 days?

Providing overall affordability measures and cost-of-living relief for Saskatchewan families and the fact that this category encompasses a number of areas, the Premier and the Sask Party government get an SP rating of minus 5. A negative rating must seem rather harsh, but again we have to follow the criteria. I don't make the rules.

So let's look at the last category, the area of education. Mr. Speaker, I've saved the best for last, or perhaps I should say the worst for last. In September 2024, leading up to the October election, desperate to hang on to at least one seat in Regina the Sask Party rolled out all the party bigwigs, including their former MLA, to the Towns area in Wascana Plains. These Sask Party bigwigs and the former MLA, eager to garner some votes, made the campaign promise of a new joint-use elementary school and new high school for east Regina.

Now the Sask Party in some of their speeches today talked about election promises. Well let's see about their election promise. The people in east Regina were thrilled and excited about the news. The Education minister at the time . . . Again this is a direct quote from the person who actually said it. He said, "These projects represent our commitment to providing quality education and modern learning environments for our children to succeed."

Well here's the Sask Party's commitment for you. Fast-forward from that announcement to just last week when it was announced that these school projects planned for east Regina would be put on hold. This decision was made as a direct result of this bad-news budget, the lack of proper education funding by this Sask Party government, and their \$819 million deficit.

Classrooms that are so overcrowded, negatively impacting students' learning environment, will continue to be overcrowded. Students that travel long distances on school bus or by taxi because the closest school is over capacity, will continue to make that long trek twice a day.

Because this involves a promise and a commitment by this government that has gone unfulfilled, I can't help but give this Premier and his government an SP rating of minus 10. When you add it all up, averaging the rates from all categories — of course accounting for the rate of inflation — this Premier and the Sask Party government get an overall SP rating of minus 819 million. That can't be right. That can't be right.

This bad-news budget makes life more expensive for all people in Saskatchewan and continues to ignore the needs of students and ignores the concerns of parents. Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the budget as tabled by the Minister of Finance. And

I will be supporting the amendment by the member from Regina Mount Royal.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Batoche.

Hon. Darlene Rowden: — Mr. Speaker, something completely different. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour and a privilege to rise and speak to this budget. The 2026-27 budget protects key priorities for Saskatchewan people, including affordability, health care, education, community safety, and sound financial management, while addressing the challenges of a province that continues to grow. It is a budget that builds on our strengths, invests in key areas, and ensures that the prosperity of our province reaches every corner, including Batoche.

[19:45]

This budget protects Saskatchewan's future by strengthening the province's economy and supporting job growth, a budget that still reflects our government's unwavering commitment to the people of Saskatchewan, and in particular the hard-working families, businesses, and communities of the Batoche constituency.

Before I continue I have a few thank yous. I am a proud farmer's daughter, and even prouder to call myself a rancher. Well lately more of a wife of a rancher since my new role, Mr. Speaker. My husband, Richard Wilson, and I have built and grown our generational ranch, raising our three adult children: Blake, Amy and our son-in-law Sjoerd, and our youngest, Rikki-Jean. All four are proud ag producers and fantastic ambassadors of the ag community. As all members can agree, I would not be able to do this role without the love and support of my family. To them I say, thank you, and I love you more.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank my constituency assistant Beau Fouquette. Thank you for all you do to keep the office going and serving the constituents of Batoche. I would like to thank the people in my constituency of Batoche. I am humbled and grateful that you have entrusted me with this role. I do not take this trust placed on me lightly.

Batoche is a land of rolling hills, farm land, and tight-knit communities. It is a home to four First Nations, vibrant Métis communities, three Hutterian colonies, and the National Historic Site of Batoche. Our towns are small but mighty, each with their unique traditions and celebrations, like Musher's Madness in MacDowall, like Aberdeen Days in June, the Birch Hills threshing festival in August, or the Pilger Pumpkin Festival in September. I am looking forward to Back to Batoche Days in July and the annual MacDowall Harvest Ball in November, just to name a few.

I would like to thank the staff in the Minister of Environment's office: my chief of staff Josh Hack; assistants Kielle Schmidt and Emily Walters, Fahadur Rahman and Leona Joyce. Thank you for all you do to ensure the office runs smoothly.

My passion for service and education also runs deep, Mr. Speaker. I dedicated 15 years to the Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Board with the honour of serving as board Chair in my final years. This experience taught me the importance of collaboration, working with diverse personalities, and governing

with fairness.

Mr. Speaker, education is the foundation of our future, and our government continues to make the necessary investments. I am pleased to see that there is \$65 million for school preventative maintenance and renewal funding for school divisions to address aging school infrastructure maintenance and repair needs.

This includes further funding for major capital projects, such as the Prince Albert francophone pre-K to 12 [pre-kindergarten to grade 12] school to replace École Valois. We're investing in new Saskatoon elementary schools to replace Princess Alexandra, King George, and Pleasant Hill. We are also investing in a new pre-K to 12 school in Shellbrook to consolidate and replace the existing elementary and high school.

Mr. Speaker, when I heard that Shellbrook school was finally being announced, I almost had some tears of joy. I did have an internal "yippee" because I remember, because I was there all those years — all those years of community and family advocacy from young and old, all the studies, school tours, and advocacy from the school board and planning from the seniors division team. It will all begin to take shape now. And the biggest winners are the students and future generations of Shellbrook Aardvarks. First in the phone book, first in our hearts, Mr. Speaker. I congratulate you all and look forward to opening day.

The members of opposition could take a lesson in good governance from the Sask Rivers School Board. That division is a rural and urban division with a 50/50 split of rural and urban trustees. For the last 15 years, not 10, Mr. Speaker, despite changes to the trustees' makeup over those years, the board remains steadfast in their support for a new school in Shellbrook. Why? Because that priority is what is best for kids. No rural/urban divide; just good governance.

We also have 19 million set aside for new minor capital renewal projects, including the demolition and partial rebuild project at Christopher Lake school. We, as government, committed to ensure that Saskatchewan students get their best starts and that all Saskatchewan students and families have the opportunities they need to learn and grow.

I know that this past year was hard for communities affected by the fires last summer. Our government has recovery efforts well under way in many of these communities affected. Our government has committed 29.93 million to support communities and individuals affected by the devastating wildfires of 2025. The funding will be utilized to assist with site cleanup, debris removal, temporary housing, and project management support for local recovery efforts.

Funding for the SPSA [Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency] will also support wildfire and emergency response capabilities, including the province's multi-year plan to purchase four repurposed air tanker aircraft. This will allow wildfire recovery task teams to continue supporting communities in their planning, recovery, and rebuilding efforts. There are representatives from the ministries of Environment, Government Relations, Social Services, and Justice and Attorney General.

I was proud, Mr. Speaker, to be able to recognize Deputy Chief Ray Baumann with the Wakaw/Hoodoo fire department and

Chief Mike Beamish of Blucher-Lost River fire district at the Premier's Commendation awards back in December. What a special day recognizing the true Saskatchewan spirit. I will have the honour and privilege to recognize work of the St. Louis local fire department with my colleague and Minister for Community Safety soon. We in the province are grateful for their time and their sacrifice. I commend them, and I am truly lucky to serve as their MLA.

I at this time would like to also recognize the businesses in Batoche area that helped during this time. It just truly showed the Saskatchewan spirit. You are a source of pride for all of Saskatchewan.

This budget, Mr. Speaker, puts forth the largest health budget ever with 636 million for hospitals, long-term care, and infrastructure. We made the choice to protect Saskatchewan families. There is an 8 million increase to support 500 more seniors already accessing the personal care home benefit since the monthly income threshold rose 40 per cent in '25-26 from 2,500 to 3,500 per month, helping make living in licensed personal care homes more affordable.

This budget delivers on the priorities outlined in our patients-first health care plan to ensure everyone receives the right care in the right place at the right time. Twenty-two million for the La Ronge long-term care project, 238 million for ongoing construction of the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital, and 8 million for complex needs facility renovations. This plan will make sure everyone has access to a primary care provider and timely diagnostics and surgery for those who need it. Our goal still remains that by 2028 every person in Saskatchewan will have access to a primary health care provider.

And, Mr. Speaker, in my area of the province, highways projects and conditions are the number one topic people have with me. This budget has 417 million in capital projects and programs through the Ministry of Highways. Mr. Speaker, my constituents are thrilled to hear that Highway 2 repaving north of Cudworth is included.

I remember getting the confirmation on this project from the previous Highways minister, and I was excited. I was relieved for the people of Cudworth and Wakaw who'd been waiting so long. I told the minister to announce it soon because I was going to blabber it out at the Cudworth fish fry. Stuff like that you just can't keep secret long, Mr. Speaker. Furthermore this includes the start of twinning of Highway 2 north of Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker, there is an abundance of positive direction in this year's budget. Our government is making the choice to protect Saskatchewan by maintaining important investments in vital services, while reducing costs where possible. This budget delivers transportation infrastructure to keep Saskatchewan people, businesses, and trade corridors moving and connected to global markets.

I'm honoured to be asked to serve as the Minister of Environment. I have learned very quickly that environment is everything from A to Z. We are blessed with a pristine environment, clean air and water, and abundance of wildlife. I believe we need to continue to protect our province's natural beauty, but also balance that with the needs for economic growth.

I do commend the work that the ministry has done and will continue to do in ensuring that the environment is protected, communities are safe, and economic growth is balanced with environmental health.

As a proud Saskatchewan rancher belonging to a fourth-generation cattle operation south of Prince Albert, I can tell you land isn't just dirt, grass, and water to us. It is family history. It is livelihood and legacy. With that, I am excited that this year's Ministry of Environment's '26-27 budget supports ongoing efforts to protect Saskatchewan's natural environment and sustainable economic growth. Simply put, this budget protects our environment while keeping Saskatchewan's economy the strongest in Canada.

As new Minister of Environment, our government has been listening and we are responding. We continue to work with our industry partners to ensure that we are streamlining our regulatory system to advance sustainable growth. Just these last few months alone, we have seen important projects get approved. And we are seeing important advancements on these projects that will have a positive impact on our economy. This budget invests in ensuring we have an efficient regulatory service system so that Saskatchewan continues to be a top mining destination in the world.

The Government of Saskatchewan is making changes to non-resident game bird hunting licences to address concerns about illegal outfitting. We are proud of Saskatchewan's reputation as a world-class game bird hunting destination. These changes will help ensure our wildlife remains a shared public resource and that Saskatchewan residents see the greatest benefits.

Currently hunting licences are available to Saskatchewan residents, Canadian residents, and non-residents with all licences being valid for the full season. In an effort to reduce opportunities for illegal outfitting activity, these changes will limit non-resident hunters' term licences to three 5-day short-term licences — one 5-day term licence in the spring and two 5-day term licences in the fall. The Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation applauds this initial step, and we also have the support of the Saskatchewan Commission of Professional Outfitters.

Saskatchewan is blessed with thousands of lakes and natural resources. We know that hunters contribute significantly to local economies by purchasing fuel, accommodations, food, equipment, and guide services in rural communities. Hunting and trapping have been woven into the social fabric of our province.

As MLAs we have received a number of complaints of some non-residents purchasing full-season licences and offering unauthorized outfitting services, which undermines licensed Saskatchewan outfitters and the principle that wildlife is a shared public resource. To address these concerns that we heard, and after engagement with stakeholders, it was our government that took the action to limit non-resident hunter term licences.

This government believes protecting licensed outfitters supports long-term economic sustainability of the industry. We look forward to continuing this work with stakeholders and reviewing the outcomes together. This budget protects Saskatchewan and ensures that we will continue to be a destination for game bird hunting, and these changes will continue to allow law-abiding

hunters to hunt for a similar time period as previous years.

[20:00]

Mr. Speaker, this budget looks to maintain a strong and growing economy. While members opposite may want to look back to the past, we're about looking to the future and protecting Saskatchewan communities.

We know that wildlife damage is placing pressure on producers due to high congregation of elk. And while Saskatchewan has one of the best compensation programs available to producers through the SCIC [Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation] wildlife damage program, paying out claims year over year isn't a sustainable long-term solution when the same pressures keep resurfacing. Without responsive measures, both the frequency of losses and the impact on producers' livelihoods will continue.

At the recent SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention, the Minister Responsible for SCIC and I announced that we will be giving eight depredation tag permits to producers who have demonstrated a history of significant elk population. The permits can be used from January 15th to March 31st, 2027. SCIC will administer the tags directly through its established wildlife damage claims and prevention process. Depredation permits are species specific and are offered outside of the regular hunting season. Following the 2027 implementation, the results of this option will be evaluated and considered in future planning of Saskatchewan's wildlife management.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that is listening and providing a solution to address the very concerns we are hearing across this province. Our government will continue to recognize the importance of a transparent and equitable process for allocating a number of big game hunting licences to the Saskatchewan hunters.

Saskatchewan is blessed with being a renowned destination for angling. Thousands of residents and non-residents enjoy our incredible fishing in our lakes and rivers each year. This budget is protecting the future of our world-class fishing by allocating 700,000 to initiate preliminary design work for the modernization of the Saskatchewan Fish Hatchery. The hatchery is responsible for all fish stocked in the province's public water bodies, and this investment will look to modernize the facility.

[Applause]

Hon. Darlene Rowden: — Thank you. In addition to that, we will be commencing the planning of a new stand-alone walleye intensive rearing facility. We have some of the best outdoor recreation activities in the world, and this budget ensures that Saskatchewan people will continue to be able to enjoy those activities for generations to come.

The 2025-26 budget includes an increase of nearly 117,000 in grant payments to Sarcan through the beverage container collection and recycling program. This investment supports the work of Sarcan as a leader in environmental protection, job creation, and economic growth. Continued program funding for SARC [Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres] also contributes to the solid waste management strategy of the

Ministry of Environment and the target to reduce the amount of waste generated per person by 30 per cent by 2030 and 50 per cent by 2040.

I had the pleasure of meeting with Amy McNeil of Sarcen and toured the Regina facilities earlier this year, Mr. Speaker. It was incredible to see first-hand the Sarcen impact. In 2024-25, Sarcen collected and recycled approximately 491 million containers at a return rate of 82.6 per cent — the second-highest in the country following Alberta, exceeding the national average of 75.9 per cent. Way to go, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be from this province. I am proud of this government's record of building a strong economy and communities, and we must protect that. For the people of Batoche this budget delivers real, tangible benefits, improved educational spaces, strengthened health care services, enhanced highways infrastructure, and continued job growth. We are ensuring that businesses continue to invest, jobs continue to grow, and families continue to thrive.

Our government had a choice: raise taxes, cut services, or protect Saskatchewan. We chose to protect Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to support this budget — and I will be voting in favour of it — brought forward by the Finance minister, seconded by the member from Carrot River Valley. And I will not support the amendment.

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

Joan Pratchler: — First off I would like to thank the good people of Rochdale for continuing to put their trust in me as I represent them in this Chamber. I want to thank my colleagues and friends and stakeholders in my portfolios of child care and early learning and education, who helped me understand and trust me to advocate for them.

As a principal and a public health nurse, I know a lot about having protection talks with my grade 7 and 8 boys. And yes, we talk about effective protection, and the best way to get the point across to those boys is just to use simple but plain language. I start off by telling them I want all their hands on the desks so they won't be fiddling with little things in their pockets, or anybody else's pockets for that matter, and pay attention.

Since this budget seems to be wrapped in the words of protection, I think we should discuss this in terms of effective protection and what that means. I recall the sentiments of my last budget response. I remember doing some vocabulary work to help with the comprehension of the whole speech, and I think I might do that this year as well. Some of the words you'll be hearing in this response are "conniving," "arrogance of power," "dereliction," "wilfully oblivious," and "asinine." So you want to listen for those.

I'll also recall equating going on about the notion that a budget is a snapshot, and that when you put enough snapshots together you get a movie. And I must say that that budget last year was tantamount to the movie of the *Titanic*, but it was managed by too many Gilligans. And it turned out it was.

This year I couldn't think of a disaster movie to equate to this

budget, but I did think of another, older TV series with a conniving, arrogant, power-hungry main character. And that series was called *Dallas*, and that character was J.R. Ewing. He is a legend. And his character is nothing like Larry Hagman was in real life however. But you know, J.R., he did have a way of delivering scintillating lines that are quite appropriate for this budget. The one I can remember the best was when he was talking to Bobby's . . .

Speaker Goudy: — You gave us all a warning ahead of time about some words that would be coming. And so I just wanted to share a little warning that as we move forward, it seems like there's quite a few words that maybe you'll want to avoid using during your speech, and some have been used already. But remember, it has to be befitting to the honour of the Chamber as you continue on.

Joan Pratchler: — The one I can remember best was when he was talking to Bobby's second wife, Miss Annie. And this was after she realized that J.R. had done yet another despicable action. She said, "J.R., I never in my wildest imagination thought even you could stoop to something so bad." To which J.R. responded, "Why, Miss Annie, you might best be working on your imagination, honey."

And right there, Mr. Speaker, is where I find myself after reading this budget. Just when I thought things couldn't get any worse, by glory be, here we are — not in Southfork, but in Saskatchewan.

The people of Saskatchewan are called to work on their imaginations to make any sense of what they experience day to day align with what this government is telling them is good for them. The government talks about protecting economy and jobs. How can one call the declining population, according to Stats Canada for a second straight quarter just this year, protecting our economy and jobs? That's not effective protection. That's leakage. Ew.

They talk about protecting our families by reducing taxes. This budget calls it protecting families when Saskatchewan has the highest rate of childhood poverty — 78,000 children in poverty. That doesn't sound like protection of families to me. Is keeping PST on some groceries or on children's clothing protecting families? Well that's not protection. That's using the word "protection" as a cover for forcing families to make some awful decisions in household finances.

Protecting families isn't happening when we can't get that child care deal rolled out properly. What is being protected when you dress up a federal government agreement as if this government is pretending to be the knight in shining armour coming to save the day and protecting families?

This government is protecting that it hasn't put one single provincial penny into a child care program like many of their counterparts have done across Canada. There's still no emergency funding for legacy centres who are in precarious deficit positions. Community boards know that there aren't enough bake sales and fundraisers to keep them afloat past this summer. There's no equitable funding formula, nothing to even out the playing field faced by so many centres for rent, supplies, nutrition, learning resources, and equipment.

This government hasn't even stepped up to the plate to listen to care providers about solutions, such as one-time emergency funding. Zero solutions for a wage grid to address salaries for the seasoned child care educators who can mentor and lead new workers. Nothing in this budget to address recruitment and retention of a much-needed child care workforce. Well that's not protection. That's sidestepping responsibility for caring for the children of this province, and it could be considered oblivious of what our children need and deserve in their young years.

This budget talks about protecting patients by improving access and putting patients first, when we have over 350-plus registered nurses graduate from the U of R/Sask Poly nursing program — the Saskatchewan Collaborative Bachelor of Science in Nursing program, of which I'm a proud graduate; it's a stone's throw away from this Chamber here — another 350 to 400 from the Saskatoon campus of the SCBScN [Saskatchewan Collaborative Bachelor of Science in Nursing] program, and another 400 from the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] nursing program, which makes roughly 1,100-ish registered nurses, not even counting the number of licensed practical nurses and registered psychiatric nurses coming on stream each year, and we can't keep them employed here in this province.

And travel nurses are called in at twice or more for salaries. What's going on? Who owns the travel nurse companies, really? One can't tell me that the health care system under this government, that they have been running for almost 20 years, loses 1,000 nurses each year from the system and can't keep them, and no one seems to know why.

Or is it that this government still hasn't figured out about how to tap into the already broad scope of practice of RNs [registered nurse], who could easily provide primary health care during the day in day clinics, especially in the area of preventative health care, delivered by registered nurses?

If one can expand the scope of practice of pharmacists, surely this government can get moving and let women, who make up most of the nursing profession, start making a real difference in health care. I can guarantee, if RNs were able to practise to the full scope of practice, we could cut unnecessary ER [emergency room] visits by a long shot. When one can't figure out how to tap into the resources of registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses, and licensed practical nurses you already have in this province and keep them here, they could effectively put a tourniquet on the health care access bleed our province has been experiencing for the past 20 years. That's not protection — that's just being blind.

And good Lord, finally this government is dipping their toes into the water to harness the incredible work of nurse practitioners. And they're going to be getting 26 of them online in the wings. But what took so long?

I'll have you know that my mother — who, by the way, is still in the hospital — was one of the first to lobby the government of the day nearly 40 years ago to convince them that nurse practitioners were a viable health care entity, and no one took that seriously. She was one of the first seven nurse practitioners 40 years ago. And now we're bringing 26 online. That's not protection; that's barely progress.

[20:15]

Had one read the national report of the Romanow Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada from 2002 — which gives common-sense recommendations from experts and end users from across Canada — we might be further ahead at this point in this province. That report was a champion of well-managed public funding health care.

Former premier Romanow, who was the Chair of the commission on this Canada-wide review for the future of health care in Canada, he wholeheartedly spoke of the life-saving role that, if employed, nurse practitioners and nurses of all stripes could provide to bolster our health care system. And that was in 2002 — long enough to protect patients, put patients first, and improve access to health care.

And don't even go down the path of closing hospitals. Let me make it perfectly clear so that everyone will know full well that those hospitals were not closed, they were turned into health care centres. They were not closed. Even back then, it was hard to attract and keep rural doctors in Saskatchewan. And I ask the question, how many of those hospitals did the Sask Party open then? None. This government can't even keep doctors in our city hospitals and urgent care centres staffed up.

If you want to talk about real protection, I'll tell you what Romanow and the NDP [New Democratic Party] of the day had to do. They had to protect this province from financial ruin as a result of the Devine years squandering public monies. The predecessors of this government had this province on the brink of bankruptcy. And he had to make tough, tough choices. He had the courage to pull us from the brink of financial ruin. The NDP had to clean up waste and mismanagement. And cleaning up that mess, now that's the epitome of protection. Effective protection, prevention, and prosperity, not anything like this flaccid excuse of a budget could ever hope to roll out.

And don't talk to me about wait times. Just don't. And don't tell me how you're promising to fix it. Don't even go there. Had there been a primary health care centre next to the RUH [Royal University Hospital] hospital two weeks ago, I'm going to bet that half of those clients waiting in that cobbled-together rat maze of an ER on those long, exhausting nights I had to wait in those hallways with my mom could have been seen. And they could have been treated with the skills and training that our top-notch RNs and nurses have right now. And they'd get a fulsome treatment, the time needed for adequate patient education and the latest care models of interdisciplinary care, that wraparound holistic health care which is the hallmark of registered nurse practice.

And what would that take? It would take some creative evidence-based health care management using critical thinking and political will to wake up and latch on to what would be innovative, perhaps to this government maybe, but what thousands of health care workers already do. It's common sense to our more than ready, willing, and highly trained people that support and provide health care for people when and where they need it.

Let's not call not having a contract for health care workers for over three years protecting health care, because it's not. That's

not protecting. That's "I'll respect you in the morning" kind of talk, and it's flat-out disrespecting the very people that bring you health care.

This budget talks about protecting SaskPower customers. Well help me understand how ramping up rates for people of this province during an affordability crisis is protecting anything. How has not maximizing the profits back into SaskPower to build and protect our grid over the years not been part of the protection plan? Or is it simply hoping that something props itself up for growth, or asking the Crowns to be on the dole method for special warrants to make the finances slide smoothly without anyone noticing? That's not protection. That's a hope and a prayer and no one notices anything untoward after the deed is done.

Let's talk about protecting communities by hiring more police officers. Have you talked to any police officers lately? They're taught, first thing, about prevention. What about addressing the root causes of interpersonal violence? What about addressing the social determinants of healthy societies, like supporting income, social status; supporting employment and working conditions; supporting education and literacy; supporting childhood experiences and housing and social supports and coping skills and healthy behaviours and access to health services; addressing a healthy, vibrant society regardless of gender, culture, and race.

Protection after the deeds are done is hardly proactive. It's not effective protection; it's an afterthought. And that's dangerous. Real protection is a combination of prevention and protection, getting to the root causes, which is far easier and far cheaper to address than trying to fix it down the road after the damage has already occurred.

Ask any police officer, social worker, nurse, community agency, and they'll tell you. Address those determinants of health, and we'll have a strong society where there is real protection and real protectors. See what they can do best by supporting and keeping peace and good order of our society.

Well let's carry on, shall we? Right into protecting vulnerable individuals with mental health and addictions challenges. I'm a mental health nurse, and the number one strategy of protecting vulnerable individuals, their children and families, the homeless is by preventing the addictions and reducing the harm of them and all their ugly friends that come along with it in the first place.

Harm reduction is evidence-based. It's absolutely tied to social determinants of health. To not have a wraparound, interdisciplinary team approach to mental health supports is not protection. It just plain lacks depth, and it's dangerous.

One can't protect people when one blames and shames them. When people are in need and are denied prevention, when it's so hard to get help and it takes so long, you hurt them. You hurt their families, and you hurt their communities. That's not protection; that's neglect.

Protecting education systems, students in schools. All righty. All hands on deck, boys. Can one call underfunding for all these years protecting education? I don't think so. Where was the government once COVID was over to help protect the integrity of our curriculum? What was done to rebuild two years of learning lost during the pandemic? If anything, that was the time

to protect by pumping much more support into learning in our classrooms to get everyone remediated and back on track. Had there been that kind of protection of the education systems, by now, our students would be back on track and we would see the light of the day at the end of the tunnel.

Not only was there no protection for them, their learning has been irreparably affected. Your protection now is really nothing more than crumbs. Where's the protection in preparing our children for the future and the skills that they're going to need to navigate the fast-paced world they're going to be living in? Where is anything in this budget about protecting or even having a leading-edge Saskatchewan response to AI and the impacts it will have on teaching and learning in our education system, pre-K all the way up to advanced education? And no, an AI centre isn't what I'm talking about. There's been diddly-squat done to address and respond to AI in education. It's going to be the future of our children, and we need to know about it. That's not protecting our children and our province's future at all. That's, wilfully, obliviousness.

This government didn't protect students then, and they're not protecting them now. We don't have enough teachers. There hasn't been enough money put into school divisions in order to hire enough teachers. In fact last year we lost 26 teachers, all from rural Saskatchewan. Teachers and teaching wasn't protected then, and they're not protecting now. Our attrition rate is terrible. Our classrooms are overflowing, and our teachers are exhausted. And complexity is more than we ever could have imagined.

Our students' assessment performances in the sciences, literacy, math has not been protected. The arts are not what they deserve. And when the ministry's curriculum department is smaller than the ministry's finance department in education, it tells me what's valued and what's protected. And it sure isn't quality student curricular outcomes.

How exactly is this government protecting our facilities? Last year we had 191 million put into the capital fund. This year, 124 million. That's \$67.5 million of cuts this year to capital funding in education, and that represents a 35 per cent decrease. Don't tell me you're adding to education when you have a 35 per cent decrease in capital funding. That's not protecting. That's abhorrent. That's plain old cutting of critical infrastructure funding in our schools, the home of where learning happens.

And so getting back to *Dallas*. If I had a cameo in this season of *Dallas* on set, and if we were talking in our characters to J.R. about me working on my imagination, I would choose a scene where I'm standing right beside Miss Ellie and Jock Ewing as we hovered over J.R. And I'd be saying, "J.R., you show me a budget for your big rig adventure, and I'll tell you your priorities, because it sure as hell ain't for Southfork."

Then I'd walk right off that TV set straight to the producer's office and sign the contract for the next season. Because when Beck's team comes riding into the next season at high noon, it's going to be a blockbuster. Because this budget priority sure as hell isn't for Saskatchewan's future, and the only thing that's really being protected is right where the Sask Party government sits.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the budget, but I will be supporting the amendment put forward by my colleague from Mount Royal. Thank you.

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

Megan Patterson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great privilege to rise in this Chamber and to respond to the budget. I want to begin by saying how deeply honoured I am to serve the people of Moose Jaw Wakamow and the province of Saskatchewan. I also want to congratulate the Minister of Finance and his team on their second budget.

Of course I also want to thank my family for their love and their support which allows me to do this important work. I especially want to thank my husband, Sean, who thankfully is no stranger to this type of work. He is a wonderful husband to our three sons and runs them to activities when I'm gone. He is a strong and steady anchor that keeps our family centred.

I also want to thank my parents for supporting our family and stepping in when needed by helping with meals, making puffed wheat cake, giving the boys rides, sharing a joke or words of encouragement. I am so blessed to be the daughter of George and Colleen Patterson.

My father took over Patterson Paints and Floor Coverings from my grandfather, Dan Patterson. This store was located on Main Street in Moose Jaw, and it was a successful business until it was devastated by a fire. My father then decided to go back to law school and take advantage of the freedom and opportunity that we have in our province to forge our own futures. He graduated from law school and became a successful lawyer in Moose Jaw.

My mother taught for 30 years in Moose Jaw. They're both incredible people that had a positive impact on the community and many individuals. I am fortunate to have had them as role models and have them play such a pivotal role in the lives of my sons.

I also want to thank my constituency assistants Denise Maki and Carol Acton for their ability to connect with constituents and to keep me organized. They are both incredible people that I love spending time with and chatting to. They probably appreciate the time that I'm in session so that they can catch up rather than have me chat their ears off. I also want to thank Sarah Wright, a communications consultant who I am fortunate to have.

I also would like to thank the staff here at the legislature for all they do behind the scenes.

It's truly an honour to work every day to improve the lives of the people in Saskatchewan and Moose Jaw Wakamow. So before I respond directly to the budget, I'd like to reflect on the past year. I just want to reflect on the leadership that I've seen on this side of the House. It truly has been a pleasure to be a part of this team.

When I graduated from the College of Commerce, Mr. Speaker, the NDP were in power. I graduated with a commerce degree. And very few people in my graduating class or the year before or the year after even considered staying in Saskatchewan. I accepted a job in Toronto and worked there for 12 years.

[20:30]

In those days, Saskatchewan was a great place to be from. But after the Saskatchewan Party won government and we had our first son, we came back to Saskatchewan to raise our family. I'm proud to say that due to our Sask Party policies and management, Saskatchewan is now the best province to be in.

I was honoured to be a part of the first Get A Life campaign run by the city of Moose Jaw. I was an example of someone who had left the province years prior when the opposition was in power, and then came back, came back for a better quality of life and a great place to live, work, and raise my family.

Saskatchewan has the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, and it is the most affordable place for a family of four despite the economic headwinds that we've been facing across the country. This year has been a particularly volatile one in terms of tariffs, trade, and global conflict. We are not immune to the effect of these events, and so they have affected our economy and our finances.

In our '26-27 budget, we do have a deficit, but due to our diverse economy and growing export markets, we are better positioned than most provinces to weather these impacts. Our team understands the importance of a strong economy. We understand how critical it is to build an economic framework to attract investment and to be strategic in our relationships with stakeholders.

Our Premier is the strong and steady anchor of our province, especially during times like this of uncertainty. Our Premier understands that in order to represent the best interests of the people of our province, he needs to focus on shared interests that can be mutually beneficial to important stakeholders and partners. It is this real leadership that enabled our government to seal a deal with India in which Cameco will supply nearly \$3 billion in uranium, and also attain support to explore a new pulse protein centre of excellence in India.

It is our Premier that was invited to China to assist the Prime Minister in advancing the Canada-China relationship and to strengthen diplomatic and economic ties. The result was an agreement between the two countries to remove all tariffs from canola meal and peas in addition to a reduction of tariffs on canola seed to 15 per cent. The deal was essential to restoring trade volumes and opening avenues for future trading opportunities critical for a growing world. Because we do have the food, fuel, and fertilizers countries around the world need.

Mr. Speaker, now the opposition's strategy and negotiating tactic of condemning and criticizing partners versus building trust and focusing on joint-value solutions would not have attained these results. As an export-driven economy, the ability to build, maintain, and improve trading relationships is critical to our economic prosperity. And this is why our province continues to focus on market diversification.

And fortunately our government had the foresight to see the benefit of international engagement years ago, opening trade offices that enabled our exports to reach over 160 countries. The value of our exports has more than doubled since 2007, from 20 billion to nearly 50 billion annually.

Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to sit on this side of the Assembly with a government focused on three priorities: keeping our economy strong, our communities safe, and our future secure. And our budget reflects these priorities.

As my colleague mentioned, choices matter. In this budget our government had a choice. We could cut services, raise taxes, or protect Saskatchewan. We chose to protect Saskatchewan.

The top two concerns we've heard from the people of Saskatchewan are affordability and health care. And this budget addresses both. This budget protects Saskatchewan residents with more than 2.5 billion in annual affordability measures. The budget builds on commitments made in Saskatchewan through the affordability Act by implementing this second year of the government's four-year plan to lower provincial income tax. The personal, spousal, and equivalent-to-spouse and child tax exemptions, as well as the seniors' supplement, will increase by 500 each year. Again, the Saskatchewan low-income tax credit will be increased by another 5 per cent on top of indexation, providing significant affordability relief for everyone in Saskatchewan.

Tax cuts combined with indexation are providing approximately 200 million in tax savings this year, meaning a family of four pays no provincial income tax on the first \$65,000 of income. This, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the highest threshold in all of Canada.

Today a family of four earning \$100,000 is paying \$4,400 less in personal income tax than they would have when our government was first elected in 2007. Mr. Speaker, this is significant. A family of four earning \$100,000 is paying less in personal income tax today than they would have in 2007, almost 20 years ago when the NDP were in power. So this represents not one-off savings but thousands of dollars a year for families year after year.

This budget also focuses on protecting our strong economy. It protects our economy through investments in workforce development by ensuring the workers have the skills and training they need through investments in career development programs to support a growing economy. Investments like this mean opportunity — increased opportunity for families and people, opportunity for Saskatchewan people to support themselves and their families and to lead one of the highest qualities of life in world.

Saskatchewan has strong full-time growth along with the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. By keeping the small-business tax rate at 1 per cent, our government will be saving businesses \$50 million annually that can be reinvested into the economy.

This is good news for our Moose Jaw downtown business association. Downtown Moose Jaw is one of the most historic and beautiful downtowns in our country. The Moose Jaw tunnels, also located downtown, welcomed over 95,000 visitors last year, making it the most visited tourist attraction in the province. Since opening in 2000, the tunnels has welcomed more than 2.3 million guests to Moose Jaw from around the world.

The Moose Jaw downtown business association has been vital in nurturing our local business community, hosting tourist events

such as the Little Chicago Show & Shine, Greek Night, and Christmas In October. This year Christmas In October had sleigh rides up and down Main Street.

Their Helping Hands initiative reflects a deep commitment to community renewal, not only beautifying the downtown but also providing hope and purpose unto those on their path to recovery. Volunteers who are in recovery are empowered by honorariums and expectations. These volunteers work to beautify our downtown core by sweeping, collecting litter, and picking up broken glass and debris. And remarkably, nearly half of the participants in this 12-week program have found employment and are living independently. The Helping Hands program demonstrates the profound impact of community-driven initiatives and the ability of the human body and spirit to overcome challenges and the deep need for purpose.

Our government will continue to support local businesses by keeping tax rates at 1 per cent. Local businesses give back every day and contribute to countless community causes. They create jobs and contribute to countless events, generate the tax revenue that funds vital programs and services across the province.

Our province's stable business climate positions the province to attract new investments. There are over 60 large-scale projects with 60 billion in private capital investment, all creating a broader tax base and a more diverse economy.

This budget will make a significant investment in infrastructure to support a growing province. Over the next four years, over 17.5 billion will be invested in capital projects to support a growing province. These investments support improvements to health facilities, schools, highways, roads, and much more.

In this budget we'll also protect health care. We are making significant investments in the new patients-first health care plan to ensure everyone has the access to the right care at the right time in the right place.

This plan outlines 50 commitments to improve accessibility, diagnostics, and surgical wait times. Key commitments include increasing the number and expanding the scope of all health care professionals; expanding access to primary care; increasing the number and access to urgent care centres throughout the province; and continuing to recruit, train, and increase the number of doctors, nurses, and nurse practitioners in our province.

Planning is under way for a new urgent health care centre in Prince Albert, North Battleford, and Moose Jaw, further demonstrating the province's commitment to bringing care closer to home. The province will also expand diagnostic services like MRI [magnetic resonance imaging], CT [computerized tomography], and PET/CT [positron emission tomography/computerized tomography] scans. This budget provides record funding at 8.5 billion, or an increase of 5 per cent, in health care versus last year.

The budget also invests in mental health and addictions. Two hundred more addiction treatment spaces will be opened, fulfilling the government's commitment to create 500 new addiction spaces.

In this budget this government is also protecting vulnerable people with predictable multi-year funding to municipalities for the provincial approach to homelessness to create new shelter spaces, new supportive housing spaces, and more trustee services to support individuals transitioning to supportive housing. Saskatchewan assured income disability clients will also receive a 10 per cent increase each year for the next three years for residential support benefits.

The government will be providing more support for individuals experiencing interpersonal violence, investing in programs and services close to home that enhance victim services, raise awareness of human trafficking, and improve access to legal and court-based resources. Community-based organizations that partner with the government to provide services will also receive an increase in funding of 2 per cent.

So in the '26-27 budget, we're also increasing municipal revenue sharing, which is increased 221.7 per cent from 2007, 2008 when our government started this program. I should repeat that. It's increased 221 per cent since we started the program. And this is the only program like this in all of Canada. The city of Moose Jaw will receive over \$4.8 million in municipal revenue sharing this year. These dollars can be used to support infrastructure investment or create jobs locally.

In this budget we're also protecting education with an increase of \$62 million. 2.5 billion will be invested into operating funding this year, which is the increase of \$62 million. There will be increased funding for 50 additional support classrooms across the province, bringing the total up to 108. These classrooms provide specialized support to help students build their self-regulation skills, improve their focus, which will improve educator capacity, which will help make classrooms more effective.

[20:45]

New capital investments in '26-27 include a new joint multi-use school in Martensville-Warman, a new school in Shellbrook, and a major renovation of Esterhazy High School. Moose Jaw just benefited from an over \$68 million investment in the new beautiful joint-use Coteau Hills and Our Lady of Hope elementary schools.

Post-secondary institutions will benefit from a new multi-year funding agreement that offers stability and predictability. This agreement includes 3 per cent annual increases in operating funding for four years. It also safeguards students by capping annual tuition increases between 0 and 3 per cent.

Although we do have a deficit this year due to economic headwinds, we are in one of the strongest financial positions in the country. Saskatchewan has the second-lowest debt-to-GDP [gross domestic product] ratio in Canada and by far the lowest debt per capita and relative to the size of the economy of any province.

This budget protects Saskatchewan with lower taxes and critical investments in key services. Our government will manage our finances carefully and continue to reduce costs where we can with a plan to balance the budget. Our government will manage the size of our workforce and reduce expenses without eliminating current positions or compromising services.

Mr. Speaker, the '26-27 budget protects Saskatchewan by maintaining a strong economy, continuing to lower taxes, controlling spending, and investing in critical services in a sustainable manner.

Mr. Speaker, the people who built this province didn't see only challenges, they saw opportunity. This government will honour their legacy by doing the same — facing challenges head-on and providing even more opportunities for the people of this province. This government will continue to ensure that Saskatchewan's economy remains strong, our communities safe, and our future secure.

I will be supporting the motion put forward by the Minister of Finance and seconded by the member from Carrot River Valley. I will not be supporting the amendment. God bless you and God bless Saskatchewan.

Deputy Speaker B. McLeod: — I recognize the member from Regina Coronation Park.

Noor Burki: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure and honour to be entering on debate on response to the budget of 2026 and 2027.

So first of all, thank you very much. A big thank you to all those members for sitting in this Chamber either on this side, on the other side. The work we do, it is not something really very easy. It is very hard. We all wake up early in the morning, get prepared, and make our way towards the Legislative Assembly. A lot of meetings, stakeholder's meetings. And we spend a lot of time. We spend a lot of time not with our families, but we are doing our job.

A few days before, I was talking to my young daughter. She's 10 years old, in grade 5. And I told her, "What do you think? What changes do you see in me?" That I being not her MLA and now I'm MLA. So she told me very hesitantly that, "Dad, it's okay. I'm not going to tell you." I said, "Well, honey, tell me." She told me that, "Dad, the only difference that I can see is, everything's fine, we still love you, Dad. But we have less time with you." Which is really unfortunate as well. If this is my case, it will be the case with all my colleagues on this side and on that side as well.

But at the end of the day, we are doing a blessing job. We're taking care of people. This is the job that is really a blessing. And I will say we will get a reward for that. So make sure that we are all on the same page.

And I will say thank you to the Speaker role as well. Sometimes it is not very easy, it's challenging, and sometimes it's tough as well. But yes, we all understand that the Speaker is also a referee and managing all those things. But you know, sometimes challenges will happen, but we wish and pray that you have strength. This Chair should be dealing with both sides of the aisle clearly, transparently, and the way it is. So thank you for all the hard work that you guys are doing over here. I really appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker, we all know about that there is one statement that, one chord that says every successful person has some woman behind their success. So I think one of them is me as well. I have

seven women behind me, my wife and seven daughters. So I think that this is the big support for me. And I will say thank you to my wife, if she is watching me, Shamim Mahnoor, for all your support, for all your dedication, for supporting me to raising our seven daughters and giving them a good education, good life. Thank you for that.

Mr. Speaker, one good news in our family that came, that my daughter's wedding was in December, around Christmastime back home. I travelled for that wedding. It was really a good gathering, good time to see that wedding. And it's always fulfilling when you see your child is getting married, getting older, that they can be educated, and they get jobs as well. So that was my third daughter, Bushra Burki. She is working as a high school English teacher in rural Saskatchewan. So she got married.

And, Mr. Speaker, you know that culturally our traditions are a little bit different. We got about 500 people that they were staying for 10 days in our house, and we were cooking and feeding them all. But, Mr. Speaker, I was not cooking anything by myself. I had so many hands, so many people that they came around and they were supporting us.

I know I mentioned here in the last session as well that my older daughter, Saadia Burki, that she is working at the Cancer Society. So she got a baby boy, so Daniyal Burki, and he is almost seven months. He is back home. So her husband is not here, so she went for her maternity leave and spending time. And hopefully she will be back by 14th of April, next month. So she will join, and Daniyal will come back.

And most of the time I have seen grandchildren are very close to grandparents. When I was teaching in many schools I could see a lot of students, they were telling me stories about their grandparents, grandpa and grandma. And I was talking to them and I said . . . [inaudible] . . . And they said, well grandparents are giving so much time. Parents are busy, so that's why. So I think that's one of the connections, and love him so much.

Mr. Speaker, other good news is that my daughter, she was graduated here. She will graduate basically this fall. I said, well this session she will be graduated, but she was very smart. She took a course and she completed her degree, bachelor's degree in three years. So right now she's working with the Ministry of Justice as well, as a job. So she's a lucky one.

She's been looking forward to go to law college. She got from three, four good colleges her admission, but she was telling me, Dad, don't tell anybody. I don't want to make my colleagues or my friends that they say, oh you've got admitted over here. So she said, don't announce that. But she's going somewhere for a good college to law. So she will be pursuing that.

Sara is now going to university. That is her first year so she is enjoying it. So she's taking psychology. Safa, thank you very much for all your hard work and telling me all those things that you do in school and sharing with me as we chat together. So thank you for all that.

And the last one is Sana that gives me advice and she needs my time as well, so I will be making sure to get some time to make sure we can spend as a DD day — dad and daughter day.

Mr. Speaker, when we're travelling, in travel all the time we will get somehow, some way, some adventure. Either we will miss a flight or we will miss a train or something like that. So when we were back home, one tragedy happened with our family as well, and that was that my kids, they have to be here to Canada on 5th of January because they were catching their school. The schools were opening in that week. So they all came together, and me and my wife, we were supposed to be flying by 16th January after 10 days.

So my younger daughter, she was super excited because she see Pakistan first time when she was knowing things, so people were giving the gift of suits. So she was collecting all of the suits from getting from people. And then when they were coming back she stuffed all the suits in her suitcase but it was not taking it. It was not space. So she was crying. She said, I want to take all my suits with me, but I don't want to leave anything behind. We told her, okay, then you need a big suitcase. So my wife, she gave a big suitcase to her. She stuffed everything in her suitcase and they came over here.

And after two weeks' time I think it was — what exactly I won't remember — January 12th. Our flight was January 16th. On January 12th she called me. She said, "Dad, I opened the suitcase and I saw in the pockets your passport and mom's passport is with me." And I was really surprised and she told me, how you guys going to fly? I said, "Well it's exactly like you cut the wings of a bird and you're telling a bird to fly. It's not going to happen."

It was really kind of chaotic as well. It was very less time; our flight was there. So thanks God that we reached out to our embassy in Pakistan, the Canadian embassy. We got an opportunity to went to the embassy. The good thing was that I was very lucky to get the time with our ambassador as well.

So they gave us a temporary passport within three days. It was really, really tremendous job that they did. I'm very thankful of that. So that was one of the adventures. So we got our passports. So we make our way. We came safe and sound; otherwise it would be costing a lot.

Mr. Speaker, our constituency executives, I'm very thankful for them for doing their great job for constituency. I'm really thankful to Bre Litzenberger. Bre is also a president of this executive, and Alayne Dubord, she is a vice-president. We have Corrina Ward; she's our secretary. And Ziyang Li is our treasurer. And we have other directors and executive members as well: Jason Hammond, Khalid Awan, Cheryl Stecyk, and Billal Malik, and Saadia Burki, Darin Milo, and Randy Ward. Thank you very much for all your hard work, all the volunteering job you guys are doing for us. That's really much appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, recently I got a new CA [constituency assistant], Nadine Johnson. She joined me last month. She's a very experienced person, worked for government many, many years. She was very good in budgeting and all those kind of things, how to manage those kinds of things to make sure we can get optimal results. She is an amazing person and a very dedicated, committed person, and I've been blessed by having very good people around me.

Mr. Speaker, a leader is always the backbone of any organization. Obviously I want to say my leader, the member from Regina

Lakeview, putting a lot of hard work to the job that she is doing. She put a lot of extra miles. She goes to each and every event, being in community, and it is very hard for me to imagine when she has children and she's managing all those things. But as I said, this is a blessing job. To do something for the community, that's always rewarding.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my constituency has four high schools. Before I was having five schools. O'Neill high school is nowadays not in my constituency. It went to Walsh Acres. But I have Thom Collegiate high school, Regina Harvest City school, Regina Huda School, Laval francophone school, and I'm really proud, and it's my honour to say that I've been teaching at all those schools from time to time.

[21:00]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Harvest City school will be coming tomorrow to visit the Legislative Assembly, and I hope you will be giving a treat of ice cream to them as well because you put the tradition, which is great. I appreciate that one. Thank you for that.

Regina Huda School, their class will be coming on March 31st as well to visit the Legislative Assembly. So it's always inspiring for young people when they come over here and they see members and all those things. Mr. Speaker, they are our future. They're our leaders. We have to make sure we have to show them up what we can do. Yes, you can do it more better than us. But yes, showing up to them is really great.

Mr. Speaker, my constituency is very diverse. If you want to see real diversity somewhere, someplace, go to the mall. I am very proud of that, that Northgate Mall is my constituency. If you can see, you will see like diverse things over here. Or if you go to the schools, you will see diversity there. If you go to apartment buildings, you will see diversity over there.

Mr. Speaker, one thing I will share with you that in my constituency 35 per cent of people that they're living in our constituency, they're all renters. We have a lot of apartment buildings. And the recent increase of rent was really a factor for them. It was very heavy on them. What the people used to, they used to go to small houses and were like taking many kids over there. Mr. Speaker, it is very, very hard for those people and we, on our side, we moved the motion to make sure we have to put a cap on the rent, as many other provinces they did it.

So that way people will stay. People will have a life of comfort. If you're raising your children in a small space, it is psychologically their brain will be not growing up. Their mind will be not that growing up. Mr. Speaker, we know, as we've all been graduated, most of us graduated from universities. When you go to any university, the building will be really, really big — humongous. And the reason of keeping this building wide, big, because people who are studying in this institution, their vision should be wide as well. So, Mr. Speaker, if I see the children raised in one room, four children, I think that is really, really very hard for the family. As a community, it is for us as well.

Mr. Speaker, one thing that we say, that social services, before they were paying directly to the owner. Now they change it that the person will have to pay. So this thing making things really worse, because when the landlord was asking the person to give

me money, they say, "I was so hungry; my kids were hungry; I spent money into that." And they were not getting the money. So many houses, they back from social services. They were not giving it. That created one of the biggest vacuum of not having accommodation for people. And people were forced to go to a shelter or become homeless, which is really unfortunate for that.

Mr. Speaker, recently we have seen that in SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] the taxes, the things, everything went higher. Before the deductible was about \$700. That went about to \$950. Mr. Speaker, the gas price is the same. The gas price is increasing over and over. We on our side, we said that you have to scrap the tax so at least people can get 11 or 10 cents on their gas bill so they can pay less. Many other provinces, they did. If we're talking about affordability, we have to look into ourself. We have to do.

Member opposite, he said Saskatchewan is governed by Saskatchewan, and Alberta or any other province is governed by them. So if you are alone and no one will say that this relaxation to the people will be really great and they will appreciate. So people in this climate they are living, it's very cold weather. They need a car to transport. They take kids to school, to colleges, to universities, back and forth for work. They obviously need a car. So the gas consumption, a little relief will be really healing up for the people in this time that we can see everything has skyrocketed.

The grocery prices before COVID and today, it's almost three times higher. Do we think that the wages of the people are three times higher? It never happened, Mr. Speaker. It is very heartbreaking when people are looking into the prices and then they're taking things from the shelf. We should not be in this situation.

And some seniors, they can't afford to take fresh food or fresh vegetables or fresh fruit. They are going to take it, frozen one. And, Mr. Speaker, people who are seniors, they paid their whole life taxes and they work hard. They make this infrastructure that we see every day. They spend and they should not be in some situation like that. They should not see this unfortunate situation.

Skyrocketing food prices put a lot of strain on the food bank. And many people that they never been to a food bank — they never saw a food bank — they are having no other way to go. People in this time, they are making a decision whether we have to put food on the table or we should buy medication or pay for bills. Mr. Speaker, we should know that people are really suffering and they're suffering mentally and that is very painful.

When we're talking about immigration, Mr. Speaker, the population decline, it's not really a good sign. If we're talking about population — China, India — why people want to do business with those big countries, they have big population. It's just because of population; that's a big market. Yes, we have to make sure we have to focus on that to increase the population.

But I'm not saying that we have to bring people to take a job from people over here, from students' jobs. We have to make sure we have to make it refined, that people who are coming from abroad, in which area they're coming, we have to hook them into that area, that specialization, that area that they can get in, that will be not a burden on our economy, that will be not a burden on our

job market. They will be going straight to the areas, to the specialty where we are taking it.

Mr. Speaker, if we build one system, every system needs to be refined. The SINP [Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program] program, family nominee program was started by NDP in 2012. Sask Party, they restrained it. And I'm not saying no, you should not be doing that. Definitely when they put some restriction, there will be some reason. But we have to go over and over and tune it and find out what things are going on. If you don't overlook, things will be going in wrong way, wrong direction.

So, Mr. Speaker, we see a lot of foreign students. They coming over here and they call this place, they dream this place, to take this place their home. But unfortunately they can't get into that dreams. We have to do as much as other provinces, at least they are doing. Manitoba, they give a work permit extension for two years to retain the young people in their province.

And students when they come to this country, Mr. Speaker, they spend for four years the money of their parents. They learn working ethics over here. They get education over here. They're ready to work in the area where they are specialized. But unfortunately we don't have this one, that we are extending their work permit. They are leaving our province.

And many young people, they are leaving our province, which is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker. We have to retain them. When we're talking about education we know about that. Education is the building blocks for success. Spending on education is not the cost; it is the best investment. And education always pays back, Mr. Speaker. The more we invest in education, definitely, definitely, I'm pretty much sure we'll get it back.

We talk about health care. The most important thing in our life is our life. If someone is not healthy, a person is painful, they will not like anything. So in our hallways, my colleague, her mom got a stroke being in the hallway. And so many people will be that. We have to make sure that we have to give it little bit generous support to make sure our health care should be on the standard. It is the right. It's not privilege, Mr. Speaker.

I was talking to a young doctor. He moved from Alberta. And I was talking to him and he told me, that my parents are living here. I came over here; otherwise I'd like to stay there. There is no competitive salary packages that I can do it like in other provinces.

Mr. Speaker, I'm running out with time but I want to say that with that, I will be saying that I'm supporting my colleague from Regina Royal Mount that he amended. I'll be supporting that. But I'll be not supporting the budget of 2026 and 2027. Thank you.

Deputy Speaker B. McLeod: — I recognize the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Travis Keisig: — Well thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's always exciting to get on your feet and enter into debate on the budget. And really I'm going to start off talking about budget day. You know, what an exciting day — this Chamber filled with people, all of us having guests and entertaining in our different offices, meeting with constituents and stakeholders. Like the buzz is infectious. It really is, Mr. Speaker.

And I had a young lady coming to budget from my constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I mean she was in awe of the building and the experience and everything else. And I mean her first question: is this what it's like every day? And I said, well no, it's actually like two times a year is the only time it's really like this. But anyway she really enjoyed the experience. It was good for her, good for . . . It's important for people to experience that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know, if you get an opportunity, if your MLA approaches you or asks you or, you know, you hear about it, talk to your elected representative and ask them for an invite. Because it's something everybody should experience, you know, at the minimum once. I mean it does get to be a long speech in some uncomfortable chairs for some people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it's something to see. You know, it really is. I had many municipal leaders across the constituency attend, and they really enjoyed the opportunity to experience the whole budget experience. So it was a great day, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know, we always have to thank our constituency assistants. The value that they bring to our work is, you know, it's really remarkable — especially, well, for my constituency assistant. Tina does a great job of handling, you know, the work of a constituency assistant, assisting constituents with challenges of navigating different programs through the government and just being there as a kind of a sounding board for so many of our constituency, Mr. Speaker. And yeah, I'm really very lucky to have her as part of my team.

I really also want to thank my wife for supporting me in what I do in this Chamber. And I like to think that I support her for her many roles. She's an administrator at the RM [rural municipality] of Tullymet, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but she's also the president of the Rural Municipal Administrators' Association. And, yeah, she's also sitting on the SARM board. So she has had just a fantastic experience of working at the upper level of municipal leadership, Mr. Deputy Speaker. She's really giving back to the province. Like she provides that common-sense view on a lot of issues at that SARM board, and she garners a lot of respect at that board. And I am really proud, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to call her my wife. We're very lucky.

My youngest daughter, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a veterinary technician working in Yorkton. Her and her . . . well I guess, I don't know, I always said boyfriend and now I guess he proposed, so it's fiancé. I'm not sure what the proper term is.

[21:15]

But anyway, they're farming in the constituency, and you know, she's working in Yorkton at the veterinary clinic. And they're doing very well for themselves.

And I'm very, very proud to see the next generation taking on a responsibility and role. Their work ethic is outstanding, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I'm very proud of them. They're doing good things in the community, very involved in . . . Her fiancé is very involved. I've watched more senior hockey this winter than I have my entire life, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Like they've been playing lots of hockey, curling lots. They're very active in the community, and they're doing really well.

My older daughter, Shannara, is . . . I guess she got proposed to as well just the other day. So that's exciting news. They haven't set a wedding date or anything . . .

An Hon. Member: — She said yes?

Travis Keisig: — Thank you. Yes, she did say yes. And yeah, her fiancé, I guess, is a linesman for Hundseth and does really good work with that company. Great company. And my older daughter is a licensed practical nurse working at the General Hospital. And I am really, really proud of her.

She's working in trauma, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And you know, a lot times . . . I mean, nursing, it's a very high-stress job. I mean that's just the truth of it. And a lot of times she'll go on kind of a group call to myself and my wife and whoever is available to talk kind of answers. And she'll decompress on the way home and talk about her day and I'll talk about mine and my wife will talk about hers. And you know, I'm very proud of her, Mr. Deputy Speaker. She's a hard worker. She's going to go far.

You know, I'm very lucky. My sister is an LPN [licensed practical nurse]. She's worked at All Nations' Healing Hospital for 28 years now, since it opened. And you know, I think she's really set the bar for her niece and for her daughter. My niece is also a lab tech. And it's very exciting to see so many members of my family, Mr. Deputy Speaker, involved in health care across Saskatchewan. There's so many opportunities for young people, and it's great to see them taking advantage of it and working hard and providing services to each and every Saskatchewan resident all across the province.

You know, it's important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to support our health care workers and most importantly the patients. This budget provides record health care funding that puts patients first. The budget makes significant investments to continue the largest nurse practitioner expansion in provincial history, which will see thousands more patients connected with a primary care provider. Additionally, increased funding will enable independent nurse practitioner clinics to hire additional health professionals and build primary care teams that can accept even more patients.

One thing I picked up on in the budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is this government is going to better support multiple sclerosis patients with a future Regina-based MS [multiple sclerosis] clinic offering specialized care closer to home, improving quality of life and long-term health outcomes. Patients in and around Regina, as well as other parts of southern Saskatchewan, will not have to travel to Saskatoon for specialized care.

This budget will continue accelerating diagnostic capacity to provide additional specialized imaging services such as CT, MRI, and PET/CT scan for thousands more patients annually. Increased funding will also be dedicated to surgical services, which will reduce wait-lists and deliver more timely access to surgery for patients.

I had a constituent, Mr. Deputy Speaker, reach out to me, and he was having cancer challenges and having trouble accessing PET scans in Regina. And this budget is going to alleviate a lot of those challenges and going to make some real improvements for all people across southern Saskatchewan.

Support for innovative new pathways to connect patients with care is being provided through further expansion of urgent care centres. The new urgent care centre in Saskatoon is expected to open its doors to patients later this year. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this also builds on the success of the province's first care centre, which opened in Regina in 2024. This year's budget also supports planning for five new urgent care centres located in Moose Jaw, North Battleford, Prince Albert, and a second location in both Regina and Saskatoon.

And I just want to share a quick story, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On budget day a constituent was here, and he had the week before attended the urgent care centre in Regina. And his wife pulled me to the side and complimented this government on the professionalism of the staff working there, the cleanliness of the facility, and the promptness of the testing, diagnosis, and treatment. So they had an absolutely wonderful experience with the urgent care centre. And I just really wanted to share that with each and every member of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

This government truly knows the value of the urgent care centres. Without these we would see thousands of people heading to the emergency department, creating even longer wait times to receive care.

This government is zoned in on improving access to health services for the people of this province. We realize the patients-first health care plan, that even with increased health funding our health care systems are under some pressure and a rising demand and a growing population. Access to care is of the utmost importance. We have heard from health care providers, professionals, and most importantly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan people.

I did an interview this morning with my local paper this morning, Mr. Deputy Speaker, talking about the budget. And you know, we talked about municipal revenue sharing. We talked about what the budget brings to the people of Last Mountain-Touchwood and more specifically the Ituna area. And the question came up during the reporter's interview, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about the Yorkton hospital. And it was a great question.

I mean a lot of people from Ituna get medical access in Yorkton, and it's a natural trading area for that community to go to Yorkton. And I told the newspaper, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the people of Ituna and the people of Last Mountain-Touchwood that this government has never not built a hospital that they promised to the people. So it's in the process. There's a process involved, but it will get built, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Moving on to education, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This budget ensures Saskatchewan students and families have the opportunities they need to learn and grow. We know that classroom complexity continues to be a challenge for student learning, which is why this budget provides for an additional 50 specialized support classrooms across the province again this year, bringing the total to 108. A specialized support classroom helps students in building skills so they are better able to focus and participate in and outside of the classroom.

School divisions in my constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker, like Prairie Valley and Horizon, both have a combined increase in total operating funding, as well as over 3 million and 2 million

for each school division, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for PMR [preventative maintenance and renewal] funding. And that PMR funding is absolutely critical for, you know, preventative maintenance and repairs.

Many people across the constituency have stated the importance of investing in education, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This government does not dispute the importance of providing our young people with a quality education in which all students feel safe. The funding this government is providing will deliver just that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Also in the budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker — something I was very excited to see — an increase of apprenticeship seats of 300 more apprenticeship seats, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You know, there was 5,000 seats. We're increasing that to 5,300. And it's absolutely critical, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're seeing the \$60 billion investment coming into Saskatchewan, and we need to be able to provide those industries with the boilermakers, with the pipefitters, with the electricians, with the plumbers, with the pipefitters, with the ironworkers. To provide these young people an avenue to access the skilled trades, provide, you know, a good job, a good quality of life.

And some of these jobs . . . You know, Mr. Speaker, the Jansen potash mine, if you would have started there day one as a tradesman, you could do your entire apprenticeship, a four-year apprenticeship, at the same job. Yeah, I mean, you don't get those opportunities very often or very many places. You know, it's incredible.

The NexGen Energy and Denison mines, those projects are going to kick off here right away. There'll be over a four-year construction timeline for a lot of those large mines. You'll be able to start there as a first-year apprentice and get your whole four-year apprenticeship done at one job. And then the sky's the limit once you have your interprovincial Red Seal certification, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So there's so many opportunities for young people all across this province, and there's a lot more to come too.

You know, one thing I also want to commend the Minister of Advanced Education on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the good work . . . We're providing an extra \$15 million of funding to the Western College of Veterinary Medicine. And we are doing some very good work of getting the right students in the right education at the right time. And it's, you know, it's really . . . It's kind of a landmark negotiated deal that they have going on there, and it's providing excellent returns to the people of the province. And you know, we are going through a very high livestock market price time — record high cattle prices right now, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we need so many of these large-animal vets that are being trained at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine in Saskatoon.

An Hon. Member: — It's a real jewel in our province.

Travis Keisig: — It is. That's a great comment from my colleague. A jewel of the province, Western College of Veterinary Medicine.

Another thing I want to talk about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on budget day I was able to have the fire chief from the community

of Strasbourg and the fire chief from the community of Lipton here. And I really wanted them to attend. I was trying to get as many volunteer fire chiefs as I could as we announced the doubling of the volunteer firefighter tax credit. This is a great addition to rural Saskatchewan.

Our volunteer fire departments all across our constituencies are cornerstones. I mean, they work at the rink. They work at the, you know, at the schools. They're always volunteering at something. If you want something done, Mr. Deputy Speaker, ask a busy person, because busy people, you know, are ready to work. And the vast majority of our volunteer fire department members are incredibly busy people.

So this is, you know, really just a small way for the province of Saskatchewan to say thank you. Thank you to all of our volunteer fire departments.

Affordability issues, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Supporting our families across the province that are experiencing this pressure. And this budget delivers affordability where it matters most for all of our families.

The government is providing approximately two and a half billion in annual affordability measures built into this year's budget, and builds on the commitments made in *The Saskatchewan Affordability Act*.

The personal, spousal, equivalent-to-spouse, and child tax exemptions as well as 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, meaning a family of four pays no income tax on their first \$65,000 of income.

That's the highest tax-free threshold in all of Canada, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A family of four earning 100,000 will be paying \$4,400 less in income tax than they would have when our government was first elected in 2007. This is a very real protection for hard-working families who are trying to get ahead, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Protecting Saskatchewan isn't just about saving people money, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Protecting Saskatchewan people is about making sure that your loved one gets home safely. That is why investments in highways, including the construction of passing lanes, are so important for the people of this province.

I am really looking forward to construction starting off this spring on turning lanes and passing lanes at the Highway 10 between Fort Qu'Appelle and Melville. And those passing lanes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was a pilot project from Fort Qu'Appelle to Balgonie on No. 10 Highway. The first ones ever built in the province, and it absolutely . . . I've driven that highway — I mean I don't want to say a million times, but thousands of times — and it was an absolute game changer when those passing lanes were put in.

They work flawlessly. You know, people understand how they operate. And you know, you just get behind a boat or a camper in the summertime, every seven miles there's a passing lane. So just patience a little bit, and then you have the opportunity to safely pass. They are very economically viable to install and they

work very efficiently. So with the start of this project and completion of it, we will have passing lanes all the way from Balgonie to Canora on Highway 10, and that is really great to see.

[21:30]

Mr. Speaker, I really want to thank the Minister of Justice for all of his hard work on the firearms file. That is something that the constituents of Last Mountain-Touchwood are very passionate about, and it's a fundamental part of our ability to provide for our families, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I mean hunting is, you know, a real part of our culture. My daughter and her boyfriend are avid outdoorsmen, and they take every advantage of any opportunity to go hunting.

And I also want to thank . . . Robert Freberg announced his retirement. I want to thank him for truly his leadership at that level at the Firearms Secretariat, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He has been, you know, a cornerstone in that office, and I just really want to take this opportunity to thank him for all of the work that he has put into the province of Saskatchewan in supporting all of our law-abiding firearms owners.

You know, it's very important, Mr. Speaker. You cannot re-emphasize as much about how debilitating the carbon tax is to our economy. We are not being charged that — and thankfully to the leadership from our government — but that's over a \$500 million bill from every Saskatchewan industry, business, resident. It is an incredible expense for very little positive outcome. So anyway, always happy to say that we are the only carbon tax-free province in the country of Canada, Mr. Speaker.

I was very excited to be able to attend the announcement of the new data centre, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with the Premier and the Minister of the Crown Investments Corporation. And you know, Saskatchewan has always been known as an agricultural powerhouse. Saskatchewan's been known as an energy powerhouse. Saskatchewan's been known as a mining powerhouse. But, Mr. Speaker, this data centre is going to put us on the road to being a technology powerhouse.

Like it is fantastic news, very exciting for the province. It's going to, you know, provide tentatively nine figures of income for SaskPower. And it does not use any water. It's a closed-loop cooling system, Mr. Speaker. And it's also important that the greatest expense to these data centres is cooling. And seven months of the year in Saskatchewan, it's going to be very affordable to cool this data centre in this province.

You know, I think everybody knows in this Chamber that I'm a very avid consumer of local media, Mr. Speaker. So I'm always watching the news, the 6 o'clock news, the *CTV Morning Live*. I'm listening to talk radio all the time. As I get older I have less and less interest in listening to music, and I always enjoy a good talk radio and whatnot.

So anyway, I was listening to *The Evan Bray Show*. Evan Bray has a house in my constituency. Yeah, a great guy, I know him. I know his brother good. His mother taught my daughter school back in the day, Mr. Speaker. So anyway, good old Saskatchewan, everybody knows everybody.

But on *The Evan Bray Show*, I just want to read a quote into the

record. And Evan Bray . . . There was a gentleman. His name was John Watson. He's the president of Bell Business Markets, Mr. Speaker. And Evan Bray asked him a question: "Did you actually do a scan across Canada to determine where the best locations might be [for the data centre]?"

And this is a quote, Mr. Speaker, from John Watson:

You know, it's interesting. There's an availability of power, resources, talented folks to build the centres, but I can tell you unequivocally, the story starts with leadership and the province of Saskatchewan. You really benefit from exceptional leadership with Premier Moe and, I can tell you, the cascade of that to his team and how they work together and how they worked with us, it was exceptional.

Leadership matters, Mr. Speaker. This truly is . . . You know, this gentleman, a head CEO [chief executive officer] with Bell Canada, a very important individual, recognizing the Premier and the team that he's built around him for getting this data centre in Saskatchewan. Two hundred good jobs are coming, 800 construction. You know, it's really exciting for each and every person, and it starts us on the cusp of being part of the technology sector, adding to all of the great things that we can do in Saskatchewan.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I think I'm running out of time, but I've got a few things I'd like to talk about yet. I really want to thank you for your leadership, for all the work that you put into managing the Assembly and the House and kind of your insistence on proper debate. You know, it's really great to see. So in that tone, Mr. Speaker, I want to enter into some debate about some of the comments from the members opposite.

I really want to just kind of set the record straight. The member from Mount Royal is an avid outdoorsman, very knowledgeable. I saw on Facebook he was out fishing on the weekend, and you know, he was criticizing the \$20 habitat fee changes that we brought forward as a government. And I just want to explain to each and every Saskatchewan person how these fee changes came about.

So currently if you want to buy a whitetail licence or a moose or an upland game birds or whatever, you have to purchase a \$20 habitat permit. And that \$20 fee does not go into the general revenue fund. It goes into something called the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund. It is 100 per cent goes into that fund, and it's 100 per cent to be used for conservation efforts all across Saskatchewan.

So currently if you are a hunter, you would buy the habitat permit and then you would buy your fishing licence, and the habitat fees would be paid. But if you were only a fisherman, Mr. Speaker, you were never being charged the habitat permit. So we have made changes so that all fishermen have to buy the habitat permit. You're only buying the permit once, Mr. Speaker. So whether you're a fisher or a hunter or whatever it is, you're only buying one \$20 permit, and 100 per cent goes into the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund.

And it's also important to note that the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, for the last several conventions they've had, Mr. Speaker, this was one of their number one resolutions they

brought forward, this change. You know, they've been asking for that.

And one of the opportunities that the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund . . . It's used to fund conservation efforts all across Saskatchewan, and it's also used to fund the Saskatchewan Fish Hatchery that the Minister of Environment was talking about. It is a great facility, Mr. Speaker. It's located in the MLA for White City-Qu'Appelle's constituency.

It's over 100 years old and it is in need of some rejuvenation, so I'm really excited that the Minister of Environment earmarked 700,000 for engineering and preplanning. And it's absolutely critical, like the amount of lakes that that fish hatchery stocks all across Saskatchewan — thousands and thousands and thousands of fingerlings that they put out.

They have one of the highest fertility and success rates of any fish hatchery in North America. And it's really interesting because they are able to do that because they are one of the very few fish hatcheries in North America that uses well water for water. Most pull from a lake or a river or some form of fresh water. But these ones are using well water which has zero disease, zero contamination from any algae and bacteria that the fingerlings are susceptible to. So they're doing great work, you know, but they need some modernization. And this \$20 habitat fee change is going to provide an opportunity for all anglers to support the Saskatchewan Fish Hatchery, which many, many people have been asking for.

Also, Mr. Speaker, there's been actually kind of a different tone from some of the new members opposite. The member from Saskatoon Silverspring posed the question in his budget response about how many pipelines has the Premier built. Kind of a . . . It was a derogatory tone. He was trying to imply that we're not getting any infrastructure built across the province.

Well I definitely have an answer for him, Mr. Speaker, and we have built thousands and thousands of kilometres of pipelines all across this province. You know, we have investments from Strathcona, Cardinal, Cenovus, myriad of other ones — hundreds of millions of dollars. And every one of those investments, Mr. Speaker, there's a flowline; there's an injection line; there is multiple process lines. There is a myriad of pipelines being built all across Saskatchewan right now as we speak.

I also want to table this document, Mr. Speaker. This was a social media post put out by our Premier, and the date is 2025, February 26. And what it says on the social media post, Mr. Speaker: "Effective immediately, all pipeline permits going east, west, or south received in Saskatchewan will be considered pre-approved."

So we are focused on continuing to grow our world-class energy sector, Mr. Speaker. Particularly important at the challenging times we find ourselves now with the challenges in the Middle East and the Strait of Hormuz and a myriad of other factors at that, but we are very supportive of our world-class energy sector.

I just want to wrap up, Mr. Speaker, on a very serious note. The NDP, the Leader of the Opposition, her chief of staff and campaign manager sent out an email that was absolutely, I found, unacceptable. And I know the Leader of the Opposition has, you

know, kind of described us as "clutching pearls."

But in these situations, Mr. Speaker, I always like to think, you know, what would the inverse be? You know, what if the shoe was on the other foot? So what would our Premier do, our leader of the Saskatchewan Party, if I sent out an email to my supporters with the word "hate" in it? Well our Premier would strip me of my duties, legislative duties immediately, Mr. Speaker, and he would expel me from the Saskatchewan Party caucus. Because hate has no place, no place in politics, Mr. Speaker. In this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, we need more debate and absolutely no hate.

I want to thank the Premier for his leadership. I want to thank the Minister of Finance for all of his work on putting together the budget. I want to thank my colleagues, the members of treasury board. They put a lot of effort into this budgetary process, Mr. Speaker. And I also want to thank the member from Carrot River Valley for seconding the budget.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting any amendments, but I will be supporting this budget. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

[21:45]

Leroy Laliberte: — Thank you very much, guys. Thank you . . . [inaudible].

Speaker Goudy: — *Hansard* . . . Can we recess just for a few minutes . . . [inaudible] . . . So we're going to recess for three minutes.

[The Assembly recessed from 21:47 until 21:51.]

Speaker Goudy: — All right. Those three minutes are up. We'll resume session. I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Leroy Laliberte: — All right. Testing. It works. Okay, I'm not touching the mike.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And again, it's great to be on my feet to speak to this budget of 2026, and to feel deeply honoured, deeply privileged to stand in the Assembly. And also thankful that the government stayed for my response to this budget, Mr. Speaker.

First of all I want to say thank you to my family, obviously. I had a good weekend with them, Mr. Speaker. My little one was playing in a hockey tournament in Saskatoon, and there was a whole slew of different teams from all over the province. So that was nice to be able to be there with her. It's her first year playing hockey, and she was pretty good, pretty good hockey player. And so being there with my family over the weekend was really nice.

I want to thank my constituency of Athabasca, the good people throughout the Northwest, for allowing me again to represent them here in the Assembly, Mr. Speaker. Very thankful for that. I've been meeting with a lot of the community members throughout over the past little bit, over the past couple of weeks. Quite often over the internet, meeting them in their communities. And so it's been a lot of travelling. The constituency of

Athabasca is pretty big, so meeting them at different times.

So I'm going to be very quick, very brief when it comes to this budget, Mr. Speaker, because there's a few things that I want to talk about. And I've been very blunt in the Assembly. I'm not one to play theatre or whatever. So I want to be very blunt with this budget and how it affects not only the people of Saskatchewan but the people in my riding.

So first of all I want to speak about health care. And this is something that I brought up before. The people of Athabasca, they struggle a lot with the health care system that's provided for them. We have people that live up in Stony Rapids that have a hospital, for example, that have to sometimes, because they don't have the proper services for that place, that they have to travel all the way to Prince Albert.

Now I don't know if any of the members here have travelled those roads from La Ronge into Stony Rapids. It's quite the ride. It's gravel. It's windy. You have to have a radio and radio every 10 kilometres to let them know that you're coming, or you're going to be meeting up with semis that are pulling out of the mine sites 24 hours a day, 365 days in a year, Mr. Speaker.

Now there's no cell service up in that area either. So in case of an emergency — if somebody gets into an accident or hits the ditch or whatever — that's also quite concerning because it's happened many times in the past and it will continue to happen, Mr. Speaker. I'm just being honest.

Now the health care closures that have been happening throughout the Northwest and happening throughout the province, I think that that's unacceptable as well. We have a small hospital up in La Loche that has to accommodate quite a few people in that area of the population. We also have a hospital in Ile-a-la-Crosse that also needs some other services. We don't have enough doctors and nurses to provide care for people in northwestern Saskatchewan.

Now this budget never really spoke to that. I saw a patients-first project that was presented, but there was no proper consultation done with the First Nations community.

I spoke in this Assembly, and I also, after meeting with the First Nations health ombudsman, found out that there were over just about 600 cases of mistreatment, a lot of Indigenous patients in the health care system. So I thought that that would be a place where the government would start to be able to have that consultation with those people, and that didn't happen.

Education-wise, I stood in the Assembly from the first time that I came in here and spoke of Buffalo Narrows school, for example. And that's only one school in my riding that needs some work done. They have no running water on one side of their school — at 2026. And I was pretty . . . I felt not only discouraged, but I was upset to hear that there wasn't going to be any money once again allocated to those schools in the North. Because those kids deserve it, Mr. Speaker. They deserve a new school, and so it was pretty upsetting to see that. Now I don't understand how a government can allow people and kids to go without, especially coming from a rich province like ours.

The mental health and addictions supports that we don't have,

that we're lacking. We have many throughout the province that are battling these addictions. We see it all over. We see it in every single one of our constituencies. Now my background, I had had opportunity to help develop projects and programs for people battling addictions in our communities throughout the North and throughout northern Canada. I've never seen it this bad, Mr. Speaker, where we're having a lot of our families and our friends . . . And I know that every single one of us knows somebody that lost somebody to this addiction.

Now the northwest part of the province has been asking for years if this government would support the initiatives that they brought forward, and that hasn't happened. There's land-based teaching models. There's teachings of Indigenous virtues, the Dene virtues. There's all of these different things, these initiatives that people have brought forward but were never supported by this government, and I don't understand why.

You know, I meet with a lot of the grandparents that are burying their grandkids to these addictions, and the same thing that they say every time is that we shouldn't be burying our grandkids. And that's what we're seeing every week, Mr. Speaker.

I had recently, just a couple of weeks ago, buried a young uncle of mine — 44 years old — to cirrhosis. And you know, we'd have . . . We lost a lot of friends and family over the past couple of months to addiction. And yet there's nothing in this budget that states that there was going to be money allocated to those programs in the North.

I had had the chance to host a town hall in my home community of Beauval, Mr. Speaker. And the talk was both on public safety and also mental health and addictions support. Now it was awesome because we had had not only the municipal representation or Métis representation, but we had the First Nations representation show up as well, along with members of the local RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police].

[22:00]

And it was sad to see that the RCMP have . . . They have such a big area to cover. And there was four members that had to cover from English River to Beauval and Canoe Lake. Now I was told that they were supposed to have five members in one community, five in another, and then four in another. But we have, I think it's four or else three in that area to be able to accommodate. So these RCMP members are overworked. And you know, we had asked again, the communities throughout the Northwest had asked if there was going to be any resources for them to be able to tackle issues when it comes to public safety. And I didn't hear anything of that also in this budget.

The roads. This one was upsetting. Now throughout the Northwest . . . And I know that there's a few MLAs here that did travel them at one point in time, not just in a plane I hope, but you know, went up, drove up on these roads and seen first-hand what the community members from these communities have to travel in, and the road conditions, and what road conditions that the emergency personnel have to travel in in case of an emergency.

Now there's a road in between Beauval that leads up to Patuanak and English River. It's about an 80- to 90-kilometre stretch, and

it's grid. Now the road was made in the early '70s, Mr. Speaker. And they were told that when that road was built, that it had about a 20-year lifespan. So today that road is terrible. They're riding right on the base of it. So in the case of an emergency like we had seen this summer, when the community members had to leave because of the wildfires, there was a lot of vehicles that were wrecked on that road and continue to get wrecked on that road. That's just one little tiny road into English River, Patuanak, and good people over there.

Now all of those roads, you know, the road into Michel Village and Dillon; the road into Birch Narrows and Turnor Lake, Kinowa Lake, Jans Bay, Cole Bay; the road right into the far North to Stony Rapids and Black Lake and Fond-du-Lac and all of these places, there was nothing in this budget to say that they were going to fix those roads or else start.

The only time that I hear the government speak about northern Saskatchewan is when it's time to pull the money out of it. That's sad, Mr. Speaker. There's a ton of mining that's going on. There's billions of dollars that's being pulled out of northern Saskatchewan every year, but yet the communities are lacking so many services. And I don't think that that's right.

I said before when I addressed the Assembly, both in response to the Throne Speech and then of course last budget, is that I'm all about solutions, Mr. Speaker. Last year we had . . . Yes, it was an unprecedented wildfire season, 2025. It was the worst that I've seen in my life, and I'm from the North. And you know, nobody can say that this government was prepared for it, because they weren't.

In 2025, and I said before, we were in scramble mode. We had had a lot of community members that were evacuated away from their homes into the city centres. It was unfortunate that we had a place like Denare Beach that lost 200 homes. We had had my home community of Beauval, that was evacuated when the flames nearly hit the community. It was right outside of somebody's home, literally.

Now I'd asked today if the government was going to support the bill that I had introduced. And I had had a member from opposite, from Weyburn, state that the NDP were using scare tactics, Mr. Speaker, on the people of the North. Now I'll tell you, if you see 100-foot flames coming at you, you'd be scared too. If you're about to see your home go up in flames, you're going to be scared, Mr. Speaker, and you feel helpless. What are you supposed to do? Now to make a comment like that, I think that that was not very good, Mr. Speaker, in other words.

But one thing I'll say for sure, Mr. Speaker, is the people of the North are coming together. They're not going to just let these types of things slide without them having a say anymore. The people of the North have been coming together over the past few months to speak of not only the wildfires but the lack of services, the lack of resources that they need to tackle these issues that are going on.

Now we'd had not only loss in the North, but we also had a lot of great things happen. You know, we'd had the school open up at La Loche, which was really nice to go up and celebrate with them on that. La Loche had had 10 years . . . You know, they came together after 10 years, after the tragedy had taken place 10

years ago at the school. People coming together like that to be able to heal and move forward, Mr. Speaker.

So with this budget, and seeing that there was nothing again to the cost of living in the North, I'd actually had had a Zoom call with a whole slew of people from throughout northern Saskatchewan just tonight before I came in to the night sitting. And they said that the gas up there, you know, it's always been high. But if you think about what we're paying here in the South right now and compare it to what they're paying in the far North, it's two totally different things for sure.

The cost of the food, the cost of the power for those individuals up there, they can't afford to live. Now if you're getting a power bill of \$900 — and I've seen some at \$1,600, Mr. Speaker — it makes it impossible for people to live. So the cost of living in this budget, again I didn't see anything that was beneficial to anybody north of Prince Albert or north of North Battleford or north of Meadow Lake, and that's really sad.

So again there was nothing in this budget that had changed from the last time, Mr. Speaker. So it's really sad.

Like I said, I'm not all about the theatre of being in this Assembly. I'm here about being blunt, being straightforward. The people in northern Saskatchewan matter. They deserve to have the same services that people do here in the South, Mr. Speaker. Now I know we have debates in here quite often, and you know, and that's what it's about, the question period or whatever. But it's our responsibility also as MLAs in this province — doesn't matter what constituency that you represent — is that we're supposed to be able to work for the betterment of all Saskatchewan residents. And that includes the people in northern Saskatchewan.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, like I said, there is nothing that changed here in this budget. The people in the North are still being neglected. There's no plan in place again for the 2026 wildfire season. I'd asked the government to support the wildfire strategy bill that I presented. Not happening. So it's inevitable that we're most likely going to be going into scramble mode again this year. I hope not.

But with that, Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to say that I will not be supporting the budget that was presented by the Finance minister, but will be supporting the amendment made by my colleague, my friend, my brother, the MLA from Regina Mount Royal. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Moosomin-Montmartre. And we're going to get them to switch it on. There he is.

Kevin Weedmark: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to start with a couple of thank yous to people that we can never thank enough. And first of all, thank you to the member from Dakota-Arm River and the folks around the mikes for getting over that little technical glitch. Thank you guys very much.

You know, there's so many people who work behind the scenes that allow us to do everything that we do here. I want to thank Charlene, my constituency assistant, for everything that she does

for our constituents, from handling casework to scheduling meetings to herding all of our guests who were here on budget day. And I found out on budget day too that she's an amazing party planner, Mr. Speaker. She helped us put on a great reception in our office space.

I want to thank Kara for everything that she does for me every day. She runs our very busy business for us. And my new role was an adjustment for her at first, Mr. Speaker, as we had worked together, lived together, done everything together for years. And it was the first time we were apart for a long time once I started into this role and had to travel a bit. And now we really cherish those times that we can get together. Or at least I really treasure those times and Kara sort of puts up with me.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the people in Moosomin-Montmartre who have given me the greatest honour of my life by allowing me to represent them in the Legislative Assembly. And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to mention that no one told me how busy this role was going to be, but no one told me how much fun it was going to be. I have to admit I really do enjoy every event I go to, I enjoy every person I meet, and I have fun in this role every single day.

Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to speak today in support of the 2026-27 budget, a budget that's anchored by a clear and compelling objective — protecting Saskatchewan. Protecting Saskatchewan means ensuring that families can rely on strong public services, building resilient communities, and strengthening the systems that support people at every stage of life. And of course it means creating the conditions to foster investment and economic growth, the basis on which we can build our province.

Mr. Speaker, I was happy to be there in Saskatoon recently when the Premier unveiled the patients-first health care plan, a plan that's about delivering better access to care, improving patient outcomes to ensure that patients receive the right care in the right place at the right time.

Mr. Speaker, this budget makes historic and targeted investments in health care while also supporting economic growth, affordability, and infrastructure across Saskatchewan. This budget increases overall health care funding to record levels, a total of \$8.47 billion. It includes significant investments in front-line services, in workforce development, in infrastructure investments that will benefit both urban and rural Saskatchewan.

And importantly, Mr. Speaker, it reflects a government that is listening. One of the most meaningful changes in this budget is the reduction in the local community share of capital funding for health facilities from 20 per cent down to 10 per cent. This is a major step forward, and to fully understand its importance, we need to remember where we came from.

Under the previous NDP government, the local share of capital projects was 35 per cent — 35 per cent, Mr. Speaker. And I can tell you from personal experience how difficult that was. In Moosomin when we started raising money for the Southeast Integrated Care Centre, our community was responsible for raising that 35 per cent share, and it was an enormous challenge. It took years of hard work, it took determination, and it took creativity.

Our community came together in remarkable ways to raise the massive amount that we needed to raise, including setting the record for the world's longest hockey game not once, not twice, but three times. We were a victim of our own success. We tried to get national coverage for our event. And so after we set the record, another town set it. And after we set it a second time, Edmonton set it. And we had to keep doing it. But those games, those three games raised a million dollars.

But that was a tiny fraction of what was needed. And that underscores the scale of the burden that was placed on local residents under the former government. Reducing the local share to 10 per cent makes projects more achievable. It reduces the pressure on volunteers and municipal taxpayers and ensures the communities are partners in building health infrastructure, but not overburdened by it.

Mr. Speaker, I saw first-hand how important this change is when I met with the Grenfell health foundation several times over the last year. This is a dedicated group of volunteers working to support construction of a new long-term care home in Grenfell. They spoke candidly about the challenges they faced, and they made it clear that reducing the local share would make a real difference.

[22:15]

I was pleased to bring the Minister of Rural and Remote Health to Grenfell to meet with the foundation. I was also pleased that the Premier was willing to come out to Grenfell so he could hear directly from the foundation members on the challenges of raising 20 per cent of the cost of a new facility.

And, Mr. Speaker, our government listened, our government heard, and our government acted. And that action will benefit communities across Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I was very honoured to have Larry Parrott from the Grenfell health foundation here in the Assembly for the budget last week. And he reiterated that he is so appreciative of how his community was listened to.

And contrast that with how health care was approached in the community of Grenfell under the former government. Do you know what change the last government made to health care in Grenfell, Mr. Speaker? They closed Grenfell's hospital. And they closed the hospital down the road in Whitewood. And they closed the hospital to the south in Montmartre. And those scars, Mr. Speaker, still run deep in those communities.

Contrast that, Mr. Speaker, with this budget that includes \$24.3 million to build the Grenfell Long-Term Care project. And the change in the community share will save the community millions of dollars.

Mr. Speaker, this budget also takes significant steps to strengthen access to primary care through the patient medical home model. Under this model, clinics become true hubs for health services. It's about continuity, it's about coordination, and it's about meeting patients where they are. I'm proud to say that Moosomin is one of 10 communities selected to participate in this initiative.

The Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker, is investing \$768,000 to support efforts between the Saskatchewan Health Authority and

physicians at the Moosomin Family Practice to expand the patient medical home model in Moosomin. This funding allows the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] to recruit 6.2 new FTE [full-time equivalent] positions in Moosomin, including positions for registered nurses, dietitians, behaviour therapists, a pharmacist, and a medical office assistant.

Mr. Speaker, this is a significant investment. Those 6.2 new positions the SHA is funding in Moosomin will make a real difference. It means patients will have better access to care. It means more services will be available locally to support the strong contingent of doctors in Moosomin. And it means the people in Moosomin and surrounding area will have a medical home they can turn to for comprehensive, coordinated care. Mr. Speaker, this is exactly the kind of innovation we need in our health care system.

And, Mr. Speaker, another critical component of this budget is the investment in training the next generation of health care professionals. We know that one of the key challenges facing our system is recruitment and retention. We need more doctors, nurses, more health care professionals across the board. And, Mr. Speaker, this budget addresses that challenge head-on. It increases the number of seats at the College of Medicine from 108 to 128. Mr. Speaker, that's a significant expansion.

And again it's important to remember where we came from. Under the previous government there were only 60 seats at the College of Medicine — only 60 — and we're going to 128. So we will be at more than double that number of the previous government with this budget. Mr. Speaker, this is an investment in the future of health care in Saskatchewan, it's an investment in access to care, and it's an investment in Saskatchewan people.

In addition to expanding medical school seats, this budget also increases the number of residency positions to 160. This is crucial because training doctors isn't just about getting them into medical school, it's about making sure they have the opportunity to complete their training here and start building their careers right here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I have the opportunity to speak regularly with young people who are pursuing careers in health care, and I can say with confidence that the future of our system is in very good hands.

Last fall I was honoured to meet many medical students when I spoke at the College of Medicine white coat ceremony. More recently I had the opportunity to attend the College of Medicine graduate awards ceremony. And I also met with many outstanding pharmacy students at the College of Pharmacy awards very recently.

Each of these experiences left a strong impression with me. These are bright, capable, and deeply committed young people who are choosing careers in health care because they want to serve others.

Mr. Speaker, there are some voices out there discouraging young people from careers in health care. I'm proud to say that none of the young students I have talked to are listening to those negative voices.

Mr. Speaker, I would never discourage anyone from following their dreams, especially when those dreams involve serving their communities, serving society, serving others through health care. Mr. Speaker, these young people know what they want to do, they understand the importance of health care, and I believe that we all need to encourage young people to enter careers in the health care system that serves every single one of us and the people we love.

Mr. Speaker, as Legislative Secretary to the Health ministers, I have the opportunity to visit many health care facilities across Saskatchewan and speak with the professionals who work in them. Time and again I am so impressed. Just last week I visited a facility where I met a medical professional who has just very recently moved from the United States to rural Saskatchewan and is looking forward to building their career serving patients here. That speaks volumes about the opportunities in this province and about the strength of our health care system.

Mr. Speaker, I am excited about the expansion of residency seats in this budget. Southeast Saskatchewan has already seen the benefits of investing in training and recruitment through the southeast medical residency program. This program has made a tremendous difference in Moosomin. Today, Mr. Speaker, we have 19 primary care providers serving the region from Moosomin — 19 primary care providers, 19. That includes 14 physicians, four medical residents — two first year, two second year — and one nurse practitioner. Nineteen primary care providers and that number has grown and grown under this government.

And do you know how low that number was under the previous government, Mr. Speaker? I'll give you a hint. It wasn't 18. It wasn't 17. It wasn't 16. Mr. Speaker, under the previous government my community was served by as low as two medical professionals, two physicians. Great people: Dr. Davidson, Dr. Hussein, wonderful people. But we have gone from having two primary care providers to 19 in one community. Mr. Speaker, the addition of the southeast family medicine residency program has improved access to care in Moosomin, and we're seeing that success expand to other communities. And that growth is supported in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, a few months ago I had the opportunity to be in Yorkton for a tour of the Yorkton Regional Health Centre. On that very day that I was there, Mr. Speaker, it was announced that a new medical residency program would include Yorkton. And the response from physicians and staff was overwhelmingly positive.

And, Mr. Speaker, this budget includes \$3.5 million to continue planning activities for major projects, including Yorkton Regional Health Centre, Rosthern Hospital, Esterhazy integrated care facility, and the Battlefords and district care centre.

This is an important long-term investment in health care infrastructure in all those communities, but even as work moves forward on those projects, this government is making investments today in those communities to improve care in those facilities.

On that same day on that tour in Yorkton, on that very day the newly expanded oncology department at the Yorkton Regional

Health Care Centre opened. By relocating the medical records department, additional space for the oncology program was created, allowing more patients to receive care locally.

This expanded oncology department is part of the Community Oncology Program of Saskatchewan, which plays a vital role in delivering cancer closer to home. And that day in Yorkton I was honoured to see a patient ring the bell as they officially completed their chemotherapy, just reminding us all just how important that program is, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, this budget includes investment in new and expanded health care facilities and urgent care centres and long-term care capacity. And it supports innovations in care delivery. And it strengthens services across a continuum of care.

Mr. Speaker, I know very well some people who live with multiple sclerosis in my area, and I know just how devastating MS is in their lives. I'm so proud, Mr. Speaker, that this budget includes \$2.3 million to establish a Regina-based multiple sclerosis clinic that will provide comprehensive out-patient neurosciences program for southern Saskatchewan, and that is going to change lives for the better, Mr. Speaker.

And beyond health care, Mr. Speaker, this budget reflects a broader commitment to protecting Saskatchewan. It includes measures to support affordability for families. It invests in education infrastructure. It supports economic growth and job creation. And it ensures that we're building a strong, resilient province for the future.

One of the key ways this budget supports communities across Saskatchewan is through record revenue sharing. This year municipalities will receive \$392.4 million through municipal revenue sharing, an increase of \$30.7 million, or 8 per cent, compared to last year. This is the highest level of municipal revenue sharing in Saskatchewan's history, Mr. Speaker. And this funding allows municipalities to invest in their own priorities, and that means improve infrastructure and stronger, more sustainable communities.

Mr. Speaker, this budget also recognizes the vital role that volunteer emergency responders play in keeping our communities safe. Across Saskatchewan, volunteer firefighters and first responders are the backbone of emergency services. They answer the call at all hours. They put themselves at risk, and they do it all in the service of their neighbours. This budget strengthens support for those volunteers by doubling the volunteer first responders tax credit to \$6,000. That is a meaningful recognition of the time, effort, and commitment that these individuals bring to their communities.

Mr. Speaker, I was very proud to have many volunteer firefighters from my riding as guests for the budget speech. These are individuals who represent the very best of Saskatchewan, people who step up when their communities need them most. This budget recognizes their contributions, and it sends a clear message that we value what you do.

Mr. Speaker, protecting Saskatchewan also means building a strong and growing economy, because it's a strong economy that allows us to make these important investments in health care, in education, in community infrastructure. And, Mr. Speaker,

Saskatchewan is in the midst of an unprecedented period of economic growth. Across the province there are about 60 major projects under way or in development, representing a combined investment of more than \$62 billion. These projects span key sectors: uranium, potash, agriculture, energy, manufacturing. They represent jobs, they represent opportunity, and they represent confidence in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most exciting recent announcements is the investment by Bell Canada in what will be the largest AI data centre in Canada, near Regina. This reflects the conditions that this government has worked hard to create, conditions that foster investment, support growth, and encourage companies to choose Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, these investments don't happen by accident. They happen because of a stable, predictable business environment. They happen because of competitive policies, and they happen because of a government that understands the importance of economic growth. And as these projects move forward, they will generate revenue, they will create jobs, and they will strengthen our economy. And that in turn allows us to do even more, to invest more in health care, to support more communities, and to continue protecting Saskatchewan for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, budgets are about choices, they are about priorities, and they are about values. And this budget makes it clear that our priority is protecting Saskatchewan. Our priority is ensuring that Saskatchewan families have access to the services they need. Our priority is supporting communities, and our priority is building a stronger future.

Mr. Speaker, the volunteers who serve on our fire departments, the volunteers who serve on health foundations, the municipal councillors that work so hard for their communities, they are the backbone of our province and this budget supports them.

Mr. Speaker, protecting Saskatchewan means investing in people and it means working in partnership with communities to build a better future. This budget does that. It's a budget that delivers for Saskatchewan and protects Saskatchewan.

And for that reason, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the budget as moved by the Minister of Finance and seconded by the member from Carrot River Valley. And I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Brittney Senger: — Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. What a great, great time to be up. Wow.

[Applause]

Brittney Senger: — Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I adjourn the Assembly and stand back here at 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

Just a special thanks to our media team for limping us through there.

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:30.]

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