



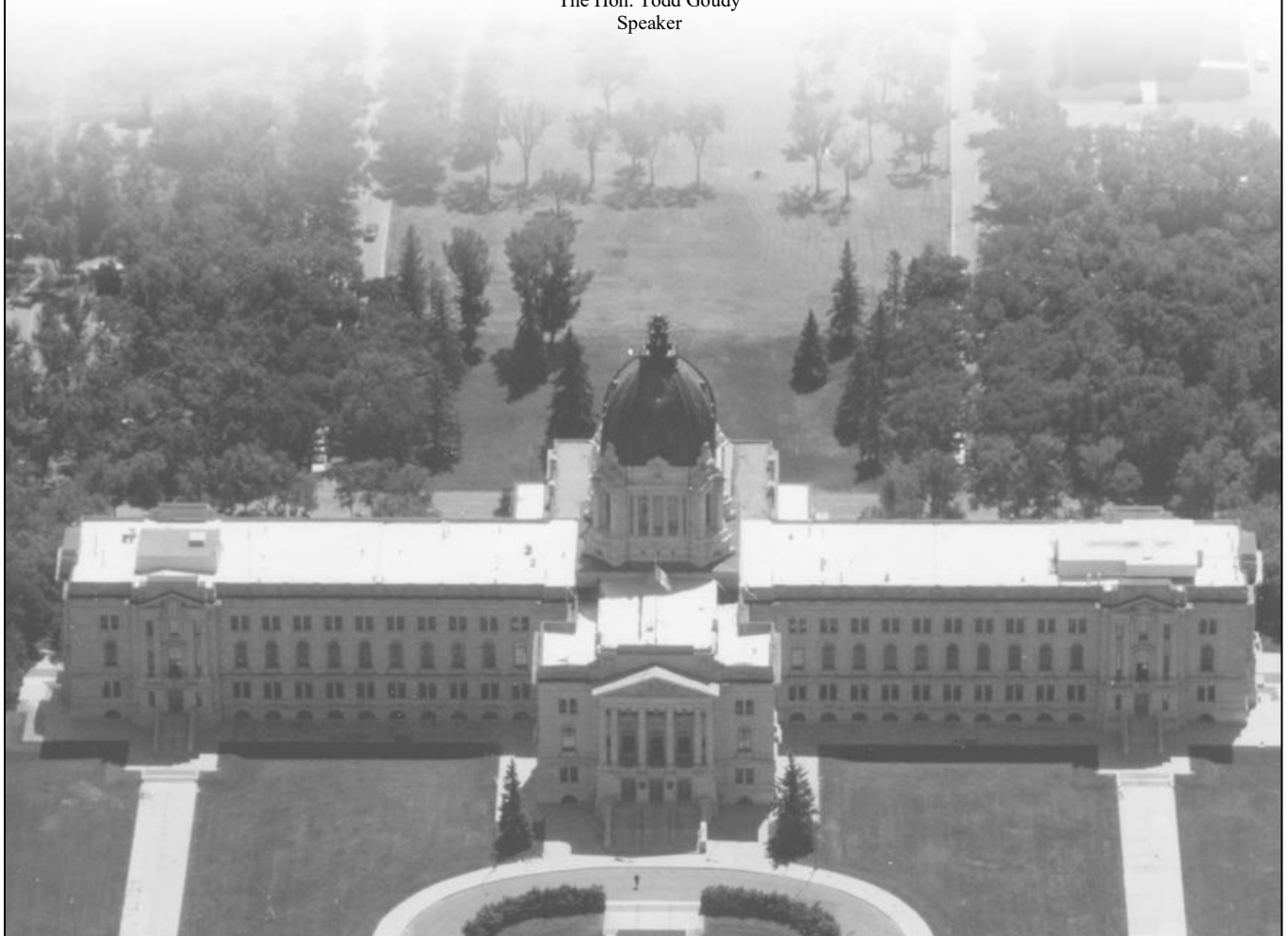
SECOND SESSION — THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE

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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Kropf , Barret — Dakota-Arm River (SP)	Young , Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)
Laliberte , Leroy — Athabasca (NDP)	

Standings

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

Clerks-at-the-Table

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

Sergeant-at-Arms — Lyall Frederiksen

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CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS	
INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS	
Hindley	1893
PRESENTING PETITIONS	
Pratchler	1893
Ritchie	1893
Sarauer	1893
Senger	1894
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS	
Celebration of Eid al-Fitr	
Burki	1894
Ukrainian Groups Express Pride and Resilience	
Weedmark	1894
Performance Addresses Belonging and Representation	
Brar	1894
Saskatchewan Man Officiates at Winter Olympics	
Wilson	1895
University of Saskatchewan Student Wins the Rhodes Scholarship	
Grewal	1895
Saskatchewan's Economy Is Remarkably Strong	
Young, C.	1895
Collaboration Results in Opening of École du Parc	
Crassweller	1895
QUESTION PERIOD	
Population Numbers	
Beck	1896
Moe	1896
Construction of New Schools	
Beck	1896
Moe	1896
Love	1897
Gas Prices and Affordability	
Wotherspoon	1898
Reiter	1898
Government Response to Feedlot Spill	
Ritchie	1898
Marit	1898
Health Care Staffing	
Clarke	1899
Cockrill	1899
Government Response to Wildfires in the North	
Laliberte	1900
Weger	1900
POINT OF ORDER	
Sarauer	1900
McLeod, T.	1900
Speaker Goudy	1900
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS	
Bill No. 49 — <i>The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2026</i>	
Reiter	1901
Bill No. 50 — <i>The Financial Administration Amendment Act, 2026</i>	
Reiter	1901
Bill No. 51 — <i>The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2026</i>	
Reiter	1901
MOTIONS	
Second Reading of Bill No. 612	
Young, A.	1901
Second and Third Reading of Bill No. 38 and Bill No. 39	
McLeod, T.	1902
MOTION UNDER RULE 61	
Removal of Fuel and Diesel Tax	
Wotherspoon	1901

**ORDERS OF THE DAY
SPECIAL ORDER
ADJOURNED DEBATES
BUDGET DEBATE**

Young, A.	1902
Crassweller	1906
Grewal	1909
McLeod, B.	1912
Ritchie	1915
Martens	1918
Warrington	1920

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I want to introduce a group of guests seated in the west gallery — and I'll get them to give us a wave — some folks from the Swift Current area.

I believe we've got — there we go — 23, what it says here on my sheet. Twenty-three grade 4 students who are part of the Swift Current home-schooling group, if I'm not mistaken, Mr. Speaker, joined by their teacher, Hillery Macfie. Hope I'm pronouncing things correctly there. There's probably some parent chaperones and others there as well from, I'm sure, Swift Current and also the surrounding area, the great southwest part of Saskatchewan which I get to be so honoured to serve as the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for the city of Swift Current. We have a number of great MLAs, of course, in that neck of the woods.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'm just so very happy. I think this is the first time I've had the opportunity to introduce the home-schooling group from my community, my part of the province, in what is their Legislative Assembly. And so, Mr. Speaker, I'm hoping that after proceedings today that I'll get a chance to go down to have a chat with the group before coming back here.

But, Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, I would ask all members of this legislature to welcome the group from Swift Current here today.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to present a petition calling for the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to build a school in White City.

I rise today to say that the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring to our attention that the towns of White City, Emerald Park, and the surrounding communities have seen a sharp increase in population in recent years; that many high schools in the surrounding rural municipalities are at or over capacity; that White City and Emerald Park are the largest communities in Saskatchewan with no high school and the only ones with a combined population of 5,000 or more; and that the high school is needed to fulfill the educational needs of the thousands of families that have moved to east Regina, White City, and its surrounding communities, and who will have children attending high school in the next three years.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to immediately prioritize the building of a high school in White City with

definitive plans to open doors by the 2028 school year.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by the residents of White City. And I do so present.

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

Erika Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for adequate and equitable SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] rates.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately increase the SAID rates to account for inflation and the cost of living; that they respect the constitutional rights of persons with disabilities in Saskatchewan by halting discriminatory practices and aligning policies with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms; that they index the SAID basic amount to inflation going forward; and provide targeted relief to those in deepest poverty, such as single individuals paying market rent.

This petition is signed by the residents of Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise yet again today to present yet another petition calling on the government to reverse the ban on third-party educators from publicly funded schools.

Those who signed this petition wish to bring to our attention the following: that on August 22nd, 2023, the Saskatchewan government banned all third-party educators from publicly funded schools. Those who are banned included organizations like the Regina Sexual Assault Centre, Partners Family Services, and the Prince Albert Sexual Assault Centre, amongst many others. The topics that these organizations teach include consent, healthy relationships, and child sexual abuse prevention.

Mr. Speaker, with Saskatchewan's worst-in-the-nation rates in intimate partner violence and sexual abuse, the government should be doing everything possible to reduce these rates, including prevention education. The decision to ban these educators will make Saskatchewan's rates of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and sexual abuse worse, not better.

I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately reverse the decision to ban third-party educators in Saskatchewan schools and consult with experts in developing a comprehensive curriculum for all Saskatchewan students.

Those who sign the petition today come from Regina and Weyburn. I do so present.

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

Brittney Senger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition calling on the Government of Saskatchewan to step up for Indigenous students. The undersigned residents wish to bring to your attention the following: that Jordan's principle was established to ensure that First Nations children have equitable access to the services they need, including supports in schools. The recent loss of federal funding will leave a significant gap in Saskatchewan classrooms, especially for Indigenous students who rely on inclusive education supports to thrive.

Funding cuts by the federal government have led to the layoff of 80 educational assistants from Saskatoon Public Schools with more funding shortfalls expected. Instead of stepping up to fill this gap, the 2025-2026 provincial budget reduces education funding — less than what was actually spent in previous years. This is an alarming move at a time when schools are already stretched to the breaking point due to chronic underfunding and staff shortfalls.

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

The undersigned residents reside in Saskatoon, North Battleford, and Duck Lake. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Celebration of Eid al-Fitr

Noor Burki: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to celebrate the end of the holy month of Ramadan for Muslims in Saskatchewan and around the world. Ramadan is a time to reflect and practise self-discipline through fasting from sunrise to sunset for a month. As Muslims, we fast as an act of worship and a chance to get closer to God. It is a reminder of the importance of service, empathy, and compassion for those in need.

The last three days, Muslims across Canada celebrated Eid al-Fitr. Eid is a celebration, one of the most important in our Muslim faith, but it is also a chance to commit to build a better future in this province and around the world.

Our provincial motto is “from many peoples, strength,” and the Muslim community exemplifies that motto. I am incredibly proud to be a part of this community, and I am honoured to stand in this House as the official opposition's first Muslim MLA.

I invite all members to join me in celebrating Eid al-Fitr, and please help me give thanks to the Muslim community across Saskatchewan for all the work they do for our province. Thank

you.

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

Ukrainian Groups Express Pride and Resilience

Kevin Weedmark: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I want to recognize the vibrant celebration of culture, community, and tradition showcased at the Tavria Ukrainian dance group's dance festival that was held here in Regina March 19th to 22nd.

This outstanding event brought together dance schools from across Saskatchewan and beyond, highlighting the incredible talent, discipline, and pride of young performers dedicated to Ukrainian dance. It was a joy to attend and see first-hand the energy and excellence on display.

This four-day event is one of Canada's largest Ukrainian dance festivals, welcoming over 700 dancers and featuring more than 600 performances. It's a vibrant celebration of culture, youth engagement, and community. At a time when Ukraine continues to face war, gatherings like this take on added significance, offering a meaningful expression of cultural pride, resilience, and community.

And I have to admit, Mr. Speaker, that between that event and the two Ukrainian Malanka celebrations I attended in Regina earlier this season, I believe I have now consumed more perogies than any one person should reasonably consume in a lifetime.

But, Mr. Speaker, beyond the dancing and delicious food, these events speak to something deeper. They are a testament to the strength of Saskatchewan's Ukrainian community and the dedication of organizations like Tavria and Poltava in keeping their culture vibrant for future generations. I ask all members to join with me in thanking them for the important work they do. Thank you.

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

Performance Addresses Belonging and Representation

Bhajan Brar: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, March 21st we observed the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This is a day observed across the world to mark a tragic event that took place on March 21, 1960 in Sharpeville, South Africa when 69 peaceful demonstrators were killed during a protest against apartheid.

The member from Regina Wascana Plains and I attended *The Movement of Our Hearts* in Regina hosted by the Recreating Community Together artists' collective. It was a powerful performance and used movement and spoken word to address concepts of belonging, representation, and how racism comes from a lack of understanding of other cultures. The performance was followed by a round dance and feast. It was an important reminder that we all need to do our part to reject racism and ensure all people feel welcome in our province.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating the artists and

community partners that made this event possible, and say thank you for all the work that they do to address racism and promote cross-cultural understanding across Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Canora-Pelly, the Minister of SaskBuilds and Procurement.

Saskatchewan Man Officiates at Winter Olympics

Hon. Sean Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan is proud to recognize Tarrington Wyonzek, a Canora boy who served as a linesman at the 2026 Winter Olympics in Milan, Italy. Tarrington is the grandson of the late Henry and Anne Wyonzek, and his journey to the Olympic stage is the kind of story that makes a community proud.

He didn't just show up in Milan by accident. This is someone who has dedicated years to his craft, quietly putting in the work it takes to reach the highest level of officiating in the world. His selection to work the 2026 Winter Olympics is a reflection of his professionalism, his attention to detail, and a commitment to hockey that has defined his career.

On that ice in Milan, with the world watching, Tarrington represented not just himself and his family but the entire Canora community and everyone in Saskatchewan who has ever laced up skates and given their time to this game.

We talk a lot about what Saskatchewan produces — farmers, builders, athletes — but we also produce people like Tarrington who go out in the world and compete at the highest level with quiet excellence and no shortage of Saskatchewan grit.

To his family in the stands wearing those Wyonzek jerseys and to everyone in Canora watching with pride, this one belongs to all of you. Congratulations, Tarrington. Canora-Pelly is proud of you.

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

University of Saskatchewan Student Wins the Rhodes Scholarship

Tajinder Grewal: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I recognize Emma Wintermute winning the Rhodes Scholarship. The Rhodes Scholarship is an international scholarship that offers exceptional undergraduate students the opportunity to pursue graduate studies at the University of Oxford in England for two or more years at no cost.

Founded in 1902, it is simultaneously one of the oldest international graduate scholarships and one of the most prestigious. Emma is currently the president of the USask [University of Saskatchewan] Students' Union and is pursuing a double honour in women's and gender studies as well as history at the University of Saskatchewan.

[13:45]

Her academic work explores gender, sexualities, social justice, and social histories through a lens of human rights and social

mobilization. She plans to continue her studies by examining how social movements and human rights discourse intersect to drive advocacy and systemic change. Emma continues to be a strong advocate for students' rights at the university and is a pleasure to work with in her role as the president of the USSU [University of Saskatchewan Students' Union].

Emma provides a fantastic example of how Saskatchewan institutions create world-class talent. I'm certain that her leadership and advocacy will build this world into a better place to work and live. Please join me to congratulate Emma on winning this prestigious scholarship. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Saskatchewan's Economy Is Remarkably Strong

Colleen Young: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's economy continues to show remarkable strength, and the latest numbers from Statistics Canada highlight just how strong that momentum is. The report shows that investment in building construction rose by over 25 per cent from January 2025 to January 2026, placing Saskatchewan second in the country for year-over-year growth.

This level of growth reflects confidence in Saskatchewan from families, businesses, and communities investing right here in our province. From new homes to commercial developments to community infrastructure, these projects create jobs, support local businesses, and strengthen communities.

Mr. Speaker, this surge in construction is part of a much larger economic story. Saskatchewan's real GDP [gross domestic product] has reached an all-time high of 83.6 billion, ranking second in Canada and above the national average. Private capital investment also rose by 12 per cent last year to 13.6 billion, the strongest growth among all provinces.

This momentum is not happening by accident. It reflects a strong economy, a growing population, and a government committed to creating a strong environment for investment, growth, and opportunity. It's forward-thinking ideas like our government's investment attraction strategy that keeps Saskatchewan leading the nation in economic strength and growth.

Saskatchewan's future is strong, secure, and filled with opportunity for all who call this province home.

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

Collaboration Results in Opening of École du Parc

Brad Crassweller: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week our Minister of Education announced the opening of the new École du Parc in Regina. The \$26.9 million project can accommodate 325 K to 6 [kindergarten to grade 6] students, features a 51-space child care centre, and includes a shared francophone community space. Mr. Speaker, this project was a collaborative effort between our government and the Conseil des écoles fransaskoises.

Since our government had the privilege to be elected in 2007, we've committed nearly \$3 billion into 109 major school

infrastructure projects. And with the completion of this new francophone school, we've completed 54 schools and 28 major renovations since forming government in 2007.

Mr. Speaker, this year's budget invests \$123.8 million for our K to 12 schools to provide safe, inclusive learning environments for our students. This includes \$85.3 million to support new, ongoing capital projects in communities such as Martensville, Warman, Shellbrook, Esterhazy, Balgonie, Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, and more. That's on top of our three-and-a-half-billion investment into our education system to build and protect the education our young people need.

On behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, thank you to CÉF [Conseil des écoles francophones], the Government of Canada, and all our community leaders who helped get this project built for the francophone students of Regina. Thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Population Numbers

Carla Beck: — Saskatchewan's population has declined for the second straight quarter. That's back-to-back population decline for the first time in over two decades. It shouldn't be this way, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan should be the place to be, not the place to be from. But this Premier brought in a bad-news budget that is going to pile more costs on people at a time that they can least afford it.

Does the Premier realize that it's his own policies that are driving people out of the province?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Mr. Speaker, over the last decade and a half, it's this province that has had some of the most rapid population gain, not only across the nation but in Saskatchewan provincial history. Over a quarter-million people have moved to a community in Saskatchewan, found a job, a career in the community of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and very much I would say make our communities a better and a stronger place, much like our forefathers did when they built the communities over 100 years ago, Mr. Speaker.

So I would say that whether it's population growth, whether it's economic growth with the 60 projects totalling over \$62 billion of private sector investment — another statistic that is unlike any time in provincial history or unlike any other province, what is happening today — Saskatchewan's record is strong.

Over a quarter-million people have made a Saskatchewan community their home over the course of the last decade and a half, Mr. Speaker. And just this year, we see that over \$60 billion, Mr. Speaker, over 60 projects have been invested to ensure that we are going to continue to grow in the future like we did this last year — one of, I believe, only two provinces in the nation.

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

Carla Beck: — What's happening today, Mr. Speaker, is that

we've had back-to-back quarters of population decline in this province. Another reason for this decline is what this Sask Party government has done to our health care system after 20 years of Sask Party mismanagement taking us to last place, Mr. Speaker.

Now there was some hope last week that maybe this government would wake up, they would actually put some investment into health care and start to turn things around.

Mr. Speaker, we saw the exact opposite. The strategy that this government announced after 20 years is a reboot of the one that they put forward in 2009 and 2012.

Does the Premier understand that letting health care in this province collapse is going to see more people leaving the province?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — I'm very pleased to rise to speak of our patients-first health care plan, Mr. Speaker, released a couple of weeks ago. It is certainly going to put in place many measures that are going to improve health care outcomes for Saskatchewan families, Mr. Speaker, ensuring that every Saskatchewan family gets the right care at the right place at the right time.

Mr. Speaker, that patients-first health care plan is going to ensure that by 2028, families, individuals are going to be able to access surgery in three months, Mr. Speaker. A diagnostic in less than 60 days, Mr. Speaker. And going to ensure that the commitment we made in the Speech from the Throne after that last election, of everybody in this province to have access to a primary health care provider is going to be the case, whether that be in any community from corner to corner in this province.

Unlike the members opposite, who have now two points in their health care plan. First point: hire an American consultant. Second point is to encourage young health care workers to not go into the field, go into the sector, Mr. Speaker. Disappointing time and time again, Mr. Speaker — that's the NDP [New Democratic Party].

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

Construction of New Schools

Carla Beck: — Mr. Speaker, I'm surprised he can deliver those lines with a straight face. But honestly the hits keep coming with this budget, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier, well, he also approved a new school in his hometown. The problem is, Mr. Speaker, that there were more than 200 schools in 103 communities that were in worse shape.

Can the Premier please explain to the people of this province how his hometown got a new school while 103 other communities went without?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I think Saskatchewan people would find it curious that it's the 109th school that a Saskatchewan Party government has built that the NDP find

troubles with, Mr. Speaker. A school, a school project that was no. 1 on the capital list for over a decade of the locally elected Saskatchewan Rivers School Board, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what we see — and it should be disappointing but not surprising — the members opposite, the NDP opposition again attempting to sow divisions between rural and urban Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. 109 schools in this province, Mr. Speaker: 52 of them are in Saskatoon and Regina, 26 in each of our major urban centres. We have built, we have replaced more than half of the schools in the Leader of the Opposition's riding, Mr. Speaker, right here in Regina.

The former chief of staff, the one that doesn't send out hate-inspired emails, Warren McCall, was on the radio show the other morning when he actually thanked — at the time it was Don Morgan; he was the minister of Education — thanked him for the three schools in north central Regina, Mr. Speaker.

The Saskatchewan Party record is 109 schools across this province, more than half in the Leader of the Opposition's riding. Fifty-two in Regina and Saskatoon combined, Mr. Speaker. And we're going to build more as we go into the future.

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

Carla Beck: — Oh, it's really, really been a bad-news budget for that Sask Party government, Mr. Speaker, when they're resorting to heaping praise on former Saskatchewan NDP MLAs, but here we go.

Now it doesn't end there, Mr. Speaker. We're learning now that as many as 20, 20 projects of new schools and renovations that have already been announced, already been promised by that government, are now being delayed, Mr. Speaker. And last I checked, Carlyle was very much a rural community. But, Mr. Speaker, we see this announcement in the Premier's backyard but delays everywhere else in the province.

Can the Premier explain to the families and the communities who are going to be impacted why he's failed to deliver on his promise, failed to deliver these schools, but has ensured that there's a new school in his own hometown?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — \$4.3 billion is the capital investment in this budget, Mr. Speaker, that will be debated over the course of this week. Mr. Speaker, \$4.3 billion. One of the largest capital investments, including in schools, Mr. Speaker, which is part of the investment that is going to ensure that we achieve 109 schools that have either been built across this province, being built today as we speak, or are entering into the planning stages to be built at some point in the very near future, Mr. Speaker.

And it should come as no surprise, however disappointing to Saskatchewan families, that we see again an NDP opposition that does not want to come together to build our communities and build our province but continually sows divisions between communities, between urban and rural communities across this province. But it should be no surprise because just last week, Mr. Speaker, we saw these emails inspiring hatred towards not policies but individuals that have chosen to serve in this province,

Mr. Speaker. And today the taxpayers and families across this province continue to pay that individual's wage because the Leader of the Opposition doesn't have the courage to fire him.

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

Carla Beck: — Mr. Speaker, the audacity of that Premier to try to make himself out to be the victim, honestly, is incredibly disappointing because he knows what he did in the last election where he put targeted hate on two 11-year-old girls. Mr. Speaker, that is shameful, it lacks courage, and frankly it is embarrassing what that Premier is coming up with for answers over there right now.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: is he proud? Is he actually proud of what he did in the last election? And is he going to stop trying to make himself the victim in all of this?

Speaker Goudy: — Sorry, not sure how that's a question that . . . Let's move on to the next one.

I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Matt Love: — Mr. Speaker, we're not getting much in the way of specifics from the Premier. So here's a very, very simple question for this government. How many schools are being delayed or cancelled because of this bad-news budget? And will the government release a full list today of those school projects impacted by these delays or cancellations?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Mr. Speaker, there are schools being built across this province at a pace unlike in any time, and unlike a pace any time in provincial history, Mr. Speaker. 109 schools across this province have been built, renovated, Mr. Speaker, in the planning stages, or being built right now today as we speak, Mr. Speaker.

As I say, more than half of the schools in the Leader of the Opposition's riding been replaced by a Saskatchewan Party government, which those members voted against the funding for those in each and every year's budget, Mr. Speaker. Twenty-six new schools in Regina, 26 new schools in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, and many other schools across rural Saskatchewan, including when school divisions put them as the top rank for a decade or a decade and a half, Mr. Speaker.

This is a government that is going to listen to those locally elected school divisions. We're going to work with those locally elected school divisions wherever they are, Mr. Speaker. And we're going to build them a school.

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

Matt Love: — Mr. Speaker, that answer would receive a zero in most classrooms in this province. So let's try a math question for this government and see if they can get this one right. If you take more than 140 Saskatchewan schools that are in poor or critical condition and then you add in a bad-news budget that actually cuts the funding for school capital, what do you get?

[14:00]

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — This is an opportunity, provide the opposition with an opportunity to take a small step in moving away from some of the divisions that they're trying to instill between Saskatchewan families, Mr. Speaker, across this province.

But the building schools faster in Saskatchewan Act is on the floor of the Assembly today. Let's pass it through all stages. Will the opposition pass that particular piece of legislation through all stages today?

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

Gas Prices and Affordability

Trent Wotherspoon: — He says build schools faster, yet he delays and postpones the funding of schools in our province. You can swear that guy can't balance a budget. Clearly that side over there and that Premier are having a pretty tough week with this bad-news budget.

But that budget's also bad news for Saskatchewan businesses, farms, and families. We're closing in on two weeks of gas prices that are north of a buck sixty a litre at the pumps here in Saskatchewan. Still that Premier continues to pile on a 15-cent-a-litre tax on every one of those litres. This despite having provincial revenues that have been boosted in an unanticipated way due to conflict in the Middle East.

For every Saskatchewan person that relies on a vehicle to get to work or to pick up their kids, my question to that government, that Premier, is really simple. Why not give them a temporary cut to the gas tax to offer them a break that corresponds to the hikes that they're facing?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, because in the member's own words, it would be a temporary cut. Mr. Speaker, instead we chose to meet our commitment in the election platform, which is to cut income taxes permanently. Mr. Speaker, right now a family of four is going to save \$4,400 as opposed to a few dollars temporarily that the NDP are proposing.

What that would do — did the math, Mr. Speaker — it would take nearly 30 000 litres of gas to save \$4,400 under their plan. Mr. Speaker, that's 30 000 litres. That's one tank of gas a day every day for the whole year.

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

Trent Wotherspoon: — You know, that Premier and Finance minister, they've hiked the debt to \$43.5 billion and counting. They've stuck the bill with Saskatchewan people. They've more than tripled the PST [provincial sales tax], as he's talking about taxes, with his biggest tax hike, the biggest tax hike in Saskatchewan's history.

He spends \$1.2 billion each and every year just to service that debt, sending the dollars from hard-working people here in Saskatchewan — \$1.2 billion — to bankers, Bay Street, and Wall Street, Mr. Speaker, instead of their priorities here at home. No relief for farms and producers as their input costs soar, all while that government is receiving additional, unanticipated revenue boosts from high oil prices due to this conflict.

Is this Premier proud of creating such a financial mess, making it so bad that he's now having to claim that he can't afford to offer families, farms, and businesses a well-deserved break at the gas pumps?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, there is such a wide range of factual inaccuracies; I don't even know where to start. So, Mr. Speaker, I'll say this: members on this side recognize the affordability issues that all our citizens are facing. That's why we're putting two and a half billion dollars in every budget in affordability measures for Saskatchewan citizens.

Mr. Speaker, on the gas tax: fact of the matter is, the entire amount that's brought in on gas tax, plus, is spent on the highways budget. They would effectively be cutting the highways budget, Mr. Speaker.

And I will go back, I will go back to the preface of his first question, Mr. Speaker, on the schools. Mr. Speaker, they have an opportunity today to pass every stage on *The Building Schools Faster Act*. If they actually believe what they're saying, if they have the courage of their convictions, let's do it today.

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

Government Response to Feedlot Spill

Erika Ritchie: — Well, Mr. Speaker, that Premier is doing a pretty good job of sowing division in rural Saskatchewan on his own. Residents in Lac Pelletier first reported a spill from the nearby intensive livestock operation run by Monette Farms on Friday. They heard nothing back.

It was referred to the Ministry of Agriculture, but we're told no one there works weekends. And this was an emergency. The water people rely on is at stake. Why isn't the Premier taking action?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. David Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously our government is very committed to making sure human health is protected. And that also includes all our water, whether it's groundwater or surface water — all of it, Mr. Speaker.

Our officials from Ministry of Agriculture and Water Security Agency were out there this morning, early this morning, and evaluating it all. There was no concerns with the berm. There's no breach of the berm, anything like that. They tested the water that's going into the lake through the culvert, and it is clear. They're sending that water away now as we speak, Mr. Speaker. But there was no breach of anything at the facility at that location,

Mr. Speaker.

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

Erika Ritchie: — Three days. It took three days to get a response. When the media asked the minister about this spill at Lac Pelletier and why it took so long for him to lift a finger, he responded by saying, people need a day.

That's all well and good, but this is an emergency, and people in Lac Pelletier believed there was an emergency line in place to deal with this.

Does the minister think a crisis like this only happens Monday to Friday during regular business hours?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Water Security Agency.

Hon. David Marit: — Mr. Speaker, as I said, the incident was reported to the spill line, which is under the Ministry of Environment. It was referred to the Water Security Agency folks, Mr. Speaker. The water security folks felt that the best reaction to it was on Monday, which . . . They reacted to it this morning, Mr. Speaker. Early this morning they were there.

Mr. Speaker, they found no breach of the facility at all, and the water flowing into the lake was clear. I've seen the video on it; it's clear. And we've sent samples away, and we'll get those results later this week, Mr. Speaker.

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

Erika Ritchie: — Mr. Speaker, residents in Lac Pelletier have been warning about the danger of putting this intensive livestock operation so close to a critical water resource for a long time. There were town halls held in the summer, and hundreds of people attended. The Sask Party government has heard from so many of these people, and I have the receipts.

Now for Lac Pelletier, their worst nightmare has come true. Why has the Sask Party government ignored these people for so long?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Water Security Agency.

Hon. David Marit: — Mr. Speaker, as I said, our officials are on site this morning evaluating the situation.

This facility had been there for over 20 years when the new owner took ownership, Mr. Speaker. There was new regulations and guidelines put in place that the new owner had to fulfill and honour. This facility hasn't changed as far as structure in the time frame, Mr. Speaker. And it has met all the standards that had to be met through the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Agriculture, not for the expansion but what he had to do to meet those terms as to regulations now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the site has been looked at. It has not had a breach in any of the berms. Obviously we're evaluating everything, and we will have the results of that later this week, Mr. Speaker.

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

Health Care Staffing

Jared Clarke: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got a very simple question for the Minister of Health. What time did the Regina urgent care centre close this past Saturday and Sunday? And what time will it close today?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member opposite indicates in his question, we did have some temporary disruptions at the Regina urgent care centre this weekend, Mr. Speaker.

Again, the Regina urgent care centre has become an important facility in the city of Regina. Has served nearly 65,000 patients in its first year and a bit of operations, Mr. Speaker, again as we work to stabilize the physician roster and other professionals that work at the Regina urgent care centre, with the goal of stabilizing the hours for residents of Regina and all surrounding communities.

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

Jared Clarke: — Mr. Speaker, the answer is 4:30 today and 2 p.m. over the weekend. Now I hope that no one in Regina needed urgent care at 2:30 p.m. yesterday. And wasn't the urgent care centre supposed to be open 24-7?

Mr. Speaker, that bad-news budget promised to build another urgent care centre, but the Health minister, he can't even staff the one he's already running. It's reduced its hours and shut down early nine times since the start of the year, and it was because of a lack of staffing every single time.

So can the minister explain how he intends to operate a second urgent care centre in Regina when he can't staff the one he's already running?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Mr. Speaker, we're very excited about the expansion of urgent care centres right across the province. A second facility coming here in the city of Regina. We've got two coming in Saskatoon. Prince Albert, North Battleford, Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite's questions, it's as if emergency rooms in the city of Regina don't exist. There's still an emergency room at the Pasqua Hospital, still an emergency room at the General Hospital, Mr. Speaker.

How we address the staffing challenges, Mr. Speaker, is exactly what's in our patients-first plan released a couple of weeks ago: training more nurse practitioners. A 45 per cent increase in nurse practitioner training seats. Not to mention an extra 20 College of Medicine seats and a new target for the College of Medicine that 95 per cent of all admissions must be Saskatchewan kids, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is yelling as I'm trying to get my answers out to the Saskatchewan people. This budget, this patients-first plan, it's good news for people of Saskatchewan, bad news for the NDP.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Government Response to Wildfires in the North

Leroy Laliberte: — Mr. Speaker, last week the Sask Party Finance minister said that the budget for wildfires is essentially status quo. After one of the worst wildfire seasons in recent memory, this government thinks that status quo is okay.

Northern leaders from English River, PAGC [Prince Albert Grand Council], Candle Lake, and more are starting to speak out. And this is why we need a real wildfire strategy in Saskatchewan.

Being hopeful, Mr. Speaker, is not a strategy. The government should be developing a strategy with these local leaders who are being ignored. That's exactly what Bill No. 609, *The Saskatchewan Wildfire Strategy Act*, would require them to do.

Now, Mr. Speaker, my question is, will the government support this legislation I have brought forward on behalf of the people of the North?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency.

Hon. Michael Weger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Minister of Finance tabled a budget that we can all be proud of. Mr. Speaker, this is a budget that provides \$750 million for community safety and another \$140 million for the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency. This will be an investment that ensures that we are ready to respond to emergencies and provide public safety services throughout the province, Mr. Speaker.

What we see, Mr. Speaker, already is the opposition trying to put fear in the people of the North when the people up north need to know that this government takes their security very seriously.

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

Nicole Sarauer: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — Point of order. What's your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During question period today, when the Leader of the Opposition and the member from Saskatoon Eastview asked questions about schools, the Premier responded by quoting and referring to a fundraising email put forward by the party on this side of the Chamber, Mr. Speaker. We've seen this happen several times now. We also saw last week the Premier quote into the record allegations from a statement of claim about one of our staff members, a SLAPP [strategic lawsuit against public participation] defamation suit from several years ago. A bit beneath his role, if you ask me.

[14:15]

But more importantly, it's a violation of the rules: rule 20(3) which states clearly that "Responses shall be relevant to the question," Mr. Speaker. Now we can keep going down this road. We can keep talking about fundraising emails on that side that called members on this side dangerous, members of the Chamber who called members on this side dangerous. Now I've always understood fundraising emails to be party business and also not allowable for debate in this Chamber. Mr. Speaker, we could talk about members from the other side who called members on this side, literally, the worst human being in the building.

But, Mr. Speaker, you've said to us before that you think the people of Saskatchewan deserve better. We agree with you, Mr. Speaker. We think that answers should be relevant to the questions being asked, as per the rules.

I ask that you find my point of order well taken, and you ask the Premier to withdraw and apologize.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In response to the point of order I would simply point out the Premier, in referencing those emails, is referencing behaviour that's consistent with what we're seeing from the opposition and how they conduct themselves day to day, Mr. Speaker. That is entirely relevant. He's not commenting on emails in isolation. This is consistent behaviour that we're seeing, and there is a tie to every question. The answer is relevant to the question, and a consistent tie to the email that is being referenced, Mr. Speaker.

I would point to historically, Mr. Speaker, we heard members of the opposition referencing campaign comments and things that happen during a campaign. They were permitted to do that for quite some time, Mr. Speaker, with no relevance in fact to the government business of the day.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would simply say that as long as the answer ties relevance to the question that was asked, it is entirely in order. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — Well I'm the luckiest Speaker in the country. I've got the best crew to work with.

And actually I'm just going to ask that we go a little outside the lines and that I meet with our two House leaders because I agree that some of the things that are being said from both sides may be stretching the rules. And I highly respect the two of you, and I would ask that we could meet in my office before tomorrow's session and have some discussions. Because I know I've heard from both of your caucuses that you have the respect of your caucuses and that we can have a discussion.

I appreciate your concerns, and I appreciate your response. But I'm going to ask that tomorrow, before I make a ruling on that, that we would have a discussion, the three of us. I would appreciate that. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 49 — *The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2026*

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 49, *The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2026* be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker Goudy: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 49, *The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2026* be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — Carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

Speaker Goudy: — When shall this bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Next sitting of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 50 — *The Financial Administration Amendment Act, 2026*

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 50, *The Financial Administration Amendment Act, 2026* be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker Goudy: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 50, *The Financial Administration Amendment Act, 2026* be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — Carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

Speaker Goudy: — When shall this bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Next sitting of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 51 — *The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2026*

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 51, *The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2026* be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker Goudy: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 51, *The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2026* be now introduced and read a first time. Is

it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — Carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

Speaker Goudy: — When shall this bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Next sitting of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — Next sitting. Why is the member on her feet?

MOTIONS

Second Reading of Bill No. 612

Aleana Young: — Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the government's agenda and what's published in *Orders of the Day* today, I request leave to move the following motion:

That the Assembly immediately consider second reading of Bill No. 612, *The Lower Power Bills and Car Insurance Act*.

Speaker Goudy: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

Speaker Goudy: — Why is the member on his feet?

MOTION UNDER RULE 61

Removal of Fuel and Diesel Tax

Trent Wotherspoon: — Before orders of the day, I seek to move a motion under rule 61.

Speaker Goudy: — Will the member briefly state the purpose of the motion and read the text of the motion.

Trent Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an important motion I hope we can all be united on.

The conflict in the Middle East has driven up the oil price, and it's boosting oil revenues in an unanticipated and substantial way. But for families, farms, and businesses, that conflict has driven prices — fuel at the pump — sky high. While oil prices and revenues remain high due to this conflict, Saskatchewan farms, families, and businesses deserve corresponding relief at the pumps.

If leave is granted, I would move the following motion:

That the Assembly calls upon the government to temporarily cut the 15-cent-per-litre fuel tax and the marked diesel tax to provide relief for drivers and families while oil prices are driven high by conflict in the Middle East.

Speaker Goudy: — The member from Regina Mount Royal has

requested leave to move without notice a motion of urgent and pressing necessity under rule 61. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

Speaker Goudy: — Leave has not been granted. Next item of business.

I recognize the Government House Leader.

MOTIONS

Second and Third Reading of Bill No. 38 and Bill No. 39

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Notwithstanding the orders of the day, I request leave:

That this House proceed to government order no. 3, Bill 38, *The Building Schools Faster Act*, and government order no. 4, Bill 39, *The Building Schools Faster Consequential Amendment Act, 2025*.

Speaker Goudy: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

Speaker Goudy: — Next item of business.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

BUDGET DEBATE

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

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

Aleana Young: — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A pleasure to be back on my feet when I was interrupted by the clock at the end of last week. I believe what I was discussing at that point was what the Premier called his government's first order of business, Mr. Speaker. We were talking of course about kids, Mr. Speaker.

But I think in continuing to go down that avenue, I'd like to take the opportunity to talk about my kids for a minute, Mr. Speaker, just to update the House. Because I do genuinely believe we all love children in this House, and we agree that we should be celebrating them no matter who they are, Mr. Speaker. And I'm lucky to have two healthy, happy little kiddos.

My son Kit just turned three the first week of session. And

members I think on both sides have met him. He's a sturdy, jolly little man. He's absolutely obsessed with trains and Lightning McQueen at this point, Mr. Speaker, and was just invited to his very first birthday party today. So shout-out to Owen, his best friend at preschool, Mr. Speaker. The theme is Beep, Beep, Beep, so this seems to be a shared area of passion for Kit and Owen, who I'm sure will continue to be good friends as the years pass.

I'm really thankful for the incredible caregivers that my son has at the YWCA, Mr. Speaker, the wonderful women who look after him each and every day. I could not ask for more thoughtful, more educated, and more loving care for my little guy while I get to be here, Mr. Speaker. I'm really grateful for that and really speaks to the importance of accessible child care for families. Because I couldn't do this job, Mr. Speaker, without the support of those incredible educators.

Speaking of education, Mr. Speaker, my eldest, my daughter Hara turned five and started kindergarten this year. She is very much her mother's daughter, Mr. Speaker. She's very opinionated. She's incredibly energetic. This morning she dressed to match me, Mr. Speaker, so I want to give a shout-out to Hara. Actually I had to dress to match her, if we're being honest about how that went, Mr. Speaker.

But she's in her first year of school. She's at kindergarten at École Massey, which she loves. She has an incredible classroom under the steady and enthusiastic stewardship of Madame Patterson, who's just giving my daughter just the most wonderful introduction to school, Mr. Speaker.

Already it's started. I do ask her what she's learned every day when she gets home, if I'm able to pick her up. And I think like children everywhere, she goes, "I don't know." And I'm like, surely you've learned something. You were there all day.

You know, it's weird, Mr. Speaker, especially as a former school board trustee and somebody who's like so engaged in education. Now I, you know, pop my kid on the bus every day and then I pick her up when I can. I say, what happened? What was going on? And she says, "I don't know." But then, you know, once in a while on weekends, I'm hanging out with her and she just starts speaking in complete sentences en français [Translation: in French] to me, so I assume she is learning many wonderful things at school. And again, I'm really, really grateful to her teacher.

And a special shout-out to the other parents in that class who are helping Hara's mom and dad learn about all the things we should be doing as parents in school. Because there's a lot of moving parts, Mr. Speaker, from crazy hair days to pizza parties to all of these things that happen. It's a whole other part-time job. And now my respect for people across all walks of life who work while shepherding their beautiful kids through early childhood, it grows with every single day.

I also want to give a shout-out to my family: of course, my wonderful husband, Taylor. And the grandparents who are so essential to my life: my dad, who's no stranger to this Assembly; and also my husband's wonderful parents, Trevor and Audrey Roadhouse. They're just collectively the most wonderful grandparents.

And as someone who didn't grow up with their grandparents —

I didn't grow up with my grandparents closer in my life — I'm so grateful both for the assists on the child care side, but also that my kids get to grow up here with their grandparents close by and getting to spend quality time with them each and every week.

I also want to thank my friends. I think I've said it before, Mr. Speaker, but I know this is probably a shared experience of all members in this House. There's a lot that we do in serving and in being present with our families. And the thing that always slips for me, Mr. Speaker, is my friends. I'm a terrible friend. I don't see them nearly as much as I would like to. I can't make it to important events. I forget birthdays and kids' birthdays.

But I'm so grateful for my chosen family and all that they do, whether it's, you know, taking the member for Regina South Albert out for the odd dinner every quarter or helping me with pickup at ballet or stolen warm summer evenings with them. I'm really grateful for them for continuing to be such a steadying presence in my life.

I'm also really grateful, Mr. Speaker, to continue to have the confidence of the good people of Regina South Albert. I am so proud to represent this constituency. It's a great place, Mr. Speaker — established neighbourhoods, schools, and is a real major commercial corridor through the heart of our city.

I want to reference a couple . . . I always try and talk about a couple great businesses in my constituency, Mr. Speaker. The ones that I want to talk about today just in passing are . . . well I'll start with one that's not new. The French Press, Mr. Speaker, is just an incredible coffee shop in Regina South Albert. Great contributors to the local community, great spot to meet up and bump into people from across this city, and are just essential in keeping me caffeinated and hydrated through the weeks.

[14:30]

I also want to talk about two new businesses that have opened up in the great state of Regina South Albert. Paddy Wagon, which is in the old Robin's Donuts on south Albert, Mr. Speaker, a great burger shop, independently owned. Started as a food truck. Just absolutely bangin' smashburgers, Mr. Speaker. If there's any members in this House who love a good hamburger, I would strongly encourage you to check out Paddy Wagon. Great service, great staff, really, really wonderful eats, Mr. Speaker.

And then the second place that I want to give a shout-out to is Nik, a new Persian restaurant that's opened up, a great Iranian restaurant that's just opened up in my constituency, again, South Albert. Incredible family restaurant, incredible food. It's in the mall just north of Bonzzini's for folks who may not know where that is.

I'd really encourage all members to go out, try some of the incredible food there, meet the operators especially during such a tough time, Mr. Speaker, for so many Iranian Canadians and folks who have chosen or have been forced to make their lives here in Canada, Mr. Speaker. Yeah, it's a really important time to show solidarity and support for our Iranian neighbours who are going through a very, very complicated time of sorrow and suffering, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to give a shout-out to the empty field south of Regina

South Albert that was supposed to be a surgical centre, I believe, promised by this government who likes to say that they've opened every health care facility that they have ever announced. Great news for my constituency, Mr. Speaker. I'll be there waiting when they want to put some shovels in the ground. But a great site, Mr. Speaker, and still one waiting for that surgical centre long promised by a Sask Party government. Great field, Mr. Speaker, but would look much better as a health care facility.

I also want to of course recognize my incredible office, stewarded by my CA [constituency assistant], Elie. I want to give a special shout-out to her and her whole family as they've been navigating a really challenging time of loss, Mr. Speaker. She's an incredible young woman.

It's hard to believe she's been in my office for a year already. Yeah, she keeps everything moving. She stays on top of me. She's incredibly gracious and kind to me no matter how many times she may have to remind me of something or send a follow-up email. And most importantly she serves my constituents, and indeed people from across Saskatchewan who reach out to our office, with just a high level of professionalism and compassion and dedication to fighting for them.

I also want to give a shout-out to my casuals who also help out our staff here in our caucus office, just the most incredible team of people. They bring such joy and commitment to the work every single day in this building. They are literally burning the midnight oil each and every day and are just doing an incredible job of building a culture of constant activity, Mr. Speaker, of excellence and real joy in what we bring to work each and every day. And I know it's something all members on this side are grateful for.

I want to give a special shout-out, Mr. Speaker, to one young man who's working part-time in our caucus office, because I think it's a fun story. It's a young man named Kai Poulin who came to us . . . This is I think a great example of why knocking on doors matters. Kai's a young man. I think he's 21. He's too young, Mr. Speaker. It's horrifying, really. But I think he's 21, maybe 22. And in the last election campaign, a young man by the name of Eric Horbal, who has volunteered with me in the past volunteered to work on the member for Regina Rochdale's campaign as well. Eric Horbal — who's also appallingly young, Mr. Speaker — Eric knocked on his door.

And Kai came to the door, and he was like, well you look like you're in your early 20s; I'm like 19 or something equally horrifying. What are you doing out door knocking? And young Eric made a really compelling case to young Kai Poulin about why he was involved in politics. Why he cared. How he'd come about it as someone who'd always been interested in politics, evaluated the choices before him, and decided he was going to try to make his province a better place through grassroots action.

And Kai thought about this. He went away. He did his own evaluation and decided that he wanted to get involved in building this province too, Mr. Speaker. And he's been door knocking with members across constituencies here in Regina. And you could not ask for a more thoughtful and dedicated and patient and deeply professional young man.

It's really fun for me too, Mr. Speaker. I don't want to give the

members opposite any more oppo on me than they've got, but you know, Mr. Speaker, I think it's safe to say I didn't grow up in rural Saskatchewan. I've never killed an animal on purpose, Mr. Speaker. I did grow up playing shinny though, Mr. Speaker. I did grow up with a rink in my backyard on a lake.

But young Kai Poulin also, he hunts with a bow; he bear hunts. He refs hockey. He's like reffing hockey left, right, and centre at 11 o'clock at night all over this province. And it's a real fun thing for me to get to go door knocking with somebody who, when a constituent of mine wants to talk about training up their hunting dogs, I've got this young guy standing next to me who knows all about that and has a real different breadth of experience than I have.

But I tell that story, Mr. Speaker, because I think it speaks to the importance of continuing to engage with young people and to making this province better and to bringing people up along with us, Mr. Speaker. Politics is about bringing people with you, and I'm so grateful that we have so many dedicated young people like Kai who are committed to this project and committed to working not just here in Regina but across the province, Mr. Speaker.

Because this has been a year of being on the road. And actually I think the last time I was on the road with Kai . . . We were most recently in Yorkton, Mr. Speaker, where I've been spending a fair bit of time these days. I do want to give a shout-out to the member from Yorkton. There's not very much that we do agree on, Mr. Speaker, but I think we could both agree that when it comes to their game, their upcoming game with the Melville Millionaires, that we should all be saying, go Terriers! My apologies to the minister, yeah. Take it outside, Minister. See you in the rotunda.

But I also want to give a shout-out just to the community of Yorkton, whether it's like Heinz at Wanders, the crew at The Flats, the mayors, the chamber leaders all across the community. It's been something I know I've really enjoyed, as has the member from Walsh Acres. You couldn't ask for a better community of people who are just dedicated to making their community better and building for the future, Mr. Speaker.

I really do love getting to go there. I got to bring my daughter with me once out of necessity, Mr. Speaker, and she thinks Yorkton is the most beautiful city in the whole world. When we drove in and we saw the water tower and then I took her to the wave pool at the Gallagher Centre, oh my God, it blew her mind, Mr. Speaker. She drove and she said, this is the most beautiful town I've ever been to. Later on when I took her to The Flats and she got to have spaghetti for, like, five bucks and a Shirley Temple, her mind was blown.

So a shout-out to Yorkton. If you're looking for somewhere fun to take to take your kids, Gallagher Centre and the wave pool, nice dinner at The Flats afterwards, and coffee and a pastry at Wanders the next morning. Great little day, Mr. Speaker, of course mixed in with important outreach work with key stakeholders across the city.

As I said, door knocking — I've said it before — is my favourite part of this job, Mr. Speaker, and something fun happened in this last door knocking season. It started coming up door after door after door, actually with the guy who wanted to talk to me about

training hunting dogs: the debt and the deficit.

Now, Mr. Speaker, obviously as New Democrats we'd be happy if the driving conversation of the day was this government's record of debt and just the 43 and a half billion dollars of debt that they've run up for the people of this province. But you know, it's not something that people necessarily lead with on the doorstep every time.

You know, you hear about health care. No one in this province has access to a family doctor. Everyone you talk to, either they or their family have just a horror story about waiting for surgery, being unable to access cancer diagnostics, having to take themselves out of province for basic health care.

You know, housing continues to be a driving concern, certainly in my constituency where we have a concerning and an increasing number . . . And I hope members opposite are listening. A concerning and increasing number — the Minister of Environment's saying no — of rural seniors who have moved into the city to be closer to health care, who are getting priced out of their modest rental apartments.

This should be of concern to all members, and I hope especially members like the Minister for Environment who represent rural constituencies. These are your people who are moving to be closer to health care, who can no longer afford their modest apartments because they're being asked to pay 13, \$1,400 for a studio or a one-bedroom apartment, before utilities.

They are facing month after month of rent increases, Mr. Speaker. And while you might think, well that's against the law, a lot of what happens to these people is they get brought in on an introductory rate, Mr. Speaker, not realizing they're on a month-to-month lease. And what happens after they've moved, and they've settled in, they've unpacked, they've put up pictures of their kids on the wall, Mr. Speaker? Well guess what? Their rent goes up. And two months later, you start getting charged for parking which you weren't charged before. All of a sudden your rent or your housing cost, whatever you want to call it, has increased 2, 3, 4, \$500 month to month.

And those people are being pushed out of, again, modest, good, what used to be affordable rental stock in Regina in my constituency all along Albert Street, Mr. Speaker. Yes, it's new Canadians. Yes, it's students. Yes, it's single parents. It is also rural seniors who are being priced out and forced out of South Albert into God knows where, Mr. Speaker.

It's a real concern, and these members have the opportunity to address it by passing the rent control bill introduced by the member from Saskatoon Westview. There needs to be action. If we care about affordability, we need to keep people in their homes, Mr. Speaker.

Oh there's so much I wanted to talk about. I've covered health care. I've talked about the debt. I've talked about the deficit. I have talked about housing.

Maybe one last piece on housing, because you know, during the budget responses — I think it was during the member from Mount Royal's budget response — I saw some surprise on the face of, I believe it was the member from Saskatoon

Willowgrove when my colleague said something about how the government likes to sell off profitable public assets. And there was some surprise on the faces of members opposite, like perhaps they had no idea what he was talking about.

And, Mr. Speaker, I don't know. I don't want to make assumptions of what might be in any of the budget bills. But I'd say this, Mr. Speaker: typically you don't introduce legislation when you want to keep something the same. It's not what you do.

And there's been a lot of coverage of ISC [Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan] in the news over the past six months or so, Mr. Speaker. And maybe I'd just say this in case there's members like the member from Saskatoon Willowgrove who aren't sure what this is about. I'd look at the budget, I'd look at the budget bills, and I'd think about maybe the fact that this is a profitable organization. Revenue is up, I think, based on this morning's reporting, 32 per cent this year, which is above last year's record revenue, Mr. Speaker.

And there's been a bit of an evolving space of comments from government members on whether or not they'd permit a sale or if they just care about protecting jobs. Maybe they care about protecting their golden share, but I don't know, Mr. Speaker. I think profitable services for the people of Saskatchewan, that are again non-negotiable — you can't go anywhere else to get this service — I think those should be kept to protect Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker.

And you know, like I said, I don't know what's in the bill, Mr. Speaker. It's not before the House. But I just flag a couple concerns, things that I hope members opposite are thinking about, whether it's the security of the data and the information of Saskatchewan people and where that might go if this is sold off to an out-of-province or an out-of-country operator, Mr. Speaker. What happens to everybody's information? What happens to title insurance? What happens to the transparency and accessibility of that, Mr. Speaker? And last but not least, what happens to housing affordability?

Because this seems like it surprised some members opposite. Every time you buy a house, right, you have to work through ISC. For every household there's a percentage — it's 0.04, I believe, of every sale that goes through — goes to ISC. They make a lot of money off of it.

[14:45]

And when they raised it in 2023 up from 0.03 to 0.04, it increased the cost of buying a house roughly 3 or \$400 on an average house in Saskatchewan. Depending on where you live in the province, right, it's somewhere between 3 or \$400 more expensive to buy that house.

And now while that may not seem like a whole lot of money to some folks, to first-time homebuyers in particular, Mr. Speaker, people trying to scrape together that \$15,000 for that down payment on their first house — you know, 250, \$350,000 house — that's a material amount of money. And if that goes up again 0.1 or maybe 0.2, that's going to cost people more and more and more money and it's going to become a housing affordability issue, Mr. Speaker.

Outside of that, Mr. Speaker, this budget, frankly it's bad news for the province and it's bad news for the Sask Party government, Mr. Speaker. We've seen it over the past week already with their flailing attempt at issues management and their evolving message box on this budget.

It seems like the Minister of Finance, I think he said something like — and I'm not quoting him, Mr. Speaker, not quoting him — that he had the choice between, you know, raising taxes or cutting services for Saskatchewan people. It seems like he had that choice and he decided to do both. I'm not sure why these folks operate in such a binary, but they're making some bad choices.

Also in Regina South Albert, like a real impact that we are going to feel is the decision to delay the much-needed renovation at Campbell Collegiate, Mr. Speaker. This is the biggest high school in Regina. It services . . . I think there's about 1,600 kids there. This was work that the division had undertaken, one can only imagine, in partnership and collaboration with the Ministry of SaskBuilds and the Ministry of Education. Because you don't look at moving 30 per cent of your student population . . . When you're talking about that many kids, Mr. Speaker, you don't do it on a dime. And this was work that was planned, work that was expected, because again we have heaving floors, we have ceiling collapses in the biggest high school in the capital city of Regina, Mr. Speaker.

And as far as I know, there have been no guarantees given to the school community or to the school board about when that project can proceed. The same government that has delayed much-needed capital projects on, we assume, 20 schools — maybe more, maybe less, Mr. Speaker, but that's what we're hearing — 20 schools. The same government has held preventative maintenance funding steady, well below what is asked for by school boards across the province, so the schools across this province are only going to be in worse and worse shape, Mr. Speaker.

The businesses in South Albert, they're struggling with the added costs that all businesses across this province are dealing with, no thanks to the \$136 million power bill hike that we are seeing from this Sask Party government.

I'm up against the clock here, Mr. Speaker, so I'll wrap it up. But I'd like to really encourage all members, especially on the government side, to make sure they're really confident in what's going on at SaskPower and the decisions that are being made when it comes to an essential driver of our economy and an essential component of not just the future of Saskatchewan, but also this government's current debt.

I'd make sure, especially to members outside of cabinet, that you're asking some real questions of your team, you're looking at all the submissions that SaskPower is putting out. Go to the rate review panel website. Read through the documents on there. It's an interesting read, I assure you.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, this budget is clearly bad news for the people of Saskatchewan. There's nothing approaching affordability relief. We saw again today the government refusing to lift a finger to save people a buck at the pumps. They've done nothing for the cost of food. They'll do

nothing for housing affordability, Mr. Speaker. They're doing nothing to help people get access to a family doctor, Mr. Speaker. They're doing nothing to improve the education outcomes of kids in this province, Mr. Speaker. And they won't acknowledge that people are starting to vote with their feet.

We heard it in question period today, Mr. Speaker, and you can flip through the government's budget when they say themselves some pretty low projections for jobs and some pretty low projections, in their own words, for population growth. And they say they're just going to have to rely on interprovincial migration, which will be a real trick, Mr. Speaker, since this is a province that has continued to lose people to every other province in this country.

But with that, as you know, as always I think I've said what I wanted to say. Oh, you know what? Just a reminder. I always try and say one nice thing, Mr. Speaker, in my budget response, and I've just seen the member from Cypress Hills stand up. I caught sight of that epic moustache, Mr. Speaker.

And as was referenced by my colleague from Regina Wascana Plains, we had incredible hospitality in the constituency of Cypress Hills earlier this fall. Just incredible folks at Reesor and all throughout that constituency. Of course, Mr. Speaker, I think Regina South Albert is the most beautiful constituency in the province of Saskatchewan, but if I had to pick a runner-up, it would be the constituency of Cypress Hills. It's just an absolutely beautiful place. So that, Mr. Speaker — that's the rose I will extend to members opposite in this budget response.

And with that, I think it's safe to say I will not be supporting this government's budget, and I will be supporting the amendment moved by my good friend, the member from Regina Mount Royal.

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

Brad Crassweller: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to stand before you and respond to this year's budget. A number of things I want to talk about with regard to the budget, but before I get there, there's a number of people that I would like to thank.

Mr. Speaker, I'll begin with my wife. In just a few weeks we will celebrate our 36th wedding anniversary. For 36 years of marriage she's been my best friend, my biggest supporter, and just all around an incredible teammate. Mr. Speaker, we've been through a lot during our time together — raising kids, starting businesses, entering political life. It's been an incredible journey.

But it's a journey that's had times of incredible joy and times of incredible sorrow. And, Mr. Speaker, sometimes those memories collide and can stir up all kinds of emotions. We just went through that again as we celebrated the birth of our first granddaughter on March 11th when Veronica Rylee arrived. Veronica Rylee was born a perfect 8 pounds 12 ounces. Beautiful little girl to our son and daughter-in-law, and we're thrilled for her safe arrival. That's why I'm wearing a pink shirt and tie today, Mr. Speaker, in her honour. And I've been looking for a pink suit, but I just haven't quite found the right colour yet. But I'll get there.

But, Mr. Speaker, the incredible joy and love I feel for my granddaughter as I held her for the first time is also a reminder of a past memory of when my little girl was stillborn. She would have just turned 20 in January. And so Paige Isabella Crassweller, your mother and father love you very much, and because of the hope we have, we know we will see you again. Which is why I am incredibly thankful for my faith that's seen me through so much and will continue to see me through the years that I have left on this earth.

And there's one person that's been with me through thick and thin. Sandy, I want to thank you so much for your unconditional love, consistent support, and for believing in me in all the things I set out to tackle in life. I know I couldn't do it without you. I know the business and definitely the bookkeeping wouldn't have happened without you.

And, Mr. Speaker, with a wife like mine, it's no surprise that our children turned out to be pretty incredible people as well of which I will take very, very little . . . I'll take none. I'll take no credit. But my son Taylor, and three daughters Chelsea and Shaylee and Ashlyn, I'm so proud of them for all that they do, for what they add to our family, but most importantly for who they are, who they continue to become, which is incredible individuals. I love them as individuals for how they're so uniquely gifted and wired. And it's been an absolute pleasure to watch them grow from young kids, through the teen years, and to turn into some amazing young adults.

Three of them are now parents, and that too is an absolute blessing to watch and be a part of our kids' and our grandkids' lives. And I must admit I'm going to thoroughly enjoy watching them go through each and every step of the way with my grandkids, and I'm going to thoroughly enjoy when they hit the teenage years. But right now I'm enjoying my three grandsons Brooks, Grayson, and William. All within eight months of each other, and it's fun to watch their personalities develop and have so much fun with them as they continue to grow.

I'm also proud of my two sons-in-law and my daughter-in-law. Marty is a proud member of the Regina Police Service. He loves going to work every day. He loves protecting our communities and I thank him for his service. My other son-in-law, Ellis, is a lineman with Hundseth and works hard every day at keeping our city people and our rural people connected as far as electricity goes. And my daughter-in-law Stephanie specializes in menopause and perimenopause for women, helping women throughout Canada and beyond. I'm very proud of them and the individuals they are and so proud to have them a part of our family.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also privileged to be the youngest of four siblings whom I have a great relationship with, and it's been good over the past year to connect with them and spend a little more time with them even though we're scattered throughout the country.

And, Mr. Speaker, as we celebrated a new life here just 10 days ago, we also had to say goodbye to an incredible lady in our family: my grandmother, Ruth Hall. She passed away in the fall, just one month shy of her 105th birthday, and I was very blessed to have her a part of my life for so long. I have nieces and nephews and brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, and I'm truly

blessed with lots of family.

I'm blessed with a lot of other people in my life, Mr. Speaker, and I want to just acknowledge a few of them. So blessed with an incredible constituency assistant in Nicole Entner-McCullough. Mr. Speaker, my predecessor — Don McMorris, who many would remember in this House — stood in this very House pretty close to where I am right now not that long ago, and he said these words: my successor will be crazy if they don't do everything they can to keep Nicole as their assistant. He was definitely right and so, Don, I took your advice.

And, Nicole, thank you again for all you do in our constituency and for our constituency. And I know the great people of White City-Qu'Appelle appreciate you for what you do but more importantly for who you are, which is an incredible individual. I couldn't imagine doing what I do as an MLA for White City-Qu'Appelle without you. I also want to thank Don McMorris for all his years of service to this constituency but ultimately to this province.

There's one other individual that I just want to point out here for just a minute, Mr. Speaker, and his name is Ryan Bellamy. He's very familiar to many of us in this building. He was Don's chief of staff for a time, and he's one of my constituents, and today is his birthday. And I won't mention how old he is, but happy birthday, Ryan.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to elaborate on some other individuals a little later on in this speech, but in general I just want to thank the great people of White City-Qu'Appelle for the honour of serving them as their MLA. I have loved my meetings with town councils, RM [rural municipality] councils, health care workers, volunteer firefighters, RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police], teachers, students, our business owners. And we have so many incredible businesses in our constituency. But I want to say thank you for who you are. Thank you for placing your trust in me as your MLA. And I'm going to continue to listen, learn, and lead as I seek to be your liaison to this Assembly.

Now I know that took a few minutes, Mr. Speaker, but all of us know that we don't serve alone, and we couldn't do it without the love and support of our family and friends. And so I just wanted to get a few of those things on the record. But I do want to talk about this budget and the impact it will have on some of the very groups that I've been talking about.

So where to start? Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I've tried to ingrain into my children, and I'll do the same with my grandchildren, is this. I remind them often that choices matter. Every day, and sometimes every minute of every day, the choices you make matter, and those very choices will shape the direction of your life and have an impact on those around you.

Well it's no different than what you see before us today. Our government had a choice. Cut services and raise taxes — and that was a choice that could have been made — but there was another choice, a much better choice for the people of this province. And this government chose to protect Saskatchewan by continuing to diversify and grow our economy, by continuing to keep our election promises.

We're going to continue to protect our strong economy. We're

going to continue to protect health care, protect our communities, vulnerable people, education, and our strong financial position. And each and every one of those key areas are deliberate choices, Mr. Speaker, choices that will ultimately protect the great people of this province.

So let's talk about health care for a minute — \$8.5 billion, an increase of nearly 5 per cent. This investment will continue to strengthen emergency and critical hospital care, open more entry points to primary care providers, provide life-enhancing options for seniors' care. Mr. Speaker, if you look at our patients-first health care plan — I'm not sure if you read it but I would encourage you; it's really good — our priority in expanding nurse practitioners across this province. No limit to the number of contracts. Building fully functioning nurse practitioner-led primary care teams. Training more nurse practitioners.

Mr. Speaker, I know nurse practitioners in my constituency, and they're excited about this direction and the opportunity. And they're in the process of walking through the steps to get set up and functioning, providing more health care in our communities — and I'm excited what it'll mean for all of these communities — which will provide access for so many to a primary care provider.

Mr. Speaker, this is an \$11.9 million investment in primary and preventative care. One million from this budget will support a pilot to enable selected contracted nurse practitioner clinics to hire additional team members to develop primary care teams. Does that sound like bad news? Sure doesn't to me, Mr. Speaker. Sounds like really good news. It'll provide more access to primary care providers.

We're adding 26 more training seats, Mr. Speaker, between the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] and U of R [University of Regina] and Sask Poly. Again that's pretty good news for our students who are looking for a career in health care.

[15:00]

And we're going to continue to protect health care and those that need it with our direction with regard to nurse practitioners. But, Mr. Speaker, we're going to go further. Let's talk about hospital care and ICU [intensive care unit] expansion. Completing renovations and staffing for 69 more beds at Saskatoon City Hospital. Staff and open 24 more acute care beds and four ICU beds at St. Paul's Hospital. Staff and open six pediatric beds at Jim Pattison Children's Hospital — so needed. Staff and open 36 acute care beds at Royal University Hospital.

Staff and open three additional NICU [neonatal intensive care unit] beds at Regina General Hospital. And this one, Mr. Speaker, is really special to me because one of my grandsons spent numerous days in the NICU. So thankful for those doctors and nurses who take care of our newborns. We're going to complete the construction of the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital, adding 57 acute care beds to the community.

And all of those beds will allow us to care for more people on a daily basis. It'll help us to be able to do more surgeries.

This budget, Mr. Speaker, is a choice to protect health care services and the people of this province by investing in our new

patients-first health care plan, which is going to ensure that everyone has access to the right care in the right place at the right time. That's not just good news, Mr. Speaker. That's great news.

So let's talk about mental health and addictions for a minute. It's another area where we're committed to making the right choices to protect those facing mental health and addictions challenges. We'll continue that by providing a record investment of 674 million to support mental health and addictions, expanding access to mental health and addictions services, opening more treatment spaces, creating a secure youth detox in Saskatoon, supporting individuals in whatever stage of their recovery journey they are at.

And, Mr. Speaker, again choices are so important in life and in leadership. And this is an 8 per cent increase for mental health and addictions in this budget. And that's good news for those who are struggling, for their families, for this province as we seek to help and support those who find themselves caught in a life of addiction or struggling with mental health issues.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, you don't have to go very far; you don't have to talk to too many people before you bump into friends and family members who struggle in these areas. And we need to be doing all that we can to help protect our family and friends and co-workers, and I believe this budget will do exactly that.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I've had the privilege of getting to know a very special couple in my constituency, and I want to talk about them for a minute. Rick and Debbie West lost their son Lincoln to mental health issues on Father's Day 2024, Mr. Speaker, an absolutely devastating tragedy. And I can't imagine what Rick and Debbie face each and every day regarding living without their son, whom they love so much. But I can tell you this, Mr. Speaker: they face each and every day with a fierce determination to turn their pain into purpose through Lincoln's Life Mattered Foundation.

Lincoln's Life Mattered Foundation was established to promote mental health and well-being among youth through education, early intervention, and access to supportive services. They aim to reduce the incidence of illness, suicide, and social isolation. Lincoln's Life Mattered Foundation activities are designed to directly address the mental health needs of youth by doing a number of key things: supporting access to counselling services, promoting peer support, educating youth about mental health, raising awareness and reducing the stigma, and building resilience and coping skills, Mr. Speaker.

Rick and Debbie, I want to thank you for taking it upon yourselves to help protect our young people. And I want you to know that your government is working with you. And by our record investment into mental health and addictions, together we'll make a difference and together we'll work toward ending the stigma of mental health. Thank you again for all you do in our communities and for your tireless work with the foundation that's making a difference in so many families' lives. Thank you so, so much. We're with you. I stand with you. Your community stands with you. And this government stands with you.

Choices matter. And this choice, Mr. Speaker, when you break it down will contribute more than \$1.8 million per day towards

mental health and addictions. Doesn't sound like bad news to me, Mr. Speaker. That sounds like some incredible news. And it's a choice this government will continue to make to help protect the people who we love the most and who need it the most.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to protect our communities: \$310 million to support RCMP operations and First Nations policing. It's a \$50 million increase. We're introducing a new small town and rural policing grant program. At the end of February, we launched a national ad campaign to recruit more officers to our great province.

All of these are choices to protect our communities. And as we talk about all the great communities that make this province what it is, this budget once again provides a record amount of municipal revenue sharing at nearly \$400 million. And I can guarantee that in every community I have the pleasure of serving, that is some very, very good news.

Best part about our municipal revenue sharing, Mr. Speaker, it's unconditional funding. I'd just like to point out it actually outpaces inflation, which is good news. It's great news for our communities. And they can use those funds however they see fit to invest in their communities because they know what's needed best in their communities.

Mr. Speaker, we also have so many incredible individuals in our communities who take it upon themselves to help protect our communities in so many different ways. And I've had the privilege of meeting a number of those individuals and groups in my constituency.

I've been on a ride-along with the RCMP from the White Butte detachment. I've attended a White Butte RCMP monthly stakeholders' meeting a few times, and it's hosted by detachment commander, Corey Niedzielski. Very informative meeting where local reeves and council members come together to discuss what's happening in our respective communities and how we can continue to work together to protect all the people that live in our communities. It's a great meeting, Mr. Speaker. I love attending.

But another group that spends countless hours training and serving in our communities is that of our volunteer firefighters and first responders. And I've had the opportunity to attend a few different fire practices to thank them for what they do and for how well they do it. A few weeks ago I attended a joint training exercise between White City and McLean and North Qu'Appelle. It was so good to watch them at their meeting and then gear up for the training exercise wearing full gear and oxygen.

They entered a dark building as they practised what they need to do in a search and rescue situation, crawling around in full gear, looking for anyone trapped in the building. And once they found them, they dragged them out. And when I say "them," it was a 185-pound dummy. They dragged them out to safety. But, Mr. Speaker, it was amazing to watch the team work and the communication involved so that they can rescue people successfully, while at the same time ensuring one another's safety.

Then they geared me up, Mr. Speaker, complete with air tank and all the fire gear that they typically wear in those situations. And

they took me into the building, and they had me drag that mannequin out of that room. Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to say, that mannequin outweighed me so it was a bit of a grunt. But I made it. Mr. Speaker, it was an incredible first-hand experience for me, and it gave me a whole new appreciation of what they do to prepare themselves for the different situations they get called to. An amazing experience.

And I want to thank Chief Mathieu Theriault and deputy chiefs Krista Bull and Chris Rostie and Chief Ashley Thompson from McLean for allowing me. And I want to thank all of their volunteer firefighters that were there that night — it was a huge group, Mr. Speaker — for allowing me to be a part of that experience but, more importantly, for investing the time training so that you and all of your fellow firefighters can be there for others but also to make sure that you get home safely as well.

And that's why I'm so happy that we've announced in this budget that we've doubled the first responders' tax credit from 3,000 to 6,000. And that's solely to recognize the risk our volunteer firefighters, our emergency medical personnel, and search and rescue teams take in helping others. And, Mr. Speaker, I am quite sure that not one of them, not one first responder would say that's a bad-news item.

That's really good news, Mr. Speaker. It's great news and it acknowledges their hard work and their sacrifice that they make and that their families make on a daily basis to help protect all of us. Thank you again to all of our first responders, emergency medical personnel who give so much to serve and protect our communities. And, Mr. Speaker, I have to point out, they choose to do it. They make a choice to go and serve and protect. And so thank you so much.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to protect vulnerable people. There's so many great things in that budget — again a provincial approach to homelessness, creating up to 40 new shelter spaces and 60 new supportive housing spaces, increased funding for SIS [Saskatchewan income support] and SAID. CBOs [community-based organization] are getting a 2 per cent increase in funding, and more funding will be provided for individuals experiencing interpersonal violence. And we'll broaden housing supports and raise awareness of human trafficking. All incredible choices that need to be made, and this government's going to make them. We'll seek to protect the most vulnerable.

We're going to protect education. We're increasing funding for 50 specialized support classrooms; 124 million in safe, inclusive learning environments for K to 12; renewal of the child care agreement; an incredible multi-year post-secondary funding agreement that was announced not that long ago.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to protect affordability. So I want to talk about that for a minute. You know, the members opposite say there's no affordability measures in the budget. Well last year's budget, which was the start of the affordability measures, are just continuing. So both budgets show exactly what those are. And maybe if you'd read it instead of shred it, you'd see those.

We're implementing the second of a four-year commitment to lowering taxes for everyone. Personal, spousal, equivalent-to-spousal, and child exemptions as well as the seniors' supplement will increase by \$500 again this year, Mr. Speaker. That doesn't

sound like bad news to me. Pretty good news, especially to all of those who that will help, which is so many people in our province, Mr. Speaker. We're going to protect Saskatchewan families.

Mr. Speaker, as I wrap up here the last thing I would like to talk about is the deficit. You know, there's times in life when governments and businesses will run deficits and it's for many different reasons. This year there's likely not a single provincial government in Canada that won't have some sort of deficit.

We're facing some global economic and geopolitical turmoil. There's considerable volatility in our world right now and there's been some unforeseen things happen, even in our own province here, Mr. Speaker, that have an impact on our finances. But you know, Mr. Speaker, there's been times as a business owner, and I would dare say almost every business owner has had to incur some form of debt.

But the good news is this: under this Premier, under this government, our economy has grown. That's good news. We've gone from 19.8 billion in exports to 45 billion in exports. That's good news. We just set an all-time record of 90.5 billion GDP. Good news. We've the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. Good news, Mr. Speaker. Best credit rating of all the provinces, second-highest GDP of all provinces, second-best net-to-debt ratio in Canada, the lowest per capita deficit in the country at this time, Mr. Speaker. Really good news.

Sixty large-scale projects with an estimated \$62.4 billion worth of investment happening in our province right now. I believe we're well positioned to deal with this deficit and get back to a balance, or better yet, a surplus like we had in 2023-2024. All of this is very good news for the people of Saskatchewan.

So in closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to come back to something I said near the beginning of this speech. Every day each of us makes choices and every choice has an impact on ourselves and those around us. Our government has made a choice to protect Saskatchewan, to protect our people. And any time we do that, I would say it's very, very good news. To quote a former premier in closing, "Hope beats fear every time."

Mr. Speaker, for all of these reasons and many more, I'll be supporting this budget brought by our Minister of Finance and seconded by the member from Carrot River Valley, and I will not be supporting the amendment. God bless you, and God bless Saskatchewan. Thank you.

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

Tajinder Grewal: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to respond to the proposed budget for 2026-2027. I'll begin my response to this bad-news budget by sharing my personal story.

I came to Saskatoon and Saskatchewan in 1999. The University of Saskatchewan brought me here. We arrived in Canada under the skilled worker category. And when I say we: me; my wife Ravinder Grewal; and our son, Ravtej. We arrived in Canada under the skilled worker category and landed initially in Vancouver. After staying there about 35 days, I moved to Saskatoon after securing a good-paying job as a post-doctoral

researcher.

When we arrived in British Columbia, Mr. Speaker, we were told that we would not be eligible for a health card for the first three months. We'd have to either buy the insurance plan or be on our own if something happened wrong. When we moved to Saskatoon, we were told that we are covered by the health care from day one. Health care was great, Mr. Speaker.

[15:15]

When we arrived in Saskatchewan our son was four and a half years old, and he received all his education in Saskatoon. And it was a wonderful experience both for him and for us as parents. In 2001 we bought our first house, Mr. Speaker. Do you know how much we paid for it? You might be surprised to know that we paid only 108,000 for our house. Life was very affordable, Mr. Speaker.

So we moved from BC [British Columbia] to Saskatchewan because I had a good-paying job, health care was excellent, our son received a good education, and life was affordable. Unfortunately I'm now using the word "was" repeatedly — was — not any more.

I was talking about years '99, 2000, 2001. Do you know which party was governing in those years? Yes, it was NDP, Mr. Speaker. Now our health care system is in a crisis. We rank last in Canada for providing a good-quality health care. This bad-news budget claimed to be about protecting Saskatchewan. What is the Sask Party protecting? Our crumbling health care system? There's only 0.3 per cent increase in funding for health care. And that's how they plan to protect health care?

In terms of education, we have the lowest per-student funding in Canada. There's no new plan for funding for teachers or students. This is the future of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And let's talk about affordability. An Angus poll reads that 84 per cent of Saskatchewan people are stressed about money. And this is the highest financial insecurity in Canada. Is this what Sask Party government is protecting, Mr. Speaker? Four years ago there were 500 homeless people in Saskatoon and now that number estimated more than 2,000. Are there any plans in the budget to help homeless people? No. None, Mr. Speaker.

One-third of children in Saskatchewan are living in poverty.

There's widespread mental health and addiction issues in Saskatchewan. If you see several years ago, mental health and addiction issues were only prevalent in urban centres, but now it's all over Saskatchewan. And we are losing people every day due to mental health and addictions.

In 2023 when I was door knocking, crime and safety was not a concern in my constituency. But when I went to door knock last year, crime and safety became one of the top issues in my constituency, Saskatoon University-Sutherland.

So what I'm trying to say, Mr. Speaker, is that everything is worsening under Sask Party government — health care, education, affordability, poverty, homelessness, mental health and addiction issues. And yet we see no plans in this budget to

address these issues.

Now I will talk about post-secondary education institutions. I will start with a positive note, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate the multi-year funding agreement. And last year when I was visiting the post-secondary institutions, I was talking with the management. This multi-year funding agreement was a top issue. And we advocated about it during the question periods and the press conferences. And I sincerely thank the government and the minister for listening. This agreement provides stability and consistency, and now all the post-secondary institutions can plan for the future.

However the major issue for many post-secondary institutions in Saskatchewan is massive reduction in international student enrolment due to changes in federal immigration policy. Some institutions are struggling financially, and many will be struggling without international students, which is simply unacceptable.

It's always beneficial to have international students, Mr. Speaker. They provide diversity and enrich experience for other students. The majority of them stay in Saskatchewan or Canada after graduation, contributing to the requisite workforce. But our post-secondary institutions should not be dependent on international students for their revenue in the first place, which is currently the case, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you may ask why this is happening. It's largely due to the underfunding by the Sask Party government to our post-secondary sector over many, many years. I can provide you some numbers here. Nearly 20 years ago, Mr. Speaker, the provincial government used to fund 60 per cent of the operating budget, and now this funding is less than 50 per cent. So there is a gap of 10 to 15 per cent, means 10 to 15 per cent less funding to the post-secondary sector. And these institutions are working hard to fill that gap. They have only a few options: raise the tuition, fundraise, or rely on the revenue from the international students, or a combination of all three. And this model is unsustainable, Mr. Speaker.

Take Saskatchewan Polytechnic as an example. Last year Sask Poly laid off more than 100 faculty and staff. For many of them, their last day to work was just before Christmas. And this year more than 25 faculty members were laid off. And this is just the beginning, Mr. Speaker. Don't take my word on that. Here is a quote from Michelle Downton, the president of the Saskatchewan Polytechnic Faculty Association:

Our members want to be working. We want to be educating students and giving them all the tools they need to succeed and lead. These layoffs have been devastating, and now entire programs are being closed. Despite our constant advocacy, we have gotten nothing more than lip service from the Sask Party government. We need support for Sask Poly and our post-secondary schools in general.

Morale among faculty is at lowest point, which is an organizational risk. Faculty members are unsure who will be laid off next month or by the end of this session, and this is not helpful, Mr. Speaker. We cannot have a strong Saskatchewan or a strong economy without a strong Sask Poly. Michelle Downton is also referring to program closures. Yes, Mr. Speaker, many

programs at Sask Poly are being closed.

For example, the health information management program will be discontinued. The HIM [health information management] profession has a long history in this province. It didn't start 5 years ago or 10 years ago, but it started in the 1960s. HIM professionals are essential not just to the health care system but also to other sectors. They maintain accurate records, ensure privacy, engage in data governance, and ensure standards from data collection, cleaning, and submission to the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health and the Canadian Institute for Health Information, among other vital roles.

The HIM skill set goes beyond what most people might think the profession entails, and it's crucial that we acknowledge the value of these professionals who safeguard so much confidential information in many organizations across Saskatchewan. Current employment opportunities extend beyond the Saskatchewan Health Authority as HIM professionals support Indigenous health at local, provincial, and federal levels. They work at organizations such as health, Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, eHealth, SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance], WCB [Workers' Compensation Board], the Ministry of Health, and many others.

As this program is being decommissioned, Saskatchewan will be the only province west of Quebec without a locally based HIM program which has been supported by so many employers. Employers will be forced to recruit HIM professionals from out of province, and this doesn't make any sense, Mr. Speaker.

And this is just for one program. Many other programs will be closed across different post-secondary institutions. Faculty and staff will be laid off. We will lose educated, trained, and experienced professionals. Young people are already leaving Saskatchewan and this situation will make it worse. For the first time in 20 years, Saskatchewan's population is shrinking two quarters in a row.

Mr. Speaker, this is a bad-news budget. While it does provide funding increases for some institutions, it fails to support the people of Saskatchewan the way they deserve. Not only that, but this budget fails to achieve many of the goals outlined in the 2026-2027 business plan.

What are these goals, you might ask. Let's look at the pages 3 to 12 of this year's business plan. One of the goals on page 8 is to support learning opportunities and programs that meet the needs of students and the province's labour force. When we talk about supporting students, one would expect an increase in financial support, especially during this cost-of-living crisis. This could come in the form of increased grants or the elimination of interest on student loans.

However when I looked at the ministry's key actions, I found nothing — nothing, Mr. Speaker — that will help the regular Saskatchewan student deal with the rising expenses. They have failed to remove or reduce interest on school loans, adjust the grant-to-loan ratio, or do anything to financially support students. This suggests that this province doesn't care for the financial or educational well-being of its students. And do you know what, Mr. Speaker. I believe that's true.

Let's look at another goal: keeping institutions sustainable. I talked about the massive layoffs at Sask Polytechnic, so I expected there to see some extra support in this budget to help to stabilize the institution and create predictability for programs, students, and staff.

What did I find when I opened this budget? There is a budget increase for Sask Poly but most of the funds — 10 million to be exact — are going to Saskatchewan Polytechnic's new campus, not to stabilize the institution's programs. In fact instead of increasing funding to stabilize programs, they have cut their training programs and services by \$1.3 million. The ministry has done nothing to support student finances or protect Saskatchewan Polytechnic faculty, staff, or students.

Most of the time members of the opposite say that we only criticize but do not propose solutions. Mr. Speaker, we do propose solutions but they don't listen. I can give you a few examples. We proposed a solution to make life more affordable. We put forward a motion to remove the provincial gas tax for six months to provide relief to Saskatchewan people, and this motion was denied today. This is much-needed relief at this moment, Mr. Speaker.

The member from Saskatoon Westview put forward a motion for rent control. The member from Regina South Albert moved a bill to lower power bills and car insurance rates. There are many other examples, Mr. Speaker, where we have proposed solutions to improve health care and make education more accessible. However this government is not listening.

I will talk about one more project we are doing as official opposition. That project is Your Future, Your Say. For the first time in 20 years Saskatchewan's population is declining, and young people are at the centre of this story. Young people are the future of this province, and yet too many are leaving because the Sask Party government has failed to create good jobs, reduce taxes, and address the skyrocketing cost of living. Young people don't see a future here that works for them.

Our leader, the member from Regina Coronation Park, and I started this consulting project — Your Future, Your Say. We are meeting with community leaders, young professionals, students, labour groups to find real solutions and implement more changes that will restore the dreams of learning, living, and working in this province.

Our first-ever event took place on March 5th in Regina with about 50 young people attending. It was purely a listening project, Mr. Speaker. We spoke only for 10 minutes; it was a two-hour event. We were listening to young people, listening for their views, their ideas, their perspectives, and listen to them report what will keep them in Saskatchewan and what it would take to build a future that keeps them here to pursue their careers and raise their families.

Mr. Speaker, it was a great opportunity to listen to young people. We will continue this exercise. Our next event is in Saskatoon on April 16th, and we plan to hold similar events across Saskatchewan.

A similar project, Your Future, Your Care, is happening in health care, where our leaders and the shadow ministers on Health are

listening to health care professionals. You can't have a good policy without listening to your stakeholders.

[15:30]

And yes, Mr. Speaker, we do propose solutions. We are listening to Saskatchewan people, and we are getting ready to govern in 2028. This bad-news budget will cost Saskatchewan people more. This Premier has more than doubled the debt to \$43.5 billion. The Saskatchewan people are paying 1.2 billion just to service the debt this year. We are in an affordability crisis, and there is no cost-of-living relief in this budget. There's no new funding for teachers or students.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I will not support this budget. I will support the amendment moved by the member from Regina Mount Royal and seconded by the member from Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Lumsden-Morse.

Blaine McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It really is a pleasure to be up here for my third time in a response to a budget speech. I enjoy these opportunities a lot, and I look forward each year for the opportunity to write that speech and to put my thoughts on paper.

I want to start, Mr. Speaker, by thanking you for your thoughtful and considered responses in the approach to your role. I appreciate your guidance and continued friendship. And likewise to my colleagues, I want to express appreciation for the family atmosphere we experience. It is really a joy to participate in that.

And to continue with the thank yous, as we so often do, the people of Lumsden-Morse, I thank you for the honour and the joy to represent you. It has been a privilege of a lifetime. I thank my office staff, Mr. Speaker. Kelly and Kathy, you keep me organized and grounded, and that opportunity to bounce things off and have that rapport back and forth is super, super good.

My family, my wife and I's family — Michael, Mark, and Jessica. Every team in life needs a quarterback. And our oldest son, Michael, is the quarterback for our dairy farm. He sits on the village council at Caronport. He's married with a wife and three children. Chelsea, his wife, is a local school teacher. And Jordynn, Levi, and Kynleigh, wonderful kids. Jordynn, the oldest, gets her licence in a few short weeks, and she is so excited.

An Hon. Member: — Uh-oh, another farmer.

Blaine McLeod: — And she can get to the farm more often. Exactly, my friend. Yeah, exactly. Our son Mark, helping as he can on the farm and managing a busy household of four boys under the age of 12, all engaged in sports and doing their thing — Elliott, Evander, Owen, and Orson. Mark's wife, Stephanie, is a teacher and does an amazing job. Two teachers in the family, Chelsea and Stephanie.

I've got to tell a quick little story about Elliott, the oldest grandson, and how he made an impact on me, at such a young age, with this little tidbit of wisdom and knowledge that he provided. On his fourth birthday he just was dressed in the most

amazing little set of Carhartt coveralls. Came to the farm, so cute. And I said, "Elliott, you're four. I would really like to be four again. Do you think we could trade? I'll be four." I won't say what my age would have been.

Elliott looked at me and he said, "Papa, you only get four once." And that has been a driving influence for me as I considered a role in public life. You only get the chance once. One chance around.

Our daughter, Jessica, is a nurse in Saskatoon: Jim Pattison Children's Hospital, also teaching with a half-time role with Sask Poly, extending her wisdom to the LPNs [licensed practical nurse]. And her husband, Nathan, and Jessica are blessed with three children: Eleanor, Piper, and Ezra.

That rounds out our crew. Ten grandkids that we have the blessing to know that they all reside in Saskatchewan. It's a two-minute walk to one home. It's a five-minute drive to another, and a two-and-a-half hour drive to Saskatoon. But we get to hold and touch and be involved with their lives.

And you know, there's credit to be given there. And I think it's somewhat appropriate to talk about the graduate retention program right here. All of them, all of them that I mentioned accessed that program, making life more affordable when they needed it most, building their careers and their families. And that has become so, so great for them.

And it's becoming the norm for people to remain in our thriving province. And it's a remarkable contrast to several decades ago when our greatest export was our offspring. It's amazing what a change in attitude and sound government policy decisions can do to drive entrepreneurship and investment opportunities that allow for great jobs without leaving your roots behind.

A couple more thank yous. My extended family, five sisters, one brother — shouldn't say my extended family; my siblings and the wife and the husbands in that situation — they show love and support to everything that I do. And helpful, helpful criticism, and sometimes, "What are you doing?" And I like that, I appreciate that information that they bring.

And I'd be remiss not to mention my mother-in-law. Putting it on the floor right now, I have the best mother-in-law in the world, absolutely. And I know she's watching as I speak. So thanks, Peg, love you.

And I left my wife, not last. But I do want to say this to my wife. And I know she would be watching, but she's on her way to pick up one of our grandsons to go to sports. But a constant support, encouragement, staying by my side, and holding my hand. Just like the picture that sits under our TV. "When you watch this speech, this line: there will always be room for your hand in mine." Love you, hon. Wouldn't want to do this without you.

So Protecting Saskatchewan, that's the theme of our budget. And I'm so very proud of what we have brought forward as a budget for our great province. I was pleased to see the member from Regina Mount Royal talk about the upheaval in the world that exists — as he started his response — upheaval that we can only imagine. The ongoing brutal war in Ukraine, an unimaginable horror that has cost the lives of so many innocent people; tariffs

that have been placed on our exports; war in the Middle East that is rapidly expanding — all of this uncertainty has brought significant financial challenges for every government in Canada and indeed the world.

And yet with the backdrop of all this uncertainty, we have delivered on all our campaign promises regarding affordability. An election fought and won on who best to guide the fortunes of our province and deliver affordability.

So as Saskatchewan's Finance minister, the member from Rosetown-Delisle rose to bring remarks regarding the global economic and geopolitical turmoil and the effect on our provincial finances, he said the following: "... we had a choice: raise taxes, cut services, or protect Saskatchewan. We chose to protect Saskatchewan."

Then came a very lengthy list of how we would protect our people, with the top two concerns being affordability and access to health care. We have kept our promise and have lowered taxes. We are making significant investment in our patient-first health care plan. And the reason we can do that is because we have a strong and growing economy. We have diversified our trade markets by expanding our trade offices, not closing them. I recall that was a campaign promise of the other side.

Mr. Speaker, we currently have 60 large-scale projects in planning or under way in our province worth north of 60 billion. The list of investors is lengthy, and the value added to our economy allows us to fulfill our affordability promises, not to renege on them like we have seen in other NDP-governed provinces recently.

And we have done this and kept our budgetary deficit the lowest per capita amongst all provinces: \$646 per capita. It's a deficit still, but it's the lowest in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we don't need to take my word. Look at the credit rating scores that we have. Best in Canada. And no, we are not happy with the deficit, but we recognize the challenge we are in. And we will work to return to balance in the not-too-distant future, all the while protecting Saskatchewan people.

Now, Mr. Speaker, after hearing all about our plan to continue to deliver the most affordable place to live in Canada and how we will ensure our residents have affordability in their daily lives, the response from the member from Regina Mount Royal was, "... this budget does none of that." None of that. That being bringing affordability to our population.

And the member from Regina South Albert reaffirmed that today as well — this budget does nothing for health care and affordability. Honestly I really couldn't believe my ears, so I had to go back to *Hansard* and read it again. Yes, there it was: "... this budget does none of that."

So maybe it wasn't heard the first time, and I'd like to again put on the record what we have delivered on affordability. We'll start with provincial income tax and the basic personal exemptions. In 2026 a family of four will pay no provincial income tax on the first \$65,000 of income. That's the highest tax-free threshold in Canada. Now these . . .

[Applause]

Blaine McLeod: — Yeah, absolutely.

Now these are broad-based personal income tax credits increasing this year by the promised \$500 over and above indexation. Indexation is a really important word, and we're going to speak about that a little bit later.

Number two: enhancements to the low-income tax credit, a 5 per cent lift over and above indexation. There it is again. That is quarterly payments to over 300,000 households in Saskatchewan worth nearly \$200 million this year. That's amazing.

Here's another quick list on affordability initiatives: PST rebate for new home construction, secondary suite incentive, first-time homebuyers tax credit, graduate retention program, fertility treatment tax credit. I'll give props to the member from Regina South Albert who did say that was a very good move on our part. When things are good, you should acknowledge it.

The autism spectrum disorder individualized funding. Active families benefit, which was doubled in the payment to \$300 and doubled the income eligibility. Tax savings, all put together, Mr. Speaker, of over \$2.6 billion annually. And my favourite — removal of the insane federal carbon tax from all SaskPower customers' bills. That's estimated to save the Saskatchewan taxpayers, in '26-27, \$505 million. Just think what we could have done if we would have got some help from the other side to get rid of that sooner.

Just an example. Prairie South School Division, here's the impact for them with the loss of that insane tax: close to \$400,000 reduction in expenses annually. It's amazing.

Now indexation, I've talked about it before. Simply put, it protects taxpayers from inflationary bracket creep and preserves the real value of the credit. Now both BC and Manitoba, NDP governments, have paused indexing personal income tax brackets and non-refundable tax credits. What does that mean? Well in '26-27, that'll cost the taxpayers in BC an additional 60 million, rising to 590 million by '28-29. And in Manitoba, suspended, and it's projected to bring in 82 million in the first year on the backs of the taxpayers.

[15:45]

Contrast that to Saskatchewan where indexation for 2026 will save Saskatchewan residents \$42 million this year. Nothing for affordability, is what was said on the other side.

So, Mr. Speaker, despite the unserious claim from members opposite that we have done nothing for affordability, I am sure that the residents of Saskatchewan can see through the unserious claims and recognize a responsible approach to governing this province — an approach that values every person in the province and seeks to meet the needs of a growing population.

I want also to talk regarding health care and our patients-first health care plan — right care, right place, right time. There are some wonderful initiatives that have already started and will continue to move forward with enhancements. Things like an enhanced scope of practice that will allow all regulated health

professionals to work to their full potential. Nurse practitioners have been given a green light to set up across Saskatchewan. There will be no limit to the number of nurse practitioners that can enter into primary care contracts. That's amazing.

There's been great feedback from the increase in providing primary care by nurse practitioners. Take the community of Central Butte, for example. They saw an additional practitioner join their integrated facility in this last year, providing primary care in Central Butte while living and raising a family and contributing to rural farm life. Financial incentive aside, it's a win-win for everyone.

Also in Central Butte, our personal care home benefit, which covers the gap between a resident's income and a \$35-per-month threshold, that ensures that residents can afford the care in a personal care home. It has allowed the community-owned care home, known as Iver Main, to fully utilize all their space and then, as in the process, to offer more full-time employment in the process.

Mr. Speaker, these are initiatives that have come from outside-of-the-box thinking that Saskatchewan people are so known for. We are a province of resilient entrepreneurs that have built what remains an attractive and affordable place to live.

Now this was brought home to me in an incredible way just recently. Actually just less than a week ago. My sister and brother-in-law and my wife and I are the primary caregivers for my aunt and uncle, who are both in their 90s and reside in a personal care home. Recently there was a new nurse join the staff of their home. As I engaged in discussions around the care for my aunt and uncle, she shared with me her journey to Saskatchewan. I was so impressed, so impressed, that I asked for permission to share her story. And she willingly agreed.

I have to set it up just a little bit before I start the story. Not long ago the city of Moose Jaw developed several promotional videos entitled "Get a Life" — a life that is simpler with more time away because everything you need is only five minutes away. Get a life with a lower cost of living. Get a life where you have space to grow and raise a family. Get a life where you can buy a house for less. Get a life with a community focus. And the list goes on. And on a side note, our own MLA from Moose Jaw Wakamow is featured in those videos.

She did that exact thing — moved to Moose Jaw so that they could get a life. Now here is Daina's story of how she came to live and work in Saskatchewan. These are her words in its entirety:

My name is Daina Moore and I am sincerely enjoying life in Moose Jaw and always thrilled to share my story with the good local citizens of Moose Jaw. How amazing.

In late 2024 I had two jobs just to get by and was working in the emergency departments both at Nanaimo Hospital and Abbotsford Hospital in BC.

I was trying very hard to make Vancouver Island a home base and a possible retirement reality for myself, but it is very expensive. I then thought about Alberta since many of my friends and colleagues seem to be flocking there. I

wanted to avoid high prices and the congested city feel, so I started to research what it might be like to live and work in Saskatchewan. I thought it would be smarter to try the next province over from Alberta.

Hmm. My own comment — good wisdom there.

At the same time, my brother received renoviction notice from the high-rise apartment he was residing in in New Westminster, BC. He had been a tenant for 17 years and was shocked to learn that his rent would now increase from 1,000 a month to almost 2,200 or more for a one-bedroom, one-bath apartment. The thought of home ownership being out of reach despite being skilled professionals was very disheartening.

Family friends from Surrey, BC, moved to Herbert approximately five years ago and have thrived in Saskatchewan, and they even run the MCC Thrift store in Herbert. Every adult member of their small family was able to purchase a home in Herbert and find employment. This was inspiring for us.

My brother and I decided to have coffee together one afternoon in the fall of 2024 in my rental home in BC. While enjoying our coffee in the warm autumn sunshine, we sat in my living room and started to play any YouTube videos we could find made by locals living in Saskatchewan. My brother researched population and crime statistics of each town or city as we came across whatever YouTube videos we could find for each one.

There were some videos posted about Swift Current and Prince Albert. I remember a friend had mentioned mineral pools in Moose Jaw almost 20 years ago. We looked at the map. Moose Jaw is close to Herbert. I said to my brother, let's search for videos on Moose Jaw.

The first video we came across was a person with a dashcam recording from his vehicle as he drove the streets of Moose Jaw. The video showed him driving downtown with all the brick buildings and murals visible. Then the person drove through the residential areas, including Sunningdale. It looked doable. The city looked like it was easy to navigate, calm, safe, and quiet. We saw all the stores and restaurants we were familiar with from BC. They were also in Moose Jaw.

Then we came across another YouTube video. This one was made by the city of Moose Jaw, called "Get A Life in Moose Jaw." This video was our game changer. When the mayor and the locals spoke about the quality of life, the affordability, and the friendly community in Moose Jaw, we decided with certainty that we were going to try to make a life in this city. This was going to be the one.

In the days that followed that YouTube research, I started to apply and heard back from potential employers in Moose Jaw, such as the Saskatchewan Health Authority. I booked a flight for us to have a scouting trip of the city. That one-week trip took place at the end of January 2025.

There was a storm that week. We saw first-hand how life

did not stop in Moose Jaw despite the storm, and we went to Bobby's Place and the Deja Vu Cafe often for warm meals after each day of scouting the city as tourists . . .

Good choices, good choices.

. . . tourists that wanted to be future citizens. We loved how the taxi drivers explained how to get around town, how safe Moose Jaw is, and made some recommendations for us. In March of 2025 when I came back to start my new job in Moose Jaw, the same cab drivers remembered me. What a nice feeling.

My brother, who also moved to Moose Jaw at the same time as I, is about to graduate from the health care cook program at Sask Polytech in June this year. He hopes to work at one of the care homes or the hospital as a lead cook for the residents.

I have recently started a very exciting role at West Park Crossing, [which is where our paths crossed] which is only footsteps from my new apartment. I should also mention that Moose Jaw is a pet-friendly city which is important to me.

And it was seamless to have my car pass the provincial inspection through one of the car repair places here. It was easy to convert my driver's licence and to apply for a medical card. And I was able to get my Saskatchewan nursing licence in two days. All so amazing.

I have also already connected with the ministry of children and families and have been able to start the long process of fostering or child adoption which has been a lifelong dream of mine, as well as being warmly welcomed as the newest member of the Moose Jaw optimist club.

I have more free time now in Moose Jaw to achieve these dreams for all the reasons that were highlighted in this video. I don't need to get a life now; I have the life.

Now that's an inspiring story of one person's journey to our amazing, beautiful province. Daina is where she can thrive and live out her dreams in an affordable fashion. And she has also answered the call to employment in health care. So despite the doom and gloom and "nothing to see here" attitude from members opposite, myself and all of my fellow members are very bullish about our future. Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we will continue to encourage our young people to move into health care roles and we know their future will be bright.

Now, Mr. Speaker, my concluding comments are not directly connected to the budget, but I want to talk about how fortunate we are to live and work in a free and democratic country. We see the evil that exists all across the globe — wars and geopolitical conflicts that are unprecedented in their size and scope, unprecedented since World War II. Mr. Speaker, it is the blood of those who fought for our freedom that allows us to enjoy the democracy under which we were founded and continue to thrive.

Mr. Speaker, it is my contention that that is under attack. I'm talking about an attack on our values, the values that say every member has a voice to be heard in debate and policy decisions.

That's critical to what we do. But an attack that called four members to be named and hated for the purpose of raising money. Members who have served this province faithfully, who have raised and are raising children and grandchildren. And why are they to be hated? The only answer that I can think of is that their political views don't align with the writer's own views.

Mr. Speaker, we're stronger if ideas and values and opinions are debated in this legislature, but hate has no place. Mr. Speaker, the opposition chief of staff and recently appointed campaign chair was the author of that hateful message of hate. Hate for any named individual has no place in public discourse. That type of cancer needs to be rooted out and replaced with common decency.

What we've seen so far in response from members opposite is that concern, frustration, and fear from people right now who really are struggling somehow excuses the language of hate. So the conclusion that I've come to, from what I've heard, is that hate is okay. The silence around not getting rid of that cancer is a deafening approval of the policy of hate. It's not okay, Mr. Speaker, and I pray that everyone in this House recognize that and decency, respect, and good order returns.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the motion moved by the Minister of Finance and seconded by the member from Carrot River Valley, and I will not be supporting the amendment.

May words that are prayed over us daily right here in this House resonate with us all: "In all our works be done, continued, and ended in thee, may we glorify thy holy name. Amen." May it be so.

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

Erika Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be on my . . . well somewhat of a pleasure. It's also challenging at times to be on my feet listening to the words coming from the other side. And yeah, I think I come in here with a pretty heavy heart today.

I spent the weekend doing the work of government-side members, responding to an emergency in the constituency of Wood River, a constituency that has a cabinet minister who has been missing in action, has been missing in action, has not reached out to the individuals who are directly impacted by a spill incident in their community.

[16:00]

And so when I get up here to speak on this budget and I have to listen to, you know, the words coming from the other side about an issue that is outside of this legislature and one where I think it's pretty safe to say, Mr. Speaker, that it is a two-way street. And you know, members on this side have also been the target of a lot of hate and a lot of accusations and misrepresentations, you know, words taken out of context.

And I know that you've been doing your very best to bring better and greater civility into this Assembly, and I applaud you for that. Because you know, at the end of the day it's the people of Saskatchewan that we are here to serve. And at a time like this

when so many people are struggling, we need to all be doing our level best and showing up with dignity and honour and respect and speaking truthfully to the issues that are before us. And I want to commit to you here, Mr. Speaker, that that is what I pledge and have pledged when I took my oath of office to serve the people of my constituency.

And you know, it's really heartbreaking when I witness on the street, when I'm canvassing, when I'm door knocking in communities right across this province and I see and witness the struggles that folks are experiencing on the daily.

Last week I was up in Prince Albert with the good member from Cumberland, and you know, you can see it. Like people are really having a hard time making ends meet. And you know, they're worried about the level of crime in their community. You know, it was almost a constant blare of sirens going off in the background when we were in the community Thursday evening.

And I knocked on this one door and spoke to this woman. And she said, you know, "we just had a stabbing on our street," that they had the roads closed. You know, things are terrible. People are really, you know, witnessing and experiencing first-hand the struggles and the social crisis that so many in our communities are facing.

And so when we look at this budget, a bad-news budget that is not even coming close to addressing the needs that are in our communities right across this province, you know, I want to make sure that I am doing my level best. And I know that members on this side of the House, we are going to do our level best to make sure that we demand better, better than a budget that does not provide any cost-of-living relief to, you know, people who are living on the margins in their communities.

We've been calling for removal of tax off of groceries and children's clothing. We've called for the gas tax to be taken off temporarily from fuel. You know, we're on record opposed to the utility rate increases, car insurance increases. You know, these are the things, these are the pocketbook issues that mean the difference between people being able to pay their rent, buy their groceries, and avoid eviction.

As you may know and recall, Minister Speaker, I was recently appointed the shadow minister for Social Services. And I can tell you it's been quite a humbling experience as I start to receive more and more casework into my office on, you know, the desperation that people are experiencing, which points to a ministry literally in crisis, literally in crisis. People not getting paid, you know, new policy decisions about their supplements to their SIS and SAID payments. Like real desperation. And I'll have more to say on that, I'm sure, as we continue to dive into the budget, look at the impacts of the order in council that came out in January.

Because what I fear and what we're seeing so far basically is a government that is balancing the books on the most vulnerable people in our province, and that's just not right. I don't think we're doing right by those people. And when we talk about, you know, how we behave and how we choose our words here in the Assembly and our actions, for me that is really at the heart of what we're dealing with here, is ensuring that our most vulnerable in society have dignity and the resources to be able to

provide for their families.

And we don't see that in this budget. We see a budget of, you know, a debt payment of \$1.2 billion a year, money that could be so much better spent delivering on the services that people need here in the province and ensuring that we have a health care system that is meeting the needs of our families.

So often we hear about long wait times to access services and, you know, the lack of health care workers in critical positions in order for our programs to be able to run at full capacity. And so that has an impact. It has had an impact on me and my family directly. You know, I have a family member who is in desperate need right now of health services and can't get them because there is no doctor available to meet that need.

And we hear these stories in our offices every day about people who go, you know, without access to health care, access to a general practitioner, primary care. And those are the stories I hear on the doorstep. You know, we know the stats. We know that we have the, worst rates in the country for general practitioners and primary care. We know we have the worst rates for surgical wait times, longest waits for, you know, emergency room access, people languishing in the hallways.

And even our member from Regina Rochdale, her mother experienced an incident recently where she had a stroke and had to spend days in the hospital before she could receive, you know, a room and be treated. And these stories are so prevalent.

It speaks to the fact that . . . you know, a tiny 0.3 per cent funding bump for health care based on last year's funding. Government wants to compare that to what was budgeted last year even though we know it was inadequate, but what was actually spent, and that is only 0.3 per cent. That is an amount that isn't even keeping up with the rate of inflation. And so there is no relief in sight. The crisis will continue.

And you know, the government says that they've come out with a new plan, and well basically they dusted the cover off their old plan from 2009 and tried to repurpose that. And so we haven't seen any real innovation or forward-looking plan in place here to address our crumbling health care system.

Needs continue to go unmet and we're all experiencing it first-hand. I mean you can't tell somebody living in Maple Creek and Swift Current, you know, that they've got access to health care when, you know, they're experiencing in real time that lack of access. And that's what I hear about from constituents right across this province: Moe will flatline our health care system, and we don't see a plan to improve that.

And I apologize. I should have referred to the Premier . . . You didn't catch that maybe, but my mistake, and I apologize. Yeah, I'll try to do better. I'll try. Yeah, I'll try to do better.

But moving right along. I mentioned community safety a little earlier, and we see a plan to . . . You know, the debt-servicing cost — 1.2 billion — that is more than three times what is being spent on policing. Like it's crazy that, you know, there is so much need. And you know, we have a budget that supposedly is about protecting communities, and yet there is inadequate funding for it.

And you know, protection comes in many forms. Protecting waterways is also important. And as I've already mentioned, you know, we had an incident over the weekend where . . . threats to a local water supply that's relied upon for drinking water, and a lack of response. So when that's happening and we're not responding in a timely fashion, people are at risk. Their protection is threatened. And we continue to see this in so many ways.

You know, one thing that was a strong motivating factor for me entering politics was my children and wanting to make sure that we were provisioning a good future for them, a future where there was opportunity for them to stay in this province.

And I'm so proud and happy to announce that my eldest daughter and her boyfriend have announced their engagement. And yeah, so yeah, really, really excited about that. They're going to get married a year from now. And they both live in Saskatoon Nutana. Really great to have them in the constituency. They're hard-working professionals giving back to their community. And you know, I want to see them continue to build their life here in Saskatchewan. And yeah, I really look forward to that. And maybe next time I get up I'll have another announcement, you know, to follow on that. We'll see. One can only hope.

And so when I look at this budget, you know, I want to make sure and I want to see that we have adequate funding for education, that we have funding to ensure adequate class sizes and supports in the classroom, that we're investing in that infrastructure.

You know, we heard the Premier today try to change the channel on the capital spending decisions that he's made to put a school in his own constituency of Shellbrook. And yeah, it was really disappointing. I mean we know that every school is, you know, in need — and Shellbrook probably no more than anywhere else — but there is a priority list. And when you see the Premier's school jumping to the front of the list like that, you have to wonder. You have to wonder whose interests are we looking out for here.

[16:15]

So Scott Moe, or whoopsie-daisy, the Premier . . . Sorry, I really didn't mean that. The Premier has doubled the debt to 43 billion. That's more debt than former premier Devine. And as I said, you know, we're paying \$1.2 billion to Bay Street bankers to service that debt, and ultimately that's stealing our children's future. Less money to fund education. Less money for, you know, funding health care, ensuring that the generation that came before us, that worked so hard to build this province and now are looking to have a health care system to rely on in their old age, that is crumbling before their eyes.

And I, like you, have older parents in that age category when they need those services there. And you know, there's been a lot of misery and suffering needlessly because of that lack of services in health care that's available for them.

I touched a little bit on social services and how honoured I am to be shadow minister for Social Services, the concerns I have for people who are most vulnerable, who rely on the income supplements and payments from our SIS and SAID program. And you know, it concerns me a lot to see the chaos within that

field.

I don't recall if I spoke about this before, but I had the great privilege to participate in the Sanctum Care 36-Hour Challenge back in the fall, which was a really eye-opening experience and one that I encourage members on both sides of the aisle here to avail themselves of to understand the challenges that people face when they are unhoused, and the fragmentation of the services that are provided. It really is a confusing maze and one where so many people fall through the cracks.

And you know, participating in the program was a wonderful opportunity for me personally to be able to witness first-hand and understand and see first-hand what those challenges are. And I take that experience with me as I go forward in this role and advocate for better, to serve those with the most need in our community. And I'm honoured to have that responsibility and will look forward to continuing to do that good work and meet with and engage with the service providers on the front lines who are trying to provide that need.

The last thing I want to touch on is my work on the municipal affairs and government relations file. That's one that I've spent quite a bit of time on. And you know, we heard from municipal leaders their disappointment in this budget, the lack of adequate funding set aside for the infrastructure deficit that they're facing in their communities, a lot of uncertainty about where funding is going to come from moving forward, and you know, the fact that they're having to make a lot of really hard choices right now in terms of providing services to their residents.

I saw it first-hand in the budget deliberations in the city of Saskatoon back before Christmas, you know. And it resulted in things like service hours being cut. But there was a lot of discussion about provincial downloading during those budget deliberations. And you know, interesting point is that those budget deliberations were happening transparently, publicly. People were able to observe and listen to the councillors as they asked the questions of the officials.

And fun fact: there is nothing preventing treasury board and this government for being as transparent. I mean customarily that's not how it works, but there's absolutely nothing standing in the way of greater transparency around budgetary deliberations, treasury deliberations, so that residents and the people of Saskatchewan can, you know, see with their own eyes the conversations and discussions that are happening. And I think that would do us all a great service to see more transparency in that way.

And I would be remiss if I failed to mention the need for better funding. And the municipalities been calling for a new funding model to address the shortcoming in funding that's available. And I was disappointed that in the municipal Act and the municipal Acts currently undergoing amendment, that there was nothing to address these funding shortfalls in the legislation.

I know that municipal leaders have been advocating very strongly, both provincially and federally, for improvements and greater funding access. And I will continue to do that work to support them in those calls. We have a SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] convention coming up in a couple weeks which I will be happy to attend and engage with

municipal leaders there. But sadly we don't see any additional funding for municipal governments in this budget.

This is a budget that has missed the mark. It is a bad-news budget that doesn't deliver on the needs and priorities of the people of Saskatchewan. And with that, I do not support the budget and I will support the amendment moved by the member from Mount Royal and adjourn debate. Thank you.

Deputy Speaker B. McLeod: — It was just pointed out to me that you adjourned debate, and I didn't quite hear that last part of what you said. Yeah, do you want to withdraw that statement?

Erika Ritchie: — Oh, my apologies. I misspoke. I withdraw that statement. Thank you.

Deputy Speaker B. McLeod: — Thank you. And thank you to the Clerks for pointing that out to me. I recognize the member from Martensville-Blairmore.

Hon. Jamie Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to say, it's a great day in Saskatchewan. I stand before this province not just to speak but to listen to the hopes, the struggles, and the dreams. This is my second budget response. What a true blessing it is to be representing the people of Martensville-Blairmore.

History does not remember those who waited. It remembers those who stepped forward. And today we stand at a moment that calls for courage, determination, and values. Like many of you, I've felt the challenges of the past but I've also seen something remarkable in our neighbours, in our communities, and in each other — a willingness to learn from those before us and keep going. We are building a future together.

In times of uncertainty, people look for steady ground, something to hold on to, and our government is that steady ground. In this budget, Mr. Speaker, we see so many decisions were made to protect Saskatchewan and not tear it down.

If education is the foundation of our future, then today we're not just laying bricks; we're reinforcing the entire structure. In the 2026-27 budget the Ministry of Education rises to 3.6 billion. Now a 2 per cent increase might not sound flashy, but in education, steady investment beats flashy promises every time. Let's start where it matters most, and that's in our classrooms. This year Saskatchewan's 27 school divisions will receive 2.5 billion in operating funding, an increase of 62.2 million. And no, that's not just numbers on a page; that's real impact.

Nearly 29 million to support the people who make education possible — our teachers and staff. Over 16 million to expand specialized support classrooms, because one-size-fits-all doesn't always work in education. Funding to keep up with inflation, because chalkboards may be old school but costs certainly aren't. And support for growing enrolment, because more students means more opportunity and, yes, occasionally more noise in the hallways.

But now let's talk about the buildings where all this learning happens. We're investing 123.8 million in school capital. And that's including new schools in growing communities like Martensville and Warman and Shellbrook and major renovations in Esterhazy.

Across Saskatoon and Regina and throughout the province, new schools are rising, older ones are being renewed, and communities are seeing projects take shape. From Brighton to Harbour Landing, this is what progress looks like: cranes in the sky and hope on the ground. And we're not just building new; we're taking care of what we already have. So much good news, and to think this is all in a one-year budget. We're fixing roofs, operating heating systems, and making sure schools stay safe, warm, and ready for learning.

But education doesn't start at kindergarten and it doesn't succeed without support at home. That's why we're investing 425.5 million in early years and child care, including continued \$10-a-day daycare, a program that's helping families breathe a little easier and participate more fully in our economy. And now we're extending that support to include children who turn six during that school year. That was because of this Education minister and his team, Mr. Speaker.

With funding for libraries and literacy programs, we're supporting not just books on shelves but doors being opened. After all, every great success story always starts the same way, with someone learning to read it. And in the end, this budget isn't just about dollars. It's about students finding their path, teachers shaping the future, and communities growing stronger one classroom at a time. Because when we invest in education, we're not just preparing for tomorrow; we're building it, Mr. Speaker.

Shawn Davidson from the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, president, said:

The consolidation of two schools into one in Shellbrook has been on the Ministry of Education's top 10 list, and all of the major capital projects which were announced today were on the Ministry of Education's top 10 list a year ago.

Now moving on to something different, Mr. Speaker. I was listening to our number one talk radio station, 650 CKOM, the other day. And on The Evan Bray Show was a special call-in series about the 2026 budget and what grade callers would give it. As I listened to concerns and compliments, I thought to myself, what grade would I give it?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to consider myself as an optimist, and I also like to consider myself as someone who always sees the value of hard work. When I take a good look into the hard work, countless hours, and the dedication it takes to get the job done, why would I ever consider criticizing it? I can appreciate how difficult it was for all of us to decide what we can and cannot have within this budget. That is why, with all the hard work put into this budget, I give it an A-plus.

[16:30]

As I tell my children, you may not be able to win today, but there's always tomorrow. If you work hard enough and have patience, it will happen. I believe in this wholeheartedly, Mr. Speaker. The budget comes once a year, and that means every year we have another chance. I am thrilled and proud to tell anyone how hard our team has been working and how hard they have worked to make every year a success. To some this may not be enough, and to some this is way more than they could have ever imagined.

Mr. Speaker, we live in a time where it is easy to be cynical. It is easy to question, to doubt, to tear things down. But today I want to speak about something far more powerful, something that requires not less effort but more — respect. Respect for our institutions, the schools that shape young minds, the systems that uphold fairness, the organizations built not overnight but over generations.

These institutions are not perfect. Nothing built by human hands ever is. But they are worth strengthening, not dismissing. Worth improving, not abandoning. Because when we respect institutions, we are respecting the people behind them: the teachers, the workers, the leaders, the communities who believe in something bigger than themselves.

And alongside respect there is something just as important, and that's optimism. Being a positive, optimistic person is not naive. It is not blind to challenges, and in fact it's the opposite. It is the courage to believe that things can improve and have the determination to help make that happen. Our team is making that happen, Mr. Speaker.

That is why I am very optimistic and thankful for all the front-line workers here in our province. As you know, I carried a side arm for 18 years, and the stories I could tell. But the strength it takes and the courage to admit when you need help, well we see more and more investment into mental health. We see the Minister for Mental Health lead with her heart and has come to some incredible outcomes in regards to supports.

We see our Minister for Community Safety recognizing the challenges of a growing population, and funding more boots on the ground so officers have the support and means necessary to keep our community safe.

Our Minister for the Status of Women has worked diligently in bringing together initiatives to keep women safe here in Saskatchewan. She has worked with many partners that have the vision of helping women in our province become educated and aware of situations they may unfortunately be placed in. Having these resources will become beneficial when they can be accessed by all women across the province and we can put an end to this nonsensical violence.

Mr. Speaker, let's take a look about how the Minister of Justice just came through for all of Saskatchewan with a huge mike drop, saving the Saskatchewan people's rights to keep their firearms.

And Saskatchewan is investing big to make health care even better for everyone, putting patients first. The Health minister has worked more hours than he can count. Lots of decisions to be made and lots of patients to help. He has gone over and above with this new patients-first plan. I am sure he is thankful for the Rural and Remote Health minister as they supply this plan to the rest of the province.

And remember, Mr. Speaker, patients first, which means bigger, better hospitals — 238 million to expand Prince Albert's Victoria Hospital, more long-term care spaces, 100 million for specialized care beds in Regina, 24 million for a new facility in Grenfell, 22 million for long-term care in La Ronge, 2 million to add more spaces in Regina.

New builds and upgrades: 8.3 million to start a patient lodge in Saskatoon, 5.3 million to finish Saskatoon's urgent care centre.

Mental health and addictions support: 3.2 million for a youth detox centre or unit in the Calder Centre, 6 million to expand complex needs facilities into Prince Albert and North Battleford.

We also have specialized care: \$2.3 million for a new multiple sclerosis clinic in Regina. Planning for the future: 1.8 million to plan more long-term care projects across the province. And what this all means: more care closer to home, shorter waits, better support when you need it the most.

Now I can go on and on about every minister and how much incredible ideas and solutions that they put forward during this budget, but frankly I would probably run out the clock. So I will touch on a few more points because they are so good and cannot be left out.

Let's go with municipal revenue sharing. Since the minister took his seat, municipalities have received 8 per cent more on their share. That means that Dalmeny is now looking to receive 580,477 for its year's share. Since the Sask Party took office in 2007, Dalmeny's share went from 161,904 to 580,477. And even better than that, Martensville, my hometown, will receive 2,845,146. That is 461.6 per cent more since 2007.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is an absolute incredible program — no-strings-attached provincial funding straight to municipalities. No other province has anything like it. And, Mr. Speaker, we are definitely envied across this country.

Mr. Speaker, as I rose to my feet in this Chamber today, I would also like to acknowledge everyone that I'm thankful for. All the staff at the legislature that keeps this place going — the security officers, the Clerks, the Pages, the maintenance staff, the cafeteria staff, ministry staff, protocol.

A shout-out to Emily for always keeping this Provincial Secretary on track, the staff at TED [Trade and Export Development] for giving me insight into the trade and export realm and taking a picture or two when I'm with ambassadors, and all the elected that I can call friends. My incredible CA, Lisa, for always allowing me to vent and then hitting me hard with debate. She keeps me on my toes.

My son Anthony checks in on his mom while he's working on the rigs, saving money for his first home as well as building his own 1980 Ford half-ton. This boy never ceases to amaze me.

My oldest daughter, Katarina, is living the dream as a new homeowner as she accepts and learns the challenges that come with it, like hosting get-togethers and having to clean a whole day after. She is my cheerleader and I am so proud of her. She is smart, kind, and applies herself daily.

Arianna, she is my youngest. She is the exact version of myself. And believe it or not, Mr. Speaker, I was a shy kid in school. A lot of people don't believe that, but my mom used to say that she wished I had an off switch when I got home. I got my money's worth with this one. She has me on my toes and is taking a liking to politics, of all things, maybe too much of a liking. And she will call me and ask me if I've been watching the election and keeps

up with world news, not to mention checking on updates on world conflict, watching me on the legislature channel and making fun of me. And I know she's watching at this very moment. Her teacher, mentioning in class that I may be friends with the Premier, had everyone questioning what I do for a living. And I'm not sure how she describes what I do, but it'd be interesting to know.

To my late mother and father, Dave and Helen Martens — and I'm assuming that's probably the first time that their names have been said in this Chamber and will go down in history — for giving me the values and the strength to go forward in a role such as this.

And, Mr. Speaker, a little story about that. As the boundary changes were coming about, I was in Ottawa with Federation of Canadian Municipalities. And I had gotten a phone call asking if I would ever consider running for provincial politics. Being the person that I am, I'm not usually that emotional, but I called my mom and was extremely emotional. I was so happy thinking that I can't believe that someone would have confidence in me to place me in such an incredible seat and to represent the people of Saskatchewan.

As I came home to tell my mom that I had come to this very Chamber and sat in the Speaker's gallery and I was introduced to the Premier that day, from then on, I believed my mom knew that I was going to be okay as her baby because she had passed away three weeks later.

I'd also like to thank the love of my life, Udi. I thank him for holding down the fort when I am gone and not home, being the parent that attends the sports and drama plays when I am at an event, for taking the youngest out for driving practice. His support and patience mean the world to me. And I also want to take a minute to recognize his family back in Israel: Rachel, Chaim, Rotem, Nama, Sean, Ben, and Omri. The strength of these people goes above and beyond, and I pray for them daily as they live through sirens and countless hours in their shelter.

We are truly fortunate and blessed to call Canada home. In a world where many struggle for safety, stability, and opportunity, we live in a country that values freedoms, diversity, and respect for one another. We benefit from strong institutions, access to education, to health care, and the ability to speak, live, and dream openly.

But being blessed to live here is not just about what we receive. It is about what we contribute. It's about showing kindness to our neighbours, respecting our differences, and working together to make our communities even stronger. Living in Canada is a privilege, and with that privilege comes responsibility to care, to participate, and to ensure that the opportunities we enjoy today remain strong for generations to come.

And, Mr. Speaker, I will leave you and this Chamber with one thought. Not only this week but many weeks, as a public figure we are criticized, disagreed with, and disrespected. But disrespectful and harmful language doesn't just affect one person. It undermines trust, damages morale, and weakens the entire environment we all share. We can disagree, we can challenge ideas, but we must do so with professionalism and basic human decency.

[16:45]

Everyone deserves to feel safe and respected in the workplace. That is not an option; it's a standard. And moving forward, I hope for better. Not perfection, but accountability. Not silence, but respectful communication. Because the way we treat each other often reflects only on ourselves. But it also reflects on all of us. And I quote, Mr. Speaker: "Try not to become a person of success, but rather try to become a person of value." And that was Albert Einstein.

And with that, I will be supporting this budget moved by our Finance minister and seconded by the MLA for Carrot River. And I will not be supporting the amendment put forward by the opposition. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Speaker B. McLeod: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Stonebridge.

Darcy Warrington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And thanks to my colleagues for their continued encouragement. It's easier to stand here knowing I'm surrounded by incredibly talented, skilled, and hard-working folks from across Saskatoon, Regina, and the North. And I know at the rate we're going we'll expand that geographical representation in 2028.

I look forward to the addresses of my colleagues on both sides as well, because of in particular, the personal nature that many of the comments provided share about our friends, our families, our supporters, who all share the vision for a better Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Before I add on to the record specific remarks about the budget, I wish to take some time to make some of those personal comments and thank yous to those in my life who allow me to do my best work on behalf of the people of Saskatoon Stonebridge.

First I would like to thank Levi Nilson, who staffs the office on Taylor Street East with Sebastian and Sarah of the Eastview and Southeast offices. Levi and all of our staff could not be more dedicated a team of people for Saskatchewan. Each and every day they show commitment to a better Saskatchewan through listening to those who share their trials and tribulations, navigating cost-of-living pressures, health care concerns, and education shortfalls that families are experiencing in this province. They are most definitely underpaid for the service they provide to the people of Saskatoon and Saskatchewan, but I will always try my best to share my endless gratitude to them as often as possible.

Words of praise and thank yous are the recognition for today, Levi, but the results of a better life for the people in this province will be the ultimate reward soon enough. And I know Levi and all of our staff on Taylor Street can see the light at the end of the tunnel, as all of us do on this side. Levi, we need to set aside more time to watch some hockey and football next year. No politics. We did watch one football game without talking shop last winter, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so I know it can be done.

To my wife, Christina. She also has the patience to recognize what all these nights away from Saskatoon are for. All of the bedtimes, dinnertimes, and playtimes that I end up absent for

with our family. She's very much an introvert and appreciates I've found a way to not drag her to many receptions or events, but she certainly encourages me to attend everything I can in order to connect with the people of not only Saskatoon Stonebridge but from across this great province.

Solo parenting — or lead parenting, as we call it — is not easy. There's no time to come up for air when you're sick, tired, or just mentally out of gas. She shares so much of her positive energy with her students in band and music Monday to Friday; yet she admirably finds a way to continue to give 110 per cent, like the hockey players say, when the bell rings at 3:30 p.m. and our son Miles becomes her focus again. All on the floor of this Chamber know how much our spouses give to allow us to serve the people of our constituencies, and after a year and five months or so, I still might not find the words to articulate how grateful I am for the sacrifices she makes and will continue to make. I love you, Christina.

To Miles, my seven-year-old son, I try to be the best dad I can for you. But it's not enough; you deserve better. After a recent three-night stint away on one of my routine FaceTimes where he reads a book to me at 7:25, he said with tears in his eyes, "Dad, I wish you didn't have a job." It was gut-wrenching — a shot of honesty from my son that changed my perspective further, as it should. That sort of comment would never have been made while I was teaching, in my opinion. And I have so much empathy for families who juggle significant time away from their loved ones.

I need to try harder to balance work and family. I love the people of Stonebridge and this province, but that little boy reminded me more needed to be done to employ what we all should when it comes to work-life balance, Mr. Speaker — family first. He's getting better with the additional absences of his dad, and it helps with his age that he is recognizing more and more that his dad is trying to help others. He's trying to make life better for everyone.

And to those in this Chamber with five-year-olds, six-year-olds, seven-year-olds — tricky ages for kids in political families regardless of political colours — we know that helping others is where the sacrifice comes from, but we all need to find the ability to give it that 110 per cent when we are with family. The occasional reminder from a teary-eyed son or daughter will do that to you.

Miles, I'm so proud of your reading, your musicianship, your artistry, and your care and respect for others. Soon it will be baseball season. Tae kwon do will continue. Campfires and golf cart rides at Jackfish Lake are coming soon. And I can't wait to be fully in those moments with you daily. Miles, you're the funniest, most talented and energetic boy a dad could have. Miles, I love you infinity times googol plus two.

All right. Now speaking about infinity times googol plus two, Mr. Speaker, it's time for me to focus on this year's deficit. The tabled budget I'm referring to is titled *Protecting Saskatchewan*. I know my colleagues on this side agree with me that within this budget there is an enormous lack of protection for Saskatchewan families. How can a government protect anyone when their Visa bill for their 43 billion in debt costs more to pay for annually than all ministries outside of Health and Education, Mr. Speaker?

Just take the debt servicing and compare it to the end of Calvert's

time, the end of Wall's time, and where the Premier's record is currently showing. Debt servicing for the Calvert government back in 2007 was only 3 per cent total of the budget. By 2017, it had risen more than double to 6.2 per cent of the entire Saskatchewan government budget. And this year it makes up a whopping 7.8 per cent, and it shows no signs of slowing down, Mr. Speaker.

Throughout that time debt servicing has surpassed too many government ministries' total spending, Mr. Speaker, including Advanced Education, Agriculture, and Highways, to name a few. Those ministries used to receive more money than debt financing. How can they protect people on Saskatchewan highways when they have to worry about crippling debt payments, Mr. Speaker?

And the debt servicing in 2007 also had ministries that were roughly equal to Justice and Government Relations spending. Tough to consider common-sense law-making and Justice portfolio management to protect Saskatchewan when the policing budget is three times less than this year's projected debt repayment.

My colleagues, the people of Saskatchewan, and myself unfortunately have to worry — it won't be long if this negative trend continues — that our debt servicing could surpass the operating budget for schools in our province. We've already seen debt-repayment costs double since the Premier took over eight years ago. When it happens again, following the current mismanagement trends, we unfortunately won't be surprised to see funding in our classrooms nearly eclipsed by funding bankers in Toronto.

We are in dire need of more focused spending and less waste on programs such as — and get ready, this is a long list — the Global Transportation Hub land deal, AIMS [administrative information management system], the Saskatchewan Marshals Service, contract travel nurses, rapid growth in consulting contracts, liquor retail privatization, rapid growth in taxpayer-paid CEO [chief executive officer] salaries, out-of-province donors taking on health care needs unable to be resolved in province for tenfold the cost of the services available here, etc., etc., etc.

This government has been too cavalier for too long, Mr. Speaker, and the people are starting to let them hear it. Amplifying those voices is critical while in opposition, and it's getting results.

I've had the honour of introducing in this House an incredible group of wonderful seniors in Stonebridge — Jean, Lynda, Sterling, Louise, Terri, just to name a few — who have been fighting against extremely high increases to the rent year after year. They have been with us advocating for rent control since the beginning.

I am happy to report that they recently saw little to no increase to their rent increase where they were experiencing 10 to 30 per cent annually for several years. Funny how these things coincidentally happen. When people use their voice, speak out, and ultimately shame corporations to do the right thing, they get results.

If this government was serious about tackling the affordability crisis they've plunged the people of this province into, they would support our rent control private member's bill brought

forward by the selfless and caring member from Saskatoon Westview. They could easily be supporting this bill. It costs the government nothing and gives people long-term predictability in housing costs. But they don't.

I'm running short on time, coming up to the clock.

But when it comes to increases at SGI, increases at SaskPower, increases to the cost of gas and fuel in the province, people like Deepan Dasgupta and many people in Saskatoon Stonebridge can't afford any additional costs. They need our help.

And so do people like Tammy O'Brien, who's been speaking out for what's right. Tammy was told by the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] to hold a fundraiser to cover the costs of getting brain surgery in Alberta. Tammy's an incredibly courageous advocate, and the Sask NDP caucus is proud to fight alongside her to make sure every person's right to health care is protected in this province.

And speaking of health care, let's talk about the recycled version 4.0 patients-first plan that can't be taken seriously, Mr. Speaker. There is only a 0.3 per cent increase from last year's actual spending and this year's budgeted spending in health care. They think that's sufficient to achieve their recycled goals. If anyone believes this sort of underwhelming financial support will achieve patients-first plan, I've got an under-supported urgent care centre in Regina to sell you.

I have to skip a couple of things. My apologies. Maybe I'll share it online later.

This budget fails so many people in so many ways, Mr. Speaker, even people who have just suffered unnecessarily because of this government's lack of any long-term planning. After so much was lost and so many had suffered because of the forest fires last year in the North, this government has the audacity to cut 36 million from northern highway funding, critical infrastructure for a part of this province long underserved and vulnerable to disasters like the fires we saw last year. It should be a high priority, and it's not to them. The North deserves so much better than, as the Finance minister called it, this status quo.

In closing I'll share this quote made within this Chamber by one of its members:

Taxpayers got the bill. The Visa bill came in. The Visa bill came in and it's huge, Mr. Speaker. Frankly it's worse than we could have imagined.

This member wasn't talking about an \$819 million budget deficit after seeing debt rise to over 40 billion. It wasn't a member acknowledging that since 2007 this Sask Party government had added an extra 25 billion in debt. This member was talking about a \$700 million deficit tabled back in 2007 that happened to follow an impressive spree of paying down debt by over a billion and establishing a rainy day fund. And that deficit budget was only that, Mr. Speaker, as the Sask NDP of 2007, of that year, handed over a sizable surplus. There was actually no deficit in the end.

The deficit situation then and the deficit situation now seem similar, but in context they couldn't be more different. The 15

budgets prior to that 2007 budget look a heck of a lot different than the 15 budgets preceding this one in front of us. The Sask NDP handed the Sask Party a surplus. When we form government, we will have to deal with the tens of billions of dollars of debt this government has racked up while they've been cutting the strings on the social safety net the previous NDP government set up.

And finally the big reveal, Mr. Speaker. The Visa bill quote I highlighted today was made by — drum roll, please — the member from Saskatoon Willowgrove. It was he who, when responding to the Hon. Andrew Thomson's budget based on his firm Sask Party opposition's values and beliefs, didn't support that budget in 2007 with his words and his vote. And that member should stick to his fiscal conservative values and beliefs and do the same this year.

And with that, I will not be supporting this bad-news budget by the Finance minister, and I will be supporting the amendment from the superior mathematician from Regina Rosemont. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — It now being 5 p.m., this Assembly stands recessed until 7 p.m.

[The Assembly recessed from 17:00 until 19:00.]

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Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

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Minister of Energy and Resources

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Minister of Mental Health and Addictions,
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Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
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Saskatchewan Government Insurance
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