



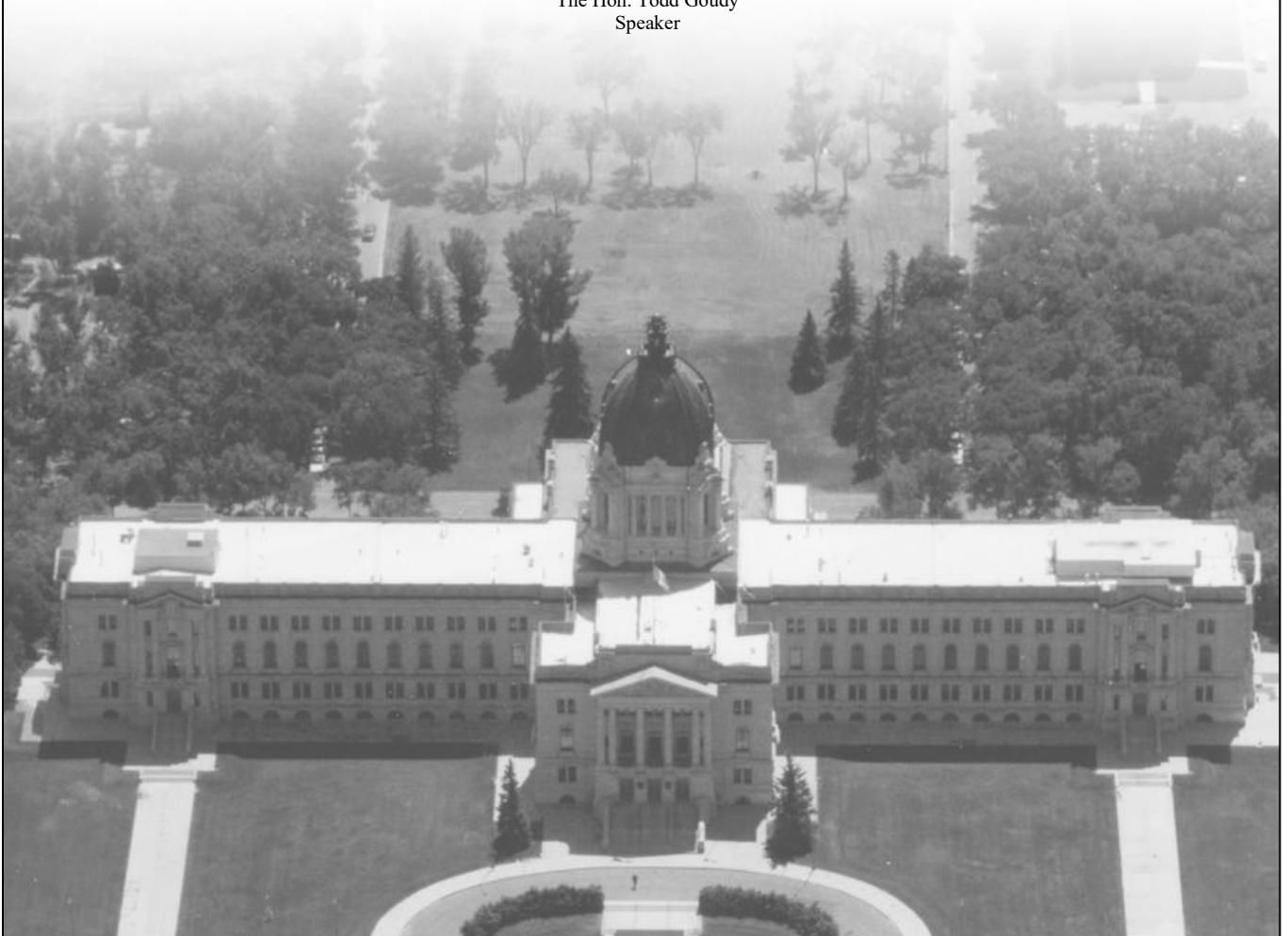
SECOND SESSION — THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE

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

Beaudry, Hon. Chris — Kelvington-Wadena (SP)
Beck, Carla — Regina Lakeview (NDP)
Blakley, Brent — Regina Wascana Plains (NDP)
Brar, Bhajan — Regina Pasqua (NDP)
Breckner, Kim — Saskatoon Riversdale (NDP)
Bromm, Terri — Carrot River Valley (SP)
Burki, Noor — Regina Coronation Park (NDP)
Carr, Hon. Lori — Estevan-Big Muddy (SP)
Chan, David — Yorkton (SP)
Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken — Saskatoon Willowgrove (SP)
ChiefCalf, April — Saskatoon Westview (NDP)
Clarke, Jared — Regina Walsh Acres (NDP)
Cockrill, Hon. Jeremy — The Battlefords (SP)
Conway, Meara — Regina Elphinstone-Centre (NDP)
Crassweller, Brad — White City-Qu'Appelle (SP)
Gartner, Hon. Kim — Kindersley-Biggar (SP)
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Kaeding, Hon. Warren — Melville-Saltcoats (SP)
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Keisig, Travis — Last Mountain-Touchwood (SP)
Kropf, Barret — Dakota-Arm River (SP)
Laliberte, Leroy — Athabasca (NDP)

Love, Matt — Saskatoon Eastview (NDP)
Marit, Hon. David — Wood River (SP)
Martens, Hon. Jamie — Martensville-Blairmore (SP)
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Mowat, Vicki — Saskatoon Fairview (NDP)
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Schmalz, Hon. Eric — Saskatchewan Rivers (SP)
Senger, Brittney — Saskatoon Southeast (NDP)
Steele, Doug — Cypress Hills (SP)
Teed, Nathaniel — Saskatoon Meewasin (NDP)
Thorsteinson, James — Cut Knife-Turtleford (SP)
Warrington, Darcy — Saskatoon Stonebridge (NDP)
Weedmark, Kevin — Moosomin-Montmartre (SP)
Weger, Hon. Michael — Weyburn-Bengough (SP)
Wilson, Hon. Sean — Canora-Pelly (SP)
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Deputy Clerk — Robert Park

Principal Clerk — Danielle Humble-Selinger

Clerk Assistant — Miranda Gudereit

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources.

Hon. Chris Beaudry: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome 17 grade 10 students, sitting in the west gallery, from Wynyard Composite High School. They are accompanied by their teacher Marsha Barteski-Hoberg — I apologize for that — and their bus driver Reggie.

I'll be happy to meet with them after question period. And if the member from Lumsden-Morse has any extra ice cream kicking around, I think we could be able to offer some. Thank you.

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

Noor Burki: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you, through you I will join the member. I have a school as well from my constituency, the Regina Harvest City Christian Academy, Mr. Speaker. They are accompanied by two incredible teachers, Ms. Yemba and Mr. Wagner. This school is located right in the heart of my constituency, right by Northgate Mall. Incredible teachers. Incredible school. A very diverse school, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm proud to say that I've been teaching in that school from 2008 all the way till 2023, on and off. So I will request all members in this Legislative Assembly to give them a warm welcome to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Hon. Michael Weger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to introduce my brother-in-law and friend Shawn Thorn seated up in the west gallery. And he's accompanied by his mother, Alice, and his three children that were able to make it with him — Deriana, Riley, and Liam.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to introduce Shawn because he is a 23-year veteran in the Canadian Armed Forces. For the last 19 years he's been employed as a medic with the air force, and he's an operating room technician. He's currently the status of warrant officer and he holds three roles, Mr. Speaker: high-readiness detachment Edmonton warrant officer, and regional operating room technician for Western Canada as well as the deputy operating room technician trade advisor for the Canadian Armed Forces.

He also served a tour in Iraq from April to October 2017, and he's received the following medals, Mr. Speaker: the Medal of Bravery, the Iraq tour medal, the King Charles III Coronation Medal, and the Canadian decoration with first class for over 22

years of honourable service in the Canadian Air Force.

Mr. Speaker, I should have asked for an extended introduction. I apologize. I have to mention he's also an amazing family man, Mr. Speaker. He's the loving husband to my sister-in-law. They have 11 children, Mr. Speaker — eight who have come to their home through adoption and fostering — ages 28 to 6. There's no individual that is more caring, supportive, and patient than Shawn Thorn. I'd ask you all to join me in welcoming him to this legislature.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of SaskBuilds and Procurement.

Hon. Sean Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, up in the west gallery, I want to introduce two of my guests. The first guy up there that looks like he belongs to ZZ Top, his name is Greg. And I worked with Greg for almost 20 years. And actually the member for Batoche just remarked that he did look like he was from ZZ Top.

So I will just tell a quick story before I sit down. We were working in The Pas in 2000 and — I think — 8 or 9. We came through town and we stopped at Tim Hortons. And I was driving the truck, and for some reason he was behind me in the four-person vehicle. And we ordered some food and he rolled down the back window and he ordered whatever he wanted. And the individual working at Tim Hortons says, "Oh my goodness, you're from ZZ Top." He looked ahead, he rolled up the window, and he said, "Don't tell anybody we're in town." So anyway a really good friend of mine.

And accompanied with him is my deputy minister, Rebecca. And I can't wait to hear all of the one-sided stories she's been listening to from him for the past 20 minutes. So I invite all members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Remote and Rural Health.

Hon. Lori Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, seated in your gallery, I would like to take the opportunity to introduce a number of individuals who are here with us today. They are senior administrative assistants from across the Government of Saskatchewan working in various ministries and divisions.

And I just want to thank you so much for everything you do for the province of Saskatchewan. I spent 20 years in administration before I ended up in this role, so I fully understand some of the challenges that you have some days but some of the really rewarding work that you get to be able to be a part of. So I extend my thank you for everything you do and welcome you to your Legislative Assembly.

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

Vicki Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join in with the minister opposite in welcoming this group to their Legislative Assembly and thank them for all of their service to the province of Saskatchewan on behalf of the official opposition. We hope

you enjoy the proceedings today. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — And I would also like to introduce a few ladies today who are seated in the Speaker's gallery. From the King's Printer, we have them with us today. Specifically I would like to welcome Kaden Schmidt and Wendy Dunn to their Assembly for the first time. And I would like all members to join in welcoming them to this, their Legislative Assembly, and thank them for all of the work that they do.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Tajinder Grewal: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition to implement rent control now. The undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring to your attention the following: that Saskatchewan tenants are currently experiencing the highest level of rent increases in the country; that rent in Saskatchewan has risen by 4 per cent in the last year alone, far outpacing wage growth and putting some more pressure on families, seniors, students, and low-income residents; that provinces such as British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and Prince Edward Island have already implemented rent control measures to protect tenants and maintain housing affordability.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will read the prayer:

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

The petition has been signed by residents of Regina. I do so present. Thank you.

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

Trent Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents as it relates to long-term care standards and the costs and the wait times that exist there.

They identify that the wait times are several months for long-term care. They identify as well that the criteria really isn't clear or consistent at all. They highlight that many families that are waiting on a wait-list end up having to secure a private care spot that they can't afford, and then that that is supposed to only be a stopgap measure but they're then denied a placement because they have that spot that they can't afford. They identify as well that home care in Saskatchewan is really expensive for a lot of families. It's \$75 an hour, well outside the means of the average family.

The prayer reads as follows:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly call on the Government of Saskatchewan to work directly with seniors and long-term

care homes to improve standards of eligibility for people seeking admittance to long-term care.

These petitions are signed by concerned residents of our province. I so submit.

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

Brent Blakley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the Assembly today to present a petition calling on the Government of Saskatchewan to address the housing crisis through affordable homes and tenant protections.

These residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring attention to the following: that the costs of housing and rental housing in Saskatchewan have skyrocketed, making it increasingly difficult for many individuals and families to secure stable and affordable housing; that the Government of Saskatchewan is wasting \$596 million on empty housing units, and more than \$194 million has been lost on utilities, grants-in-lieu, and forgone rent. Many of these units remain uninhabitable because of the cuts to the maintenance and renovation budget over the last decade. Market vacancy rates are low in Saskatchewan's urban centres, and monthly rental costs have increased significantly while wages for Saskatchewan families have remained stagnant.

The prayer reads as follows:

We respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately implement a comprehensive, affordable housing strategy aimed at stable and affordable housing. This would include restoration of the cuts made to the housing portfolio, investment in the development of affordable and low-income housing units, enforcement of rental protections for tenants, and allocation of resources towards development of second-stage housing and crisis centres.

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

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

Bhajan Brar: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise here today to present a petition to the Government of Saskatchewan to step up for Indigenous students in Saskatchewan. We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring to your attention the following: we, the undersigned, call on the Saskatchewan government to take immediate action to stand up for the Indigenous children and all vulnerable students by advocating for the full restoration of funding previously supported by Jordan's principle.

Jordan's principle was established to ensure that First Nations children have equitable access to the services they need, including supports in school. The recent loss of this special funding will leave a significant gap in Saskatchewan classrooms, especially for Indigenous students who rely on inclusive education supports to thrive. This is an alarming move at a time

when our schools are already stretched to the breaking point due to chronic underfunding and short-staffing.

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.

This petition has been signed by the residents of Saskatoon. I do so present. Thank you.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Ability in Me Programming Builds a More Inclusive Province

Kevin Weedmark: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to recognize the important work of the Ability in Me program and the profound impact it is having for individuals with Down syndrome and their families right across Saskatchewan.

AIM [Ability in Me] is built on a simple but powerful belief — that every individual has unique abilities, strengths, and potential worth celebrating. Through programming, advocacy, and community connection, AIM empowers participants to build confidence, develop skills, and pursue meaningful opportunities in their daily lives.

This past Saturday evening I was honoured to bring greetings on behalf of the government at an AIM fundraiser in Saskatoon. It was an inspiring event and I learned a lot about Ability in Me. I had the opportunity to speak with staff, board members, and family members who shared stories of perseverance, inclusion, and achievement. The families, volunteers, and organizers behind AIM demonstrate an unwavering commitment to creating a more inclusive province where everyone belongs.

[13:45]

Mr. Speaker, the work of AIM goes far beyond programs and events. It builds community. It changes perceptions. And it reminds all of us of the importance of ensuring that every Saskatchewan resident is supported to reach their full potential.

I ask all members of this Assembly to join me in recognizing the Ability in Me programming and thanking everyone involved for their dedication, compassion, and leadership. Thank you.

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

List of Schools in Need of Repair or Replacement

Matt Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, while defending his decision to leapfrog 200 crumbling schools to build

a new one in his hometown of Shellbrook, the Premier accused us of sowing division between urban and rural communities.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I would hate to pass over any rural or urban community. After all, I'm not the Premier. So I would like to read over each community with a school in worse condition than the schools in Shellbrook. That includes both urban and rural, Mr. Speaker, and it's going to take a little while.

Alameda, Allan, Arborfield, Asquith, Battleford, Beauval, Bellegarde, Bellevue, Bethune, Birch Hills, Bjorkdale, Borden, Broadview, Buffalo Narrows, Cando, Canora, Carievale, Carlyle, Casa Rio, Choiceland, Churchbridge, Clavet, Colonsay, Cupar, Delisle, Dundurn, Estevan, Fillmore, Fort Qu'Appelle, Gladmar, Glaslyn, Grand Coulee, Grayson, Green Lake, Grenfell, Gull Lake, Hafford, Hague, Hazlet . . .

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately I'm running out of time. I could go on for much longer, but I'll conclude my list there with Hazlet. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

New Chapter for Wadena Bakery

Hon. Chris Beaudry: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to pay tribute to a true Saskatchewan treasure, the Wadena Bakery.

An Hon. Member: — Great place.

Hon. Chris Beaudry: — It is. For decades the bakery has been at the heart of the community, a place where neighbours gather, travellers make a special stop, and stories are shared over a cup of coffee and a doughnut. Now, Mr. Speaker, I know every community in this province is proud of their local bakery, but let's be honest. When it comes to Boston creams, everyone knows Wadena Bakery has the best in Saskatchewan. People drive hours out of their way just to pick up a box. And, Mr. Speaker, this was proven by our friends on the *Monday Nooner*.

Now recently the bakery was sold, and it marks both the end of a chapter and the start of another. We're grateful for the family who poured their lives into the business, rising early and staying late to make sure the ovens were full and the shelves never empty. And we welcome the new owners who now carry forward this legacy, not just of baking but of community.

The Wadena Bakery reminds us that in rural Saskatchewan a small business can become something much greater — a symbol of pride, connection, and joy, Mr. Speaker. I ask all members to join me in thanking the past owners and wishing the new owners every success as the Wadena Bakery continues to serve the best Boston creams in the province. Thank you.

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

List of Schools in Need of Repair or Replacement

Trent Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, just one member's statement isn't enough to get through that list of schools that that

government is passing over, so I'll continue:

Hepburn, Herbert, Hodgeville, Indian Head, Invermay, Kamsack, Kelliher, Kelvington, Kennedy, Kerrobert, Kyle, La Loche, La Ronge, Langham, Lashburn, Leask, Leoville, Loon Lake, Luseland, Macklin, Macoun, Maidstone, Manor, Martensville, Maymont, Meadow Lake, Melville, Milestone, Montmartre, Moose Jaw, Moosomin, Neilburg, Neudorf, Nipawin, Nokomis, North Battleford, Osler, Pangman, Pense, Perdue, Pinehouse, Ponteix, Preeceville, Prince Albert, Qu'Appelle, Radville, Rapid View, Regina, Regina Beach, Rocanville, Sandy Bay, Saskatoon, Sedley, Shaunavon, Southey, Southend, Spiritwood, Springside, Stockholm, Stony Rapids, Sturgis, Theodore, Unity, Vanscoy, Vibank, Waldeck, Waldheim, Wapella, Warman, Weyburn, White City, White Fox, Whitewood, Wilkie, Wolseley, Wymark, Yellow Grass, Yorkton.

You know, that's just some of the schools that that government chose to bypass, all those communities, all those students, all those families, Mr. Speaker.

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

India-Canada Cultural Association Hosts India Night Gala

Brad Crassweller: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the weekend I had the privilege of attending the India-Canada Cultural Association's annual India Night gala dinner in Martensville. Mr. Speaker, this sold-out event was a truly remarkable evening, and the dinner quality was only surpassed by the quality entertainment that celebrated culture, success, and community spirit.

We were joined by Renu Gautam, the consul of commerce and community affairs, from the Consulate General of India from Vancouver; Saskatoon mayor, Cynthia Block; Brad Redekopp, MP [Member of Parliament] for Saskatoon West; and representatives from both sides of the House to recognize the many contributions that Indo-Canadians make to our province.

Mr. Speaker, the ICCA [India-Canada Cultural Association] puts on events bringing community together every year, and it was great to see people from Saskatoon and surrounding area come together for this time of celebration. The ICCA is a non-profit organization with a rich history spanning over 50 years, dedicated to promoting and developing and enriching the cultural and social life of the Indian diaspora in Saskatoon and beyond. This event is a testament to the shared values and traditions that enrich our diverse communities and province.

Our government values the relationships that we've developed with the Indo-Canadian community, because it's in and through those relationships that we work together to build stronger communities, stronger cities, and a stronger province.

On behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, thank you to the ICCA Saskatoon for putting together such a fantastic evening, and thank you to everyone who attended. Thank you.

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

Rates of Tuberculosis in Saskatchewan

Jared Clarke: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to mark World Tuberculosis Day and to raise awareness about a disease that continues to affect families here in Saskatchewan. Tuberculosis, or TB, is a potentially fatal but preventable and treatable infectious disease that most often affects the lungs.

Now despite modern medicine, Saskatchewan continues to experience TB rates significantly higher than the Canadian average. In 2023 the national TB rate was approximately 5.1 cases per 100,000 people; however in Saskatchewan the rate was more than twice the national average, around 10.9 cases per 100,000. Now these numbers are even more pronounced when we look at northern communities. Pediatric TB in northern Saskatchewan is also increasing. In 2022 the incidence rate was 268 cases per 100,000.

Now these are not simply statistics; they reflect real lives affected, families disrupted, and communities struggling. In 2024 the Provincial Auditor found Saskatchewan does not have a current provincial tuberculosis strategy guiding the Saskatchewan Health Authority's TB prevention and control unit and its partners to reduce TB rates in the province and improve patient outcomes. This must change.

I want to say thank you to the health care professionals and community partners fighting this disease. Your efforts are so important. On World TB Day, let's commit to ensuring equitable health care access so that every person in Saskatchewan can live free from this preventable disease. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

New Schools Built in Province

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take the opportunity to set the record straight on our government's commitment to building schools in Saskatchewan. Our government is the one that builds schools. In fact we opened seven new schools last year alone, Mr. Speaker.

We are building and opening schools at a rate never before seen in the province, Mr. Speaker. 109 new schools or major renovations have been completed or announced since 2007. This includes 26 in my home community of Saskatoon. And the school in Brighton will certainly be no exception, Mr. Speaker, the largest most innovative school in the province going into one of the fastest growing areas of the province.

Mr. Speaker, I remember when the members opposite stood in a field in Moose Jaw saying, this school will never be built. And guess what, Mr. Speaker? We were pleased to attend the grand opening of that school just last year. I remember a bit further back, Mr. Speaker, when the NDP [New Democratic Party] said the school in Westview would never be built. Lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, a brand new school in Saskatoon Westview was built.

And I remember even back further when the NDP closed 176 schools, Mr. Speaker, one per month. Yes, the only list longer than the list of schools we've built is the list that the NDP closed. So while members of the opposite spend their days spinning

ridiculous stories about school builds, our record tells the true story. This is our record, what the public expects of us: to put students first.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

Speaker Goudy: — Before question period, just on the point of order from yesterday, March 23rd, 2026. The Opposition House Leader rose on a point of order, an important ruling that I had some discussions. But I would appreciate a little bit more time. I know that might curtail our debate today a bit. But if that's all right with you, I'd ask to rule on that tomorrow at the appropriate time.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Affordability and Provincial Budget

Carla Beck: — Mr. Speaker, the price of food has gone up and up and up. We continue to hear from people every day facing impossible decisions like whether to pay for their heating or to put food on the table; seniors struggling to decide whether they should pay for their medication or for groceries.

Still this Premier chose to keep his \$25-million-a-year tax on groceries year after year. It's still contained in this year's bad-news budget. This tax, to help him pay for the financial mess that he's created in this province. Mr. Speaker, it doesn't have to be this way.

Will the Premier cut families in this province a break and will he cut his tax on groceries?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I would just say that last week what we saw was the introduction of the best and strongest budget in the nation of Canada, Mr. Speaker. A budget that is going to ensure that our province and the communities where we live continue to be the most affordable communities in the nation of Canada, Mr. Speaker.

And I would point . . . well first I would make the comment that there is no PST [provincial sales tax] on groceries in this . . .

[Interjections]

Speaker Goudy: — I'm just going to ask that we respect one another. And the Premier's given a serious answer. Let's listen.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I would point to page 62 of the budget, Mr. Speaker, if what we're advocating for is to adopt the taxation measures in Manitoba, which is currently governed by an NDP government. In Saskatchewan a family of four making \$100,000 — page 62 of the budget document — would pay \$5,968 in tax. That same family of four making \$100,000 in Manitoba would pay \$8,855. That's a \$3,000 spread, Mr. Speaker. I didn't do the math on that, Mr. Speaker, but that's a whole bunch of rotisserie chickens, let me tell you that.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is today in Saskatchewan a family of four with an income of \$100,000 is going to pay \$4,400 less in provincial tax than they did under the NDP when they were government in the province. The fact of the matter is a family of four in this province is going to pay \$3,000 less in tax than they do in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. And I would say that we are kicking in for those rotisserie chickens through . . .

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

Carla Beck: — Mr. Speaker, apparently this is a joke to the Premier. But you know what? Last week after this — what did he say? — best and strongest budget, I had the chance to go meet with some seniors, Mr. Speaker, seniors in this province who are asking me to ask the Premier does he understand what it is like to try to live on \$37 after you pay your rent and your heat and all of the other ways that this government has nickelled and dimed seniors in our province, Mr. Speaker?

Maybe cutting the grocery tax wouldn't fix all of their problems. But I guarantee you, Mr. Speaker, these are people that are looking for a break, any break, right now. In fact, what we're seeing in Manitoba right now, cutting that tax on groceries would provide these seniors with a break. All it takes is a little bit of leadership and a little bit of political will.

I'm going to ask again. Will this Premier reconsider? Will he give those seniors in this province who are struggling right now, deciding whether they pay for their medication or their groceries, will he cut them a break? Do as Wab Kinew has done and take that tax off the groceries.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Mr. Speaker, in the last campaign there was a number of commitments that we were elected on, Mr. Speaker, to the people of the province. They were delivered in last year's budget, continuing to be delivered in this year's budget in more than two and a half billion dollars of affordability measures each and every year. That's why Saskatchewan continues to be the most affordable place to live. That's why, Mr. Speaker, I make the statement that this is the best and strongest budget in the nation of Canada, Mr. Speaker.

That included increases, Mr. Speaker, to the seniors' income plan. In fact in that campaign the commitments we made impacted everyone — first-time homebuyers, students, post-secondary students entering the workforce. Mr. Speaker, supporting the affordability measures for families across this province. That's why we're able to make the statement in Saskatchewan that a Saskatchewan family of four with \$100,000 income pays \$4,400 less in income tax than they did under the NDP, \$3,000 less than those in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, although we are a contributor, and so we are in many ways contributing to those rotisserie chickens, we very much are focused on supporting Saskatchewan families, supporting the affordability measures that are in place for Saskatchewan families in communities right across this province, Mr. Speaker, regardless of their age.

[14:00]

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

Carla Beck: — Mr. Speaker, this Premier's policies, his inability to take accountability for what's going on in this province is actually driving people out of the province to the point that right now, for the first time in 20 years, we are seeing population decline two quarters and running, Mr. Speaker. People in this province are leaving in part because they simply cannot afford to stay.

Can the Premier tell people who are on the verge of leaving this province why he couldn't be bothered to lift a finger to provide some affordability in his budget?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Mr. Speaker, with respect to the population of this province, Mr. Speaker, we have been among the most rapid increases in population over the course of the last decade and a half of any province across the nation of Canada.

And here's why, Mr. Speaker. One, we remain the most affordable place in Canada to live. Two, with investment like we are seeing today, with 60 projects over \$62 billion when you get here, you have a great chance at having a very viable career in the community where you live, Mr. Speaker, a career that's going to support you and your family.

With the patients-first initiative, we are going to ensure that you are going to be able to have the opportunity to access the right care in the right place at the right time, Mr. Speaker. With the initiatives that we are making, whether they be in offering recovery opportunities or enforcement, Mr. Speaker, investing in the enforcement of the laws in our very communities, you can ensure that you are going to be able to take your family to a park and feel safe in the community you live.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good-news budget for the people of Saskatchewan — everyone that lives here, families across the province — but it is a bad-news budget for the NDP.

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

Construction of New Schools

Carla Beck: — Mr. Speaker, he's first in line for the credit, for the praise, for the clapping for themselves, and he is nowhere to be found when it's time to take some accountability, time and time again, Mr. Speaker.

Another reason that people in this province are leaving is because of what this government, this Premier have done to our education system and to our kids' schools. Yesterday the Premier insisted that this bad-news budget wasn't going to delay any school builds in the province. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it's been confirmed that the new school in Carlyle and two more here in Regina will be delayed as a result of that budget. This has been confirmed by local school boards, Mr. Speaker, and I will take their word any day of the week over that Premier's.

Now will he stand up, will he admit that there are delays because of this budget? And will he release the full list of those delays here today?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Mr. Speaker, the topic of accountability actually is very ripe the last week, week and a half of what we've seen by the party opposite, Mr. Speaker. But I will not go into that.

What I will say, Mr. Speaker, is this is a government that has been focused on investing in education, whether it be in the classrooms, whether it be in specialized support classrooms or building the actual classrooms with 109 schools, Mr. Speaker, across this province being built, already built, or in the planning stages.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the school in Shellbrook — which has been top of the capital priority list of the locally elected school division for over a decade, likely closer to a decade and a half — maybe the Leader of the Opposition wants to take that conversation up with that locally elected school board as to why they prioritized that particular facility, Mr. Speaker.

But with respect to capital investment, capital investment in education, this year's investment is \$123 million, Mr. Speaker. In the last year of the NDP government, that capital investment was \$23 million or \$3.7 million in a school they named after their leader, Tommy Douglas, Mr. Speaker, which equalled the amount they invested in the renewal or the enlargement of the CVA [central vehicle agency] fleet. They spent as much on cars, government cars, as they did on a school, Mr. Speaker.

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

Matt Love: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier doesn't want to answer a question about a list of delayed schools, a list we know exists because his minister says that list exists. A list that could have up to 20 school projects on it that are being delayed by this bad-news budget. We also know full well that this Premier is building a new school in his hometown of Shellbrook while a school in Carlyle that was already approved is getting delayed.

Can the Premier explain why he is picking winners and losers in public education, and why he's delaying desperately needed schools in Saskatchewan?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll say it again. The 109 major projects — the new schools, major renovations — in Saskatchewan since 2007 in communities right across this province, in our big cities and our rural communities as well, and northern Saskatchewan as well . . .

[Interjections]

Speaker Goudy: — Sorry. I just ask for quiet when we're having an answer.

Minister.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And of those 109 — 26 in Regina, 26 in Saskatoon, and the rest in rural Saskatchewan and remote communities around this province —

this government is very proud to speak of its record when it comes to capital investment in the education sector.

And, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, they want to talk about lists, provide lists to them, Mr. Speaker. Here's a list that we'll table here today of a number of communities that are impacted: Neville school, Admiral school, Piapot school, Earl Grey school, Wilcox public school, Francis school, Glenavon school, Crane Valley school, Prince Charles school, Mr. Speaker, Smeaton school. And even, Mr. Speaker, before the NDP got done with their time in government, closing all these schools in Saskatchewan, Lang school in the Leader of the Opposition's hometown, Mr. Speaker.

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

Matt Love: — Boy, these guys hate accountability. You know, the Premier is even putting his own neighbourhood school over even those promised to his own cabinet ministers. Constituents for the Minister of Advanced Education were promised a new school for Brighton in Saskatoon nearly two years ago, which is years overdue. There are over 9,000 people living in that community today, and it's growing. And there's no school; what they've got is an empty field.

Will the Premier explain to his own minister and the good people of Brighton why his neighbourhood gets a school and they get an empty field?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, mister school. The community, the neighbourhood of Brighton is one of the 20 projects that have been announced by this government, that we have funding advanced to for the planning and the construction, Mr. Speaker. And that school will be constructed in that community, Mr. Speaker; I guarantee you that. That is going to happen because every school that this government announces will be built and has been built, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, and when it comes to Brighton, by the way, that member, that member for Saskatoon Eastview posted a video on Facebook earlier this winter in February, talking . . .

[Interjections]

Speaker Goudy: — Order, please.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Yeah, it wasn't a very good video, Mr. Speaker, as one of the other members had said.

I will say this, Mr. Speaker. In that video here's what he said: "We'll build that school when we take government." That's how they treat the people of this province — not with humility, but with hubris. They want to take government. That's how they treat this, Mr. Speaker, and that is the lesson that should be taken from those members opposite.

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

Matt Love: — I will take no lessons on hubris from that minister

or any member opposite. Now yesterday this government tried to push through their building schools faster Act. But there's just one problem, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't actually build schools faster. And that is according to a letter the school board Chairs for Regina Public and Regina Catholic wrote last Thursday: "The proposed changes may address one barrier, but are unlikely, on their own, to substantially accelerate the delivery of new schools."

Why is the Premier insisting he's building schools faster across Saskatchewan when everyone else in this province knows they're not?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And the member opposite is right. I've seen the letter from the Regina Catholic and Public Schools where they do identify that the acquisition of land is one of the many issues that impacts the timeline when it comes to building schools.

We've seen that previously, Mr. Speaker. When neighbourhoods are growing, municipalities are growing, sometimes they don't have enough land set aside for some of these new builds. So this is important. Mr. Speaker, members opposite had the opportunity . . .

[Interjections]

Speaker Goudy: — Sorry, I am just going to remind us. We're talking about schools. We've got students in the balconies, and the minister is giving a response. Please let's hear clearly the response of the minister.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We wanted to pass that particular piece of legislation faster yesterday through all stages, Mr. Speaker, and the members opposite decided not to do that. And by the way, the members opposite aren't all on the same page when it comes to this issue. As a matter of fact March 11th the member for Saskatoon Southeast in debate said ". . . when it comes to *The Building Schools Faster Act* we need to be mindful of fiscal management."

So that's what these members — some of them at least on that side — think about building schools faster. It's upset them, Mr. Speaker, but I can understand why.

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

Health Care Staffing

Jared Clarke: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, yesterday I asked about the operating hours at the Regina urgent care centre which has seen their hours reduced yet again. And in response the minister said:

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.

Does the minister stand by those comments?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I do. There are two emergency rooms in Regina: the Pasqua and General.

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

Jared Clarke: — I appreciate the straightforward answer for a change, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to read from a government press release dated December 13th, 2024. The release claimed that the Regina urgent care centre had, in the minister's own words, ". . . taken significant pressures off of existing emergency departments within Regina."

Well reading that quote back, Mr. Speaker, seems like the Regina urgent care centre was built to relieve pressure off of emergency room departments at the Regina Pasqua and General. So now I'm not sure why the minister is suggesting those emergency departments should relieve the pressure off the Regina urgent care centre.

So can the minister clarify, is it the duty of the Regina General Hospital and Regina Pasqua to make up for the short-staffing that's being experienced at the Regina urgent care centre?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's dangerous territory for the opposition to be talking about the number of hospitals in Regina, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, folks in southern Saskatchewan will remember the closure of the Plains hospital out on Ring Road many years ago, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would remind . . .

[Interjections]

Speaker Goudy: — Order, please.

Minister.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Mr. Speaker, if members opposite had read our new patients-first health care plan, they would understand that putting patients first means that we are going to find the right care at the right time at the right access point for patients, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as we roll out more urgent care centres around the province, it provides an option for patients to receive a different type of care in a different building, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, 65,000 Saskatchewan residents have received care at the urgent care centre since July of 2024. That has relieved pressure from the two emergency rooms in Regina, Mr. Speaker.

I know the members opposite don't like to hear it, Mr. Speaker, but this government's going to stay focused on solutions.

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

Jared Clarke: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, back in 2024

when they opened the Regina urgent care centre, that Sask Party government said it would be open 24-7, and it would take pressure off emergency departments. Now it took one year for them to quietly give up on it being open 24-7. And now they're giving up on it relieving emergency departments. That's zero for two, Mr. Speaker. That Premier's health record cannot be matched.

But hey, their patient-first plan says that a second urgent care centre in Regina is going to fix health care, Mr. Speaker. The question: what hours will the second Regina urgent care centre have? And how is it going to be staffed?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have one member opposite from Saskatoon Southeast talk about, extol the values of fiscal responsibility. And then, Mr. Speaker, the member from Walsh Acres says something totally different. Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day we work closely with the Saskatchewan Health Authority to evaluate the resources that we have in place, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, I know they're frustrated. They don't want to hear this, Mr. Speaker. Our priority is going to be opening up more access points, more urgent care centres around the province, Mr. Speaker. I'd rather have two urgent care centres in Regina than one open 24-7, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue working down that path. The urgent care centre in Saskatoon is nearly 75 per cent complete . . .

[Interjections]

[14:15]

Speaker Goudy: — I hate to compare, but there's a lot more noise going on on the opposition side than the government side. And I don't mean to sound like I'm picking sides here, but seriously, I think they're staying quiet and you're not. So please.

Minister.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — As I said, Mr. Speaker, the reason that we want to open up more access points, more urgent care centres, Mr. Speaker, is so that we can put patients first, ensuring they get the right care at the right time.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Transportation Funding in Northern Saskatchewan

Jordan McPhail: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, last year's wildfire season showed us just how critical our highways and airports are in northern Saskatchewan. They're a lifeline to communities. That's why it blows my mind that this Sask Party government is cutting funding for those northern roads and airports. This bad-news budget will see a cut of \$36 million compared to last year. Why is the Sask Party cutting the budget for northern roads and airports?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Kim Gartner: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. We

recognize the unique transportation challenges for northern residents of this province. In this budget we will invest \$86.3 million in northern highways and airports. Since 2008, our government has made record investments totalling over \$1 billion in the northern transportation network.

In this year's budget alone, the Ministry of Highways is investing 178 per cent more in the North than the NDP did in their last budget. Their budget, 31 million; our budget, 86 million. That's why this budget is good news for Saskatchewan and bad news for the NDP.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Jordan McPhail: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it's right there in black and white for the minister.

In their own news release, 2024-2025: "122.3 million to build, operate, and maintain highways and airports." Last week's budget: "Northern Saskatchewan will benefit from an \$86.3 million investment to build, operate, and maintain highways and airports." I'm no mathematician, Mr. Speaker, but 122 minus 86 is a \$36 million cut where I come from.

Why is the Sask Party government cutting northern highways?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Kim Gartner: — You know, Mr. Speaker, budget allocations vary from year to year as projects progress to completion and new projects enter the planning and construction phase.

This year's budget includes improvements on Highway 102, Highway 106, and maintenance on northern roads and infrastructure. It also includes a replacement bridge on Highway 955 over Clearwater River near La Loche. We are committed to a safe, reliable, and sustainable highway system for everyone in Saskatchewan.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Jordan McPhail: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this bad-news budget cuts roads in the North, but that's what northerners have come to expect from this Sask Party government. This Premier sees the North as a place to make cuts. That's what he did in the last year's budget, and that's what he's doing this year's budget. It's shameful.

Why is there always more money for consultants, for sweetheart deals, and for schools in the Premier's own riding, but only cuts when it comes to the highways and the airports of the people of the North?

Speaker Goudy: — The "sweetheart deals," that's offside.

Minister of Highways.

Hon. Kim Gartner: — Mr. Speaker, since 2008 our government has invested more than \$14.6 billion in transportation infrastructure. We've improved more than 22 700 kilometres of highway all across this province. We are focused on delivering a safe, reliable, and sustainable transportation system for everyone

in Saskatchewan.

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

Ensuring Community Safety

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well that's little consolation to people of the North.

Speaking of little consolation, Mr. Speaker, more than two years ago Romana Didulo and her queen of Canada cult moved into the village of Richmond. For two years the government did nothing while the cult terrorized the community, uttered death threats, and even dumped raw sewage next to a playground and ball diamond.

On November 18th, members of the community came to the legislature to meet with the ministers of Justice, Government Relations, and Environment, and their local MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for Cypress Hills. They came asking for support, but this government has done nothing.

My question for the government: where are the supports for the people of Richmond that are needed to clean up their community and to keep them safe?

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

Hon. Michael Weger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to protecting the people in Saskatchewan — the families, communities, the residents in the North, and the residents in Richmond, Mr. Speaker. And we showed that when we presented the best budget in Canada last week, Mr. Speaker, a budget that is supported by the strongest economy in Canada, with a commitment to make sure this is the most affordable place to live in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is good news for Saskatchewan. It's bad news for the NDP. But what do the NDP do about it, Mr. Speaker? They start question period off rehashing rotisserie chickens. This is why no one can take the NDP opposition seriously.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 616 — *The Islamic Heritage Month Act*

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

Noor Burki: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 616, *The Islamic Heritage Month Act* be now introduced and read for the first time.

Speaker Goudy: — It has been moved by the member from Regina Coronation Park that Bill No. 616, *The Islamic Heritage Month Act* 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?

Noor Burki: — At the next sitting of this House.

Speaker Goudy: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 52 — *The Heritage Property Amendment Act, 2026*

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Alana Ross: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 52, *The Heritage Property Amendment Act, 2026* be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker Goudy: — It has been moved by the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport that Bill No. 52, *The Heritage Property 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?

Hon. Alana Ross: — Next sitting of the Assembly.

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

MOTIONS

Second Reading of Bill No. 612

Aleana Young: — Well, 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.

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 Saskatoon Southeast.

Brittney Senger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure where I left off last night. I know I made quite a bit of progress on my remarks. I guess I'll just take it from the top.

I'm pleased to rise and join in the budget debate today. As is customary in this Assembly, there are a number of people that I would like to thank. First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the people of Saskatoon Southeast for allowing me to represent them in this Legislative Assembly.

I'd like to thank my constituency assistant, Sarah. She brings so much to our office every single day. She has an exceptional work ethic, judgment, and integrity. I could not serve my constituents effectively without her. I have the utmost respect for her tenacity, her ambition, and everything that she does.

I'd also like to recognize the people who support me and who have helped shape who I am today, especially my colleagues, my friends, family, chosen family, from every corner of this country. And I'd like to single out my grandparents, who have always stood by my side. They always celebrate my accomplishments and provide me with love and unconditional support. I truly don't know what I would do without them.

Every member of this Assembly is aware of the sacrifices that come with the job, the time we spend away from our family and our loved ones in order to serve our constituents. On budget day my grandma Rose Rawluk celebrated her 80th birthday. And sadly I could not be there to celebrate with her. However I promised Grandma that I would wish her a happy birthday during my budget response, allowing the milestone that she celebrated to be recorded forever in *Hansard*. When I told her that, she said, "Well I don't know, Brittney. It's probably going to be a bad-news budget." And as always Grandma was right. Anyway happy 80th birthday, Grandma.

Mr. Speaker, the world is nothing like it was 80 years ago. And the world is changing rapidly and it's becoming less and less predictable. We see conflict, economic instability, and rapidly evolving technology. And now this uncertainty has crept into people's homes, their lives, their workplaces, and their future. People across the province are worried. They're worried about what will come next and what this uncertainty means for them, for their loved ones, and for their wallets.

During times like these, people look to the government for solutions. They look for leadership and for security. People look for actions demonstrating compassion and care, decisions that make life more affordable and more secure. These are not high standards; they are reasonable expectations. And any government can and should be evaluated using this criteria. By these measures — compassion, leadership, security, predictability, and fiscal prudence — this budget has failed.

Mr. Speaker, when I ask people across Saskatchewan about the challenges they face and what they need to see from their government, a common theme emerges. I can boil it down to this: the Sask Party is always reacting, never acting to prevent problems in the first place, and often needlessly causing problems in their own actions.

This latest budget is no different. It brings cuts to programs supporting the most vulnerable. And these cuts will ultimately end up costing the province more and adding to an already crippling mountain of debt. No one wakes up in this province planning to rely on Saskatchewan income support. No parent dreams of their child having to grow up and depend on SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability]. These programs are and always have been a last resort. They exist because they must. They exist because life gets hard when things get bad.

The decisions made in this budget by the Premier, by the Finance minister, by the cabinet and their entire caucus will have one major effect. These decisions will widen the gap between people's income and the cost of living, especially as global conflict continues to escalate. This budget will make life harder for people when things go bad.

[14:30]

Under this Premier, rent in Saskatchewan has risen by 35 per cent. Less than a decade ago, when I moved out, I was paying \$1,200 a month for a two-bedroom apartment. Today a similar unit in Saskatoon rents for \$1,800 a month. And it doesn't stop there. It's costing more for electricity. It's costing more for car insurance, for home insurance. All of this is making it so much harder for people to keep the lights on and to get to work.

Then there's the cost of food. Even before the war in Iran, food prices were expected to increase by 4 per cent. In the current calendar year, the cost of feeding a family of four will increase by \$1,000. As global uncertainty grows, these costs will grow even higher.

So will gas prices, Mr. Speaker. Just today we saw the price per litre at nearly \$1.74 here in Regina. Personally I'm grateful to be in a position where I can afford to absorb these rising costs, but that hasn't always been my reality. And it certainly isn't the reality facing most people in Saskatchewan.

This budget fails to meet their needs. It is failing so badly that people are literally voting with their feet and choosing to leave the province. The members opposite used to talk about how proud they are of Saskatchewan's population growth. Well if that's true, if good times bring more people here, then the opposite must also be true. Flawed decisions, poor planning from this Premier are forcing people to leave. The population in Saskatchewan has fallen for two quarters in a row. I'll admit it's not a huge number, but it is a trend, a clear signal suggesting the current government is on the wrong track when it comes to meeting the needs of their people.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's not the only evidence that this budget is failing the people of Saskatchewan. Last month we learned a gruesome new statistic: Saskatchewan now has the highest rate of child poverty among all the provinces in Canada. Let that sink in for a minute. In a province where we are proud to say, "We feed the world," we can't even feed our own children.

Let's look at poverty in human terms. Poverty is parents skipping breakfast and lunch so their kids can eat well. It's the lonely elderly person saying, "Sorry, I can't join you because I can't afford it." It's young people saying, "I have to take a year off of university because I can't afford to pay tuition and rent." Poverty

is skipping doctors' appointments because you can't afford to pay for the gas to get there. It's going without important medication because you can't afford to fill the prescription.

Mr. Speaker, poverty doesn't always look like someone starving on the street, although with this budget I suspect we'll see more of that. Poverty hides in plain sight. If you listen carefully, you can hear the sound of poverty in voices of vulnerable people all across Saskatchewan. And this budget will make those voices louder. It will create more sad voices and more poverty in Saskatchewan.

Along with the population decreases, we're seeing other signs of increasing distress. Mr. Speaker, food bank usage is skyrocketing. In fact a third of food bank users are children. Imagine if that were your child.

This government has the knowledge. They have the resources. They can draw on the expertise of our professionals to deliver the help that is needed. But they've made a choice. Instead of action they've chosen apathy. That is heartbreaking, Mr. Speaker. It makes me sad.

Mr. Speaker, I repeat: one in three children are living in poverty in Saskatchewan. It's shameful. Nearly 40 years ago, a motion passed unanimously in the House of Commons — even supported by the Progressive Conservatives — to end child poverty in Canada. It is truly shameful that I must stand in this Assembly and inform you that Saskatchewan is moving further and further away from that goal, not closer.

Just two years ago this government made a commitment. They promised to help families and help food banks manage rising costs of food by providing additional funding. Yet today, despite higher food prices and the highest rate of child poverty among all the provinces, this Premier and this Finance minister have made a needlessly callous decision. They have chosen not to renew that support for families and for food banks.

I don't understand, Mr. Speaker. Why would they do that? Why are the Premier and Finance minister asking the most vulnerable people in the province again to bear the greatest burden in times of hardship and uncertainty? Mr. Speaker, this budget is going to hurt everyone. Even those who can live comfortably are going to feel the effects. But here's what the members opposite never seem to appreciate: everyone deserves to live in dignity.

Essentials like food, medical care, shelter, and access to public education are basic human rights. And it's a government's responsibility to make sure those standards are within reach for everyone in this province. People deserve to live in dignity, and governments of all political stripes must deliver on that fundamental obligation. You can't, like this current government, just eliminate the Saskatchewan rental housing supplement and not expect it to hurt people.

That rental housing supplement meant a person with a disability could receive payments under SAID. They were able to combine both programs, allowing them to afford to pay their rent, live independently, and contribute to their community.

However the actions of this government are pushing the most vulnerable into making an impossible decision. Choices like

finding a job that pays just enough so they can qualify for the Saskatchewan housing benefit, only to receive less funding than they were receiving before, despite an increased cost of living. Or they can rely solely on SAID, and that hasn't kept up with the cost of living and actively discourages work.

Talk about a disgusting consequence of this government's policy. A political party that applauds employment and initiative, a party that says it promotes entrepreneurial hustle and ambition, now supervises the administration of a program that actively discourages work. It's mind-boggling, Mr. Speaker.

SAID has unreasonable income restrictions. People working more than 10 hours a week start losing benefits. The Premier and the Finance minister have created a trap, a trap that many won't be able to escape. If you're someone with a significant and enduring disability, low vision, mobility challenges, mental health concerns, the system will keep you in poverty. You will be permanently submerged below the poverty line, gasping for air, gasping for hope. That is the legacy of this budget, and that will be the lasting legacy of this Premier and this Finance minister.

People need real, lasting support, not a \$1,000 loan. They need support that actually helps them get ahead. Helping people achieve their basic human needs — shelter, opportunity, education — is not just the right thing to do. Helping deliver basic human rights makes economic sense. When people have stability, they can live independently. They can get on track. That saves money in the long run.

Mr. Speaker, getting out of poverty is difficult. It's not impossible, but it's hard to do. When some people start getting left behind, they stay left behind. They're more likely to rely on social assistance for longer. They're more likely to experience homelessness. Poverty increases the severity of mental health challenges. It aggravates chronic illness and addictions. Poverty leads to run-ins with the justice system. It increases rates of interpersonal violence and gender-based violence, which Saskatchewan already has the highest rates, double the national average.

This budget fails to invest in the people of the province. The decisions we make following this debate will have real consequences. The harm won't disappear; it will shift. Burden will land elsewhere, usually to the people who are the least equipped to deal with it. The burdens caused by this budget will land on the health care system, already stretched too thin. Our overworked front-line employees will now face even greater demands despite seeing little to no meaningful increase to their budget.

The burdens will land on municipalities, which will be forced to spend more on policing, crime prevention, mental health and addictions services. Police will be forced into responding to housing encampments. The extra hours worked will find their way onto property tax bills. These bills will be paid by the very people this government claims to support.

This is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. It makes me sad and it makes me angry. I am proud to say I am from Saskatchewan. It's my home and it always will be. When I ran for office, I had a simple goal. I wanted to make this province even better than it is. I

wanted to make this province as great as it could be. I believe with all my heart that everyone in Saskatchewan should have a fair shot. They want hope. Mr. Speaker, this budget falls short on providing that.

Any member who votes in favour of this budget is choosing to accept the inevitable consequences — higher child poverty, increased gender-based violence, more homelessness, an increase of mental health and addictions. Those are clear consequences and it is not a choice I am willing to make. Mark my words. The people of Saskatchewan are watching. They will hold these members to account.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude by stating that I cannot and will not be supporting this budget. I will be supporting the amendment put forward by the member from Regina Mount Royal.

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

Kevin Kasun: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to start off with . . . As is my tradition and as an act of reconciliation, I want to begin by first acknowledging that the constituency I represent, Prince Albert Carlton and its location on Treaty 6 territory, and today that I speak on Treaty 4 territory, both the homeland of the Métis people.

[14:45]

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's economy is strong, our communities are safe, and our future is secure. And our government is working hard to keep that momentum going, both in the city of Prince Albert and across this great province. Mr. Speaker, we continue seeing continued record job growth and low unemployment, proving again that Saskatchewan is the best place to live, work, and raise a family in Canada. That strength is making a real difference.

Mr. Speaker, before I talk more about how great this province is performing, I must first send out a few thank yous to some of the people that help me represent my constituency. Mr. Speaker, none of us would be here without great people working with us.

For me, I must first of all thank my wife, Shevawn. Every one of us who represents our constituency needs our family, that family who supports us and who obviously believes in the work that needs to be done as much as we do. And, Mr. Speaker, my wife is no exception. She has a busy career on her own, and with my demands as working as a government MLA, her responsibilities have also increased. I want to put on record how much she means to me and to the people of Prince Albert Carlton for the sacrifices that she does to support our government.

Mr. Speaker, none of us would be here to do our job to the level it needs to be done without our constituency assistants — or, as the government has acronyms for everything — our CAs. Mr. Speaker, they are the front line to our constituents' concerns. They are the ones that get the good phone calls as well as the calls that sometimes require some help to help through navigating an issue they may have or just a need that needs to be fixed.

Mr. Speaker, I am blessed to have a CA that can do all that. I

want to thank my CA, Genesis, who works tirelessly to help anyone who calls and who is always watching to make sure I do everything right. I want to say thank you, Genesis, who will probably tell me to fix my tie when I'm done here.

Mr. Speaker, our government has made a commitment to Saskatchewan. Our government is protecting the people of Saskatchewan with this budget with 2.5 billion in annual affordability measures; investing in Saskatchewan's workforce; 8.5 billion in health care — that's up 393 million; enhancing law enforcement to protect communities; protecting vulnerable people; 2.5 billion in school operating funding, which is up \$62 million; and most importantly protecting Saskatchewan's strong financial position.

Before I talk more about our great province, let me talk about how the constituency that I represent, Prince Albert Carlton in the city of Prince Albert, is affected by this. Mr. Speaker, we are investing \$1.9 million to establish the hospital public safety teams, the HPST, in Prince Albert as well as in Regina and Saskatoon. These teams will expand on-site security capacity in response to rising violence, destructive behaviour, and increasing police calls. By coordinating with municipal police services, the hospital public safety teams will enhance the Ministry of Health and Saskatchewan Health Authority's ability to maintain safe, secure hospital environments.

Mr. Speaker, \$238.4 million for the Victoria Hospital redevelopment project. Once this project is complete, the number of beds at Victoria Hospital will increase to 242, up from 173. Advancement of planning for urgent care centres in Prince Albert and across the province.

Mr. Speaker, \$401 million capital investments across our province on our highways, including the twinning of Highway 2 north of Prince Albert, which is a very busy highway to the peoples of the North and to lake country. The twinning will help with the safety of travel on such a busy roadway.

123.8 million in new and ongoing school capital projects, including design work on the Prince Albert francophone pre-K to 12 [pre-kindergarten to grade 12] school to replace the École Valois. This facility will provide space for 300 students with the ability to expand to 350 students, as well as 51 daycare spaces. Mr. Speaker, that's huge.

We're also including 2.7 million for addictions treatment funding and support for the recovery-oriented system of care, which includes funding the complex-needs facility in Prince Albert and North Battleford. Mr. Speaker, renovation work is already under way on those projects. It will have dedicated on-site health care professionals and security personnel to provide care for up to 15 individuals in crisis.

Mr. Speaker, there's plenty of good news for the people of Prince Albert in this budget. And the envy of all other provinces, our municipal revenue-sharing program, a program that provides sustainable, predictable funding for our municipalities. Mr. Speaker, this year my city of Prince Albert received \$10.183 million. That's an increase of over \$750,000 from last year. If this program wasn't in effect, just imagine the strain it would put on municipalities to raise those funds through the mill rate. To put some perspective on this, since 2007 our government

has issued over \$5 billion in revenue sharing.

You want to know one of the most important things we are giving to not only the people of Prince Albert but all the people of Saskatchewan? We've introduced the patients-first health care plan. This is a plan that outlines our commitment to transform health care through accelerating the pace of change, improvement, and innovation. Patients are the heart of every decision we make. It builds on our commitment to ensure every resident has access to a primary care provider and timely access to surgery.

The patients-first health care plan also profiles an incredible process we've made over the last several years through initiatives like the health human resources plan. Through dedicated efforts and focus, we are committed to ensuring Saskatchewan residents get the right care at the right time and in the right place.

Mr. Speaker, we aren't giving people doom and gloom. With everything that is happening in the world, from wars to market uncertainty to trade inconsistencies, it is a different kind of world than what we thought it would be. But you know what doesn't help? Not believing in the people of this province to pull through tough times. Not giving the people the policies and the resources to pull through.

Our government gives people hope. When you have hope, people are able to recognize the possibilities that are available to them. With other provinces cutting services and raising taxes even to the point of breaking the promises that they made to their people during the elections . . . But our government, through policies and creating an environment where private investment can grow, brings hope to the people of this great province.

And the proof is there. With 60 major projects bringing in over 62 billion in investments to our province, this not only proves that this government believes in its people, but the investors believe in us as well. Do you know why they believe in this province, Mr. Speaker? Because our government is protecting the priorities that matter most to the people of Saskatchewan.

As both our Premier and Finance minister have said time and time again, this government had a choice, and this government chose Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, this government could have raised taxes or this government could have cut services, but this government chose to protect Saskatchewan — protecting Saskatchewan by keeping every affordability promise we made, investing a record amount in health care, and keeping taxes low for every family in our province.

Mr. Speaker, we are protecting our economy and jobs. We have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, maintaining the small-business tax at 1 per cent, 125 million investment in workforce development, and one of the largest capital budgets in Saskatchewan's history — 4.3 billion invested in essential infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, we are protecting health care. A record 8.5 billion for health care, including 636 million for investments in hospitals, long-term care, and health infrastructure; largest nurse practitioner expansion in provincial history; and funding for approximately 200 more addiction treatment spaces.

Mr. Speaker, we are protecting communities: 310 million to support RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] operations and First Nations policing, doubling the volunteer first responders' tax credit, and nearly 400 million in municipal revenue sharing.

Mr. Speaker, we are protecting families with lower taxes. Saskatchewan is the most affordable province for a family of four — 200 million in savings through personal income tax reductions and indexation, and doubling the active families benefit tax credit.

Mr. Speaker, we are protecting education: 50 additional specialized support classrooms to help students succeed, \$9 million to enhance school food programs, signing a new federal agreement to keep \$10-per-day child care in place, and 119 million to protect post-secondary affordability, including 68 million for graduate retention program.

Mr. Speaker, other provinces are not doing as well as Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the deficit is a very important number, but just as important is the per capita number. This is the number that the deficit affects each citizen of the province that they reside in.

Mr. Speaker, New Brunswick had a deficit of \$1.4 billion, which is a per capita of \$1,611. This would be equivalent to Saskatchewan having a \$2 billion deficit. Nova Scotia had a deficit of 1.19 billion, which is a per capita of \$1,089.89. This would be equivalent to a 1.38 billion deficit in Saskatchewan. Alberta had a deficit of 9.4 billion, which is a per capita of \$1,864.76. That would be equivalent to a \$2.36 billion deficit in Saskatchewan.

One of the largest and most unfathomable was NDP British Columbia, which had a deficit of a whopping 13.3 billion, which is a per capita of \$2,343.23. That would be equivalent to 2.96 billion in Saskatchewan. And as of right now, I don't have the NDP Manitoba numbers, but hopefully somebody else today will have those by the time it's their turn. In Saskatchewan, our per capita debt was \$646.80, the lowest amongst the provinces.

Mr. Speaker, we have the highest credit rating in Canada. Moody's rating is Aaa1; S&P Global, AA. Or sorry, Moody's rating was Aa1; S&P Global, AA; Morningstar, AA. Mr. Speaker, we are doing very well.

Mr. Speaker, on October 28th, 2024 the people of this province made a choice. They made a choice to choose, once again, hope over fear. They made a choice to keep going in a direction of growth. They made a choice to keep our economy strong. They put their trust in this government that doesn't change its mind as the wind blows but knew this government will keep our province going in the right direction.

And I thank not only my constituency for choosing me, but I thank all the other constituents that made the same choice of hope over fear. That hope is what has allowed this province to have the economy we have and the excitement that we are the best place to live, play, and raise a family in Canada. What they didn't vote for, Mr. Speaker: they didn't vote for us to go backwards. We can't go back to the days of being a have-not province.

While other economies across North America are being rattled

by tariffs and uncertainty, Saskatchewan is growing. Our GDP [gross domestic product] hit an all-time record of 90.5 billion. And again I must say, we have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, this isn't by accident. We keep our trade offices open. We diversified our export markets. We secured a \$2.6 billion Cameco uranium deal with India and many more mine start-ups in our province. Mr. Speaker, entrepreneurs and businesses know what Saskatchewan has to offer.

Mr. Speaker, I would be amiss if I didn't thank our Premier and the ministers that are directly involved with this ever-changing world. I want to thank their families as well as the MLAs' families for the sacrifices that they have made.

I am thankful to have the opportunity to speak here today. God bless Prince Albert, this Assembly, our great province of Saskatchewan, and Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I truly hope that because of all . . . As I want to say, Mr. Speaker, I truly hope that because all of us in this House are leaders within our community and in this province, that we can work together to make this province a wonderful place to live, work, and raise our families. And it starts right here in this room. One of the ways we can do this is by not using derogatory words to describe others, to stop the spread of inflammatory comments that target individuals.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, let me repeat what others have said and that I will be supporting the motion put forward by the Minister of Finance and seconded by the member from Carrot River. I will not be supporting the opposition amendments. Thank you.

[15:00]

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

Sally Housser: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm so pleased to rise today on behalf of the constituents of Regina University to respond to the '26-27 budget. The last real speech I gave after the Throne Speech, I was in the coveted 9:30 at night, bottom-of-the-ninth-inning-in-the-fourth-game-of-the-World-Series spot. So I'm sure there's hundreds if not thousands more people watching now than perhaps at that time.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to begin by congratulating the new Minister of Energy and Resources on his appointment to cabinet. And I'm very much looking forward to the work at estimates and committee, of sometimes the more thorough or in-depth part of the parliamentary process, and looking forward to working with him on our great energy and resource sector here in the province of Saskatchewan.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I did just want to send the Manitoba NDP and our whole NDP family my deepest sympathies on the death of Amanda Lathlin. She was the MLA for The Pas, the first Indigenous, First Nations woman elected to the Manitoba legislature, and the first cabinet minister. She was a tremendous leader in both the Manitoba legislature and with the Opaskwayak First Nation. So my love goes out to all the folks who are dealing with her rather sudden death this week.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that putting together a budget is a complex and challenging process at the best of times, let alone with the amount of global uncertainty we're facing. So my thanks, my sympathies do go to all the people in the public service for their work in developing this budget.

I would also like to thank our caucus staff. Their dedication and late nights of our research and issues management and communications team is unmatched. And I'm always so incredibly proud of the work they do each and every day, but particularly in this spring session period.

I would also really like to thank my constituency assistant, Daisy Bowman, for all her support in the lead-up to this legislative session and for all the incredible work that she does for the constituents of Regina University. Mr. Speaker, Daisy came relatively new to the political world or the NDP process, but she has really taken to the job itself and the whole political world with such gusto and learns incredibly quickly. And I really don't know what I would do without her, Mr. Speaker.

I do want to get into the budget but I do want to say a quick thank you and shout-out to my family, my ever-patient and very wise husband, Noah; to my wonderful stepkids, Mila, who's in her first year at university, and Isaac, who's playing football at LeBoldus.

And to my family and particularly my mother, who is now living on her own in Newfoundland. She's got one daughter in Regina and one daughter in Abu Dhabi in the UAE [United Arab Emirates]. And she knows that this time of year my calls become perhaps a little less frequent. But she did say to me the other day, "Sally, your sister's living in a war zone and I hear from her more than you." So I'm going to try to step that up a little bit.

I do want to bring that lighthearted thing into talking about that challenging global climate that we find ourselves in. Having a family member and her family, young family living in the Middle East certainly does bring that conflict closer to the home, as it does for thousands of people in Saskatchewan who have family that are living in areas that are embroiled by that conflict.

And we can talk very frequently about how this conflict affects the economics of the world, but I think it's always a good reminder to think of the human cost and the displacement, starvation, the fear. My sister herself, what she has to deal with more than anything else is a 7-year-old and a 6-month-old making it through the night with constant air raid sirens. She has the means and the ability to deal with it, but there are many people that are not so fortunate, Mr. Speaker.

So I just want to acknowledge that, you know, in the context of where we find ourselves, we understand that there are global things that are without our control that affect our economy, affect the way we operate. But we do have to look at what we can control within our own borders here, which brings me to the budget. So I'll discuss today the numbers as presented by the Finance minister. But, Mr. Speaker, you will have to excuse me if I'm finding it difficult to have full faith in what is being projected in '26-27.

Last year the Finance minister did project a \$12 million surplus, a number that almost everybody at the time found fairly hard to

take. But then that surplus — or fictional surplus — turned into over a billion in debt in just 12 short months. And it's extremely worrying to me to think what over \$800 million in deficit named in this budget will turn into by this time next year, how many special warrants we're going to see, or how much unbooked spending.

Conversely I'm tremendously proud of the Saskatchewan NDP's record of being excellent fiscal managers, Mr. Speaker. And you don't have to take my word for it. The perpetual lefty cheerleaders that are the Fraser Institute will tell you the same thing: NDP governments have a better record of balancing provincial budgets.

In 1991 NDP premier Roy Romanow rescued the province from the brink of bankruptcy after Grant Devine had ballooned the budget from 4 billion to 12.5 billion in just nine years. When the NDP took the reins of power in 1991, Roy Romanow took that mess that was left to him by Conservatives. He balanced the budget in three years and then had six consecutive surpluses that allowed the government to reduce the debt by \$4 billion. Reduce it. Reduce it. We haven't heard that in a while, hey.

Since taking office, the Sask Party has steadily increased the debt. The current Premier has managed to double the debt in just over eight years, taking our provincial debt to over \$40 billion — 40 billion. Everybody, but especially real fiscal conservatives, should be horrified at this. Our debt is now so high that for the first time ever, Saskatchewan taxpayers will be on the hook for well over a billion dollars a year just to service the debt, Mr. Speaker. That's nearly three times what the government is spending on policing, nearly three times what they're spending on economic development.

And what are we getting, Mr. Speaker, for the Sask Party's gross fiscal irresponsibility? Well it's another bad-news budget, Mr. Speaker. This budget does nothing for the people of Saskatchewan except for driving their costs up even more. Everything your family needs is more expensive, and there's no new cost-of-living relief in this budget. There isn't a dime in gas tax relief, despite the high gas prices and windfall revenues, Mr. Speaker. And that doesn't just affect the family budget and getting to and from work. That really has a major impact on our farms and small businesses as well, who are already hurting.

There's new taxes and fees on hunting and fishing and driving, and all of this after it was promised that costs wouldn't be hiked. And Saskatchewan people are already struggling with higher power bills, auto insurance, taxes on groceries and kids' clothes. And shout-out to the Manitoba NDP for seeing the light and agreeing to take the PST off groceries. That is a real, significant, practical thing that will make a difference in people's wallets right away. People have been suffering with those tax hikes since the 2017 tax grab, which was the largest tax hike in Saskatchewan history.

Now on to health care, which is something that is the thing that I hear most consistently when I'm talking to constituents, when I run into people in the grocery store in my riding, people who come into my constituency office, people who send us emails. Health care is still the number one thing. And I tell you, Mr. Speaker, they're not getting in touch with me to tell me how good it's going.

You know, this budget, it's not even just keeping our health care system on life support. What we're seeing here is a flatline. We're at a point that is no longer sustainable. And the patients-first plan — and I have to ask myself always who was coming first in the health care system before that — but I feel with the health care plan, you know, the *Peanuts* comics with Lucy whipping away the football from Charlie Brown, and he's going, maybe this time she's going to let me kick it.

And I think the Saskatchewan government wants people to believe that this time, despite presenting a plan to fix health care in 2009, 2012, and 2015, that this time, guys, we're actually going to get it done. Remember that they'd promised to completely eliminate emergency room wait times to zero by 2017.

You know, and what we see here — I mean all over departments but particularly in health care — is a government that is penny-wise and pound foolish. What I mean by that is that the cost of putting in all these Band-Aids on Band-Aids instead of the major investments and generational investments, we need to see to get our health care system back on track. And that's why this deficit and the amount of debt that this government has piled on is so concerning to me.

There is times to go into deficit spending. There is times to increase the debt. But you have to have something to show for it. And instead we have this: penny-wise and pound foolish, sending people to Calgary to get mammograms at 10 times the cost of actually fixing the system here, let alone blowing a tremendous amount of money on an AIMS [administrative information management system] system which still isn't working and travelling nurses' contracts instead of creating the workforce that we need here.

The Sask Party over 18 years has broken our health care system, and despite 2009, 2012, 2015, and now 2026, they cannot be trusted to fix it. We need actual big, bold, and generational change to get our health system out of last place. And we do not see that in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing I hear about a lot in the riding of Regina University, in my constituency, is crime and safety. And people are really feeling that anxiety now. I hear it all the time of, "I used to be able to leave my door unlocked," you know, and I think that that's something that people really miss. And you know, Regina University is not . . . it's more suburban than anything else. It's not right downtown.

But that feeling of safety and that worry about crime, what I hear from people is that, you know, even if we're worried about something, even if somebody's garage gets broken into or my bike gets stolen or something like that, we're not even bothering to call the police anymore because they're simply not going to come for that. They are dealing with . . . police officers are becoming de facto emergency responders, mental health counsellors. They are doing jobs that they were simply not hired and trained to do. And that leaves the other parts of the city and the other issues of crime unaddressed.

And you know, again this goes to the penny-wise and pound foolish issue. We need to make people feel safer in their homes and we need to get tough on crime. But in order to do that, you

have to get tough on the causes of crime. And that sounds like a trite thing to say, but we all know and every bit of statistic shows it, that if people have a roof over their head, then they're less likely to turn to drugs and have addictions issues and mental health issues.

So housing, you know, the importance of people being able to get housing is so key. And if we invested the money in that on the front end, and again that would be great if we saw deficit spending that really had a generational and bold plan to address the housing crisis we see. That would be something I'd be willing to accept because it would save us money almost immediately, but certainly further down the road, Mr. Speaker.

The other major issue of course as we've talked a lot about today is education. And you know, this budget has nothing new to support teachers and students, which again I hear constantly about overcrowded classrooms and people not getting the supports they need, Mr. Speaker.

You know, we have more than 140 schools that are crumbling, and this budget is going to allow them to fall into further disrepair. Again, not spending the money up front allows the costs continue to grow. Once a school gets past a certain point of disrepair, it becomes more and more expensive to fix, to the point where you might as well knock it down and then the cost of building a new school. And that's what we see happening way too often.

And you know, it was disturbing to me to hear the government talk about us trying to create an urban-rural divide on this issue. This is not about an urban-rural divide. This is about 140 other schools that were identified, that needed work, that needed the money before the one in the Premier's riding. And I understand that in that constituency, in that town, that school board, that's what they were advocating for. But every one of those 140 schools on the list have a school board advocating for another school that is their number one priority. And they are just as passionate and their kids deserve it.

[15:15]

But the thing is, this is about priorities. Obviously we can't fix every school at one time. We can't build all new schools for everybody that wants one. But what people expect is a premier that governs for the entire province, not just for his riding. This is about having a school in our resource-rich North that doesn't have running water, and the Premier's riding getting a shiny new one. That's what this is about. This is not about urban-rural; this is about a government setting priorities and sticking to them.

You know, and as a province and a country, we need to be focused on the future. And we must find the opportunities to grow and adapt and seize the chance when we can. This budget is short-sighted at best and squanders our most exciting opportunities.

With the change in federal government leadership there has been some excitement and even something approaching consensus around the country and the need to build trade-enabling infrastructure. But this budget says nothing about trade-enabling infrastructure. There's nothing about ports and rails and the barest mention of pipeline.

But even if you leave the big nation-building projects out of the equation, Mr. Speaker, even some of the getting back to basics of how we grow our industry, particularly the mining industry . . . And everybody's very excited — I sure am — about rare earth and critical minerals in the North. But I tell you what: in order to develop that properly, we're going to need more than one dirt road going north.

And you know, what we saw today in the budget, and my colleague talked about it quite eloquently, is at that time when we should be developing our North for Canadian sovereignty, for our economic security and prosperity, that we actually saw a cut, a \$36 million cut to highways and airports in the North. And so not just for the people in the North, who again deserve to have the same services — their children deserve to have the same schools as people in the South.

But this is also about bottlenecking and hamstringing our most precious resources that we are very excited and proud about. But you know, when you're talking to, say, the trucking association or people in industry who say, you know, we still need basics like pullouts for our drivers to be able to stop on the side of the highway, you know, or this road isn't safe to drive on with the trucks we have now, let alone if we want to increase that, Mr. Speaker, that is a problem.

The other issue I want to talk about in terms of a missed opportunity in developing our resources . . . And this is something that every single industry person I've talked to in my portfolio, every single union, building trades union I've talked to, every single First Nations I've talked to has said, you know what? It's great. It's all well and good to talk about building all these things. We don't have the people here to do it. We don't have the skills here to do it right now. It is the elephant in the room that is rumbling towards us. And you know, I was talking to one First Nations business leader, and what he said to me is that, you know, we don't have a labour gap; we have a skills training gap. We have the people here in the province willing to do it.

And industry is doing a good job at this. First Nations are doing a good . . . George Gordon Developments corp, George Gordon First Nation, they have a fantastic program where they are training young people. They've got a classroom of 30 people they waded in from Zoom how to work on the new solar farm that they own. That's fantastic and we need to see more of this.

Industry is stepping up. First Nations are stepping up. Labour is there ready to do the training. They need a partner in this government. There is so much potential in our energy and resources market, and we really have to think about maximizing it so that all the people of Saskatchewan can see that benefit, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm going to digress for a second because it's just something that bugs me as a former communications person, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party's inability to stay on their own message over the course of this budget period has been fascinating to me. And I know you get sick of us saying bad-news budget. But that's what political messaging is, right.

But back when I was, you know, a deputy director of communications or a press secretary for a minister of Finance, I would spend weeks if not months meticulously planning out the

rollout. And it's wild to me that 48 hours before the budget they chose to stick with some inside baseball and step on their own budget's messaging. They drove the AI [artificial intelligence] story down to like third in the day.

And you know, perhaps I'm missing something in that respect, you know, and I'm never sure if we're lost and reckless or can't be taken seriously. I should be putting quotes around those lest they try to say that I'm saying that about myself here, Mr. Speaker, lost and reckless. Today we're dividing urban and rural. That's new, you know.

And what's with this budget again? It's protecting, right? Protecting. Right. Anyways I'm sorry it bugs me so much. I was such a sticker for message discipline back in my day, and you know . . . But anyways, back to that kind of messaging. And that leads me to the point today is today was the first time I heard the line, "This is the best budget . . ." I don't know, was it in the history of life? Or in the country, in the province?

But the audacity to say that, and the audacity to say that Saskatchewan has the strongest economy, when we have the highest rate of economic anxiety in the country. We have the highest rate of people defaulting on their mortgages five years running. We have a population in decline, a trend now for two quarters in a row. The highest rate of child poverty, the highest rate of food bank use, the highest crime rates, the highest rates of domestic violence and sexual assault, the longest surgical wait times, and schools that are crumbling unless you're in the Premier's riding.

Mr. Speaker, whether the Sask Party government wants to believe it or not, all of those are economic indicators, and those are economic indicators that real people, real citizens feel every day. And for the government to continue to try to tell them that they've never had it so good, well, Mr. Speaker, it just doesn't add up.

It's clear that this budget isn't growth that works for everyone. This budget isn't delivering for you. And this budget protects absolutely no one. It's clear that it's time for change and for a Saskatchewan NDP government that's focused on the future, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I will not be supporting the budget and will be supporting the motion from the member from Regina Mount Royal. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Sean Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is this thing working? It feels different over here compared to being over there. You're too far away.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying what a privilege it is to rise in this Assembly and speak to a budget I believe in. Before I get into my remarks I want to thank a few people. My constituency assistants Clarissa, Keri, and Liz, they work hard every day for the people of Canora-Pelly and I would not be able to do this job without them.

To my constituency association, Katie, Dave, Rachel, Renae, Chris, and Dwayne, thank you for everything you do. To my

office staff — Regina, Michelle, James, Cole, and Steveko, our building manager, who keeps everything running — thank you.

And to the team at the Ministry of SaskBuilds and Procurement: Rebecca, Jill, Paul, Karen, Patrick, Meaghan, and Dave. I came into this file as a new minister, and you guys and girls really made that easy. And I'm grateful for all of you.

And, okay, to Renee. She keeps me honest. She keeps me grounded. And none of this happens without her. So now I'm clear; I could have stopped right now. I already did everything I needed to do. But I also want to thank my mother-in-law. The member for Lumsden-Morse set a really high bar. Janet's a good mother-in-law, and like so many things in life, I'll only have one, and I'll never have an opportunity to compare her to anyone, but she's great.

Mr. Speaker, I'm a little bit of a history nerd. So much of what happens in this building moves me in ways that probably surprise people, but probably not. Last week on budget day, I had a chance to meet Gary Lane, the Finance minister who delivered his budget in 1986 — 40 years ago to this month — when I was six years old. I will not ask how old the member for Battleford was at the time, Mr. Speaker. But to be able to touch history like that is something I do not take lightly.

A few months ago, Mr. Speaker, you and I both had the opportunity to deliver a signed copy of the Throne Speech to Rod Gantfoer, the very first Finance minister our party had. That was a remarkable day.

I think it's the member for Saskatoon Willowgrove that talks about standing on the shoulders of giants, Mr. Speaker. I have a giant in Ken Krawetz and you have one too, sir. We're both very fortunate to have them in our corners.

One of the things that was really on my mind for the past while was truly how unbelievably special my road crew was. I learned the hard way how to do good work by doing very poor work to start with. Hey, 2007 Lee showed up, which was a great turn of events, and ironically something else very good happened that year.

An Hon. Member: — What was it?

Hon. Sean Wilson: — Well you tell me. Soon Greg, Matty, and Devon followed, TJ, Ronnie, Curtis, Ben, and Darwin. Darwin is from the Kelvington-Wadena constituency, and he constantly refers to me as Senator Wilson, but he spells it wrong, and that name has stuck in northeast Saskatchewan. I've had a lot of time to reflect on what made this group of people very special and very efficient. Sure, a lot of them will tell me how much they miss me and that they don't have their bus driver anymore, but the reality is they're all very special and have their own unique skills. All I ever did was hang around with them and eat all their food.

There's something very special about a good crew that knows how to get things done, but there's always something more special in a story like sending a young summer kid to Naicam to get steaks so that we could stop and eat. And it's also more special to remember that one whiner that said the steaks were either too tough or too burnt or too red, so the next time we get

steaks we just make sure we get him a single rotten cheeseburger.

The best work is done with friends. The best jokes are the ones that last 20 years. Making money and making production is good, but the best type of work is the stuff that is incidental to the fun you're having every day.

What I did not expect . . . And he's not even in here. What I did not expect when I came here was to find that kind of camaraderie again. Oh I wasn't supposed to say that. Having the Minister of Energy as a seatmate has been a lot of fun. He's got me to do things I haven't done in 25 years, including curling. And I have to say I did not skip a beat from grade 12. I am an extremely high-end, very capable curler.

An Hon. Member: — How did you feel the next day?

Hon. Sean Wilson: — Yeah, a little sore. But the entire crew on this side of the House is very special in its own way, and I'm genuinely fortunate to be part of this team.

I was a little bit choked when I got moved over here from over there. But trust me, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot more shenanigans over here that you can't hear about. And it's good. And I am so close, so close to the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood that I get to hear his signature catchphrase up close every single day. And what is that?

An Hon. Member: — Right.

Hon. Sean Wilson: — There we go. Right. So during the speech you don't have to clap, but I would love for my colleagues to give me a "right."

Some Hon. Members: — Right.

Hon. Sean Wilson: — There we go. I want to thank the Minister of Finance and this entire government for putting together a plan that does what budgets are supposed to do — protect people, build things, and prepare us for what comes next.

Mr. Speaker, I've spent over 30 years in heavy construction and highway building, and there's one question that matters to me the most, more than any other in this work: are we getting value for what we're spending? That's the question I bring to this file every day. And when I look at the 2026-27 budget, the answer is yes.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about where I come from because that's what grounds me in everything I do in this building. I represent Canora-Pelly, a constituency that runs from Canora to Kamsack to Preeceville and dozens of communities in between. It's home of some of the hardest working people I've ever met. And it's my job to fight for them.

So let me tell this Assembly what this budget means for those people. Mr. Speaker, every municipality, every RM [rural municipality], every village in my constituency is getting more revenue sharing this year — every single one. Canora goes from 618,000 to 673,000. Kamsack goes from 526,000 to 573,000. And smaller communities that matter just as much, total goes from 26,000 to 28. And Lintlaw goes from 46 to 50,000.

And, Mr. Speaker, Buchanan. In 2009 the mayor at the time,

Adam Kosar, local electrician and just genuinely a good guy, had decided he wasn't going to run another term. He thought I might be interested in running, so he got me my papers.

[15:30]

I remember exactly who signed those papers: Adam Kosar, electrician extraordinaire; as we called him in town, Sparky. Eleanor Sliva, my best friend's mom. Vangy Wolkowski, one of my first bosses' moms. Louis Roebuck. And my double neighbour, George Bilan. You might want to ask about the double neighbour. I'll talk about that sometime in the next four years, or two and a half, I guess — or eight. I guess we'll see what happens, right. But I'm only expecting the good things, you know, 16 or 20.

But anyway I took those papers to the post office where my mom worked, right across from the town office. She was supportive, but her own father had been the mayor of Buchanan, and she did not particularly want me in municipal politics. She told me to leave the papers with her and think about it before I handed them in.

So I left to go to work. And it was a paving job at Marcelin where I was sitting when those papers were in the post office. Apparently it was 4:25, just before the deadline, when Sparky walked into the post office. He told my mom how happy he was that I filed my papers. She held up the papers and said, "He's not doing it." Adam grabbed them, ran across the street, and handed them in himself. I imagine those papers were pretty torn up with the fighting over keeping them in the post office two more minutes or getting them across the road.

And just like that there was an election. I really didn't know what I was doing, but I got lucky and I won. And, Mr. Speaker, I don't think I'd be standing here today if it wasn't for Sparky. That year Buchanan's revenue sharing was \$30,000. This year it's \$78,000. That's unreal. Where's my "right"?

Some Hon. Members: — Right.

Hon. Sean Wilson: — There we go. Kent Zuravloff became the mayor; Nick Woloschuk was the other councillor. And it legitimately felt like the most important position a person could have. And of those five people that signed, four are gone. I can't believe how fast time flies.

Across the constituency . . . Right. Right. Revenue sharing increased from 9.75 million to over 10.6 — nearly \$850,000 more, no strings attached — for local government to spend on local priorities. That's what happens when an economy grows. Three-quarters of one per cent of this PST flows to municipalities. When Saskatchewan grows, they grow. And Saskatchewan is growing.

Mr. Speaker, we are a long way from where this province was when the other side last ran it. A long way. And I'm pretty sure that distance is exactly what bothers them the most.

On the health side: 4.5 million for 25 new nurse practitioner positions in rural communities like Canora, Kamsack, and Preeceville. That's the primary care coming into communities that have been fighting it for years.

Canora Composite School roof and exterior repairs are being completed this year. Child care spaces are growing, 66 new spaces in development in the constituency including 56 in Ebenezer and 10 in Pelly. Mr. Speaker, when the NDP were last in government, Canora had exactly zero regulated child care spaces — zero. Today there are 250. I do not raise that to relitigate history. I raise it because it's actually a very good illustration of what a plan actually looks like over time.

On roads, the rural integrated roads program is putting 353,000 into the RM of Garry and 425,000 into the RM of Insinger. Real work on roads that real farmers use every day. Nurses hired.

An Hon. Member: — Right.

Hon. Sean Wilson: — Say right. Schools repaired.

Some Hon. Members: — Right.

Hon. Sean Wilson: — Child care spaces added.

Some Hon. Members: — Right.

Hon. Sean Wilson: — Roads maintained.

Some Hon. Members: — Right.

Hon. Sean Wilson: — And more money for local councils to spend where they know it's needed.

Some Hon. Members: — Right.

Hon. Sean Wilson: — That's what the budget looks like here in Canora-Pelly.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to speak as the Minister of SaskBuilds and Procurement. The '26-27 capital plan is 4.3 billion, nearly 1.8 billion in executive government infrastructure. Over 2.5 billion through the Crown Corporations. We're on track toward 30 billion in infrastructure investment by 2030. We've committed 24.9 billion since 2021. We will get there.

My ministry is responsible for the planning, design, and delivery of major infrastructure projects in health, education, and government services — every major hospital, every major capital school. We're the ones who take the vision and build it. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear about what that means. This is construction, procurement, and getting shovels in the ground on budget, on time, and delivering for the Saskatchewan taxpayers. That is the standard I hold this ministry to every day because it's the exact same standard I held myself to for 30 years before I got here.

Earlier this year I had the opportunity to tour the Yorkton Regional Health Centre with . . . [inaudible] . . . and I have to say it's one of the best tours I've taken since being elected, not just as a minister but as an MLA. What struck me most was the people running that facility. They have pride in their work. The care they put into every corner of the building, that's not something that you can manufacture. You either have it or you don't. And the team in Yorkton has it.

When you walk through a facility with people who genuinely

love what they do, that energy is contagious. You leave feeling more committed to making sure they have what they need to keep doing it. When people talk about good health care, the conversation usually goes straight to doctors and nurses, but the people who run these facilities day in and day out, they are the unsung heroes of the whole system. If they don't show up, there's no health care.

Mr. Speaker, right now Canada's economy is struggling, growth is slow, and unemployment is near 7 per cent. And families are feeling the pinch. And then there's Saskatchewan — lowest unemployment in Canada, population up by over 230,000, private investment over 18 billion last year. Revenue sharing up in every single community. Our capital plan is building hospitals, schools, and long-term care homes across the province.

The members opposite will tell you that this province needs more investment, more jobs, and more economic activity. Mr. Speaker, I agree completely. That's exactly why this government has spent 18 years building the conditions that make investment want to come here. That's exactly why private investment exceeded 18 billion. That's exactly why we have the lowest unemployment in Canada. The members opposite keep trying to build that argument, but we'll keep building this province.

There are wild times in this world right now — unstable economies, tariffs — but our budget is the best one delivered in the country. The Minister of Finance is keeping people first, continuing to invest, and staying the course. That is what responsible government looks like when times get hard. You protect people and you keep building. This government has that approach, and it's working.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite will tell you it's not enough, that we should be spending more and taxing less at the same time. I've sat through those speeches. I've listened very carefully. And I keep waiting for the part where it makes sense, but it does not come. Our plan is working. Our province is growing. And the job of the opposition, apparently, is to stand up every single day and explain to Saskatchewan people why that's actually bad news. The people of this province are not fooled and they never have been.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are very concerned about this province. They have been very concerned about this province since 2007. Saskatchewan people for their part have made their feelings known on that concern four times since then, and I take that as a pretty good indicator of where things stand. This was after '07. Five counting '07. Six coming very soon.

Mr. Speaker, I grew up in Buchanan, and I served as the mayor of a village where every dollar counted and every decision showed up at your door the next morning. Trust me; that's true. And when I ran for this seat, I said, Canora-Pelly is not just a region on a map; it's a source of inspiration and it's where my roots are. I meant that then and I mean that now.

This budget invests in the people of Canora-Pelly and the people of Saskatchewan. It builds what communities need to grow and what families need to thrive. It does that with a plan, with discipline and a clear understanding of what we can afford and what we owe the next generation.

I'm proud to support this budget, I'm proud to serve as the Minister of SaskBuilds and Procurement, and I'm proud every single day to represent Canora-Pelly. So, Mr. Speaker, I support the budget brought forward by the Minister of Finance, seconded by the member for Carrot River Valley. I will not support the amendment.

Mr. Speaker, I came into this Assembly from 30 years of building things — roads, highways, and infrastructure that lasts. I have never once finished a job by standing on the side of the road telling someone else they were doing it wrong. That, Mr. Speaker, appears to be the full extent of the opposition's plan. We'll keep building. They're welcome to watch. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member of Saskatoon Westview.

April ChiefCalf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll have a few comments to follow up on that in a moment. I'm pleased to rise in the Chamber today and have an opportunity to respond to the 2026-2027 budget.

I would like to start by acknowledging that we are gathered today on Treaty 4 territory and the homeland of the Métis. Now, Mr. Speaker, land acknowledgements have become a common way to begin many events and gatherings, and I do believe that it is important to recognize the lands that sustain us, the first peoples of these lands, and the relationships that we have with one another. But words are meaningless unless actions follow those words, and so part of my response today will focus on how we are not honouring those words and those relationships.

But before I begin my response, I do want to thank some people that make it possible for me to be here and do the work that I do.

So of course, first of all I want to thank my husband, Cal. Now I've noticed some folks get a little bit emotional when they talk about their spouses. And I do want to acknowledge my husband does a great deal for me. But I think that sometimes when I leave to come to Regina for a few days for session, it's a bit of a relief on his end because by the time I get home, I've got a lot of laundry to do and I'm a little bit tired and grumpy. But I really do want to thank him for all the support that he gives me.

I also want to thank my children, Matthias and Kathleena, and their partners for the many, many ways they encourage and support me. And they still help me with technology all the time.

And I also want to thank my sister Leslie and my brother-in-law Jim for always making sure I eat properly when I'm in Regina. Honestly I get my week's worth of vegetables eating with my sister on Sundays. I want to thank my dad for letting me stay with him while I'm in session. And while we're on the topic of birthdays, it will be my dad's 85th birthday this Friday, yeah.

I also want to thank all the people who have been assisting me in the office and helping the constituents, including Robyn, Aiden, James, Curtis, Ivan, and Wambui. And as well, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues here today and all of the staff who work tirelessly to serve our team and the members of our constituencies.

I want to thank the members of my constituency association who are so committed to our success. And I want to give a shout-out to Gracie and Max for coming to a fundraising event that we had last Friday night, because I'm sure they had better things as young folks than to help us serve popcorn and run the karaoke machine.

With regards to the constituency of Saskatoon Westview, I of course want to thank the residents that live there. The weather's gotten warm. I've been door knocking again, having great conversations with people on the doorstep, and I just want to thank them for taking that time to speak with me and share their concerns.

And I want to again acknowledge all the work done by the local community associations in my riding: Westview Heights, Dundonald, Massey Place, and Hampton Village. I was able to briefly attend an event last week in Dundonald that was organized by the Dundonald Community Association. And we had enough snow this year that we were able to have a horse-drawn sleigh ride. And it was really great to meet with people in the constituency there.

I'd like to express my appreciation to the people who have been hosting some wonderful events in Saskatoon and area that I've attended recently. I had great fun last weekend attending a fundraiser for the Possibilities youth recovery centre playing bingo. And you know, here was the great thing. I just went in and I sat at a table with some people that were obviously younger than me, and the first bingo card was '80s songs. And I felt kind of old because I knew what most of them were and they did not. But then when they brought out the next bingo card which was contemporary songs, you know, I was like, okay. I didn't know most of those, yeah.

I've also been attending Eid gatherings and prayers in Saskatoon and really want to thank everyone at those locations for welcoming my colleagues and me into their prayers and their mosques.

And I want to thank the organizers of India Night in Martensville for their hospitality, especially the Patel family who just wouldn't let me sit alone. They were worried that I was going to be sitting alone at a table until my colleagues arrived. And I just want to thank also the member from Saskatoon University-Sutherland and Saskatoon Chief Mistawasis for attending that event with me.

[15:45]

And that's one of the best parts of this job, isn't it? To be able to attend so many events in the province and meet so many great people. I've been engaging with a number of stakeholders in the area of housing, and I really want to thank them for the hard work they do, and often with very minimal government support. They keep people safe and housed in our province.

I had a great meeting last week. I met with a non-profit housing corporation. It's a Métis corporation called Gabriel Housing, and they offer safe and affordable housing here in Regina. Now the fun thing is that my husband and I rented from them in 1993 and 1994. And we were expecting our first child when they rented to us and we brought him home to that little house on Marshall Crescent here in Regina.

And they were very proud of us. Like they thought this was quite amazing that, you know, we came to them at a time where we were really financially strapped in our lives. I was on maternity leave and our benefits were just not enough to cover our expenses. And so we were able to get subsidized housing. And they look at us as a great success story because, you know, former tenant who's now an MLA. My husband works at the university; he's almost done his Ph.D. now. So they were quite excited to have this meeting.

And we know we had this great conversation. We know that if people have the right supports at critical points in their life, they can achieve their potential as opposed to falling between the cracks.

Now lastly, Mr. Speaker, before I move on to my response to the budget, I want to take a moment to speak about my good friend Val, who passed away in La Ronge two weeks ago. She was my biggest fan, and I know she will be missed by all who knew and loved her.

I met Val when she moved to La Ronge in 2003 to work as a reporter on the community newspaper. She was also a United Church minister, a mother, wife, grandmother, an amazing community organizer, and a great friend. And I can't help but think about the conversations Val and I would have had about this budget. And on that point, Mr. Speaker, I'll turn to the budget.

Well, Mr. Speaker, on our side we have been calling this budget a bad-news budget. But actually, you know, I don't disagree, but I've actually come up with something that I think is even more apt, and I call this budget simply divine.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I mentioned earlier I grew up in the '80s and I know the '80s music. I also know some things about politics. If you're in my age group, you know what this means, and it means that the debt that gets accumulated does eventually have to be paid back. Now on the other side of the room, they can spin the story about the numbers all they want. But I've been here before and the facts are the facts.

The predicted surplus of 12 million in the 2025-2026 budget. Twelve million surplus ended up being a \$1.2 billion deficit. So it seems that there were some issues with not enough zeros and maybe putting a plus sign where there should have been a negative sign.

The projected deficit for 2026-2027 is 819 million. And the debt, the debt, the provincial debt is 43.5 billion — 43.5 billion. Now when you divide that number by the population of Saskatchewan, it works out to over \$34,000 in debt per person in our province. I've been here before. That's an enormous burden to place on the people in our province. And again, it's simply divine.

And what do we get for that debt? Well we get an increase of 0.3 per cent funding for health care. We get funding for education and students that doesn't even keep up with inflation and the increase in the number of students. We get a government that claims they are cutting taxes while they rely on provincial sales tax on construction, groceries, and children's clothing to pay the bills.

Did you know that according to the Sask Party government's budget, a family in Regina pays \$200 a year more in provincial sales tax than a family in Vancouver? And they pay more in income tax per year than a family in Vancouver and a family in Toronto. And despite the continuous claims by the government that Saskatchewan is the most affordable place to live in the country, I discovered that on page 59 of their provincial budget, Regina is "the third most affordable jurisdiction in the country."

So those are some of the concerning numbers in the budget. But let's move on to discuss some of the issues we are experiencing in the province of Saskatchewan. Now, Mr. Speaker, when I look at the budget in relation to the most vulnerable people in our province, it's clear this budget and this government is not protecting them, and yet that's the theme of the budget — protecting.

So for example, there's a growing number of people who don't have a roof over their head in our province, Mr. Speaker. The point-in-time count from the fall of 2025 in Saskatoon revealed that 1,931 people — that's just in Saskatoon — were experiencing housing insecurity, and 725 of those people were unsheltered. The others were either staying in a shelter or couch surfing or staying in an encampment. Of note as well, 82.9 per cent identified as Indigenous. Now, Mr. Speaker, I find it absolutely appalling, appalling that Indigenous people are unable to find a place to live in their own province and in their own lands. And this is not reconciliation, and this is not upholding Treaty relationships.

In the budget the government is proposing to create, and I quote, "up to 40 new emergency shelter spaces at existing shelters based on demonstrated need." Well clearly we have a need in this province, Mr. Speaker. Now the problem with this is, they refer to these as spaces but they're actually beds. So how on earth are 40 new beds going to solve the problem of homelessness in our province, when there are 1,931 unhoused people in Saskatoon alone? Is this budget protecting the growing number of unhoused people in our province?

The government also notes that the Saskatchewan housing benefit will make renting more affordable for "eligible renters." The key word here is "eligible," because recipients of SIS [Saskatchewan income support] and SAID and post-secondary students do not qualify for this benefit. Why is this budget not protecting those living in poverty? Now some seniors may be eligible for the benefit, but their rents are increasing so quickly that they are still struggling to make ends meet. Why is the budget and the government not protecting seniors from unreasonable rent increases imposed upon them by corporate landlords?

Why is this government not protecting library, health care, education, and transit workers who are dealing with escalating violence in public spaces? Why are people who are struggling with mental health and addictions issues not able to access the supports that they need? Why is this budget not protecting them? And why are there so many vacant government housing units when there are people sleeping on the street who need a home? Why is there no increase in funding to assist people in the North with roads, affordability, and fighting wildfires? Why is this budget not protecting northerners? Why is this budget not protecting the most vulnerable people in our province?

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm reticent to bring this up, but we've heard repeatedly in the Assembly over the past week and a half that hate has no place in the legislature. This comment is being made in reference to an issue that in fact occurred outside of the legislature, and it's actually the members of the other side who keep bringing it up in the legislature.

Now these comments are really quite tone-deaf when we consider . . . I look around this room, and I don't see a room of victims. We are among the most privileged people in the province, sitting here in this legislature. Let's use that privilege not to feel sorry for ourselves. Let's use that privilege to end discrimination in our society, discrimination that people experience based on gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, faith, race, age, ability, etc.

Mr. Speaker, I know transgender people who no longer feel safe in their schools, workplaces, and in this province in general because of the words, the actions, and the legislation put forward by this government. Mr. Speaker, this is a government who does not stand up for vulnerable people in this province in legislation or in the budget.

And based on the massive debt that has been accrued by this government; the inability to properly plan for health care, education, and other essential services; and the lack of protection for those who experience barriers that could be addressed with political will, I have a number of really valid concerns. And what we're asking for is not to spend more but to spend responsibly. \$43.5 billion is a lot of money to accrue in debt, Mr. Speaker. Again, Mr. Speaker, this bad-news budget is simply divine.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the budget. I will instead be supporting the amendment put forward by the member from Regina Mount Royal. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Kim Gartner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and it's a pleasure to rise and speak to the budget. But I would first like to thank some special people in my life that support me every day as I represent the good people of Kindersley-Biggar.

Firstly to the most supportive spouse anyone could ever ask for, my wife of 37 years and counting. You are a strong woman who has raised four extremely strong children. Your influence on our children and grandchildren is shown every day by their compassion, empathy, and patience with those around them.

Secondly I want to take the opportunity to once again thank my constituency office staff. Rita, Cathy, Max — whose real name is Maxine — you really are what keeps my office running, keeps me organized, and professionally communicate and advocate for the residents of Kindersley-Biggar. Thank you so much for being in my corner.

Lastly to my ministerial office staff: Keenan, Candle, Jacob, and Rahul. We have quickly grown as a team, and it has been my pleasure to spend some time learning about who you are as an individual. Thank you for sharing a laugh and some very, very interesting personal stories.

Mr. Speaker, you have and you will continue to hear many

numbers thrown around during this debate. Up until today I wondered if I would ever get to talk about the Ministry of Highways. That's changed, but I'm going to proudly speak of the commitment this government has and will continue to have towards the transportation network in Saskatchewan. There's a saying: if you don't tell your own story, don't expect someone else to tell it for you.

As a rural resident, I know that the highway is our connection to family and friends, our connection to services we require in health and education, and is our connection to providing the food, fuel, and fertilizer the world needs. We are a landlocked province. Our highways and transportation network move our export-based economy.

I represent a vibrant and diverse constituency, from flowing fields of canola and wheat to conventional oil and gas extraction to beef and hog production, and now moving into the space of meat and coffee processing and so much more.

The Ministry of Highways's budget of \$764 million will keep Saskatchewan people and the province's export economy moving and connected to the world. We are continuing to improve safety while enhancing key transportation corridors to meet the growing needs of our Saskatchewan economy.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, the economy is growing. It's been mentioned numerous times: 60 projects worth more than \$62 billion. The importance of a safe, reliable, and sustainable transportation system cannot be understated. With this year's budget, the Government of Saskatchewan has invested more than \$14.6 billion in transportation infrastructure since 2008, improving more than 22 700 kilometres of highways across the province.

In this Assembly there have been consistent calls from the members opposite to eliminate Saskatchewan's fuel tax. Eliminating the fuel tax would mean forgoing over \$500 million in annual revenue that is directly earmarked for the Ministry of Highways. How would the members opposite propose to support the maintenance and improvement of our transportation system without this dedicated funding? This is a question that deserves an answer. Mr. Speaker, I fear the answer is that they have not given it much thought.

[16:00]

In fact, Mr. Speaker, their 2024 election platform did provide us with the answer: highways were not even mentioned in that document. Their fiscal tables, which promised billions in new spending, did not spend a single dime on highways. What message does this send to our residents and businesses that use our highways every day for personal and economic activity?

Thankfully our government supports the expansion of our economy and safe movement of people and products across this province. Mr. Speaker, highways are the arteries of our province. Just like the arteries carry blood through the human body, highways carry people, goods, and services throughout our province. Without a reliable and efficient transportation system, our economy, our safety, and our daily lives would be severely affected.

Highways are essential for connecting communities. They allow people to travel for work, education, health care, and recreation. Students commute to school, families visit relatives, and tourists explore the wonders of our province. We have come to expect a very high level of service from our highway system, a system that provides a safe, reliable, and sustainable daily connection for our communities.

Businesses rely heavily on our transportation system to move the food, fuel, and fertilizer to our customers around the world and here at home. Strong highways support a strong economy and protect the services the people of Saskatchewan have come to expect.

Highways play a major role in the provision of emergency response and disaster management. Ambulances, fire trucks, and police vehicles depend on safe, reliable roads to reach emergencies quickly. During natural disasters and evacuations, highways become critical routes that allow people to move quickly and safely when every second counts.

Our government will continue to deliver on its Saskatchewan growth plan, and for the Ministry of Highways that goal is to improve 10 000 kilometres of highway by 2030. This budget will deliver 850 kilometres of improvements, bringing the total to over 7900 kilometres after seven years of the plan. It reflects our commitment to protecting Saskatchewan by enhancing safety, improving connectivity, and supporting growth across the province.

As our population grows and the economic opportunities continue to present themselves, addressing the infrastructure needs requires a constant state of evaluation. Adapting to changing traffic patterns, different materials being transported, and community accessibility challenges will continue to evolve.

Within my constituency of Kindersley-Biggar, the reconstruction of Highway 51 east of Biggar began last year and will continue this year, providing a major upgrade to an important grain and cattle transportation route. Investments in the RMs of Reford, Senlac, Biggar, and Heart's Hill through the rural integrated roads for growth program, these projects will directly improve important rural roads required for movement of goods to market.

Mr. Speaker, there is another side to my ministry's budget. It's an important and sometimes unheralded contribution to the network. I'm speaking of highway maintenance. Like any piece of infrastructure, highways experience wear and tear over time. Without regular maintenance, they can quickly deteriorate, become unsafe and expensive to repair. For example, a small crack in the pavement may seem insignificant, but if it is left unrepaired, water can seep in and weaken the road structure. Over time this leads to potholes, larger cracks, and even structural failures.

By fixing these issues early through routine inspections and repairs, we can protect the road and avoid much larger reconstruction costs in the future. By investing in regular maintenance, we can extend the lifespan, improve safety, and improve the long-term sustainability of our highway system.

Mr. Speaker, you can't just vaguely toss around buzzwords like "fixing our roads" or "improving infrastructure." You must put

substance behind your plan. We have published our plan. We are following our plan — and ahead of schedule, I might add. And every dollar collected through the fuel tax is invested back into our transportation system.

Mr. Speaker, the last time the NDP were in power, they collected \$1 billion more in fuel tax than they actually spent on our highway system, leaving what was referred to as a \$1 billion pothole. Mr. Speaker, we want everyone travelling our highway system to get to their destination safely. Whether it is in summer or in the dead of winter, our dedicated maintenance crews work diligently, many of them dedicating a full career to protecting the travelling public.

We're just coming to the end of another winter season, so I want to give special recognition to the operators of our more than 300 snowplows and 100 graders. In Saskatchewan the weather turns quickly. These operators are scheduled to respond 24-7. They are specially trained to operate our specialized equipment. They communicate road conditions to the Highway Hotline staff and safely travel thousands of kilometres annually, protecting the people of Saskatchewan.

Of special interest, Mr. Speaker, the snowplows we operate here in Saskatchewan are made in Saskatchewan. By purchasing only the truck chassis, Highways staff attach an in-house designed and built equipment, like the plows themselves which are built in our Prince Albert Highways shop.

This is true Saskatchewan innovation and shows the dedication by our Highways maintenance employees to the protection and safety of everyone travelling on our provincial highway system. As a province, we are very proud of these dedicated employees and the level of service they provide to our transportation system.

The safety improvements needed are many times identified by our maintenance crew. This budget will invest \$20.1 million in safety improvements like improving intersection safety, guardrail and lighting improvements, and turning lanes, initiating design improvements to protect people and the safe movement of goods, like the intersection of Highway 11 and Enterprise Lane at Davidson.

As we discuss safety, let's not forget the provincial bypass lane initiative. Between 2013 and 2024, the Ministry of Highways has installed over 60 sets of passing lanes, covering approximately 285 kilometres of Saskatchewan highways. The ministry's passing lane plan aims to improve safety and address the history of fatalities, collisions, injuries, and heavy traffic on priority roads that connect transportation corridors across the province.

Mr. Speaker, this budget also delivers on our commitment to northern Saskatchewan roads and airports. This infrastructure connects northern communities, businesses, and industries, such as mining, to the rest of Saskatchewan. It provides access to jobs, health care, education, and other services.

This year's budget will see an investment of \$86.3 million to build, operate, and maintain our northern infrastructure, an infrastructure that includes operating and maintaining 16 northern airports and ice roads in the winter. Since 2008, our government has made record investments totalling over \$1 billion in the northern transportation network. This budget is

investing 178 per cent more in the North than the NDP did in their last budget.

Mr. Speaker, I have stated many times that I am proud to represent the farmers, the ranchers, the oil and gas workers, and every business operating in the small towns and rural municipalities of my constituency. With no community having a population big enough for city status, we are a true rural constituency. As a constituency we are hard-working, optimistic, innovative, and very family and community orientated.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask everyone in this Chamber to think of rural Saskatchewan, think of them the next time you turn on the lights to your home or your business, you turn up the heat during a cold winter's night or you put that piece of bread into the toaster, when you fertilize your lawn or your garden, or when you tap that screen on your cell phone or change the tires on your car or your bicycle. The food, fuel, and fertilizer that powers our economy is, for the most part, a product of rural and northern Saskatchewan. Every day small communities and rural municipalities are a beehive of economic activity, providing thousands of jobs and fuelling an economy that creates the wealth required to fund our health, education, and social programs.

So I would ask the members opposite to try and understand that the communities of rural Saskatchewan require investments into health, education, social programs, as do the residents of our larger cities. When the members on this side of the House make investments in the capital infrastructure of the province, it is done with balanced proportion. When you are critical of investments made into rural Saskatchewan, and no matter who the MLA is, you are critical of the very people that work every day to support our economy.

Our government will continue to protect the people of Saskatchewan and the economy of Saskatchewan, and neither can be successful without the other.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the budget as presented by the Minister of Finance and seconded by the minister from Carrot River Valley. And I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you.

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

Bhajan Brar: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to rise in the Assembly today to respond to the government's budget. To begin, I would like to say how grateful I am to all of my constituents in Regina Pasqua. It is truly an honour of a lifetime to be their MLA and to represent them in this legislature. Now that it is spring and the weather is nice, I am looking forward to connecting with the constituents at their doorsteps and listening to their concerns. And during the election, Mr. Speaker, I knocked on every door four times, and last summer I knocked on every door and listened to their concerns.

Now I want to start. Thanks to all of my family members and my extended family members. Things have not been easy for my family, but I could not be able to be the MLA for Regina Pasqua without their support. Mr. Speaker, as I already mentioned many times that I have a very big family here in Regina. I have three kids — one in the USA [United States of America] and the other

two are living in Regina. I have eight grandkids.

And, Mr. Speaker, the month of March is the happiest month of the year for my life because in this month I married, 51 years ago. We celebrated, me and my wife, 51st anniversary just on the day of the start of the session, 2nd of March. And four of my kids' birthdays fall also in March. Two of my grandkids' birthdays fall today — they are twins. They went to be at school, otherwise they would have been here with their mother to make happy birthday. And happy birthday to them at their home.

Also thanks to the Regina Pasqua NDP executive for all of the work they did over this winter to help me connect with other members.

I also want to thank all of the staff who work here at the Legislative Building — all the maintenance staff who keep the legislature clean; the security, who are always there to greet us; and the cafeteria, who keep us all fed. I want to thank the Legislative Assembly Service, the Clerks, and the Legislative Pages for their crucial work in supporting each member in their duties.

Thank you to all of my colleagues on this side of the House, to the Leader of the Opposition, and all of the opposition caucus staff for their constant guidance. And last but not least, thank you to my constituency assistant, Andrea, who has been with me for over a year now and is always there to help me support the people of Regina Pasqua.

I now want to discuss this budget and how it is bad news for the people of Saskatchewan. This budget does not address the concerns I have heard from my constituents in Regina Pasqua. There is no new cost-of-living relief, nothing new for students and teachers, and nothing new for health care. All this budget does is add to our debt.

[16:15]

The number one concern I hear from so many is that everything is getting more expensive, most especially rent prices. Mr. Speaker, so many of my constituents in Regina Pasqua are students and are new to Canada and rely on rental. However, rent in Saskatchewan is skyrocketing with 40 straight months of rent increase.

I am proud of our team and proud of my colleague, the member for Saskatoon Westview, for listening to the people of this province and putting forward a private member bill to implement rent control. This budget has nothing to address the rent prices. It is clear that we need rent control now.

Mr. Speaker, families in this province are also feeling the cost . . . [inaudible] . . . too. So many people who are working good-paying jobs are lining up at the food bank after finishing their shift. At a time when people are struggling, this government chose to raise the power rate and auto rates. This increase is costing my constituents money they need to pay their bills. Of course they are not seeing . . . [inaudible].

Mr. Speaker, there is no relief in this budget for people in this province who are struggling to make both ends meet and are living paycheque to paycheque. Our team has been calling for the

gas tax to be removed for a period of time due to the sudden increase. The government could have provided relief to Saskatchewan, but they did not.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has the highest rate of poverty among its children, higher than any province in the country. 27.1 per cent of children are living in poverty, as compared to the national level rate, 18.3 per cent. The most urgent change needed is addressing the underlying causes of poverty and affordability.

Mr. Speaker, if we talk about education, this budget provides no new supports for teachers or students. In fact this budget actually cut funding for schooling. The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation explained that when you adjust for inflation, this budget has cut \$33 per student compared to last year. Students in Saskatchewan were already facing some of the lowest per-student funding in the country, and they're just making it worse.

Mr. Speaker, this budget also cut funding for school capital by 67.5 million. This is a 35 per cent reduction from last year. This is happening even though there are more than 140 schools in poor or critical condition. The Minister of Education has confirmed that some crucial projects already in progress are being delayed.

One such school is the one desperately needed in Regina Wascana Plains. Mr. Speaker, this reminds me all too well of the brand new school in Harbour Landing, which was first announced in 2020 but is not going to be completed until fall '27 due to many delays.

We can look to Harbour Landing School to see what happens when you do not address overcrowding and growing population. Students miss out on crucial learning opportunities and they lose spaces like the library to make new classrooms.

Mr. Speaker, the calls for so many schools across the province are being ignored. However the Premier made sure the school in his own constituency was approved. He did this even though there are 200 schools and 103 communities that are in worse shape.

Mr. Speaker, the students of this province deserve real investment in their future. This budget does not address any concerns that our team has heard from students, teachers, and families all throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, if we talk about the health care system, every day the situation is deteriorating. Staff is running short every day and those working are exhausted. Wait times in emergency seem unlimited. People of Saskatchewan are being sent to other provinces for various tests, and the unionized health care workers are still without contracts.

In this budget all we see for health care is a small 0.3 per cent increase in funding, and if we compare with the inflation, then you can judge it whether it is less or more. It is clear that they have no new plan to address the concerns my constituents have with our health care system.

This government has broken our health care system and they cannot be trusted to fix it. That is why I am so proud of my colleagues, the members for Regina Elphinstone-Centre and Regina Walsh Acres, for launching a consultation, Your Care,

Your Say. Saskatchewan needs big, bold changes in health care.

Mr. Speaker, the government has explained that this budget is there to protect Saskatchewan. However many people have concerns about the large amount of debt that our children have to pay for. Our children and grandchildren will have to pay the debt incurred by this government. It is on all of us to do the work necessary to give them the best life possible.

Speaking about the debt, Mr. Speaker, this budget plans to spend three times more on servicing the debt than on policing. This government claims to be tough on crime, yet they are spending more on servicing the debt than addressing crime in our communities.

Just earlier this month there was a taxi driver who was shot and killed in North Battleford. He was just beginning his shift. Now so many others in the Sikh community in North Battleford are feeling unsafe. We have been seeing increasing violent crimes all across our province. This is not how it used to be. We need more funding to go towards making our communities safer.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is also not helping our communities in the North prepare for the 2026 wildfire season. It seems the government has not learned from last year. We need to be more prepared. We need to put more money into preparing for wildfires and having an actual wildfire strategy. This is legislation that the member for Athabasca put forward in the fall.

Mr. Speaker, new data from Stats Canada show that the population of Saskatchewan has declined for the second consecutive quarter. It is clear that after almost 20 years of this government we are going in the wrong direction and people are leaving our province.

However my colleagues, the member for Coronation Park, the member for Saskatoon University-Sutherland, and the Leader of the Opposition have launched the Your Future, Your Say consultation to see what the government can do to keep people living in our province and attract new talent.

Mr. Speaker, this budget does not address the concerns of the constituents of Regina Pasqua. It does not provide any cost-of-living relief. This budget does not address concerns of students and teachers, and it in fact lowers much-needed funding. This budget does not address the crisis in our health care system, but this budget does greatly add to our province's debt.

This budget is bad news for the people of Regina Pasqua, and I will not be supporting it. I will instead be supporting the amendment moved by the member for Regina Mount Royal. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — Sorry. Just trying to . . . I've just heard a few times — I'm not sure exactly how it was worded; I was trying to listen back — but I wouldn't like to hear any more about the Premier making . . . It almost sounds like the constant comment is that the Premier is in total authority over on the government side and that he is putting that decision upon his government to put the school in his constituency. There's something about it that just keeps on coming up.

It's good to say the government has done this. But to single out

an individual and say that this is his intention and this is his purpose, I think is unfair to that individual. And I don't think we can have any personal attacks on any individuals in this Chamber.

So I tried to listen back. I heard it, but the way that it sounded was that the Premier individually influenced to have the school built in his own constituency. And I don't think that we can be giving that intention to an individual like we've been. And so please, let's steer clear of that in the speeches, that the Premier is putting this in his own constituency. Just something about it just seems offside.

I recognize the member from Humboldt-Watrous.

Racquel Hilbert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A budget is a plan for the future. It's a way to express values. We in government are elected by the people through a majority to govern, directed by the votes to build a budget, a budget that works for the public to address concerns and prioritize values felt by the province. A deficit budget is something that's not particularly ideal.

I would like to firstly thank the hard-working individuals who go to work every single day to work safely and that they come home to their families, or home to dream of the families yet to come.

The taxes of hard-working people pay and help fund every public sector of this province. It is a means to help protect Saskatchewan; protect families; protect businesses; protect industries like farming, mining, and forestry; support jobs; supporting health care; investing in communities; protecting education; and keeping a way of life as not to lose the economic momentum.

This budget will directly and indirectly affect constituents within my constituency. Saskatchewan is not immune to the challenges that many provinces face. It's because of years of planning, through diverse investments that were made over a duration of 18 years, that we are reaping some of the rewards of a strong, stable economy. There is more work to do, and we have a vision to continue to strive forward.

This is my second budget speech that I'm honoured to speak to on behalf of my constituents. They are the reason that I'm here, and they represent the heart of my speech.

Protecting communities includes PST revenue sharing. This is unique to Saskatchewan. Humboldt receives 1.6 million provincial revenue sharing. This builds streets, pays for services at the pool and the rink and helps keep the community clean and beautiful. Watrous receives 593,000 in provincial revenue sharing. This helps to fund municipal infrastructure, pools, and the civic centre that the community relies on.

All of the communities in my constituency share a need, a desire to serve their communities and create a better place for their children and grandchildren. Removal of the carbon tax has benefited every aspect of Saskatchewan, helping to keep Saskatchewan the most affordable place to raise a family while keeping Saskatchewan the most affordable province. We do it by protecting our economic engine, the jobs of the hard-working Saskatchewan people who are the drivers of the economy, while protecting families, which are the future drivers of the economy.

We achieve this by training adults and youth for stronger essential skills to support foundational work, skills, and abilities; training for in-demand occupations such as health care, construction, mining, manufacturing, and agriculture; programs for employment and pre-employment for strong social programs with a goal for some to transition into workplace and some with a goal to run their own businesses.

The party mandate is for an economy that supports a strong social network which protect those who truly need support while encouraging individuals to become self-sufficient. Programs help to support the economy in turn.

In my constituency, Carlton Trail — I want to give a shout-out to Amy and her team — they provide opportunities close to home. Sagehill is located in Bruno, and I want to give a shout-out to Susan and her team at Sagehill. I'm also an alumni of St. Peter's College. They have a great team and currently offer a four-year comprehensive program for a Bachelor of Science in Nursing with student housing. This training supports hospitals in rural Saskatchewan. These agencies provide programming that can change the trajectory of someone's life.

[16:30]

Both Carlton Trail and Sagehill, and even St. Peter's College, hold a special place in my heart. They expand investment into small and medium businesses. With the help of provincial tax credits, they also help develop jobs and retain our future drivers for the economy and for our children. Many businesses I frequent had their start through Sagehill and Carlton Trail.

This budget will help keep us affordable by protecting vital economies, and it works to provide higher paying professionals, which in turn generate higher tax revenues. Tax revenues are spent right here in Saskatchewan for Saskatchewan. The very definition "vital" means absolutely necessary, essential — essential for success or the existence of operating something. I will repeat this again: the budget will help keep us affordable by protecting vital economies.

The budget does not directly impact companies like Bourgault Industries and Bourgault Tillage Tools in St. Brieux and Vonda, Michel's Industries in St. Gregor, Bornhorst Seeds in St. Gregor, Mollenbeck Industries, Failure Prevention in Watson, LeRoy Leisureland in LeRoy, PAMI [Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute] in Humboldt, Inksters and MCI Sales in Watrous. But they all benefit in some way from economic spinoff from a strong economy.

The Manitou Beach spa is under new ownership, and I had the honour of a personal tour. They are investing in Saskatchewan and with the support of Tourism Saskatchewan and Manitou media group — shout-out to Jeff — they work together to make Watrous a provincial travel treasure. The spa is located on the banks of Manitou Beach, the dead sea of Saskatchewan.

Manitou Beach hosts a biannual woodcarving festival. Carvers come from across Canada and internationally to take part in an amazing, unique woodcarving competition. I've had the privilege to meet business owners like the owners of Scaletech. They're owners from Allan. They provide real-world operations for scale system designs. They install commercial weighing systems and

scale management software. From truck scales to landscape billing, ticket management, they operate across Saskatchewan. They support a wide range of industries specializing in the weighing needs of trucks, rail, potash, oil, grain, livestock, fertilizer, packaging, and support manufacturing sectors.

I've had the pleasure to support Shilo's in Allan. They serve amazing pizza and chicken wings, and I met some amazing, resilient, pragmatic people. We met the owners of the restaurant called Schartner's in Colonsay. They serve high-quality, homemade food that I was not disappointed to eat. The Red Apple in Humboldt is my son's favourite store. He loves shopping there and asks to go there all the time. Thrift on Main Street in Watrous is a unique shop that I have shopped at often.

Watrous and Humboldt both have Home Hardware Building Centres that are the source for building materials. And I have used them to acquire materials myself. The Rona in Humboldt is where I've even purchased materials for industry.

A-Line Furniture in Humboldt has always been competitive priced, and I call them first to see what they offer and what they can order in. We've had the pleasure to meet the owners of the Simpson Hotel. For good cheer and good times, it's a gathering place where everyone visits.

The people of this province are connected together. People of this constituency, in my constituency, have family in other constituencies. Family ties bleed across boundaries and connect all of us. Families in this province shingle together to support each other and work together. Like rain on a roof, together they shed water. Each shingle works together to prevent damage from uncontrollable weather events. The shingles are not meant to hold water or pool. Water is meant to shed, and the excess goes to a rain barrel that can be used later and used again.

This analogy is like an economy. During uncontrollable events, money is invested. It has a trickle-down effect, and excess money is collected to be used again.

Organizations protect families, like Partners Family Services. And I want to give a shout-out to Hayley and her team. They offer adult and youth counselling, Triple P Parenting. They provide immediate access to safe supports for those experiencing or at risk of experiencing interpersonal violence. They can provide in-home support as well as education to increase knowledge of healthy parenting practices.

They provide rapid access to counselling clinics for remote and in-person counselling. They provide crisis intervention services for immediate and short-term care for individuals who are experiencing crisis due to an event that has happened and need immediate support in order to remain safe. They offer targeted group programs throughout the year based on the needs of the client. And I do thank them for their dedication, humanity, and service to the community.

I've had the privilege to meet Angela at Interlake in Watrous. Angela and her team work, and their work aim is to promote independence and participation in the community for adults experiencing disabilities. They provide a safe, active environment to help individuals achieve their optimum level of self-determination and become active and contributing members

to their communities. I want to thank each and every one of them for their dedication and joyful service to their community.

I've had the privilege to meet Ray and his team at Futuristic. Futuristic has a core belief that every person, no matter the ability, shall have the right to live their life like any other citizen, including opportunities for development in areas such as social, vocational, residential, spiritual, recreational skills within their community. They encourage community engagement like money skills, reading skills, aquacise, curling, minigolf, camping, and out-of-town excursions, and music. Ray himself is a talented musician, and he brings his gift with him. Clients sing, volunteer, bake, and build in our community every day. I do thank them for their dedication and gift of service to the community.

I had the privilege to speak with Juanine and her team at the Humboldt & District Community Services. They offer residential services, called Hilda Home supported independent living program, and many community-based programs like community inclusion support services, summer recreation and respite programs, and inclusive social programming. They offer employment services in the area. And they have a community work crew and offer a job research centre. I do thank each and every one of them for their dedication and service to the community.

Camp Easter Seal is seated on 100 acres of the most beautiful place in Saskatchewan. It's on the banks of the Little Manitou Lake. They serve hundreds of campers annually from all parts of Saskatchewan. They employ dozens of summer staff, nurses, cooks, counsellors, and program staff. Camp Easter Seal is fully accredited by Saskatchewan camping association and the Canadian camping association.

They have a grand chalet, dining hall, 14 cabins with heat and air conditioning, with a newly renovated aquatic centre. This waterfront camp offers boating equipment and buildings to house art programs, sports, and gaming programs. The medical building is fondly known as the pillbox. There's now a tree house which has been added to provide a unique space for activities.

This camp offers a safe, warm, and fun, supportive environment to foster inclusion and belonging. It is completely wheelchair accessible, and they're dedicated to a barrier-free experience for all campers. I do thank each and every one of them for their dedication, care, and compassion — and humour — that they bring with them as they serve their clients and community.

I had the privilege to meet Kari and her team at the Humboldt soup kitchen. They are passionate and carry a core belief that everyone in the area should have access to a good, healthy meal each week. They receive funds from a variety of avenues and work hard to stretch every dollar. When meeting with them, they offered more. What they offer is more than just a warm meal; they offer a personal connection so people don't feel so alone. I thank each one of them for their dedication and service to the community.

This budget brings protection. It invests in reliable infrastructure like highway improvements for Humboldt and Watrous. I do thank the Minister of Highways for the investment in Highway 2, which is resurfacing, widening, and grade improvements. Highway 5 east of Saskatoon: resurfacing, widening, and grade

improvements. Safety improvements west of Humboldt: Highway 16 preservation. The culvert replacement east of Colonsay bridge. Lane turn-off, boundary flare near Guernsey. Resurfacing west of Lanigan. Highway 20, southbound flare and bypass.

Highways are our lifeline for transporting food, fuel, and commodities. And our most valuable resource are the families who travel on the highway daily. These improvements help families to reach their destination. And I had the privilege to meet with the fire chief of Vonda, and he shared that the highway passing lanes have reduced the number of emergency calls and deaths. And he predicts that twinning it will be just as beneficial.

This budget keeps unemployment low and keeps our credit rating the best in Canada. It is important to protect family farms. This budget invests in agriculture, and I do thank the Minister of Agriculture. Our government sector will see investments in agriculture, partnerships that support strategic programs in agriculture foods, and agri-food investments in mitigating risk of farming, crop insurance, AgriStability, and giving producers reliable coverage and giving them time to pivot as the needs arise.

This budget supports the facilities in and around Humboldt and Watrous for family fun, activities like swimming, golfing, curling, baseball, hockey, and so much more. To protect families, this budget's putting record investment into health care by expanding the scope of nurse practitioners, more education seats in health care. This budget provides a tax credit for first responders as a way to say thank you to our volunteering emergency staff.

Mr. Speaker, I do support the budget, and I do not support the amendment. Thank you.

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

Don McBean: — Looking at the clock. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is once again an honour to stand and provide some comments, dare I say analysis, and response to the budget. As continues to be the format of our budget responses, I'd like to start with a bit of a state of the person, Don McBean; his riding, Saskatoon Chief Mistawasis; family; and the fantastic ride that I have been able to be a part of for the last two years.

I've read over a few of the more substantial responses to the Throne Speech and budget that I've been able to give. I know I've covered a lot of the foundations of who I am, my family, my story.

A bit of a summary just in case the rest of the world hasn't been listening as attentively as one might imagine. I know we know the bit about being a teacher, administrator, retired principal. Not inclined in any sense to turn into an MLA, but that's what happened. And I've just got to say it is five F — fantastic, fascinating, full, sometimes frustrating, but because I insist on this always being the case, so much fun.

And as if you needed reminding, my speaking style isn't always particularly linear and might include some tangents into personal stories, memes, metaphors, song lyrics, cartoons, quotes from neighbours, other important people. The frame that I would like

to bring to my comments today has a lot to do with the MLA from Saskatoon Chief Mistawasis a year and some ago, and what I am able to understand and participate in today.

You heard that, on top of the first year as an MLA, the love of my life and I were thrown into a very significant medical situation. Valérie's recovery, following 50 days in the hospital and a return home in early July in a wheelchair, has continued steadily and ultimately in a positive manner. But we're not done yet.

You probably also know the part about almost two years ago when the MLA from Regina South Albert invited me to consider putting my name on the ballot. First thing I did was phone a good friend, teaching colleague, a former candidate. And I really just had one question: how much, if I do this thing, how much do I get to be Don McBean, lowercase dduck, the one you know and love? And how much do I have to turn into Don McBean, the political guy? It's still an interesting question. Though I've got to say that what I've figured out, muddled towards, is I'm not sure that it warrants two Facebook pages anymore. You'll hear some reoccurring thoughts on that question in the paragraphs and pages ahead.

But other than the first time I rose, I haven't spoken particularly towards my amazing children. And I would like to take that opportunity. In youngest to oldest this time, just to change things up, Charles McBean has moved out of late nights in a downtown restaurant kitchen into the early mornings of a new bakery, honing his culinary skills. He's tempted still to head out into some of the high-paying cooking jobs that he was able to do previously, but it seems there is a certain kindling interest named Cadence that's keeping him close to the city.

[16:45]

Manon Hunt, on the other hand, has left the city and province and her kindergarten teaching job — temporarily at least — while she pursues a master's in psychology and counselling and is closer to the love of her life, Ken Martelli in Edmonton. Navigating a new city, new career path, new role as a stepmom, her life is very full.

Next is Sophie, Dr. Sophie McBean. Four years of pediatric residency in Ottawa in Ontario are completed, and she's taken up practice with her partner, Dr. Reed Gillanders, in Prince Albert. We are all looking forward to a fun wedding in the bush at the end of August.

Emily and her Liam — there's another Liam; just hold on — are holding down the far eastern end of our family while she travels the world representing an impossibly successful, for-profit even, urban bee environmental operation. This small cohort of friends started in Montreal putting beehives in the backyards of their parents and parents' friends, and now they have 40-plus locations across North America and Europe.

Julien Hunt and Virginie Charollais and the amazing two-year-old grandchild Liam — Little Liam we call him — are close to us in Saskatoon.

Papa is keeping the water flowing in a good way with one of our valued — are they valued? — Crown corporations. There'll be more on that too maybe if I get that far.

And maman [Translation: mom] is doing the impossible with grade 1s in the classroom at l'École canadienne-française. And if you want to hear more about little Liam, well you can ask. Of course you have five grandchildren, you don't have a favourite, but he is the one that's closest. And mamie [Translation: granny] loves spending time with little Liam. What a joy.

The oldest of the bunch, Katie McBean and Fraser Sutherland with three more amazing grandchildren — Ellis, Bennett, and Oakley — live in London, Ontario. I squeezed in a four-day trip there just before session started. I'm not sure that was a good idea because it just makes me miss them even more. But it was fun to connect with 7-year-old Ellis who is channelling his grandpa by becoming passionate about *Calvin and Hobbes* cartoons. And we had a good time on that.

I have spoken to the recovery of Valérie. We've learned so much, the amazing medical practices available. And even our latest learn is something called synkinesis, the misalignment of nerve regeneration. And there's an answer for it all and we are looking forward to spring. None of us more than Valérie.

Here's an acronym. I always have acronyms for things — LYASMAF — is how I end many communications with my family. It stands for "love you all so much and forever."

Last year in a significantly truncated budget response — because I was towards the end and we were running out of time — I did make a bit of a statement about how numbers and budgets especially don't mean so very much especially in the framed context that everyone comes up with. And here's a chance for a bit of a story.

I was teaching in Quebec. Quebec mathematic scores, they led the country. One of the most popular programs was called Défi mathématique [Translation: Math Challenge]. It was translated into English. We got to be pilots of the English version. And so we worked with les frères Lyons [Translation: the Lyons brothers] and they had a such fun exercise for us to do. They put up a question and everybody, all the math-nerd teacher types, are coming up with various answers. And they eventually brought us to the proper answer was "depends." Numbers don't mean anything unless what they depend, the frame within which they are being examined.

I alluded to this in my previous budget speech. A good number of the members on the other side were actually listening and targeted my words by saying that they loved numbers and they believed in numbers, and attempted to refute what I had said. What I guess I learned is that they didn't understand, or perhaps my non-syntactical gymnastics are a shade over average comprehension.

I don't just love — I don't not like numbers — I love numbers and I'm pretty good at numbers. And in fact I'd say I'm darn good at numbers, enough to recognize that a percentage increase in anything doesn't mean much if you don't put into context what it is you are being compared to. And straight-up numbers, there's so many examples that we've heard over the last few days, I can't even get started. We know that we're going to continue. For two days we've heard those numbers repeated. We're going to continue to hear them repeated over and over.

Mr. Speaker, I would take the opportunity to make a specific example in this regard. In the legislature we face at times, if not frequently, statements that technically are true in a narrow sense, but are not exactly accurate when looked at in the broader context of cumulative impact on families and seniors.

One such example of this is the government repeats in every budget, and again this latest, that the number of households that have been removed from the tax rolls. And this figure is now up to 65,000 households. But let's be clear about what this actually means. What the government is referring to is that these households no longer pay provincial personal income tax. But it's made to sound like they're no longer paying taxes, which is simply not correct. Working families, including those with lower incomes, continue to pay provincial sales tax, property tax, payroll-related taxes — many of which are directly levied by the provincial government.

This summer, Mr. Speaker, I had a fantastic opportunity to have in our office half time a young student, Alastair Nicholson. He was a student at the Sauder School of Business at UBC [University of British Columbia] finishing his year right now. And because I was even a little less present in the office, Alastair, I'd given him various assignments. My constituency assistant was working with him. And he said, could I do an analysis of provincial taxes combined for low-income households?

Alastair is the epitome of what we know and appreciate about the young people in Saskatchewan. And what his work confirmed and what many families already know is when you look at those provincial taxes combined, low-income households in Saskatchewan are indeed paying provincial taxes. And they are facing an effective tax rate of approximately 20 per cent. That's a big number.

And what is even more concerning about this is that rate has increased under this government. In 2004 the combined provincial tax burden on low-income households was approximately 11.6 per cent. Today it is significantly higher.

How did it happen? Seems relatively deliberate policy choices — increasing PST from 5 to 6 per cent in 2018; expanding PST to include insurance, vehicle registrations, children's clothing, prepared goods. These are not luxury items. They are basic necessities. Low-income families and seniors spend a large share of their income . . . sorry. They are items that low-income families and seniors spend their income on. This is the reality facing Saskatchewan families.

So when the government highlights the number of people that it's removed from paying personal income tax, it only represents a part of the picture. Let's go back to les frères Lyons [Translation: the Lyons brothers]. It depends.

One tax may have been reduced or eliminated. Others have been increased and expanded, often in ways that disproportionately affect those least able to absorb the cost. Government — we might have heard this before — gives with one hand and takes with the other. So if the government wishes to continue citing the number of households removed from income tax rolls, it should also be prepared to provide a complete and transparent accounting of the overall tax burden to those households. This is what Saskatchewan families deserve, not partial and misleading.

I have to switch to my other set of papers. I thought I was going tonight. Oh I got a few minutes left . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I didn't hear that, but I heard something about apologizing.

You know what? I will address one issue. Again it's not exactly a budget issue, but it has been the topic of conversation for the last while and used perhaps to take us off the conversation. It's the question of the email that uses the word "hate" in it.

Since my very first years in teaching when I got involved with peer mentoring, mediation, and conflict resolution, I learned a simple truth, that being that when we make personal attacks, we've lost the argument. Of course it's ludicrous to suggest in our political playground that it's not going to happen, but honestly I do wish for something close to a positive relation.

And now in just about every budget response — I haven't kept track today — perhaps we hear the government side talking about accusing the NDP of inciting hate. That's the wrong verb. And to go back into my classroom, there are a number of words that I would, in vain somewhat, attempt to extinguish, and the "H" word was one of them. We weren't allowed.

Nothing has been said at any point that comes close to an incitement. Perhaps there was an acknowledgement of distrust and some of the smugness and hubris of certain members in the government, and I'll leave it right there. But, Mr. Speaker, at this point in the series of budget responses, I think the members of government could understand they're not doing themselves or our legislature any favours by climbing on one word and twisting it into something that was never said.

I would, with 30 seconds . . .

Speaker Goudy: — Why don't you apologize for saying that they're "twisting." You said earlier that . . . "misled," you used, I think. And now you used the word "twisted into something." So "twisted," "misled." You got 20 seconds left. Why don't you just withdraw those two.

Don McBean: — I withdraw and apologize for that last statement.

Speaker Goudy: — All right. It being now 5 p.m., this Assembly stands recessed until this evening at 7 p.m. Thank you all.

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

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