



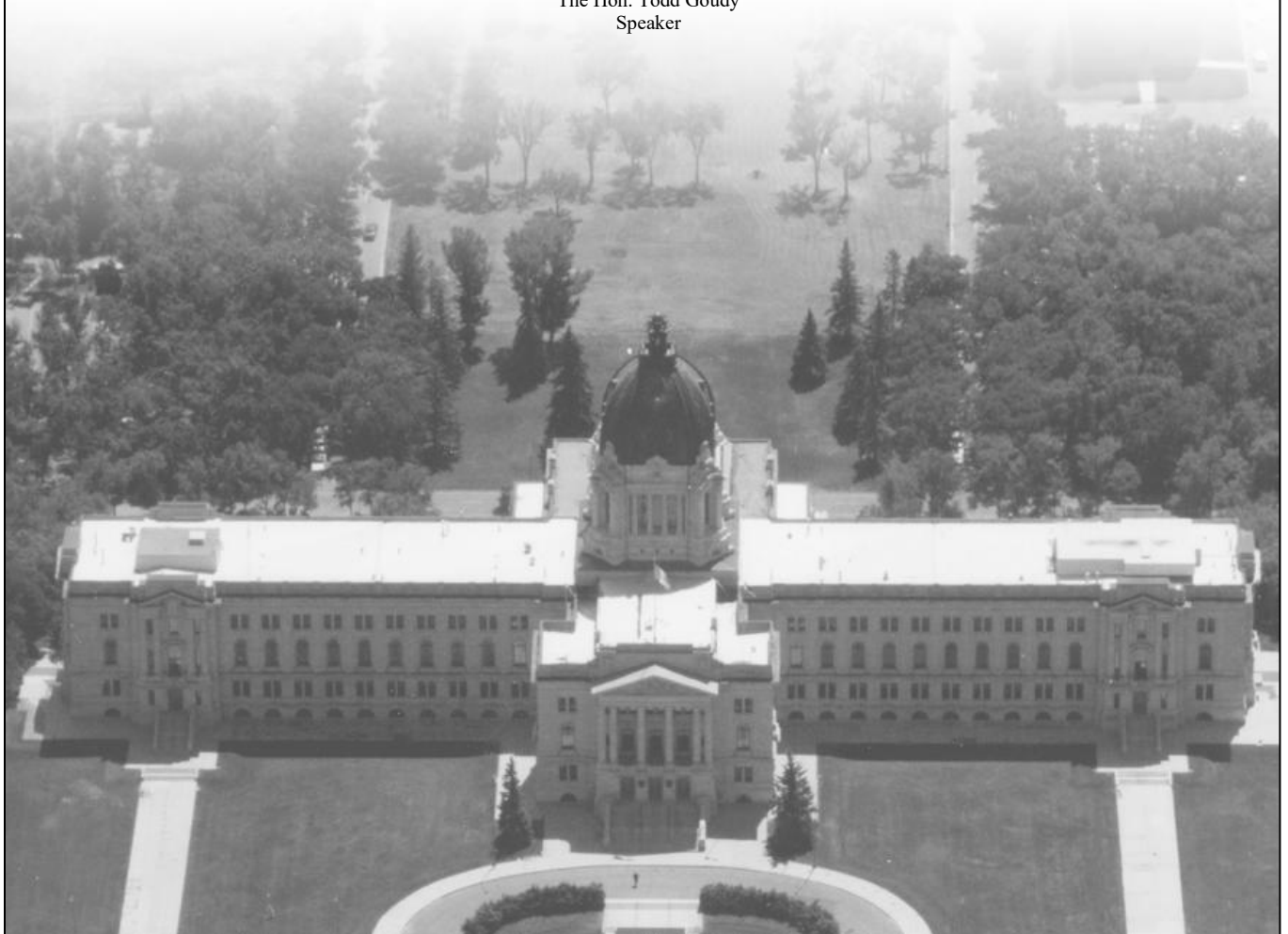
SECOND SESSION — THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE

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)	Love , Matt — Saskatoon Eastview (NDP)
Beck , Carla — Regina Lakeview (NDP)	Marit , Hon. David — Wood River (SP)
Blakley , Brent — Regina Wascana Plains (NDP)	Martens , Hon. Jamie — Martensville-Blairmore (SP)
Brar , Bhajan — Regina Pasqua (NDP)	McBean , Don — Saskatoon Chief Mistawasis (NDP)
Breckner , Kim — Saskatoon Riversdale (NDP)	McLeod , Blaine — Lumsden-Morse (SP)
Bromm , Terri — Carrot River Valley (SP)	McLeod , Hon. Tim — Moose Jaw North (SP)
Burki , Noor — Regina Coronation Park (NDP)	McPhail , Jordan — Cumberland (NDP)
Carr , Hon. Lori — Estevan-Big Muddy (SP)	Moe , Hon. Scott — Rosthern-Shellbrook (SP)
Chan , David — Yorkton (SP)	Mowat , Vicki — Saskatoon Fairview (NDP)
Cheveldayoff , Hon. Ken — Saskatoon Willowgrove (SP)	Nippi-Albright , Betty — Saskatoon Centre (NDP)
ChiefCalf , April — Saskatoon Westview (NDP)	Patterson , Megan — Moose Jaw Wakamow (SP)
Clarke , Jared — Regina Walsh Acres (NDP)	Pratchler , Joan — Regina Rochdale (NDP)
Cockrill , Hon. Jeremy — The Battlefords (SP)	Reiter , Hon. Jim — Rosetown-Delisle (SP)
Conway , Meara — Regina Elphinstone-Centre (NDP)	Ritchie , Erika — Saskatoon Nutana (NDP)
Crassweller , Brad — White City-Qu'Appelle (SP)	Ross , Hon. Alana — Prince Albert Northcote (SP)
Gartner , Hon. Kim — Kindersley-Biggar (SP)	Rowden , Hon. Darlene — Batoche (SP)
Gordon , Hugh — Saskatoon Silverspring (NDP)	Roy , Jacqueline — Regina Northeast (NDP)
Goudy , Hon. Todd — Melfort (SP)	Sarauer , Nicole — Regina Douglas Park (NDP)
Grewal , Tajinder — Saskatoon University-Sutherland (NDP)	Schmalz , Hon. Eric — Saskatchewan Rivers (SP)
Harrison , Daryl — Cannington (SP)	Senger , Brittney — Saskatoon Southeast (NDP)
Harrison , Hon. Jeremy — Meadow Lake (SP)	Steele , Doug — Cypress Hills (SP)
Hilbert , Racquel — Humboldt-Watrous (SP)	Teed , Nathaniel — Saskatoon Meewasin (NDP)
Hindley , Hon. Everett — Swift Current (SP)	Thorsteinson , James — Cut Knife-Turtleford (SP)
Housser , Sally — Regina University (NDP)	Warrington , Darcy — Saskatoon Stonebridge (NDP)
Jenson , Hon. Terry — Warman (SP)	Weedmark , Kevin — Moosomin-Montmartre (SP)
Jorgenson , Keith — Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood (NDP)	Weger , Hon. Michael — Weyburn-Bengough (SP)
Kaeding , Hon. Warren — Melville-Saltcoats (SP)	Wilson , Hon. Sean — Canora-Pelly (SP)
Kasun , Kevin — Prince Albert Carlton (SP)	Wotherspoon , Trent — Regina Mount Royal (NDP)
Keisig , Travis — Last Mountain-Touchwood (SP)	Young , Aleana — Regina South Albert (NDP)
Kropf , Barret — Dakota-Arm River (SP)	Young , Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)
Laliberte , Leroy — Athabasca (NDP)	

Standings

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

Clerks-at-the-Table

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

Sergeant-at-Arms — Lyall Frederiksen

Hansard and other documents of the
Legislative Assembly are available
online within hours after each sitting.

<https://www.legassembly.sk.ca/>

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS	
INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS	
Cockrill	2009
Teed	2009
McLeod, B.	2009
Mowat	2010
Love	2010
Moe	2010
PRESENTING PETITIONS	
ChiefCalf	2010
Warrington	2010
Clarke	2011
Gordon	2011
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS	
Remembering Davinder Singh	
Brar	2011
Tisdale Hosts Masters Provincial Curling Championships	
Bromm	2012
Memories of Renowned Trading Post	
McPhail	2012
Community Events Raise Funds for Camp Easter Seal	
Chan	2012
Provincial Budget	
Blakley	2012
Saskatchewan Woman Inspires as National Hockey League Assistant Coach	
Kaeding	2013
Art Teacher Wins Excellence in Education Award	
Young, C.	2013
STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER	
Ruling on a Point of Order	
Speaker Goudy	2013
QUESTION PERIOD	
SaskPower Rates and Affordability	
Beck	2014
Moe	2014
Construction and Maintenance of Schools	
Beck	2016
Hindley	2016
Affordability and Provincial Taxes	
Warrington	2016
Reiter	2017
Funding for Food Banks	
Senger	2017
Jenson	2017
Health Care Staffing	
Teed	2018
Cockrill	2018
Government Response to Wildfires in the North	
McPhail	2019
Weger	2019
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS	
Bill No. 53 — <i>The Saskatchewan Chemical Fertilizer Incentive Amendment Act, 2026</i>	
Kaeding	2019
MOTIONS	
Second Reading of Bill No. 612	
Young, A.	2019
ORDERS OF THE DAY	
SPECIAL ORDER	
ADJOURNED DEBATES	
BUDGET DEBATE	
Kropf	2020
Conway	2021
Hindley	2025

Breckner	2028
Cockrill	2031
Love	2035
Chan	2038
Marit	2041

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, I'd like to welcome several guests sitting up in the west gallery today, members of CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees] 5430, health care workers from several different communities right around our province.

Mr. Speaker, I recently had the opportunity to be in the hospital in Battlefords supporting a family member of mine. And really it was a good reminder for me that really CUPE 5430 members are found in every corner of our health care system right around the province, providing care in so many different contexts to help put patients first in this province each and every single day.

I had the opportunity to meet with CUPE leadership this morning. Looking forward to speaking more about that later on today. But I'd ask all members of the House to join with me in welcoming these health care workers to this, their legislature.

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

Nathaniel Teed: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave for an extended introduction.

Speaker Goudy: — The member has requested leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Nathaniel Teed: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to join with the Minister of Health opposite in welcoming these very fine health care workers to their Legislative Assembly.

Joining us today in the galleries is Kyla Adolph — and maybe I'll say, yeah, give us a wave as I read your name — who is a CCA [continuing care aide] here in Saskatchewan; Korina Snyder, an admin officer; Jen Russell, LPN [licensed practical nurse]; Laura Guilbault, CCA; Sabrina Volman, lab scientist; Amy Moore, billing clerk; Nancy Pollock, dietary and food services; Cammy Kessler, an LPN; Jasmine Rupert, a lab tech and X-ray tech; Gene Pineau, facility manager; Nick Gafencu, electrician; Victor Castro, a continuing care aide; and Mary Moffat, who also works in food services in our long-term care.

Mr. Speaker, this is just a fraction of the health care workers who joined us on the steps of the legislature today calling on this government to sign a deal with health care workers to get them a raise. It's been four years for these health care workers that they have not seen a raise. They have not seen a collective bargaining agreement.

And so I ask all members to join me in welcoming these hard-working health care workers that deserve a deal now. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Blaine McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I ask for an extended introduction.

Speaker Goudy: — The member has requested leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Blaine McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, sometimes surprises are the nicest things that you have in life, and today I had one of those. Went for lunch downstairs and I ran into a group of university students, one of whom I knew and was involved with and engaged on a number of projects then. So here's my opportunity to introduce them to the House.

I'll start with the one that I know the best, Mason Hausermann. And just wave while I introduce you, Mason. He's an M.A. [Master of Arts] candidate as a historian studying the military and political history of Canada. And Mason has been actively engaged and involved with the pedestal work that happens in Victoria Park, where the stories of individuals and war battles are displayed with a QR [quick response] code. If you haven't checked it out, you should.

He's a Kamsack native — shout to his MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] — and he has just finished an internship at the Regina Royal Canadian Legion Branch 001. And you heard that right: 001, the very first Legion in the province, soon to celebrate their 100th anniversary this summer. We have more to say on that in time. And he's now finishing his internship at the RCMP Heritage Centre. Thanks for being here today, Mason.

Prabhjot Singh Sabharwal — I think I did justice to it — from India, majoring in engineering at the university. Brendan Munro, majoring in history. And I said, did you grow up in this area? And he said, Regina, all 22 years. Thank you for being here and studying here.

Aleena Alam, an Honours candidate, international studies with a focus on international affairs, bridging the gap in the weaponization of geopolitical memory. What an interesting field of study at this point in the life of our world. And Aleena said to me, "I'm a third-culture kid." And her friends corrected her, "Actually it's four." She was born in India, lived in Saudi Arabia, the UK [United Kingdom], and now studying in Canada. So a fourth-culture kid.

And Meerub Ashraf, majoring in business and religious studies. Here from Regina is her home. And we welcome you to this, your Legislative Assembly. And I ask all members to give them a good round of applause as welcome. Thank you.

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

Vicki Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And on behalf of the official opposition, to you and through you, I'd like to join with the member opposite in welcoming this group of university students to this, their Legislative Assembly. It's so important that we have young, bright minds that are engaged in the political discourse of this province. It is absolutely critical that your insights are included in the policy of this province. It's one of the reasons that we have Your Future, Your Say consultations going on right now with the opposition.

I want to thank you for taking the time out to come and join us in your Legislative Assembly, and ask all members to join us in welcoming them to this their legislature.

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

Matt Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to welcome three guests seated in the east gallery, people who are just incredibly important to me. We have my two sons over there as well as my mother, Jody.

And you know, it's something that I really enjoy in this Assembly, when we get to celebrate our families. And sometimes I feel like I talk about my kids too much in here. But I think that we're all just so, so fortunate to have people in our lives supporting us. And you know, I've got three of the best here with me today.

I do want to say that I heard a few comments today about one of my kids that I didn't appreciate. It was several questions from colleagues pointing out that my son is taller than me, which I don't think is true. But I know that my days are numbered; it's getting very close. He's 13 and wearing size 13 shoes. And I think I've got four to six months before he passes me, but I assure members of the Assembly he has not passed me yet.

But I'd like to welcome my son Tom to his Assembly. Just a phenomenal young man, someone who I think I genuinely look up to. He's a leader on his sports teams in his school . . .

An Hon. Member: — Literally look up to him.

Matt Love: — Easy. Easy. And just a good friend to so many, including to his younger brother Myles, who's cuddling with him up there in the gallery. Myles is a musician, an athlete, a creative. You might see him around the hallways today throwing some paper airplanes later on. Very excited to come here today and see how far he can get them down the hallways.

And next to them is my mother, Jody, who recently moved to Saskatoon from Kelowna. She moved here last summer, so she's just about made it through her first winter in Saskatchewan. But we'll see what today brings because I think it's going to get worse out there.

But I'd like to welcome these three incredible people, three of Saskatchewan's best, to their Assembly. And I invite all members to join me in welcoming them to their Assembly today.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Mr. Speaker, through you and to you, to all

members of this Assembly, I'd like join with the member from Saskatoon Eastview in welcoming his mother and his two boys — young men — to this Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker. We may not agree on a number of things that go across the floor of this Assembly with respect to policy, but certainly all of us in this Assembly can agree on the fact that we don't serve here alone. We only serve here with the support and the love of our families.

And so I want to join with the member from Saskatoon Eastview in recognizing his family, thanking them for their support. And I extend that same graciousness and that same thankfulness on behalf of the government to you for supporting that member, who serves in disagreement with the government all too often, Mr. Speaker, but serves his constituents well.

So, Mr. Speaker, joining with the member from Saskatoon Eastview in welcoming his family to this Legislative Assembly, I ask everyone to join us.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

April ChiefCalf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in the Assembly to present this petition to the Government of Saskatchewan to step up for Indigenous students.

The undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring to your attention the following. They call on the Saskatchewan government to take immediate action to stand up for 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 schools. The recent loss of this federal funding will leave a significant gap in Saskatchewan classrooms, especially for Indigenous students who rely on inclusive education supports to thrive.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I will read the prayer:

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.

Mr. Speaker, the signatories to this petition reside in Cochin and North Battleford. I do so present. Thank you.

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

Darcy Warrington: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise to present a petition on behalf of Tammy O'Brien and many facing life-threatening illnesses, travelling out of province,

and having to bring out their Visa. I rise today to present our petition calling for financial support for travel expenses for medically necessary treatments not available in Saskatchewan.

The undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring to your attention the following. Many Saskatchewan residents requiring specialized care unavailable locally must pay substantial travel-related costs out of pocket, creating a financial barrier to essential medical treatment. This undermines equitable access to health care and places undue hardship on patients seeking medically necessary services outside the province.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to amend provincial health care policy so that the Government of Saskatchewan provides financial support for reasonable travel-related expenses, including travel, accommodation, and meals incurred by Saskatchewan residents who must leave the province to obtain medically necessary treatments not available within Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by citizens from Biggar, Prud'homme, and Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

Jared Clarke: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling on the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to build a school in White City.

The undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring to our attention the following: that the towns of White City, Emerald Park, and the surrounding communities have seen a sharp increase in population in recent years; that many high schools in the surrounding RMs [rural municipality] are at or over capacity; that White City and Emerald Park are the largest community in Saskatchewan with no high school and the only one with a combined population of 5,000; and that a high school is needed to fulfill the educational needs of the thousands of families that have moved into east Regina, White City, and its surrounding communities, who have children attending high school in the next three years.

[13:45]

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately prioritize the building of a high school in White City, with definite plans to open doors by the 2028 school year.

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

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

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in the

Assembly to present a petition to implement rent control in Saskatchewan.

We, 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 more than 4 per cent in the last year alone, far outpacing wage growth and putting more pressure on families, seniors, students, and low-income residents; that without rent control, landlords can implement unchecked rent hikes, making housing increasingly unaffordable and unstable; that with rent control, residents can budget more effectively, potentially putting them in a position to save for a down payment on their first home; that provinces such as British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and Prince Edward Island have already implemented rent control measures to protect tenants and maintain housing affordability.

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

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Remembering Davinder Singh

Bhajan Brar: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to remember Davinder Singh, who lost his life due to gun violence on March 13th, 2026 in North Battleford while working at a job as a taxi driver.

Davinder Singh was only 30 years old. He was born in the village of Daulatpura Niwan in Moga, Punjab, the same district in India that I am from. He was a hard worker and skilled at his job at Punjab State Power Corporation, the same place that I worked in India for 34 years. Like myself and so many others, he came to Canada in 2022 in search of a brighter future for his family.

Mr. Speaker, he worked tirelessly as a taxi driver with Crown Cab in North Battleford. It is not an easy job: all of the late nights sitting with strangers, ear on the radio and eyes on the road. And safety concern is part of taxi driving, not in Battleford but in the whole of Saskatchewan.

Davinder Singh was working hard to make it back to India to attend his younger brother's wedding, but he never made it. He leaves behind his wife, his parents, his younger brother, and countless others from his community in Canada and his village in India who are mourning his loss.

It is heartwarming to see how the entire Sikh community and the people of Saskatchewan have rallied together to honour Davinder Singh and to support his family. I ask all members of this Assembly to join me in honouring the memory of Davinder

Singh. Thank you.

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

Tisdale Hosts Masters Provincial Curling Championships

Terri Bromm: — Mr. Speaker, from February 26th to March 1st, Tisdale was host to the 2026 Masters Provincial curling championships which saw the best curlers in the province, age 60 and over, competing. Both men's and women's events took place, with the winners advancing to the national competition in Grande Prairie this April.

Beginning Thursday, 11 men's teams and five women's teams were in a hard-fought competition to claim the best-in-the-province title. The event was well attended from the opening ceremonies to the finals on Sunday.

Tisdale residents had some hometown talent to cheer for with skip Gerry Furber, third Lester Willerton, second Dennis Abbott, and giving a special shout-out to the lead, my father-in-law, Gene Bromm, all of whom we enjoyed cheering on in their Friday night win.

On Sunday the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport joined me, taking in some semi-final action and touring the Tisdale RECplex. The end of the event wrapped up with the 2026 Saskatchewan Masters Provincial Championships being awarded to Team Nikolejsin, the men's team from Weyburn; and Team Inglis, the women's team from Yorkton.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join with me in congratulating CurlSask, Tisdale Curling Club, the organizers, and all the volunteers for hosting a successful event. And the best of luck to these teams competing at the national curling competition.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Memories of Renowned Trading Post

Jordan McPhail: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to commemorate a hallmark business from northern Saskatchewan, Robertson Trading post in my hometown of La Ronge. I have fond childhood memories of this renowned establishment. Walking up the steps of the store and seeing elders and trappers who have since passed on; the smell of smoked hides once you stepped in through those front doors; the sights of fur hats, traps, beadwork, birchbark bitings, carvings, canoes, canned goods — you name it. And the owner, Scott Robertson, sitting at his desk next to a warehouse that contained furs from across the North.

This wonderful store was first opened in 1967 by Alex and Phyllis Robertson and operated for nearly 60 years. During that time they worked seven days a week, began amassing a collection of Indigenous art that belonged in a museum, endured through the collapse of fur prices, and would eventually pass their legacy on to their son Scott along with his wife, Karen.

After nearly six decades of business, Scott made the difficult decision to close his legendary store, only occasionally reopening to sell canvas tents, beads, beaded moosehide poppies, and cuts of meat from award-winning butcher Guthrie.

Tragically on June the 3rd of last year, a fire destroyed the building that housed Robertson Trading post, along with their collection of Indigenous art and other historical artifacts. This loss was felt and mourned by the community. Although the many artifacts have been lost but will live on forever as the stories and the memories of this beautiful northern trading post and the history that it delivered. Thank you, tēniki, ninanāskoman, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Yorkton.

Community Events Raise Funds for Camp Easter Seal

David Chan: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate one of Yorkton's most enduring and uplifting community traditions: Easter Seals Snowarama, hosted by SaskAbilities Yorkton, along with its companion events, Bowlarama and the remarkable Snowarama Desert Chapter in Arizona.

These events continue to demonstrate the generosity of the people of Yorkton and rural Saskatchewan. This year Yorkton Snowarama raised a record-breaking \$315,133. Applause, please.

[Applause]

David Chan: — Mr. Speaker, these funds will go to supporting Camp Easter Seal summer fun and adaptive technology services programs that change the lives of children and youth experiencing disability.

Bowlarama added its own energy and community spirit, bringing families and supporters together for the cause. And it's always such a fun event. Equally inspiring is the Desert Chapter founded by long-time supporters Larry Hilworth and Rick Bilous. Now in its fifth year, this Arizona-based ride raised over \$130,000, proving that Snowarama can thrive even under desert skies.

Mr. Speaker, I want to honour these individuals, their groups, their organizations, the volunteers, donors, and all involved for creating life-changing opportunities for Easter Seals kids all across our province.

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

Provincial Budget

Brent Blakley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today to talk about Saskatchewan's \$40 billion man — the Premier. Breaking records is never easy, but this Premier has the honour of knowing that he's responsible for Saskatchewan's debt ballooning to that \$40 billion total, dwarfing any and all of our province's predecessors. Saskatchewan's debt is now double what it was under Grant Devine and triple what our debt was under Brad Wall.

We know now from this bad-news budget that communities drastically in need of a new school won't be getting them any time soon. These front-line health care workers that need relief won't be getting any. And Saskatchewan people who are already struggling to make ends meet will ultimately pay the price for

this Premier's financial train wreck. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation released an article stating, "Saskatchewan's government is sending taxpayers a billion-dollar bill for debt interest and calling it a plan."

He says the government chose to protect Saskatchewan. In this case, protect Saskatchewan means keep overspending and keep piling debt onto taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, the worst part is, if we've learned anything from last year, this budget won't be what we think it is. That \$819 million is likely only the beginning of the debt Saskatchewan will accumulate over the next year. The people of this province deserve better than this.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Trade and Export.

Saskatchewan Woman Inspires as National Hockey League Assistant Coach

Hon. Warren Kaeding: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize and celebrate an inspiring trailblazer from Saskatchewan, Jessica Campbell who has made history as the first full-time female assistant coach in the National Hockey League.

Born in Moosomin and raised in Melville, Jessica's love for hockey was nurtured in Melville where she played on boys teams until she was 17, excelling as a stand-out forward. And I give my son Matthew credit for helping develop her career, as he was often the goaltender playing against her.

Jessica went on to captain Canada's U18 [under 18] women's team to a gold medal at the IIHF [International Ice Hockey Federation] World Championship and later played collegiate hockey at Cornell University, followed by a professional career with the Calgary Inferno in 2016.

After retiring as a player, Jessica transitioned into coaching, earning widespread respect for her expertise in player development. Mr. Speaker, Jessica became the first woman to coach at the IIHF Men's World Championship and later joined the Coachella Valley Firebirds, the AHL [American Hockey League] affiliate of the Seattle Kraken.

On July 3rd, 2024, Jessica shattered another barrier, becoming the first full-time female assistant coach in NHL [National Hockey League] history. Her presence behind the bench is not just a personal achievement, but an inspiration for young athletes across the country, particularly women and girls who dream of careers in hockey.

Jessica Campbell's historic success is a reflection of her roots in Saskatchewan and the strength of communities that shaped her. We are incredibly proud of her accomplishments and look forward to seeing her continued impact on the sport. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Art Teacher Wins Excellence in Education Award

Colleen Young: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a

teacher who recently received the CCSSA, Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta Excellence in Catholic Education Award. Tammy Torrance is a long-time art educator at Holy Rosary High School in Lloydminster.

This award is presented annually to a teacher whose impact extends beyond the classroom and reflects a deep commitment to Catholic education. The award recognizes educators who foster academic growth while nurturing students spiritually and personally through faith, compassion, and leadership.

Tammy began her teaching career 20 years ago and during that time has helped shape and expand the school's graphic arts, visual arts, and photography programming while drawing students into spaces where creativity and confidence can flourish. Staff and administration of the school say her dedication reflects the broader mission of Catholic education to nurture the whole child and create an environment where faith and learning grow together.

Tammy says her enthusiasm about teaching has never waned, and that part of her energy comes from the nature of teaching art and the creative ideas of her students. With art, nothing ever has to stay the same. Each teaching day is different.

Please join me in congratulating Tammy Torrance on her excellence in teaching award and thank her for being that outstanding teacher that all students wish for and want to have in their classroom.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

Speaker Goudy: — So yesterday I mentioned that I was going to defer the ruling from Monday till today. So on Monday, March 23rd, 2026 the Opposition House Leader rose on a point of order alleging that during question period, the Premier's answers were not relevant to the questions asked and the Premier was referencing party business when he referred to a fundraising email.

In response, the Government House Leader argued that the Premier's comments were relevant to the questions asked, and I committed to meeting with the House leaders ahead of ruling on the matter. And having met with them, we agreed that it was ultimately up to the Speaker to decide.

The first matter I will address in the point of order is the issue of referencing party business during question period. Rule 20(2) states that:

Questions on issues not officially connected with the government, of a private nature, related to the Board of Internal Economy, caucus, party or political responsibilities are prohibited.

Although the rule sets restrictions on questions asked rather than answers given, this Assembly is also governed by the principle that you cannot do indirectly what you can do directly. As such, this rule can be understood to apply broadly to both questions and answers during question period.

I have cautioned members from both sides many times in the past against referring to caucus business or party business, and I have stated that it is not permissible. On that point, I will again caution both sides to abide by the rules and refrain from references to party business when asking questions or giving answers.

[14:00]

This Assembly has also had a long practice, including many rulings, of giving latitude to ministers to answer questions and allowing them to answer in the way that they consider the most appropriate. In reviewing the Premier's remarks from Monday, I find that they are relevant to the question, even though they included additional comments which may not be considered relevant. And therefore I find the point of order not well taken.

Furthermore I would like to read from a few of our rule books, the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. I think you'll understand what I mean by some of these comments.

When members swear or solemnly affirm allegiance to the Sovereign, they are also swearing or solemnly affirming allegiance to the institutions the Sovereign represents, including the concept of democracy. Thus, members are making a pledge to conduct themselves in the best interests of the country [or in our case, the province]. The oath or solemn affirmation reminds members of the serious obligations and responsibilities they are assuming.

Speaker Fraser ruled that the Chair was:

... not empowered to make a judgment on the circumstances or the sincerity with which a duly elected member takes the oath of allegiance. The significance of the oath to each member is a matter of conscience and so it must remain ...

When I asked to meet with the two House leaders it's because it's a big responsibility for me to decide on some of the disagreements that this Chamber has. There was talk about hate in a document and well, you hated first or no, you were worse.

It's not up to the Speaker, as it says here. It's not up to the Chair to empower ... And they are not empowered to make a judgment on the circumstances of the sincerity with which a duly elected member takes the oath of allegiance. That should be our guide. Not just the rules.

When we come into this Chamber, when we're elected as MLAs and sent here as the most hon. members of our communities to serve our province well, as it says: "... members are making a pledge to conduct themselves in the best interests of the [province]."

It is not up to us to set your conscience. I can't raise the bar for someone else, but I certainly can raise it for myself. I can't legislate morality in this Chamber, but we can certainly do it for ourselves.

I want to read ... It says, "Only the House can examine the conduct of its members." So the actions. We judge ourselves by our intentions, other by their actions. Well, they did this. But yeah, well, I didn't mean that. And they did that. Well, you know,

we judge ourselves by our intentions.

Let's look at here, just for a moment, at our own Saskatchewan *Rules and Procedures* put together in 2007. The Code of Ethical Conduct.

As Members of the Legislative Assembly we recognize that our actions have a profound impact on the lives of all Saskatchewan people. Fulfilling our obligations and discharging our duties responsibly requires a commitment to the highest ethical standards ...

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

Members of this Assembly must act not only lawfully but also in a manner that will withstand the closest public scrutiny; neither the law nor this code is designed to be exhaustive, and there will be occasions on which Members will find it necessary to adopt more stringent norms of conduct in order to protect the public interest and to enhance public confidence and trust.

Our world is pulling apart. We're Saskatchewan. We can't change the world, but we can certainly stand to our own conscience. The King, the Queen, they uphold. When they become the Sovereign they take off their crown and submit to an authority greater than themselves.

And I would say that when we come into this place, it's not for the Speaker to legislate what's right and what's wrong. We all know what's right and what's wrong. We were raised.

And so I'm just asking ... I'm going to hold to the rules. I'm going to be more firm moving forward, just holding the rules. I'll do my absolute best, but I am challenging us to raise our bars because the province is watching. The people are watching. And we need to be the example of what they expect in this place. So with that, I'll ask ...

QUESTION PERIOD

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

SaskPower Rates and Affordability

Carla Beck: — Mr. Speaker, for the first time in over 20 years, population in this province is declining. And the choices of this government are driving people and driving investment away.

Now it's been two months since that Premier sprung his power bill hike on Saskatchewan people. And Saskatchewan Industrial Energy Consumer Association, well, they're speaking out. In a recent letter, more than 20 of the largest companies in Saskatchewan say this power bill hike came with no consultation and that it "puts potential capital investment at risk."

Will the Premier scrap the rate increase, these hikes and costs for families, that are also putting investment in this province at risk?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I would just go back to the fact that Saskatchewan today is the most affordable province in the nation of Canada to live. Part of the reason for that is because we have the second-lowest utility bundle of anywhere in the nation of Canada, including the power rates that we have in this province, Mr. Speaker.

This government has taken numerous steps to ensure that that utility bundle remains as affordable as possible while replacing the necessary infrastructure, whether it be power generation, power lines, our SaskTel data towers that we have, to provide that service that Saskatchewan people expect, Mr. Speaker.

For example we removed the carbon tax from all of the electrical rates across the province, making our province the only truly carbon tax-free jurisdiction in the nation of Canada, Mr. Speaker. That is realized by Saskatchewan families right across this province, Mr. Speaker.

We had, after the 2020 election, delivered on a campaign commitment to lower power rates for one year by 10 per cent, Mr. Speaker. We delivered on that commitment, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that our province and the families that live in communities across this province remain in an area of Canada and the world that is one of the most affordable places to live.

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

Carla Beck: — I'm going to guarantee the Premier that these folks pay pretty close attention to power rates. I'm going to read from the letter:

SIECA expects better from its Crown corporations in this province, as the lack of engagement and extremely short notice makes planning and budgeting extremely difficult, deteriorates trust in relationships that have been built over several years, and it puts potential capital and investment at risk.

They'll go on to say, Mr. Speaker — there's more — "SIECA strongly suggests that rate increases only be implemented after approval from the rate review panel."

Consultation first, Mr. Speaker. What a novel concept.

Will the Premier listen to these industry leaders and drop his rate hike at least until after they've consulted with the people and the job creators that they've blindsided?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I would hope and I know the minister and others can engage with all of the members of that association and others across the province. As we do, Mr. Speaker, throughout the course of a year with the industries that are utilizing power in this province, as well as families that also are utilizing power, in an effort to ensure that that utility bundle that we have remains affordable in this province.

Notwithstanding the fact that Saskatchewan families are facing inflationary pressures like every other Canadian is across this nation, Mr. Speaker, the fact remains, this government is making every effort to ensure that that utility bundle is as low as it can be

while replacing the necessary infrastructure that we need to make the investments in, Mr. Speaker, through those publicly owned utilities.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, after the 2020 election, we had made a commitment to lower power rates by 10 per cent for over the course of the year. I find it interesting that today they're asking for these lower power rates when at that point in time the critic for SaskPower said, and I quote, "I call the 10 per cent reduction in power rates a handout for business that doesn't seem like good public policy," Mr. Speaker. Is it good policy, or isn't it?

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

Carla Beck: — Mr. Speaker, SIECA [Saskatchewan Industrial Energy Consumer Association] — some of the largest job creators in the country. I'm going to assume the Premier knows who's on that list. But let's be clear: they're warning this Premier that this rate hike at SaskPower is going to put investment and jobs at risk. For the first time in 20 years, our population in this province is declining. And guess what? These rate hikes, they're not going to help that.

So the Premier has a choice. Mr. Speaker, he could listen to these job creators and the people of Saskatchewan who are warning this Premier about the consequences of this rate hike, or he can continue to listen to that minister, the one he's already had to demote once.

I know which one I'd choose, Mr. Speaker. Which is he going to choose?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Mr. Speaker, this is precisely why no one takes the NDP [New Democratic Party] seriously. One day they're saying that a 10 per cent reduction in power rates is not good public policy, Mr. Speaker . . .

[Interjections]

Speaker Goudy: — I'm going to mention the members on the far end of the room. Meewasin and South Albert, please come to order.

Hon. Scott Moe: — One day what we're seeing is the NDP saying that the lowering of power rates is not good public policy, Mr. Speaker, and going so far as to call it a handout for businesses. Well who else uses power across this province are Saskatchewan families, Mr. Speaker, while you see a government that is making every effort to ensure that that utility bundle as a whole is the most affordable, or second-most affordable as it sits today, in the nation of Canada.

Who is taking notice, Mr. Speaker, of the accessible power and the rates that we have in this province, are industries from around the world as they make investments here. Over 60 significant investments, most if not all of them using significant amounts of power, employing Saskatchewan people, but totalling over \$62 billion of investment.

In fact two of the largest three investments recently in the nation

of Canada are right here in this province, Mr. Speaker. Both are using significant amounts of power. The most recent — about 300 megawatts of power — is a \$12 billion data centre that's going to be operational here right just south of the city of Regina, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue with our efforts to ensure that we have some of the most affordable utility rates across the nation of Canada. We're also going to continue with our efforts to be recognized globally in attracting that investment. That's going to provide more careers and continue us, Mr. Speaker, as a growing province by every metric.

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

Construction and Maintenance of Schools

Carla Beck: — Well far be it for me to give him any advice, Mr. Speaker, but he just made the wrong choice. And, Mr. Speaker, let's be clear: this is why people in this province, after listening to answers like that, why people in this province are looking for change.

But there's more. One week ago the Premier released his bad-news budget, and they claimed that they were supporting schools and they were supporting new builds. On Friday, however, the Minister of Education admitted that there were, and I quote, "several schools being delayed because of the budget." On Monday all the school boards confirmed this. On Tuesday there were even more articles again confirming these school delays.

Will the Premier admit today that his bad-news budget is delaying schools in this province?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a good-news budget for the people of Saskatchewan, for communities right across this province, Mr. Speaker. The number of new projects, capital projects in the education sector that were announced as part of the budget this year, Mr. Speaker. Plus the continuation of 20 other projects that are already under way, that are in various stages of design and planning and preparation as they advance to the construction stage, Mr. Speaker.

And each one of these projects is a bit different in terms of what's ahead of them for the next steps. In the case of Carlyle for example, Mr. Speaker, myself, the Minister of SaskBuilds, the member for Cannington — who represents that great community — recently had the opportunity to meet with the mayor and the board Chair for that school division as well as a trustee to talk about that particular project. There's some concerns with respect to some additional costs required for servicing of the land.

And that's the responsible thing for all of us as elected leaders to do is to be able look at additional costs to make sure that we're asking questions if those are being incurred before we advance it to the next stage.

We had a very good and a very positive meeting with the local leadership. And I'm very positive and looking forward to making sure that we continue to have that project move to the

construction phase and looking forward to the grand opening of a new school in Carlyle, Mr. Speaker.

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

Carla Beck: — Well the question was for the Premier, Mr. Speaker, but perhaps he hasn't been fully briefed yet. Let's be clear here: the new school in Carlyle is delayed. The new school in Regina is delayed. The renovations at Campbell, also delayed, Mr. Speaker.

No more games. People in this province deserve a straight answer. They deserve to see the full list of those schools that are going to be delayed because of this bad-news budget.

[14:15]

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: will he stand up, will he actually confirm these delays, and will he table that list today?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition and the members opposite there are quick to point to lists. And they've talked a lot about them. As a matter of fact, they did a media event on the list, Mr. Speaker.

The member for Regina Rochdale, as a matter of fact, I understand she did a Facebook post the other day going through a whole list of communities. She should check her own Facebook post, Mr. Speaker, because somebody commented on that post and said . . . And this is a quote, Mr. Speaker. This is a quote. And this individual said:

Please take Grayson off this list. Our school is well maintained. It provides a fabulous learning environment for our kids. We have a new daycare in the school, a brand new playground, a well-equipped gymnasium, modern technology in our classrooms. Combine this with a staff of amazing teachers, and our children have an incredible environment to learn in.

Mr. Speaker, that was said by the mayor of Grayson This government will continue to listen to people like the mayor of Grayson and not listen to the NDP.

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

Affordability and Provincial Taxes

Darcy Warrington: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under this Premier, the price of electricity is going up. The price of food is going up. The price of housing is going up. The price of fishing is going up. The price of hunting is going up. The price of owning a car is going up. And the price of putting gas in your car is way up, Mr. Speaker.

On cutting the gas tax, the Premier said yesterday, "It's not a conversation we would be opposed to at some point." Families need a break now, not at some point down the line. Why won't the Premier suspend the fuel tax today?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, it's very simple if the member would've been listening over the last period of days and weeks. Because the entire amount of the fuel tax, plus, goes into the highways budget, Mr. Speaker. This side of the House is not prepared to cut the highways budget. The NDP might be; however we might not, Mr. Speaker . . .

[Interjections]

Speaker Goudy: — Order, please.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, we recognize affordability issues. Saskatchewan, while we're the most affordable province in the country, Mr. Speaker, we're not immune to that. That's why we chose to do more. That's why we chose to make affordability a central point of the budget, a central point of the election campaign a year and a half ago. That's why we made a priority to cut income tax, Mr. Speaker, so people can keep more of their own money in their own pockets. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Darcy Warrington: — Mr. Speaker, they don't recognize affordability issues. Lunch kits in schools across the province are filled with PST [provincial sales tax] products. Yesterday we raised the concerns of Saskatchewan families and seniors who are facing an affordability crisis, and we asked the Premier to make life more affordable by cancelling the tax on groceries. In response the Premier made jokes about rotisserie chickens. People are struggling to pay their bills, and the Premier makes jokes at their expense in this Assembly. Pretty telling.

Instead of laughing at the people of Saskatchewan and telling folks how great they have it, why won't the Premier deliver some cost-of-living relief and cancel the tax on groceries?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, here's what's not a joke: members opposite standing up every day and saying, take the PST off of groceries. There is no PST on groceries, Mr. Speaker. There's no PST on milk, on eggs, on bread, on meat, Mr. Speaker. There is on some prepared foods. And NDP Manitoba might have decided to take it off of candy and pop. That's their decision, Mr. Speaker.

We are concerned about affordability. That's why there are so many affordability measures, including the income tax cuts in last week's budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Funding for Food Banks

Brittney Senger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A budget is where a government makes their priorities clear. And this government's priorities are crystal clear in this bad-news budget. They cut supports for people while ensuring bankers and bondholders on

Bay Street and Wall Street get \$1.2 billion of Saskatchewan taxpayer money, all while \$1 million in funding is being cut from Saskatchewan food banks. The Moose Jaw Food Bank is forced to limit visits because of the overwhelming need for support.

Why is the minister cutting food bank support? And will he restore this funding?

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

Hon. Terry Jensen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a government that takes very seriously the issue of protecting our citizens and making life more affordable. The Finance minister just ran through a laundry list of affordability measures, Mr. Speaker, that this government undertakes every year — \$2.5 billion worth of affordability measures.

With regards to the food bank, Mr. Speaker, that was a two-year, \$2 million commitment that this government made to help the food banks out during a time of unprecedented inflation, when inflation was 6, 7, 8 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, this year's budget has targeted increases in a number of areas including the low-income tax credit, doubling of the active families benefit, increasing the disability tax credit, and removing another 54,000 people off the tax rolls, Mr. Speaker. This is what making life more affordable in the best province in this country looks like. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Brittney Senger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tax credits do nothing to give people emergency support. The executive director of the Moose Jaw Food Bank told the media, "What we are seeing is something we've never experienced before."

One thousand households visit each month. A third of their clients are children. Fifty new visitors come through the door each month that have never used a food bank. The food bank states that they are seeing more working-class families and low-income seniors than ever before.

The government's response to this? The Minister of Finance cut their funding. And absolute silence from the government's Moose Jaw MLAs.

Will the minister restore this emergency funding that the bad-news budget cut?

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

Hon. Terry Jensen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And with regards again to the issue of the food bank funding, the commitment was made for two years, \$2 million during a time of unprecedented inflation, when inflation rates — driven largely by the Liberal-NDP coalition government in Ottawa — were 6, 7, up to 8, 9 per cent.

We value, Mr. Speaker, we value the work that food banks do across Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker . . .

[Interjections]

Speaker Goudy: — Member from Cumberland.

Hon. Terry Jenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And we value the work that food banks across Saskatchewan in addition to all of our community-based organizations do, Mr. Speaker. There's several non-profits, literally thousands around Saskatchewan, and that's what makes Saskatchewan such a great place to live, work, and raise a family, Mr. Speaker. This is a government that . . . We include \$2.5 billion worth of affordability initiatives every year. And that's work that this government will continue to do on behalf of the people of this province.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Meewasin.

Health Care Staffing

Nathaniel Teed: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. People all over this province are struggling to make ends meet. But one sector is really feeling the strain, and that is health care workers. They've gathered . . .

[Applause]

Nathaniel Teed: — That's right. They've gathered on the steps of this legislature today because they have not seen a raise in four years, Mr. Speaker. Let's let that sink in. Because after three years of contract negotiation, that minister has nothing to show for it. It's unacceptable.

Will the minister deliver a contract and get these health care workers their long-overdue pay raise?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I agree; three years is too long. We need to get a contract done, and government is focused in that regard.

I had an opportunity to meet with CUPE 5430 leadership this morning. A very productive meeting with Bashir and Linda and Janice. Talked about several priorities that the government has to ensure that we can come to an agreement that works for health care workers and also works for patients right across the province as well, Mr. Speaker.

Over the last couple of weeks, I've been working with both SAHO [Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations] and the Saskatchewan Health Authority to narrow in on what the employer priorities are so that when bargaining starts up again on Monday we can have productive conversations with our union partners. And we look forward to getting to a fair agreement for health care workers and for patients.

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

Nathaniel Teed: — Mr. Speaker, it's been three years. All that conversation should have happened three years ago. And productive meetings? These health care workers still showed up on their steps of their Legislative Assembly because they aren't seeing action.

Now day after day that minister stands up here and claims he's

working hard to fix the health care crisis in this province. He talks about the facilities he's building, the beds he's opening up, Mr. Speaker. I don't think he understands that he needs to be able to attract staff. Bashir Jalloh put it best on budget day, and I quote: "The budget is very disappointing because it does not talk about the root cause of the problem we have today in health care. That is chronic short-staffing."

There's nothing in this bad-news budget to address the staffing challenges in health care. To the minister: how does he propose to attract health care workers to a province that won't even give them a fair deal?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated in my previous answer, a productive meeting this morning with CUPE 5430 leadership. We look forward first to SAHO and CUPE and all the provider union partners getting back to the table on Monday to engage in quality bargaining time and getting us closer to a fair deal for health care workers and a fair deal for patients, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talked about facilities, talked about beds. The member opposite forgot about the most ambitious health human resources action plan across the country. In this year's budget, Mr. Speaker, a good-news budget, \$200 million focused on our health human resources action plan. We have seen . . .

[Interjections]

Speaker Goudy: — Member from Saskatoon Silverspring, I'd call you to order, please.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — As I was getting around to saying, Mr. Speaker, there's \$200 million in this year's budget focused on the health human resources action plan.

I was looking at some numbers earlier today. Vacancy rates in hard-to-recruit classifications across the province have come down 48 per cent over the last three years, Mr. Speaker. That means we have more people working in full-time positions. We look forward to continuing the good work as part of that action plan.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Meewasin.

Nathaniel Teed: — Mr. Speaker, the fact is that there isn't even a penny in this budget to sign that deal, and he is the only person in this province calling it the most ambitious health care retention plan. None of these health care workers will even reiterate that to us.

Mr. Speaker, that minister is claiming with a straight face that he is working hard to attract health care workers to this province. There are 10,000 of them right here in Saskatchewan being pushed to the breaking point because he won't sign a contract. They feel burnt-out and they feel disrespected. They were overlooked in this budget, overlooked in the patient-first health plan, and they're being overlooked at this moment by that minister. Enough is enough.

Why won't that minister sign a contract and keep health care workers in this province?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — You know, Mr. Speaker, I'll take issue with one thing the member opposite said in his question. The patients-first plan — a very ambitious document that has 50 next steps to improve health care right across the province — the patients-first plan talks about the role that so many different professionals play in our health care system, ensuring that patients get access to the right care at the right time and as close to home as possible, Mr. Speaker.

Members of the provider unions are key members in terms of ensuring that that care can be provided to patients in a timely fashion right across this province in communities large and small, Mr. Speaker. I have already spoken to the advancements that we hope to make at the bargaining table over the next several weeks with CUPE and our other two provider unions, Mr. Speaker. As I said, it's a priority of this government to make sure that we get a fair deal for health care workers and a deal that works for patients as well. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Government Response to Wildfires in the North

Jordan McPhail: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party government completely mishandled the wildfire response last season. Many in Sucker River, Denare Beach, East Trout Lake, and elsewhere have lost their homes or their cabin. Some temporary housing has been brought into the North, and many families are rebuilding at great cost, but many of my constituents are still waiting for their new home. So many families are still without the support that they need and that they've asked for.

To the Minister for Community Safety: is he aware of how many families are still homeless today due to the fact that their inaction had wildfires sweep through their communities in the North last summer?

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

[14:30]

Hon. Michael Weger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And my condolences go out to the member from Cumberland, the residents in his constituency — including Scott Robertson, whom he mentioned in a member statement today on the loss of the Robertson Trading post — and to all the individuals that have lost their homes in that constituency, Mr. Speaker.

What I've been doing, Mr. Speaker, is working with stakeholders to address what happened in last year's fire season and recognize the contributions of the fire departments that assisted with those wildfires but also to meet with stakeholders to discuss what we can do better next season.

And last night, Mr. Speaker, I drove 700 kilometres to St. Louis with my colleague the Minister of Environment so that we could meet with the fire department in St. Louis and then also with two

separate stakeholders to discuss. And we'll continue to do that, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we can protect the people of the North during this upcoming fire season.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 53 — *The Saskatchewan Chemical Fertilizer Incentive Amendment Act, 2026*

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Trade and Export.

Hon. Warren Kaeding: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 53, *The Saskatchewan Chemical Fertilizer Incentive Amendment Act, 2026* be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker Goudy: — It has been moved by the Minister of Trade and Export that Bill No. 53, *The Saskatchewan Chemical Fertilizer Incentive 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. Warren Kaeding: — 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: — Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Notwithstanding the government's agenda and what's published in the *Orders of the Day* today, I request leave to move the following motion:

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

Speaker Goudy: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

Speaker Goudy: — Leave's not granted.

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 Dakota-Arm River.

Barret Kropf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I get the question asked to me often about, what do I miss about coaching and my time as a coach. And I would say the biggest thing that I miss is the process of recruiting athletes, or student athletes, to come and play for my team.

And it's a really interesting dynamic because you travel to a city to go and watch some athletes play, and you come with a game plan. You've got a strategy, and you've got this vision for them. And at the same time those same athletes are getting ready for their hockey game and they're, you know, going through all their rituals. And they're sitting there nervous because they want to make sure they perform and they perform to the best of their ability so they get heard and they can perform to their best of, maybe, that vision that I was looking for in them as an athlete.

And then after the game you're down in the bowels of the arena with like 10, 20 other coaches, and you're trying to recruit the same athletes. And it's really the same: the best plan with the best vision that's going to end up getting that athlete. But even then, when you get to meet with that athlete, there's this nervous exchange. You hope that he likes you and that, you know, there's this relationship that can be built around offering him a scholarship to come and play for your program.

And, Mr. Speaker, I liken this year's budget, this budget to protect the Saskatchewan people, to like a recruiting strategy to recruit people to come and play on Team Saskatchewan.

It is a plan that is clearly been working since 2007, to keep recruiting people to be a part of this amazing province of Saskatchewan. And we start with, Mr. Speaker — I touched on it very briefly last night — with the data centre that was just announced, the AI [artificial intelligence] data centre that's been brought in by Bell Canada to partner with us here in the province, a 300-megawatt data centre.

It's a closed-loop, super-efficient centre. It will provide data sovereignty for our province. It makes us tech leaders in this space, Mr. Speaker. And it's super exciting because, as I nerd out on that space a little bit, the technology that they're bringing in to this data centre is going to be using 32 per cent less power because of the chip design that they're using from Cerebras. So it's not just about creating jobs. They're also making sure that it's going to be an efficient facility.

As a SaskPower kid, Mr. Speaker, I grew up in Estevan, right in the heart of the coal production with Shand, Coronach, and of course Boundary. And my dad, for 42 years he twisted a wrench and built those turbines and rebuilt them and rebuilt them and continued to rebuild them. And, Mr. Speaker, it's because of the strength of our power capacity to produce power here in Saskatchewan that we are able to attract great businesses like Bellnet data centre because we have abundant energy. And that's a great way to attract new people and new businesses to our province.

It's an exciting time for our province on that front, Mr. Speaker, because as we get into the playoffs, everyone's going to start picking their favourite teams. And everyone knows that the trade deadline just passed. And the teams that load up for the playoffs in hockey, Mr. Speaker, the players will go to that team that they know that there's other great players on that team. And so just like the Bell data centre coming to Saskatchewan, other tech leaders are going to now say, Saskatchewan is a place that we want to come and set up shop.

So in the near future I can just envision that there's going to be aerospace, and there's going to be robotics, and there's going to be all kinds of different businesses and research and quantum computing that's going to be announced here because we have one great signing. And we're going to attract more to this great province, Mr. Speaker.

I get the opportunity to be the backup goalie to our Minister of Education. They call it the Legislative Secretary for Education. But it's an honoured role that I get to learn alongside our Minister of Education. And one of the things that is going on in our province right now is the Saskatchewan School Boards Association has formed a work advisory group, Mr. Speaker, on artificial intelligence.

And I'm excited because Lisa and Jerome, they're the Co-Chairs of that committee. And we've met several times already in the last couple of months to work on the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] strategy on AI and how that's going to be implemented across our province to make sure that our kids in our K to career have a strong capacity to know what AI's going to be for their future. And I'm really excited, and I'm thankful to the minister for inviting me to be on that committee.

I'm also thankful, Mr. Speaker, that the municipal revenue sharing program is going to contribute over \$8.2 million to Dakota-Arm River and our constituencies and our RMs. It is money — as we know; you know, it's been talked about here already — that has no strings attached, that the leaders in each of those communities get to decide where that money's going to be spent. And I'm excited for them to do that.

I'm thankful that this budget invests in post-secondary. Our Minister of Advanced Education just recently announced a long-term funding agreement. Part of that funding agreement also includes no tuition increases, Mr. Speaker, and a grad retention program.

And speaking of the grad retention program, I was reminded just recently of another exciting event that took place that broke records was TeleMiracle, raising record amounts of money. And one of the events, Mr. Speaker, that it got to cross through my constituency on Highway 11 was the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] agro students. They've been doing it for about I think 47 years, where they push a bed to Regina — or vice versa, from Saskatoon back to Regina — and they raise money.

And one of their stops was at the Aylesbury Elephant Bar, and Lisa Watkins hosted them. You know, it was almost like a reunion, all the original bed pushers mixed in with some of the new ones. And we were able to sit there, and I went and talked with some of those ag students. And I was asking them, like are you seniors, are you freshmen, where you're at? And many of

them said, oh we're freshmen, and we're excited to be in the ag program because we know it's going to have great jobs."

And I got a chance to talk to some seniors that said, "We've already got jobs lined up, and we're going to stay here in Saskatchewan because of this grad retention program." And so right there, Mr. Speaker, I said, "Oh like are you from Dakota-Arm River? Are you from Saskatchewan? Whereabouts are you?" And they said, "Oh actually, MLA Kropf, I'm from Calgary. I'm from Red Deer. I'm from Grande Prairie. I'm from Edmonton." And so, Mr. Speaker, our investment in post-secondary is landing some amazing recruits to come and play for Team Saskatchewan.

When it comes to health care, I know our Health minister's going to be talking about this shortly. We have a great strategy to recruit more people to come to Saskatchewan. You know, I've spent some time over the last year going around and travelling and meeting with our health professionals across Dakota-Arm River.

And you know, just an example of that, one of the people in the groups I met with was in Davidson with Krista Alexander and her team of professionals. And really at the end of that meeting we spent an hour or so just talking about some of their ideas and just listening to them and hearing where their vision is at, Mr. Speaker, for their community of Davidson and the health care. And I left inspired. That group really fired me up, Mr. Speaker, because I loved their ideas. And I promised to them that I will continue to be their voice here in Regina, and I'll continue to be their advocate every chance that I get.

Another opportunity that I had, Mr. Speaker, on budget day last week, was getting the opportunity to meet Dr. Mike Kelly. And I'd probably describe him as the captain of our health care team here in Saskatchewan. A world-class doctor that was born and raised here in Saskatchewan, he is the Gretzky of neural health and stroke care in our province.

His work has impacted lives and changed our nation-leading stroke care, saving the life of my father-in-law in fact. Because about three weeks ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my wife and I were up in Saskatoon at an event. And we got a call early in the morning from my mother-in-law saying, Keith's having a stroke. So they called the ambulance in Assiniboia and proceeded to get him on the way to Dr. Wigmore Hospital in Moose Jaw. In the meantime my wife and I quickly packed up our suitcases and hopped in our vehicle and started heading down Highway 11.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, upon arriving at Dr. Wigmore Hospital in Moose Jaw, my father-in-law was treated with great care. A team of professionals was on the spot. Knowing because they had communicated with the ambulance, they were able to get the care, the scan, the treatment, and everything that they possibly could for him.

And by the time my wife and I arrived from Saskatoon, we met him in the parking lot because he already had a game plan and a strategy for his care moving forward, Mr. Speaker, all because of the acute stroke recovery pathway that Dr. Mike Kelly has put into place across our province. It is world leading, and it's going to be a strategy and a recruitment plan that will allow us to recruit other health care professionals to our province. So I thank him for that work.

Saskatchewan has the food, fuel, and fertilizer that the world needs, Mr. Speaker. But our greatest asset that we have here is our hard-working and humble people who continue to be leaders and innovators and are making a difference here in our communities and around the world. I will never, ever stop bragging about Saskatchewan. It's a place that I love. And this budget is an incredible recruiting plan that helps us attract more and protect those who call this place home.

As such, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I support the budget put forth by the Finance minister and seconded by the MLA from Carrot River Valley, and I reject the bad game plan of the opposition and their amendment.

Deputy Speaker B. McLeod: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Meara Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to be on my feet to enter in some comments on the '26-27 budget. I just want to open my remarks by recognizing that we're on Treaty 4 and express gratitude for my colleagues, for this opportunity to speak to the budget. It's always an opportunity to speak to the opportunities, the hopes, the dreams of Saskatchewan people, but also the ways in which we feel this government is letting folks down.

I want to start by just thanking my constituency office assistant, Dagan. As many of you know, we're over there on 5th and Elphinstone. And I'm going to be perfectly honest with you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Things are getting tougher, so much tougher. There's not a day that goes by that I don't check in with Dagan.

This week it was, you know, he was leading people out of an intersection. They were intoxicated. They weren't safe. Last week we had a couch kind of dumped in the parking lot that was covered in blood. He regularly shows up to the office, and there's human feces. He's regularly attending to people with naloxone; people have overdosed, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's really sad. And it's getting really tough for whoever is working in that office, and right now it's Dagan.

And every day I am thankful for him because he puts on his social work cap. He has a social work background. He has so much compassion and knowledge that he shares with our constituents. He does such good advocacy. And I'm so lucky to have him, and the people of Regina Elphinstone-Centre are lucky to have him.

But I do want to be really honest about the realities in the neighbourhood. Things are getting really scary, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and people come to our office concerned all the time. They're really concerned and frustrated at the changes they're seeing around them. And you know, I guess that's why we're here — right? — this opposition. That's why we're fighting this fight. We think there's so much more that we could be doing for not just the people who live in Regina's core or Saskatoon's core, but the people right across this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[14:45]

And truly the community that I serve is incredible. I was reminded of that just last week. We had two community association AGMs [annual general meeting] that fell on the same night, so I was running around to both of them. We had the

Rosemont Mount Royal AGM that happened, and then I ran over to the Cathedral AGM. Of course I also represent the area that represents the North Central Community Association. They're all doing fabulous work.

I want to give a shout-out to Linda, who's leaving the Cathedral association after nearly a decade. I want to give a shout-out to Alex, who's leaving the Mount Royal Rosemont Community Association for over a decade. These folks are doing incredible work, often in the background. I just can't thank them enough.

You know, this is a tough time for people, community. That community, that glue is an antidote to despair, I think, for a lot of people, is really important right now. And those are the folks on the front line really doing the work to keep our communities strong, looking out for their neighbours. And I want to just extend my thanks and my gratitude to those folks that are involved at that level.

I also just want to just . . . quick shout-out to my family. We have a new family member since last year's budget, I guess. We've got little Maeve. She's now just over nine months. What can I say about Maeve? She's pretty happy. She's pretty plump. She's got these bright blue eyes, and I just like miss her every day that I'm not with her.

And that really goes for my other two boys, too. Lew, who's in grade 1 at Connaught. Il parle français très bien. [Translation: He speaks French very well.] He's starting to learn French under the amazing guidance of Monsieur Wybo. My partner, Nick, doesn't speak French, and I think it's just like a really wild experience for him to have a kid who's now speaking this whole new language, speaking with Mom secretly, saying things that he can't understand. It's just like a little bond we have and it's been so much fun. That French vocab, those sentences are just spilling out of him, and it's really exciting to see.

Little Éamon, he's four. We call him our ray of sunshine. He is a happy, bright, curious little thing and he's just taking the world by storm.

And I want to thank my mom. She's an incredible source of support to me and my siblings and their partners, who I don't see as much as I'd like to, but they mean the world to me as well.

It does continue to be the honour of my life, of course, to represent the people of Regina Elphinstone-Centre, and I'm going to move on to the budget.

It's interesting this year, Mr. Speaker, that the tag line of this budget is Protecting Saskatchewan. I noticed that right away and I thought, well that's interesting. Like who is this government protecting Saskatchewan from? Because they've been in government now, what? Two decades, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm asking myself, you know, what bogeyman are they pointing the finger at now? Because you know, last I checked, Mr. Speaker, this government has valiantly protected us from the dangers of trans kids. They've protected us from the dangers of coed washrooms, the hazards of having our kids taught about sex and consent in the classroom.

This is a government that is now introducing a mechanism to

forcibly treat people who are dealing with addiction, despite the fact that they have to wait weeks and months for voluntary treatment. So who are they protecting us from now, Mr. Deputy Speaker? It's worth a think. It's certainly worth a think.

That being said, I do feel there are some very real threats out there today. I feel, for example, that a public and reliable health care system that Saskatchewan people historically have been so very proud of is certainly under threat. I believe that our health care system is at a crossroads, Mr. Speaker, and in no way does this budget meet the moment.

Let's just take a moment to sort of set the stage for this health care budget. We see a 5 per cent increase in health spending when we compare this year's budget to last year's budget. However as we know, this government far outspent what they budgeted to spend this time last year, and so really all we see is a 0.3 per cent increase compared to what was actually spent last year. So there's no new net money here, Mr. Speaker. So where are they planning to save in actual spending from last year to make room for the new spending announced?

And maybe this highlights one of the points we've been trying to make on this side, that this is an absolute work of fiction and fantasy, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because this budget doesn't even provide funds to settle all of the outstanding contracts that we just heard about out there — CUPE members, SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses] members, HSAS [Health Sciences Association of Saskatchewan] members, SEIU-West [Service Employees International Union-West] members — Mr. Deputy Speaker, the hard-working, front-line health care workers who literally hold up our system each and every day. They have not seen a contract, many of them, for years. They haven't seen a raise for years, and this budget actually has nothing for them. So I'm just sounding the alarm I guess, Mr. Speaker, that once again we see a budget that is not based in reality.

We also see an acknowledgement that the federal government is giving us a \$122 million increase to our federal health transfer, but we don't see this budget reflect that increase. I think the people of Saskatchewan expect that the federal money that they're getting, which after all is taxpayer money, Mr. Deputy Speaker — health care is an area that we all care deeply about — they expect that the dollars sent from the federal government to be spent on health care are indeed spent on health care.

I can't overstate how challenging things have become in health care, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We see wait times. We see people suffering on wait-lists, waiting too long for the care that they need. We see the worst access to primary care in Canada — the worst access to primary care in Canada.

Staff burnout is unprecedented. I was out there. I just heard from those health care workers. They're saying you cannot pour from an empty cup, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And yet we hear from these front-line workers that there's actually nothing in here to address the burnout and the short-staffing out there. Workers are leaving. We have fewer doctors today — now — than we did last year.

You know, one of the speakers out there today on the steps of the legislature was talking about one of her colleagues, an X-ray tech, who couldn't be here today because she is interviewing for a job in BC [British Columbia] where they pay her a living wage,

Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The president of CUPE 5430, the largest health care union in this province, Mr. Speaker, he said that this budget was “very disappointing because it did not talk about the root cause of the problem we have today in health care, and that is chronic short-staffing.”

And then we have the president of SUN, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who at the end of last week said that there is “no clear plan to grow and stabilize the RN workforce. Even the recently announced patient-first plan neglects the working nurse force.” He said that, in short, a clear commitment to invest in Saskatchewan’s nurses in all areas of care and right across our publicly funded and publicly delivered health care system has been noticeably absent.

And he pointed out:

This is even more concerning given the 636 million capital investments to build hospitals, long-term care homes, UCCs, and specialized facilities across the province. You know, it’s great news on paper, but more beds in more facilities requires more registered nurses. Without them we’re just building hotels.

We’re just building hotels. You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, last I checked, the business of health care was still a human business, you know. It’s still a human endeavour. It’s care provided by humans to humans, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that fact appears to be lost on this government.

It is wild. It is unbelievable to me that we’ve built an urgent care centre here in Regina that we have failed to staff 24-7. Their promise was to staff it 24-7. Instead they’ve put in place bank hours. They can’t even honour those bank hours, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And now they are shutting their eyes with one hand to the reality, using their other hand to pat themselves on the back because they’re going to — you guessed it — they’re going to build a second urgent care centre in Regina. And they have absolutely . . .

An Hon. Member: — Sounds like a hotel to me.

Meara Conway: — It sounds like a hotel to me too. They have absolutely no plan to staff this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It’s outrageous.

You know, this patient-first plan that they’ve announced, I’ve gone on the record talking about how this is a new cover for an old plan, a plan that was announced in 2009, 2012, 2015. Let’s look at the themes. It’s expanding scope of practice, team-based care, shortening wait times. It’s all the same stuff, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So people are wondering, why should we believe that they will keep their promise this time? It’s a good question, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know, it’s interesting when you look at this budget. We see 600-plus million for capital projects. We see an additional close to 100 million for acute care capacity, and then 12 million for primary care — 12 million extra for primary care, Mr. Deputy

Speaker. We have the worst access in Canada. The whole reason that we see a lack of patient flow, so much pressure on our emergency rooms and our acute care capacity: (a) it’s a staffing issue and (b) we have no primary care, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Imagine if we took a fraction of all that additional money that we’re pouring into the side of the system that is the canary. They call it the canary for a reason, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It’s an indication of the overall health of the system. And we are lacking the foundation of our health care system, which is primary care. And that is why people are asking, does the canary still have a pulse, you know?

We now see it’s on the regular. We hear from people like my colleague for Regina Rochdale and the experience she had with her mother. Beds in hallways, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Beds in registration areas. Like what’s next? Are beds going to be spilling out onto the sidewalks, Mr. Deputy Speaker? What needs to happen for us to understand that we need to build out a primary care system that works?

And this government continues to say that we aren’t coming forward with solutions. I can tell you that that is going to be one of the main areas of emphasis when we come out with the results of our Your Care, Your Say consultation. It is so unbelievable to me to see 12 million for primary care, 12 million additional for primary care in the context of a health budget that is 8.5 billion — 8.5 billion, Mr. Speaker.

It just shows they don’t understand the issues. And it’s no surprise they don’t understand the issues because the number one thing we hear is they have stopped listening, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And if you needed no clearer indication of that, it is what has played out in this place over the last two weeks: individuals on that side attacking me for quoting a front-line health care worker who said that she warns young people away from going into health care.

And instead of sitting for a moment, talk about . . . Try to be curious. Why are people saying that? What’s going on? Their response is to attack me, but really what they’re doing is they’re attacking the words of health care workers, Mr. Speaker.

[15:00]

I want to read some of those words into the record, Mr. Speaker. Because in response to that quite frankly unprincipled and shameful display from this government, I was reached out to by dozens of health care workers with a similar sentiment. And here’s what they had to say: “You’ve made a hostile work environment with the lack of support for health care workers. Yes, we need health care workers but we also need to support them appropriately. Not how the Sask Party operates, I’m afraid.”

Another health care worker, Mr. Speaker: “Well right now Moe is the problem. Give health care workers a decent wage before young people stop working for health regions.”

Next quote, Mr. Speaker: “As a 30-plus-year health care worker, I don’t encourage them either.” And she means here young people to go into health care, Mr. Speaker. “Not until we get better relief language, better patient-to-staff ratio, and better wages.”

“How many health care workers out there encouraging their kids to choose health care careers today in Saskatchewan? Serious question.”

“What do you expect? You have made a very hostile work environment where the staff mean nothing. Start actually listening to front-line workers for how to fix problems instead of picking and choosing what you want to take from random public polls.”

Another quote, Mr. Speaker: “Do not do it. I did work in health care for many years. You’re overworked, underpaid, working two times harder when you’re short-staffed, and unappreciated.”

It may be hard to hear this, Mr. Speaker, but this is real. This is the actual reality out there. And I have many more where this came from, Mr. Speaker. I have dozens. And really the number one thing I hear when I go out there is that this government has stopped listening and that . . . Yeah, I think I’ve made my point.

You know, I want to talk for a second about the announcement regarding nurse practitioners. Immediately when the government began announcing their plan, prior to the patient-first plan, prior to the budget, there was an acknowledgement that nurse practitioners have a valued role to play in team-based primary care. Couldn’t agree more. I would have liked to see that acknowledgement happen sooner, like maybe a decade ago, but I couldn’t agree more. It’s a good thing that they have acknowledged this, Mr. Speaker.

But I am worried that this new announcement with nurse practitioners is actually not going to work in the way that they hope it will, and here is why. Currently today in Saskatchewan the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] has hundreds of unfilled nurse practitioner roles posted online, a lot of them in primary care. Over two dozen of them are stale from last year. They’re having trouble filling these roles, Mr. Speaker.

The other thing we see with this announcement is they are basically asking nurse practitioners to sort of plop down into the same situation that we’ve seen family doctors for years, a situation that is not working very well, Mr. Speaker. So I am concerned that, without more analysis, without a different direction, we are just going to see more of the same. This is a failing model. And instead of actually addressing the model, we’ve just . . . now we’re looking to nurse practitioners to fill a role in this model that has not been working, Mr. Speaker, including around compensation and the fee-for-service model that we see there is an appetite to move away from for primary care.

I don’t know how much time I have left, but I want to speak for a moment about the proposed solution around wait times for surgeries and diagnostics, Mr. Speaker. I was hoping to see something around staffing. I was hoping to see something around building out our public capacity, but we don’t see that. We see the main driver of a solution in their mind is to further expand privatization in health care.

And I want to be really clear about what has happened in Saskatchewan health care since 2007. We’ve seen a major expansion of privatization in our health care system, not just in diagnostics and surgeries, Mr. Speaker, but in laundry, in blood,

in transportation. We’re spending hundreds of millions of dollars on travel nurses, contract nursing — band-aids to sort of address this failure to take on the issue of short-staffing. And this has led to other waste. You know, like I think it was ’24-25 we spent nearly, what, 240 million on overtime. Again because of a staffing issue, Mr. Speaker.

But returning to the question of privatization, let’s remove ideology from it all together, shall we? Let’s just look at the evidence, because this government posts their wait times for diagnostics online. A lot of this . . . Well hips and knees are not posted online, but we know that Saskatchewan has some of the worst waits in Canada for hip and knee surgery. And the diagnostics are right there for everyone to see. There is a public dashboard, and I invite all to go look. Our wait times are not improving. Our wait times are not improving.

We’ve seen an expansion of privatization. We’ve seen some very lucrative contracts, sole-source contracts, go with no transparency. We can’t get those contracts, Mr. Speaker. I could tell you we’ve tried. And we see no measurable improvements for the people of Saskatchewan. And in many cases we see women being sent out of province to Alberta for mammograms at 10 times the cost.

I really, really believe, Mr. Speaker, that so much is at stake, that people feel in their bones what is happening to our health care system, the erosion of our health care system. We need some bold solutions. And it is incredible to me — holy moly — it is incredible to me to know that we have seen an old plan with a new cover, and that is the solution.

So I’m going to move on, Mr. Speaker. You know, I’ll just maybe say something briefly about the financial situation that we find ourselves in. Because like many of my colleagues, I want to know how it is that our Premier has tripled the debt. He’s accumulated more debt than any other premier in the history of Saskatchewan. How is it that he’s also the Premier to oversee the first decrease in the quality of life since the Depression, Mr. Speaker? And now our population is also dropping. So these are important questions to ask ourselves.

We are now servicing the debt to the tune of \$1.2 billion a year. We would expect our public services to be in tip-top shape. They are not. And we are leaving a burden for our children that they had no choice or agency in creating, Mr. Speaker.

You know, I think I’ve gone on long enough. I had no idea I was talking for that long. I’m so sorry to my colleague from Regina Walsh Acres. But I do want to say that, you know, it’s a very disappointing budget on health care, education. These are two of the great equalizers in our society. And they are way more important now than they have ever been, Mr. Speaker, because of the financial strain we see people under.

We have one in three kids under six living in poverty. How does this Premier square that with his constant crowing about prosperity and growth? These numbers he seems to pull out of thin air about this private investment, well why isn’t the benefit of those projects being seen or felt by the people that matter most — kids, our future; seniors, who built our province?

How does the Premier square that hole? I don’t know, Mr.

Speaker, but I think that's the question that I'm going to leave with the people of Saskatchewan as I take my place in this House. I will not be supporting the budget. I will be supporting the amendment moved by my colleague, the member for Mount Royal. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Swift Current.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks for the opportunity to enter into the budget debate here this afternoon. You know, it's been a few years that I've had this opportunity to participate in the debate. Not quite as many as the member, the minister for post-secondary education perhaps, but hopefully get there some day.

Mr. Speaker, as many members do, I'll take this opportunity to begin by thanking a few folks, as we all do. First of all, of course, first and foremost my family back home in Swift Current and across Saskatchewan in parts of the province that you'd be familiar with of course, Mr. Speaker. My family back home in Swift Current: my spouse, Erin; the kids Darren, Anna, and Audrey.

And of course little baby John, who's eight months old and growing and changing every day. He's poked through a couple of little teeth on the bottom now, so he's got some fangs that are going under way. And he is just an absolute joy and keeps us sometimes up at all hours of the night. But that kind of depends on his mood I guess that day. But he is just absolutely the apple of my eye.

And we FaceTime every morning and every evening around suppertime until the little guy is ready to go to bed. And I can't wait to get home on Thursday afternoons. And so that's made me a little less available sometimes for certain meetings and events, but the priority is to try to get back home. And he's been just absolutely wonderful.

Of course the family back home in Melfort, Tisdale, St. Brieux area: my mom and dad, my siblings, nieces, cousins, aunts, uncles, you name it. Some familiar territory back up there, and always good to have a chat with them and follow up on the ton of snow that they have up there, which is way different than kind of southwest Saskatchewan. You're nodding your head, Mr. Speaker, so I think you've seen what's . . . Lots of snow in the forecast, or it's already come through the forecast and it looks like it might be another decent spring I think up in that neck of the woods.

In addition to that, the people of Swift Current, those that support me both professionally and personally as well. My friends — they know who they are — that have been there as good sources of counsel for many weeks, months, and years. And I'm just very, very grateful for that. And I'll talk a bit more further about the people that I am so honoured to represent in that amazing city.

My constituency assistant, long-serving Nola Smith, who's been there since 2009. And when we are here and I'm here in Regina and sometimes elsewhere, she is serving as the MLA, frankly, when I'm out and about. And I just can't possibly thank her enough and just express how much trust I have in her and faith I have in her and the job that she does running our MLA office and being the face for that office and being the voice on the other end

of the phone when I'm sometimes not there. So thank you to Nola.

The staff here at my office in Regina — Zoe, Haben, Caelan, Alexis, and Halle — who do a great job of supporting me plus the folks in the ministry, the deputy minister, the assistant deputy ministers, and their broad team of individuals that support them.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, those that are here in this Assembly, particularly those on the government side, the Saskatchewan Party caucus that I am so very fortunate to get to serve with. And you know, every election we get to see some new faces, meet some new friends. And of course, those that move on to other things, we maintain those friendships and make sure that we check in with them at every opportunity we have and make sure that we maintain that.

And so I'm very grateful to the Premier of course for his outstanding and amazing leadership and everyone that is part of the Saskatchewan Party team, all of the great qualities and attributes that they bring to the decisions that we make as we try our very best to honourably represent our constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to stand on my feet today and provide some remarks with respect to the provincial budget 2026-27, titled *Protecting Saskatchewan*. I'm going to focus on a few areas, maybe dip back a little bit to some areas that I think are pretty important to me, I think not only as the MLA but in some of the roles I have previously served.

The budget is about protecting the investments we've made. And I think we've heard some comments and some criticisms from some, you know, questioning that, but it really is about that. It really is about investing, some of the major strides that this government has made. And they have not been easy. They have been done in concert and in conjunction with the people of this province, who we do listen to, Mr. Speaker, who we do meet with regularly and consult and take their feedback very seriously. It's why the decisions that were made in this budget were made very strategically.

And these are tough decisions, Mr. Speaker. We want to ensure that — and the stats bear out — while this is not the position that we ultimately want to be in . . . We obviously don't want to be in a deficit position. But out of the various provinces and territories in Canada, we are looking very well.

[15:15]

Compared to the other provinces per capita, our deficit's \$646. Compared to BC, \$2,300 per person in BC; a thousand-ish in Nova Scotia; 1,800 per capita, New Brunswick; Quebec, 949 but that's not quite an apples-to-apples comparison there for obvious reasons; New Brunswick, 1,600; Yukon, almost 1,700. But we've made some very strategic decisions to make sure that we continue to invest in this province, invest in the people of this province, in the communities of this province while still protecting the many amazing things that are happening and will continue to happen.

In the area that I am very fortunate to serve as the Minister of Education, a \$3.6 billion total education budget. Two and a half billion dollars into the operating side of things. And that in

comparison to previous years is a 2.6 per cent increase in operating funding for our school divisions, building upon 8.4 per cent increases and 8.8 per cent increases. Nearly 20 per cent increases in operating funding to our 27 school divisions in Saskatchewan over the past three years including this new budget here. And that is significant, Mr. Speaker.

And I know there is always calls for more to be done, and we understand that. But we need to be able to make these investments in a fiscally responsible manner, Mr. Speaker. In addition to that, the addition of 50 more specialized support classrooms, bringing to that total 108 across this province when you factor in the eight pilots and the 50 that were a part of the current budget year that's about to end here next week.

These are very important towards addressing some of the complexity issues that we face in some of our province, in schools across our province. Mr. Speaker, I've heard that. I've heard that from teachers, from school divisions, EAs [educational assistant], those on the front line, the impact that that particular initiative is having, in addition to the addition of classroom complexity teachers — 500 of those across the province, Mr. Speaker. These are all very, very important investments. And again we recognize that there is more work to be done, and this is a government that is committed to doing that work in the education sector in collaboration with our partners there.

And I need to, Mr. Speaker, just for a minute thank those that are on the front lines for the work they do each and every day in the classroom: teachers; EAs; the special supports that are in there, whether they might be speech-language pathologists or occupational therapists; those that keep the school running, to keep lights on, the custodians; those that are driving the school buses; those that serve on school boards, who ran for their locally elected school division or school board to make a difference and to bring those voices to the table on behalf of their school division; and those that serve in the administrative end of things.

I think everybody is trying to do their very best to make the best decisions they possibly can, not for themselves, but for students that are sitting in those desks, in those chairs, and the families that they are honoured to represent in their school division boundaries, Mr. Speaker. So I just possibly can't thank enough those that are working in our education system for the work they do each and every day.

Mr. Speaker, focus a little bit on the benefits of the budget to the city of Swift Current. And you often get asked . . . You know, I'll do a media interview on budget day and they'll ask, what's in it for Swift Current? And so I'll tell them some of the things that are in there.

For example, in the post-secondary education side of things, a multi-year funding agreement that will benefit the Great Plains regional college headquartered in Swift Current. Serves the southwest and west central Saskatchewan. Great leadership there by the CEO [chief executive officer] Brad Mahon and his team. This budget benefits them, Great Plains College.

Improved access to patient medical homes in the pharmacy pod. I'm going to touch on those a little bit separately because I really want to focus on those two particular initiatives, Mr. Speaker.

Some upgrades to the Cypress Regional Hospital. The pharmacy clean room renovations that will be happening there, plus some enhanced security that's going to be coming to the hospital in Swift Current. And, Mr. Speaker, by the way, that is as a result of the great work that is being done by the ministers of Health on that particular initiative. It's something that I heard about as the local MLA from front-line nurses and one of these issues that . . . You know, we didn't think that we would want to be having to make decisions around this, but that sadly is the nature of the world that we're in these days, and so we're going to be acting on that.

Some highway improvements to Highway No. 4 in the Swift Current area, Mr. Speaker, and also revenue sharing. And I know my colleague, the member for Saskatchewan Rivers, talks regularly and glowingly about the nation-leading, no-strings-attached municipal revenue sharing program that this province has here in Saskatchewan. And Swift Current back in 2007, Mr. Speaker, about \$1.3 million in revenue sharing from the government as part of that formula. In the new budget, Mr. Speaker, that amount increases to \$4.5 million. That is a big-ticket item, and I know it is appreciated by my mayor and my council, and I think by municipalities, urban and rural, right across this province, Mr. Speaker. And that is a great initiative for the people of this province.

Now I do want to talk a bit about a couple of the initiatives that are being, I think, expanded across the province as part of the patients-first health care plan — right care, right time for the patients of this province. First of all, I just want to congratulate our ministers of Health, the member for The Battlefords and the member for Estevan. Having sat in those chairs for a few years, I know the amount of work that goes into it. And I know how much that they have done to bring these initiatives forward to government to get these implemented in communities right across this province, based on the feedback that they have taken from front-line health care workers, those in the health care system, and most importantly from the patients. Because that's what this is about, Mr. Speaker. It's about the patients.

And so this is a very, very ambitious . . . And you've heard us use that term before, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to health care initiatives in this province. It is, I would say, the most ambitious health care plan in this country, right here in Saskatchewan and being built upon by this government.

Mr. Speaker, in that health care plan are a couple of initiatives I want to speak about specifically because . . . And I'm a little bit biased but I think that the roots of these actually had some starts in Swift Current. At least, you know, they had a very good starting point there, so we're going to touch on a couple of those.

First one . . . And I'm going to draw a connection to why this is significant. The first one is the pharmacy care pilot project, which launched in Swift Current in December of 2023. And where that came from, Mr. Speaker, was by the government listening, listening to an organization — in this case it was Shoppers Drug Mart — that came to us with an initiative that they had tried and implemented quite successfully in some other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker. And they came and contacted us in the government to say, we want to try and roll this out here because it's worked very, very well in terms of expanding scope of practice and expanding access for patients in this province.

So through the leadership of Shoppers Drug Mart . . . And by the way, Paul Bazin and his team at Shoppers in Swift Current, just a great group of pharmacists and support staff to help get this off the ground. By the way, it's since expanded to other pharmacies across Saskatchewan, including in Swift Current. But through their collaboration, managed to launch this pilot.

And I remember having early conversations with Paul, and he was absolutely convinced that this was going to be a positive, that this was going to be a winner. Not for the government, not a winner for the government, not a winner for Shoppers, but a winner for patients, Mr. Speaker, and for the health community in Swift Current.

I look back at one of the quotes from that event that day in December of 2023. And in addition to the work that was being done to allow pharmacists to manage COPD [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease] and underactive thyroid and warfarin medication management, there was also an add-on there that came as a result of the collaboration and talking to the local psychiatrist, Dr. Ahmed, to be able to help use the pharmacists to manage medication for those that have mental health challenges. And Dr. Ahmed said, and I quote, "This pilot exceeds all my expectations. Its accessibility for clients is amazingly awesome." That's from a psychiatrist in Swift Current, Mr. Speaker.

Now in addition to that, here's the local connection and it's only about two days old. On Monday night, our second-youngest, Audrey, wasn't feeling great. Her throat was terrible. And it's about 4:30, 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Clinic's going to be closed, but what does Erin do? She calls up the pharmacy in Swift Current and makes an appointment for Tuesday at 10 a.m., the next day, to go in and have Audrey checked for strep throat.

Because what were the options otherwise? The other options were to go to the ER [emergency room], the Cypress Regional Hospital, with not only an 11-year-old but an eight-month-old baby. And is that the best place for those particular patients to be? Mr. Speaker, it's not. I'd argue it's not because the ER is meant to handle other, much more serious types of complications, Mr. Speaker.

Anyway they were able to go get checked for strep throat. Turned out that it wasn't strep throat. But at least they had that peace of mind that it wasn't that, and it's being managed at home. There's a real-life, very current example of how that expansion of scope of practice for pharmacy and for pharmacists allows for other health care providers to be able to do everything that they are trained to do, Mr. Speaker, to treat the patients of this province.

Now the second one, Mr. Speaker, is one that the ministers of Health are very familiar with. It's around the patient's medical home. And for those that aren't familiar with it — and I think they should be because we've talked a lot about it — it's about building team-based care with family physicians and providing them with some extra funding in these clinics to be able to hire some additional support in there: RNs [registered nurse], other staff that can address other concerns that perhaps maybe you don't need to necessarily go see your family physician for.

And I think that is positive because what it does is it allows for . . . Again it frees up not just dozens or hundreds. It frees up thousands of appointment spots for patients to see family

physicians by having those patients triaged to other health care providers that perhaps can provide the care that that patient might need that maybe doesn't need to necessarily be seen by their family physician. And it's working exceedingly well, Mr. Speaker. And that was one again that has its roots in Swift Current and, I think, a couple other communities, but is being expanded as part of some of the initiatives that are being funded in this provincial budget, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm just going to quote a couple of things here. One of the leaders on that particular initiative is Dr. Tara Lee in Swift Current, a great leader in health care. To say she is a go-getter is a bit of an understatement because she is very aggressive on new initiatives and making a change, making a difference in health care.

An Hon. Member: — Energizer Bunny.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — And we've . . . Yeah, Energizer Bunny is what member for Lumsden-Morse says, and he's not wrong.

Mr. Speaker, we've heard some members talk about — and this is disappointing — about people not wanting to get into health care. And it is very disappointing that we're hearing that tone from the members opposite because it couldn't be further from . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And we've struck a chord, Mr. Speaker, struck a chord.

So we're going to read some quotes into the record, Mr. Speaker. And if they would pay attention and listen, they'll get their opportunity. Some of them already have, so they should just pay attention, Mr. Speaker. Including the deputy leader over there, she had her opportunity last night and nobody was paying attention, but anyway.

Dr. Tara Lee said this:

I knew right away I wanted to do family medicine. My community experience when I came back to Swift Current, I knew for sure that rural medicine is what I wanted to do. Swift Current is a fantastic place to raise children, and the benefits are huge in coming in to learn in a rural or regional area. So when physicians come to a regional centre, they do it because they can offer so much to a community.

And here's what else Dr. Lee says. She says:

And I'm excited to say that it's going really well. The communities are really happy with the students that they're bringing in, the medical students. The medical students are doing well and the experience they're getting is excellent.

And then she wraps up her comments by saying:

Whatever you're considering, go and do it. Go and see it because you don't know until you get there.

Mr. Speaker, that's coming from a doctor in Swift Current who is trying to encourage more people into the health care system across this province.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker — and then I'll get close to wrapping up

because I've got other members on this side of the House that want to enter into debate as well — another family physician in Swift Current. A great, young gentleman and a leader in the community, particularly in the health care side of things, Dr. Emmett Harrison, who is a family and emergency physician in Swift Current. And he talks a bit about his road to where he got to and the work that he does in our community. He said:

I have always lived in Saskatchewan. I grew up in Moose Jaw, trained at the University of Saskatchewan. I love this practice and the province so much that I decided to stay. One of the things that I wish physicians knew about practising in Saskatchewan is that there is a lot of funding for innovation and team-based care. So for example, we're working with community pharmacists [as I mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker] to help with the expanded scope to work collegially to meet the needs of our patients for access.

I'd say if you were a physician that's thinking coming to a small community like this would limit their career, that's a myth [is what Dr. Harrison says]. I think it's very much the opposite.

He goes on to say, Mr. Speaker:

What I enjoy best about living and working in Swift Current is the people, the people being the patients and my colleagues. It's a community where you can host many events, and you'll never be short of volunteers even though there's 17,000 people. People are always willing to help.

And he says:

We always joke that you can get anywhere in Swift Current [and this is true] with the length that it takes to listen to one song on the radio.

That's how long it takes to get across Swift Current. And in the end, Mr. Speaker, here's what Dr. Harrison says, and I quote:

Per capita we do pretty darned good for having physicians stay here in this community, and that's allowed some opportunity for wellness and work-life balance. So there's lots of us to support you and support your well-being. Saskatchewan is calling. Grow your practice; grow your life.

I couldn't agree more, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, those are the people that I am so honoured to represent — people like Dr. Harrison, people like Dr. Lee, people like the patients that are in our community, people like Paul Bazin from Shoppers Drug Mart, the educators of Swift Current and southwest Saskatchewan and across this province, Mr. Speaker.

That is the people I am so very honoured to represent as their MLA and take advice from them on what their priorities are. And that's why, Mr. Speaker, this government does make the investments it makes into the budget.

[15:30]

And this is a good-news budget, Mr. Speaker, a very good-news budget. People across this province know it, Mr. Speaker. And

so I am honoured to stand here today to say that I will be supporting the budget tabled by the Minister of Finance and seconded by the member for Carrot River Valley.

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

Kim Breckner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take a few moments at the beginning of my address to thank my family. Thank you to my husband, Paul, who is so supportive, and love to my little boy, Ian.

And a big thank you to Ian's caregivers: my mom and her husband, Darrell; my dad and his partner, Annette; and my grandma Barbara Osemlak — she has cared for children her whole life and it's wonderful to be able to learn from her — and of course Paul's parents, Nadia and Bruce Breckner, and my aunt Rosanne. Thank you to them for giving me the opportunity to be here and to do this work while I know my little boy gets the greatest time with all these people, and I'm always getting pictures of him smiling.

I'd also like to thank Emma York, my constituency assistant, for the great work that she does, and for my constituency association members who are so supportive and do great work. I'd like to thank my MLA colleagues who have made this such an enjoyable role, and our hard-working caucus staff.

So today I rise to respond to the 2026-27 provincial budget on behalf of the people of Saskatoon Riversdale. This is a community of working families, of newcomers, of seniors, of small-business owners who deserve a government that's honest with them about the state of our province's finances and a government that's serious about addressing the affordability issues.

Premier Moe stood before this province on February 25th and he promised that this budget would not make life more expensive for Saskatchewan people. He broke that promise before the budget was even tabled. Let me be clear about what the government quietly did in the weeks leading up to budget day.

SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] introduced new transaction fees and raised the auto insurance deductible by 36 per cent, from 700 to 950, meaning that when Saskatchewan families get into accidents — a very stressful time for many people — that they'll pay significantly more out of pocket. That's not making life more affordable.

The cost to insure your vehicle is going up. SaskPower rates are going up. Hunting and fishing licence fees are going up. That's not making life more affordable. And these were announced on a Friday news dump — very telling, because this government knew they were breaking their own promise and they hoped Saskatchewan people wouldn't notice.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people already report the highest level of financial anxiety in all of Canada. Four in ten are borrowing money just to put food on the table. And what's this government's response? Cutting funding to food banks. This is not the profile of a province that is the most affordable place in Canada to live. This is a province in distress, and this budget does not meet that moment.

I think of families living paycheque to paycheque who now face higher car insurance costs, higher utility bills, and higher fees from every direction. I think of them when this government boasts of income tax exemptions and how those benefits . . . Well we're happy to see them, and great for some families. They mean little to the families that are just barely making enough to get by — in some cases not enough.

And this Premier, he has the audacity to mock our call for removing PST on groceries. What an out-of-touch premier not to recognize the stark poverty experienced by people in this province. Nearly one in three children under six live in poverty, and this Premier mocks actions that would give their families a little bit of relief. He should be doing everything he can, regardless of whether it's an NDP idea or a Sask Party idea, but he won't.

And why won't he? Well he told us. Because according to him, politics is like a hockey game. I quote from page 251 of *Hansard*:

And there was two affordability platforms that were put forward in the most recent election. There's been questions as to, you know, why [we] won't . . . enact them both. Well, Mr. Speaker, not everyone can win, whether it's politics or a hockey game, Mr. Speaker.

People's ability to put food on the table is not a game, Mr. Premier. And the people of Saskatoon Riversdale and the province deserve a premier who does not treat it as such.

I talk to many people on SIS [Saskatchewan income support] and SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] in my riding, Mr. Speaker. And we see a very modest increase at 2 per cent for these programs, which when already dealing with such low rates is barely a step up at all. And further, this government continues to refuse to index these supports to the cost of inflation. Doing so should not be treated as generosity. It's the bare minimum. These are our province's most vulnerable residents and they have been falling further behind for years. Our salaries are tied to inflation. I don't see why that should not be the same for the people we serve.

And I repeat. The people of Saskatchewan are the people we serve, not the other way around. Every day, every day we come into this Chamber and we say a prayer asking that our works may glorify God. And it's been a long time since my Sunday school days, but I still remember — and this is a quote, don't attribute it to me — but I remember being told, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

And another teaching, again a quote, not my own words, "Whatever you did for one of these the least, my brothers and sisters, that you did for me." And I won't speak to the accuracy and all that, you know, rough translation. But I think it gets the sentiment across that I wonder how not even protecting these little sums these people receive, protecting that from the erosion from inflation when we're happy to secure our own earnings, how does that stack up to these teachings?

People in my riding also tell me they struggle to find housing. It's clear this government needs to enact rent control. It also needs to fully utilize Saskatchewan Housing's existing low-income units, many of which sit vacant while families have

nowhere to go. Incremental additions are not enough when the housing crisis is this severe.

And for goodness sakes, this government must reverse the changes to SIS and SAID and make the housing supplement directly payable to landlords. Again, everyone is saying this is a failed policy change. Mr. Speaker, the government should not put their pride before the good of the people of this province. Just reverse it.

As the Trade and Export shadow minister, I of course want to talk about trade. Saskatchewan's economy depends on export markets, and our export record under this government is deeply troubling. I'm excited about the recent news of trade with India, but we have a long way to go. Saskatchewan exports to India dropped 43.5 per cent in 2025. Over Premier Moe's entire term in government, exports to India are down nearly 20 per cent.

Farm exports to India, the lifeblood of this province, dropped almost 54 per cent in 2025 alone. And over Premier Moe's full term, merchandise farm exports to India were down 26.7 per cent.

And it's not just India. Trade with the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Norway, Iraq, Singapore, China, and the United States all declined in 2025. The total value of exports shipped from Saskatchewan has now declined for two consecutive years, and that doesn't even count for the double-digit inflation we've dealt with over the past eight years.

We support trade offices. We support international engagement. But this government needs to be held accountable for results, not just ribbon cuttings and press releases. Saskatchewan farmers and exporters need a government that actually delivers open markets, and they need to be supported at home as costs go up, especially utility rate hikes.

We heard it in the letter referenced by my colleague from Regina South Albert just today. These utility rate hikes, they challenge our local industries' ability to be competitive. We can't improve trade without addressing the affordability crisis for individuals and businesses here at home.

And I worry about the future, Mr. Speaker. I worry about what kind of Saskatchewan my son will inherit. I'm getting emotional about debt. Isn't this awful? That's how bad the debt is. It makes me a little bit emotional, Mr. Speaker.

It was less than 10 years ago the Sask Party introduced the biggest tax grab in this province's history, raising the PST and applying it to children's clothing, to groceries, to used vehicles, to insurance premiums, and more. They told us it was necessary to balance the books. But where are we now?

This budget projects a staggering 33.6 billion addition to our provincial debt. And that brings us a total to a record of \$43.5 billion. Saskatchewan people will pay 1.22 billion this year alone to simply pay the interest on that debt, more than we spend on policing in the province. That money, that money could go to hospitals, to schools, to housing. That is the cost of the Sask Party's mismanagement, and the people of Saskatoon Riversdale deserve to hear it plainly.

While ordinary Saskatchewan families face higher fees and stagnant wages, this government has demonstrated time and time again that it's focused on its friends and insiders. We have watched hundreds of millions of dollars squandered on the AIMS [administrative information management system] project. We have watched the Sunrise Motel scandal unfold with no accountability. We've seen sole-source contracts. And now, while more than 200 schools across Saskatchewan are in desperate need of renovation or complete rebuilding, a fact is now that in the Premier's riding a school has jumped the queue. That is not protecting Saskatchewan. That is protecting the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatoon Riversdale, they sent me here to tell you about what they're living through, and to fight for something better. The '26-27 budget, it papers over a record \$43.5 billion debt load with modest tax tweaks. It makes broken promises in affordability. It directs new schools based on political geography rather than student need. And it fails to deliver the timely health care and mental health access that this province's most vulnerable people urgently need.

Saskatchewan people deserve better. The NDP is committed to fighting for that better. For every family borrowing money to put food on the table, for every patient waiting months for care, for every child in a school that should have been built years ago, and for every worker whose wages have not kept up with the costs this government has imposed on them, we will not stop fighting until Saskatchewan is a province that works for everyone.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the government's budget. I will be supporting the amendment by my colleague from Regina Mount Royal.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pleased to rise today in support of our government's 2026-2027 budget. A budget that makes a clear choice to keep investing in Saskatchewan people and to protect the services that my family relies on and all of our families in the province rely on and continue building a health care system that delivers real results for patients, not just promises. It's a good budget for Saskatchewan people.

It might be a bad-news budget for the NDP, Mr. Speaker, but a good-news budget for the people of this province. You know, Mr. Speaker, members opposite are always looking for something to oppose. I understand that's the job. But, Mr. Speaker, myself, this Premier, our government, we are focused on delivering for the people of this province.

You know, Mr. Speaker, before I begin . . . You know, the members opposite can't help themselves whenever I get up to speak it seems. You know, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to stay focused on speaking to the Chair and delivering a message that I think is incredibly important to the people of this province and the people of my constituency, Mr. Speaker.

Before I begin I would like to offer a few thank yous to some people that are very important to me. First of all the folks of The Battlefords for giving me an opportunity to serve in this position. I don't take it lightly. It's a long 4-hour drive — not the longest,

I know, in the province — but it's a long 4-hour drive down here on Sundays, and you know, it always gives me a bit of an opportunity to reflect and to be very grateful for this opportunity.

All of us, I mean, at the end of the day, somebody else is going to be in this chair one day, maybe sooner rather than later, as they will be for everyone in this Assembly. And so we have a short time to be here and to serve on behalf of our constituents. Some longer than others. I know the member for Saskatoon Willowgrove has faithfully served his constituency and this province for a couple decades now and we're grateful for that. And hopefully we all have similar opportunities, but we do so at the pleasure of our constituents. I'm going to have more to say about that in a couple minutes.

[15:45]

I want to thank my constituency assistants. You know, some days my office in The Battlefords is a busy place. Gail and Claudette do just a fantastic job in terms of serving the people of our constituency and sometimes other constituencies as well around the province in terms of directing where they need to go. And you know, I've seen my CAs [constituency assistant] go above and beyond for the folks in our community, and it makes a difference. And I am very grateful to them for that.

I do of course want to thank all my colleagues here. You know, we have a great team. We have a lot of fun. And you know, it's very fortunate to be able to work with each one of them every single day.

I want to thank my family. And you know, since I got up in the House in the fall to reply to the Throne Speech, I've got a new member of our family. My wife and I were able to welcome a baby girl to our family earlier this month. And everybody's happy and healthy, and we are so grateful. And you know, just really another thing in my life to thank God for and be incredibly grateful for, just the blessings that my wife and I and our family have.

And you know, I'm going to talk more about health care in a few minutes, but our experience at the Battlefords Union Hospital, what a fantastic place to welcome a new member of your family to. I think, I always tell folks in my community we can be very proud of the teams that we have at BUH [the Battlefords Union Hospital].

You know, I think about Dr. Nault and Dr. Viviers, Dr. Hutchinson and the RTs [respiratory therapist] and the nurses that were in the O.R. [operating room]. You know, and then the recovery room nurses and the nurses on the maternity ward, just absolutely fantastic. Chelsey and Madison, really the whole team of nurses.

And I love going to our hospital, quite frankly. You see people you know. You know the people across the hall from you. And it feels like in many ways a bit of a reunion, sometimes a coffee row in the hallway of the maternity unit. But just incredibly grateful obviously for a beautiful and healthy baby girl in our family, and grateful that we can have that close to home.

An Hon. Member: — You don't look too tired.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Not too tired, no, no. So you know, I want to get back to the folks of The Battlefords because I'm going to speak, you know, specifically about a few things in this budget that I think are particularly relevant to the constituents that I have the honour of representing.

But before I get there, I just want to talk. You know, there's been several comments about this specific issue by members on both sides of the Assembly. I don't want to dwell on this too long, but I do feel like some of the recent political strategy of the opposition NDP should at least be referenced and mentioned. And you know, I guess my name was attached to that as well, and so I would like to make a comment on that.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, as I said, I'm not going to dwell on it, but I do want to state I think the strategy was poorly thought out. And it doesn't really match up with how I have come to know Saskatchewan people to be or to talk. And it's a good reminder for all of us. Those words don't feel like Saskatchewan to me. And you know, it's a good opportunity for all of us to check ourselves in terms of the words that we use.

You know, but that being said, I don't want to be naive enough to think that we won't see this again. And you know, I say that because I've seen it before. I've seen it before 2026. I saw it in 2024 in my own community. You know, I saw the opposition buy advertising through out-of-province companies to make personal attacks against myself and my family and my constituency. And they can ask their candidate in the constituency how that went for them in that race, Mr. Speaker.

And so I fully expect to see this strategy employed again by the opposition. And you know, I'm not sure what to say to that, except fill your boots. And unfortunately that's where we're at in politics today.

But this is, I guess, the learning and the reminder for me. At the end of the day, thinking about what makes me get up every morning and come to work, what motivates me, the days where I feel like I love this job and am being effective for the people that sent me here are the days that I'm not spending focused on politics, but I'm focused on delivering for the folks of The Battlefords.

So it's those days, Mr. Speaker, where we've been able to help a constituent. We've been able to move the ball forward on a larger topic. Those are the days, those are the days I love this job. And I'm so grateful for the honour. And that is really my commitment to my constituents, is to stay focused on delivering for them each and every single day.

And so let me just begin by talking about what this budget means for The Battlefords. And you know, there's several things that I think are really relevant, first of all on the capital side. And I will talk more about health care capital later on, but continued planning investments towards a new long-term care facility in my community, replacing one of the oldest buildings delivering patient care in the province. We're very excited in our community to see continued advancement on that, continued planning dollars towards a new campus or a renewed campus project for North West College.

And North West College, I'll just say, has become such an

important part of our community. Starting this September we're going to have a Bachelor of Education program delivered in The Battlefords. Think about that. So last year we added the four-year bachelor of nursing program. This September we're adding the Bachelor of Education program as a partnership between North West College and the University of Regina.

If you want to become a nurse or a teacher in our community, there's no need to go to Saskatoon any more. There's no need to go to Regina. There's no need to go out of province, to Edmonton or Calgary or Winnipeg or Vancouver. You can do it right at home. And when you talk about families, you know, and some of the affordability pressures that are real out there, Mr. Speaker, that means that those families can keep their kids close, keep them at home.

And they can get a quality, four-year education right at home, have clinical placements in our facilities or do practicums on the education side right in our schools in our community. And, Mr. Speaker, they're going to set up and have an opportunity for an incredible way of life in our community. That is so exciting to me that we are bringing more of that education back home to our community.

The increased investment in the marshals. And it's interesting, because the Deputy Leader of the Opposition came to The Battlefords recently. And you know, there was a news release I read from the opposition that day complaining about public safety in our community. And it is a concern that is shared by myself and many residents in my community. But it's passing strange, Mr. Speaker, to hear that kind of language from the opposition when they opposed the Saskatchewan Marshals Service, Mr. Speaker.

And now we see the first regional location for the Saskatchewan Marshals Service in The Battlefords. We're now up to four officers in The Battlefords. I got a text just earlier this week from a volunteer firefighter in my community who attended the scene of an unfortunately fatal collision on Highway 40, and just expressing his gratitude for having the Saskatchewan Marshals attend that scene and do traffic control so that our firefighters and other professionals could focus on the scene, obviously dealing with what they needed to in that moment for those families.

Speaking of volunteer firefighters, Mr. Speaker, we are very blessed in my community. I've spoken about them before. Both the town of Battleford and the RM of North Battleford No. 437 both have volunteer fire departments.

And with the doubling of the volunteer first responder tax credit from \$3,000 to \$6,000, Mr. Speaker, you know, are people going to get into volunteer firefighting because of that? Maybe, maybe not, Mr. Speaker. But what it does, it recognizes the reality that our volunteer firefighters — wherever they are in this province, whether they are in a more urban setting or a rural setting — it really recognizes the time that they're taking away maybe from their farm or their business or their family to give to their community, Mr. Speaker.

And I would put up our fire coverage in The Battlefords and area up against anywhere else in the province. We have dedicated volunteer departments and then a professional department in North Battleford as well, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to health care, I already talked about Battleford's district care and the continued planning dollars there, Mr. Speaker. This government's budget this year continues to invest in the recruitment of health care professionals, specifically in The Battlefords. The rural physician incentive program, RPIP — which has been a long-standing incentive in the province, a \$200,000 incentive for physicians setting up in rural communities — has now been expanded to the regional centres in our province as well. So that's The Battlefords. That's Lloydminster. That's Swift Current. That's Yorkton. Communities of that size, Mr. Speaker, because we know that those communities are often hubs for health care for smaller rural communities.

And so Battleford's Union Hospital, as a regional hospital, doesn't just serve the folks in The Battlefords. It really covers folks from Wilkie and Unity and Turtleford and Glaslyn and Hafford and really even points further beyond that, Mr. Speaker. It's been exciting to see that incentive being expanded to The Battlefords specifically.

Continuing the rural and remote recruitment incentive, Mr. Speaker, you know, we've heard the members opposite criticize and vote against incentive programs like this. The Battlefords have been the most successful community under this incentive in the whole province, Mr. Speaker. We've filled over 500 positions full-time right around the province. Nearly 100 of them have been right in The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker. That is absolutely fantastic.

So you know, Mr. Speaker, it's these sort of investments that are absolutely crucial for the folks of The Battlefords. And you know, we talked about it before, and many times I've heard it from other speeches, these investments that can be made because of the economic strength of our province. There's no doubt there are some challenging headwinds globally. We wake up, and you know, watch or listen or read the news every morning. There are some challenging dynamics out there.

It's a little bit disturbing to hear a member opposite get up today and talk about how the export record of this Premier is dismal, Mr. Speaker, when we have members opposite commit to closing the trade offices in this province during the last election, Mr. Speaker. Nine trade offices right around the world, Mr. Speaker.

I didn't join the Premier in India on his last trip, but I know for a fact that our team on the ground in India — in those trade offices that the members opposite had previously committed to close — Scott Matthies and his team in India were absolutely crucial in making sure that our Premier and other exporters in this province had the opportunity to get in front of the right people in India, Mr. Speaker. That is absolutely crucial.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I've heard some criticisms; well hasn't the government heard of Zoom or a phone? Mr. Speaker, if you haven't been in business, you wouldn't understand that with your customers you actually have to show up and see the whites of their eyeballs, Mr. Speaker. Build that relationship, not just once but year after year after year, to continue reminding them of the value that our products bring, the way that we grow and mine and produce things in this province and why that's relevant in India, why that's relevant in China, why that's relevant — I know our minister was just recently in Brazil — why it's relevant in all

those countries around the world.

And, Mr. Speaker, it is the export growth in this province that has really driven some of the economic activity that allows us to make significant investments into health care, Mr. Speaker, into education, expanding the specialized support classroom pilot. I remember when I was in that file, Mr. Speaker. We started with eight classrooms. And I will say that is a made-in-The-Battlefords idea. And thanks to Light of Christ Catholic School Division and director Cory Rideout and board Chair Glen Gantefoer for their real intensive work in terms of helping us as a government bring this idea together and start to see it rolled out.

But investments like this, economic activity means that we can make investments and expand that program to 100 classrooms right around the province.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to focus on health care, Mr. Speaker. This is where I spend a big chunk of my waking hours, and maybe even some of my sleeping hours thinking about it too, in terms of how we focus on improving the health care system so that it's better for patients right around the province, Mr. Speaker.

A record investment, over \$8 billion in health care, a nearly \$400 million increase over last year's budget being invested into health care in this province. And that is not abstract, Mr. Speaker. Those are real dollars going into front-line care and to services that patients will actually feel, Mr. Speaker.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I'll just say I'll give a lot of credit to the Premier. You know, him and I have spent a lot of time talking about health care in the last 12 months and in terms of what needs to be done and the action that we need to take. And you know, credit to him for pushing my counterpart the Minister of Rural and Remote Health and I to get to this place where we're at with the patients-first plan that we released a few weeks ago. We're not done, Mr. Speaker. There is certainly more to come on that.

But we've been pretty clear about the direction of our health care system. It's patients first. It's not bureaucracy first; it's patients first. And at its core, Mr. Speaker, patients first is about one core principle — providing the right care at the right time in the right place. I like saying, as close to home as possible, Mr. Speaker. Right care, right time, and as close to home as possible — that is absolutely important.

And, Mr. Speaker, we can say that's important. We can stand up in this room and say yes, that's important. Right care, right time, as close to home as possible. But really, Mr. Speaker, where that comes from is that's what patients' expectation is. As I've had the chance to tour around this province meeting with community leaders, meeting with health care workers, touring facilities, that's what patients want. That's what patients expect.

And patients actually are open to really exploring a ton of different options in terms of helping us get there. You know, investments in primary care access. Investments in expanding virtual care. Investments in recruiting and supporting specialists in our province, Mr. Speaker, and investing to increase diagnostic imaging capacity. I know my colleague from Estevan likely shared some of the exciting news around the MRI [magnetic resonance imaging] coming to the southeast of Saskatchewan.

That's going to make a big difference, Mr. Speaker.

You know, Mr. Speaker, if you want better access to care, you need more people delivering it, Mr. Speaker. And that's why this budget continues to invest very heavily in recruitment and retention and training, Mr. Speaker.

You know, the investments out of this patients-first plan and in the budget, some of the investments that I would say I'm most proud of and most excited about for the impact that they're going to have on patients in Saskatchewan is the expansion of medical education and residency seats in this province, Mr. Speaker.

[16:00]

You know, I said it before — deficit budgets right across the board in Canada, Mr. Speaker. We've seen that. However which province do you see expanding medical education seats by 20 per cent? That's Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker — 20 more undergraduate medical education seats.

But even more important than that — and I've talked about it in question period and other times as well — is ensuring that we have strong representation from right across the province in that undergraduate medical program, Mr. Speaker, ensuring that we have kids from Lloydminster and La Ronge and Humboldt and Saskatoon and Regina and North Battleford, of course, but also from the Southeast and the East Central regions, Mr. Speaker. And that is exactly why the directive has been given to the College of Medicine that we need to see 95 per cent of those seats filled by Saskatchewan kids.

That won't be easy, Mr. Speaker. That won't be easy. But you know, Mr. Speaker, I know this: I know there are hundreds of Saskatchewan kids every single year looking to get into the world of medicine. Despite what some people say in this province about, you know, people shouldn't go into health care, I meet these folks. I meet these families, meet these students all over the province who want to get into health care and serve their community, whether that be in nursing, whether that be as a CCA, but in particular as family physicians or physicians just generally, Mr. Speaker, in this province.

We need to make sure that there's more seats available, which we've done as a part of this year's budget, and that those seats are going to Saskatchewan kids — absolutely vitally important, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'll just say to the other side, you know, so which province are you seeing a 20 per cent increase in physician training seats? It's Saskatchewan. But then there is a 45 per cent increase in another category, and that's nurse practitioners, Mr. Speaker, a massive increase in nurse practitioner training seats.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite got up a little while ago and said we should have done this a decade ago, yet we never heard about it from the opposition members. They've just been busy opposing over the last year, Mr. Speaker. This government's been getting down to work, engaging with the Saskatchewan Association of Nurse Practitioners, adding more training seats, adding a financial incentive for RNs to become nurse practitioners, Mr. Speaker. We have more work to do.

But then even more exciting, Mr. Speaker, is the work that's being done on the nurse practitioner primary contract side. Already awarded 22 or 23 contracts right around . . . See, Mr. Speaker, we hear noise from the other side. Again it's easy to oppose; it's hard to actually find solutions. But we're going to stay focused on finding solutions, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the contract nurse practitioner positions, you know, having the contract is one thing. But now going to these nurse practitioners and say, listen. We see you as primary care leaders in your community wherever you may be, whether that's in the Southeast or whether that's in the community of Wilkie, which has seen a significant improvement in primary care access as a result of one of these nurse practitioner contracts by saying to these nurse practitioners, okay, let's provide you with additional dollars to build out your team.

Hire registered nurses. Hire LPNs. Hire social workers. Hire other professionals that you see as important in terms of building out your team so that you can see more patients, and again that we can ensure that patients are seeing the right person at the right time, and what's the last part?

An Hon. Member: — As close to home as possible.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — As close to home as possible. Thank you, Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, I am very excited about the work that's been done with the Saskatchewan Association of Nurse Practitioners. They are absolutely a fantastic partner. And I know colleagues on this side of the House in particular, very excited about the role of nurse practitioners in the province.

You know, Mr. Speaker, this budget also makes a significant investment into the spaces where care is delivered. The capital budget: \$636 million, Mr. Speaker. You know, the Premier and I were looking at some old numbers the other day. The last capital budget for the Saskatchewan NDP, when they last had the honour of forming government, the last capital budget for health care was \$76 million, Mr. Speaker.

And I understand there's adjustments for inflation in there, Mr. Speaker, but it goes to show when you compare 76 versus 636, when you compare closing hospitals and health care facilities and building more capacity in the system, Mr. Speaker, it really shows the priority that this government's placing on not only building out the workforce, Mr. Speaker, but ensuring that the right buildings are in communities right across the province where people have access points, Mr. Speaker.

You know, much has been made about the new hospital in Prince Albert. That's a really exciting project for Prince Albert and really the whole North. But you know, Mr. Speaker, I think it's particularly important to mention some of the bed expansions that we have.

You know, when I came into this file I had the opportunity to tour several of our urban hospitals. And I wanted to make sure that we are utilizing the space that we have as best as possible and taking services that might be in the hospital that don't need to be in a hospital and taking those out, putting those out in the

community so that we can expand our bed capacity for folks.

And so you know, building on the success at Saskatoon City Hospital, we see more beds being added in existing space, really, Mr. Speaker, and repurposing existing space in the hospital to make sure that they're for acute patients. Royal University Hospital, St. Paul's Hospital, Mr. Speaker, adding NICU [neonatal intensive care unit] capacity at Regina General Hospital, ensuring that more of these neonatal patients and their families don't need to travel to Saskatoon. That's going to have a massive impact on access to health care, Mr. Speaker.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we've heard a lot from the opposition about what they are against. They're against the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital. They're against virtual care, Mr. Speaker. They're against privately delivered surgeries, Mr. Speaker. And I'll come back to privately delivered surgeries in just a moment.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, this is the reality. They actually don't have a plan on that side. They've got four Health critics but zero plan. Okay. We've heard, Mr. Speaker, for several months about this big, bold plan, but the plan is nowhere to be seen. So I'm thrilled that we are talking about the patients-first plan, because it means that there is no plan on that side. Kind of what I suspected, Mr. Speaker.

So you know, without a plan, it's just talking points. It's just criticism, and we've seen this before, Mr. Speaker. It's easy to oppose. It's easy to close, Mr. Speaker. It's much harder to come up with actual solutions. It's harder to actually do the work and get out there and figure out how we expand our health care workforce. You know, these folks should just put their heads down and get to work on that plan, Mr. Speaker, because we've been hearing about it for months. It's good. Good to see their efforts, Mr. Speaker.

You know, Mr. Speaker, there is more time yelping over there than actually focusing on building a plan that's going to put patients first. And that would be my challenge, Mr. Speaker. Because you know, thinking a lot about what folks talk about and what they don't talk about, Mr. Speaker, I think that's really relevant, what the opposition isn't talking about.

They're not talking about a big, bold health care plan because they don't have one. They're not talking about a power plan, Mr. Speaker, because their power plan would put the carbon tax right back on Saskatchewan power bills for families right across the province.

They don't want to talk about virtual care, Mr. Speaker, because they know their record on virtual care, and that's bringing proposals forward in this House to ban virtual care. And I've mentioned it before. You know, I understand the 27 folks in here on that side, Mr. Speaker, they might oppose virtual care, but the rest of the 1.25 million people out in this province, Mr. Speaker, they want more access to virtual care.

But instead, you know, we see the opposition talking about rent control, which stakeholders have been very clear, Mr. Speaker, in this province. You talk to the realtors association. You talk to the landlord association, Mr. Speaker. They talk about how that would absolutely constrict economic growth in this province. But the members opposite aren't listening to that. They're too busy

talking about rotisserie chickens, Mr. Speaker, and I believe the Premier did a great job of canvassing that yesterday.

You know, Mr. Speaker, they're not talking about virtual care. They're spending time talking about the Shellbrook school, Mr. Speaker, which I find particularly dismaying. You know, Mr. Speaker, if you're going to tell a community in this province that they shouldn't get a new school, at least go to that community and tell them that. At least go there. But the member opposite only got halfway there, only got halfway there.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I had the honour of serving in that file previously . . .

[Interjections]

Speaker Goudy: — Order, please.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — I had the honour of serving in that file previously, engaging with all 27 school divisions right across the . . .

[Interjections]

Speaker Goudy: — Very good. Minister of Education . . . or of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Formerly, Mr. Speaker.

But I had the opportunity to engage with 27 elected school divisions. And when those locally elected school divisions brought forward their capital priorities, Mr. Speaker, those are taken seriously by this government.

And so you know, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the Leader of the Opposition seeing three schools in her constituency replaced over the last number of years, Mr. Speaker, this is not political. This is focused on the students and families of this province, Mr. Speaker, and ensuring that they have the appropriate resources and the appropriate learning facilities in place for their education.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to wrap up just because I know I have some colleagues that have a few things to say, and I hope I've left enough time for them, Mr. Speaker.

But I'll say this: no doubt there's challenges related to this budget. Folks in the province, you know . . . The desire I think across government is to have a balanced budget every single year, but in the face of headwinds there's choices to make. And we clearly heard from the people of this province, you know, to protect the \$2.5 billion of affordability measures that are in each and every single budget. Families in this province didn't want to see us go back on that.

When it comes to health care, Mr. Speaker, families in this province, in my constituency and all other 60 constituencies, don't want to see us go back on that, go back on the good work that's being done in terms of improving access to primary care, improving access to surgeries, Mr. Speaker. So important that we continue to put patients first in every single decision that we make in the health care system, Mr. Speaker, making sure that we get the right care at the right time and as close to home as

possible.

Mr. Speaker, I've run out of time to talk about publicly funded, privately delivered surgeries. I will have more to say on that at some point, I hope very soon, Mr. Speaker, because I think that is a major difference in opinion, a difference in policy. And we should be talking about these policy ideas, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly what we should be debating on this green carpet here in the floor of the legislature. And there's a difference between the policies.

And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that when it comes to the policy directions that we're going to take as a government when it comes to putting patients first, we are going to put every option on the table. When it comes to putting patients first, providing more access to health care, Mr. Speaker, we will turn over every rock to find solutions that will make life better for the people of this province.

That's exactly why I'm proud to serve on this team and support the budget delivered by the Minister of Finance and seconded by the member for Carrot River Valley.

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

Matt Love: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Boy, quite the speech to follow from the Health minister opposite, who decided to use his time on his feet today to tell a bunch of stories about what members on this side have or have not supported over the years. And while I would like to spend my time on my feet correcting the record on most of what the minister said, instead I'm going to focus on one theme today, and that's family, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm fortunate today, I think, in my time in this Assembly for the first time giving one of these addresses, a response to the budget or the Throne Speech, to have members of my family here. They're the only ones in the gallery — I think I'm allowed to say that — you know, and I had an opportunity to welcome them earlier. And I appreciate the welcome from the Premier that he also offered. I thought that was a kind gesture. But I want to just take a minute again to say some thank yous, as we all do when we share our words, you know, in response to the budget.

I'll start with my mom, who's here. You know, she's an incredible woman. And I'm going to talk about family today and a little bit about my own upbringing and things that I experienced as a child and youth growing up. But you know, my mom is somebody who has spent most of her life serving other people. She raised three boys on her own, and she served my brothers and I in incredible ways. And then she went on to serve other family members as they aged and, you know, took care of my dad's mom for quite a while, helping her out as she was growing old, and supported her own mom, who's just an incredible woman and I think is going to turn 93 this spring in Vernon, BC.

So she's spent her life caring for other people. And she moved here to Saskatchewan. She moved to Saskatoon last summer, and so she's, you know, as I mentioned earlier, getting through her first winter. But we're just so thankful to have her here to be close to her grandkids. She's at every basketball game, every football game. She's helping us out when she can. She's here in Regina

this week to help us out when we needed a little support. So I want to say thank you to my mom for coming to join us in Saskatoon and just being a closer part of our family.

[16:15]

And I want to say thank you to my boys, who are here, and my daughter Etta, who couldn't be here. She's got a big year coming up. She's entering the Olympic qualification period soon. Hopefully I think if things go as planned and she stays healthy, she'll be off to Samoa and New Zealand, Scotland and China and Montreal.

She has a number of competitions coming up as she represents our country on the national and international stage, and you know, she continues to do well. And she's entering that Olympic qualification period here very soon, and she's I think hopeful and on track to make the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles. So I appreciate questions from members on both sides of the Chamber on her progress as an athlete.

She's also an incredible leader in her own regard, Mr. Speaker, and she's a passionate young leader in our province with the Saskatchewan Young New Democrats.

And I've got my boys here today, and I welcomed them earlier. My son Tom . . . And if the member from Walsh Acres has any further opinions on who is taller, then we're going to have a problem because my son is way taller than that member is, and so hopefully that will quiet things down. But he's just an incredible young man, and it was an honour to welcome him here earlier.

And my youngest, Myles, leaning on his mom's shoulder. I may have lost him as he's getting kind of to the end of his energy period of the day and probably getting tuckered up there, and he's got to listen to Dad go on and on. But just a wonderful young kid. I'm so thankful for him.

And you know, we heard the member from Stonebridge the other day give a tribute to his son and talk about the challenges of this job and being away from family. And I'll say how important it was for me last night after a long day to get back to my condo here in Regina which is very empty, there's very little . . . there's nothing on the wall, it's a very quiet place. And to get to come home to my family in the condo last night, how special that was to have them here in Regina and to be here today.

And of course joined there now by my wife, Emma, who is just an incredible inspiration in my life. She's my biggest support. And I want to talk about one thing that she did recently that I found really inspiring. She recently competed for the first time in an athletic competition. She competed in a weightlifting competition this past winter for the first time and was coached by my daughter.

And what I found inspiring about that was that for so many people, I think even for people like me like, as I age, we kind of shy away from doing things that are new, trying something for the first time. Especially in a venue where you're going to be judged and observed and competing. And she took this on with so much passion and so much enthusiasm. She trained hard, and she did her first weightlifting competition. We had friends and

family come and join and watch and cheer her on.

And I know I said this already, but it's truly inspiring to see her take on something like that and to do it with our daughter. It was really something that brought our whole family together. And I was just so proud to be there and cheer her on on that day just a few weeks back. It was really inspiring. I want to thank my wife for all the ways that she inspires me and supports me in this work.

And I also want to give a few shout-outs to some colleagues here. I don't have time to talk about all of our 27 members on this side. We've got so many incredible people. But I just thought of a few that, you know, their work has really encouraged me to keep going and to work harder and to represent the people of Eastview well.

So just a few quick shout-outs to the member from Saskatoon University. He works so hard on his file of Advanced Education. When I go to events with him, with different ethnic and cultural groups in the city, he knows everybody. He's so well loved and respected in our city of Saskatoon. And I just want to share with the Assembly how proud I am of him as a colleague. Just the level of respect that he has within our city is just something that I think we all strive to attain.

My colleague from Saskatoon Westview, she came into this work, you know, very new to politics. But she took on a really important file with housing and has advocated for affordability for renters in just an incredibly effective, thoughtful, educated way. And I'm just so proud of the work that she is doing to fight for affordability in our province.

My colleague from Regina Rochdale, who's joined me as associate shadow minister for Education . . . It is so great to have a partner in this work. And you know, there's times when we can't both be in the meetings together, so we trade things off. To have somebody as knowledgeable and as passionate and as experienced as she is — she has served this province as an educator and an administrator for her career — to have her insight, to do this work together, it's just incredibly valuable. And I want to thank that member for her work and dedication.

And finally my colleagues who represent our northern ridings, you know, Cumberland and Athabasca. They went through so much this past summer during wildfire season. And what inspires me about their work is they're still going. They're still fighting for those northern people.

And they're not just criticizing what this government failed at so badly; they're bringing forth solutions. There's the bill before this Assembly right now because of these members. And they are incredibly strong advocates for northern people, for northern business, for northern communities, for northern education, for northern health care. And I'm just so fortunate to call them colleagues.

My final thank you for today is to the people of Eastview. You know, Eastview is such a great constituency to represent. I'm very thankful for the 10 years that I spent teaching families in Eastview and coaching families in Eastview and shopping at businesses in Eastview before politics was something that I ever thought of — and I think a lot of us have similar stories — because it gave me an appreciation before I got to be here that

really reminds me what an honour it is to represent all of those families and businesses and individuals and seniors from my seat in the Assembly.

So to the people of Eastview: I'm thinking of you as I respond to this budget and as I think about what this budget means for families in Saskatchewan. There is nothing in this budget that I can vote for with good conscience knowing that it's going to make life better and more affordable for families in my constituency.

This idea of family and what's important to me . . . When I go back and I think about what I spoke at my nomination meeting in 2019, I talked about my family and I talked about my three kids. That was my entry into politics: wanting to build a better world for my kids and fighting for things that are going to make the world better for the people who I love. And then wanting the same things for the people that I love and wanting that for everybody, for our families, for your families, for everyone's families. And I think that that's what's at the centre of my examination of this budget — is it going to be better for families like mine and families like yours?

We live in a province and this government presides over a province that has the highest rates of childhood poverty in the entire country. Compared to all provinces, we have more children living in poverty in Saskatchewan than any other province. We have 78,000 children living in poverty in this province. How can members in this Assembly support a budget that will do nothing to get us out of last place in that category? I cannot comprehend being satisfied in any way.

And yes, I believe voting for this budget indicates being satisfied with last place for childhood poverty in the country. I do. Because there's nothing in this budget that will change that. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I think that there's much that will make it worse, and I'm going to get into that.

Not only are we in last place for the number of children living in poverty, those in poverty in Saskatchewan are 32 per cent below the poverty line. We have the greatest depth of poverty as well, Mr. Speaker. More families struggling to put food on the table, struggling to provide the necessities of life, than any other province. Not just more numbers, but the depth of poverty is worst in the country. How can members opposite support a budget that is not going to improve that? I'm not expecting to go from worst to first in one year, but something, anything, to get us out of last place.

So what's the impact on learning? I'm the shadow minister for Education, Mr. Speaker. What's the impact on poverty for children in our classrooms? Poverty impacts learning. Poverty impacts growth. Poverty impacts health. Poverty impacts academic achievement. It impacts social interactions. It impacts relationships between students, between students and teachers, students and staff. Poverty creates stress on families, creates stress on parents. And kids feel that. They know that.

And, Mr. Speaker, I grew up in a home where at times we lived under the poverty line. Not consistently through my childhood, but at times we did. And I remember going to basketball practice in high school with shoes that were too small and falling apart. And I remember a coach bringing me a new pair of basketball

shoes. And I know we have teachers across this province doing this kind of thing every day, helping their students. In a province where we have more children living in poverty than any other province, teachers are often the ones — coaches, counsellors, school staff — stepping in to provide the needs of those students.

Now did I wear those basketball shoes, Mr. Speaker? No, I did not. They were not cool. They were not cool. They were really old. I stuck with my shoes that were broken for that season. I maybe had the wrong priorities.

But my point is, when we have children living in this kind of, this amount of poverty, this depth of poverty, it's often those on the front lines in education who are doing everything they can to care for the needs of these students. And that is the situation we have in Saskatchewan today.

So what is in the budget that could possibly get us out of last place? There really is virtually nothing.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want members opposite to know that this study that puts us in last place, it accounts for those tax breaks that members opposite are so proud of. They know that. They've accounted for that. It hasn't changed our last-place position. So this is not the answer to getting us out of last place. It's not the only answer, I might say. The study accounts for everything that this government will talk about. Anything that they could say to answer for this last-place position is included in this study. And we are in last place.

The data actually shows things get worse for children under six, for those early years that we've heard from the Premier and from the minister that all of a sudden they figured out how important those years are to a child's development. Well those kids are living at a higher rate of poverty than any other province in the country. These are not family values, Mr. Speaker.

And I ask members opposite, where are those old conservative values? Those family values, where are they? When we lead a province that has more children in poverty than any province in the country, where are those values today? Those used to be conservative values. And those are still New Democrat values today, Mr. Speaker.

Is there anything in this budget to control increases to rent? No. That's a solution brought forward on this side of the Assembly. Is there anything in this budget to give families some much-needed relief at the gas pump? No. Buying children's clothes? No. Buying groceries? Yes, including rotisserie chickens and all those things that often go into a busy family's backpack when the kids are going . . . They're headed off to school, you know, what's in their lunches? Many of those are items, as my colleague pointed out earlier today, that this government slapped PST on a number of years ago. Is there any relief for this for families? No.

What about families who rely on the food bank? We heard earlier today about what's happening in Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker, where they are rationing the number of times a family can visit the food bank in a month. How can those two members from Moose Jaw support a budget that cuts food bank funding in their community where they are now rationing food bank usage for those families? Family values would tell me that they should vote against this budget.

[16:30]

What about school nutrition? Now I'll have an opportunity next week to get into this with the minister in committee. And this might be me telling the minister, I'm going to ask about school nutrition next week in committee. He probably knows that I will because I'm passionate about it. When kids are hungry, they simply can't learn. And we need to solve this piece in Saskatchewan.

For the last number of years — and I'll find out where we are this year — Saskatchewan has ranked dead last for school nutrition funding in the country. In fact if we tripled, tripled our provincial contribution, we would only get to second-last place. That's how far behind we are. Three cents per child per day for school nutrition. Completely inadequate in a province with the most number of children living in poverty. It's shameful.

Mr. Speaker, what has this government done in this budget? I've talked about some things that they haven't done. What have they done? They've increased power rates. They've increased insurance rates. They've cut food bank funding. They've offloaded costs to municipalities that will increase property taxes for families struggling to afford life in Saskatchewan. And they've added PST onto things, as I said, like groceries and children's clothing.

It's very hard to comprehend where the values are in this budget to support families in a province not only with the highest rates of childhood poverty but with the highest rates of people financially insecure, people who couldn't afford an extra \$200 charge at the end of the month. We have the highest rates of people unable to pay their mortgages in the whole country, and there is no support in this budget for families like that. These are families in Eastview. Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, these are families in Eastview. These are families in every constituency represented by all 61 seats in this Assembly.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, I think when it comes to families, we can't talk about supporting families without talking about supporting education. And I'm going to take just a couple minutes before I wrap up to talk about what's in the education budget.

We have an operating grant increase here of 2.57 per cent. And what we hear every year from this government on budget day is, record funding in education. We hear that almost every year. A couple years we didn't because there were massive cuts we still haven't recovered from, but we hear this almost every year. And then in the weeks and the months that follow, school divisions have to make cuts most years. Despite what they say, cuts are coming.

And that's because this is a government that has not planned and has not funded for two key factors. That's inflation and enrolment growth. Inflation and enrolment growth.

Now the last couple years they've started using these words in their budget releases, and they claim in the budget that this 2.57 per cent is going to cover inflation and enrolment growth. They project 700 new students, and they've costed that. They projected some inflation, and they say they've costed that. But I'm telling you, Mr. Speaker, when it comes time for school division budgets

to be delivered this spring, there will be cuts. Because this government's math is wrong. It's always off, Mr. Speaker.

When they talk about record funding, let's have a look at 10 years, from 2013 to 2023. And their conservative friends at the Fraser Institute, they've done the math and they've shown that in that 10-year period, 2013 to 2023, education funding across the country, adjusted for inflation and enrolment across Canada, is up 6 per cent. Other provinces have figured it out. In Saskatchewan, it's down 14.7 per cent.

Is it still record funding? Yes, I suppose that talking point can still be used. But when adjusted for inflation and enrolment growth, it's a cut of 14.7 per cent. So our kids, our families, Mr. Speaker, do not have the supports that they need for success in this generation and the next. Those supports that used to be in our school, whether it's one-on-one supports, specialist supports, smaller class sizes, they've vanished. And here we are this year with a 2.57 per cent increase that this government is celebrating that will lead to cuts, and it will impact families. And there's not a member opposite who should vote for this budget knowing what I've just shared.

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation has done the math and they've indicated that this year's budget will actually be a decline in per-student funding of \$33. No, it doesn't sound like much, Mr. Speaker, but after the decade that we've had, dropping 14.7 per cent, this will be damaging to our schools. It really will.

On the capital side, Mr. Speaker, we've heard the debate in here. And I'm not going to spend too much time canvassing this, but we have a 35 per cent reduction in our capital spending of just over \$67 million dollars. A drop. We see schools being delayed in this province.

And day after day we have the Premier of Saskatchewan saying that there's no delay and the province of Saskatchewan saying there is a delay. That was literally the headline in the news last night, Mr. Speaker. I couldn't believe it. In the six years I've been here, I have never seen a headline like that.

The Premier of Saskatchewan has a different opinion than the province of Saskatchewan. Who is in charge over there, Mr. Speaker? Who is in charge of this boat? The Premier of Saskatchewan says there's no delay, and the minister and the province of Saskatchewan says there is a delay. They can't even look me in the eye right now because they know it's true, Mr. Speaker.

We've never seen anything like this. The Premier of Saskatchewan saying one thing and the minister and the province of Saskatchewan saying another. And do you know who else says that there's going to be delays? The school boards, Mr. Speaker. The school boards say there's going to be delays. The mayor in Carlyle says there's going to be a delay.

It's kind of incredible, Mr. Speaker, to see something where a minister who sits right next to the Premier, two feet away, having a different opinion on whether or not there are school delays than the Premier himself. I've never seen it before. Quite shocking, Mr. Speaker. Completely different opinions on a simple question. Are schools going to be delayed in this budget? Well I'm pretty sure we'll find out in good time.

Mr. Speaker, I'll wrap up here I think. I said I wouldn't talk for long. I think I've talked for longer than I planned to.

You know, this is a government that's costing families. This is a government . . . When we see cuts in education, where do families go? They go for private tutoring. They seek out private specialists. They pay the school so their children can eat lunch at school. Their cuts to education are costing families. This is not a budget that's going to protect Saskatchewan families — not families like mine, not families like yours, not families like any of ours or those that we represent. This is a bad-news budget for families.

And again I say in closing, Mr. Speaker, where are those old conservative values, those old conservative values of protecting families? And I'll tell this Assembly, those are still New Democrat values. And we will always protect families in Saskatchewan, and we will always stand up for affordability. We will always stand up for the health care that our families need.

We heard from health care workers outside today, health care workers with children at home that have to stop at the food bank on their way home from working two shifts. We've heard from health care workers who have to sell their blood plasma just to pay the bills. Are we not protecting these families? They asked the question on the steps of this building earlier today. It's a good question, Mr. Speaker. Do they not deserve to be protected too?

This is a bad-news budget for families. Where are the values that we're supposed to bring to this floor to protect Saskatchewan families? If we can't answer that, we can't vote for this budget. Mr. Speaker, I will not supporting this budget. I will be supporting the amendment brought forward by my seatmate from Regina Mount Royal. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Yorkton.

David Chan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Creator for his many blessings, and I ask for his help and his grace for every one of us who strive to do right for our constituents, for our province. It's a privilege to rise today and deliver my response to this year's budget. I'm proud of our team, and I'm grateful for the work being done across this province to serve the people of Saskatchewan.

First I would like to express some thanks to some very important people. To my wife: I want to thank you, Judy, for being an incredible, dedicated, diligent mother to our children, loving them to the utmost. You pour so much love into each of them. And I'm grateful for how dedicated you are to raising our kids, being their mother, filling in the gaps of my frequent absence. It's been mentioned a number of times already here, and you know, when you're doing this work, it takes you away from home for long days, long weeks. And it's a sacrifice that we don't make by ourselves. Our families make that with us.

I want to thank my constituency office staff, Lindsey, Melissa, and Len. Your work makes my work possible. I couldn't do what I do without you guys, and you're an incredible team. I thank you for serving our community with heart and dedication. I also want to thank my prayer team. I can't overstate how much your support means to me, and I do not underestimate the power of your prayers.

And to the people of my constituency, Mr. Speaker: I count it a privilege every single day to represent such a remarkable community. Whether it's the Yorkton Lions giving their time and efforts to raise funds for local organizations like the Boys & Girls Club, or SaskAbilities showing us what it means to live out compassion and become family to the ones you serve. Or whether it's Suncrest College showing us what strong, responsive leadership can look like, what it means to partner with students, industry, governments, and Indigenous communities, how to build bridges. Or whether it's our amazing business community giving generously to our local sports teams and community organizations.

And let me say, Mr. Speaker, I believe that there is no more generous business community than the one we have in Yorkton. Mr. Speaker, Yorkton is a community that shows up, and I'm incredibly proud and profoundly grateful to serve and represent my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, this budget comes at a time of significant global and national economic uncertainty. Over the past year we have seen tariffs imposed by three of our largest export markets — the United States, China, and India. These are not minor disruptions. These are major pressures on a trade-dependent province like ours.

At the same time we are dealing with persistent inflation, elevated interest rates, and rising input costs. Families are feeling it. Producers are feeling it. Businesses are feeling it. And yes, provincial governments feel it too. In short, Mr. Speaker, everyone is being squeezed.

Now I want to address something directly. This budget runs a deficit, as does every province in Canada. As a fiscal conservative, deficits are not ideal. But there are times, specific strategic moments, when they are necessary and even appropriate. And let me frame this in a way that reflects how sound fiscal management works.

If you are managing a well-run company, one operating in an essential industry with strong fundamentals, stable demand, and long-term growth prospects, you would not respond to a temporary downturn by cutting your core capacity. You wouldn't shut down productive assets. You wouldn't lay off critical talent. You wouldn't hollow out your future.

Instead you manage your cash flow, you maintain your operations, and where appropriate, you invest. Because you understand that downturns are temporary, but capacity when it is lost, it's very difficult to rebuild. That's not reckless. That's not recklessness. That is disciplined, forward-looking management. Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what this government is doing.

As our Finance minister said, in the face of economic headwinds that not only us in the province but all across the nation, even across the globe, are facing, we had a choice to make. Do we raise taxes and cut services, or do we protect Saskatchewan? Mr. Speaker, we chose to protect Saskatchewan.

And thankfully, importantly, Mr. Speaker, we are in a position to do so. That is not accidental. It is the result of years of steady, stable economic policy and responsible fiscal management. It is precisely because of that discipline that we now have the

flexibility to respond to external shocks without compromising our long-term trajectory.

But, Mr. Speaker, in the midst of these global pressures, what does this budget actually do? Well it increases funding to health care. It delivers the largest capital infrastructure investment in our province's history — \$4.3 billion. It increases support for agriculture stability, increases funding for education and post-secondary education. And at the same time it delivers \$2.5 billion in affordability measures, cutting taxes, putting money back into the pockets of Saskatchewan people, on top of indexation.

Mr. Speaker, that is not a government in distress. That is a government executing a strategy. And the clearest validation of that strategy is not what we say in this Chamber; it's what the market says.

Let me return to the business analogy. In financial markets a company's valuation reflects investor expectations of future earnings. Capital flows towards stability, predictability, and opportunity. Investors allocate their dollars where they see disciplined management and long-term growth. The same principle applies to jurisdictions.

[16:45]

So the question is, what is the market saying about Saskatchewan? Mr. Speaker, private capital is flowing into our province at one of the fastest rates in the country on a per capita basis. We are ranked first among the provinces for private capital investment growth in 2025. We lead Canada in mining investment attractiveness. We're third globally in mining investment attractiveness, and we rank second in the nation for real GDP [gross domestic product] growth.

There are currently over 60 major private capital projects under way or planned in this province, representing more than 60 billion in investment. That is an incredible boast, Mr. Speaker. It is record setting for our province and record setting across this nation. Mr. Speaker, that is not just rhetoric. That is investors putting real dollars on the line, expressing confidence in Saskatchewan's stability, in our people, in our resource base, and in this government's policy environment.

And the story does not end there. We have one of the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratios in Canada. We maintain one of the highest credit ratings and we have the lowest unemployment rate. We offer one of the most affordable utility bundles in the country. We have the highest personal tax-free threshold for a family of four. And we continue to be one of the most affordable housing markets in Canada. Mr. Speaker, taken together these are not isolated statistics. They are indicators of a province that is competitive, stable, and responsibly managed.

Now this doesn't mean that people are not feeling pressure. Affordability remains a top concern. I hear it from my constituents in Yorkton. Families are managing rising costs, producers are dealing with tightening margins, and businesses are navigating uncertainty. And that is exactly why this budget takes the steady, measured approach that it does. It's our government recognizing the challenges faced by workers, families, and businesses alike and letting them know, don't worry; we got you.

We're well positioned to weather the storm, and we're going to protect what matters most. We are going to keep the economy steady. We are going to protect jobs. We're going to invest in health care and education. We're going to keep communities safe. We're going to keep our affordability promises to workers, families, and seniors and small businesses. And we are going to make sure that when this period of uncertainty passes, as it always does, Saskatchewan is not weakened; it is strengthened.

Mr. Speaker, that is what disciplined spending, intentional investment, and long-term vision look like. That's what leadership looks like, and that is why people trust this government.

Now I want to turn specifically to what this budget means for the people of Yorkton. Mr. Speaker, there is a great deal in this budget that will make a tangible difference in my community. Let me begin with health care. I'm pleased to see continued progress on the Yorkton hospital project. The 1.8 million allocated in this budget moves us fully through pre-design and into the design phase. And that matters because the design phase is the critical bridge between planning and construction. It's where we move towards seeing physical work begin and dirt start to move.

I want to thank the team at SaskBuilds for their steady, continued work on this file, including my friend, neighbour, and colleague, the Minister of SaskBuilds, member for Canora-Pelly. His extensive background in construction gives me added confidence that our hospital project is in good hands. Mr. Speaker, he's the right man to have on the job.

I also want to recognize Ross Fisher and the Yorkton Health Foundation for their leadership, as well as Larry Hilworth and everyone involved at Farming for Health. This is a powerful example of a community coming together, raising over 2.5 million to support health care locally. Also I want to mention former member for Yorkton, the Hon. Greg Ottenbreit and his wife, Leone, who have been champions for health care in our community.

Mr. Speaker, there's another great piece of news. The community contribution requirement for the Yorkton hospital has been reduced from 20 per cent to 10 per cent. That is significant. Under the previous government it was 35 per cent. We brought it down to 20 per cent, and now to 10 per cent. That represents tens of millions of dollars staying in our community. Mr. Speaker, that is a meaningful, concrete win for the people of Yorkton brought by this government.

But we are not only building for the future; we are addressing the needs of today. That's why I'm thrilled to talk about our patient-first health care plan that will be funded in this budget. To mention just a few highlights, this plan includes the largest expansion of nurse practitioners in Saskatchewan's history. It removes caps on contracts. It adds 26 training seats right here in Saskatchewan, expanding nurse practitioner training capacity by 45 per cent. It enables nurse practitioners to work to their full scope, and it supports the development of nurse practitioner-led clinics. Mr. Speaker, this is smart policy. It increases capacity faster. It aligns with team-based care models and it improves access, especially in rural communities like mine.

Yorkton is also 1 of 10 communities selected for patient medical homes, which implements a team-based model of care and structures care around the needs of the patient instead of the needs of the system. This is industry led, and we've seen excellent results from our pilot project in Swift Current. I'm thrilled this is coming to Yorkton. It's going to mean better access, more timely care, and more coordinated services for our residents.

Mr. Speaker, we are also now included in the rural physician incentive program. This will support recruitment and retention in our region. It's a big deal to Yorkton and again more good news for Yorkton.

Beyond health care, this budget delivers for Yorkton in other key areas. Highway 52 will see improvements supporting safety and connectivity. The city of Yorkton will receive 4.39 million in municipal revenue sharing, the highest amount ever. This is stable, predictable funding that allows local leaders to invest where it matters most.

And on protecting communities, this budget continues our commitment to keeping communities safe with 310 million to support RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] operations, alongside investments into the Saskatchewan Marshals Service, as well as funding for 100 new municipal officers. Mr. Speaker, these aren't insignificant measures.

Yorkton has been a beneficiary of this focus, receiving last year \$357,000 under the municipal policing grant program. This funding put boots on the ground. It supported innovative approaches like police and crisis teams pairing law enforcement with mental health professionals to respond more effectively. This is practical, results-driven policy that makes our community safer.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to see funding in this budget for 200 more addictions treatment spaces. This is an important and significant step for our province in supporting individuals and families dealing with addiction. As someone who worked in this space, I welcome this wholeheartedly.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is about stability in uncertain times. It is about protecting Saskatchewan. It is about making strategic investments today so that we are stronger tomorrow. And for the people of Yorkton — for the families, workers, producers, and businesses that I represent — this budget delivers real, tangible results.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to support this budget but I want to finish on a personal note. I want to finish by sharing about the first time that I met our Premier. I was a candidate at that time, and you know, I was not familiar to this building, to this scene. And I don't know how other members feel about that first time, but I was awestruck. I was awestruck by the building, the prestige, the opulence.

And I remember walking into the Premier's office, and it can be intimidating. It was intimidating. You know, everything in that office — the furniture, the design — it communicates gravitas and it impresses upon you the importance and significance of where you're standing. So here I was, you know, now a candidate but just a regular guy, regular Joe standing in the Premier's office

about to meet the person that runs the government of our province. It was a big deal and I didn't know what to expect.

But I remember that meeting. I remember that meeting. He started by showing me some of his cool gifts, some of the things he had received from delegates. But then he went over to a table, waved me over, and his eyes lit up. And he proceeded to show me pictures of his family and his grandchild. The Premier — the suit, the tie, the booming voice — just delighted to share the joy he had in his grandchild.

And what did I see in those pictures, Mr. Speaker? I saw a proud, loving grandpa. Not a suit, not a tie, just a granddad, family man on a country road delighted to spend time with his grandkid. Mr. Speaker, it's easy to see members as the roles, but we need to humanize them.

I'm not here to cast stones because I know I miss the mark and I myself am guilty, but I am here to speak my conviction. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I am only a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have faith enough to move mountains but if I do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient. Love is kind. It is not jealous. It does not boast. It is not proud or rude. It is not selfish or self-seeking. It is not easily provoked to anger and it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil. It does not rejoice in unrighteousness. It rejoices with the truth. Love always bears up, always trusts, always hopes, always endures. Love never fails and never ends.

Mr. Speaker, whatever we know, whatever we think we know, we only see part of the picture. None of us know the whole story. None of us see the whole picture. In all our knowledge, in all of our knowing it is at best incomplete, and one day it will all come to an end. One day we will all come to an end.

Mr. Speaker, I'm paraphrasing. The passage says that right now we see, but only as though through a darkened glass, and that we know only in part. But when we stand before our Maker, we will know fully even as we are fully known. And when the perfect comes, the imperfect disappears.

Mr. Speaker, this is imperfect, and we are all imperfectly endeavouring to do our best. And we are all of us imperfect and incomplete. Let us have grace for one another. Mr. Speaker, love does not rejoice in what is evil. It rejoices with the truth. I pray in this province, in this Chamber, that love and truth will always prevail.

The passage finishes with this, Mr. Speaker. Now these three remain: faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the motion put forward by the Finance minister and seconded by the member from Carrot River, Tisdale. I will not be supporting the opposition.

Deputy Speaker B. McLeod: — I recognize the member from Wood River.

Hon. David Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I see the

essence of the clock. I don't have a whole lot of time to speak on response to the budget, but obviously I do want to say a few words and thank a few people. Obviously everybody has done the same in thanking their family and friends and constituency, and our staff that way too.

I just want to take this opportunity to thank my staff upstairs, but I really want to take the opportunity to thank the Ministry of Agriculture, Bill Greuel and the entire team over there; obviously with Jeff Morrow and the Crop Insurance team as well, and Shawn Jaques and the Water Security team as well. I want to take this opportunity to thank them for all the work they do and getting us to the budget we got to.

And I really will talk about how our budget is protecting the whole ag sector here in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Our investment in the business risk management, we're fully complementing the programs in the business risk management. Our budget is up over \$60 million this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but over \$522 million in the business risk management side of it as well.

I also want to talk about some of the new programs we have, like the new satellite forage rainfall insurance program and what that means to the people in the ranching community here in the province of Saskatchewan. It gives them more accurate data on the rainfall insurance program that they have. It narrows it down the scope of a township.

But I also want to talk about probably one of the key things that I'm . . . Very important to me as the minister of this great ministry here in the province of Saskatchewan is our research dollars. We're just under \$40 million again in research here in the province of Saskatchewan. We will continue to invest in agriculture in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is vital to this province and our economy. Thank you.

Deputy Speaker B. McLeod: — It now being 5 o'clock, this Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.]

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Scott Moe
Premier
President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Chris Beaudry
Minister of Energy and Resources

Hon. Lori Carr
Minister of Mental Health and Addictions,
Seniors and Rural and Remote Health

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff
Minister of Advanced Education
Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Minister Responsible for the
Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill
Minister of Health

Hon. Kim Gartner
Minister of Highways

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Minister of Crown Investments Corporation
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Government Insurance
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Power Corporation
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Telecommunications
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Water Corporation
Minister Responsible for
Lotteries and Gaming Saskatchewan Corporation

Hon. Everett Hindley
Minister of Education

Hon. Terry Jenson
Minister of Social Services

Hon. Warren Kaeding
Minister of Trade and Export Development
Minister Responsible for Innovation
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority

Hon. David Marit
Minister of Agriculture
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Water Security Agency

Hon. Tim McLeod
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Minister Responsible for the Firearms Secretariat

Hon. Jim Reiter
Deputy Premier
Minister of Finance

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

Hon. Darlene Rowden
Minister of Environment

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

Hon. Michael Weger
Minister of Community Safety
Minister Responsible for the
Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency

Hon. Sean Wilson
Minister of SaskBuilds and Procurement
Minister Responsible for the
Global Transportation Hub Authority