



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. Don Toth
 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — Lorne Calvert

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Hon. Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Brotten, Cam	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Calvert, Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
D'Autremont, Hon. Dan	SP	Cannington
Draude, Hon. June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Hon. Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Furber, Darcy	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
Gantfoer, Hon. Rod	SP	Melfort
Harpauer, Hon. Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Harrison, Jeremy	SP	Meadow Lake
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Hon. Nancy	SP	Martensville
Hickie, Hon. Darryl	SP	Prince Albert Carlton
Higgins, Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Hutchinson, Hon. Bill	SP	Regina South
Huyghebaert, Yogi	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
LeClerc, Serge	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMillan, Tim	SP	Lloydminster
McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
Ottenbreit, Greg	SP	Yorkton
Quennell, Frank	NDP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Reiter, Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Ross, Laura	SP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Schriemer, Joceline	SP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Stewart, Hon. Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Tell, Hon. Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
Toth, Hon. Don	SP	Moosomin
Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation Park
Van Mulligen, Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
Wall, Hon. Brad	SP	Swift Current
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney
Vacant		Cumberland

[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

**MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY
(BUDGET DEBATE)**

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Gantfoer that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Van Mulligen.]

The Speaker: — Order. Debate will resume on the budget debate, and I recognize the member from Rosetown-Elrose.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, agriculture is a key economic driver in the Rosetown-Elrose constituency, and the Sask Party government is committed to our agriculture producers. We're delivering on our promise to fully fund the agriculture risk management programs, crop insurance in the AgriStability and AgriInvest programs. Over \$220 million are committed to fully fund these programs, which includes a \$25 million increase to the crop insurance program.

We're delivering on our promise to introduce five-year interest-free loans to municipalities to help them with the increasing demand for both commercial and residential lots. Mr. Speaker, we're finally seeing growth in this province in municipalities of all sizes, large and small, and this will be an effective way to help those municipalities deal with that growth. Municipal work has been my career, Mr. Speaker, and I know that the municipal sector is very pleased with this program.

We're also delivering on our promise to increase municipal revenue sharing by 7 per cent. We're also delivering on our promise to double tourism funding, doubling it to \$16 million. Saskatchewan is a great place to live, but it's also a great place to visit, and we need to get that message out.

We're delivering on our promise to include \$250 million in our first budget for debt reduction, Mr. Speaker. This is the first budget of many, many budgets to come from a Sask Party government, and included is \$250 million for debt reduction, as promised — another promise kept.

We're delivering on our promise to reduce the burden of education tax on property. Now I want to talk about that initiative now, Mr. Speaker. This has been a long-time problem in our province. For many years, Saskatchewan governments have been criticized for relying too much on the property tax base to fund education.

In 1944 then Premier Tommy Douglas promised to do away with the education tax when funding allowed because he considered it to be too regressive. Way back in 1969 . . . 1969

was a long, long time ago, Mr. Speaker. I was just a kid. The member from Meadow Lake wasn't even born yet in 1969, Mr. Speaker. Then Premier Thatcher called a provincial local government conference, and at that conference, the inequity of education tax on property was seriously questioned. That's how long, Mr. Speaker, that this has been a contentious issue. Among all the provinces, Saskatchewan is the most reliant on property tax to fund education.

Concern about this issue has been most pronounced in the agricultural sector. As the years went by, people have gotten more angry and demanded action. In 1999 tax revolt meetings were held in over 100 rural municipalities in this province. A few years later, in 2005, over 100 rural municipalities withheld the education portion of property tax from school divisions. Also in 2005, five organizations — PARCS, the Provincial Association of Resort Communities [of Saskatchewan]; SARM, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities; the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce; the SSBA, the Saskatchewan School Boards Association; and SUMA, the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association — those five organizations formed a coalition to lobby the provincial government to take action.

Mr. Speaker, this issue has gone on far too long. This budget clearly addresses the issue. This year, residential property owners will be getting a 12 per cent rebate on their education property tax bill. Also, Mr. Speaker, agricultural property owners will receive a 47 per cent rebate on their education property tax bill. This means that an average farm land owner will save over \$2,000.

Mr. Speaker, this government is spending nearly \$160 million on property tax relief. And Mr. Speaker, what this budget does is it keeps our promise. Mr. Speaker, this budget includes \$1 billion in capital investment. That is \$1 billion in infrastructure investment for our great province. That's the largest capital investment in this province's history and, Mr. Speaker, that investment is desperately needed. It's needed for capital spending plans for our municipalities. It's desperately needed for our roads and for our highways. It's desperately needed for repairs and upgrades on schools all over this province. It's needed for improvements for universities and training centres. It's desperately needed for repairing and upgrading hospitals and health centres all over Saskatchewan. And it's needed to buy medical and safety equipment for those very same hospitals and health facilities.

Mr. Speaker, these investments are needed to prepare this province for growth. Growth is something that many people thought wasn't possible for Saskatchewan, but it's happening, Mr. Speaker. Growth is happening and will continue to happen.

We have people moving into towns and villages all over this province. In many communities it's difficult to even find a house for sale. I was speaking to a real estate office in Rosetown this morning, Mr. Speaker. They told me that three years ago there was about 80 houses for sale in Rosetown; today there's two or three. Today there's virtually nothing for rent in Rosetown.

Our small towns are beginning to boom, Mr. Speaker, and it's

great to see. People are actually moving from Alberta to Saskatchewan instead of the other way around. New people are moving here, and Saskatchewan kids are starting to come home, come home to small-town Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, these are exciting times for our province. We need to continue this economic growth. We need to continue the momentum we're now enjoying, and we need to make sure this growth improves the quality of life for all our citizens. Mr. Speaker, this budget is an extremely important step in that direction.

I will be voting against the amendment, Mr. Speaker, and I'm pleased to tell you that I will be supporting the budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before I give my response to the budget, I just wanted to first of all thank the constituents of Athabasca who've again seen fit to give me the opportunity — and I'll always use the phrase seen fit — to give me the opportunity to stand and represent the northwest part of Saskatchewan, in particular Athabasca.

I want to also point out, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my wife, Beckie; and my three daughters Michelle, Kellie, and Taylor; and the new additions to our family over the past several years, Brodey who is my grandson and Michelle's boy, and Meika who is Kellie's daughter. And they're my two new additions to our family. And if anything's any indication by their ability and their strength and their good looks, then the Belanger clan have a lot to look forward to, Mr. Speaker.

So I certainly hope, again, as the member from Moose Jaw pointed out, we all hope they all look like their grandmother. And I would second that motion, Mr. Speaker. There's no question that most of my children, thank goodness, get their looks from their mother. And I think the whole community of Ile-a-la-Crosse is pretty happy with that, in fact the whole constituency of Athabasca. So I'm pretty happy with that too, Mr. Speaker. But I want to thank her for her tireless work.

And for the record, Mr. Speaker, in front of the government and all 58 MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] here, I promised my wife when I married her in 1985 that I would build her a nice, big beautiful house by the lake. I haven't delivered that yet, Mr. Speaker, but I can tell her today that I am promising on building her that big, beautiful house, and that's going to be done within the next two years. Now that is on record, Mr. Speaker, and if we don't begin that process very soon, then the MLA for Athabasca is going have to find another career because that's one promise that I would not have kept if I didn't deliver as I said I would.

I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the budget today, I want to do an impersonation of the Sask Party on election night. And there's a big celebration because they got 38 seats and we got 20. And they're bouncing around in their room, their

election headquarters you know, just holding hands you know, and singing "Kumbaya", and the whole bit you know. Just oh, they're really on a roll, Mr. Speaker. They're really happy. And of course on the opposite side, at the NDP [New Democratic Party] headquarters, we're disappointed to lose. And obviously we learned many, many valuable lessons.

But there they were with their leader and their supposed cabinet candidates, just prancing around and saying, we won, we won, we won. And they celebrated and chanted this, we won, for about three or four hours, and somebody said to them, hold it you guys. Let's all stop dancing here. Let's all stop dancing here. Well why are we not celebrating, asked another Sask Party member. We won, didn't we? But the bright guy in the Saskatchewan Party said, what do we do now? What do we do now?

You know, they're sitting there saying, well hold it. We're going to celebrate for another couple of hours, and we'll answer that question later. So they danced some more, Mr. Speaker, and they pranced around. They celebrated, and they said, we won, we won. And then again that wise old Sask Party guy said . . . well he's not really wise. He wouldn't have been around 10 years. It's actually a conservative, Mr. Speaker, that said, hold it guys. We won. What do we do now?

And all of a sudden they started thinking. They started thinking. And they said, they — the Saskatchewan Party — said well let's follow the NDP plan. That's what we'll do. We'll follow the NDP plan because, Mr. Speaker, they got a lot of money in the bank. The NDP left a whole whack of money in the bank, and they had a good plan that people liked. So let's follow that plan.

And what's more, what's more, Mr. Speaker, they said, okay, we'll follow the NDP plan because they know how to govern. They've been governing for many years. Even despite the mess we left them, they still recaptured the glory that Saskatchewan sought.

But we'll follow their plan, Mr. Speaker, and then, why don't we sell some assets? Sell some assets, you know. I don't know, maybe an upgrader here and there. We'll use the money to balance the budget, Mr. Speaker. That's what they said they'll do. Okay what else should we do? Okay let's talk about, let's talk about a fiscal stabilization plan. That's part of the NDP plan, isn't it? Let's adopt that as well. So they got that done up, Mr. Speaker.

Hey another great idea, let's pay down some debt. People like that in Saskatchewan. Let's pay down some debt; that's what the NDP would have done. So you guys, these Sask Party guys were really cooking now, Mr. Speaker. They are really going.

Instead of scrapping everything, let's just keep all the programs we have, the social programs, and then we'll add some money to it, the money left behind by the NDP. So we'll use their plan, and then we will pay down debt. We'll have a Fiscal Stabilization Fund. And what else? Oh we'll invest in social programs. Now what else should we do? Okay we can say we're a caring new government looking forward to a brand new agenda. That's what we'll say. So they got this all figured out. Their celebration, we won we won — what do we do now? Let's follow the NDP plan. Let's enhance what they've done

based on the buildings they left us behind.

But, but, Mr. Speaker, there was a bright young guy that got up in the Sask Party, and he said, but we'll tell everybody it was us doing it. That's what we'll do. We'll tell the media and we'll tell the cities. We'll tell the Aboriginal people, oh we're doing this, you guys. And you know what? They're starting that process, Mr. Speaker. They'll say it was us that developed the economy.

No, no, not even four months, you can't do nothing in four months, Mr. Speaker. You can't reverse the population trend in four months. You can't have a booming economy in four months. You can't have buildings in the bank in four months.

So when you guys say, it was us that are doing all these wonderful things, this new government's investing billions in this or five billion in that, whatever the case may be, Mr. Speaker, they insult the people of Saskatchewan's intelligence when they do that. And the vast majority of people in Saskatchewan are saying, come on, Sask Party, give it up. You're not going to fool us. You're not going to fool us, you know.

And then furthermore when you say, okay after we won we'll adopt the NDP plan; we'll say . . . [inaudible] . . . all these wonderful things and maybe one-third of the gullible people are saying, well maybe they are good. But one-third is quickly diminishing, Mr. Speaker. Because they're forgetting a whole whack of other things that the NDP would have done, Mr. Speaker. And we've made reference to that, Mr. Speaker, over the past several weeks.

[19:15]

And I want to point out as well, after they won, after they adopted the NDP plan, they said, okay, what do we need to do now? Well let's see — they got record royalties, record revenue, they got a booming economy. For crying out loud, the NDP made a plan on the economy. They made a plan for highways. They made a plan for education. They made a plan for health. They made a plan for the environment. They made a plan for housing. They made a plan for training. Mr. Speaker, they had all these plans. So what this guy said, well how about if we adopt their plan? All the plans they have except for critical areas that we speak about in this amendment, Mr. Speaker.

So their little celebration. They're holding hands, dancing in a circle, chanting we won, we won. Better follow the NDP plan. And their first opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to develop a budget, what did they do? They followed the NDP plan. They followed the NDP plan. And if I never speak in this Assembly again, Mr. Speaker, I can say to all those hard-liners, those right wingers out there that thought they had a champion over there, we have NDP-ized them, Mr. Speaker. If there's ever a word that we could use, we can say throughout the process of time this was such an effective government that we NDP-ized the opposition who are supposed to be hard right wingers.

And, Mr. Speaker, the job is done. Now they're trying to say oh no, no, no, no, you guys forgot certain areas. And then the fourth part of their plan, Mr. Speaker, is we will get two or three of our members to yell across, you know. We'll get them.

No you guys are bad, you know. You guys don't know what you're doing over there in the opposition. And you'll get them to yell, oh NDP is to blame. So now we hear three or four of them ranting and raving and almost blowing a gasket trying to explain to us why the NDP is bad, Mr. Speaker. And I'm going to point out to those individuals that try that — nice try, nice try. Water off a duck's back. But we look at that as foolish antics that the people of Saskatchewan are going to make you pay for, Mr. Speaker, and I'm talking about the opposition. So I want to point out as you look at some of the situations, Mr. Speaker, again I'll point out, don't insult the people of Saskatchewan's intelligence, folks, because what happens when you claim credit for something that you have not done and you had nothing to do with, that makes you guys look absolutely foolish.

Instead of wasting your time blaming the NDP for the past 16 years, why don't you get a political life, and you can figure out the strategy on your own to take Saskatchewan into the 21st century? And if you can't figure it out, well resign. Step aside. We'll take over again and show you how it's done, Mr. Speaker. That's the bottom line. And as much as you want to yell and get your so-called . . . I could use the word goons, but for lack of a better word, I want to give the goons too much intellectual ability in the terms of the response that those guys might have.

I want to make these points, Mr. Speaker. First of all, for the great social crusaders over there, you're firing social workers. Guess what? You have money. You're firing Saskatchewan Environment support staff. Guess what? You have money. You're not putting social housing as a priority. Guess what? You guys have money. You know, you did not increase the social assistance rates to the lowest-income people in this province. Guess what, you guys? You have money. You did not commit to the Prince Albert mill. Guess what, you guys? You have money. You didn't put effort into the First Nations and Métis people. Look at their budget. Zero. A big fat zero. Guess what, you guys? You have money. You know it's Station 20 has no plans now. Look, you guys. You have money.

Your first opportunity, the first opportunity to do something, you guys failed miserably. A big fat F. A big fat F. And I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, after they were having their little dancing and celebrating that they won and what do we do, follow the NDP, and they . . . [inaudible] . . . can't do that right, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to point out that when I served as a cabinet minister under my premier's government, former government — and I'm not going to say former premier because I'm too proud to say that — but under my premier's former government, we knew that development of the economy wouldn't get us a lot of votes from the right wingers. We knew that. But we still did it. Why? Because it was good for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Why? Because we governed for everybody.

And secondly, Mr. Speaker, we know that spending major money on Highway No. 1, Trans-Canada Highway, major dollars, millions of dollars, we knew it may not result in us

getting extra votes in that area, but guess what, Mr. Speaker? We invested in there, in that particular region, because it was good for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. That's what we did.

Mr. Speaker, the investment into the sequestration project in Weyburn, that was a lot of effort, a lot of money in Weyburn, and we did that because we believed that this was good for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. So before we have anybody talking to us about certain areas not being recognized — like the working people, like the cities, like the North, the First Nations, Aboriginal people — I tell them, all throughout Saskatchewan the NDP served everyone in every region, not because of politics but because it was the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker. It was the right thing to do.

And I want to point out, and I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, if we look at what they ignored . . . What did they ignore? Property tax relief. Property tax relief. And you drive through some of our cities, and I think some of these cities are, in my opinion, are very noble cities, they're very proud cities with a lot of history to them. And you see some of their roads and some of the conditions of their recreation sites and some of their infrastructure, whether it's water and sewer, whatever the case may be — these cities need money.

And that minister of municipal services that's bellowing from his chair again, you turned your back on the cities. And now every, every taxpayer, land taxpayer in Regina, in Saskatoon, in Prince Albert, throughout all the land — in the north, west, east, south — every taxpayer that pays municipal taxes will remember that minister turned his back on them and we said 7 per cent.

So as we hit, as we hit the cities, as we hit the cities and we see the potholes and we see some of the conditions of some of the public places that people use for recreation, or we see some of the cutbacks in services that the cities are forced to do or raise the taxes, I will tell them one thing: remember it was the Sask Party that put that plan into place. And you guys have money, for crying out loud. You have money, you guys. Why don't you guys spend it like drunken sailors and give everybody money? You can do it.

But Mr. Speaker, they — with all due respect to sailors — they had the money and they did not make the commitment that they should have and ought to have put, for the cities. And, Mr. Speaker, the cities, as I mentioned they are the noblest, in my opinion, of the entities that are out there because they're the hub of activity, they're centres of excellence, and they do so much to make Saskatchewan great. And you guys turned your back on them and you give them a paltry 7 per cent.

So every bump that I hit on the Saskatoon streets, on the roads, or every dilapidated building I see somewhere, I'm going to remember the minister of municipal services and that government who refused to help those cities and those larger centres. When the time came and when they had the money, they turned their backs on them, Mr. Speaker. They turned their backs on them.

And let's talk about the skills training, Mr. Speaker, skills training. What'd they do? They slashed that as well. So there you go again, Mr. Speaker. A lot of young people, a lot of

young people want to make Saskatchewan their home. They heard of this booming economy. They show up. Hey, we want to get trained. And guess what? Skills training, whether it's for as a plumber, electrician, or whatever the case may be, these guys said, well let's cut that. NDP was putting way too much money in this skills training stuff here. Let's take that money and put it in somewhere else.

Well that decision's going to hurt the economy. It's going to not help us attract young people, Mr. Speaker. Young people are not going to come here. They know they aren't going to have that kind of support mechanism in place. So that's one of the seven things that they did that I think really, really ought to be exposed to the people of Saskatchewan.

And the third area, Mr. Speaker, is the environment, the environment. And how many times, how many times have we been told there's global warming? Evidence is there. And what do these guys do? They stick their heads in the sand, Mr. Speaker. It's actually the oil sands that they stuck their head into, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to be very clear. We support oil and gas development. I support oil and gas development. But my goodness, put your thinking hats on or thinking caps on and think. Okay, if we're going to support oil and gas sector . . . If we're really smart as a party, we're going to support the oil and gas sector. We'll give them the right royalties, give them the right royalties. Then we'll turn around and we'll do something on the environmental front to counteract and to better the challenges we face overall on the environment, Mr. Speaker.

And isn't that make sense? Doesn't that make sense as you invest in the oil and gas sector that may be creating some problems? And then you turn around and you invest in the environment. But these guys didn't, Mr. Speaker. They didn't. What they did was they invested into more aircraft, Mr. Speaker, and more conservation officers. There was no effort on their part to talk about the environment.

And the Minister of the Environment says, well I'm bored sitting here. Well I'd be bored too if I was broke, Mr. Speaker. I'd be bored if I had no money to do any planning. And that's why we're not asking her any questions, because there was no investment in the environment, Mr. Speaker. None in this budget.

And yet the young people, the old people, industry, and everybody that really enjoys Saskatchewan's beautiful scenery and nature in general, the scientists, everybody's saying the environmental issue has got to be dealt with. How many more times do they have to say that, Mr. Speaker? The environment is being threatened. You have global warming. You got major problems. Why aren't you listening to that call, Mr. Speaker?

That's what they're telling the Saskatchewan Party government. And guess what? They have the money. They have the money, Mr. Speaker. And I point out as well that there's many, many people from all quarters that say exactly what I'm saying. For crying out loud, listen to what we're saying and spend some major money into the environment so we can at least, at least tell our grandchildren we tried. And these guys never did, Mr. Speaker. These guys never did.

And that's why over the session we're not going to ask the Minister of the Environment any questions. Not because she can talk about blaming us for 16 years, because there's really no plan over there, no plan over there.

Now on the social housing, Mr. Speaker, on the fourth point of social housing. My goodness, you know, you sit there and you talk about the calls that we had over the years to talk about social housing. And what do these guys say when you have the money? They say, we're going to study it. We're going to get this Merriman guy and this Pringle guy together and they're going to figure out a solution for us.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I wish both those gentlemen good luck in finding the solution, because there's 10,000 books on solutions. The people of Saskatchewan, those that are living on the street, guess what, they're tired of . . . [inaudible] . . . on the problem. They want clarity on the solution. And these guys never provided one iota of any evidence whatsoever of any kind of support, support towards social housing.

Again what happened? It was the old NDP plan that they put money into. It was the old NDP plan, and today now when I watch them at these grand openings, cutting ribbons, saying oh this is for low-income people and medium-income people, you know, I kind of smile. Because the rest of Saskatchewan smiles too because the first thing that comes to my mind, well you guys had nothing to do with that.

You shouldn't be on the front page cutting ribbons. What's wrong with you guys? You should be giving credit where credit's due by saying, it was the NDP plan so maybe we should get one of them to cut the ribbon.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — But that smart guy in the Sask Party said, no, no, no, no. Don't start that, you guys. You're going to tell everybody it was us that did this. Oh, oh, oh, okay. Back to plan B now. Oh, no that was . . . no, no, that was plan A. No, no, that was . . . Whatever the plan might be, they're confused over there, Mr. Speaker.

So I want to point out, I want to point out that when you guys, when the Sask Party makes comments about their investment, their plan, the whole part of Saskatchewan, we all have a collective laugh. We all smile and we all say, okay, whatever, you know. And then they do it again a month later. And I want to tell them, you know, it's kind of funny, you guys. You know, it's almost like *The Gong Show*, because people know, people know you didn't do it.

[19:30]

And then the other . . . last session, they're talking about the Roughriders, you know, how they never won a cup under the NDP, Mr. Speaker. That's what they claimed their claim to fame was. A month after they came in, yes, we won the Grey Cup because you guys are gone. Yes, okay. And then I opened the paper and Joseph is gone. They couldn't even hang on to Joseph, for crying out loud, you know — championship quarterback, couldn't hang on to him.

And then they talk about, another few things to talk about — oh, our booming population. Oh my goodness, did you open up a lab where they can fund and create people for the province, or were these people on their way here already? You know, are they actually back in some Sask Party room cloning people? And oh, a record number of people working. Well hello, we done that two years ago, and we keep on doing it.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I look at the budget, of course I like the budget. It's a good budget. But there's huge deficiencies, I mean there's a lot of deficiencies in certain areas that are going to hurt. They're going to hurt. And you look at some of the other challenges, Mr. Speaker, and I could go on.

I could go on. But I'm not going to because the bottom line is this is one boring government, Mr. Speaker. This is one boring government, Mr. Speaker. And about the only entertaining we get is when they say, well this new government is proud to announce 10 million on housing and there's the building right there. The building took over two years of construction. Well we're going to pay for it. Yes, no you're not going to pay for it; that was money left behind. Well it's a new government. What the heck.

So, Mr. Speaker, enough of my imitation of the Sask Party government. I think I want to get on to my final point.

And a more serious point is the fact that, you know, it's really important that the Sask Party ought to know — the Sask Party ought to know — when you insult the people of Saskatchewan's intelligence by claiming all these good things happen because you guys are government, you know, you just, you just really get them really upset. And the second thing you do, second response you get is you get laughter. And the third response you're going to get is they're going to be awfully mad at you unless you do what you say you're going to do.

And you can talk about your 58 promises like set an election date — I can promise that in a heartbeat, you know and deliver it . . . [inaudible] . . . Big deal. Big deal, you know. And that's supposed to be the mantra of a new government. Well you can have that new government.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's really important that people ought to know is that when this party took over power in 1991 — I was not part of it of course — but when it took over power, they had \$15 billion, a \$15 billion debt, Mr. Speaker, 15 billion. And you know, the most amazing thing, when these guys took over, they don't have that debt hanging over their head. They have a booming economy. They have the greatest population growth. They have record revenues, record oil and gas, record number of people. The debt has gone down by an incredible amount, Mr. Speaker, based on the people of Saskatchewan's work alongside of the NDP, Mr. Speaker.

Now imagine for a moment as those guys rant and rave and yell and turn red over there. Imagine for the moment, Mr. Speaker, if we did not have that \$15 billion debt what this party could have done on social programs, on environmental programs, on housing programs, and really preparing young people for the future, Mr. Speaker. Imagine what we could have gotten. But we never had that opportunity. Why? Because we had a problem called the big debt left behind by those guys over

there, Mr. Speaker.

So as I hear, Mr. Speaker, them talking about a new government, give me a break. People don't believe that. They're going to experiment with you. That's what I said at election day. But, you know, 46 months from now and counting I think that experiment's going to end, Mr. Speaker. And that's why on this side of the House we say, flattery? Thanks. You're following our budget.

But you know if we would have been in power, we would have done things radically different on many other fronts to make sure that people knew that after we slayed the deficit and the debt monster that it was time for the NDP to really put their money into the environmental front, which our former leader or former premiers tried, on the social programs, on preparing young people, and that's where this budget failed miserably, Mr. Speaker.

So my final point is — I'll point out to these guys across the way, Mr. Speaker — very clear, very clear. It is always better to be a has-been than a never-was-er. And if that's all we're getting from the Saskatchewan Party is a cheap imitation of what the NDP wanted to do but were never given the opportunity to do because of a wide variety of reasons . . .

An Hon. Member: — Sixteen years.

Mr. Belanger: — And all they yell across the way is 16 years, 16 years. Like my goodness, give it up already.

You guys talk about looking to the future. Well who's looking in their rear-view mirror is the Sask Party, because they're worried. The NDP are catching up. And guess what? Guess what, Mr. Speaker? All the trouble they've had since they've been in government, it's only been four months, four months. Four months and all the trouble that they have caused and created, Mr. Speaker, and as much as you want to dress it up, imagine what the situation will be four years from now, Mr. Speaker. Four months versus four years, and I'll tell you and the people of Saskatchewan, that's why we think that the budget itself is a step in the right direction.

But because there's huge deficiencies in four critical areas, we decided as a caucus that we'd put an amendment, and we're trying to see if these guys would continue copying what we're doing. And if they were smart, they would, Mr. Speaker. If they were smart, they would. But I'm afraid they won't because what they're going to do, they're going to say oh no, no, no, we're not NDP-like. We're right wingers. Okay well show us.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out again that Saskatchewan really thought, really thought this new government was going to be exciting, was going to be innovative, and was going to be daring. Mr. Speaker, they're nothing but. So we've been given a time out. We'll graciously take that time out. But as I've said to those that need the inspiration and to those that have not lost hope, we'll be back. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to debate the new budget, the new historic Sask Party budget. But I'd be remiss if I didn't just make a few comments on the member for Athabasca. Just remind him that at one time we sat as Liberals over there, and he was one of the people that would condemn the NDP day after day, just like he did there, and all of a sudden he's sitting with his friends over there and all of a sudden everything's all right. So the member should take a look in the mirror, Mr. Speaker.

But I found some of the comments he made over there kind of interesting. He was condemning the Sask Party for being in power four months and paying some of the debt down. And I know this is foreign to the NDP because in 16 years they paid no debt down. In fact if you add up the debt . . . The members opposite would be well advised to listen. If you add up the debt and liabilities of this province, add them together, they're \$21.6 billion, which is far higher when they came to power in 1991. And there's not a member on that side — including the member, evidently, from Athabasca — that even knows what paying the debt down would mean.

He went on to talk about the Sask Party selling the upgrader. He's got to start attending caucus meetings because he totally missed it, because it's part of the NDP's hidden agenda — privatization. It will be if they'd have been elected. Four more years, they'd be selling the Crowns. He's got to watch what's going on in this province, Mr. Speaker.

He went on to condemn the Sask Party for the condition of the highways and the streets in Saskatoon. He was talking about the potholes in Saskatoon. Mr. Don Atchison, the mayor up there, would really appreciate that after the NDP had been in power for 16 years and those streets helped get to that way by the underfunding from that NDP government, so the member for Athabasca should pay attention to what he's saying and who he's condemning for what.

Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate having the opportunity to talk on this budget when it's built around growth, security, and the promises we made in our campaign.

But I want to just talk a bit about the member for Nutana today in question period, and she's talking about the funding of a grocery store in Saskatoon. And at the end of every question, she would say, well now is that mean or just incompetent? So she was insinuating we're one or the other.

I want to go back and I want to review what that government, that NDP government did when they came to power in 1991, just in case the member and the members opposite forgot. And let's talk about what she's talking today.

Let's go through the whole list of the things they did to rural Saskatchewan. Number one, you cancelled the GRIP [gross revenue insurance program] program out there. Now would that be mean or incompetent to the people and the farm families of rural Saskatchewan? Well you hadn't been in power very long when you did this, so I suggest it was probably mean because you hadn't learned how to be incompetent, but you learned very

quickly how that . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, order. I just want to remind the members that their remarks to be placed through the Chair. We shouldn't draw individual members directly into the debate. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to go on to another thing that they did when they got to power in 1991 and talking about what the Athabasca member said about the streets in Saskatoon. They cut funding to municipalities, and they downloaded on municipalities to balance the books, and they did that all over the province, Mr. Speaker. Now I don't know if that's mean or mean-spirited or incompetent but to the people of rural Saskatchewan, it hit home.

Mr. Speaker, they went on in 1991 to close 52 hospitals. I would say people in rural Saskatchewan would say that's mean and incompetent because what it did, Mr. Speaker, is it drove nurses out of this province. It drove doctors out of this province. And guess when we come to power in November the biggest issue we had to deal with? A shortage of nurses, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we've been here, like the member said, we've been here four months and already we've hired 300 more nurses to backfill for the shortage caused by that government, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, I go on to talk about rural Saskatchewan and what the NDP did when they came to power in 1991. They cut funding to education which in turn has revolved into closing schools in rural Saskatchewan. Now what would you call that? Mean? Well I would call it incompetent because you weren't planning for the future.

When you chased nurses out of this province, when you chased teachers out of this province and, Mr. Speaker, when they chased doctors out of this province, they weren't looking down the road, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, they went on in 1991 and they quit fixing highways. They quit patching holes in highways. And for a member of that government to have the nerve to say that it's all the Saskatchewan Party's fault because we've been here four months and all the problems with our roads fall on the Sask Party, I think it's time, Mr. Speaker, that we look at . . . they look at in the mirror and just see where they're going.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a bit . . . I talked about growth, security, and promises, and I want to talk about some of those promises and commitments we made. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about young people and keeping them in Saskatchewan. And in the election we talked about launching the most aggressive youth retention plan in Canada by rebating up to \$20,000 in tuition costs. Well, Mr. Speaker, the 2008-09 budget commits \$12 million to the graduate retention program which includes \$20,000 in tuition fee rebates. Mr. Speaker, that's a promise made and a promise kept, something that the party opposite probably can't get.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to the nurses that I talked

before. We committed to filling a bunch of nurse spaces in this province, for retaining nurses, and going out and finding nurses, Mr. Speaker. That was a commitment that we made during the election.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the '08-09 budget provides \$20.7 million for nurse recruitment and retention, on top of the \$60 million partnership with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, funded for the 2007-08. Mr. Speaker, we go on and talk about . . . we provide \$40 million for four years to work towards the goal of creating 300 new registered nurse education seats in Saskatchewan over the next four years. Mr. Speaker, a promise made, a promise kept. And the list goes on, Mr. Speaker.

I want to talk about ag land and what we do in the agriculture sector in this province. In the election campaign a promise we made was to increase property tax rebate on ag land. Mr. Speaker, in the '08-09 budget, increases to the property tax rebate on farm land went from 38 per cent to 47 per cent. Promise made, promise kept, Mr. Speaker.

And it goes on to talk about education. Increased K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education operating funding to school boards by \$28 million in 2008-2009. That was the commitment, the promise we made. Mr. Speaker, through the '08-09 budget, the Saskatchewan Party government is providing \$34.6 million increase to K to 12 education funding. Once again, promise made, promise kept, Mr. Speaker.

And the list just goes on and on and on. Talk about the CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization] program or the new AgriStability program, Mr. Speaker. A promise we made was to fully fund the provincial government share of the agriculture risk management programs. Mr. Speaker, one of the first things we did when we came to power, through this new budget, is to fully fund the farm programs in this province. Something I might add that hasn't happened under the NDP. They were always the last one to fund these programs, and had to be dragged kicking and screaming with the federal government to actually pay our share and have an input into what the programming would even look like. And that programming needs a lot of work, Mr. Speaker, because the NDP past Ag ministers never got to the table and helped build these programs, and we're having to clean up that mess, Mr. Speaker, once again.

[19:45]

Mr. Speaker, one of the promises we made during the election was providing 300 million in five-year interest-free loans for municipalities out there to service lots for the growing economy that's coming in this province. And, Mr. Speaker, that's a promise we've also kept. Promise we made, promise we kept — 300 million of interest-free loans to municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, we also made commitments toward the highways. Dedicate 140 million over four years to provincial government's share of the NewGrade upgrader to improve road and highway infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, the '08-09 budget provides that 140 million over two years from the NewGrade upgrader sales into just those same roads and highways. Promise made, promise kept, Mr. Speaker.

Municipal funding, increased funding for municipal revenue sharing by 7 per cent. Promise kept once again, Mr. Speaker. And I know I could go on and on, and I know I'm getting probably tiring because the NDP don't like to hear when you make commitments that you actually keep them.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk for a few minutes directly about agriculture which is near and dear to my heart. And I just talked about fully funding the CAIS program to the tune of \$91.5 million, the new AgriStability, agri-investment that we've put into this province and we've put in for programs for the farming community in rural Saskatchewan.

Crop insurance, just want to talk on this, Mr. Speaker, and it's a program that I think many farmers out there felt that needed a lot of work, and we're going to do that work this summer. But when it come to funding with higher grain prices, Mr. Speaker, we put \$129.8 million into the crop insurance program. Mr. Speaker, that's an additional \$25 million more than the NDP government put in last year for the crop insurance program.

We've also come out, Mr. Speaker . . . and it's due to the drought in the Southwest and the tough times they're having out there, and the problem is many wells are going dry out there right now, and they're real concerned with dugouts and things like that for watering their cattle and having water for their ranches and farms. We're going to put \$6 million program in place for farm and ranch water, Mr. Speaker, into an infrastructure fund. The Southwest has had the drought for the past 2, 3, 4 years in some cases, and anything we can do to alleviate the water situation, I think, Mr. Speaker, will be well received.

I want to talk about a committee we put together from the Southwest, Mr. Speaker. Dave Marit, the president of SARM, is on that committee. Doug Steele, a director with SARM, and Larry Grant, a producer in the Southwest, are our resource people out there that are helping us put this program together and I think have a real handle on the problems out there and how we can address them or start to address them to help their producers in their area and help the Southwest get through these tough times.

We've also increased, Mr. Speaker, research funding of 1.6 million to up to \$15.2 million. And, Mr. Speaker, why that's important . . . I think with the agriculture industry that's going to be part of the future, whether it's in higher yielding grains or grains that could be frost tolerant and take 2, 3, 4 degrees of frost, which could save farmers millions and millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, down the road.

I want to talk again, because I think it's very important to farm families out there, is the education tax rebate. And this was a commitment, Mr. Speaker, that we've made over four years, that we would start to increase that rebate to farm families to get to the point where it's actually really making a difference — something the members opposite always said they were going to do but never followed through on, Mr. Speaker. So that rebate's going from 38 per cent to 47 per cent and next year higher and on up.

Rural road strategy, \$89 million, Mr. Speaker, long overdue because . . . one of the reasons I ran for politics, Mr. Speaker,

was because of the downloading and funding cuts to municipalities all over the province but especially the rural infrastructure in the RMs [rural municipality].

Mr. Speaker, one thing. And there's so many good things, Mr. Speaker, happening in agriculture, which is a far cry from where it's been in the last 16 years, but some of the things that happening are too numerous to even keep within the budget. So I'm going to tell you about some things that didn't even fall within the budget, Mr. Speaker.

We're going to look and we're looking very seriously at bringing the CAIS administration back to Saskatchewan. And that's something that no previous Ag minister from the NDP side would even contemplate, and the reasoning being that if it was here in Saskatchewan, the government of the day would be responsible when the program's not responding for our farmers. Well, Mr. Speaker, if that program's not responding to our farmers' needs, maybe we need it back here in Saskatchewan.

So number one, we can make it more responsive, that it doesn't take two to three years to get an application processed, which is happening now. And if the government of the NDP, previous government, had of dealt with this issue long ago we would have it here. We would deal with it. And we would be like Alberta where turnaround time can be as quick as seven days, not two to three years, Mr. Speaker. I think something like that's long overdue, and it's something we can do in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, another thing we're going to do is a crop insurance review. And I know this really isn't part of the budget, but I think it's something that is going to be well received out there. Very quickly we're going to put into place a crop insurance review where . . . Many farmers in this province don't carry crop insurance because — I said when we were in opposition — the crop insurance program doesn't work for many farm families out there. We're going to go around this province and find out what changes we could make to that program, how we can improve that program. But those changes are going to come from the grassroots and from farmers themselves.

And this fall we're going to put all those ideas together and improve that program so once and for all maybe these programs start to work for farm families and for farm businesses because farm businesses are getting to be very big business out there, Mr. Speaker. And we should be doing the things we can and then after that just getting out of the road and letting them run their own business, Mr. Speaker.

We're going to put 380,000 into a gopher research program, Mr. Speaker. And I really want to take a minute to show our appreciation for a number of the RMs in the Southwest especially, Mr. Speaker, 164 RMs who also came to the table with \$500 each to put towards this gopher research program because the problem is so bad in the Southwest and costing millions upon millions of dollars and maybe out by . . . You know, it probably isn't going to help this year, but down the road it's certainly I think going to help start to deal with the problem of so many gophers out there.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're also working with SARM to expand

the strychnine registration past July 31, 2008. And we think this is very important because that's the only avenue farmers have right now to try and control the gopher problem until we get this research in place and maybe find other alternatives. So that's one of the things that we're working on. Another one is to approve another 60 additional RMs to be eligible for that same strychnine.

Mr. Speaker, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the Canadian Wheat Board today. And I know this is a subject that the members opposite really near and dear to their heart. It must be, Mr. Speaker, because they invested 123,000 of taxpayers' money into Friends of the Wheat Board to promote the monopoly from the wheat board. But they did that, Mr. Speaker, right after 62 per cent of Western farmers said they want choice to market their own barley.

So what the NDP government as usual have been doing is trying to pick winners and losers, although this time they picked the minority because far less farmers want the wheat board as a monopoly, I believe, right now than the ones that want the choice. They're not saying and we're not saying the wheat board has to go. What we're saying is farmers should have the right to market their grain to who they want, when they want, for the largest amount of money they can receive for that grain.

I don't think that's asking too much, Mr. Speaker. They put the inputs to grow that grain. They pay the taxes on the land to grow that grain. They should have the right because it's their property, to market this grain in the best way they see. And it's their grain, Mr. Speaker. It's not the NDP's. It's not the Sask Party's. It's not the government of the day. It should be the right of farmers to do as they see fit with their property.

Mr. Speaker, I'm so enthused about this new budget and being part of a Sask Party government, I could go on for hours and I'm sure the members opposite would love me to. But because my colleagues would like to go on, Mr. Speaker, I think I'll stop there.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to also congratulate you on letting your name stand for Speaker. I know you're going to do a great job. So thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a privilege and an honour to enter into the debate on the budget of the Saskatchewan Party, our first budget.

And Mr. Speaker, I want to begin — as I did not enter into the debate on the Throne Speech back in December and this is my first opportunity to rise in debate — I want to acknowledge the constituents and the residents of Canora-Pelly for re-electing me for the fourth time, and I appreciate their support and advice that is provided to me on an ongoing basis.

I also want to thank my staff back in Canora-Pelly — my constituency assistant, Bob Blahay, and my two other assistants who provide part-time work, both Carol Sleva and Brandi

Zawislak — for their outstanding work because without them it is very difficult to make sure that all of the concerns that are raised at the local level are addressed.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those opening comments, I'm very pleased to be able to talk about this outstanding budget because, Mr. Speaker, the reaction by so many has indeed been that. It has been outstanding as we look at the comments made by so many individuals throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to repeat all of the comments made, but I'm just going to talk about some of the headlines. Mr. Speaker, after our March 19 budget, the headline that was headed . . . article on behalf of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation said this: STF "welcomes overdue funding for K to 12 education." Mr. Speaker, the article regarding the rural municipal position was this: "SARM pleased with provincial investments in infrastructure." Mr. Speaker, the Chamber of Commerce, their headline on their article was this: "Chamber supports strategic investments to promote future growth."

Mr. Speaker, that was the key to looking forward, to ensuring that this tremendous momentum that we have in the province of Saskatchewan right now, the growth that we're seeing in so many areas, is going to be sustained into the future.

Mr. Speaker, I think one of the telltale comments was delivered on March 20, the day after the budget, on CJME radio, and I want to enter that article into the record, Mr. Speaker. The heading on that article was, "Budget: new government put our money where their mouth is — growth agenda did a giant step forward." Mr. Speaker, the comments are by Paul Martin. And they are, and I quote:

Last fall when the province's two major political parties duked it out in the election, the key theme that emerged was centered on the way the parties would deal with the buoyant economy.

The NDP said it was time to harvest the economy. In effect, it was big enough and that we should take the extra money generated by the economic activity to underwrite an expensive drug plan.

The Saskatchewan Party on the other hand argued a different vision saying that the growth pattern had just begun, and it was time to invest in building a bigger economy not halt its progress. Well the new government got its first chance to put our money where its mouth was in yesterday's budget.

With the title, Ready for Growth, the Saskatchewan Party directed its attention to infrastructure, the foundation for economic growth as we build a new platform to continue building upon. And the government's promise in the last election that it will deliver a growth agenda took a giant step forward.

I'm Paul Martin.

End of quote, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is very indicative of how people in the province have reacted to the Sask Party's first budget.

Mr. Speaker, I want to spend some time talking of course about my responsibility, and that is education. On behalf of so many people in the province of Saskatchewan who have children in schools right across this province, Mr. Speaker . . . There are over 700 schools throughout the province, and there are many parents. There are many children. There are many taxpayers who are very concerned about what happens in education.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my cabinet colleagues, and especially the Minister of Finance, the member for Melfort, for understanding that — at this point, because of what the previous administration has done to education, its lack of support to education for so many years — that there was a need to address infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, there was also a need to address other initiatives within the education budget, and I think we've done just a tremendous job. And I want to thank the caucus members and the cabinet for seeing that this was going to be key to the success of the province of Saskatchewan.

Education is the cornerstone. It is the building block for moving this province forward, and this government has recognized this. How has it recognized this, Mr. Speaker? Well I can tell you that the Education budget in its entirety is \$1.186 billion, Mr. Speaker. That is an outstanding amount of money.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker — Mr. Deputy Speaker is now sitting in the Chair — Mr. Deputy Speaker, this was an increase of \$241.7 million, which is 25.6 per cent increase. It increased a quarter of its total amount, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That shows the people of this province, that shows, I believe, the members opposite that we are very supportive and that we want to move education forward, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[20:00]

And I'm going to highlight some of the things that have happened in education with this additional \$241 million. First of all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the increase to the foundation operating grant. This is the money that is transferred by way of government grant to all of the school divisions. This additional monies that was provided to school divisions is \$34.6 million, which is almost a 6 per cent increase to what was previously received. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this fulfills a commitment within our platform that said over the course of four years, we would increase funding to K to 12 system by 20 per cent. And in our first year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are already at 6 per cent increase.

Mr. Speaker, we have also provided \$500,000 in the way of funding to community schools to increase the nutrition program. Mr. Speaker, it was in our platform. It was something that we campaigned on, and we have fulfilled that promise.

Mr. Speaker, there are many other initiatives that I wish to put on the record. I want to talk about the fact that we have increased the intensive supports factor. This is a program that is within the grant structure that is allocated to school divisions to provide support programming for students with learning disabilities and difficulties and disadvantages. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we increased this by \$3 million, a very significant amount.

Mr. Speaker, this has now raised the total of monies provided to school divisions in the way of intensive supports to \$67.4 million. This will allow school divisions to ensure that the programs that are needed to address those learning difficulties and those learning disabilities will in fact be achieved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have also increased by \$2 million the amount of money that is provided for pre-kindergarten programs. And what this will mean, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that we will now add an additional 38 programs. Mr. Speaker, for each . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm sorry, this pre-kindergarten program is designed to provide assistance to school divisions for vulnerable three- and four-year-olds. And this will now increase the total number of programs from 155 programs to 193 programs that will meet the needs of over 3,000 students, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member from Athabasca talk about that this was something so close to the NDP. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this program was not even in existence when the NDP were talking about it. This is now going to reach proportions that will address the needs. This will in fact put in place a program that will be very well accepted across this province.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other things we have done is that we have added \$33.8 million for child care facilities. This is an increase of \$3.4 million. What will this additional money provide, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Well I can tell you that it will add 500 additional child care spaces. Mr. Speaker, this brings that total to 10,350 spaces. Mr. Speaker, that is a commitment. That is a commitment of the Saskatchewan Party government, and it shows by the fact that we have put our money where our mouth is, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the other things that we have provided is \$7.5 million in funding to the province's early childhood development and KidsFirst strategy. Mr. Speaker, we've recognized, and many educators across the province, many parents, many school boards have recognized that the time to deal with ensuring that our young children have the ability to succeed at what they do is to address those problems early, to address them at the three-year-old stage, four-year-old stage.

And in fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have programs in schools across this province, in community schools, where there are 18-month-old children that are now coming in because they have been identified that they need some assistance. Mr. Speaker, we're providing the funds to those school divisions so that those programs can be supported and can be put in place, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the time that I want to spend this evening and as limited as it is, I want to spend it talking about capital projects, the development across the province in dealing with so many of the needs. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think what we need to first have people understand is the infrastructure deficit that is currently within

the province.

I want to put this on the record, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that right now before the facilities branch of the ministry of learning in the major capital request list, there are 107 applications. The initial costs — which are, no question they are low, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at this time because inflationary costs have increased dramatically as we move month to month — those projects were identified as requiring \$555 million. That's what the initial major requests are. In fact the school boards association is indicating that the backlog of infrastructure issues might need as much as \$1.1 billion to address those needs, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, it's very easy to see why we have that kind of an infrastructure need. We have to look at the times when schools were in fact constructed in this province. Mr. Deputy Speaker, from 1969 and older, those are the categories — we categorize schools as being pre-1950, 1950 to '59, of that decade, and '60 to '69, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that total is 68 per cent of all of the schools in the province of Saskatchewan are older than 1969. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's already 39 years ago and older. So we know that there is a decaying infrastructure. We know that there is a need.

And, you know, I listened to the member from Athabasca again talk about what they had accomplished and what they had done. And I want to put on the record that this is the accomplishment of the NDP for the past five years. The NDP, through the government funding of capital, invested \$169.2 million for K to 12 schools. Five years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they invested a total of \$169 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I indicated and as the Minister of Finance indicated, we have put forward a very aggressive capital plan. We have put forward a capital plan this year's budget that is \$117 million.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we also added just a few weeks ago, because yesterday was still the last day of the previous budget and there were some additional revenues from oil and gas, we added \$13.1 million to last year's capital.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this short time since the Saskatchewan Party has been in government we have added \$130 million to capital in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are going to be many happy communities. There are going to be communities right across this province that are going to look forward to some new projects. But you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do also want to indicate for the record the kinds of things that we as a new government inherited from the former ministry. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the projects that were announced in 2003 by that former government — and interestingly enough, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was an election year when those projects were announced — there was still an outstanding amount of commitment of \$27 million for the schools that were announced in Saskatoon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have now been able to complete the

final amounts of money needed to finish Tommy Douglas school, to finish Bethlehem School, and to finish the francophone school within the province, within the city of Saskatoon. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've also been able to finish the funding for the project that was identified also in 2003 for Nutana and for E.D. Feehan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that \$27 million will go towards projects that were already announced in 2003.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is 2008. So for the member for Athabasca to suddenly suggest that we were copying the NDP plans is ridiculous. It is totally ridiculous to listen to him make those kinds of comments. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other thing that we have been able to do is to make announcements about, of course, new projects. And that's the part that I'm really excited about, to be able to announce that communities who have been waiting a long time for capital projects. These projects, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have been submitted as projects by school boards. School boards submit forms that are called B-1's. Some of these forms have been in the ministry in 2004, 2005, 2006.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're finally going to get the opportunity to deal with Scott Collegiate. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Scott Collegiate here in Regina is a project that will encompass a lot of partners. It will provide the north central region of Regina with an outstanding complex that will be able to address the needs. It will address not only education needs, it will address health needs. It will commit a facility in short order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we're committing the entire amount necessary in this year. We're not spreading any of these projects out over a number of years as the former NDP government did. We're putting the money now into place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the other projects that has been announced of course is in Oxbow. Oxbow is a community in the South East Cornerstone School Division, where they have been waiting for a project for a long time.

And in fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are two other communities that are very close to Oxbow whose schools have closed. They were small schools in the communities of Alida and in Alameda. Those schools have closed because they were under the impression that there was going to be a new school in Oxbow quickly.

Well under that government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, under the former NDP, I dare say those people in Oxbow would have been waiting a long time. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're going to address that need and there's going to be a new school constructed in Oxbow that in fact will result in five schools being put together in one kindergarten to grade 12 complex. That is going to be significant for that community, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the same thing is going to happen in Porcupine Plain.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Porcupine Plain is in need of renovations to its K to 12 school to ensure that the programs and the environment that students are learning in is upgraded.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are committing to that project.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are also committing . . . And I know the two members from Prince Albert, one on this side of the House and the other member on that side of the House, will be happy to know that the project for St. Anne School in Prince Albert is going to be completed in short order because we are providing the funding for that project in this fiscal year, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to indicate that the Churchill High School in La Ronge is going to be constructed as well. Significant dollars. This project will probably be in the 14 to \$15 million range, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that amount of money is going to be allocated to La Ronge.

And I also heard the member from Athabasca talk about nothing being provided to the First Nations and Métis. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this school is wanted by that community, is wanted by those individuals, and it will address the needs of the First Nations and Métis communities.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[20:15]

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're also announcing a project in Duck Lake. The Stobart Community School in Duck Lake in fact has been waiting to have its project announced, and we're going to do exactly that. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are projects in Maple Creek Composite High School. There's a project at Balcarres School. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the first project of an expansion in Humboldt, the Humboldt Collegiate, is also going to be done this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are significant projects. These are projects that are costing in the neighbourhood of \$100 million because that's what needs to be done. We need to get ready for growth. We need to be ready to ensure that the future of our children, that the future of Saskatchewan, that the potential for Saskatchewan is in fact realized.

One of the other things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we're announcing is that in the city of Saskatoon — because there is significant growth in Saskatoon, Saskatoon's population, Saskatoon's expansion is significant — and we have announced that the monies that are needed to do some land acquisition in the Willow Grove area is in fact being announced this year. And we are going to spend \$1.7 million of this year's budget to ensure that that land is acquired, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's what this government will do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're also providing a number of initiatives that are referred to as block initiatives. Block initiatives are those in some of the other schools that aren't on the large capital scene, and they are projects that are lower than \$500,000. We're also going to be allocating \$12 million to address those projects that are under 500,000. Mr. Speaker, simple math tells you that's going to be 24 schools at least that

will get some funding to be able to address, whether it be a roof repair, a window replacement, or repairs within the structure itself to floors. These are things that this government sees as a priority, and we're putting our funds there, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have had some discussions in this Assembly about the education property tax rebate. The members opposite have said, well it's such a small amount. It's really insignificant. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the amount of money that we are putting in place to ensure that there is a rebate to agriculture, residential, and commercial lands is \$156.6 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's significant dollars, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I want to indicate for people in the province exactly where those rebates will be allocated.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as known by all of the members on this side of the House, of course agricultural is the main component and of course the largest land group owners in the province. They are agricultural people. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our commitment to increase the percentage of rebate to property taxpayers of agriculture land will result in \$91.8 million worth of rebate to agricultural producers, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, our commitment to increase the percentage of rebate from 10 per cent to 12 per cent will ensure that residential owners will receive \$43.5 million worth of rebates. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is going to be on average \$133 per person. The members opposite have been standing in this House and saying, oh it's just a \$20 pizza for this year. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's \$133 on average for residential homeowners.

And finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the commercial-industrial rebate will be \$21.2 million which, Mr. Deputy Speaker, translates into \$156 million. I dare say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is a significant amount, and when people in the province of Saskatchewan who listened to the now Leader of the Opposition opposite talk about . . . I believe it was four years ago when he said that the current program is “. . . the status quo is not on.” It's not on any more. We can't have that.

What did they do, Mr. Deputy Speaker? They didn't put in place a plan that was going to be achievable, and we've said right from the get-go, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the rebate program is a short-term program. And we've put significant dollars into the rebate program. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have already started our work to ensure that there is a permanent relief put in place for property tax owners.

And my colleague, the member from Rosetown, is going to be working on that project as the Legislative Secretary in charge of ensuring that the property tax question is dealt with.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, a couple other things that I want to talk about today is the amount of money that the province has put into the budget, the education budget, to ensure that the pensions that are owed to superannuated teachers are in fact going to be met. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's not a secret — even though the members opposite, some of

them don't want to admit it — there is an unfunded pension liability. That unfunded pension liability is significant. And as we move through the next number of years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, up to about 2018, 2019, we will continue to see an increase in the amount of money that is needed to address the payments made on behalf of pension earners.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's not a new problem. I can't blame the NDP entirely for that one because that started back in the . . . even though I'd like to. But you know, that one started away back.

But you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for 16 years they, the NDP, recognized that there was an unfunded pension liability. And I look at what Alberta has done, and I look at what Manitoba has done in terms of putting some monies into the plan in addition to meeting the obligations on an annual basis. And they have addressed that unfunded liability to a degree.

And in fact in the province of Manitoba it looks like the plan is about 80 per cent funded. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in Saskatchewan by the year 2026 we will begin to see a decline, but not till then. We then, from now to then, we must continue to add monies to the pension fund to ensure that we are fulfilling the legal obligation of this government to ensure that the pension obligations are met.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is why there is a significant increase to the pension plan expenses for the Ministry of Education, as you will see in the Estimates book. Because each year now . . . Because the plan closed in 1979 — and based on a 35-year career — probably the year 2014 as I indicated, maybe up to about 2017, that's where we're going to see the largest number of teachers retire. And there will need to be as much as, the actuarial report is indicating, that we will have to have a line item expenditure in the tune of 250 to \$300 million as an expenditure.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we better have growth in this province. We better have growth in this province because if we don't have growth, it will be difficult to meet that kind of obligation as we move forward into that year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to end with a couple of comments about the liabilities of the province of Saskatchewan. And I listened, I listened in the last couple of days to the member from Saskatoon Nutana talk about the role that the NDP played from 1991 to 2007. And she talked about liabilities and debt and the like.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to put on the record that from the auditor's report, the 2007 report volume 2, that in 1991, as my colleague from Melville-Saltcoats indicated, the total amount of liability — that is government debt, GRF [General Revenue Fund] debt, Crown debt, pension liabilities, and other liabilities that the government had in 1991 — that total was \$17.6 billion. Significant amount.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's move forward in time. Let's take us to 2007, March 31, 2007. The combined amount of debt and pension liability and other liabilities is 21.6 billion. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's an increase. That's an increase of \$4 billion. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for that group over there to say how they

have made such significant improvement to the economy of the province while they were in power is just not accurate, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — It's not accurate. We have almost a \$22 billion liability in this province. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the pension liability for teachers is listed at \$4.7 billion. It's something that we're going to have to pay. You can't just forget about it and say, oh that liability is going to go away. We have to pay it. It is going to come from the taxpayers of the province of Saskatchewan. So for those people on the other side to suggest that suddenly this . . . magically the debt, the liabilities, they really don't mean anything, is just not accurate, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We must ensure that this province grows, that we are able to address these kinds of problems because that government did not put in place contingency plans to ensure that we would deal with these kinds of projects. They didn't deal with capital in ensuring that schools could be constructed, and now we have a terrible disrepair across the province, and we have to ensure that those are met. They didn't put in place or didn't recognize that the pension liability in a few short years — when we're still government — will be a fact that we're going to have ensure that there's \$300 million for that line item, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They didn't do that.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am so happy to be part of this government. A government that is looking forward, that wants to ensure that we have a province that is the envy of every other province in Canada. That in fact we will be the place to move to, not move away from. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can tell you that I will be supporting the budget presented by this new government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well it's been quite a night for speeches. There's been some interesting comments made, and I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to be able to give a few comments of response to the budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I, like everyone else, was quite curious to see where this government was going to put revenues of over \$9 billion. With the unprecedented revenues coming into provincial coffers and the resource revenues that are coming in, everyone was curious as to what this government . . . what their priorities were and how the people of Saskatchewan would benefit at this budget.

And I know there's been many speeches made tonight about infrastructure being the main focus of the budget, and that we have heard over and over again. And with a cash surplus of \$1.3 billion over budget, this investment by the government really is not unexpected.

But I do have to say schools, highways, and health care will

benefit from this infrastructure funding. And it will continue to build on the last couple of years where infrastructure was also a focus for the former government. And it is welcomed by each and every one of us and no one will deny that.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, trying to sell this infrastructure announcement as a new \$1 billion investment was a bit of a shell game. When you look at \$600 million is invested regularly by departments in infrastructure, it's an ongoing expenditure, not a totally new one. And it's easy to announce funding and put money towards capital projects, but the difficult part is to building and completing the projects as announced, on time, on budget. So we'll keep an eye on this and we'll see where it goes.

Locally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for my constituents in Moose Jaw Wakamow, there was talk of the funding to the Moose Jaw Union Hospital. Now in the budget speech it was even mentioned, and I quote, "... continued plans to expand the Moose Jaw [Union] Hospital ..." was how it was stated in the budget address, but no further details were available. So it's difficult to know if the project is a go or not. The wording used in the budget speech was a little vague to say the least.

[20:30]

Now I would expect that it includes part of the funding for detailed planning. Now I may be assuming too much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I truly hope not. But I would like to see some indication of dollar amounts and timelines. And we'll have to wait and see.

I actually called across to the Minister of Health the day after the budget and asked if he knew what the funding would be. And at that time, he said he didn't know. Now whether he was ... He could have just been not telling me, Mr. Speaker, and I'm hoping that he does have definite facts and a timeline because it's a project that is long past due in the city. And the people of the Five Hills Health District have been working hard to see this project move ahead. So we'll wait for a final announcement to determine when this much needed project will move ahead. And I'm sure that ... well I'm hoping, Mr. Speaker, that Moose Jaw will see this project bear fruits for our city.

Mr. Speaker, also the increase in child care spaces announced in the budget was a welcome addition for many families who are currently on child care waiting lists across the province. I was very disappointed, Mr. Speaker, though to hear that only 500 new spaces were being developed this year.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government provides this province with \$7.5 million each year for five years, solely for the development of new child care spaces. So the question remains where the rest of the money is being spent. And lately the Premier has stated a number of times that his negotiations and close friendship with the federal government have resulted in a new \$31 million for child care in Saskatchewan. And he said to the media that this is outside other agreements and that no other province has received this additional funding.

So just some quick math, Mr. Deputy Speaker: 7.5 million that comes in the regular programs across Canada, out of \$250

million that the federal government dedicated to the creation of child care spaces and the 31 million new dollars that the Premier says he has negotiated, that equals thirty-eight and a half million new dollars for child care and child care spaces. And that doesn't include any of the money that the province is putting in. So 38.5 million, and what do we see? We only see 500 new child care spaces created in this province. Mr. Deputy Speaker, where's the rest of the money? And Saskatchewan's families are waiting.

Now, Mr. Speaker, funding agricultural risk programs, the continuation of tax initiatives that have been put in place approximately three years ago, indexing personal tax exemptions, the reduced corporate capital tax, small-business tax — they were all well received. And I know the tuition freeze for universities was well received by students. But, Mr. Speaker, when you look at this budget overall, there's definitely a number of places where it's missed the mark, and missed what's needed by the residents of Saskatchewan.

First and foremost there's been a very long debate over education property tax, and the issue has been studied to death. The member from Wood River has a quote: "There's been enough study," he says. "It's time for action." And this was a couple of years ago. And there's many more quotes from the members opposite where they say, enough study. We want some action. Let's get this done.

So when they're first elected to government, what's the first thing they do? Well the Saskatchewan Party government appointed someone to study the issue yet again. And, Mr. Speaker, I know options are in place to put forward permanent solutions. They're well developed and waiting for funding.

With this government sitting on \$1.3 billion cash surplus, they should be putting in place a permanent solution or at least bringing all taxpayers in this province to a 60/40 funding split, and this year.

Instead the Saskatchewan Party plan will give each homeowner an increase of \$22. Well that's pretty exciting, Mr. Speaker. I've put a note on my bulletin board, and at home that's a sticky note on my fridge. And it says, make sure you watch your tax notice. See if you got an extra \$22 tax credit. I can hardly wait to receive this \$22 credit, and especially when I know that the government is sitting on \$1.3 billion in cash.

So why are they studying the education property tax again, Mr. Deputy Speaker? The options are done. The money is in the bank. Why are they studying this issue yet again? It's quite simple actually. They don't want to commit the funding. They've got the funding, but they don't want to commit it to education property tax. The member from Rosetown who's in charge of the study said a month ago to the media, "Stay tuned." You'll like what you see.

So what exactly does that mean? The member from Rosetown is studying the issue. We are told he will report by the end of the year. Has he done the report already? How does he know what the result is? You'll like what you see. How does he know that we will like what we see? This report isn't supposed to be done for another eight months. Is the report done with no consultations? That wouldn't be unusual for this government.

Mr. Speaker, it sounds like this government is playing games with an issue important to many across the province. Maybe they know the results. You'll like what you see; that's what the member doing the study said. But they just don't want to deal with it in this budget. What they have done . . . put it out for a study and they've pushed it out into the future, so they don't have to dedicate any money and they can do it later on.

Another area that missed the mark, there is a commitment in the budget to new training seats. But with Saskatchewan's economy booming, the expansion of training seats need to be more appropriate to address the shortage of skilled workers. Choking off our growing economy due to a shortage of skilled workers is not a risk that this government should be taking. Training seats should be doubled, so the economy can continue to grow so that young people can get into the classroom and begin building their careers.

Mr. Speaker, another area where this budget sadly lacks is housing. Now this area has really missed the mark with its lack of attention paid to low-income and affordable housing. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can give you a list of vacancy rates in Moose Jaw for affordable, for senior, for low income, but basically what it breaks down to is the vacancy rate is zero. And there's no attention paid to this. Now Saskatoon and Regina is facing an even more difficult time with housing, but it's affecting all communities right across the province. And there's absolutely nothing in this budget that addresses the housing issue.

Also we see a lack of any significant action on climate change and the environmental sustainability, an issue many say is the greatest challenge facing our province and in fact the world. And here it is in the budget given minor consideration while the government is hoarding \$1.3 billion cash surplus and giving a token acknowledgement to the environment. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's unacceptable.

There are a number of other areas, Mr. Speaker, but I guess the one that I pay most attention to is the area of municipal affairs. And there truly was a number of disappointed mayors, councillors, and reeves after hearing the provincial budget. And after spending 18 months of work to reach a permanent long-term revenue-sharing agreement, all of that work was set aside by this government.

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the municipalities received less, and you heard me right, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They will receive less in revenue sharing this year than they did last year. The comments from the mayors in Regina and Saskatoon said, with this budget property taxes will have to go up, and we're seeing that already. There's been discussions in Regina. We're hearing in Yorkton that there's going to be some substantial jumps, and Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're all paying attention in our communities to see what the effect is.

This government has said, aren't we doing wonderful things? We've given you a \$22 credit, and in the meantime they're forcing the municipalities by giving them less money than we did last year in revenue sharing, forcing them to put up municipal property tax.

So, Mr. Speaker, this government is sitting on surplus revenues

of \$1.3 billion, and they couldn't see their way clear to support urban and rural governments. There's so many demands for water, sewer, street, road upgrades, growing communities. They're all left to the municipalities to deal with on their own.

Oh I forgot. The government said they would loan them money at no interest rate. So they'll lend them money. They can't afford to give them any more or keep some commitments, but they'll loan them money. What we've seen over the past couple of months is this government has been dangling a carrot in front of municipalities, called infrastructure money. But they haven't signed on to the federal Building Canada agreement yet. No money is coming forward for Saskatchewan municipalities. They haven't signed the agreement. But yet you look across Canada, and there's four or five other provinces that have signed on to the agreement. The money's flowing. Their municipalities are able to move ahead with their project. But what's the holdup here? We don't know.

They're dangling another carrot in front of municipalities by promising \$140 million over two years for roads, but I'm not sure how much of this carrot is even still available.

The list of projects that we're hearing this government has committed to is growing. They talk about the 70 million each year for two years. They've also put out commitments on IPSCO Place for 20 million. The minister talked in the media about the Regina interchange, the money being there for that. But there's no funding amount for these, no timelines attached to it. The intermodal facility, the minister has committed to that, to funding that project. The federal government has said what their share is, but there's no dollar amounts or no timelines from this provincial government.

Rural water project, no. The federal minister says these projects have been approved, but we don't hear anything. We don't hear any funding amounts. We don't hear any timelines. People are waiting. Municipalities are waiting to be able to move ahead with these projects.

Now here we are too, they have promised, they promised in their election platform and they've made the commitment to SUMA, to SARM, to many others. They've promised to come up with a formula to revenue share with municipalities that will grow when the province's revenues grow and decline when the province's revenues decline. But with \$1.3 billion cash in reserves, this government doesn't seem too anxious to want to revenue share at this point in time. When times are good, revenue sharing doesn't seem like such a good idea and we're just going to dog it to sign any permanent revenue-sharing agreement with the municipalities. It's unacceptable.

Departments and initiatives, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that are not mentioned in the budget can often feel a greater impact than the departments that have been highlighted in the speech, and as with all things, the devil is always in the detail. And on closer scrutiny, the budget reveals that Social Services is targeted for restructuring by centralizing the income security branch and pulling some services out of communities. It could be communities such as mine in Moose Jaw. And potentially over a couple of years, we can see 200 jobs that will be lost or moved with program redesign. And it could also end up with 4,000 clients being hit with reduced benefits. So at a time when

the government is in the best financial position it's been in in many, many years with \$1.3 billion in cash reserves, a time when government political staff have received substantial pay increases, why would this government target the most vulnerable in our society for cutbacks?

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this just goes along with the big example that we've heard about over the past couple of days — Station 20 in Saskatoon. A time when this government is sitting on over \$1 billion in reserves — in cash reserves — they're targeting the most vulnerable in our society.

Mr. Speaker, with many of these things, the details are not revealed or discussed on budget day and only begin to see the light of day as scrutiny of the budget begins. As an opposition, our responsibilities are to question these details and hold the government accountable for its actions, especially when it impacts not only our constituencies but people throughout the province.

So while many of us were quite curious as to how this budget was going to play out, what we were going to see, and how this government was going to spend \$9 billion plus in revenues, there was a great deal of disappointment right across the province when people realized personally they wouldn't feel any effects from this budget. Personally you look at all you will see is a tax credit on your tax notice when it comes from your municipality. Will you see any benefits? Will we see increased benefits for people across the province? Absolutely nothing that they will feel. Everything's building — which is good — but you also have to balance.

[20:45]

That's one of the difficult issues when you're government is that you need to look at balance. You need to make sure that you're addressing many problems and many issues and demands that are out there. But there has to be a balance.

So talking about buildings and roads is one thing, but there's also the human side of the equation that needs to be addressed. And, Mr. Speaker, with attention that was not paid to the environment, with absolutely no attention that was paid to housing, with absolutely the reduced and seemingly makeshift program that was put forward for training for young people across this province when our labour market is very short, people are crying for workers all over the province, young people are waiting for opportunities to get into training programs . . . You can't ignore the human equation when it comes to making a budget. And that's exactly what this budget does.

So, Mr. Speaker, while there was a great deal of curiosity when this budget was coming forward, it was a disappointment to many. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I most definitely will be supporting the amendment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my

pleasure to rise in support of this budget, the first budget of the Saskatchewan Party. And I want to thank the Finance minister for the budget he brought forward in three short months, not just the minister but the Treasury Board and the very many dedicated, professional people that are working in the ministries to make sure that we can bring forward a budget that is supported by so many people across this province.

It's impressive and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it reflects the values of the people of Saskatchewan. And when I say the people of Saskatchewan, I mean all the people of this wonderful province no matter what age group or what location, whether they live in the North or the South or rural or urban Saskatchewan. This budget represents the needs and values of every person in the province.

On November 7, 2007, the people of this province spoke loud and clear that they were ready for a change, a change to see this province rise to its full potential. The new government and the people of Saskatchewan are ready for growth. Until recently, the trend was to leave Saskatchewan in order to find better opportunities. Well not any more, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is the place to be.

During the election, many promises were made by this government and we are keeping those promises. Promises for the betterment of education, for better health, for infrastructure improvement, for agriculture improvement, and everything that is a foundation for the people of this province.

In order for this opportunity of growth to happen, we realize that training and education is essential. That's why we have kept our promise for the most aggressive youth retention plan in all of Canada: \$12 million in this budget was committed to the graduate retention program, Mr. Deputy Speaker; 250 training seats to the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission; and there's going to be over \$160 million to repair and upgrade schools, and universities, and training centres.

According to the 2006 census, First Nations and Métis people make up 15 per cent of the total provincial population. The population under 25 years of age accounts for 55 per cent of the total First Nations and Métis population.

Many people have indicated earlier that one of the biggest assets we have in our province is young people. They need to have access to education and training. And once the education and training is obtained, they need to have access to jobs. They need the security that after all their hard work and their dedication, there'll be a job waiting for them in a province that they love.

A report released by the Canadian West Foundation and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business shows Saskatchewan's growth potential in oil and gas, in mining, in manufacturing, and agriculture research, and hi-tech in construction, and in capital investments. The young and growing populations, along with this government's commitment to education and training, will ensure that Saskatchewan is prepared for the growth that's taking place right now and the growth potential for the future.

For the past 16 years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the targets for growth were set extremely low. And they were set by the NDP across, and that's exactly what the previous government did. It repeatedly set its standards so low that they could easily meet their targets. In fact in the K to 12 education system the party was prepared to manage a decline — 3,500 students-a-year decline.

Mr. Speaker, the economy did start to grow before we became government. It started to grow when the NDP started to adopt the Saskatchewan Party's policies. That's when we started to see a turn in the economy. Instead of the copy cat government, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan made a choice on November 7. They made a choice to have a government with a vision, a government that had clear directions and foresight to see that Saskatchewan is an economic leader and not just an observer.

This government is setting new standards when it comes to health care. We know that the access to health care is an important component to growth. In the 2008-2009 budget we made a promise for the recruitment and the retention of nurses and doctors. That's a promise kept. In this budget there are funds for 120 additional training seats for nurses, with a goal of creating 300 new registered nurse education seats in Saskatchewan over the next four years; \$6.1 million for more physician training, for seats, recruitment, and retention. We want to make sure that when the people of Saskatchewan need a doctor or a nurse, they will have access to one.

We also promised to increase the number of prescription drugs covered under the provincial formulary. We kept that promise, Mr. Speaker. We increased the funding to \$6.1 million to add new prescription drugs to the formulary.

The 2008-2009 budget looks at the future needs of Saskatchewan and the government realized the need for improvement and infrastructure. The investment of \$256.2 million is the capital budget for highways and infrastructure. It will dramatically improve our provincial highway system. The funding also supports urban highway connectors and upgrades to rural and northern roads. The time for this investment is now to ensure our communities, our highways, and our roads can keep pace with the growth in our population and the increased demand for our transportation system.

Mr. Speaker, with the recent weather disasters that are happening and have happened in the past years, I've seen in my constituency crop failures or the inability to plant crops due to very wet conditions. I'm very pleased that the Minister of Agriculture was able to fully fund the provincial portion of the agri stability and the agri invest. It's been brought to my attention on several different occasions that the current crop insurance program does not accurately protect our farmers today. The additional increase of \$25.8 million to crop insurance program will help to ensure the proper protection will be there for our producers.

Another commitment that was made is a rebate on property taxes paid on agricultural land. A rebate of 47 per cent, up from 38 per cent, will save the average farm family \$2,072.

Within the next 12 to 18 months, Mr. Deputy Speaker, almost

900 affordable housing units will become available; \$60 million for the provincial neighbourhood revitalization housing initiative which targets inner-city neighbourhoods in major urban centres. The time is right for increased investment as the numbers show. Saskatchewan is leading the nation in housing starts and the percentage of building permits.

The time is also right to take responsibility to protect our environment. With the continued economic growth, this budget reflects our commitment to green initiatives. An additional \$10 million will bring the total to \$17.5 million. The funding will be used for climate change, the prairie adaptation research centre, solar water heating, geothermal energy demonstration programs, provincial air quality programs, and the municipal energy efficiency program. We want to make sure that the people of our province have access to clean air and water for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to say that 87 per cent of the First Nations and Métis Relations budget ends up in the hands of First Nations and Métis people and northern people. As you may know, the former Department of Northern Affairs and First Nations and Métis Relations were amalgamated last year to form the new ministry, which produced a 22 per cent increase over their combined budgets for 2008-2009.

The topic of the duty to consult and accommodate has been brought to my attention by the leaders of the First Nation and Métis communities. They told me, Mr. Speaker, that they were not consulted when the NDP produced the guidelines. Before the election, the Premier said that a consultation was a priority and that a Saskatchewan Party government would re-examine the former government's policy because so many First Nations and Métis people were concerned and upset with the guidelines.

The First Nations and Métis consultation participation fund has been increased to \$3 million. This represents a 50 per cent increase.

The \$200,000 for a round table, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is going to be a key element of developing the new policy. We believe this policy will be vital to the continued economic growth of the province and ensuring that First Nations and Métis people will be able to share in the growth of the province. This government promised and is delivering on its promise to consult with First Nations and Métis people.

In addition you have to remember that the ministry of First Nations and Métis people is a window into the government for First Nations and Métis people and northerners. There are other doors — doors into health and into education and social services and highways — that also provide for services and programs.

Some examples are the First Nations access roads and the northern roads strategy that will benefit from the \$400 million dedicated to strengthening the province's roads; 300 more training opportunities for on-reserve adult basic training seats through local colleges and the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology. There will be \$2.2 million of funding for the First Nations children programming; \$3.5 million for Aboriginal Health Transition Fund to increase the participation of First Nations and Métis people in the development and delivery of

health services.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we believe that the passion and strength from the people of this province will be the driving force of our economy. We've seen the strength and the wealth that we have in this province — the strength and the wealth from the people of Saskatchewan and the strength and the wealth in the resources of our province.

This budget reflects our commitment to the future of our province and shows that our government is ready for growth. It is my privilege to support this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker. For all the people of Kelvington-Wadena's constituency, I'm very pleased to support this budget.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — Recognize the member from Regina South.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While we were all entertained listening to the member from Athabasca have his Kumbaya moment and recall fond memories of the dim and distant past, members on this side of the House are actually here to work. We're here to address today's challenges and plan for the future of our province. Mr. Speaker, with that in mind, it's an honour and a pleasure to rise in the House today to speak in support of our new government's very first budget.

Now, Mr. Speaker, on November 7 of last year, Saskatchewan voted for a change and elected as its new government a party that campaigned on a commitment — responsible management of the province's finances. I am pleased to confirm that the strengthened balanced budget legislation already introduced in the fall session and the sound budget recently presented in this spring session clearly show that we are already keeping these commitments.

Now here's what Saskatchewan has said in response — Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association executive director, Donna Brunskill, on addressing the nursing shortage: "For the first time in a decade," she said, "I am confident that the RN shortage is getting the attention it deserves." Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation president, Dianne Woloschuk, on the \$240 million in new funding for education: "This is significant and, in truth, it's been long overdue."

In addition to providers of key public services, our business community has also made positive comments. Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce president, Steve McLellan, on the historic \$1 billion ready-for-growth initiative, he said:

The new capital investments in post-secondary education, roads, municipalities and health care . . . will help the province realize sustainable strategic growth, not only in the short term, but in the future as well.

And business commentator, Paul Martin, said:

With the title, Ready for Growth, the Saskatchewan Party directed its attention to infrastructure, the foundation for economic growth as we build a new platform to continue building upon. And the government's promise in the last

election that it will deliver a growth agenda took a giant step forward.

Finally, representing rural Saskatchewan, SARM president, Dave Marit, is quoted as saying, "They lived up to a lot of their promises. We think it's a very responsible budget." It's a great start, Mr. Speaker.

[21:00]

Mr. Speaker, as you know, government is all about community development, whether your community is a municipality, a province, or in fact the whole country. To do the job well, you have to work hard to stay in touch with your constituents. If you listen carefully, they'll provide you with the answers to the three most important questions a government must address. Where are we? Where are we going? And how do we prepare?

As everyone knows, the answer to where are we, at present, is right in the middle of a hot economy, that it's leading the nation in a number of key growth areas: retail sales growth, no. 1 in Canada; wholesale sales growth, no. 1 in Canada; export sales growth, no. 1 in Canada. Housing starts, building permit values, even capital investment, almost every category you can think of, we're leading or close to it. We're experiencing record job growth. Our population has increased by over 15,000 in the past 12 months. And we're number one in football.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Where are we going? Simply put, we're convinced Saskatchewan has entered an era of unprecedented opportunity for economic development and growth. The experts all agree on what lies ahead of us. RBC Financial Group and TD Economics both predict Saskatchewan will record the strongest economic growth in Canada this year — an average of 3.5 per cent. BMO Financial Group also says we will be number one in Canada for economic growth. And the Canada West Foundation is forecasting that Saskatchewan will lead the nation in economic growth — 6.3 per cent is what they're telling us — eclipsing even Alberta.

Just as important, in visiting all 13 of our cities plus a number of towns, villages, rural municipalities, and northern settlements, I'm seeing optimism and confidence like never before. Lloydminster, Alberta, has always had a robust economy, but now Lloydminster, Saskatchewan, is building three brand new residential subdivisions to meet the demands for growth in their community.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Humboldt is also developing new lots, scrambling to keep up. It used to be, Mr. Speaker, in an average year, Humboldt marketed about seven lots for new homes. Now the figure is 70. Yorkton is planning for the possible arrival of two brand new canola crushing plants with an investment potential in the hundreds of millions of dollars. And Rocanville is organizing to accommodate new growth resulting from an expected \$1.8 billion expansion in the potash industry.

All of this growth is just the tip of the iceberg, Mr. Speaker.

And our new \$300 million interest-free infrastructure growth initiative is going to help municipalities get ready for it.

The third question is, how do we prepare? The answer is that while Saskatchewan's economy and people are ready for growth, our infrastructure is not. We're all aware that far too many of our highways are crumbling and that increasing oil patch activity and bulk transport of materials like potash and grains make a major investment in the roads that are Saskatchewan's economic corridors an absolute necessity.

And everybody knows too that many of our schools and health care facilities are in real need of renewal and even replacement. Our new government clearly understands these urgent priorities. We get the message. That's why we created the ready-for-growth initiative as a central part of our very first budget. And it's why we funded it with \$1 billion, the largest public sector investment of its kind in the history of our province.

Another important fact, Mr. Speaker, is that for the very first time there is a five-year capital spending plan included in the budget documents. Imagine that — a government with a plan.

Here's how the money breaks down. Over \$400 million will be invested in the construction and maintenance of paved highways and gravel-surfaced roads. Particular attention is being paid to routes serving areas of current and emerging economic development, for example oil and gas in the northwest and southeast regions of our province.

Nearly \$200 million is being directed to health care facility projects. Most of the dollars will support a large number of regional and community hospitals and special care homes around the province. The remainder is dedicated to purchasing medical technology like equipment for diagnostic imagery.

K to 12 education gets over \$100 million in new funding which allows 11 new major projects on the ministry's capital priority list to go ahead in 2008-09. And it also lets previously announced projects carry through to completion. In addition, as mentioned, there's \$12 million in block funding for smaller work.

Post-secondary education capital funding also gets a boost. Provincial revenue sharing for rural, urban, and northern municipalities — a large portion of which goes to capital projects — also increases by 7 per cent as promised.

And finally, there's \$100 million in capital funding directed to provincially owned facilities primarily through Saskatchewan Property Management and the Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport. Mr. Speaker, add it all up and you get \$1 billion — a landmark figure.

Naturally the budget addresses other priorities as well, as all good budgets will. There is money for new physician and nurse training seats and retention initiatives as well. There is funding to continue the post-secondary tuition freeze for students and to introduce our new tuition rebate program for graduates who stay in the province.

There are considerably more resources for the U of R

[University of Regina], U of S [University of Saskatchewan], SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology], and other advanced education institutions to expand their programs and their capacity for students.

The prescription drug health plan is being expanded to include children under the age of 14, and more pharmaceuticals — for example the cancer drug Avastin — are being added to the formulary list.

Property tax rebates are up. The active families benefit will be introduced, and the caregiver's tax credit is being doubled. New child care spaces are being added along with new resources for early childhood development and learning, and school lunch and other anti-hunger programs are being strengthened.

There is more funding for community-based organizations and food banks, including transition houses and sexual assault centres in support of their critical, front-line service delivery. There will also be more police officers to help keep our communities safe. And in particular, the Internet child exploitation team that targets Internet predators will nearly triple in size.

There is more money for the arts and our provincial parks, and tourism's budget has been doubled in recognition of the huge role this industry plays in our growing economy. Funding to meet the education, skills training, and employment needs of First Nations and Métis peoples has also increased . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Indeed. And there is more money for green initiatives designed to reduce our environmental footprint and develop innovative technology.

Mr. Speaker, we have also included funding to begin the establishment of a brand new provincial capital commission right here in Regina to feature this city's unique heritage, culture, and arts. Finally, we have eliminated the dreaded wiener roast tax . . . [inaudible] . . . for people who want to have a campfire while visiting their favourite park. And we're actually paying down the debt by \$250 million, again as promised.

Mr. Speaker, little if any of this should come as a surprise. Virtually all of it is contained in our *Securing the Future* document which we distributed last fall for the election. We're just sticking to the plan and keeping our promises. In fulfilling these budgetary commitments, we have kept 40 campaign promises made by our party leading up to the 2001 campaign.

Before closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to briefly discuss one other related issue which has already been introduced this evening. Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot of talk from members of the opposition about the need for a new revenue-sharing agreement with municipalities. What they fail to mention is that, just as with many other important issues, they had 16 years to get the job done, and they didn't get the job done. They didn't get the job done, Mr. Speaker. And yet they claim, we were this close, this close to completing the deal before the election.

Mr. Speaker, you'd think that with 16 years to get the job done and with the ability to get any election date they wanted, surely the former government would be absolutely sure to honour their

province of a new revenue-sharing deal and make it a central part of their election platform. Well as we know, it didn't happen, and many will conclude, understandably so, that a respectful relationship with our province's municipalities never was important to the previous government after all. A sad truth, Mr. Speaker.

How close are we to completing a deal? Well actually not close at all, Mr. Speaker. I've done the homework, and I found out that while valuable progress has been made on an agreement for cities, an enormous amount of work has yet to be done with towns, with villages, with rural municipalities, and with northern communities.

So what are we to think of the claim from the opposition that we were this close? Well, Mr. Speaker, let's be charitable and just term it an exaggeration and leave discussion of possible underlying motives to another day.

Mr. Speaker, we have already discussed the fact that the previous government had 16 years to complete a new revenue-sharing deal and didn't get the job done. What they did do was relentlessly claw back more and more funding year after year throughout the entire decade of the 1990s until the revenue-sharing pool was less than half its original size.

An Hon. Member: — That's a shallow pool.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — It's a shallow pool indeed. Oh they found money for other priorities, but they turned their backs on Saskatchewan's municipalities. As a result, our cities, our towns, our villages, our rural municipalities, and our northern settlements all lost their ability to keep up with the repair of aging infrastructure and fell far behind in this important work.

Mr. Speaker, if you're looking for the cause of today's \$1 billion deficit in infrastructure in our communities, just look to the members across the aisle. In contrast, our \$1 billion ready-for-growth investment in infrastructure is a very clear indication of our determination to correct the errors of the previous government. And our plan to revive the revenue-sharing agreement discussions, fast-tracking them towards a targeted completion this fall, shows our commitment to building a better relationship with our respected municipal partners and a brighter future for all of Saskatchewan's municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, this government has hit the ground running with new energy, new ideas, and a new plan. We've rolled up our sleeves, got down to work, and accomplished a lot in our first four months. We are keeping our promises, making the investments needed to sustain the momentum in our economy and ensuring that everyone in our province benefits from the growth. Mr. Speaker, with this budget Saskatchewan is truly ready for growth, and that is why I am very pleased to offer it my full support. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, thank you for the

opportunity to rise here today and engage in the budget of the Sask Party's first budget here. So thank you very much for the opportunity.

We do have quite the opportunity lying before us here as legislators to ensure that this budget meets the needs of people and families of our province. As our Finance critic, the member from Regina Douglas Park, has pointed out, this budget almost delivers to the people of Saskatchewan. But it falls short and misses the mark in some integral areas that need to be addressed.

With a 10 per cent increase in spending, this budget tries to meet many needs but falls short. In fact it can be very accurately argued that this budget tries to meet too many needs. It can be argued that this budget is an inch deep and a mile wide. Someone mentioned a shallow pool across the other way; I'd have to agree. This budget represents a 10 per cent increase in spending only a few months after our Premier states that our finances were stark.

Mr. Speaker, contrary to the stark finances comment by the Premier, the numbers, the statistics, the story of our province is one of a thriving province. We have a booming economy. Activity and investment across this province is at an all-time high. We're seeing it in our rural areas. We're seeing it in our towns. We're seeing it in our cities. We have experienced record job creation in this province for some time. We forged our way to the front of almost all economic indicators in our nation. I believe we're number one almost across the board for 2007 and of course 2008 looks really strong. Record revenues, record investment — things are good in Saskatchewan.

We could talk about the \$1.3 billion in the public purse. Wow, has there ever been such a transfer of power in any province with that kind of money in the bank? What an opportunity, what a special opportunity, what a responsible time for the Saskatchewan Party government to make sure they meet their needs.

The member from Canora-Pelly mentioned here tonight a debt number, and I know he talked a bit about a liability number that, you know, from 1991 that hadn't seen a decline, I guess, from 1991 till 2007. It's all a modest increase.

I guess what the minister forgot to mention or the member from Canora-Pelly was that we've seen compounded revenue growth for some time, and we are at such a time in this province right now to look at your debt, to look at your liability. You don't look at a fixed number. You look at your ability to pay it.

[21:15]

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

Mr. Duncan: — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member has asked for leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Weyburn.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate the opportunity to introduce a guest, and I thank my colleague opposite for allowing me a few minutes.

Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, it's a pleasure for me to introduce, seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, my wife, Amanda. She's here to — the better half, Mr. Speaker — she's here to watch the rest of this evening's proceedings. And I'd ask all members to welcome Amanda to the Assembly today. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Gantefoer that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Van Mulligen.]

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, it also encourages me that the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy, a good friend, to see his wife in the audience here tonight. And I'm glad to see that must keep him grounded and probably offers us good judgment on that side.

But going back to the member from Canora-Pelly talking about the debt, the liabilities of this province, who are we going to believe? Are we going to believe the banter opposite or are we going to listen to credit ratings? Are we going to listen to investment houses? Are we going to listen to, are we going to listen to what I guess investment specialists across North America have seen?

And what we know is that we have come from a place where debt to GDP [gross domestic product] was last in the nation, and then I believe we're number 2 or 3 right now. That's an honourable achievement by our government, something I'm proud of here today.

Moving on to the topic of these nurses and health care. We hear the members opposite clamour and talk about 300 new nurses from the Philippines. Well they're not here yet, Mr. Speaker. The nurses from the Philippines aren't here yet. There's a few that have come and that's commendable.

And it's commendable as well that they would take the plan that was laid out by the NDP government previous to start these wheels in motion. These things don't happen on a whim, snap your fingers. The process has been in place for some time. In fact the first recruiting mission was over there before the last election. I'm very, very glad the Sask Party government is continuing to do that, and we're seeing the reward. We're seeing the benefit of that NDP plan here right now.

So I talk about a whole bunch of great statistics and some good things happening in our province. We talk about the reward, the opportunity that the Sask Party has in front of them, and I guess we could also talk about the coattails that they've been riding for some time, trying to claim many achievements over there that can be very rightfully, thoughtfully attributed to us. And I believe if you talk to a member one-on-one, they're very clear that you know these numbers are ours. The member from Athabasca did a great job here tonight in talking about that.

The Easter holiday and recess from session allowed me to chat with many of my constituents. It offered me the opportunity to go door-to-door and ask how this budget affects their daily lives. It offered me the chance to meet with and discuss the implications of this budget with organized groups and associations. I've been able to ask if this budget meets the needs or represents that their government is listening.

Whether on the doorsteps with constituents or in meeting with organized groups, one constant seems to be that this budget has missed some important marks. And the common sentiment is that the Sask Party government has not listened closely enough to the needs and challenges within Saskatchewan. The budget builds on many of the principles and programs set out by our government. In fact there are parts of this budget that I support and definitely welcome, but there are some real gaps that need to be addressed to make this a people's budget.

It is not my desire to reflexively criticize the Saskatchewan Party or the Saskatchewan Party's budget. This is not how I carry myself within my constituency, not how I carry myself at events out and around Regina and across the province. Mr. Speaker, it is my complete desire to always be on the side of quality of life, while representing my constituents with a sincere and unfiltered voice. It has been through this recent consultation and question asking on the doorstep and meeting with organized groups that I can confidently summarize four glaring shortcomings of this budget that need to be addressed: significant property tax relief, the spots of skills training, investment in affordable housing, and the environment.

As a legislator looking to work co-operatively for the betterment of our province, the progress of our province, I request that the Sask Party listen to the voices of my constituents and the thoughtful, organized voice of many and address them within their first budget. I hope that, given the choice and the co-operative feedback, that the Sask Party will indeed side with ensuring quality of life, deliver on these shortcomings, and deliver a responsive and dynamic people's budget. Mr. Speaker, I encourage the Sask Party government to offer the hard-working people and families of our province this consideration.

Mr. Speaker, to highlight a point on the Sask Party budget shortcoming of failing to deliver on significant property tax relief, I ask the members opposite to consider the plea of many. I ask the members opposite, the Sask Party, to listen to the concerns of Saskatchewan families. The Sask Party has clamoured for some time on the need for this relief, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's time for the Sask Party to step up to the plate and deliver the needed relief. It's unfortunate that the Sask Party has failed to ready our province for growth on this front.

As the Sask Party talks lots about the need for in-migration and immigration, I wonder if they also state to those interested in coming to our province that across our fine province taxes are going up in municipalities across the board. Because of this Saskatchewan Party budget, taxes will be increasing across Saskatchewan within Regina, within Yorkton, within Saskatoon to name a few, many more to come. In Regina, for example, the city stated it will be forced to increase its tax rates by 3.9 per cent last week; Yorkton, last night, 10 per cent as a result of status quo funding received by municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, this lack of funding displays the short-sightedness of our new Sask Party government in regard to the growth economy that they have been handed. It is essential that our Sask Party government become dynamic and responsive to the needs of our people in this growth economy. They have missed the mark in serving families, Mr. Speaker. The fact that property taxes will increase as a result of this Sask Party budget is a prime example of this. Growth needs to be balanced with effective and responsive policy.

Mr. Speaker, I call on the Sask Party to deliver a significant reduction of property taxes and to do so within this budget. It's a fair time with such wealth, with \$1.3 billion in its hands. That the province will force tax increases upon its residents is completely unfair . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The member from Wood River has mentioned that someone from his side might be interested in this speech. And absolutely no problem, I can photocopy and offer one for the member from Wood River.

On the topic of housing, within Saskatchewan's booming economy more and more people are feeling the housing crunch. The cost of rents have far exceeded the cost of living, Mr. Speaker. Many families are struggling to keep afloat. No child chooses what socio-economic they're born into, whether they're born into wealth, whether they're born into poverty, Mr. Speaker. The skyrocketing inflationary costs of housing are an extreme challenge for so many. The potential of creating a significant wedge between those that have and those that don't are significantly compounded in a growth economy. The downward pressure on the quality of life are felt by many, not the few.

These housing challenges have been categorized a crisis by the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, a crisis. Yet they choose a path with no immediate address. When something is in a crisis, prompt, responsive, effective policy are required and required immediately. It is the only approach of a responsible government.

Our Sask Party government is stalling. At a time where action is needed, they're creating a task force. If we are truly going to ready ourselves for growth, we need to ensure that our families and residents struggling to get by are able to participate, Mr. Speaker — the working poor, the disabled, and our seniors. The failure to invest in housing is a shame. I hope that this will be reconsidered by the members opposite.

You could look at the topic of skilled training spaces. If we're going to sustain this economic growth, it is crucial to address the number one challenge facing our business community — the shortage of labour. The Sask Party budget failed to address this real challenge. Skilled training spaces are needed for

business, Mr. Speaker, and also crucial in ensuring all families can benefit and participate within our economy, raising the standard of living, offering the chance to step out of historical poverty. It's the opportunity we have in this boom. I hope the members opposite are willing to engage.

If we look at maybe the largest issue — in fact I shouldn't say maybe — the largest issue facing our province, our nation, our country, our world, we need to address the environmental challenges that lie ahead of us. As a resource-rich province, we have the opportunity to invest and lead on this front. Slashing of the budget to address these environmental concerns is a real problem, Mr. Speaker.

This budget lacks the resources needed to meet the aggressive climate change targets set out by our New Democratic government then adopted by the Saskatchewan Party, which I commend them on doing. Mr. Speaker, I request that, on the topic of the environment, that we work non-partisan on this fundamental challenge. I humbly request our Sask Party government to address the shortcoming within the budget.

This budget was cornerstoned around infrastructure. I don't argue about the need for this infrastructure investment. \$1 billion in infrastructure is an important investment. Not insignificant but it's also not going to cure all the issues and problems across our province.

It's important that I mention that \$600 million of this is an ongoing budget. So we do see a \$400 million investment at a time, may I remind you, with record revenues and \$1.3 billion in the bank. I certainly don't disagree it's a needed investment. We've got to talk about things like construction inflation. We talk about a \$500 million budget that's going to deliver almost, almost 30 kilometres more of highway. I'm not saying that 500 million is insignificant, but I think we can all share here that 30 kilometres isn't significantly more. The cost of construction in our province; the cost of delivering on this infrastructure is growing more and more expensive as we speak.

\$100 million of school capital is welcomed. I welcome the investment in communities across our province. I welcome the benefit that those schools and the investment in those schools will offer those communities. But as the minister opposite, the Minister of Education mentioned, we do have an approximate over \$1.1 billion of infrastructure deficit, while we've also cited the number in this House of 20 per cent construction inflation a year. Well, Mr. Speaker, I know one thing. I know that if I take \$1 billion and I grow it by 20 per cent, that's going to accrue by another \$200 million by next year. So not to minimize that \$100 million investment, but it does not even keep pace with the accruing cost of our deficit for our schools in the province.

I guess I encourage the Sask Party to continue that investment. I certainly know my wife and I at home couldn't balance our credit cards in that manner. These costs, may I remind you, are the challenges of boom, and for the preachers of growth on the other side, they're challenges they're going to have to be able to respond to.

[21:30]

I heard the member from Cannington say he'll take the accolade

of being a preacher from growth. I have to admit — and on the lighter side here — I often wonder if they talk about growth so much because they think their average height is about five foot two.

But I guess I'll go back to the welcomed investment in education. The budget put forward by the Minister of Education here today has some good pieces in it. The Saskatchewan Party has invested into a proud NDP education framework. We're talking about things like community schools, Schools Plus, youth in custody projects, all sorts of investments that are invested to get to the heart of a community and offer an enriching and fulfilled life.

The member from northwest says, well we never did it. I'll have to take the member from northwest back some time through the research, the dialogue, and the debate to create community schools, taking it from a concept, and now to have community schools across this province that are delivering some real outcomes. For the member opposite from northwest to say we never did it tells me he's saying the professionals in those buildings aren't doing it, and that's a shame because they are doing it; they're doing everything they can. And I ask the Saskatchewan Party government to do everything they can to continue to support those.

I offer accolade on the food funding. I offer accolade on the pre-K [kindergarten] funding. I offer accolade on the child care spaces.

Again these investments are allowed to fit into the budget because the foundation of these programs has been put in place. The philosophical purpose of those programs has been debated by our NDP government for years in conjunction with department professionals and officials and academics, and some good things are happening in our province in education. I welcome the investment.

We could maybe talk about school closures. You know, some of this stuff is a big challenge, and I think this government opposite offered a fair amount of hope on this topic. I know in my constituency there's three slated for closure right now, and this is a hard, hard reality, and it's a hard reality that boards are working with communities on. And I tell you, it's a hard reality of declining enrolments and birth rates and different demographics and change and movement from area to area.

But I tell you, for this government to go and to run on to keep schools open and to be out at town hall meetings saying we don't believe in school closures, but then to come up with \$1 million to address the many — and there are many this year — school closures that will be imminent here this year, that will be reviewed here this year and more as we go forward, well that's a shame, Mr. Speaker. And I guess a further shame is that there was a real false hope sense out of this broad statement of school closures or the remedy of such was going to apply across our province.

I certainly know in my constituency with three schools slated, as I mentioned, that a lot of individuals thought that this Saskatchewan Party government were going to offer them hope. Well it's been very clear a few weeks back, a little too late after a lot of hard work from some community groups, that that

funding was never going to be made available to cities. They were offered this false hope. And now as we see this \$1 million I guess it's just going to be interesting to see what schools, what communities, are judged as communities of opportunity.

If we look at the educational funding, I already mentioned much of the positives that I do see there, but I'm not willing to completely celebrate a 5.9 per cent increase in the foundational operating grant. That takes into account the teachers' new collective bargaining agreement. When we factor that piece in, we're talking about a per cent or a bit more. That's status quo. In fact that's below the increase in the costs to deliver these services. In the talk of the property tax review, I've already mentioned that I'm disappointed that residents in Regina, in Yorkton, and across this province aren't going to see real property tax reduction this year. But a review's been in place or has been called, and as I understand, this review will be done with the resources within our ministry and that there have been no extra resources allocated to that ministry.

Well, Mr. Speaker, as I understand and as you understand, like I can't assume what you understand, but as I know member opposites understand, we have significant challenges in this province in regards to education and that our ministry has been working at full capacity for some time. For the members opposite, for the Minister of Education to simply slide resources the way of this property tax review without allocating new investment for staff allocation is a bit of a shame because we have professionals in that ministry who are working at full capacity.

We look at some of the mismanagement pieces here. The Social Services incident and how things have been communicated has been really poor. It's been unfair for the individuals within the ministry. I think we expect more of a minister. I think we call it ministerial accountability.

The seniors' drug plan that's been introduced by the Sask Party government is creating a new and expensive bureaucracy. It's creating a means test for seniors. It's excluding what's a smaller proportion of the seniors who can access it. And we have to remember something in this province is that those seniors who you're excluding have worked their entire lives. If they're collecting a half-decent payment at that stage of their life, we have a thing called progressive income tax and they've been paying it for a whole lot of years. Hard-working seniors of our province finally getting to a stage where they can have something they can count on. Instead, just to prove the ideological bent of this government, we create an expensive department of bureaucracy.

Balanced budgets. We've presented balanced budgets for year after year. These guys have clamoured, clamoured that these weren't balanced. They use your Fiscal Stabilization Fund. But now these guys come out of the gates, and they follow the exact same process. They create their own Fiscal Stabilization Fund. And in fact without the sale of that NewGrade upgrader — which I know the member from Lakeview took you through the process here today to explain that actually utilizing those revenues is illegal until it's passed through legislation — you're using those revenues to balance this budget, Mr. Speaker, or the Sask Party government is.

Post-secondary, post-secondary rebates on education just don't address, Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, the need we have in recruiting in this province. Every sector in our province is looking to recruit right now. We need workers from across our nation. We need workers from across the world. It falls short. It needs to be broadened. And I hope that the minister opposite is able to find a way to do so.

First Nations and Métis funding has been significantly reduced by this budget, by transferring significant amounts to the duty to consult fund. This is good, but why can't we do both? Why can't we invest at this time of prosperity like we've never seen in our First Nations people and invest in that duty to consult?

I'm just going to share one statement ... actually two statements here from a *StarPhoenix* article here from Saturday, March 29. And I'll quote:

If, as is generally the case, the Saskatchewan Party used its first budget to set the tone for its administration, the province has a growing list to worry about.

Rather than appear to be competent managers of the public purse, Premier Brad Wall's team has been extravagant in its spending, ham-handed in its communications strategy and incompetent in its delivery.

Mr. Speaker, that's the good part of that article. That's the part that favours the Saskatchewan Party.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina South has really failed our municipalities. In conjunction with the failure to reduce property taxes in significant ways, he has offered Regina residents a property tax increase. That's right. The actions of this government and particularly the member and minister from Regina South have raised property taxes in Regina. Tax increases will soon be the reality for municipalities across this province — Yorkton at nearly 10 per cent, Saskatoon soon to announce, many more to follow. Just consult with SUMA. Ask them how disappointed they are with this.

But the member from Regina South had a chance to prove himself responsive to the needs of this dynamic economy. Mr. Speaker, tasked with this challenge, the minister has chosen to hamper cities and towns while his provincial government reaps all the benefits of growth. This is not in line with the needs of our city, my constituents, nor growing cities and towns across our province.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member from Wood River account his version of Saskatchewan. He repeatedly cited hospital closures of years past as a major issue needing to be addressed. Tonight again it was mentioned by the member from Melville-Saltcoats. I guess I look to the member from Wood River for his action plan to address his perceived mismanagement. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing from the member from Wood River on what hospitals this or future budgets will reopen. Mr. Speaker, the member from Wood River might have to consult with his colleagues, the Finance minister and the Health minister, instead of railing on in his speech as if he were in opposition.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member from Saskatoon

Northwest rant and rail against the previous government for what he perceives as many social failings. I ask the member, where is his voice in his own caucus? Because of his budget, it does not reflect the social investment he calls for. Mr. Speaker, there's a real disconnect. When \$8 million of previously committed investment are yanked from an innovative community-led project to offer significant health and wellness to our most vulnerable, where is his voice? But as he stated yesterday, and as the member is stating here tonight, he doesn't like the project. He calls it a grocery store.

Then I ask him again, where is his voice to ensure that those previously committed dollars remain a social investment? The member from Saskatoon Northwest must be struggling with his wee voice within the Saskatchewan Party caucus. He must be struggling with his wee role within the Saskatchewan Party caucus. It must be hard, with so much conviction, only to see the Minister of Health spend it on fire alarms and cooler systems. Can't we do both?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wotherspoon: — It brings me to another topic. Through this debate I've seen from a couple of members particularly a bit of a politicization of social issues in our province. I've seen a disregard for the history within our province.

We've got systemic issues. We've got systemic barriers. The challenges we're facing here today are cyclical and have grown through time. They're real, real challenges. We don't need to deny the statistics that say we've got some social challenges here.

But I'll tell you something, Mr. Speaker, that when members opposite, particularly two members, take a role and commit to a righteous plan as if they are going to fulfill on all the social ills of our province, they are taking a role much larger than they're able to deliver on.

The people of our province, the vulnerable people of our province, deserve more. They deserve their full commitment, which I believe they have, but I tell you, Mr. Speaker, we've got issues in this province that are going to go far beyond any term in government, far beyond any premier sitting in that chair.

What we need to be is thoughtful. What we need to be is consistent. We need to make sure we're shooting in the right direction. And I guess I challenge members opposite to continue to ensure that we're approaching these long-term challenges with thoughtful and effective policy.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I listen to the member from Batoche's aye aye captain to his leader, and likening his party to a ship. Well I think his romantic prose could have been summarized better as a ship being surfed on an island, or in fact many islands, stranded until this Saskatchewan Party government addresses these challenges. Issues do not exist on islands. They are connected, Mr. Speaker. Nor do the implications of these issues not being addressed exist on islands, Mr. Speaker. These issues are interconnected.

[21:45]

An example: without investment in skills training, our labour crisis is not addressed, our economy's stifled, our marginalized residents and families barred from entering this economy and the social fabric of our province. A balanced and responsible government would offer a balanced and responsive budget. A balanced government would address such holes as the property tax relief that's needed, the lack of action on the housing crisis, the insignificant funding to skills training, and the slashing of the funds to the issue that is first and foremost in our world, our nation, and our province — the environment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to participate within this debate. I do feel that there's some very good stuff in this budget, but the shortcomings should be addressed. Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the motion. I will be supporting the constructive amendment. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Meadow Lake.

Mr. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My colleagues here know that I'm not one prone to overheated rhetoric or overt partisanship or anything of that nature, Mr. Speaker. But I've got to tell you, Mr. Speaker, this is probably the best budget I have ever seen. Outstanding. Probably the best budget in the history of this province. Absolutely amazing, Mr. Speaker. I am incredibly proud to stand here and enter debate on behalf of the people of Meadow Lake.

I would very much like to congratulate the Minister of Finance who in three short months was able to put together an incredible document, with shortened timelines, that has been incredibly well-received by the people of Saskatchewan and very, very well-received by people in Meadow Lake.

You know, we've talked about, in this budget, two big things, Mr. Speaker. We've talked about keeping our promises and we have. We've kept 40 of our promises in this budget. And we talked about preparing our province to be ready for growth, which is at variance with the previous government who prepared for failure, who didn't plan for growth. That's very much different from what our approach is, Mr. Speaker. We are planning to grow this province.

You know, just in terms of the momentum that this province has right now, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk about some of the recent positive economic news in 2008.

In January, year over year, Saskatchewan's population grew by nearly 17,000 people, an increase of 1.7 per cent, the biggest jump in population since 1952, Mr. Speaker.

We're keeping our young people here. I can tell you a story, Mr. Speaker, about my cousin who had a choice, whether to go to Alberta or to stay here in Saskatchewan. And this was during the election campaign, Mr. Speaker. She had to make a decision and she phoned me and said, you know, Jeremy, what are your chances of winning? I said, I think they're pretty darn good. And she, on the basis of that, made a decision to stay here in Saskatchewan because of what we were going to be doing as a

government and what we were going to be doing for university graduates. So I think that's a very positive thing.

You know, again in the positive economic news, Saskatchewan set new employment records with nearly 500,000 people working in the province in February 2008. Saskatchewan has experienced the largest growth of any province in Canada in the final three months of 2007, with an increase of .33 per cent. And that's attributable solely to our government, Mr. Speaker.

Year over year, Saskatchewan grew above the national average. And five years ago, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to remember NDP MLA Doreen Hamilton was quoted as saying that this was, quote, "more wishful thinking than statistically attainable." Unbelievable.

Saskatchewan's now leading the country in several important economic indicators, including wholesale trade, 14.4 per cent growth, first in Canada; retail sales, 17.1 per cent growth, first in Canada; construction permits overall, 42.3 per cent growth, first in Canada; residential building permits, 74.2 per cent growth, first in Canada; new vehicle sales, 13.1 per cent growth, first in Canada; international exports value, 29.8 per cent growth year over year, first in Canada.

A new report from the Canada West Foundation predicts Saskatchewan will lead the country in economic growth in 2008. A new report from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business shows that Saskatchewan business owners are the most optimistic in Western Canada and rank second in the nation in optimism.

I mean this is outstanding news, Mr. Speaker. This is great stuff. Yet we have an NDP who are angry, who are bitter, who are frustrated. Now listening to the comic stylings of the member from Athabasca over there, you would think this was the worst budget that had ever been brought forward. Yet we have the NDP that are saying, well this is almost an NDP budget, on the other hand. You know, the opposition can't get their stories straight. Their messaging is all over the map on this, Mr. Speaker.

You have the Finance critic that says it's almost an NDP budget, but on the other hand, we're not spending enough. It doesn't make any sense. Leader of the Opposition saying we are spending too much. And he's pointing to the cost of the clean coal project. It's unreal, Mr. Speaker. You know, they talk about they want to address climate change. They say that they had a great commitment to addressing climate change. I think that's a variance with the record, Mr. Speaker. But that being said, we come forward with a clean coal project that would, in a very real way, address climate change. It would bring economic benefits to the province. And they say it's going to cost too much. You know it really doesn't make any sense, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things we've often heard the NDP talk about is a hidden agenda. And they love to throw this phrase out there, and they love to acclaim that somehow the Saskatchewan Party has a hidden agenda.

Well you know, talking about the budget and what we would see in an NDP budget, I think it would be interesting to look at some of the resolutions from the last NDP convention, Mr.

Speaker, the convention where we had a Young Turk, a young fellow who really could fire up the crowd, named Allan Blakeney give their speech, the keynote speech at the convention, on the subject of renewal, Mr. Speaker, which is, you know, very well received, I'm sure, by convention delegates.

But one of the motions that we would possibly see in an NDP budget was cutting, cutting the D.A.R.E. program which is the drug abuse resistance education program, Mr. Speaker. This is a program where police officers go into schools, where they talk about the dangers of drug abuse, and where they have had great success in the past in keeping young people away from dangerous drugs. Well what do we see from the NDP? We see an NDP motion at their convention to get rid of this program. It's astonishing, Mr. Speaker. It's absolutely astonishing.

I'm going to actually read, I'm going to actually read another motion from that convention which could possibly be in an NDP budget — who knows? I'll read it.

Whereas tenant-landlord relationships are holdovers from feudal times;

And whereas the government currently spends money housing people on government assistance by paying rent to property owners, thereby exposing themselves to market forces [That's dangerous stuff in the pricing of rent.];

Therefore be it resolved that an NDP government would put severe restriction on property owners so that renters may have further protections from facing market forces;

And be it further resolved [It gets even better, Mr. Speaker.] that an NDP government would purchase housing facilities in a variety of neighbourhoods so that the government could ensure the people receiving government assistance have a decent place to live at an affordable rate;

And be it further resolved that the overall agenda of an NDP government's housing strategy would be to lead to the end of private landlordship so that every person in Saskatchewan could have a place to live.

I mean, Mr. Speaker, we've seen this sort of thing happen before. It hasn't happened in this country but, you know, North Korea and Cuba. I mean that's the type of model that this party obviously wants to follow.

And you know, we've seen, we've seen the founding document of this party, the founding document of this party, still on their website — the *Regina Manifesto* — calling for the eradication of capitalism. I mean, Mr. Speaker, this is dangerous stuff. These are dangerous motions coming from the NDP. And you know, frankly, Mr. Speaker, it's a little concerning to the people of Meadow Lake.

I'm going to refer to another motion here, and I'll read it:

Whereas oil and gas are finite, non-renewable resources with a value that will increase as they are depleted;

And whereas our oil and gas revenues contribute to all aspects of life in this province, including the delivery of public health and education programs;

And whereas much of our oil and gas revenues are currently clawed back by a faulty equalization formula;

Be it resolved that Saskatchewan New Democrats support an increase . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I realize it's getting somewhat late in the evening, and I'm surprised that there's so much life on the floor, but I think it's appropriate for members to allow the member from Meadow Lake to complete his remarks. Thank you.

Mr. Harrison: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know what's causing all the commotion in here. These are just facts that I'm putting forward in a very even-handed way and obviously the opposition are, they're not happy to hear about it.

But you know, let me go back to this motion that I was talking about with regard to oil and gas that was debated at the NDP convention:

Be it resolved that Saskatchewan New Democrats support an increase in oil and gas royalties so that we maximize our oil and gas revenue.

Increase — increase — oil and gas royalties, Mr. Speaker. You know, that would be an absolute disaster for our province if that were to happen, Mr. Speaker. Yet this is a motion that's seriously debated at their convention. This was . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order. I'd ask the members to allow the member to speak to the debate on the budget.

Mr. Harrison: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think this is very relevant because this could possibly be in an NDP budget. This is what they obviously believe in. But that being said, you know, we're talking about oil and gas, and that's an important part of the budget.

And we're also talking, we're also talking about hidden agendas, Mr. Speaker. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? I have here in my hand, which I'm happy to table, something that is shocking, something that I think really does show the NDP agenda when it comes to oil sands. You know, this is a real bombshell, Mr. Speaker, and I'll hold it up here. But this is a picture taken . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. For the sake of new members I would like to remind the members that they're not to hold up anything as a prop and use it as a prop. Would the member from Meadow Lake remember that. Order. Member from Meadow Lake.

Mr. Harrison: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize for that. But I will describe this picture, and I will table it for the House. But this is a picture of the Leader of the Opposition and the NDP environment critic standing at a rally today behind a

sign that says, stop the tar sands.

We have not been able, we have not been able to get that party on the record, since the election, on what their position on oil sands development is, Mr. Speaker. We haven't heard. We don't know what that position is.

But you know what, Mr. Speaker? We know now. We know what the position of the NDP is with regard to oil sands. They want to shut it down, Mr. Speaker. They want to shut it down, just like their leader, just like their leader, the member for Toronto-Danforth, who has called for a moratorium on oil sands development, just like a former cabinet minister in that government who has called for a moratorium on oil sands exploration, Mr. Speaker. We know what their position is on oil sands. They want to shut it down.

And do you know what, Mr. Speaker? I think that's unfortunate. I really do think that's unfortunate. The oil sands in this province offer incredible potential, absolutely incredible potential for our province, for the future of our province.

We have a company operating right now in northwestern Saskatchewan that has third party verification of approximately 1.5 billion barrels in place, and this is only in one township that's actually been fully explored, which would result . . . That's a world-class commercial project right there, Mr. Speaker, and that's just scratching the surface. We could end up with 10 billion barrels of oil in place or even more. What does that result in, Mr. Speaker? That results in thousands of jobs. That results in investment of billions of dollars.

And we're talking about an area of this province, northwestern Saskatchewan north of La Loche, that is one of the most economically depressed areas in the entire country. And what do we have? We have the NDP saying that they don't want any development to happen there.

Mr. Speaker, what kind of priorities does this party have? Do they want to keep the people of La Loche in poverty forever? There's an opportunity for those people and we are providing dollars for training so those people can take advantage of the natural resource that exists in northwestern Saskatchewan. And they say no. They say no to the people of La Loche. They say no to the people of Clearwater River. They say, we do not want to see development. It is unbelievable. It's irresponsible.

[22:00]

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk further about this picture where we have the Leader of the Opposition and the NDP Environment critic. This group today, which was participating in a day called Fossil Fools Day, this . . . other groups participating in this event, they blocked a gas station in Ontario today, Mr. Speaker. They blockaded banks in New York City and Boston. They blockaded a gas terminal, like they blockaded roads in England. They shut down mines in the United Kingdom.

These are people that are breaking the law. These are people that are using violence to achieve political means. And you know what? You have the Leader of the Opposition and you have the Environment critic of the NDP associating themselves

with these people. It is shameful. It is shameful, it's irresponsible. It's, quite frankly, sad to see the state that a once-proud party has fallen into. They're reduced to associating themselves with groups that are participating in violent activities. It's unbelievable.

You know, the other thing I want to talk about here today, Mr. Speaker, is I want to set the record straight on some oil sands questions. You know, we heard from the NDP Environment critic, who for the first time in this session of the legislature asked a question of the Minister of the Environment. And we later heard during the comic stylings from the member from Athabasca that that would be the end of questions to the Environment minister, but we did get a couple anyways.

You know, we — Minister Boyd and I — visited the site of Oilsands Quest quite recently. The Minister of Energy and Resources and I visited the site of Oilsands Quest very recently. And I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, the environmental footprint really is minimal. The company in question has bent over backwards — done everything they possibly can — far exceeded any regulatory requirements for environmental stewardship in the development or the exploration of what could very well be the first oil sands project in this province, to the extent of actually hiring summer students to go and walk along roads that are near the site, picking up cigarette butts and any garbage that might exist to the point of cleaning up any sort of possible contaminant that is in existence in the area.

And you know, the other thing I would like to talk about is I think the NDP and others of that ilk would like to portray oil sands development as being some sort of a giant open-pit process. Well you know, frankly, that just wouldn't be the case here, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about an extraction process that would be an in situ sort of process, possibly a steam-assisted process. There's going to be no bigger environmental footprint than there would be in any other conventional oil extraction operation. And you know, I think the NDP are trying to blur the truth on that and I think their allies in this Fossil Fools Day are trying to do likewise. So you know, I think it's quite unfortunate that the NDP are going down this route.

But, you know, the other thing that our government's been doing in order to support revenue for the budget, Mr. Speaker, has been . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. It's been a long-standing tradition when we're into Throne Speech and budget debate that the speeches have some variance and I would ask the members to allow the member to place his thoughts on the issue.

Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member for Battlefords obviously generating more . . .

The Speaker: — Order. For the sake of new members, when a member has asked the Assembly to come to order, members are not to refer to or bring the Speaker into the debate. Just accept the motion or order that's been brought forward and move forward with the debate when you've been invited to speak. The member from Meadow Lake.

Mr. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

You know, one of the things that our government has been doing very aggressively — very aggressively — in order to increase the revenue for the budget process in this province is spreading our message about our natural resource wealth, not just across Canada but around North America. And we've been taking that message on the road. I know, Mr. Speaker, I was in Houston, Texas, not that long ago spreading the good word about the incredible natural resource wealth in our great province. The Premier and the Minister of Energy and Resources, the member from Wood River, and myself were in Washington, DC [District of Columbia] as well, attending meetings of the Energy Council, Mr. Speaker, and spreading the good word about the incredible potential in our great province.

You know, speaking of the Energy Council again, it was an initiative of our government to become a full member of the Energy Council. The previous government had basically, you know, stood at the back of the room for a year or so. We decided to become full members, Mr. Speaker, because we felt it was important that that message and those contacts be obtained for our province.

You know, talking again about the incredible potential in the oil and gas industry, look at the Bakken play, the Bakken Formation, Mr. Speaker, in southeastern Saskatchewan where we have in just the last couple of years gone from 700 or so barrels a day produced to nearly 20,000, Mr. Speaker. We have seen land sales, land sale records shattered. The last two land sales have been record for this province. And you know, Mr. Speaker, frankly in the discussions I've had with stakeholders in the industry, it's a reflection purely, purely of the confidence the industry has in our government. The industry wants to work with us. The industry wants to be a part of what's happening here in this province because of our government and because of what we've done.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to wrap up by again saying how proud I am to be a part of this party, a part of this government, have these wonderful colleagues here, who at 10 o'clock at night are all here. It's a very encouraging thing to see.

And do you know what, Mr. Speaker? We are so optimistic about the future of this province. We're looking forward. That party wants to be negative. They want to look in the rear-view mirror. They want to talk about the glory days in the 1960s. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? We think Saskatchewan's best days are in the future. And we're going to work hard. And we're going to make it happen.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Weyburn.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly appreciate my colleagues' encouragement and I hope they're as enthusiastic when I finish as I am when I begin, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I've quite enjoyed the debate that's taken place on both sides of the House, Mr. Speaker. And I listened pretty closely what the members opposite have to say on this budget.

Now, Mr. Speaker, and I have to say right off the start that all of us as elected members, we don't know how long we're elected. We won't know how long that the people will want to keep us as their representatives. That's up to the voters of Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Speaker, I have to say, I have to say, that for as long as the member for Athabasca is an elected member of this Assembly, I hope I'm here, Mr. Speaker, because that was one of the most enjoyable speeches that I've ever heard. And, Mr. Speaker, it was quite ironic that on the day that the comedy awards was announced that it's coming to Regina . . . And in fact there's going to be sort of a "Canadian Idol" for comedians. I would encourage him to go out for that, Mr. Speaker, because that was certainly one of the highlights of what I've heard in this Assembly.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this budget is . . . The government, the Finance minister, titled this budget *Ready for Growth*, Mr. Speaker. And the members opposite, they've come into the debate, Mr. Speaker, and they don't give a title as to what they would title their amendment, Mr. Speaker. But I think I know what the title should be. This is a ready-for-growth budget, and their amendment and their opposition to this budget I think should be called the would have, could have, should have, Mr. Speaker.

You know what, you hear members opposite . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Duncan: — We would have paid for that, Mr. Speaker, had we been re-elected. We could have funded that, Mr. Speaker, had we been given more than 16 years, Mr. Speaker. Or my favourite, my favourite, after people came to this Assembly wanting the cancer drug of Avastin funded, Mr. Speaker . . . In fact at the cancer breakfast this morning a constituent of mine, Keith Whyte, spoke very eloquently about his battle with cancer and, quite frankly, his battle with that former government, Mr. Speaker. And the NDP opposition put out a report card and they actually gave us good marks because we funded that drug, Mr. Speaker. And it's a shame that they didn't do it when they had the chance, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute shame that they didn't do it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what we've heard, what we've heard from members opposite, and especially the member from Athabasca, you know on one hand this government can't take credit for population growth, or job growth, or income growth for the people. But he wants the potholes fixed already, Mr. Speaker. We've only been in government for about four months but there's potholes out there that need to be fixed. There's municipal issues that need to be fixed, Mr. Speaker. And there's recreational facilities in northern Saskatchewan and rural Saskatchewan that have been neglected, Mr. Speaker. And they were there for 16 years and it's a shame that . . .

In fact, Mr. Speaker, my good friend, the member from Regina Rosemont, you know, he had some good things to say about this budget. And you know, it's good, People on this side of the House think he's in the wrong party and we would sure welcome him any day, Mr. Speaker. But he said, on the \$1 billion infrastructure piece — and I'll get to that in a little bit,

Mr. Speaker — he said it didn't go far enough. Well, Mr. Speaker, you know what? It probably didn't, but one step at a time, Mr. Speaker, because there was an infrastructure deficit left by that government, Mr. Speaker. And \$1 billion for this year will go a long, long way, Mr. Speaker. But we won't get the job done in four months, Mr. Speaker. And nobody expects that.

Mr. Speaker, I'm really pleased to be able to speak in favour of this budget, a historic budget for the people of this province, Mr. Speaker. And I want to first begin, as many members have, by congratulating the Finance minister and the members of the cabinet, the members of this government for putting together a plan that we can go to our constituencies. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the members opposite. This is a good budget for the people of this province and they could sell it to their constituents as being a good . . . It's not just good for our constituents. It's good for the entire province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Duncan: — And, Mr. Speaker, it's a budget that's going to build on the optimism that we've seen in this province and optimism that we've seen since the election, Mr. Speaker. And I will say that there was optimism. There was things moving along. There was momentum in 2007, Mr. Speaker, and there was anticipation of a new government, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you during the Easter break, I had the chance to travel around the constituency. I spent some time in Weyburn. I was out in Coronach. I spent some time . . . I spent a day in Coronach at one of the municipal offices, Mr. Speaker, meeting constituents.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? People of this province think this is a good budget, Mr. Speaker. This is a budget that they've been waiting for, for a long, long time, Mr. Speaker. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? Bright times are ahead for this province. Even in fact coming back from the Easter break, it's even brighter in the building, Mr. Speaker. And you know, I think that's an indication of what people are feeling around this province.

Mr. Speaker, there's not a lot of time left, Mr. Speaker, in my remarks here, but I have a lot to say. And I think members on this side have talked about a lot of the positive indicators going forward. So, Mr. Speaker, I won't repeat a lot of those.

But, Mr. Speaker, this is a budget that makes this province ready for growth. And again my hon. colleague across the way from Rosemont, I believe he called members of this government creatures of growth. I'll have to check *Hansard*, but I think that's what it was. And I take that as being, I . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Preachers, I'm sorry, it was preachers.

Mr. Speaker, I would much rather be a member of a government that preaches growth, than that preaches decline like we saw over the last couple of years with that government, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Duncan: — We needed a budget, Mr. Speaker, that looked after infrastructure because we're a government committed to growing this province so we can continue to pay for the services that people in this province have come to expect. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that this is a great budget because it's a historic budget. It's the largest capital investment in this province's history, and I think that this is being well-received by the people of this province and by the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy, Mr. Speaker. And I'll get to their comments in a little bit.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at, when you break down the billion dollars in infrastructure we're looking at in this budget, \$200 million for hospitals and health facilities, Mr. Speaker. Facilities that provide the necessities of what this province, what people of this province have come to expect, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, if there's one thing that the government needs to provide, it is quality health care to the people of this province. And for so long we haven't seen the proper investment. I want to talk about, Mr. Speaker — and that's a positive development — I want to talk about \$160 million going into our schools, Mr. Speaker, to look after infrastructure. And I want to personally congratulate the Minister for Education for pushing this issue, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[22:15]

Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, in our area, in our area of the Southeast, Oxbow is finally, after several years of being on the list but never getting the funding, Mr. Speaker, Oxbow . . . And even though it's not in my constituency, what that means for my constituents, Mr. Speaker, is that Oxbow's going to be taken care of because the school board in our area thought that was a priority, Mr. Speaker. So that meant that other capital projects had to wait until Oxbow could get approved, and the school board came year after year trying to get funding. Finally we can get that project under way and completed, Mr. Speaker, and that will help to look at projects within Weyburn, within the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting that . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . If he feels that I'm picking on him, I don't mean it, Mr. Speaker. But the member for Regina Rosemont, my hon. colleague, one of the things that he needs to be aware of, Mr. Speaker — and I think all people in this Assembly — that 88 per cent of the schools in this province, Mr. Speaker, were built prior to when I was born and to when . . . because I know we're the same age. We're right around the same age, Mr. Speaker. Eighty-eight per cent of the schools were built before we were even born. And they weren't looked after under this government . . . the former government, Mr. Speaker. They weren't looked after properly, and so there's a long ways to go, Mr. Speaker, to bring those facilities up to where they need to be to provide those services.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know one thing. If there's anything that people are giving — my constituents are giving — this government credit for, it's the work that this government's committed to in highways, Mr. Speaker, because for so long . . . And maybe the members opposite, maybe the members

opposite, maybe their constituents, don't feel that it's a priority or maybe that's what they suppose. But I would invite any of them to come to Weyburn-Big Muddy, and I'll tour them around, and we'll go through all the small towns in the constituency. The number one thing that I've heard about from my constituents is finally we're going to see some highways being rebuilt, Mr. Speaker, finally.

And finally we're going to see a plan, Mr. Speaker. Because in the past we had the former premier, the Leader of the Opposition, say he admitted that it was really a year-to-year thing. It was ad hoc. There was no plan, Mr. Speaker. And now finally municipalities and constituents are going to be able to see where they are in this government's plans, Mr. Speaker. And I think that's a positive development for the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Duncan: — Now, Mr. Speaker, when I've been listening . . . and I listen pretty closely to what the members opposite say, but at the same time I'm trying to write my remarks. And I get a pretty good, you know, when I'm writing my remarks out . . . But every once in a while I'll hear something that a member opposite has said, and so I feel like I need to correct some of the things that have been said opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the first thing that I want to say, and perhaps it was an oversight, Mr. Speaker, but in his reply to the budget, the member for Massey Place took a bit of exception, Mr. Speaker, with something that was committed to in the campaign and what we've delivered in this budget, Mr. Speaker. And I want to read what the member for Massey Place had to say. Talking about the Premier campaigning in the last election, talking about the leader of our party, he said, and I quote:

In his platform, he committed to, quote, "doubling education property tax rebates saving the average homeowner \$450 a year." That's a pretty explicit promise, Mr. Speaker, a promise which this government has failed to keep. They did not double education property taxes; they didn't even come close to that. Rather they simply increased the rebate that homeowners receive on education property tax bills from 10 per cent to 12 per cent — a 2 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker. That's a far cry from fulfilling their promise.

But, Mr. Speaker, let's look at what we actually made a commitment on, Mr. Speaker. And maybe it's revisionist history, Mr. Speaker. Maybe it's taking a little bit of liberty with what actually we promised, Mr. Speaker, but I just happen to have our party platform with me, Mr. Speaker. And page 14 said:

A Saskatchewan Party government will reduce the education portion of property taxes for Saskatchewan families by doubling property tax rebates over four years.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, so that's what we committed to in the campaign. And then, Mr. Speaker, I would refer — if that member's reading along with me so that he knows what exactly he got wrong in his statement, Mr. Speaker — in the budget it says that, and this is on page 12, that "residential and

commercial portions will go from 10 per cent to 12 per cent." Mr. Speaker, exactly what was said in the campaign, Mr. Speaker.

And so, Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member, perhaps the member just was a little bit fuzzy on what happened in the campaign. I know they want to forget what happened in the campaign, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, the one thing that they've talked about a lot is the property tax issue. What they don't mention is what we committed to and what we are delivering to agricultural landowners, Mr. Speaker. And why don't they discuss it? Because they had no plan in the campaign, Mr. Speaker. And it's pretty evident when you look across and see how many rural-based MLAs are sitting on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker. It really tells the story.

Now, Mr. Speaker, something else that really interests me on the property tax piece. This is, Mr. Speaker, from my home newspaper, the *Weyburn Review*. This came out after the budget, and the NDP Finance critic, the member for Douglas Park, he said, on property tax, he said:

I think the government really missed an opportunity to provide broad-based property tax relief. Certainly the government has the financial flexibility to do . . . Why they are staging the increase in relief over four years is a puzzling question to me.

Mr. Speaker, why we're doing it? It's because that's what we committed to the people of the province that we would do, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Duncan: — And, Mr. Speaker, I understand why the member for Douglas Park is a little bit fuzzy on why a party would keep a promise after they made it in the campaign because I believe he was the same member that said you don't talk about tax increases during a campaign. What did he do? . . . [inaudible] . . . within the finances of the province. Whoops, the election comes, they're re-elected, and he raises the PST [provincial sales tax] by 2 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

So I can understand why he's a little, why he's a little confused on why we are doing this over four years, Mr. Speaker, with the full intention and the absolute commitment that a permanent solution will be found, Mr. Speaker, before that time is up, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, while we're talking about property tax, the member from Regina Dewdney, now this was . . . It was another interesting speech, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, what did that member, what did that member say, Mr. Speaker? He actually — and I quite enjoyed this, Mr. Speaker — he used a baseball analogy. And what I think he was trying to refer to, they believe that this party is taking credit for things that he believes that their party had put in place, Mr. Speaker. And so it's the baseball analogy about, you know — and I think the people of the province agree — that we hit a grand slam on this one, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Duncan: — We hit a grand slam. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, and in fact that same member said, he actually gave credit for a good budget — I believe he said a good budget — in half the time that a government usually has to put a budget in place, Mr. Speaker. So really by those standards . . . But here's the baseball analogy that he used, Mr. Speaker. He said, he said that they inherited, that this government inherited, “. . . they inherited a province where they were on third base.”

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to build on this analogy because I think he got it wrong. And I like the baseball analogy, Mr. Speaker. But it wasn't that we were on third base as the government or they were on third base as a government, Mr. Speaker. Here's what it was. The province and our economy, Mr. Speaker, maybe the economy was on third base, Mr. Speaker.

And to go a little bit further with the analogy, because I think this really, this is a bit of a better use of the baseball analogy, Mr. Speaker, the manager of this baseball team is the voters and the province is on third base. We're just about there, Mr. Speaker. We're going to score a run, and the manager — the voters, if the member can follow this — the manager's looking at who he has up to bat. And let's go back to November. Who's he got up to bat, Mr. Speaker?

And the manager, the voters . . . well it's the 16-year-old veteran that, you know, sometimes has to take every third day off because, you know, they're little bit rusty. And they've had a not a bad career, Mr. Speaker, but they're on the downturn of a career, Mr. Speaker.

And so the manager's looking and instead of going with that veteran, the manager — the voters — decided they were going to go with something new, something that they trust, trusted, Mr. Speaker, something that they could believe in, Mr. Speaker. And so, Mr. Speaker, our government was elected, and I think we've got this province . . . we've batted a run in, Mr. Speaker, on this one.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Duncan: — Now, Mr. Speaker, just a bit further on the analogy — and I don't want to go too much further on it, Mr. Speaker, but it reminds me . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And I know that members on this side, I hope they're enjoying this. But it reminds me of a first baseman for the New York Yankees, Mr. Speaker. And he was given a chance. In fact in 1925, Mr. Speaker, the Yankees decided to put Lou Gehrig in. And he was in for 2,130 consecutive games, Mr. Speaker — yes, a record that lasted until 1995, Mr. Speaker.

But you know what? Nobody remembers who he replaced. You know, Wally Pipp was his name, but nobody really remembers that. And I think, Mr. Speaker, that this Premier of this province is going to be like that. He's going to have a long run, Mr. Speaker, a long run. And down the road when he's got many, many terms as Premier of the province, Mr. Speaker, the people of this province, they'll remember that there was a premier before him, but they won't remember who he was, Mr. Speaker, because this government is going to do some tremendous things

over the next number of terms that we will be in government, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we're still on the property tax piece here, Mr. Speaker. And there was some talk about, there was some talk . . . Maybe, Mr. Speaker, my time's winding down here.

So I'm just going to move on to talk about the reaction of the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy. And I've already talked a little bit about it, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, the hometown news, the front page — “Budget gives broad-based support to infrastructure,” Mr. Speaker. The mayor of Weyburn, she was quoted in the paper, Mr. Speaker. She said that overall . . . This was her quote: “Overall, as I sat and listened to the budget, I felt it's a good time to be a resident of Saskatchewan,” Mr. Speaker. That's from the mayor of Weyburn. And we certainly appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker, there's good comments from people in the education system in our area, Mr. Speaker, from the Chairs of the boards of the school divisions, Mr. Speaker.

The other one that I want to talk about . . . And I know the member for Elphinstone had some comments about the regional colleges and that he felt that there wasn't enough there for regional colleges. And, Mr. Speaker, this comes from our newspaper, and the quote is, Mr. Speaker, “Overall, I think the infrastructure investment of 45.8 million for post-secondary institutions was a wise decision by the government [Mr. Speaker].”

Now who was that person? That's the president and CEO [chief executive officer] of our regional college, Mr. Graham Mickleborough, Mr. Speaker, who just two years ago was an NDP candidate, Mr. Speaker. So he liked the budget.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Being at the time of adjournment, this Assembly is adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:30.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EVENING SITTING

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

**MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY
(BUDGET DEBATE)**

Reiter	499
Belanger	500
Bjornerud	504
Krawetz	507
Higgins	511
Draude	514
Hutchinson	516
Wotherspoon	518
Harrison	523
Duncan	526

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Duncan	519
---------------------	-----

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Brad Wall
Premier

Hon. Bob Bjornerud
Minister of Agriculture
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Crop
Insurance Corporation

Hon. Bill Boyd
Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff
Minister of Crown Corporations

Hon. Dan D'Autremont
Minister of Government Services
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Liquor and
Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for the Information
Technology Office

Hon. June Draude
Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations
Minister Responsible for Northern Affairs

Hon. Wayne Elhard
Minister of Highways and Infrastructure
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission
Provincial Secretary

Hon. Rod Gantfoer
Minister of Finance

Hon. Donna Harpauer
Minister of Social Services

Hon. Nancy Heppner
Minister of Environment

Hon. Darryl Hickie
Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing

Hon. Bill Hutchinson
Minister of Municipal Affairs
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan
Gaming Corporation

Hon. Ken Krawetz
Deputy Premier
Minister of Education

Hon. Don McMorris
Minister of Health

Hon. Don Morgan
Minister of Justice
Attorney General

Hon. Rob Norris
Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour
Minister Responsible for Immigration
Minister Responsible for the Workers'
Compensation Board

Hon. Lyle Stewart
Minister of Enterprise and Innovation

Hon. Christine Tell
Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for the Capital City Commission