



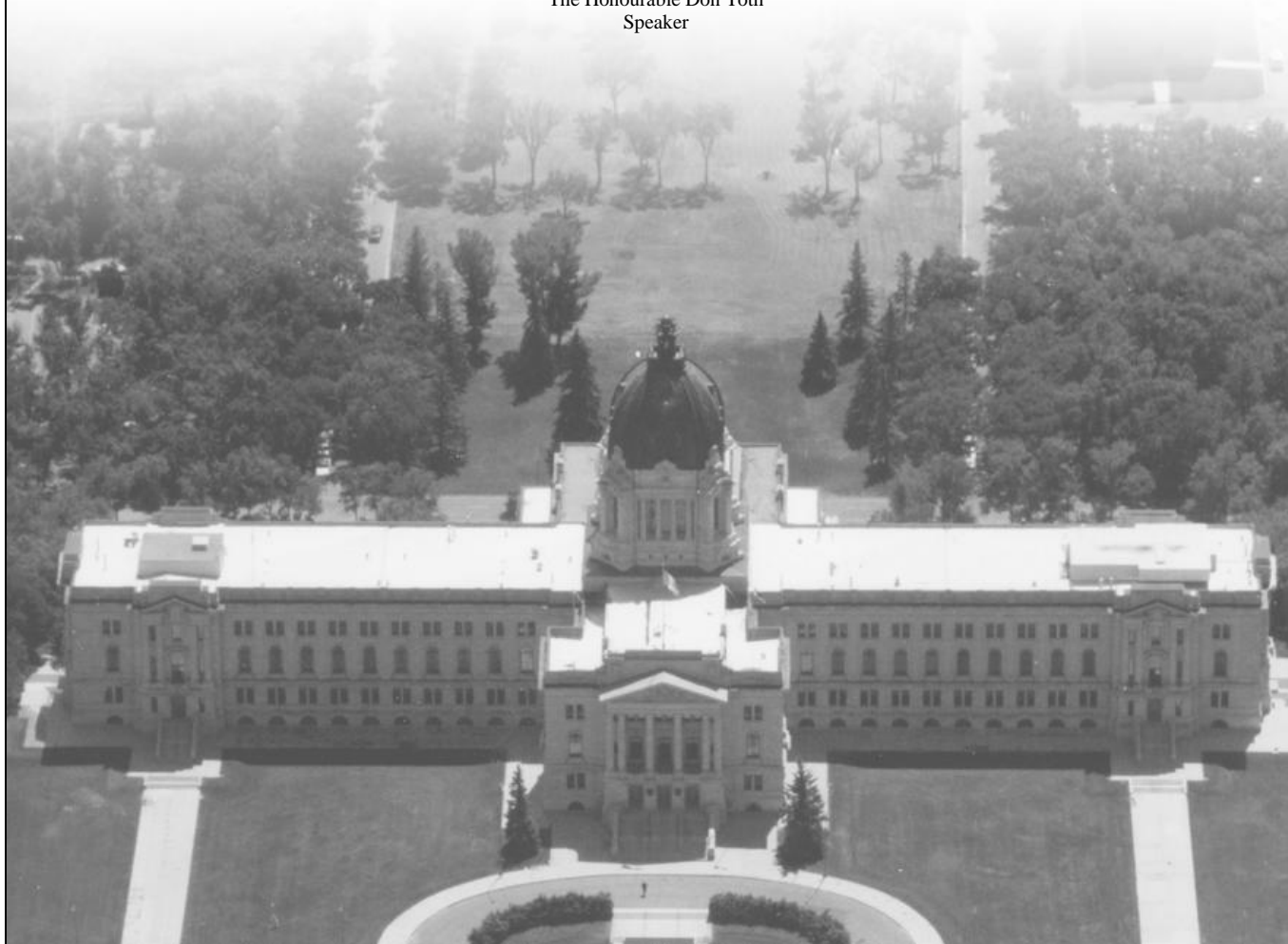
SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

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
Vermette, Doyle	NDP	Cumberland
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

[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 Deputy Speaker: — It being 7 o'clock, this House is now back in session. Orders of the day, special order, debate will continue. I recognize the member from Carrot River Valley.

Mr. Bradshaw: — Good evening, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak this evening. I hope I can keep a few of the people awake after a good dinner.

Mr. Speaker, of course I support this budget. Let's face it, Mr. Speaker, this budget is not only a fantastic and historic budget for Saskatchewan but also the best budget in all of Canada and probably the best in North America. Oh heck, let's go a little further, Mr. Speaker. I think it's going to be the best in the whole world.

Mind you, Mr. Speaker, as all of us here know, Saskatchewan is the best place in the world, especially, especially the Carrot River Valley constituency. And I have to say, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all of the people from the Carrot River Valley constituency for supporting me. And I want to thank my CA [constituency assistant] especially for putting up with all my antics over the past 16 months. My seat member's laughing at that. I didn't think that was all that funny, really.

Mr. Speaker, it's hard to believe that just a short two years ago, we were just a wee province — a province that would be in and out of equalization perpetually, a province destined to be a continual have-not province. My, how things have changed in the last 16 months. The optimism, the enthusiasm, the we're going to get things done feeling, Mr. Speaker.

Now when we visit outside the province and tell people we are from Saskatchewan, where there used to be a snicker or sorry to hear that, people now look at you with envy — envy — with that one look in their eye, just wishing that they could be here also.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? In this past year, 15,000 people have done just that. They have moved to Saskatchewan because they see opportunity here. They see optimism here. They see a great place to raise their families. They see a government that's looking forward, looking to the future, a government that is a positive government, a government that is strong and steady.

Not, Mr. Speaker, like the old and tired former administration,

whose largest export was people, mainly our youth. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is a far different place now. And with budgets such as this and the previous one, with the forward thinking of this administration, Mr. Speaker, we may have to put up walls to keep people out. What a change. What a change.

Let's just take a look at just a few of the things in this budget, Mr. Speaker. The largest education property tax cut in Saskatchewan history.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, how many eons have people been asking for this? Think of it. The former premier, Tommy Douglas, said on August 31, 1944, and I quote:

We are pledged to do away with the education tax as soon as we get new sources of revenue to take the place of the revenue now realized from that tax. When we develop new sources of revenue sufficient to supplement the revenue now raised from the tax, we shall do away with the tax because we consider it regressive legislation.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, the CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] actually thought of doing something on education tax. The NDP [New Democratic Party] actually thought about it also; they just didn't get around to it.

Mr. Speaker, coming from Carrot River Valley, a mainly agricultural area, the education portion of tax on farm land has always been a sore point. Come to think of it, Mr. Speaker, there are not many things agriculture related that they did get around to, such as enhancing crop insurance, fully funding the CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization] program.

There is one thing the NDP did very well for rural Saskatchewan though; they cut back on basically any money going to the RMs [rural municipality] or anywhere else in rural Saskatchewan, for that matter. I give the RMs just a ton of credit for the monies they had to work with, Mr. Speaker. They have done an amazing job, considering what they had to work with.

In this budget coming from the Saskatchewan Party we see — this is just on kind of the agriculture end of it — 25 million for the RMs, 25 million to provide cost matching for new federal infrastructure programs, 20.9 million for the final year of the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund, 20 million for the Building Canada fund. The list just goes on and on. This government and this budget will give the municipalities their just due, Mr. Speaker, something that they've been sorely lacking for in the last 16 years.

Now we know that this is not going to be an instant fix. But what it does, it allows these formerly cash-strapped municipalities a method to budget for their infrastructure projects in a timely and responsible way, something that just couldn't happen under the NDP . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Under the NDP.

There is just another little-known thing in this budget that perhaps quite a few people overlooked because it's not that

large. Mr. Speaker, coming from a small town, coming from a small town and belonging to the volunteer fire department for close to 25 years, I know how we as a fire department were always strapped for cash. When it came to upgrading equipment, one of them was emergency telecommunications, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to see \$1.8 million set aside for this equipment that addresses our volunteer fire departments' needs.

I know, I know it's a small thing, and a lot of people would have missed that in the budget, but that's what this Saskatchewan Party does. We look after the small things as well as the large things. I know, I know, Mr. Speaker, that this means, this means a lot to our small towns, our small towns and our communities where we have volunteers doing the major portion of the work.

Another thing of note, Mr. Speaker, for the Carrot River Valley is the monies being put forward for the Cumberland Regional College in Nipawin. This is a large project, a project that's desperately needed — \$5.4 million for a new facility that has been needed for years, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you just don't know, you just don't know how much this is appreciated.

Cumberland Regional College is a fantastic academic centre for the northeast — a facility that offers advanced education to people who want to improve their life and make them more employable. This is also a facility that is used extensively by our First Nations, who we all know are the fastest growing segment of our population but also are the least educated. This is a tool, Mr. Speaker, to allow them to move forward, to improve their self-esteem, to bring them out of the poverty and depression that, unfortunately, they have been saddled with for years.

Mr. Speaker, I personally want to thank the Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour for this absolutely wonderful announcement that benefits not just the people and the First Nations of Carrot River Valley but the whole province of Saskatchewan as we move forward steady and strong, continuing to make Saskatchewan the place to be.

And speaking of education, Mr. Speaker, in this budget another 6.5 million for the most aggressive graduate retention program in all of Canada. This is personal to me as my children will be able to take advantage of this wonderful program. Actually one already is. This will help them stay in what is the best place in the world, Mr. Speaker — and I say it again — Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, another facility that this budget addresses is a children's hospital in Saskatoon. Mr. Speaker, I personally know how much this is so desperately needed as our first-born had cerebral palsy, and we spent a lot of time in the University Hospital in Saskatoon. I give the Saskatoon University Hospital credit for the excellent care that they gave our daughter. But that being said, a stand-alone children's hospital is something that is really, really needed. Mr. Speaker, the \$100 million now and the \$200 million committed in this budget for this hospital is a godsend for the parents and the children of this province.

Speaking of health, Mr. Speaker, \$23 million, \$23 million is set aside to attract and retain nurses and other hard-to-recruit health professionals. Mr. Speaker, this is just another sign that this government doesn't just sit around on their hands waiting to get

around to it. We go out, Mr. Speaker, and get her done.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many good things in this budget, I just kind of wonder where to go next. Let's try highways. Let's try highways, Mr. Speaker. Our Minister of Highways is another person who has been very, very busy trying to fix up years of neglect. Just think of it, Mr. Speaker, we now have a plan, not just the hodgepodge of the former administration, but an actual plan — \$630 million worth. Nineteen per cent higher than our first transportation budget which was in itself historic. Saskatchewan has been the laughingstock for years as to the condition of its highways. No more, Mr. Speaker. No more.

The introduction of the five-year rolling plan is the, I believe, the first for this ministry. Within five years, within five years, this government will have increased the primary highway system by 65 per cent, 65 per cent, therefore enhancing and making the transportation of goods far more economical throughout the province — 1,580 kilometres of major highway and maintenance improvements this year alone.

But wait, Mr. Speaker. There's more. Rather than being confrontational with the federal government and asking them to do everything, and if they didn't we would go pout in a corner, we partnered with them to speed up the twinning of Highway 11, which now will be completed in 2012. You know sometimes you have to give a little to get a little. Mr. Speaker, we don't wait to get around to it. We just get her done.

Another small thing coming out of the highways is the 1 million for the short-line railways sustainability program. Mr. Speaker, this is just another one of those small things that this party, that this party looks after. It may not sound like much, but Carrot River Valley has two short-lines within its boundaries. These lines enhance the movement of not just grain but also some manufactured goods. This takes a portion of the strain off of the highways' infrastructure and therefore is money well spent. I commend the people in the Carrot River Valley community who had the foresight and tenacity to purchase and operate these lines.

Mr. Speaker, we could be going on and on here for a long time. But just think, Mr. Speaker, the last two budgets — \$2.5 billion, \$2.5 billion. And not only that, a 40 per cent cut in our debt. Now that, that, Mr. Speaker, is responsible government. We get her done.

You know, Mr. Speaker, just another example, just another example of how we're getting her done is the police end of it. We were promised by the NDP for eight years, for eight years that they would give us 200 more police officers.

[19:15]

An Hon. Member: — What happened there?

Mr. Bradshaw: — What happened there? I think we got something like 83 — 83 officers in eight years.

Mr. Speaker, we already got \$1.6 million put away to get another 30 additional police. We said in our platform that we were going to put in 120 police officers in four years. We're going to have them. There again we're going to get it done, not

just get around to it.

Also we have 5.3 million set aside for the enterprise regions program. And another thing on that, there's an extra \$300,000 to implement the northern enterprise region. This is great. This is great for the North. I'll tell you, I'm right next door to them because Carrot River Valley is right on the treeline. We're helping out the North as well as the South. Mr. Speaker, this government's looking after all of Saskatchewan, all of Saskatchewan in the best of ways.

Mr. Speaker, I see my time is kind of coming up here, and I could go on and on about how great this budget is. I could even brag up our government, Mr. Speaker. But that being said, I won't. All I can say is, Mr. Speaker, just look at the numbers. A balanced budget, 424.5 million General Revenue Fund surplus, historic infrastructure spending to address the shortfall left by the NDP — all of this and still providing tax decreases for the great citizens of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that I support this budget and I do not support the amendment. With that, I will end. And thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I welcome this opportunity to enter this budget debate. And at the onset, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to support this budget and will be voting in favour of its adoption and voting against the motion put forward by the opposition.

I welcome this opportunity to explain why I support this budget and support the continuing efforts of our government to grow this province to the benefit of all the residents of our province and to the benefit of those from other jurisdictions — individuals and business that are joining our province in our unprecedented growth and prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, our government realizes that in order for this province to grow, we must provide a competitive environment, not only to retain but also to recruit. Mr. Speaker, in a period of 16 months this government and this province has done more than the previous government was able to do in 16 long years.

A competitive environment involves a multitude of factors but, Mr. Speaker, it is not rocket science. Individuals and businesses want a place where they can prosper, where they can grow. A good government will address the environment of their jurisdiction and assist and plan and promote and support that environment.

Our government has accepted this challenge. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would maintain that by endorsing this vision — a vision of growth, a vision of hope — that in 16 short months we have seen, we are continuing to see the benefits for all of our province: the shift from a philosophy of stagnation and fear to a philosophy of growth and hope. Mr. Speaker, our government's second budget propels the positive future of our province.

We are all aware that we all face two inevitable realities: taxes and death. As a government, we also realize we have more control over the former reality — taxes — than of the latter, which we concede is in the realm of a higher power. However we are also committed through our initiatives in health care, in justice, in social services, and in our infrastructure initiatives to also address the quality and longevity of life. Taxes, in and of themselves, do not create wealth; they are a redistribution of existing wealth. Our government has in 16 months clearly shown to this province — to all of its residents — this realization. And this gets back to creating a competitive environment, an environment where growth isn't only possible but in fact becomes the driver of the economy.

As we're all aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a number of sources of taxation that are utilized by governments to generate the revenues that are required to provide those services that governments are expected to provide. However when taxation becomes a deterrent in the jurisdiction, be it in the rates of taxation or the fairness of the taxation or the reliance on taxation, we see the impediment to growth, the impediment to the creation of wealth. Quite frankly, we see what we saw in 16 years of socialist government of this province — a failure to grow, a period of stagnation, a period in our history that was not only unacceptable to the residents of this province but was a period in time that we saw an out-migration of capital, both human and monetary, that was unprecedented.

Mr. Speaker, this budget and the direction this government has taken will continue to turn this situation around. The infrastructure deficit left by the former government was staggering, and it has been addressed in an unprecedented program that is creating jobs and upgrades at a level never seen in this province. But also, Mr. Speaker, it is creating that environment for growth, the environment to retain and recruit, the environment to grow. Our government and this budget squarely tackles the issue related to taxation — the rates and economic impact on all the residents, the fairness of the taxation system, and the reliance on taxation itself to move our province ahead.

Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, I have had the opportunity to discuss this budget and the performance of our government and that of the past government and of the vision for our province that we as a government have been advocating. I've had the opportunity to not only meet with residents and leaders of my own riding, but on three occasions in the neighbouring riding of The Battlefords. Mr. Speaker, the reception to this budget and this government's performance was overwhelming. The reception received by our Minister of Crown Corporations on Friday morning as he announced the SaskPower initiatives and the reception of our Minister of Finance this morning endorsed for me the reasons why I am here in this Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Chisholm: — The sentiment was clear. There is more progress for the entire province in 16 months than we have seen in 16 years. And there is a sense of optimism over the upcoming 12 months as this year unfolds, and into the coming years, for our province. As this budget debate unfolds, I'm certain my colleagues will have an opportunity to detail the positive benefits in their constituency and the performance of this

government will generate. I would no doubt that we will not hear much of that from members opposite.

As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, my constituency is a rural constituency that is largely agricultural, and it is also driven by a thriving oil and gas sector. What I was hearing in my area and in my venture into The Battlefords this weekend was regarding personal tax.

Firstly, from those paying provincial tax, thanks for the relief that is now being realized. For many, in the form of 2008, substantial refunds that have already been received and as a result of unprecedented reduction in 2008 personal income tax. From those who are not paying provincial income tax, thanks for the first time in their adult lives as a result of the changes in our personal exemption for individuals and dependents. For those who have not been subject to provincial tax because of their income level, thanks for the substantial additional assistance.

These changes that have been introduced have benefited all individuals of our province. If I have any advice for the residents of Saskatchewan, it would be, firstly file your 2000 income tax return and secondly, file as soon as possible to take advantage of the benefits you will realize.

Secondly on property tax, we remember the quotation “the status quo is not on.” A catchy enough phrase, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in itself, but what was on under the previous government if it was not the status quo? Property taxpayers have funded a disproportionately high share of education tax in our province for far too long. That’s why during the 2007 campaign our Premier promised a long-term solution to this problem. This budget kept that promise.

Let me address, Mr. Speaker, some of the initiatives that relate directly to agriculture. Saskatchewan Agriculture’s budget for 2009-10 is \$483.4 million. This represents a 177.5 million — 58 per cent — increase over 2008-2009. Most of this additional money will benefit farmers and ranchers directly through the AgriStability, AgriInvest, and crop insurance programs.

Specifically there has been provided \$20 million in additional funding to improve the crop insurance program. There is also funding in the budget to bring the administration of AgriStability back to Saskatchewan. We are also keeping our election promise to fully fund the provincial share of AgriStability and AgriInvest. This will help to provide certainty and security for our farmers and ranchers.

This budget also includes \$5 million in new provincial funding for the new federal-provincial Growing Forward agreement. This new agreement will include a province-wide water infrastructure program. Details of the Growing Forward agreement will be announced shortly.

Another initiative in agriculture was the announcement recently that we are bringing home the administration of AgriStability, AgriInvest, to be melded with the administration of our crop insurance program.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have heard a lot from the other side about outsourcing. The previous government was content for

years to have the administration of the programs — AIDA [agricultural income disaster assistance], NISA [Net Income Stabilization Account], CAIS 1, CAIS 2, etc., that have attracted the majority of their often meagre and often late commitment to agriculture — to be outsourced to Manitoba. This, Mr. Speaker, was an outsourcing of monumental proportions.

We are in the process of correcting this injustice to the people of our province, and particularly to the agricultural producers of our province. Mr. Speaker, I know this initiative will not only benefit those Saskatchewan residents who will be engaged in the administration process of these programs, but it will also benefit our agricultural producers.

As an adviser to a number of agriculture producers in Saskatchewan and Alberta for many years, I can tell this Assembly that our Saskatchewan producers, they will see immediate benefits as this shift from outsourcing of these services to a made-in-Saskatchewan alternative, in the assistance they will be provided, the turnaround times, and perhaps most importantly, in the knowledge and understanding of Saskatchewan agriculture that has not been evidenced in the past.

These programs, Mr. Speaker, can work, but our producers should expect and will receive the assistance and guidance they need to make them effective for their operations. It is not enough for the government to say it is committing X number of dollars to a program and then abandoning their responsibility to an outsourced agency to hopefully perform the services that should be the responsibility of their government representing their producers.

Our agricultural community welcomes this change of direction. Their expectations are high, and this government intends to produce the results that will meet those expectations.

This budget provides for the continuing success that our province has seen and will continue to see. It brings to mind a quote I recently came across. The quotation is from a gentleman by the name of Paul Sweeney. And the quote is as follows: “True success is overcoming the fear of being unsuccessful.”

[19:30]

Mr. Speaker, we are all learning, and part of this learning process, because we only have a limited time on this plane, is to prudently select the schools, the sources of our learning process. I would suggest that certainly I would enrol in our Minister of Finance’s school of growth and creation of wealth and not the Larry Hubich school of economic fear and redistribution.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I proudly reiterate my support for this budget, will be supporting its passage, and will most certainly be voting against the motion put forth by the members opposite. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise this evening to be able to make comments on the budget that was brought down last week.

But first before I get started in my budget comments, I'd really like to pass along a thank you to my staff in the constituency office in Moose Jaw. As MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly], we are very reliant on our staff. They keep us organized and represent us to our constituents when we're here in the House and busy with the duties that we have. Mr. Speaker, my Moose Jaw staff does a great job, and thanks to them; and thank them for all of the work they do for and with the constituents.

For me, Mr. Speaker, it's always the way I look at the budget or throne speeches, budgets especially, is how they affect the constituents of Moose Jaw Wakamow and what effect will they have on the people that I represent. And I know that they're . . . I guess the two main pieces or a couple of the main pieces out of this budget, truly are issues that have been discussed for a number of years, studied and lobbied and a great deal of discussion that's happened over the education portion of property tax and municipal revenue sharing.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there has been a fair bit of work that's been ongoing over the last number of years by stakeholders and by the government to reach an acceptable resolution to this permanent revenue sharing. And I know everyone was very pleased by the Sask Party government's decision that they carried on all the good work that had been done previously. And they resisted the temptation to toss out any of the good work that had been done by the previous NDP government, and today we see a solution in place.

Deputy Speaker, I know that municipalities seem very pleased with the revenue-sharing proposal that has been put forward, and it is good to see a permanent solution put in place for revenue sharing and predictable revenues for the municipalities. Municipalities have many demands on their plates, and this will definitely make it easier for them to put in place some long-term planning and put their budgets together in a more timely fashion. So, Mr. Speaker, I think we're all pleased with the municipal revenue sharing.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Higgins: — Now, Mr. Speaker, there will always be concerns that this may not be enough and we will see, as cities and municipalities develop and finalize their budgets, if some communities may see increased property taxes. We don't know yet, but an increase is expected to come forward a year from now for the same program, and I'm sure that municipalities will hold government to their word to receive a full point of the PST [provincial sales tax] in their revenue sharing.

So it's good to see this move ahead, and I'd like to thank all of those who have worked over this past number of years to put forward a fair and balanced solution to this issue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other big issue that affects not just my community of Moose Jaw but all communities is the education portion of property tax. And people are pleased to see a firm

proposal put forward, but many are reserving their opinions on the issue until we see the final effects.

I know that the minister handed out some charts on budget day with the impact of the proposed changes, all wonderful and good, but I think the minister only used the best examples of the most drastic improvements, namely his own constituency. And I'll reserve my opinion until I see some solid numbers from Moose Jaw.

This is a reassessment year, so property values will be going up, and as yet communities do not know the impact of the proposed changes. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we'll have to wait and see. The total property tax bill should go down, but what effect will reassessment have? Or will there be property tax increases in various communities to meet the demands facing municipalities and communities? There are a number of unanswered questions by property taxpayers across the province, so we'll just have to wait and see when more information is available.

Mr. Speaker, there are many more questions from the school boards and the professionals who work within the education system. So now we have the autonomy of the school boards removed, and the provincial mill rates are set by the minister. Are the changes drastic? Some may feel they are. Are the changes needed? Well some may argue yes and no. And is this really the best way to proceed to answer the issue of the education portion of property tax? Well the jury's still out on that. But I guess it really doesn't matter what the answers are to these questions because the minister felt that no consultations were needed; he had all the answers.

But to have these changes proposed to the officials within the education system during the budget speech was somewhat crass and, I have to say, disrespectful of the many professionals that have spent their careers improving the education system in our province and provided the best education for our children.

Saskatchewan's education system has a stellar record of excellent communication and consultation. And across Canada we are — or should I say, we used to be — held as an example of good work that could be done working together between the Government of Saskatchewan and the education system.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the proposal also has a number of questions left unanswered. How will capital be funded and prioritized? Will capital projects be at the province's discretion or at the school division's? I'm hearing the province has already taken over this role — not officially, mind you, but to the frustration of some school divisions. Will a school division's funding remain whole with the provincial dollars being injected, or will there be shortfalls and adjustments?

And what is the funding formula that is being used? Average expenditures I'm hearing rumours of, which is really a difficult way to go, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because if you've only had \$1,000 in your pocket and that's what you've spent over the past year, and for the past couple of years you've spent each and every year that \$1,000, so then they come along and say, well the average of your last few years spending has only been \$1,000, so that's all we're going to give you.

Well there may have been programs and projects that were

worthwhile, but the funding wasn't there. So to go purely on an average of previous expenses is pretty difficult for many school divisions, so I hope the minister will be flexible when he looks at this.

There is a number of questions. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that there will be some hours of questioning that will come in estimates, so we can hopefully get some clear answers from the minister. And I know the school divisions are waiting to meet with him further. After having a bit of a surprise on budget day, I know they have many questions also.

Mr. Speaker, another initiative in the budget that I will wholeheartedly support is the 1,000 child care spaces. Now the bad part is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're still waiting to see the 500 care spaces that were announced and promised in last budget. But if the minister is now proposing the 500 from the '08-09 budget and another 1,000 in this budget, I think that would be pretty good. But if he's adding the 500 that he announced last budget with another 500 this, and only announcing 1,000 all in total — he's just moved that first 500 forward — well then there will be some disappointment.

And it will clearly show to Saskatchewan families that this minister still is not taking this issue serious, that children need that early start, that early support — whether it's in pre-kindergarten or early learning in child care — they need the early start, the good information and support. Families need that support if they are to access increased education or return to educational or career training opportunities, or to return to the workforce.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to repeat that the other day we contacted just seven centres in Saskatoon. And the wait list there in these seven centres was 835 spaces for child care. These are people that are on the wait list. We need, I mean, 1,000 spaces or more. If it is 500 from last year and 1,000 new ones this year, well that's even better because 1,500 would make a better dint into the wait lists that are out there.

And at the University of Saskatchewan, the child care wait list just at the university is 500. That's appalling that there are 500 families waiting to be able to access child care spaces. There's money that comes in from the federal government into this province to support the creation of child care spaces, and the province is sitting on the best financial situation it has seen in many years. Mr. Speaker, there is no reason that we aren't moving ahead with this.

There needs to be some action on this issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We know the importance of early learning and child care, and we know that the need is there. If all of this is as it should be — with spaces, support for early child care education, and capital — I mean that's absolutely great. And I can hardly wait for the announcements, but there also is an area of concern.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the budget . . . And we will know that while the Ministry of Education has control of the spaces, the criteria that's put forward for child care spaces, they will do the designation — ELCC [early learning and child care] is contained within the Department of Education — but when you look at Social Services, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the cost for subsidy has always been contained within the Ministry of Social

Services. So when you look at the child care parent subsidies, it remains the same. So I guess the question is, are we expecting 1,000 new child care spaces not to receive subsidy?

It would be very difficult for lower income families or even middle-income families to pay the full cost for child care spaces. And I'm sorry the minister thinks this is funny because it isn't to many families. It's not to families. I mean to be able to access child care for your children — quality, affordable child care — but then to see, yes we're offering all these spaces, but we're not offering any increase in the subsidy amount in the department; it stays the same from '08-09 to '09-10. So new budget's supposed to be more spaces coming forward, but we're not seeing any financial support for it. So that raises a number of concerns.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's also a couple of areas that are of concern in the budget and it includes . . . I know the members opposite have stood in their places a number of times and they have said, well this budget has just improved everything for people right across the board. They talk about how much better life is for Saskatchewan residents, but there is some gaping omissions in this budget.

The government's own charts within the budget documents will quite clearly show that in the inter-city comparisons of taxes, utilities, and housing for a single person at \$25,000 total income, in 2008 the cost for that person in the city of Saskatoon was \$10,389. In 2009 for that same person living in Saskatoon for taxes, utilities, and housing, a single person at \$25,000 total income, the costs are \$11,149. So you're talking about increased, increased costs for a single person.

And, Mr. Speaker, just as a bit of side note, in '07 the costs were 9,600. So I mean we have seen, since the Sask Party government has come in, we have seen utilities increase, we have housing increase, and we have seen no response to that for the average person. Costs have increased substantially. And quite often when you look at the comparisons, it's the housing costs and rent that have skyrocketed and are adding the extra costs besides and utilities. So this is a gap in the budget. We haven't seen much to address housing increases and the stress that's caused, not only on seniors, but low-income and affordable housing initiatives.

[19:45]

So, Mr. Speaker, there's another area of the budget that was a bit of a surprise. When I took them home over the weekend, and I sat down and I started reading through the documents, having a look at what was contained in the documents themselves, and I was surprised at the number of issues that were repeats in the budget.

And no, don't jump to conclusions, it isn't the repeat of good programs that are moving forward. There is a few of those, but not a lot of repeats that way. They're just plain old repeats where things that were done last year, things that were done mid-term are again announced and announced and announced. And they're evident throughout the whole budget. So, Mr. Speaker, that's an area that also raises a number of concerns.

And, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the documents themselves,

and you look at the government's own charts, there is one chart in there, page 61 in the budget summary, that speaks to the total debt of the government of Saskatchewan. And it shows quite clearly that debt will rise over the coming budget cycle of \$900 million.

So it's kind of interesting when we see that over the past couple of months there's been these billboards all around the province talk about one-time oil dollars. Well we know it's one-time dollars that come from resources. Oil was at an all-time high, and what we've seen was the dollars put on debt which we all agree with, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But then we see all these smiling billboards all around the province with the Premier's face on them talking about how he's reduced debt.

Well I'm just wondering, Mr. Speaker, after looking at this budget document, will we also see those billboards when he starts to increase debt? And it looks like we're going to have a number of years of increased debt. People just have to go the budget summary on page 61 and it shows debt steadily increasing over the next number of years up to 2013. And there's also other documents, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that shows the total debt as a percentage of GDP [gross domestic product] continuing to rise, total debt of the province continuing to rise. So it is a concern. It's a real concern, and something that of course hasn't been talked about very much.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's a number of other areas too; one I guess that has been talked about before, the projections for the coming year. And there's been a number of concerns that have been expressed with the numbers that were used in the budget development — GDP growth calculating the budget, and making your future projections on GDP growth at 2.1, when all of the revised projections from financial institutions put the current projection not at 2.1, but at point six three per cent. Which is a wee bit of a difference, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And when we look at some of the articles that have come out in the news media over the past little while, there's a comment that has to do with David Dodge's comments that he made concerning the federal government, and also a comment that was added by Mr. Douglas Porter, an economist with BMO Nesbitt Burns. And he talked about the "... 'lavish global praise' for our banking system should not be 'torqued' into sunny overall comparisons with other national economies ..."

And then he goes on to say, "'Amid the well-deserved back-patting,' Porter said, 'is the rather uncomfortable fact that Canadian economic indicators are now deteriorating nearly as quickly as their US counterparts.'"

Which we can say, okay, that has to do with the federal budget, it has to do with the federal budget's concerns. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look at the optimistic projections that were used here for the provincial budget — GDP growth at 2.1 per cent when current projections are at point six three per cent — it does give us a bit of cause for concern.

And also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look the amount of revenues that are coming from potash — the sales of potash, Mr. Deputy Speaker — a full 20 per cent of the revenues are projected to come from potash. Now it's kind of interesting in the pieces of criticism or comments that have been put forward

on the calculation or projection that 20 per cent of your revenues will come solely from one resource. It makes you think back to the Minister of Finance talking about the wild gyrations of a resource economy. Doesn't seem to bother him now.

But it's also, the government, I think ... The comments today when we had a member from the government side stand up during members' statements, which is traditionally a time to get up and talk about some good news out of your constituency. Well oh no, they felt some need to get up and defend themselves — that it wasn't on production; it was on sales.

Well I beg to differ some of the comments, but potash mines don't stockpile huge amounts of potash. What they do is produce what the guaranteed sales and contracts they have from. There may be some stockpiles, but it's not a huge amount, just by the sheer logistics of it.

So anyway, they proceeded to stand up and try and clarify the difference between sales and production, and that this all smoothed away this whole concern. But the fact of the matter is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$1 out of every 5 that they have projected will come into this province in revenues comes from one resource. Kind of like putting your eggs all in one basket, and here's hoping nobody trips and falls because we could have some serious repercussions.

So, Mr. Speaker, no matter what your faith in the potash industry is, no matter that you feel you can ignore the whole economy worldwide, that sales may be slowing down, that things may be tightening up, and we may see some changes here in Saskatchewan, it causes concern that 20 percent, a full 20 percent of our revenues projected by this government for this province in the coming year comes from one resource industry. Still a concern.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is some concerns. There's concerns with the budget. There's concerns with some of the projections. But time will tell. We will see what will happen in the coming months.

And, Mr. Speaker, there also is some concerns about the insurance policy, that even though the money put into the Growth and Financial Security Fund, I believe it's called ...

An Hon. Member: — Pretty close.

Ms. Higgins: — Pretty close. Close enough. That half of that money's been spent. So during a year of unprecedented growth in this province, unprecedented financial situation, we are seeing the insurance policy cashed in to pay the bills, which is a little bit unnerving because it's not exactly what you would think an insurance policy would be used for.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have to make one other comment. When we talk about they stand up and they say balanced budget, I can remember one of our members from this side of the House stood up during the winter. It was end of December, into January when first the Premier was talking about instead of spending \$1.5 billion on infrastructure in the '09-10 budget, he was going to take 500 million and spend it in the current year, the '08-09 budget, move things up, provide an economic

booster shot to the province. But he also saved his skin and balanced his '09-10 budget. Because if they had spent that \$500 million in this budget coming up, they would have been in a deficit position.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting how these things can be spun. But I would just say to people, you need to have a look at the numbers. You need to be sure. I mean, even go back, look at last year's budget, look at this year's budget. You will see the repeats. You will see the areas of concern.

Some good things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I'll grant them that. With these kind of resources, it's wonderful to see things being done for the people of Saskatchewan because this economic prosperity, this economic prosperity is what Saskatchewan citizens have worked for. They have earned it.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while there are good things, there are a number of concerns. I look forward to more questions, the opportunity to be able to ask more questions in estimates. And I will be supporting the amendment put forward by my colleague.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's indeed a privilege and an honour to speak on the second budget of a Saskatchewan Party government, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think people have recognized very quickly with the speech delivered last week by my colleague, the Minister of Finance, when he talked about strong and steady. Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's what the people of this province want. They want a government that delivers a strong and steady approach to growth, Mr. Speaker. That's what the people in this province want. They want to be assured that there is a government that has a plan.

And, Mr. Speaker, one of the other things that I think is starting to show through very clearly as we assess budgets of other provinces across Canada, that indeed Saskatchewan is in a bit of an unusual situation in that we have a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker. One of few provinces — maybe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the only province — to have a balanced budget this year.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to spend a few minutes talking about the Growth and Financial Security Fund. And I know my colleagues will wonder why I'm beginning there. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there have been some things said by the opposition members that need to be clarified. They need to be clarified right now, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The purpose of the Growth and Financial Security Fund is this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it's listed on page 65 of the budget document. It says this:

The purpose of the GFSF is twofold:

[One] to assist in the achievement of the Government of Saskatchewan's long-term objectives by providing for

financial security of the Government of Saskatchewan from year to year; and,

[the second point, Mr. Deputy Speaker] to provide a source of funds that are to be available for appropriation to be used for programs of the Government of Saskatchewan identified as promoting or enhancing the economic development of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you take a look at those two points, the reason for its creation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have to remember that in '08-09, the opening balance of the fund was \$1.634 billion — 1.634 billion. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fund again at the end of this next fiscal year is going to end at almost \$1.2 billion. Now you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard the members opposite talking about the fact that the rainy day fund has been drained — it's been drained. \$1.2 billion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't think is much of a drain.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to go back in time a bit to 2002, because you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in that time the NDP were talking about a particular fund. And the members on this side of the House will remember the definition of what they then said was the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

And the government talked about this until a couple of people actually studied it and made some comments. And this was a comment made on November 28 by Provincial Auditor Fred Wendel. And I'm paraphrasing a bit because he made a large amount of comments. And he says, the Fiscal Stabilization Fund is not a proper accounting practice. It's not following generally accepted accounting principles.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the very same time, Norm Halldorson, who at that time was with the chartered accountants, he was a chartered accountant and Chair of the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, and he said that:

This has been an accounting shell game. There's nothing to withdraw. There's nothing there.

Mr. Speaker, and I heard from members opposite saying, oh well, your Growth and Financial Security Fund is just like our Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Mr. Speaker, in 2002 there was no money in the NDP's so-called Fiscal Stabilization Fund — unlike, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the \$1.2 billion that's going to be in a Growth and Financial Security Fund of a Saskatchewan Party government.

[20:00]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Nola Joorisity also at that time, a couple years later, weighed in on this debate and she said from . . . And by the way, I used her quote in the March 24, 2005 *Hansard*, and it is this: "When you draw down the fiscal stabilization fund, you are, in fact, incurring debt because there's no actual money in there."

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you look at the position that the NDP has taken regarding the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and trying to compare it to the Growth and Financial Security Fund, it's like comparing apples to oranges, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They're just not the same.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also listened with interest today when our Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis Relations was answering to some questions about what our government has done for schools and for the North and in terms of expenditures. Mr. Deputy Speaker, last year the amount of spend that we as a government did for capital infrastructure on schools was a record \$259 million.

You know, and I want to bring the members opposite, to their attention, but also people in the North and in all schools that have First Nations and Métis children attending schools — and that's occurring right across the province — but I do want to make special mention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the Northern Lights School Division. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Northern Lights School Division, we have a project that is going on in Churchill High School at La Ronge. We have a project at La Loche. We have project in Pinehouse. We have a project in Buffalo Narrows and a project in Beauval — all recently announced, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the value of those projects in the Northern Lights School Division is \$31,294,625.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that's on top of all of the other projects that we have announced — projects like a brand new school in Duck Lake, projects in Porcupine Plain and in Balcarres and here in Regina, in community schools in Regina and in Saskatoon and in Prince Albert. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a record spend.

And this is a government recognizing that for last year's projects, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are spending total value, that is the Ministry of Education's share plus the school division's share. We are going to be spending over \$350 million in total, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I dare say that's an astounding amount of money because . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I took a look at the last estimates for the NDP government in 2007-08. And the last time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the combined ministry was called Learning which included K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education plus advanced education. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, two numbers jump at you from that set of estimates. And in that set of estimates in 2007-08, the amount of capital that was spent or allocated by the NDP for their K to 12 capital was \$18.3 million. And the year before, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was 21.8 million. That's what the NDP's record is, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It's not \$259 million which we just completed in this fiscal year or in the fiscal year that we're in now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because in fact we still have to go until March 31 before we in fact will be concluding the fiscal year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think the most important part of this budget, as far as my ministry is concerned, is of course the announcement about the property tax. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's been a situation that's been long needed. We have heard about the weakness of the foundation operating grant, the FOG

[foundation operating grant] grant.

The FOG grant has been in place since 1974, Mr. Deputy Speaker, 35 years. It probably served its purpose well, but we have heard from many school boards that it did not address their needs. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we were elected in 2007, we made three commitments. We indicated to the people of Saskatchewan that we needed to achieve a fair balance for education funding. Saskatchewan has one of the worst records as far as the reliance on property owners to fund education. So, Mr. Speaker, we made that commitment.

We also made a commitment to ensure the K to 12 education system is properly funded. Mr. Deputy Speaker, for a number of years I have heard from boards of education who talk about recognized expenditures that the government used, and the actual expenditures that the board faced were quite different, as much as 12 per cent where the real cost at a board level was at least that much higher. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, when a board of education has two sources of money, and they are now short 12 per cent and the grant has been announced, the only other source that they can go to, of course, is the taxpayer.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the third commitment we made was that we would reduce the education portion of property tax.

Mr. Speaker, I was very proud of the fact that our Finance minister, in his address to the province, indicated that there would be an additional \$241 million allocated to school boards.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, this addresses a number of the concerns that board members have had, that parents and students in schools have had, to ensure that in fact we are recognizing the real expenses. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I understand the concerns of boards of education who have changed from a system that they've been familiar with for decades and decades, and that is a system where they had access to the property tax base. Mr. Speaker, I have committed to the boards of education that we're going to work with them over the next two years as we move through a transition phase to recognize the real costs.

And that is why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we developed the budget necessary for the \$241 million, we've taken into account the full increase of teachers' salaries that will come about with the next year of the contract coming into force on September 1, 2009. We've built in a 4 per cent inflation rate on all of the other costs that a board of education has.

But I do also want to indicate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that these are estimate numbers at the time of budget. And we recognize that of the 29 boards of education that are in the province of Saskatchewan, there may be, there may be some unusual circumstances — I hope circumstances where suddenly the enrolment of a board of education grows by 500 students because we've attracted 500 children from outside of the province of Saskatchewan. Those will be great things.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we recognized as a government, after the tremendous work done by the member from Rosetown who worked on a report for me to find out what is the best way of

addressing the funding of education. The member made out a number of recommendations in his report that I received in the first week of February, and I had a chance to assess that report against other reports that have been produced over time — a number of reports have been produced for government. And the situation that developed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was that there had to be first of all a cut, and secondly a cap to education property tax.

So, Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we have done. We have put in place fixed mill rates for the three classifications: residential, agriculture, and commercial. We have indicated what those mill rates will be effective January 1, 2009. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've also indicated what those mill rates will be on January 1, 2010. In this first year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the savings for property owners in the province of Saskatchewan will be \$103 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And when you look ahead to January 1, 2010 and the mill rates are lowered again, you will recognize that there will be a further savings to property owners of \$53 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the short-term program that we were using, before we have moved to this current position that is fixed, was a rebate program. And the rebate program last year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for all property owners in the province of Saskatchewan, we actually returned about \$158 million.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you add the numbers — the 158 million for a rebate program, the 103 million that taxpayers will save this year, and the additional 53 million that they'll save next year — Mr. Deputy Speaker, if government had not addressed the education property situation, the tax that was levied on property owners, they would have to contribute over \$300 million more from property to fund education. And that number, Mr. Speaker, has been reduced by that full \$350 million.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, the goal of course is to enhance the amount of funding that is the responsibility of the province. And this year, that number that we will be moving towards with the \$1.38 billion worth of expenditure in the education budget will move the percentage of cost to about 63 per cent for government, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And next year that will move to 66 per cent.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've also been asked, well will that continue to increase? Will that percentage continue to increase? And the answer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is of course. Because now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the entire costs — inflation, new contracts, all of the things that will happen in the K to 12 education model — that full cost is going to be picked up by government. So as costs increase to boards of education overall, and we continue to enhance the funding 100 per cent, we will see a continued change in the percentage that the government of Saskatchewan will be picking up, and a further reduction in the amount that taxpayers will be contributing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are so many great things in this budget. And I want to highlight a number of them. And I think the first one that I want to talk about is the early learning and child care. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have listened to the people

of Saskatchewan who have indicated to us that there is a need to address the number of spaces that are available for early learning and child care. So that is why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have announced an additional — an additional, for the benefit of the member of Moose Jaw Wakamow — we have added an additional 1,000 new child care spaces.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's a pretty significant amount because the member opposite raised some concerns about, oh there have been announcements, and the child care spaces haven't been delivered, and there are concerns. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the record, I want to place on tonight's record the actual numbers that have been assigned. Mr. Deputy Speaker, on March 31, 2009, for centre- and home-based spaces, there will be 9,942 spaces in operation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have 251 spaces that have been allocated, but they haven't been opened yet because of some delays — delays because of construction, delays because of municipal sewer and water system installations. And they are: 45 spaces in Fairhaven School in Saskatoon, 50 spaces in Lester B. Pearson School in Saskatoon, 25 spaces in Frontier, 30 spaces in Gravelbourg, 41 spaces in Birch Hills, 15 spaces in Montmartre, and 30 new spaces in Vanscoy. Plus, Mr. Speaker, the 15 spaces that were just announced here in Regina with the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] and the transfer of 60 spaces from Argyle.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you add up those numbers, those add up to 251. There are additional 207 spaces that are delayed due to overall school construction, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because now we're remodelling and renovating schools to incorporate child care.

[20:15]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are 50 spaces for Mount Royal in Saskatoon, 21 spaces in Turnor Lake in the North, 50 spaces allocated to St. Michael School in Saskatoon, 50 spaces for the Saskatoon Open Door Society for Queen Elizabeth School in Saskatoon, and 36 spaces allocated to Nipawin. That's 207 spaces. So, Mr. Speaker, the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow is right. There are 458 spaces that have been allocated. There's monies that have been budgeted for them, but there are various concerns as to why they haven't been opened yet — construction and plans for the future. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that will take the total amount to 10,400 spaces — exactly what we said would be in operation.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've also indicated that that 10,400 is going to increase by an additional 1,000 spaces to 11,400.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — So the member opposite has indicated that, you know, she was wondering whether they were real numbers. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that she understands the file because she was the minister of Education sometime back, but in fact there are going to be 11,400 spaces when all of these spaces are implemented, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, last year one of the lobby groups that wanted to ensure that we moved forward very quickly was the libraries, the public libraries in the province of Saskatchewan. They wanted to implement a single integrated library system, also referred to as SILS. SILS, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a cost-effective way for the 310 local public libraries in the province, that are found within the 10 public library systems, to share resources. They had to ensure that there was one hardware system, one project set of software in all of the 310 libraries that could address these resources.

So last year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we announced a \$5.2 million expenditure over four years. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased that we have again kept our promise, and the additional \$625,000 necessary to help those 500,000 registered users in the province of Saskatchewan be able to use SILS is indeed going to happen, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I indicated to you at the beginning the record of the NDP as far as school capital in 2006 and 2007. Mr. Deputy Speaker, while 259 million would have been accepted again by the Ministry of Education for spending on school capital, we know that that wasn't realistic because of the fact that the economies of the province and the economic conditions in the nation have changed. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm very pleased to announce that in this budget we are again allocating \$61 million for K-12 school capital.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — You know, and my colleague is right, on top of last year's 259 million, when we add the 61, we're now going to have allocated, in the short time that we have been a government, \$320 million in capital.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are many more projects. There's no question about that. All the people who have concerns, the people that are living in communities right now where there's overcrowding and, you know, people in the province know that there are those kinds of situations in Lloydminster and in Warman and in Martensville and in White City and in Balgonie. There are a number of schools that need to be expanded, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a huge number of projects, and I've indicated that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, after last year's spend of \$259 million, we were able to address almost all of the schools listed on priority 1. Priority 1 schools, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are only two projects left in that category. And now we're going to be able to start to address the schools that are listed under priority 2. But I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there are 21 projects listed under priority 2, and we probably require 325, \$350 million to address those schools. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with \$61 million, of course that's not going to be possible.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a couple of other situations that we need to address immediately. One that has been around for the entire 16 years of an NDP government was the problem with asbestos. And we're going to have to move on those projects in schools.

We're also going to have to address a concern, Mr. Deputy

Speaker, that has been put in place by the occupational health and safety standards. We now have to ensure that on every school roof in the province of Saskatchewan, we have a system that will ensure that anyone who goes on that roof will be protected by either attaching themselves to a guide wire or they will have to be kept within an enclosed space. Huge, millions and millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, a huge cost will be required, and we're going to have to start addressing that. We started with some projects last year.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look at \$61 million, and we look at the needs and we look at all of the things now that we have to do, it's a small amount. And we're going to try to ensure that we address those concerns that are of course jumping at us in a fashion that will ensure that we have to move on those projects.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are many school divisions who know now, as we've addressed the capital concerns in the last while, that there is hope, that there is a situation where this government will recognize the projects. Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, under the NDP, as I indicated last year at this time, first amount of money that we have to allocate out of our new budget was to pay for the projects of 2003, which were the last set of projects that the NDP were attempting to put in place. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're catching up, but we're catching up fairly slowly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to talk a bit about the learning technologies. I'm very pleased to be working with the Minister Responsible for Crown Corporations as we address delivery of technology through technologies delivery of distance learning.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the necessary items in all schools, in public libraries, in regional colleges, is the CommunityNet connection. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're going to be spending an additional \$4 million to support the increased capacity of CommunityNet and to ensure that the blackboard learning management system is in place. So we're moving forward with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We're going to be adding \$500,000 to school divisions to support the transition of distance learning. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we made a change, we made a change that was initiated, oh I guess, about four years ago under the NDP, when they indicated that there was a need to restructure the correspondence school, to move away from that paper model courses to a technology supported distance learning.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can tell you that the uptake, the uptake by the boards of education and others has been astounding. We have, I believe, 12 providers now, Mr. Deputy Speaker — 10 of them are school divisions and 2 others that are providing courses through distance education. We now have over 100 courses that students can take through distance supported learning, and that's outstanding, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We now recognize how this system can truly deliver quality education to all parts, all parts of the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the other enhancements — it's not a large enhancement in the budget — it's \$150,000 additional monies beyond what was spent last year, and that \$150,000 is to subsidize adult students' registration fees. We are ensuring that

adults who want to take these courses to complete their grade 10 or their grade 11 or their grade 12 now will have their fees subsidized. And we're subsidizing to the tune of \$225 to ensure that more adults, more adults will be able to access these courses and of course complete their education.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the other changes that we announced to our educational agencies was a significant amount of money overall to all educational agencies, but I do want to talk about an expenditure of \$80,000. An additional \$80,000, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was given to the heritage languages grant program. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while everyone says, well that's a pretty small amount of money, I want to indicate to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that is a 56 per cent increase, 56 per cent increase to the heritage language program. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's the first increase to that program in 11 years.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, we recognize how important immigration is to this province. We're seeing a number of individuals moving into this province wanting support. They need to be able to address English as a second language. They need to be able to address heritage languages that they have brought with them and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to announce that kind of increase to that program.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, the budget that we have described in the last six days has been a budget, I think, that people of Saskatchewan have been waiting for for years because they recognize, they recognize that we are facing tough times in Canada. We're facing some economic difficulties in the world, yet this province has positioned itself well over the last 16 months. It has positioned itself well to attract immigration. It has positioned itself well so that in fact we are leaders, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are leaders in creating jobs. We are leaders in so many different factors, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that is why it's an exciting time.

As the Minister of Finance indicated that, you know, there's just no better place to be from right now than from Saskatchewan because this is a province that is going to continue to grow. It's going to continue to recognize the strong leadership of the Premier of the province. It's going to continue to recognize that we as a government understand that there are many needs. There are many needs in education — as I've indicated the few that I've been able to explain tonight — the many needs in health, in highways, agriculture. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it goes on and on and on.

But the exciting thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that this is a strong and steady budget. It is a budget that is balanced, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it is a budget that is sustainable. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am proud to be able to support this budget.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources.

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

pleasure this evening to join in the budget debate and to talk about the highlights within the budget.

But I want to start off by just saying thank you to some people. First of all, in my constituency office in Kindersley, there are two ladies there that make sure everything's kept in order there — Susan and Sherri. They do a great job. Unfortunately, as a cabinet minister, from time to time we don't get as much time in our constituencies as we probably should get. And if it wasn't for the very good work of these two ladies, it'd be much more difficult in my constituency than it is. They're able to keep things in order, and very seldom are there any concerns that are too significant that they can't deal with.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank the staff in my office here at the legislature in the ministry offices here. They do a great job as well in terms of research, in terms of organization, in terms of keeping the office managed properly. And they certainly do a great job with respect to that. And I want to take this opportunity to publicly thank them as well.

In addition to that, I want to thank the good people of Kindersley. I've had the very good fortune, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of being elected on four occasions, and certainly I want to thank the people for that increased majority on each one of those occasions. It's been a great and very rewarding opportunity and a great honour to have served in that capacity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget has many highlights in it. We've heard speeches from both sides of the House about it. I think that Saskatchewan has never been in better fiscal shape than we are in today in this province. The people of Saskatchewan have worked very, very hard to get where we are today.

[20:30]

Clearly, after 50 years of collectively or longer of NDP administrations, it's going to take a little while for us to get out of the ditch that we're in right now over the last number of years, but we're making progress. In 18 months, I think we've done more than the previous administration did in 16 years.

And I can't help but notice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you travel around Saskatchewan, when you travel around and talk to people, I've never seen the level of optimism that there is in Saskatchewan today, compared to what I've seen over the last 15 or 16 years. People in Saskatchewan are extremely proud of the progress that this administration has made in the last number of months. They are looking at it and they're saying that Saskatchewan for once is on top. For once in their lives, Saskatchewan is number one in Canada in terms of economic growth, in terms of job prospects, in a number of areas like that.

On the weekend — I think I want to illustrate this point — on the weekend, I attended, I went to a playoff hockey game at home. Standing around visiting with a number of folks in the area there in this particular juncture in the evening, there were a number of business people that I was standing there visiting with.

And a gentleman came up, and he is one of the most, I would say, one of the most astute business people I've ever met. I

doubt very much that he votes for the Saskatchewan Party, doubt very much, but what he did was really quite interesting. This is a guy that has been probably one of the bedrock supporters of the NDP for as long as I can remember — my entire life . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And if you want me to, I'll share with you, I'll share with you his name later on, member from Athabasca, if you want. Because I'd be happy to provide you with his telephone number and everything else to substantiate what I'm about to say.

He came up to me, and in the presence of a number of business people, he said to me — he's a Massey Ferguson dealer and a General Motors dealer in Eston, Saskatchewan — and he came up to me and he said to me, I want you to know in the presence of all these other business people in this small, little town that I think this is the best budget I've seen in my entire life.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — And he said that for a number of reasons, for a number of reasons. He said, we've seen a substantial amount of property tax decreases in this budget. That's very good for his business. He thinks it's good for rural Saskatchewan. It's good for urban Saskatchewan. It's a step in the right direction. It leaves more money in the pockets of people to make the decisions about where they spend it, rather than government making it for them. That was one of the points, he said.

In addition to that, we see a substantial amount of money going into health care, into education, into infrastructure. He said as well that he thinks that these are very, very important initiatives that government should be funding. In addition to that, he said, there's a number of measures that help the disadvantaged in our society in Saskatchewan these days. And you can look to all of them in the budget, from tax decreases to income support for those that are disadvantaged in society in this province. There's a number of areas there, he said, that are very, very important.

I think he was being very, very sincere. And this is a gentleman that I don't think is, as I said, I would be surprised if he's ever supported the Saskatchewan Party. But I suspect that in the next election he may. I strongly suspect that one more of the bedrock support that the NDP has had, opposite, for probably 50 years is about to abandon them. And I think that's the kind of thing that we're seeing all across Saskatchewan today.

There are people, there are people looking at Saskatchewan, the management of the Premier of Saskatchewan, the Minister of Finance, and the caucus as a whole, and they're looking at them and saying, I think these people are managing this province pretty well.

And we're not just us that are saying those kinds of things. You look at the news from across Saskatchewan, from across Canada, and internationally. We've seen stories on CNN [Cable News Network], BNN [Business News Network] about what's happening in Saskatchewan. Everybody is sitting up and taking notice about the good news that there is in our province these days. They're saying, what has happened in Saskatchewan that's resulted in such a dramatic turnaround in the fortunes of that province?

They're sitting there and they're looking at it. And they're saying, they're running a balanced budget. They're running with the highest level balanced budget, which is the only one in Canada at the moment that's going to be running a balanced budget with the possible exception of Manitoba, who incidentally has about two and a half billion dollars of transfer payments on a yearly basis from the federal government. So it's a little bit hard for them to argue that they are running a balanced budget if they didn't have that level of support from the federal government.

The fact is, is that people are looking at Saskatchewan and they're saying, this government is on the right track. This government is moving in the right directions. Yes, there are areas of the economy that are struggling. Yes, there's no question about that. You look at the forestry sector; there's difficulties there. There's no question about that. We have admitted that. We have said we are working on that. I think you'll see over the next number of days and week a number of steps that will start to help that.

But the only thing that's really going to help the forestry sector is for there to be an upturn in the housing market in the United States. We cannot as an administration make a marketplace for lumber if there is no marketplace out there for it. There's no government on earth that can afford to support an industry when there simply isn't a market for the product that they produce.

And I'm interested, I'd be interested in knowing what the members opposite would want an administration to do. Would you want to continue, as one of the members opposite has advocated, to pour money into the pulp mill in Prince Albert? A hundred million dollars you folks were going to put on the table. And the fact of the matter is, is I don't think there's anybody out there today that believes that that \$100 million now, in light of what's happened in the economy, would be a good investment. There's no one alive out there that would believe that that money would be anywhere other than gone right now. That's the fact of the matter.

And I look at the other member from P.A. [Prince Albert], when questioned by the media with respect to this said, yes, it's probably right, that the government shouldn't be putting additional resources into this.

So it's going to be a very difficult turnaround in that industry. I look at housing start numbers that come out of the US — 3 million starts on a normal basis — under 500,000 and actually still dropping in the US, not climbing yet. But that industry will turn around, and we're going to do everything we can to help make that turnaround possible. And I think the member opposite from the North will be seeing some of those measures very soon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people are proud of Saskatchewan for a number of reasons. We're paying down debt at record levels, and I think that that's important to the people of Saskatchewan. There's large tax relief, and I think that that's important. There's big infrastructure investment.

And I couldn't help but note last week in the legislature after question period, the former premier was very, very, I will say,

agitated at the fact that we were talking to them about the infrastructure deficit that his administration left the province of Saskatchewan. A huge infrastructure deficit.

And again to just illustrate the point, you look at the 950-some million dollar investment of SaskPower. And the members opposite reaction to that was, that all that is going to happen is we're going to see power rates go up. Well the fact of the matter is, is we have no choice but to invest that or we won't see the lights on in Saskatchewan. SaskPower officials have said very clearly we are on the edge, frankly, in terms of being able to manage the level of power generated in our province, to the point where we have to make this significant investment in Saskatchewan.

There's an infrastructure deficit out there that's very critical that has to be managed some how or another. And everyone knows in Saskatchewan, the only way that you're going to address that is to pour significant number amount of dollars into that SaskPower rebuild in order to manage that. And that's very important.

And again to just illustrate that point, if you drive around rural Saskatchewan, a number of years ago, SaskPower, under the NDP administration, SaskPower sent out crews all over the province. And anybody that lives in rural Saskatchewan will remember this. They sent crews out all over rural Saskatchewan. They had some way of being able to test the soundness of power poles. This is just to illustrate the mismanagement that we see courtesy of the NDP when they were in government. They went out and they assessed the soundness of power poles. There's some measurement that they are able to ascertain whether these power poles needed replacement or not. And if they did need replacement, with an aerosol can of red paint, they painted a big X on them.

That is so many years ago now that the paint has worn off with the weather. And those poles are still standing there today — the ones that the NDP said should've been replaced I think it was in the neighbourhood of 10 years ago approximately. There's two right out in front of my farmyard, and they're still standing there, sort of precariously balancing away there. And the fact is, is that after that length of time, that now we'll have to — if you want to replace those poles — you'll have to go around and do the assessment once again because the paint is worn off. They've been so long in need of replacement. And that's just an illustration of the kind of mismanagement.

What was the point? What was the point, I would ask the members opposite, of going through that exercise and that cost and all of that kind of a problem without doing anything about it? What was the point of that? Other than to just make it look like the same thing that the NDP members and their government has done all of the time — make it look like you're going to do something even though you have no intention of carrying forward with it, none whatsoever.

And it's a little bit like the member from North Battleford. He stands in his place day after day after day and talks about the hospital in North Battleford. He was the Health minister for, I think, three years or in that neighbourhood, and he says he had plans to do it. He was going to get around to it; he was going to make sure that if they would've won the last election, you could

bet for sure that they'd be building.

Well the problem with that is, is as everybody knows, he committed not one thin dime towards doing that for the people in his constituency. And now he has the unmitigated gall to stand up in this legislature and say to the Government of Saskatchewan, I want that hospital built immediately in my constituency.

And I would ask the member opposite, with respect to that is, what would he have us not do in order to fund something in his constituency? What would he rather have? Or what would he look at, the Government of Saskatchewan, and say, we want to cut you back in health care, in other areas of the province. We want to cut you back in Education or Highways or First Nations and Métis or any other department in order to be able to put more money into his constituency.

The fact of the matter is, is this has been a problem in his constituency for a long, long time. It's one more of those NDP infrastructure deficit questions that's out there. And again, you look at departments all over this government and you can see that same sort of thing. Just travel rural Saskatchewan and take a look at the highways. I think the Minister of Highways has said that if you gave him \$6 billion, he could spend it entirely in the Department of Highways just trying to address the infrastructure deficit that you folks left on the people of Saskatchewan — that the NDP left on the people of Saskatchewan — and that goes from department to department to department.

You go to the schools in rural Saskatchewan. You go to health care facilities. I had the Minister of Health tour the Kerrobert Hospital in my constituency, and I was even astounded. It had been a few years since I'd been there and toured it myself. But I was astounded at the level of degradation that you could see in the facility. Thumbtacks in the roof with a string down draining water into buckets — in hospitals in Saskatchewan. Crumbling infrastructure all over the place in that hospital. It was absolutely astounding at the level of disrepair that there was in that facility.

And the members opposite have said that that's been well managed. Well I would dare say that the people of Saskatchewan don't manage their affairs that way, and they are ashamed of the fact that our government has . . . that that NDP administration has allowed things to go to that level.

When you look at in the health care fields having to shut down operating theatres in the summer because the fact that there wasn't adequate air conditioning in the operating theatres — and at the same time the members opposite say it's been well managed. Well the fact of the matter is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is Saskatchewan is just beginning to find out the level of that NDP Ponzi scheme that they've been portraying on the people of Saskatchewan for a long, long time.

It's coming down in a lot of ways. People are looking at it and saying, what was wrong with the previous administration that they didn't manage some of these things much better than they are? And I say to the people of Saskatchewan, we've just begun to uncover the kinds of problems that the NDP left the taxpayers of Saskatchewan . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — And the other thing that's really, really interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this debate, is the level of optimism that there is on this side of the House, the level of pessimism that there is on the NDP side of the House. And it's shocking to see that.

I remember not too many years ago when they were on the government side, they were saying things like, up your attitude; you've got to be more positive about Saskatchewan. Well the fact of the matter is, is we're extremely positive about Saskatchewan now that it's being managed properly.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[20:45]

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — We see speech after speech after speech trying to say to the people of Saskatchewan that it can't get any better; it's only going to get worse. You have to, you're going to, wait and see; we're going to see the province go down the drain in the not too distant future. It was astounding in the budget address and shortly after, in the member's response, the Finance critic's response to the budget that he was talking about this can't last; this prosperity can't last in Saskatchewan. Doom and gloom. This is simply, you know, we've got too many eggs in one basket, in the potash revenue side of things.

And the fact of the matter was, is he was just wrong in terms of how the calculations are made with respect to potash royalties for the province of Saskatchewan. It seems astounding. It's either a case of he knew and deliberately told the people of Saskatchewan something that wasn't quite right or he didn't know — which is even worse as a former minister of Finance — that he simply didn't understand how the potash taxes were collected in this province. And that's frightening to think, that as a former minister of Finance, that he didn't know better with respect to how potash taxes were calculated.

So I think as members on this side of the House all thought these members would know, these numbers are not just something that are picked out of thin air. There's a lot of analysis that's done by Department of Finance officials and other agencies with respect to coming up with these numbers.

In addition to that, we've talked to senior executives of all of the potash corporations and said to them, we want your best estimates as to what you think is going to happen in the potash market. They've been very forthcoming with respect to that. They have said that they think our numbers are accurate. They think that they may even be on the low side in terms of these projections.

I look at Scotia Economics from the Scotiabank talking about this. The budget's price projection of 556 US [United States] per tonne of KCl [potassium chloride] for 2009-10 fiscal year seems reasonable.

So I guess when you look at that, when you look at what we've been able to, in speaking with the potash executives of the various potash producing companies, they are all saying that these numbers are achievable.

And in fact in the marketplace recently, the Russians have sold a significant quantity of potash to Brazil recently for \$750 US per tonne of KCl. So our 556, when you look at comparables that are out there in the marketplace right now, is extremely reasonable. And in fact, we may see a significant increase in the amount of potash royalties for the province of Saskatchewan.

And the members opposite for some reason want to suggest that that just simply isn't going to be the case and we're on a fiscal train wreck, I think is what one of the members suggested with respect to that, even though he was dead wrong in terms of the calculations of it. So you have to wonder a little bit about his credibility on the whole issue of potash taxes when he simply as a former minister of Finance doesn't even know how they're calculated.

So we think that these numbers are reasonable. Potash is an internationally traded commodity. We're seeing in recent days, as I said, potash prices are actually strengthening.

We are reasonably confident that we will see a conclusion to the latest round of potash negotiations with China and India here very soon. I am told by potash officials the discussions are going well. They're talking about significant quantities. They're talking about prices in the neighbourhood of what has been negotiated with other countries, so they are confident that we're going to see those numbers met.

We've already seen oil in the last few days improving. It's not to say that it may not bounce back the other direction, but we're already some 7 or \$8 over what the Minister of Finance's budget estimate is. So we're on track, I think, in a lot of ways, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to that, we see an economy that's growing, one of the only ones in Canada, and I think again it's something that we as a province should be extremely proud of. We see people moving back to Saskatchewan. I can't help but note my son on the weekend told me about three of his friends that he went to school with have moved back to Saskatchewan recently. They say that there isn't the kind of opportunities in Alberta that there once was, and now they're happy to be moving back to Saskatchewan. And I think members in the government here from all across Saskatchewan can point to numerous examples of that, of people moving back to Saskatchewan, and that's probably one of the best things that we can ever see.

If you go to rural Saskatchewan these days — and I think the same exists in urban areas as well — you go to events in your constituency and you see for the first time young people there that you have never seen, little children wandering around at these functions, which is a tremendous change than what we have seen in the last decade or so in Saskatchewan. And it is very much welcome across this province, and I think we're going to see that trend continue because Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has been identified by many people as one of the best places — and I think the best place in Canada — to live and raise a family.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — This is a balanced budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$424 million surplus. I think that's a tremendous

accomplishment when you look at what is happening in other jurisdictions across Canada. Some 15 or \$16 billion deficit, I think it is, in Ontario. Province after province after province, including the province of Alberta, with deficits. And Saskatchewan, the only one in Canada that's going to post that. And I think that that speaks to the fiscal management of a government that wants to see our province move forward for the first time in 50 years.

We see the largest reduction in education property tax. That's something that's been talked about in this province for longer than I've been around in political life — going back into the '40s, Tommy Douglas talking about that, saying that this needed to be addressed. The NDP talked about it and talked about it and talked about it, study after study after study, the former premier saying that the status quo was not on.

I think people in rural Saskatchewan, in urban Saskatchewan have been waiting for property tax changes for a long, long time. And now, thankfully, as a result of this budget, we see that kind of property tax reductions that the people of Saskatchewan have been waiting for for a very long time.

In addition to that, we see historic revenue sharing in Saskatchewan, something again that the municipalities across this province have been waiting for for a very long time. And the only answer that the NDP, the members opposite have to this whole change in terms of education and property tax and revenue sharing is, we were going to do it too; we just didn't get around to it.

And frankly I think, members opposite, that the problem with that is, is people look at you folks and say, you were the government for a long, long time. How come you couldn't get around to these things? How come you couldn't do some of the things that have been accomplished in the last 18 months in Saskatchewan when you were the government for such a long, long period of time?

Well the fact of the matter was, is when NDP governments have been in power in Saskatchewan, we've seen economic stagnation, the likes of which Canada has never seen in any other jurisdiction except in this province.

The fact is, is that we are seeing a turnaround in the economy here that we have never seen in this province ever in my lifetime, nor any of the members opposite's lifetime have we seen the kind of turnaround in an economy. Saskatchewan is on top, and I dare say we will stay that way.

In addition to this budget, I think that something that's not well known or hasn't been publicized a great deal is, is the changes that have been made in the field of agriculture. This is the largest single budget in the history of the province of Saskatchewan with respect to agriculture — the largest budget ever.

Saskatchewan agriculture's back on the radar screen, when it comes to the Government of Saskatchewan, for the first time in decades. The fact of the matter is, is the NDP systematically went about reducing the budgets in Agriculture over the years, starting back in the years of Roy Romanow, when they ripped up the GRIP [gross revenue insurance program] contracts with

farmers, when they gutted the crop insurance program in terms of yield averages and drove the price up with respect to that. They closed down infrastructure in rural Saskatchewan, the rural service centres. They closed down a number of crop insurance offices. They systematically went about gutting Agriculture for years, and now we see a government that's moving back in the right direction in terms of supporting still the largest industry in our province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — And it's really quite interesting. It's going to be quite an interesting time coming up in Saskatchewan because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the same time we're debating the budget, we see the NDP going through a leadership process. And they're starting to talk about some of the things that they would do, some of the leadership candidates. I see some of the most left wing propaganda coming out the — that you can imagine in Saskatchewan — coming out of the candidate from Regina here talking about nationalizing the oil and gas industry, talking about a number of those things.

You would think the social experiment that we've gone through for 50 years would be enough, but still we see members opposite talking about the merits of the *Regina Manifesto*. And that's one of your leadership candidates. Just look it up and check it out for yourself, the people of Saskatchewan. This is what these people are talking about, opposite, is a return to the past with the *Regina Manifesto* and all of the good things that were accomplished in it that the NDP have been promoting for 50, 60 years.

We see in addition to that, we see one of the leading contenders talking about nuclear energy and how he is supportive of nuclear industry, just not the Saskatchewan Party's version of the nuclear industry.

I will predict one thing though, that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that in this leadership race, we will see, I think, the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow will probably be successful in this. I think she'll likely be the winner in this thing. I think the . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — And the former executive with Nexen, I doubt the NDP are ready for an oil industry capitalist from Calgary to take over their party. Just don't think it's going to happen. I just don't think that the good socialists of the NDP are going to allow the capitalist from Calgary, Alberta to take over their party. I'd be very surprised if that's the case, and we'll be watching with great interest, but I'll make the prediction right now.

In addition to that, I've said to the member opposite, I think she's a good candidate. I've offered to provide her with a little, very modest amount of financial support, and I'll see that she gets that. The fact of the matter is, I think she's the best of the bunch over there, even though it's not a very deep talent pool. But nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, it's going to be on the radar screen here in Saskatchewan for the next number of months. Watching that with great interest, I think the people of Saskatchewan will be.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a number of members that want to get into the debate with respect to the budget. I certainly believe that this is a budget that moves Saskatchewan in a positive direction. It moves Saskatchewan in a direction that the people of this province have been waiting for, for a long, long time. They're very proud of the fact that we are making progress. They want us to continue with the good work that has been started in the last number of months. We certainly will be doing that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that's precisely the reason why I will not be supporting the amendment. I will be wholeheartedly supporting the budget as presented by my good friend, the Minister of Finance.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — I recognize the member for Regina northwest.

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's truly a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to rise and participate in this debate, the debate on the budget speech. It's truly an honour for me to do so on behalf of the fine folks in Regina Northeast.

As I'm sure you've heard me say before, Mr. Speaker, that wherever you travel in Saskatchewan, it's been my experience of wherever you travel in Saskatchewan, you meet nothing but fine, great people — warm, friendly, very hospitable people. And where will you find more friendlier and hospitable people than the good folks in Regina Northeast? And as I do every summer, I'm looking forward to, this summer, to have the opportunity to get out and door knock, visit with my constituents on their doorstep. I like to try to do 14 polls every summer. I do so because it keeps me in touch with the folks there. It keeps me in touch with their issues and their concerns, and it's just nice to get around. And having done this a number of times, it's the opportunity to watch people grow and watch their families grow and watch how things change and how life affects each and every one of them.

I also at this time want to say thank you to my constituency assistant, Sylvia, who does an excellent, excellent job of keeping me on track and keeping me on time and usually at the right place at the right time. Anybody who's ever had to work with me knows that's quite a challenge, and she does a good job of that.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the budget, the budget we had the opportunity to sit through the other day, we see the government's attempt to put a spin on it, their tag on this budget of being strong and steady. But it doesn't take much of a genius to go through the budget to recognize very quickly that the comments made by my colleague, the member from Regina Douglas Park, was probably the correct ones when he said that this budget was really wrong already.

[21:00]

And it's sad to say that, Mr. Speaker, because this is the second budget of this Sask Party government, and I would have hoped that they would have been a progressive budget, a positive budget, moving forward type budget but it unfortunately isn't the case. What we're seeing here is a budget that comes up

really short; in fact, quite short in regards to the time in which their budgets are coming down in the history of this great province with the revenues that are available.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at this budget, for those of us who've been around for a while, we can't help but think, I've seen this movie before. In 1982, a very similar movie to this played out across this great province of ours, played in communities right across Saskatchewan. The plot of that movie, Mr. Speaker, was overinflated government revenues. It was done so by — in those days it was called creative accounting — now I think the new buzz term, according to the government opposite, is creative financing. But nevertheless it's still the same results, Mr. Speaker.

We look at the plot of that old movie and it was a movie that was based on overly inflated provincial growth. And that's an old mathematic or accounting trick, I guess, Mr. Speaker, that if you don't have enough revenue, genuine revenue to be able to balance the budget and support your financial claims, then you inflate the revenues or you inflate the province's growth to reflect inflated revenues. It's helped offset, offset the shortfall in your budget.

But then this is a political tool also. You need to have a hook out there to be able to catch the voter so you introduce unsustainable tax reductions. That's what we saw in the old movie. We saw the old movie storyline, a storyline of wildly increasing government spending. They spent money that they didn't have. And part of that process was an infrastructure spending that basically they had, I think, a rule of thumb of a new building in every community.

That was the old movie, Mr. Speaker. That movie had a bad plot. This movie had a very bad storyline. Mr. Speaker, that movie didn't make any money. Just the opposite is true, Mr. Speaker, that movie cost Saskatchewan taxpayers \$14.7 billion of debt. Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan gave that old movie two thumbs down.

In 2007, people of Saskatchewan, I believe, thought that the new Sask Party maybe had learned some lessons from the past. And I know that there was people who shared with me they were going to be voting for the Sask Party. They hoped they wouldn't be like the old party was. They hoped they had learned some lessons, and they extended that opportunity to them by electing them government in 2007.

Well, Mr. Speaker, let's look at the remake of this movie, a movie that is coming to every community across Saskatchewan and across this great province of ours, and will be playing in a theatre near you soon. Some of the supporting players in this remake movie were also bit part players in the original movie.

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party budget, really when you boil it down, is nothing more than short-term gain for long-term pain. Short-term gain for long-term pain, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party's runaway spending and unrealistic expectations will lead to disaster down the road. That's exactly what was playing out in the old movie, Mr. Speaker, and that's exactly what's playing out in this movie.

The Sask Party's forecast figures for economic growth are

blindly optimistic and completely out of alignment with those in the private sector forecasts. Instead of reducing the debt as they had promised, when you look at the bottom line here, Mr. Speaker, this Sask Party budget will increase the provincial debt by nearly \$1 billion — a Sask Party budget that doesn't provide a long-term plan or a vision of a strong future for this province.

The Sask Party is stripping away, Mr. Speaker, stripping away nearly half— not quite but nearly half — of the rainy day fund and they're doing it at a time of unprecedented prosperity in this province, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party is really gambling with Saskatchewan's future. The unfortunate part of that gamble, Mr. Speaker, it's not the Sask Party that will lose; it's the people of Saskatchewan that will lose.

Wild revenue projections and out-of-control spending and a mounting debt is all the old movie that we've seen before. The Sask Party will allow them to call this a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker. Well, raiding the rainy day fund in order to balance the budget is not a balanced budget. Whenever you spend more money than you take in in one year, it is not a balanced budget. If you have to go to the reserve fund to balance it out, it's not a balanced budget; it's simply digging a hole deeper or growing the debt higher.

Mr. Speaker, the debt — the GDP ratio — is once again on the increase, once again on the increase, Mr. Speaker. After more than a decade of decreasing that during the former government, we're seeing that within the second year, second year of government, they've turned that around, and they're increasing the debt.

Mr. Speaker, they're basing 20 per cent of their revenue projections on potash sales, and there may be some productivity there. But why potash? Why all of a sudden potash? Well they couldn't stretch the reality of the oil revenues, but they think they may be able to get away with stretching the reality of the potash industry. We will see. They're in negotiations right now with China, as a major, major purchaser of potash. And we'll see how that comes out.

But we do know that United States farmers are rethinking their cropping plans simply because of their inability to secure financing, to finance their farming operations for the forthcoming years. They're looking at production of crops that take little or less or no fertilizers at all.

Mr. Speaker, a single mother making \$25,000 in Saskatchewan today is worse off under the Sask Party government than she was last year. The Sask Party's reckless promises, wishful thinking, and extravagant spending has jeopardized the future of this province.

Mr. Speaker, 12.5 per cent increase in spending in this year's budget over last year's budget; last year's budget had a 10.5 per cent increase over the previous year. At that rate of increase each and every year, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan party government spending will double in six years. That simply isn't sustainable, simply isn't sustainable.

Mr. Speaker, this new movie, this new movie is starting out on the same foot as the old movie did, starting out with inflated provincial growth numbers. And how is that done, Mr.

Speaker? Well it's the old story that you have to have the balance sheet; you need to have enough money coming in to offset the expenditures.

So how do you do this? Well you know what the expenditures are going to be, so now you have to ensure that you have that revenue. So you look at the formula and say, well what do we need to support this? Do we need a half a per cent provincial growth? So you put that in. Close, not enough. One per cent. No, it's not enough. Jump it to 2 per cent. Even that's not enough. They finally settled on 2.1 per cent.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, experts across this great nation of ours — whether it be the Toronto Dominion Bank, CIBC [Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce], the Royal Bank, the Scotiabank — all, all are predicting zero growth to, at the very best, point six. But this government who knows all is predicting 2.1 per cent. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll take the word of the experts any day.

We have a government here, Mr. Speaker, who in their second budget alone, their second budget found it necessary to strip away at the rainy day fund, a fund that they had set up just a year ago to guard us against wild fluctuations in the economy. At a time when we have some of the record resource revenue incomes to this province, they found it necessary to dip into the rainy day fund simply to balance their budget. Mr. Speaker, this government is on record of spending at an unsustainable rate, growing the provincial debt only in their second year in office. Only in their second year in office they have seen fit to grow the provincial debt by nearly a billion dollars.

Mr. Speaker, those of us who've been around for awhile have seen this movie play out before. When you have a lot of money to spend, you have a lot of new friends. But when the bills come due, your new-found friends aren't anywhere to be found.

Mr. Speaker, this new movie has a bad plot just like the old one did. Mr. Speaker, this new movie has a bad storyline just like the old one did. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm afraid this new movie will have the same painful ending as the old one did for the people of our great province of Saskatchewan, a legacy of debt. Mr. Speaker, I fear that our children and our grandchildren will be paying for a movie they never saw. This new movie will soon be renamed as a nightmare on main street.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of this movie when the credits roll, we'll see many new names — not all; some of the old names are there — but we'll see many, many, new names and different names, different from the old movie, but we'll also see that the characters are the same. Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan will give this new movie two thumbs down also.

Mr. Speaker, this Sask Party budget, when all is said and done, when all is said and done and time has gone, the budget speeches have all ended and we're back to the regular business of the House and all is said and done and it's no longer new news but old news, when all is said and done, the dust has settled, I believe, Mr. Speaker, that this Sask Party budget will truly make history. I believe it will truly make history because I believe history will show that this budget was the tipping point that led this government to be the second one-term government in the history of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it may be a surprise to you and my colleagues in the House here, but I will not be supporting the budget. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Sutherland.

Ms. Schriemer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to enter the budget debate this evening, but before I do, I would like to say thank you to my constituents of Saskatoon Sutherland and thank you to my constituency assistant, Danielle Velazquez, and my mom who always watches, and my children, Elise and Jarrod, and my partner, Gary, for his patience and understanding.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatoon Sutherland constituency is a very diverse constituency. It houses the University of Saskatchewan. It has trailer courts, people living in poverty, millionaires, middle-income people. There's quite a mixture in Saskatoon Sutherland and with reference to the budget, the budget had something for everybody. As diverse as my constituency is, the budget was equally diverse in addressing the needs of all people in Saskatchewan.

This past weekend, Mr. Speaker, I made phone calls in my constituency to ask the citizens how things were going and what they thought of the budget. In one phone call, the lady that answered the phone said that she found our Minister of Finance to be one of the nicest, most honest people. And she has the utmost respect for him. I thought that was very nice.

[21:15]

In another phone call, this person commented on our Minister of Social Services, saying that she cares. She's taken the time to meet with the foster parents regarding the issues surrounding foster care in the province. And we all know that the report from the child's advocate was definitely not supportive of our foster care program in the province, and that there had been problems with this program for some time. So, you know, it could have been addressed before, but wasn't. And I would like to say thank you to our Minister of Social Services for doing such a fine job and addressing those needs.

The only complaint basically was that the children's hospital wouldn't support a sub-specialty in pediatrics like a pediatrician sub-specializing in nephrology, a kidney specialist for children, that something like that wouldn't happen here because the cases wouldn't support the skill level that that physician would have to use.

I think that time will tell. We do know that we need a large number of pediatricians and sub-specialties with regard to pediatric problems because we're sending all of our cases out of the city. So someone who has a child that needs cardiovascular surgery, for example, has to travel with that child, sometimes on an air ambulance all the way to Edmonton or Calgary where the child would then receive treatment. The costs concerning the mom and dad's parking, their food, their hotel, of course those are costs that the parents have to absorb in these cases. And it's extremely stressful on these families, given that they're away

from their community, away from their own support system and could financially create some problems as well.

So I don't agree with that comment. I think a children's hospital in Saskatoon is of immense importance.

The other issue regarding our budget, Mr. Speaker, is that the education proportion of our property tax, which the Premier promised to address in the campaign for the 2007 election, that promise, Mr. Speaker, has been kept. And we have to thank the Legislative Secretary that took on that task, the member from Rosetown. And we congratulate him and the Deputy Premier on their excellent, excellent work. The people of this province have been asking for this to occur for years, Mr. Speaker, at least a decade. So the Saskatchewan Party government has made a decision, and this property tax will help people, especially in the constituency of Saskatoon Sutherland, that this issue will be dealt with.

I'm a little concerned, however. We know through the figures that the property tax in Saskatoon, the education portion will go down. Now we know why we changed the system, and there's a lot of other things that we should change as well in the province. For instance the RMs, the school boards, the regions for social services — all of those areas in the province, there's not one coterminous boundary, Mr. Speaker. Not one. We have bureaucrats on top of bureaucrats in some of these areas because there's no consistency. There's no consistency in the borders, and there's no consistency in the taxation.

But what concerns me is the member from Nutana, the member opposite from Nutana, who is telling the citizens of Saskatoon that their taxes will go up, Mr. Speaker. That their taxes, their education portion of their tax will go up. And mark my words, Mr. Speaker, she will be proved wrong. And when she is proved wrong, I'm hoping that she would apologize to the citizens for leading them down a garden path.

Another announcement in this budget, Mr. Speaker, that affects Saskatoon Sutherland immensely is the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] student housing. Mr. Speaker, we have given 14, \$15 million to the University of Saskatchewan for badly needed student housing. After more than 30 years, the University of Saskatchewan is ready to get back into the business of building resident spaces for its students.

On February 4, Minister of Social Services “. . . announced the government would contribute \$15 million towards the cost of new residences along Cumberland Avenue that will add about 400 additional beds to the university's inventory.”

Four hundred beds, Mr. Speaker. That really is something and it sure helps the university and the university area and the city of Saskatoon.

The multi-building construction project is expected to be underway later this year with full occupancy anticipated for 2011.

The funding for the U of S is part of \$150 million infrastructure investment plan unveiled by Premier . . . Wall [by our Premier] Feb. 2, and will be provided through the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation.

Richard Florizone, U of S vice-president finance and resources, told the media conference the Feb. 4 announcement was the result of a “coming together” of the city, the community, the university, the private sector and “the people of Saskatchewan through our government, to help us find a solution.”

Mr. Speaker, this really impacts my constituents in the city of Saskatoon Sutherland, given the amount of rental spaces we have in the constituency and the amount of university students living in the area close to the university. So this is a very, very positive step, extremely positive step, for the housing and rental issues in our constituency.

Now, Mr. MacKinnon, the president of the university said that:

... recent opportunities he has had to meet with young people have shown that “the number one question on the minds of our students is housing.” The funding announcement was the culmination of a “creative partnership among all parties” that will give the university the opportunity to be more competitive. Speaking directly to the government ministers in attendance, he added what he described as the most important words in the English language — “Thank you. Thank you very much.”

Mr. Speaker, this is just wonderful news, wonderful news for our constituency.

I'd like to talk about a little bit about Saskatoon as a whole and what this government is providing in the 2009-10 budget for Saskatoon as a whole. We are giving \$200 million investment in a new children's hospital, as I stated earlier; \$23.3 million to accelerate twinning on Highway 11, completing twinning from Saskatoon to Prince Albert in four years.

Mr. Speaker, that highway is one of our busiest highways in the province. And in the summer, the traffic — with the campers and all of our citizens from, you know, south of Prince Albert travel north to the lakes — there's extremely, extremely heavy traffic, Mr. Speaker.

And I remember working as an emergency medical technician and attending many, many accidents on that highway, Mr. Speaker. They were horrible accidents, and they took the lives of our citizens. A lot of times, it was families because the parents were travelling up to the lake with their kids for the weekend. And it was quite traumatic, Mr. Speaker.

So I applaud our government for increasing the monies to get this highway completed so that the citizens in our province can travel to their vacation spots more safely.

The other new monies is \$15.7 million for the international vaccine centre at the University of Saskatchewan which consists of \$9.8 million in new funding and 5.9 million previously committed through the Innovation and Science Fund.

Mr. Speaker, I toured InterVac [international vaccine centre]. And they are in the process of building a international-class laboratory for the research and development of vaccines. As you can well imagine, Mr. Speaker, this laboratory has to have

some very unique qualities in order to be able to do proper research.

When doing research on cattle, for example, if you immunize a cow, you have to have a sterile environment in order to house that animal to prove that the vaccine works as a result of the medical intervention. So it's very important that these facilities are able to sterilize or keep the air quality clean while doing their research. This facility is going to be world-class and one of the largest and most advanced in North America, Mr. Speaker.

Again, you know, this is housed at Innovation Place on campus at the university, and it's part of my constituency. And it's an innovative, wonderful idea, and shows just where this government is going. We're going forward. We are innovative, and we're not scared to try new things because success sometimes takes risks, Mr. Speaker.

So there's also 5 million for the first year of a \$27 million overhaul and renovation and expansion of the Saskatoon Queen's Bench court house. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatoon Queen's Bench court house is on Spadina Crescent in downtown Saskatoon and overlooks the river. It is a beautiful building, and it's in a beautiful location.

However, it is very antiquated. Our Queen's Bench trials that go on there — those are the trials for homicides, kidnapping, robbery, your more serious federal offences that go to trial, be it by judge or judge and jury — the trials occur in Queen's Bench court. Now one of the issues at Queen's Bench court is that there's no secure entrance that you can bring a prisoner through. And this does create some concern, given what the charge would be and how much animosity there was for the prisoner, so to speak, that you would find it very difficult to protect him or her while you were unloading at the back door to go up into the court house.

So the expansion of this facility is greatly needed, and I'm happy to say that this government is committed to that.

The next project in Saskatoon is \$3.2 million operating fund for SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies]. As you well know, SIIT caters to the Métis and First Nations people who are going on to certificate programming in a level or a course that is offered by SIIT — chemical dependency course, licensed practical nurse course. We're finding that, you know, there's an increased employment rate with our First Nations people and that the education and opportunities have to be supported in order to encourage participation. And this is also a very needed and wise investment, Mr. Speaker.

[21:30]

Now when we look at our budget, I commented that we have people living in poverty in my constituency, and a very diverse constituency. And so it's very important that we address the issues surrounding higher rents and higher cost of living in the cities with fixed income earners or people on social assistance. Low-income families and individuals, what we have done as a government is this: 80,000 low income earners will no longer pay Saskatchewan income tax. Mr. Speaker, 80,000 will pay zero income tax in this province. Family-based tax exemptions

are now the highest in Canada; right here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker — the highest in Canada.

New Saskatchewan low-income tax credit puts more money into the pockets of low-income people who pay no taxes — seniors, students, others and low-income working families. Maximum tax credits. Mr. Speaker, provided to eligible families with children is increased to \$600 per year — \$600, Mr. Speaker — twice as much as the old sales tax credit.

This also provides additional tax savings to over 300,000 lower income provincial residents. And we eliminated the 2008 tax refund from the income calculations for SAP which stands for Saskatchewan assistance plan and TEA [transitional employment allowance] which stands for the transitional employment supplement, and the new income support program for people with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, there is a constituent that came to me, and it's a couple that's in their late 50s. And their youngest child, I believe it's their youngest child, who's now 30 was born with Down's syndrome. So, Mr. Speaker, they have cared for their son at home. And he walks across to an old folks home and spends the afternoons there visiting the old folks, and they really like him.

But the way the payments are made through social assistance, the way we inherited this program from the former government, was that the person with disabilities, this young man with Down's syndrome, is paid the same as other persons on social assistance payments. So therefore they can cut off the payments for the same reason they cut off a welfare recipient's payments.

So this young man went with his parents to Australia for four weeks. They thought they'd take him to Australia rather than get a caregiver for him. And while he was gone, Mr. Speaker, he was cut off welfare; he was not paid. And they did that because he wasn't in the country to fill out the forms, Mr. Speaker. It's a sad statement.

Persons with disabilities have been asking for special recognition because there is a difference, Mr. Speaker. There is a difference getting payment for a person who has a disability than there is for a person who can't find employment for whatever reason. So what we're doing, Mr. Speaker, is the Minister of Social Services is presently in conversation with the stakeholder groups to discuss how they can change this, so this kind of unacceptable thing doesn't happen again.

So we also have increased support for seniors, Mr. Speaker. And I have a lot of seniors in my constituency as well. A lot of them have moved in from rural areas and retired in the city. Some live in the same house that they've raised their children in and now are retired in. We have more than doubled the maximum monthly Saskatchewan Income Plan benefit for single seniors and each member of a two-pensioner household, Mr. Speaker. That's a huge difference; that makes a huge difference for seniors on fixed income.

We have increased income thresholds for seniors; increased to qualify for social housing. So a senior who's on a fixed income, housing goes up, we've increased that cost to allow more people to be supported by that program, Mr. Speaker.

Rent is something that . . . or rental properties is something that exists quite a bit also in the constituency. And there is some concern over the increasing cost of rent. Well, Mr. Speaker, we've also done things to address that problem.

Like I said, there's something in this budget for everyone. We have increased shelter rates for 6,500 households on the social assistance plan and the transitional employment assistance, between \$32 and \$119 per month. As well, the shelter rates for the provincial training allowance. So, Mr. Speaker, our government is responding to the needs of its citizens and responding very well.

We have increased the TEA utility benefits by 20 per cent October 1, 2008 to support families on TEA to pay higher utility costs. SAP recipients will continue to have actual utility costs fully paid. So, Mr. Speaker, again, you know, the opposition accuses us of not helping when utility rates or rent rates go up. And that's just not true, Mr. Speaker, not true at all.

We have increased the Saskatchewan rental housing supplement for low-income families, between 36 and \$136 per month. We've introduced an automatic twice-a-year rate adjustment for the above housing programs — an automatic twice-a-year rate adjustment for the above housing programs, Mr. Speaker. That didn't exist ever in the opposition's world — ever.

We've increased the income thresholds to be eligible for Saskatchewan Housing Corporation social housing. So we have made changes to allow more people to access programs that they may need, Mr. Speaker.

We have touched on the issue of child protection issues and foster homes earlier. But I'm going to just go over some of the main things that we have done as this government to better protect the children at risk. Fifteen per cent increase in foster care rates; 41 per cent increase for extended family caregivers; 3 million increase in the intensive supports factor, providing programming for students with learning difficulties, disabilities, and disadvantages. That's huge, Mr. Speaker. People who are already disadvantaged being afflicted with a learning disability, it's not a real good measure for success.

This government is responding, the Department of Social Services is responding through our minister, Mr. Speaker: \$5 million for 30 additional child protection case workers and 30 permanent placement planners to handle the increased number of children needing help from Social Services. You know, a lot of times we sit, Mr. Speaker, and we just don't think of children needing protection because if we as a human being can't reference it, then it really doesn't occur to them in their reality.

Well, Mr. Speaker, years ago as a young constable, I went to a noisy house party complaint. And we were clearing out the house, and in the basement of the house, which was a dirt basement, sat a 2 year old child in fetal position in the corner, wearing only a diaper and a very, very dirty diaper. She was shivering. She was crying. I picked her up and she hung onto me like a little kitten does. And, you know, these are the kind of children that need society's protection. They need intervention because the child should not be made to suffer the sins of the parents, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very, very pleased with this budget. I'm very pleased with the government's behaviour. We are a government that have responded to the needs of the community. We are inclusive. And one of the criticisms was that there was nothing for First Nations people. Well I mentioned a bunch of things that crosses over to that area — SIIT, housing support, etc. So I don't really believe that statement at all, Mr. Speaker. And I mean, it's just not true.

What is true, however, is the gloom and doom and darkness that is shed by the members opposite. And in fact, the member speaking before myself made a comment about the result being very dark, the results of the budget will be very dark, Mr. Speaker. That has a couple of problems. Number one, I don't think it's really healthy to be that negative. But it speaks to the whole mentality of where our province is, and where our province is going.

And there is a presentation that was given by General Colin Powell on leadership. And I want to share a few of these lessons hoping that members opposite will understand and maybe change their behaviour to one of caring for the province, as opposed to being negative about the province: "Leadership is the art of accomplishing more than the science of management says is possible."

And this is something that we're finding, Mr. Speaker, and the Minister of Energy and Resources commented earlier about the infrastructure and hospitals and how our infrastructure wasn't kept up, how our things are breaking down. And we're having to look at those things, Mr. Speaker, and we're going on tours and seeing them.

And lesson no. 7 from General Powell is "Keep looking below surface[s] . . . Don't shrink from doing so just because you might not like what you find."

Mr. Speaker, we are finding these breakdowns and we are fixing them, and that is the job of a good government and it's the behaviour this government has.

The last quote for my friends across the way. Lesson no. 12:

"Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier." The ripple effect of a leader's enthusiasm and optimism is awesome. So is the impact of cynicism and pessimism. Leaders who whine and blame engendered those same behaviors among their colleagues. I am not talking about stoically accepting organizational stupidity and performance incompetence with a "what, me . . .?" smile. I am talking about a gung ho attitude that says "we can change things here, we can achieve awesome goals . . ."

We can be the best and we will, Mr. Speaker. I am in support of this budget and will be voting so. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a pleasure to stand in the Assembly and take part

in the budget debate. Before I do I just want to offer my congratulations to the previous speaker. I'm always a little bit nervous about speaking after the likes of the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Energy in this House, and now I'll have to add my colleague from Saskatoon Sutherland to that list. She did an excellent job, Mr. Speaker, and a very thoughtful presentation.

Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to stand in the Assembly and to speak in support of the budget presented last week by the Hon. Minister of Finance. Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I get to my comments, I do want to put on the record a couple of things. First, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to publicly thank my constituency assistant, Marcie, for all her hard work over the last year, especially in the last few months. She does an incredible job not only for me but for the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy, Mr. Speaker. And she is going on, I believe, her 10th year as the constituency assistant in Weyburn-Big Muddy, and I want to congratulate her on that and thank her for all her help.

[21:45]

Mr. Speaker, I also of course want to extend my thanks and my appreciation to my wife, Amanda, for her support. I consider myself one of the lucky few in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, of the members that don't reside full time in Regina who can get home most evenings. And that's been a great source of strength and support for me to be able to see my wife, and just to know that she's there and usually trying to catch me on when I'm on TV and critique me when I get home. So that's probably going to be no different this evening. So I want to thank her for her support, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Duncan: — And, Mr. Speaker, before I get to the budget, I just want to congratulate a couple of hockey teams in Weyburn, Mr. Speaker. The Weyburn Red Wings and the Senior Devils' seasons have both come to an end. They fell a little bit short in playoffs, Mr. Speaker, but I know they worked very hard. And they do a good job representing the people of Weyburn and, you know, a great group of young men. I believe the Red Wings have nine that are moving on after this season, Mr. Speaker, and they've just been great ambassadors to our community. And I want to congratulate them and coach McMillan and his staff on another good season. And they'll be back at it next year, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I like to collect quotes and little sayings that mean something to me, to speak to me. And the one that I have in my office, one of the ones that I have on my bulletin board here in Regina in the office, it says, and I quote, "Plan, read the Bills you are passing, and think of the kids who will have to pay for all this in the future."

So, Mr. Speaker, I spent the weekend reading the budget. And I want to thank and congratulate the Minister of Finance and his ministry officials and, Mr. Speaker, this government, our cabinet, and my caucus colleagues for crafting a great budget for the people of this province — a historic budget, a transformational budget, Mr. Speaker, and one that I am very happy to support.

Mr. Speaker, I also spent the weekend reading the report produced by my friend, the member from Rosetown-Elrose. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate him for all the hard work that he put into this report, Mr. Speaker. He did an excellent job, and I'm very happy to call him my colleague and my friend, Mr. Speaker. I think he did such a great job that as a reward we should just, you know, let him golf the rest of the summer, Mr. Speaker. But I'm not sure how that would be different from any other summer in the past.

Mr. Speaker, to say that this budget, Mr. Speaker, has been well received would be an understatement. The accolades were almost universal. And this extends also to the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency. I have had numerous people call the office, email, stop me on the street over the weekend to express their support for the budget, Mr. Speaker. And I want to speak to a few of the specifics of this year's budget.

Mr. Speaker, at a time of global uncertainty, Saskatchewan is truly in a very enviable place. While our province is not immune to the economic issues facing the North America and in fact the worldwide economy, we are certainly in a better position than most.

Mr. Speaker, in this budget, we are forecasting a budget surplus of \$424 million. And this is a really amazing accomplishment and achievement, considering that every other government in Canada — with maybe perhaps the exception of one — is expected to post deficits this year, and in some cases, several years into the future. Mr. Speaker, this is true also in the United States where, with very few exceptions, state governments are instituting mass layoffs, service cuts, and massive tax hikes, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things that I've looked at recently is a report, Mr. Speaker. This was a report published by the National Conference of State Legislators. And it's an update. The title is an *Update on State Budget Gaps*, fiscal year '09-10, Mr. Speaker. And just to summarize the report, they are projecting, Mr. Speaker, in the United States, that for fiscal year '09, there will be a budget gap for state governments. When you total up all the state governments in the United States, there'll be a budget gap of nearly \$47.5 billion, Mr. Speaker.

In most cases in the United States, the governments by law can't run a deficit. So when they have a budget shortfall, that's when they have to cut services. They have to cut staff, and they have to try to raise revenues somehow, Mr. Speaker.

And when you look at all of the states that are projecting to run a shortfall, when you look at 2009 and 2010, the estimates that are coming forward, there are only five states that at this point are estimating not to have a shortfall in either one or both of those years, Mr. Speaker. So it's certainly not just governments in Canada that are looking at tough budget choices, but also in the United States.

Mr. Speaker, there's even states that are not issuing tax refunds to those who are eligible because they simply have no cash.

Mr. Speaker, the quote that I will read now comes from the *Los Angeles Times* and it says, and I quote:

They have plundered reserves [this is in reference to state governments], enacted hiring freezes and engaged in all manner of budgetary voodoo to shield us from the pain.

But now state governments — reeling from a historic free fall in tax revenue — have run out of tricks.

So, Mr. Speaker, at a time when balanced budgets are just not realistic for the vast majority of provincial and state governments — and in fact our two federal governments — Saskatchewan isn't just looking forward to a balanced budget, but a surplus of nearly half a billion dollars, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, if that was all that we could point to in this budget — and I'm certainly one that believes that we have a responsibility as government to not run deficits, to keep taxes as low as possible and provide services that governments are responsible for — if that's all we can point to, then I think it'd be a very good budget, considering the circumstances. But, Mr. Speaker, this budget includes so much more.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget delivers on two very major promises that our party and Premier, in fact each of us as candidates together, made in the last provincial election. We are well over 100 campaign commitments delivered on. And the best part is that unlike previous governments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we aren't waiting until the eve of an election to do so. We're not stringing the people along trying to buy votes with their hard-earned money.

Mr. Speaker, the first measure in this budget that I want to talk about is the measure to fundamentally transform how education is funded in Saskatchewan. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this budget our provincial government is delivering on a campaign commitment that achieves a fairer balance for education funding, ensures that K to 12 education is properly funded, and ensures that education portion of property tax is further reduced.

Mr. Speaker, under the new system — and certainly I'm not the first member to go over the details, but I think they're important to put on the record — under the new system, the provincial government will cut and cap education property tax rates for residential, commercial, and agricultural property. The overall amount of tax paid to fund education will be reduced by \$103 million this year, 14 per cent reduction compared to last. This, Mr. Speaker, is the largest education property tax cut in a single year in the province's history.

Last year the provincial share of education funding was just 51 per cent. This year it will increase to 63 per cent and 66 the next. On top of this, Mr. Speaker, we are adding \$241 million in funding to education. Mr. Speaker, this is significant because in the last 30 years, I don't believe any provincial government has funded more than 60 per cent of education until this year, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the reaction to this has certainly been very positive, and I want to put a couple of comments on the record. Saskatchewan realtors had this to say, Mr. Speaker, on budget day:

It shows a government isn't afraid to tackle big issues and

make tough decisions. That is a very positive message after decades of delay.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Stock Growers, Ed Bothner: ““The \$35 million reduction in the education portion of farmland taxes will be especially beneficial to cow-calf producers’ . . .”

The early reports from my constituents have been very positive. For constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy, most who reside in the South East Cornerstone School Division, property taxes have funded the vast majority of education in our region. Last year, I believe, only 9 per cent of education funding in the Southeast came from the provincial government. Mr. Speaker, the local chair of the board believes that under the new changes, we’ll be closer to 40 per cent, which will be a significant burden removed from our citizens, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to express my appreciation to the government, especially to our Premier and our Education minister and to the cabinet, for having the courage to implement this change.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP’s favourite argument is that they were going to get to it or they didn’t have the money to do it. But, Mr. Speaker, I don’t buy that at all. What they didn’t have was the courage to make this change; indeed with the NDP, the status quo was always going to be on.

Mr. Speaker, this budget already budgets for a surplus at a time of economic calamity. It provides for historic property tax relief, and it also provides for a new deal with municipalities. This has been a long-standing issue with municipalities. And, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that we have delivered on this commitment.

For many years, our RMs, villages, towns, and cities have been asking for a better deal from the provincial government. For many years, they have had to come to the legislature on budget day to see what they would receive from the province by way of revenue sharing. The new municipal operating grant will provide equal to 90 per cent of 1 per cent of the PST for this year, and that will be increasing to a full 1 per cent next year, Mr. Speaker. This will provide a reliable and predictable source of revenue. This year they will receive \$170 million, and this is in addition, Mr. Speaker, this new commitment is in addition to the \$100 million that municipalities received by this government in February to address their long-standing infrastructure needs, Mr. Speaker.

And I could quote from municipal leaders and how pleased they were to see that this was happening. But really for me, Mr. Speaker, it really hit home on Friday when I was in Weyburn making an announcement with our Member of Parliament and our mayor of Weyburn, Her Worship Mayor Button. We were announcing some funding for some infrastructure in the city of Weyburn through Building Canada, the community component. And I was very happy that Weyburn was a part of the first intake. And, Mr. Speaker, the praise from Mayor Button was, you know, it was really great to hear from her in her public comments, even though what we were announcing on Friday had nothing to do with what was announced in the budget. But she went out of her way to make sure that everybody that was at the public event knew of her support for this, and she was certainly very, very happy to hear this news when she was here

on budget day.

Mr. Speaker, I’m very fortunate to represent the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy, and it’s just some of the greatest people, I would say, in this province that I have the honour of representing. And certainly agriculture is a large part of my constituency. We have a lot of land that’s seeded every spring when you’re more in the Weyburn part of the constituency. But as you move west, you get into the ranchland and into the Big Muddy, the Big Muddy hills, and lots of cattle in that area, Mr. Speaker. And before I get to the budget, I want to express my appreciation to the Minister of Agriculture.

We’ve had successive Agriculture ministers, all from that side of the House, Mr. Speaker, that would go to Ottawa and try to get a better deal for our producers, whether it was to fix the CAIS program or whether it was, you know, whether it was assistance for drought. And usually they didn’t come back with a whole lot. And it didn’t matter if it was a Liberal government or if it was a Conservative government. And then the minister of the day would stand in the House and give his reasons why. Why he didn’t have any support is because the feds never gave him any support. And it was usually our Agriculture minister, who was the critic at the time, that would grill the minister of day and give everybody in this House a pretty good show but make some pretty good points about what this minister could be doing on their own.

There’s now a change, Mr. Speaker, because our minister, I’m very pleased to say, went to Ottawa, tried to get the feds to sign on to some new deals — and maybe there’s some things that still can happen — but at the time came home and wasn’t successful in getting the feds on board. But what did our minister do, Mr. Speaker? He put the province’s money where our mouth is as a province, Mr. Speaker. It’s one thing for an NDP government to always say, well the feds aren’t going to do it so we’re not going to do it either; we don’t have the money to do it.

So, Mr. Speaker, I’m very appreciative and I know my constituents are, of the work that our Agriculture minister has done on the front when it comes to cattle and livestock and the hog sector, Mr. Speaker. And I also want to speak on what the budget has to say for rural Saskatchewan. And this budget, Mr. Speaker, has been very well received in rural Saskatchewan, not only for the changes to the education property tax that will see more money staying in our producers’ pockets, but because the budget for the Agriculture ministry is increasing, Mr. Speaker, by 58 per cent. It includes \$177.5 million more for agriculture compared to last year. And I believe this is the highest Ag ministry budget in the province’s history.

[22:00]

Our government is ensuring that our risk management programs are fully funded on budget day, Mr. Speaker. We are putting more money into crop insurance after fulfilling another promise to review and improve the program. The budget includes new funding to continue on with the water infrastructure program, Mr. Speaker, which I have to say, in the last year when the water infrastructure program came out, Mr. Speaker, part of my constituency was in the RMs that were eligible for the programs, and part of it wasn’t. And I know there was a lot of

uptake on that program. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I don't know the exact amount of dollars that that program would have cost the province last year for those areas affected by the drought, which is another thing that the NDP government — the Ag minister at the time — you know, didn't have the time of day to meet with producers in the Southwest, didn't have a program to put together; I don't even think really talked to the producers because the producers probably would have said this is a pretty good program.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, for what that program cost, it sure paid a lot of dividends, because it was certainly well received. And we're looking forward to hearing what the minister has to say on that in the future, Mr. Speaker.

So it's interesting to see what the reaction has been, given the support for the Ag ministry budget in rural Saskatchewan. Now according to my local radio station, Mr. Speaker, in Weyburn, and I want to quote:

The Saskatchewan Party government is saying the latest provincial budget is good news for farmers, but the opposition New Democrats tend to disagree.

Now apparently the opposition critic, the member from Saskatoon Nutana, apparently thinks that it's not really a good budget for agriculture and for rural Saskatchewan. And because, Mr. Speaker, what are the reasons? Well, because the 177 million increase will be spent on programs like AgriStability and crop insurance, Mr. Speaker — imagine that. We're putting all our money upfront into these programs, and that's not good news, you know. Imagine the logic of putting money into something that you've committed to, Mr. Speaker. Also, because the provincial government is spending money to move AgriStability from Winnipeg to Melville, Mr. Speaker, and I'm not sure I really understand why that's a bad thing, but maybe she'll have more to say on that later.

So, Mr. Speaker, a bad budget according to the Ag critic. So what are others saying, Mr. Speaker. Well, Dave Marit had this to say, and I quote, "... the best budget for rural Saskatchewan in history ...", Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Duncan: — From Ed Bothner, president of Sask Stock Growers, and I quote, "We are pleased to see that agriculture is back on the provincial government's radar." And he later said, "It's been decades since our industry has received this level of attention and support from the provincial government," Mr. Speaker.

Mark Elford, also from the Stock Growers: "It's the best we've seen for a long time," Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to judging this budget on the basis of how it treats rural Saskatchewan, with all due respect to the opposition critic, I will take the word of SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] and of APAS [Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan] and the Stock Growers and any one of my producers in my constituency over the critic from Saskatoon any and every day of the week, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I've had . . . In keeping with the budget but I also want to speak on the announcement of the booster shot that came earlier this year, Mr. Speaker.

I want to extend my appreciation. This is my first opportunity in this type of forum or setting in the legislature to express my thanks to the Education minister for realizing the infrastructure needs in the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency when it comes to our schools, Mr. Speaker. And we have been very, very grateful for the money that Weyburn-Big Muddy will see, not only in the city of Weyburn for the junior high renovation and the roof project, but also at the Weyburn Comprehensive, my old high school, that is going to see a major rebuild. And also in Gladmar, the community of Gladmar I believe is receiving some money for some upgrades.

And, Mr. Speaker, I don't tend to agree with the opposition very often, but I do with my hon. friend from Regina Rosemont who said a few days ago in this very House, said that there is a very large education infrastructure deficit in this province and I'm pleased to see that we have an Education minister that's making this a high priority.

I also want to speak in regards to the infrastructure boost, the economic booster shot, and how that will affect health care in the southeast part of the province, Mr. Speaker. And I want to specifically point out, I know there are several long-term care facilities in the member from Cannington's constituency that are going to be priorities and that money has been dedicated to, but I also want to speak to a project in Radville, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate my hon. friend's permission to talk a bit about Radville, Mr. Deputy Speaker, seeing how it's very close to the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency, but not technically in. And, Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of constituents that consider Radville their home and so, for at least a day, the member and I from Estevan will share something in common, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to thank the Minister of Health for making sure that Radville was going to be looked after. The Marian home centre in Radville is a long-term care centre in Radville. It was originally built in 1947; it was added on to in 1956. And, Mr. Speaker, I've had the opportunity to tour the facility twice in the last year and meet with the board, the local board, the Marian home board, Mr. Speaker. And I know that the Health minister had made comments about some of the facilities that he had toured before making the announcement and I just want to put on the record what the citizens of Radville were dealing with.

Mr. Speaker, in the tour that I took of Radville — and it's a very old facility — it's, I believe, a three-storey facility that was built in the '40s and, as I said, added on to in the '50s. And like any old building, it gets really hot in the summertime and they have a hard time keeping it cool.

But there's areas because of when the building was built, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the tools that health care providers have today, the building just isn't set up right. Obviously it's set on a couple of storeys so it's difficult to move patients in and out, and if there's ever an emergency, I know the elevator has been a

trouble at some times.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, even the rooms for the residents of the long-term care centre, there are rooms in that facility where you walk in through a doorway that is quite narrow and you then walk through another door that is straight ahead to get into one resident's room, and then if you turn to the right, a really sharp right turn, there's another door. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's no way that you can get a patient, in their bed, if there's an emergency, through that doorway. You can't make the turn. So if a patient is in that room and there's ever a medical emergency, they have to move the patient on to a gurney and then transport them out.

There's areas where you can only wheel a patient in a wheelchair only so close to the room where the bathtub is because you can't even get the wheelchair into the room with the bathtub, Mr. Speaker.

So this is definitely a facility . . . And it speaks to the long-term need for and plan for making sure that we have doctors. I know that Radville is served very well by Dr. Oberholzer, Dr. O as he's commonly referred to, and I believe his wife, Dr. Helms.

And I had the opportunity the second time that I toured the facility, Dr. O gave me a tour. And it was about 8 o'clock at night and he was there taking care of a patient that was in some distress. They were waiting for an ambulance to bring the patient, and so he was waiting with that patient. And in the brief time that he had, he took me around. And I believe they've been there for a number of years. And I don't know correctly, but I think it's . . . I'm not for sure that I know, but I believe they've been in Radville — they're a husband and wife team — and they've been in Radville for, it's got to be five or six, probably even more than that. And I've been told by very reputable members of that community, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that between the two of them, there hasn't been a single day since they arrived in Radville where one of them hasn't spent some time in the health centre — every single day, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it speaks to the dedication of our health care providers.

And I know now with not having a . . . We're short a doctor in Coronach, but also in Bengough. And I know that Dr. O has been taking care of patients in the long-term care facility in Bengough, and also there's a clinic in Pangman and a care home in Pangman that he's been providing coverage. If there's anybody in that area that is worthy of recognition in this House, they are certainly candidates for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So again I want to put on the record my thanks to the Health minister for making that announcement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will confess I haven't really been keeping a close eye on the time, so I'm not sure if I'm over or under, but I just have two more points that I want to speak on, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

One is this notion that . . . and it relates to the announcement made last Friday by the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation, the discussion about the long-term debt of the province, Mr. Speaker. And I'm very proud, and I won't back down from anybody, in saying that this government indeed has lowered the debt of the province by 40 per cent in a year and a half of being government, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And there's this issue that keeps . . . And I would have thought, and I'm sure, members — I certainly try to catch it as much as I can; members opposite do — I'm sure that members on the other side would have caught a *StarPhoenix* editorial about this whole issue about the Crown long-term debt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I want to quote from that. It says, and this is a quote:

Mr. Van Mulligen, who did a credible stint as Finance minister for the NDP, does himself a great disservice by feigning outrage at the debt figures.

He fully knows there's a world of difference between a government racking up debt to finance irresponsible spending on public programs Saskatchewan cannot sustain in the long run, and with Crown utilities and business enterprises borrowing money for commercial purposes that are repaid with their cash flows [Mr. Deputy Speaker].

And the editorial finishes by saying:

Sometimes, it's best to give a wide berth to a topic when to raise it means exposing oneself as less than credible on the issue . . . [Mr. Deputy Speaker].

Now this is an interesting area that the members opposite want to go, that somehow that this is adding new debt to the province, and you know, how is this going to affect ratepayers, and maybe we don't even need to do this, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But it's interesting to note that between . . . And this is from the NDP. I believe the opposition, I believe the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said this on Friday, that in trying to refute the claims by the Crown minister that infrastructure was neglected in the Crowns over the NDP, she said that between 2000 and '07 the NDP invested nearly 2.5 billion into SaskPower's infrastructure.

Now let's just put that in perspective. At a time when the members opposite presided over a government that saw in the neighbourhood of 35,000 people leave this province, there was still a need in the Crowns, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to spend \$2.5 billion to make sure that there was infrastructure to serve the people of this province. By the way, it was less people in the province but still there was that need.

So we've come to a position where we have a growing province. And I'm not sure about members opposite — I don't want to speak for them — but we're pretty proud of that on this side of the House. We're pretty proud that there are people moving back to this province, that we have a growing population when members opposite didn't think it was going to happen or didn't think it could happen. We're pretty proud of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And if it means that we're going to have to incur some debt in the Crown corporations to ensure that there's infrastructure in this province to keep the lights on, to service the new people that come to this province and set up their homes in this province, to people that bring new businesses to this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not sure what the members opposite think is the alternative.

Maybe we pick a day. We don't spend all this money, Mr. Deputy Speaker, keeping in mind that when they were losing 35,000 people, they still spent \$2.5 billion in infrastructure. So maybe they don't think we need to spend this money and then we decide — I don't know — by lottery, when the lights are turned on in Weyburn. Or maybe we decide . . . I mean it almost seems like we're going back to Soviet Russia here or something, you know, depending on the number of your household or maybe the last number of your licence plate, when you can use power, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So for the opposition members to use this phony-baloney argument that the debt is increasing in this province, it lends no credibility to what the members opposite are saying.

And the last point I want to speak to is this notion that, well the GDP numbers are fiction, and we've had to . . . you know, they're just all wrong, particularly from the member for Regina Northeast. Frankly he's a decent man, and I think he represents his constituents well, but with the tone that he was taking tonight, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think we just need to replay his speech tonight in this province for the next two and a half years. And there will be no doubt that there will be more seats on this side of the House under this party after the next election, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[22:15]

And I know my time, I'm right to the end, but I do want to say this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I don't think members on this side — and certainly not our Finance minister who's one of the most honourable people that I've come to know in my short time in this House — need any lessons from members opposite on transparency when it comes to economic growth, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because it was the members opposite that were in government in an election year, in 2003, that said that we would have 6.8 per cent growth in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And how did they back it up? Well let's compare. In our budget this year, in the '09-10 summary, there's a list of private sector GDP forecasts. And you can run down the list: IHS Global Insight, CBOC [Conference Board of Canada], TD [Toronto Dominion] Bank, RBC [Royal Bank of Canada].

In the budget that was presented by the NDP government in 2003 in an election year, the members opposite were happy enough to produce a forecast that was — and this is on page 23 of the '03-04 summary — and it was an individual company's forecasting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in a year that they picked out 6.8. It's a bar graph. And it's for '02, and there's bar graphs for '03 and '04, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And what did they do? They did a bar graph with the low private forecast and the high private forecast. So we didn't even know in 2003 what were the numbers used. It was amalgam. It was a consolidation of all the different private forecasters, no transparency whatsoever. So I don't think that our Finance minister, I don't think a single member on this side of the House needs to take any lessons from the members opposite when it comes to transparency and accountability, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And with that, I thank you. And I will not be supporting the

amendment, and I will be supporting the budget. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to join the proceedings tonight. We'll talk the clock out of course. The member from Weyburn-Big Muddy has very thoughtfully left me with about 11 minutes to go until we hit the clock, so we'll take advantage of that, Mr. Speaker.

I want to start my remarks by of course thanking the good people of Regina Elphinstone-Centre for sending me to this Assembly to be their representative, to work with them and for them. And it's certainly a responsibility that I take very seriously, Mr. Speaker, and one that I feel very privileged to have.

Other members are of course interested in these remarks. I don't know if it's late, they're sugared up, they're, you know, a little chatty from their chair, Mr. Speaker, but we'll see what they have to say throughout the debate here.

Again it's interesting to follow after the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy. You know I quite respect him as another young MLA in the Assembly. Perhaps not the bellower that the member from Kindersley is, but, you know, I guess he's working on it. It's interesting that he would tail off with a discussion of the private sector forecasters that they used for the basis of this budget, Mr. Speaker, to come up with the projection of 2.1 per cent economic growth.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that's . . . You know, it's an old story that lawyers or economists, you can get six of them in a room and you have seven opinions. One of the things about the economic forecasters that they are in agreement on these days, Mr. Speaker, in this time of turmoil and volatility, is that the markets are changing very quickly.

And certainly, you know, if you followed the evolution of the federal Conservatives as they went through the different permutations and . . . [inaudible] . . . as they went from, you know, Stephen Harper offering up the great advice that he suspected there are going to be lots of buying opportunities out there in the market; to a technical deficit; to, okay maybe we've got some problems; to the born-again Keynesianism of the federal Harper Conservatives. You know it's interesting to see how quickly that's progressed, Mr. Speaker, almost like watching a gymnastics floor show.

But in this time of volatility where the economists agreeing that yes things are volatile, you'd think that the members opposite would err on the side of caution in terms of their GDP productions because that of course is where it all hangs together. That's the basis on which you can predict economic growth in terms of what you're going to get for revenues coming in, how that matches up with expenditures being made. And for them to almost, to triple, in fact, plus the projections, the latest projections from the economic forecasters right from the word go, Mr. Speaker, it casts a shadow over this budget of doubt that should not be there. That should not be there.

It's funny, Mr. Speaker, this budget does a lot of great things. And I'll happily go on record saying that, but the problem that we have on this side, Mr. Speaker: it's one thing to promise good things to the people; it's another, of course, to pay for them. And how you're going to pay for them has to be built on the solid rock and not on the shifting sands, which again the economic forecasters, they're quite happy to recognize.

And we've got, you know, the bellowing back and forth over on the other side about different budgets over the years. But, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we were very clear on on our side of the House was that the credit ratings always went up on this side of the House. And when it came to financial advice from the members opposite, well it's very interesting, Mr. Speaker. I think I would take the affirmation coming out of the different bond rating agencies when it comes to financial advice over the bellowing of the members opposite.

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. I recognize the member.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So again, if they . . . You know, this is the budget debate. You'd expect they've all got a chance to participate. So if they want to do so from their seats, that's of course up to them. But thanks for the assist there, Mr. Speaker.

Anyway, budget projections are based very much . . . The GDP number is of critical importance. So to have that number in question right off the bat, Mr. Speaker, raises a number of questions about the affordability and the sustainability of all these things that are good and well received.

But again, Mr. Speaker, I think one of the things that's happened globally with the economic crisis . . . There's a good pundit I was listening to the other day who talked about economics having been divorced from history. And how the economists couldn't predict this because they had decided in the main that history had ended, and that they would not look back to see what had happened at different times in the economic history of the North American market or the global economy generally. And again, Mr. Speaker, those who forget their history are doomed to repeat it, Santayana would say.

And we've seen in this Legislative Assembly, we've seen in this province before, what happens when you get people in that want to promise a bunch of great things off the top. And of course, they're very appealing, Mr. Speaker. But the problem is, sometimes you pay for those things over decades. And I think there's widespread agreement, Mr. Speaker, that the 1980s, we saw that kind of behaviour take place in this province, with disastrous effect for this province. And we spent the '90s cleaning up that mess and paying that off.

So again, Mr. Speaker, you can have a record expenditure in this budget of \$10.2 billion, but if it's based on a foundation of shifting sand, then we worry about what's going to come over the long haul. And moreover in the main, Mr. Speaker, it has to do with a bet being made on potash and the price of potash, and getting the appropriate deal with China.

So I guess it's merciful in that we'll see how that bet makes out, Mr. Speaker, but when it comes to the finances of the province and the well-being of the people of the province, to make bets

that are that risky to that extent, this is not a venture capital fund that they're running, Mr. Speaker. It's the budget of the province of Saskatchewan. So we'll see how this all works out, Mr. Speaker; and you know, God only help us if it doesn't.

I guess in the main, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to address my comments to two main perspectives. One of course is to the people of Regina Elphinstone and how I see this budget impacting their situations, and of course the second is how the budget impacts or rather does not impact the situation for First Nations and Métis people in this province.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it's a funny business in this House to give credit because of course they'll pull quote you. And they'll say, you know, they'll take your comments out of context, and then next thing you know you're getting read off in the hosanna chorus of all the people that love the budget, you know — full stop, period.

So I guess I'll be very clear, Mr. Speaker. I'm supporting the amendments put forward for very many of the reasons that I've been discussing so far. But I do want to point out a number of things that I think are steps in the right direction in this budget.

Again I think the constituents in Regina Elphinstone Centre will look at what's happening with education property tax savings, with the increased funding there, how that works out. I think that, you know, they're going to be looking forward to a tax cut. And of course who doesn't look forward to a tax cut, Mr. Speaker?

But again the question that we look at there is, how does this play out over the long haul, and is this built on a sustainable foundation? And that of course, Mr. Speaker, is something that you find out over time. So it looks pretty good on budget day, and the hosannas ring forth, but we'll see how this plays out.

Something that I was most interested to note on budget day, Mr. Speaker, was the way that the Chair of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, Roy Challis said that he was shocked. And when you think that the member from Rosetown-Elrose has been bandying about the province doing his reports, and you know I guess I'm also glad to see on budget day, Mr. Speaker, that they finally freed the Reiter report — to use the common reference to it, Mr. Speaker — I was glad to see that report finally see the light of day. And I guess it's interesting if you're in the business of public policy, are you more interested in spin control, Mr. Speaker, or are you more interested in good public policy.

So the fact that the School Board Association themselves, that what they had to say about the budget was that they were shocked. I think that speaks volumes as to the approach that has been taken with hiding the report under wraps, and then only releasing it on budget day for maximum effect. So we'll see how that plays out with the School Board Association, Mr. Speaker.

And again the point has been well made, certainly by the trustee that represents the ward that I live in in the city of Regina, he's made the point that if you've taken away the economic levers, then you effectively have lost your autonomy as a school board. And again that they would do this, to drop it in the budget, not

have the advanced debate around the Reiter report — again to use the common usage, Mr. Speaker — in advance of the budget, again I don't think it speaks to good public policy. I think it speaks to spin control, and we'll see how this goes over the years to come.

One of the things that I was glad to see in this budget, Mr. Speaker, was increased revenue sharing for the cities and for rural municipalities, for the municipalities generally. It's something I'll have more to say about tomorrow, Mr. Speaker. And recognize that the clock is now 10:30. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — The time of adjournment having been reached, this House now stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:30.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

**EVENING SITTING
SPECIAL ORDER
ADJOURNED DEBATES
MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY
(BUDGET DEBATE)**

Bradshaw 2431
Chisholm..... 2433
Higgins 2435
Krawetz..... 2438
Boyd 2442
Harper 2447
Schriemer 2449
Duncan..... 2452
McCall 2457

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Brad Wall
Premier

Hon. Bob BJORNERUD
Minister of Agriculture
Minister Responsible for 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 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 Capital City Commission