



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

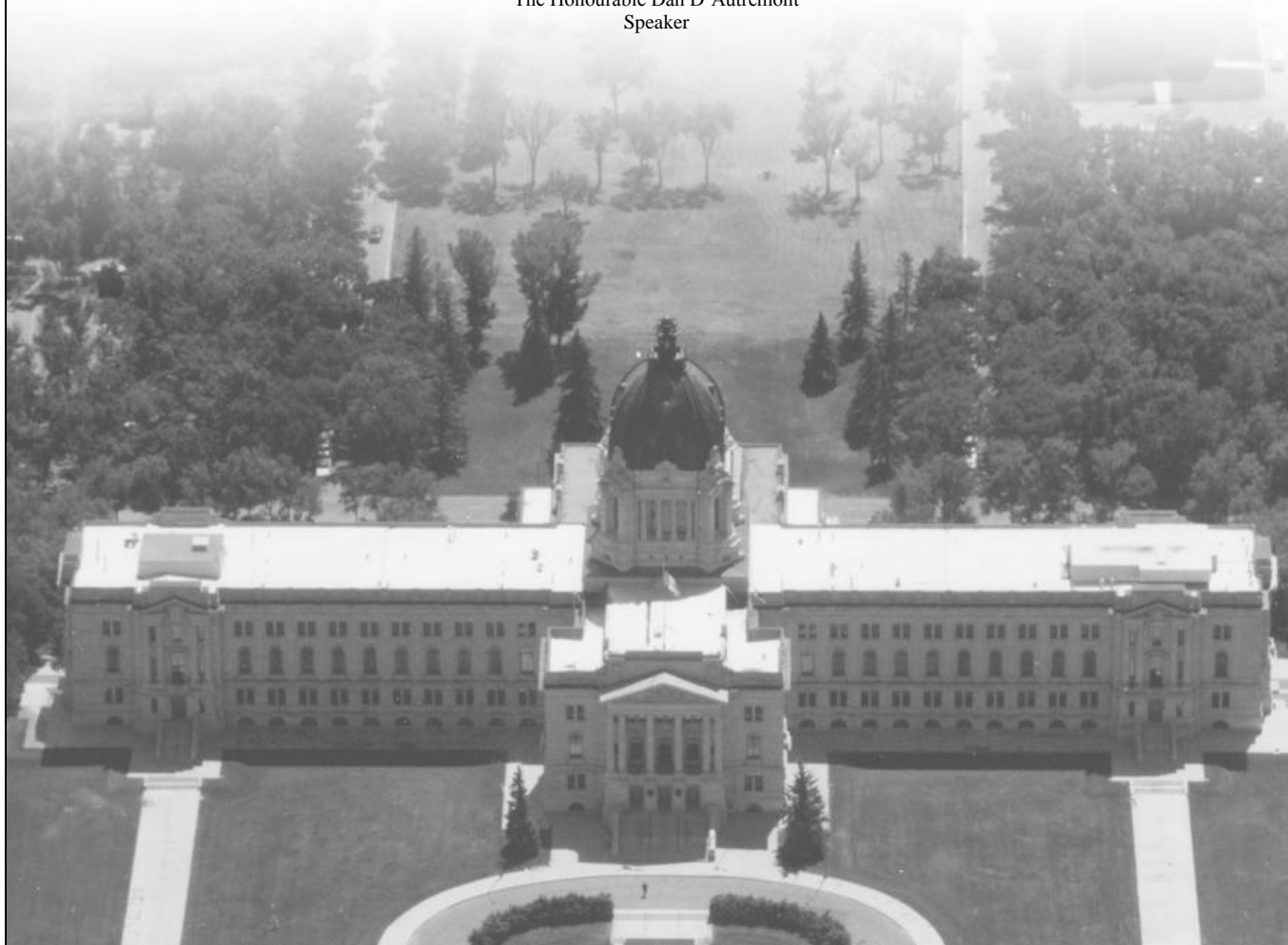
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**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)

Published under the  
authority of  
The Honourable Dan D'Autremont  
Speaker



**MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**

Speaker — Hon. Dan D’Autremont  
 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall  
 Leader of the Opposition — John Nilson

<b>Name of Member</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>	<b>Constituency</b>
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
Broten, Cam	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Campeau, Jennifer	SP	Saskatoon Fairview
Chartier, Danielle	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Cox, Herb	SP	The Battlefords
D’Autremont, Hon. Dan	SP	Cannington
Docherty, Mark	SP	Regina Coronation Park
Doherty, Kevin	SP	Regina Northeast
Doke, Larry	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Draude, Hon. June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Hon. Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Hon. Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Harpauer, Hon. Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harrison, Hon. Jeremy	SP	Meadow Lake
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Nancy	SP	Martensville
Hickie, Hon. Darryl	SP	Prince Albert Carlton
Hutchinson, Hon. Bill	SP	Regina South
Huyghebaert, Hon. D.F. (Yogi)	SP	Wood River
Jurgens, Victoria	SP	Prince Albert Northcote
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
Lawrence, Greg	SP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Makowsky, Gene	SP	Regina Dewdney
Marchuk, Russ	SP	Regina Douglas Park
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMillan, Hon. Tim	SP	Lloydminster
McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Merriman, Paul	SP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Moe, Scott	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
Ottenbreit, Greg	SP	Yorkton
Parent, Roger	SP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Phillips, Kevin	SP	Melfort
Reiter, Hon. Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Ross, Hon. Laura	SP	Regina Qu’Appelle Valley
Sproule, Cathy	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Steinley, Warren	SP	Regina Walsh Acres
Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Tell, Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
Tochor, Corey	SP	Saskatoon Eastview
Toth, Don	SP	Moosomin
Vermette, Doyle	NDP	Cumberland
Wall, Hon. Brad	SP	Swift Current
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Wyant, Gordon	SP	Saskatoon Northwest

[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

**EVENING SITTING**

**The Speaker:** — It now being 7 o'clock, the House stands in session. I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

**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. Krawetz that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Wotherspoon.]

**Mr. Makowsky:** — Well thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I believe before the supper break there, Mr. Speaker, I was talking about affordable housing here in the province and the incentive we've put for the tax rebate on multi-unit starts.

Mr. Speaker, you know, it's one thing for me to say that, but stakeholders have also let their opinions known. Jim Scarrow said, and I quote here, "We are very happy. Five stars. Home run for the rental initiative."

Bill Madder is from the Association of Saskatchewan Realtors. I quote:

The rebate on business income tax puts Saskatchewan in a leadership role nationally. Tax treatment of rental investment and income has been a major federal-level problem. Here we see Saskatchewan stepping outside the box to come up with a home-grown answer.

In all, Mr. Speaker, \$309 million in the next four years towards housing, and that, we think, will bring some balance to the housing market here in the province.

Mr. Speaker, there are many young families out there in our province, more and more each day, who are finding their way here in the new Saskatchewan. Of course I have a young family myself. I've mentioned this before. My three young boys, Nicholas, Ryan, and Blake, are certainly the highlight of my life, and they make their dad proud. And you know, I guess that's why we get into this business or any business we do, Mr. Speaker. We do it for our kids, if we have them, or our grandkids, and that's why we work hard and do our best. And in this job, we want to leave the future better than or things better than what we found it. And of course there's many young families in Regina Dewdney, and this budget has several measures to address their needs.

One of them, the active families benefit, Mr. Speaker, has been extended to kids to 17 years of age and under. This is one of my favourite measures, not only that this government brought in in '07 but to ramp it up even more in this budget. I've been involved in sports all my life as an athlete and a coach for many

years, and I've seen what sports and what activities can, they can be for kids here in our province. It's certainly a portal to learn, interact, work hard, and be a proud part of their community. Time and time again, over and over, I've seen, well peers of mine, students of mine, and just kids that I've coached get so much out of sports. And they grow. My own kid, he's just grown so much socially since he's been involved in sports, Mr. Speaker. It's great to see, and all the kids in Saskatchewan have benefited from this \$250 tax credit, that it really goes a long way for accessibility so all kids can have that opportunity to participate.

The PST [provincial sales tax] exemption on clothing has been extended to those under age 17; \$6 million net increase for the children and youth agenda, including \$1 million for autism therapies; \$600,000 for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder; 50 new pre-kindergarten programs; \$600,000 to support EAL [English as an additional language] students. There's going to be 500 new child care spaces in this budget, Mr. Speaker, as part of the campaign promise to add 2,000 in four years.

You know, tax savings are a big part of what we've done here in government, Mr. Speaker. Quite simply, here in Saskatchewan we have the highest threshold before you pay taxes anywhere in Canada. And what that means for families in our province, Mr. Speaker, a family of four with an income of \$50,000 in 2007, they had to pay to the government 3,382. This year, in 2012, in this budget they'll only be paying \$744, Mr. Speaker.

That's a change from the NDP [New Democratic Party]. That's a lot for the families in our province, a savings of \$2,638. Now that's good news for the people of the province, for families. It helps with affordability. Their money, they can decide on their own what to do with their money rather than government spending it for them, Mr. Speaker.

And you know one of the big pluses in this budget, Mr. Speaker, for children, my kids, future kids, grandkids out there, one of the truly . . . things makes this budget so good — that this budget is balanced, Mr. Speaker, on a summary financial basis. In its own terms that's a great thing, but when you compare it to others, it really does stand out, Mr. Speaker. Many governments have simply spent more than they have taken in over time. They have no qualms, I guess, about kicking their problems down to the next generation financially. And you know, Mr. Speaker, that leads to systemic unsustainable debt on their operations.

And, Mr. Speaker, some governments, it seems that they have a situation where it's like a person. They have a credit card, and they take out another credit card just to use that credit card to pay the interest on the original credit card. And you have to wonder, what are the consequences of this over the long term, Mr. Speaker? Will these countries have any say what they do domestically, and what are their policies going to be as a result of that? How will future citizens possibly pay this debt off, and what will their standard of living be as a result? I imagine it'd be a little bit lower than it is now certainly. And if interest rates go up, that's certainly a situation as well. Well we see the situation with Greece that Germany has sort of dictated what they could do with their own treasury, Mr. Speaker, so they lost

some of their sovereignty there, I think. Certainly not the whole problem, but that is certainly some of the problem we're seeing in other parts of the world.

And of course we see some jurisdiction, they'll start the printing presses — right, Mr. Speaker? — and that helps make debt cheaper. But provincial governments, we don't have a central bank or a printing press, so we have to be even more careful that spending does not get out of control.

And, Mr. Speaker, you know, I don't mean to lecture other jurisdictions on what they do within their own borders, Mr. Speaker, it's just . . . And I take no pleasure in pointing this difference out, you know, but they are critics of this budget. And government is about choices. And it doesn't mean we can't do more or we can't be diligent but, as a comparison, you know, well I often hear from the members opposite about our neighbours to the east. They say, Manitoba has this; they do that. But, Mr. Speaker, they also have over a \$1 billion deficit. Now I know some of that has to do with flooding, no doubt. But, Mr. Speaker, well I am kind of partial to the Saskatchewan advantage. It doesn't surprise me a whole lot the NDP would promote this model based on their multi-billion dollar election platform spending spree.

Ontario has a \$16 billion deficit and a \$250 billion debt. They will have to make very difficult decisions in the very near future, Mr. Speaker. You know, we could do a lot more if we wanted to run a \$1 billion deficit as well. But the people of Saskatchewan, they didn't want that, Mr. Speaker. And we saw that on November 7, 2011. Here in Saskatchewan we chose a different path. We've taken a different path here in Saskatchewan. We've actually paid off debt in the GRF [General Revenue Fund] by 44 per cent since 2007, Mr. Speaker. I don't really recall any other western country, western democracy doing anything close to this in the last several years. It saves hundreds of millions of dollars in interest costs.

I find it interesting when you watch other budgets, other finance ministers stand up and say, we promise to cut the deficit — and of course everything has to go perfectly — by 2019, by 2021. Well, Mr. Speaker, we don't have that problem in Saskatchewan. We're very lucky. You know, by being cautious now and making some tough decisions, we will not have to avert a crisis like many places around the world will soon have to do.

Back to our friends to the east for a moment, you know, don't ask me about our choices to live within our means. This past weekend the *Winnipeg Sun* said, and these are quotes here, Saskatchewan is "kicking our butts." We have the Jets, meaning in Manitoba, "But on the financial, tax and prosperity front, our Prairie cousins to the immediate west are teaching us a hard lesson in Economics 101," Mr. Speaker. And further to that, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has transformed itself. These are quotes. Saskatchewan has transformed ". . . itself into a lean, competitive province that has done a bang-up job attracting industry, skilled labour and capital." The article finished by calling the difference between the two provinces . . . Now I liked most of this article, Mr. Speaker. This next sentence, and you'll see in a second why I don't like it as much, but "[It's been a] . . . stark contrast. I'd say we could learn a lot from our banjo-pickin' cousins to the west. At least when it comes to

managing taxpayer dollars."

You know what, Mr. Speaker? I want the best for my kids and my grandkids. I don't want a legacy of uncontrolled debt to be hung on them, Mr. Speaker.

While I think I'm getting a little better at being a politician, I've managed to be more and more long-winded. So I'll just wrap up. I know a lot of my colleagues will want to enter in this good budget debate here. But, Mr. Speaker, I'll end by saying this. We now have a AAA credit rating. We've fulfilled our campaign promises. We've helped families and seniors with affordability. We've improved access to health care, all within a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker. That's how you keep the Saskatchewan advantage.

On behalf of the people of Regina Dewdney and my family, I'm going to be supporting this budget, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm also very pleased to stand today to participate in the budget and to dismiss all the rhetoric and all the revisionist history that we're hearing from the Sask Party, Mr. Speaker. And let the . . . I think the most important thing, I think people out there in Saskatchewan know one thing, Mr. Speaker: that this budget doesn't do anything for the future. It doesn't do anything for the vision that the people of Saskatchewan expected, and it certainly hurt the people that were the least advantaged in our great province. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to explain how that works.

But before I do that, Mr. Speaker, I want to make a few comments on a few of the points raised by the member from Wood River. He's talking about the Meadow Lake pulp mill, Mr. Speaker, of how they spent \$800 million, I think was the figure he raised, to save a seat. And I'm trying to figure out, Mr. Speaker, where did that come from, Mr. Speaker, \$800 million to save a seat in Meadow Lake?

Mr. Speaker, what that member ought to know, and had he been here just a bit longer he would have known, that that deal was structured by Grant Devine — all right? — and there's many other deals in this province that were structured by the former premier. And, Mr. Speaker, what was really, really amazing is how that member tried to hook that onto the NDP, saying this is what they've done. This is what they spent to save a seat. And what that member should do is study the history, Mr. Speaker, study the history on who structured that particular deal.

I would suspect, Mr. Speaker . . . At the time, the minister from Meadow Lake at that time was George McLeod. And I think as the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] — I think he was the minister of Health at one time — I think he bought in the company to set up a pulp mill up in Meadow Lake. And, Mr. Speaker, the province of Saskatchewan, the taxpayers were on the hook for that pulp mill, and we paid many, many, many years for that, Mr. Speaker.

It was a contract that was designed and set up by the former PC [Progressive Conservative] government that this government, the NDP government of 1991 and on, had to pay every single

year, Mr. Speaker. And if my memory serves me correct, I think the deal was that any cost overruns and any managerial fees that were due to this particular company that came in and set up . . . I think the company was Mac Millar, the company president at the time, and the pulp mill was Millar Western Pulp mill. That was the partnership, and the deal was that any costs for management, any overruns as a result of the pulp mill coming in to Meadow Lake, that the province of Saskatchewan would pay those costs over a defined period of time, Mr. Speaker. I think the bill was for 15 years.

So before that member from Wood River tries to rewrite history, he ought to know that that's about how long, of the 16 years that the NDP took control of this province, 16 years, it took us about 15 of those years to clean up that Tory mess in which that member was a part of in those days. So what he ought to do is start, maybe, perhaps reciting history correctly, Mr. Speaker.

And that's the most amazing thing about these guys is they'll say things that is absolutely false, something that people out there in Saskatchewan know is false, and yet they keep saying it. And they keep saying it, and they're hoping that people will say, oh what the heck, you know, if that's what they're saying, it must be true.

And, Mr. Speaker, I tell the people out there in Saskatchewan, that is not factual. They ought to look back. And you ought to research what he's speaking about because, Mr. Speaker, the facts will clearly point to his right wing ilk, and that'll show that it was their deal. They consummated that deal, and they put the province of Saskatchewan, which included the NDP government at the time, on the hook for almost \$1 billion for that pulp mill in Meadow Lake, almost \$1 billion, Mr. Speaker, for that pulp mill in Meadow Lake. And he has the audacity of 16 years later getting up and saying, why did you guys do these certain things? Why didn't you do some of these things?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I've said it once and I'll say it again: but at the 16 years that the NDP were in power, Mr. Speaker, it took them about 14 or 15 years to clean up the last Tory mess, Mr. Speaker. And just when things were starting to get better, the people of Saskatchewan lost patience with the NDP, and they obviously looked for another choice, Mr. Speaker.

Now what I want to point out on the budget itself, Mr. Speaker, is that it's an amazing scenario to watch how the people that could least afford it were attacked by this Sask Party government, Mr. Speaker, the people that could least afford it. From my perspective as a northern MLA, I was hoping things would really turn around for the people of northern Saskatchewan. And some of the things that people in southern Saskatchewan take for granted, like a housing market or home ownership, these are some of the things that were ripped out of the budget and told, and told to the people of northern Saskatchewan that you don't count any more.

[19:15]

Also, Mr. Speaker, what happened was the seniors, the seniors were also told, you're going to pay more now for your medicine. You're going to pay a lot more for some of your ambulance costs. And the list goes on, Mr. Speaker.

And what also happened, Mr. Speaker, is that northern forest fires crews were cut by that particular government, down one member for each crew. And, Mr. Speaker, that is an absolute shame.

And you look at the highway commitment, Mr. Speaker, for northern Saskatchewan: no new money for highways, no new construction for highways, Mr. Speaker. And that is absolute, an absolute shame. And we look at some of the challenges that people have to travel with, travel some of the roads that people have to travel on. You can see that northern Saskatchewan, is it any wonder that they're very upset at the Sask Party government? And that's one of the reasons why, Mr. Speaker, that they have let their voices be known, and they certainly give me a lot of information that I wish to share tonight in the Assembly.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, we're seeing less social support for the people that desperately need that support, Mr. Speaker. And yet in northern Saskatchewan, there's one thing northern people are very proud of. They're proud of the fact that a lot of their northern resources are used to create a great number of jobs in southern Saskatchewan, that the resources of the North, uranium in particular, Mr. Speaker, offers a great, great commodity to the world. And we hope that the industry will continue for many, many years.

And what happens as northerners are sitting and looking at some of the economic activity happening in their area, they see a forestry truck zip by. They see some of the northern mining products drive by. And yet you see the condition of our roads, and you see the fact that seniors are paying more, and there's a lot less support for northern Saskatchewan. And the worst part of it is that the fact that northern roads are really not being cared for at all, Mr. Speaker. But that's my perspective from northern Saskatchewan.

And what people ought to know is that . . . And I'm happy. For a certain extent, I'm happy that people are speaking up, and they're really bringing forth some of their concerns. You see some of the activity in the Assembly today with the film industry. They came here, and this industry was really upset. Why would they do this, Mr. Speaker? Why would they do something that's contrary to what I think is a great idea and a great concept and that's stimulating the industry in the province? And yet they turn a deaf ear on some of their concerns.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to read a particular quote here from a March 24th, 2012 article. And this is not from the NDP, Mr. Speaker. This is not a revisionist historian that's going to be changing how he or she perceives history. This is actually Bruce Johnstone of the Regina *Leader-Post*, Mr. Speaker. And what he says, Mr. Speaker, is quite amazing. And he talks about, Mr. Speaker, and I will quickly read out what he has said when he's talking about the industry itself, and I quote: "But the industry says the program has generated \$623 million in production work since 1998 — a more than six-fold return on the government's investment of \$100 million."

Now, Mr. Speaker, these are people that have watched budgets over the many, many years. They're probably more intelligent and probably a lot more trained to look at how these things

unfold as each budget is unveiled. And you look at the headline that he has put under his column and it says, "Penny wise, pound foolish," Mr. Speaker. And this is Bruce Johnstone, who is a respected journalist in the province, and he writes for a very large paper. And the list goes on in terms of some of the other headlines, Mr. Speaker. And this is not the NDP saying it, Mr. Speaker. These are journalists and the media in the province of Saskatchewan.

So we can take the revisionist history that the member from Wood River likes to do, or we can listen to the neutral folks in the media. And that's what I encourage people at home to do is to look at what the media is saying, what the people are saying, what the industries are saying about what is wrong with this particular budget and what is wrong with this particular government, Mr. Speaker.

Now I pointed out at the outset, that look at the issue of how they have taken so much away from the film industry, that they've increased costs for seniors. And the list goes on as to what they have done terribly wrong with this budget. And, Mr. Speaker, what have they proposed? The savings that they have in those areas, they're going to add three more MLAs and they're going to build a statue, Mr. Speaker. That's their grand plan for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And that is what people in northern Saskatchewan, I think people throughout the province are going to say: why didn't you tell us that on the doorstep? Why didn't you tell us that on the doorstep that your plan was to add three more MLAs? Why didn't you tell them on the doorstep that your plan was to cut the film and tax credit so the industry begins to suffer, Mr. Speaker?

They wouldn't do that, Mr. Speaker. They wouldn't do that because they knew they would not get elected, Mr. Speaker, to the extent that they had, and that there's trouble brewing on the horizon. And they hid that from the people of Saskatchewan, what is unfair of this Saskatchewan Party government.

Now I'll also point out, Mr. Speaker, there is another article here we have from Murray Mandryk, who is another journalist that talks about some of the . . . Again he's being very neutral. And what he points out, Mr. Speaker, and what he points out — and Mr. Mandryk is neutral, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Mandryk is neutral — and what his headline on the budget, Mr. Speaker, the headline reads, "Sorting out the budget hypocrisy," Mr. Speaker.

That's what he said and that's exactly what we perceive within the NDP, is that these guys are not managing the money and the finances properly. They were handed a booming economy, Mr. Speaker. They were handed a great surplus within the bank account of the people of Saskatchewan, and things were moving in the right direction. And what do they do, Mr. Speaker? Again as we pointed out, is they're starting to do creative ways on how they're going to handle our financing. And people out there in the media are certainly paying really close attention to how these guys are managing the money.

Now again to the rookie MLAs that are here, we understand from the opposition's perspective that your job is to primarily read the notes handed to you, and you put the best spin as you

possibly can. But the real story comes from the media and certainly comes from the groups that come to this Assembly to express what some of the concerns are and what some of the challenges are and how this government has turned their backs on key critical areas, Mr. Speaker, on key critical areas.

And I would point out from the northern perspective, Mr. Speaker, at one time there was a program which allowed people that rented their homes for 10, 12, 15 years the opportunity to actually buy out that home, that they would do an assessment on that home and determine, based on the housing market, that your home would be worth this amount of money, therefore would you like to buy the home and therefore you can become more independent. And, Mr. Speaker, we're hearing now that that program is ended, that all these people, all these families that had the opportunity to actually purchase their home and begin the process of home ownership, that they can have an asset and a value, that they can actually do something with this particular home, they are being told now, oh sorry, we're changing our mind. We're not going to offer that to northern residents, therefore you'll be renting forever. You will be renting forever.

And, Mr. Speaker, that is a shame because part of the process of building up hope for families is to give them that opportunity and the possibility of home ownership. And right throughout this land, throughout Saskatchewan right now, Mr. Speaker, there are tens of thousands of young people that'll never realize that dream of owning their own home because that Saskatchewan, the dream is gone because of the expense and the cost of houses are so high that nobody can ever afford to buy their own. So there'll be many people beginning to rent for the rest of their lives, Mr. Speaker, for the rest of their lives.

Now they've extended that to northern Saskatchewan where there is no housing market. There is no housing market, Mr. Speaker. And yet this government says, okay, for the area that has no housing market, guess what? We're not going to give you an opportunity to own your own home, and we're not going to give you any opportunity to have that pride in your own home ownership. From now on you're renting forever, Mr. Speaker.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, that's a serious breach of a contract in general because people out there expected that opportunity. And this government, this Sask Party government ripped that opportunity out from underneath them. And there are many young families, single mothers that really wanted to continue to build their future for their kids and working poor people that wanted to actually own their own home, that opportunity was ripped off. It was ripped out from underneath them by the Saskatchewan Party government. And that is an absolute shame, Mr. Speaker.

And furthermore, Mr. Speaker, you look at the cuts to the northern forest fire program, the cuts to the northern forest fire program. We already know northern Saskatchewan has challenges when it comes to jobs and employment and opportunity in these northern communities, Mr. Speaker. We know that those problems exist. And what did this government do, Mr. Speaker? It started cutting jobs in northern Saskatchewan under the one area where we think it's really important, and that was of course to protect the forestry

industry, protect the communities, protect the lives. But what they've done is reduce the northern forest fire fighting group and the different crews out there. They've cut them, and they've gutted them right throughout the northern part of the province. And that is not fair to the northern people.

And I would say one thing, Mr. Speaker, is why in an area that has the greatest economic challenges, why in the area that has probably the highest unemployment rate, if not in Saskatchewan right across the nation, why would they go there to cut jobs and take away essential programs like home ownership, Mr. Speaker? What was the intent behind that, Mr. Speaker?

So I think what's really important for the rookies out there to understand, and I appreciate that, home ownership is good. It's really nice when you go there and you see young families move into new homes, but that dream is probably only for a select few. There are thousands of people out there being affected adversely by this government, by some of the decisions and some of the choices that they made, Mr. Speaker, and they continue to make. So how is it that most disadvantaged people in this province have to pay the highest price when it comes to things like home ownership or employment in their own community, Mr. Speaker, and a sense of opportunity in their own land?

And they weren't done there yet, Mr. Speaker. They weren't done there yet. Then they went after the enterprise regions, which was their concept to begin with. They began slashing the enterprise regions, saying no more are we going to look at the economic opportunity, the economic opportunity for northern Saskatchewan people. We're going to pull away from these enterprise regions that we set up, and we think that that's enough of that.

So, Mr. Speaker, you have to look at that notion of why do that in an area that desperately needs as much of the support as we possibly can. And they not only ripped the opportunity from people's dreams of owning their own homes, but they also aren't going to do anything to help them economically. Plus we're going to also cut jobs and we're not going to fix your roads.

And yet at the same time, Mr. Speaker, at the same time, we are now going to keep hauling out of a lot of the resources out of the North. And in the meantime, you guys just sit and watch the trucks drive by that are hauling out pulp or hauling out logs or hauling out a number of goods from northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. The people in northern Saskatchewan see that, and we tell the people all throughout the province that this is not a fair Saskatchewan unless it's good for all of us. That is not fair in any way, shape or form, Mr. Speaker.

So not only does the budget do a lot of nasty things to our seniors, it does a lot of nasty things to young families. It does a lot of nasty things to Aboriginal people, and it really, really penalizes northern Saskatchewan, an area where they need more support, not less, Mr. Speaker, not less. And that's the message that the people are sending here on a continual basis, that we need investment in the North. We need employment opportunity in the North. We need home ownership opportunities in the North. And all of those were taken away by one budget by that Sask Party government, Mr. Speaker. And I

say shame on them, Mr. Speaker.

And yet the worst part of this all, Mr. Speaker, is the fact they're hauling out all kinds of resources out of northern Saskatchewan. And as Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people who call the North their home watch this, they say, why don't they at least fix up our roads so that the trucks that are hauling out all these goods can have an easier drive out? And they won't even do that, Mr. Speaker.

So what does this mean? What does this mean? It means that they simply do not care, Mr. Speaker. They do not care. So this whole notion of the fact that they put these programs in place, and they take programs out from the budget, and they don't realize all the misplaced priorities they have put on against the North or onto the North, that how dramatic and how negative of an effect that that has on many people's lives, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to talk a bit about the northern forest fire fighting program, Mr. Speaker. They are an excellent, they are an excellent bunch of people, men and women, that do a fantastic job of protecting northern forests, Mr. Speaker, not only for threats to communities and to lives but also to the industries such as tourism and forestry, Mr. Speaker. These guys that fight against the forest fire threat to many of our northern parts of Saskatchewan, they do a tremendously good job. And the reason why I know, Mr. Speaker, is you do the comparison on what Alberta pays versus what BC [British Columbia] pays versus what Manitoba pays and versus what Saskatchewan pays, and you will see, out of the four Western provinces, that Saskatchewan's probably got the lowest cost of fighting these fires than any other jurisdiction. And that's a tribute to a lot of these northern forest crews that do a tremendous amount of great work. And it's a very good bunch of people that do their service well, Mr. Speaker.

[19:30]

Many times, many times they put their lives on the line. Many times they leave their families and they go out and they do a job for the government. And now how does this government repay them? Well we're going to cut your program more, and you're going to get less equipment. And, Mr. Speaker, that's a slap in the face for a great amount of good work that was done by these crews throughout northern Saskatchewan.

And the question you've got to ask is, why? As you're hauling out the uranium, why are you firing our forestry protection officers? As you're hauling out the logs, why are you stopping home ownership from becoming an opportunity for people? And as you're hauling in tourists and hauling them out again, why is it not fair to ask for fair treatment of our elders and not have them pay more for their medicines?

And, Mr. Speaker, one of the points that was raised by my colleague is many people in northern Saskatchewan, the elders in particular, they were quite pleased when that \$15 charge was put on their prescription, and yet they still had a difficult time, Mr. Speaker. They still had a difficult time in trying to do the rent, the power bill, the food, and the list goes on. But yet with the increase in the prescription cost now under this government, they're going to have a greater and a more difficult time trying to make ends meet. And these are the people that developed

northern Saskatchewan — our pioneers, our elders — and this government shows them how much they have respect for them by cutting these programs and increasing the cost of medicine, which is an essential need for many of our elders. And they increased those costs, Mr. Speaker. So what's going to happen is many of those elders will now not buy the prescription.

So I look at the budget itself and the implications, Mr. Speaker, and some of the challenges that this government put before the North, and I tell the northern people one thing: that one of the problems that we have is that we're not going to Regina enough and bringing groups of people and organized people to this Assembly to show this government that we mean business when we don't want to be pushed around any more on our own land. And some of the resources that you have taken out of the North, why don't you put it into meaningful, visionary things that mean a lot for the future of our province, that gives us as northern people more independence?

It's about social and economic justice, Mr. Speaker; that's what this is about. And this government doesn't get it. This Sask Party government has no idea what it's doing when it does harmful cuts like that and, Mr. Speaker, the people of the North are getting angrier and angrier and they simply are not going to take it any more. And I encourage them to come to Regina, to come to this Assembly and voice their opinion and their displeasure as to how this government is treating them, Mr. Speaker. And I would encourage anybody listening tonight to get organized and start rallying against this government.

And so I again, out of respect for the fact that the rookie MLAs have no choice but to read the script in front of them, I'll ask them to dig deeper at what that particular government is doing, what they're saying, and what they've done with this budget. Have a look around and ask the questions: is home ownership being supported by our government?

The answer would be a flat no because there's hundreds of families, young families, that'll never afford a home in Saskatchewan, that Saskatchewan dream that many of us have and have had for our kids and our grandkids. That'll never happen again, Mr. Speaker, because the prices of houses are going through the roof and young people and young families in this province cannot afford to buy a home, or the down payment to buy a home. And that's all throughout Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, not just in northern Saskatchewan. We hear that steady. We hear grandparents that are continuing to work to try and make ends meet.

And, Mr. Speaker, home ownership is a key thing. It's a great thing to see. I'm not arguing that point, nor am I disputing that sentiment. I'm just saying that it's getting more and more difficult for young working people to be able to have that Saskatchewan dream of owning their own home, Mr. Speaker. And about all they can look forward to is sky-high rents, without the possibility of owning their own home. And that's a shame, given the fact that this government is bragging about all the money that they've got, Mr. Speaker, bragging about the booming economy and all the great opportunity that they have in this land.

When we start seeing roads being paved to First Nations communities, when we start seeing home ownership being

supported to the northern communities, when you start seeing benefit sharing of all the resources in northern Saskatchewan and the same quality of life that you enjoy in southern Saskatchewan and some sectors of the province, then and then and only then will we feel from the northern perspective that we're part of this province, Mr. Speaker. But the treatment we got from the Saskatchewan Party in this last budget is shameful, Mr. Speaker, at best. It is shameful, and the worst thing is they've been bragging about all the money they've got and they've been bragging about the economy that they supposedly built, Mr. Speaker.

They inherited that, Mr. Speaker. They inherited that. And I would challenge any member across the way to do a history check, do a history check and they will find out that every time the economy was going great and things were happening and people were working and things were really moving forward, Mr. Speaker, guess what? The NDP were in charge. And that's why the people of Saskatchewan are always proud to support the NDP, Mr. Speaker. That's why I'm proud to stand here as an NDP member, Mr. Speaker. But every time things went south on the economy or anything happened to . . . [inaudible] . . . in the province, guess who took over? The conservatives, Mr. Speaker.

So the message we have today is that you've got to be careful that you don't mess this up. You've been given an opportunity, an opportunity never afforded to the NDP government under Romanow in 1991. We were paying \$2 million per day on interest alone, Mr. Speaker, on interest alone left by the Tory government of the 1980s. And if you think for one minute — for one minute, Mr. Speaker — of the things we could have done if we didn't, the things we could have accomplished in the long term if we didn't have that huge debt covering or over our heads, Mr. Speaker, we could have done wonderful things.

Now what happens, Mr. Speaker, is that you look at . . . Look at the history again. I think that the interest payment alone on the debt left by the Conservatives — left by the Conservatives — I think it was twice the amount given to all the school boards in the province. It was twice the amount of the education budget, Mr. Speaker. That is an amazing challenge to meet that debt if it's twice the amount of your education budget. And that is an amazing thing that people out there, in the history of Saskatchewan, they look at how that was managed, of how the NDP chipped away at that debt problem and then began paying down the debt itself so it resulted in lesser interest, Mr. Speaker. It took a lot of time to get there, Mr. Speaker; it took many, many years. And that's why I say today, when this government took over, when this party took over, Mr. Speaker, they had two and one-half billion dollars in the bank. They had a booming economy and the population was on the rise. So really, Mr. Speaker, they had very little work to do except spend money.

So my argument today is, when we say to you to manage that economy and that money very carefully, the lessons are from a party that went through the repayment of debt left by your predecessors, your cousins. We had to take some very tough positions and make some hard choices to begin to recapture Saskatchewan so it's not purchased by the people of Wall Street. And actually Saskatchewan came into its own after years and years of very careful management and certainly some good vision attached to it, Mr. Speaker.



Now I obviously want to give credit to where credit is due. Tchorzewski was the minister of Finance at the time and they called him Eddie T, and certainly he was one of the builders. He's one of the people that rebuilt hope and rebuilt our finances. It wasn't the member from Wood River; he wasn't around then. It wasn't the member from Kindersley. He took off when the tough work started, Mr. Speaker. It was people like Eddie T. It was people like Romanow. It was people like Eric Cline. Those are the people that we should thank today, Mr. Speaker, because they were a good government. They brought back Saskatchewan from the brink of bankruptcy, Mr. Speaker. And that's why today, when you hear these guys do the spin, spin, spin, keep talking about the good things and well let's do a different story of how the history unfolded here; and we say it enough, we say it enough, the people of Saskatchewan will then believe us.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan know one thing. They know that the economy of Saskatchewan was hot and will continue staying hot for a long time. They know regardless of which party is in place, it will continue staying hot and will continue building, Mr. Speaker. And the third thing is, they know one thing for certain, they know one thing for certain, that these guys didn't build the economy. It was handed to them, Mr. Speaker. That they know, that they know.

So overall, Mr. Speaker, I would say that some of the members out across the way here may have been convinced by their colleagues in the backroom, you just say this, follow these notes, don't deviate from the notes because that's going to be our spin for the next two years, that's what they've got to tell people. And if we all say it, if we all say it then maybe some people will believe us.

Well, Mr. Speaker, to me I think that's very . . . That is not the proper way to do things, Mr. Speaker. That is not the correct way. That is not the right way. There's no question in my mind that what they often tell their members is look, we got this great opportunity, we have to work hard to build a new vision for Saskatchewan. Instead, Mr. Speaker, they have not done anything except claim credit for something that they have not done, Mr. Speaker. They have claimed credit for something they have not done. And that's why I sit here today and look at some of these headlines and I say to myself, you know, without those really gifted people that we enjoyed having in our company in those tough, tough years, that this government does not know what they're doing, not with the economy. They don't know what they're doing with the budgets. They don't know what they're doing with the opportunity that's before them because this is their first opportunity that they've ever had.

And some of the other points I would point out, Mr. Speaker, as well, is that you look at the whole notion of this paydown of debt. That was one of the things, that was one of the things . . .

[Applause]

**Mr. Belanger:** — And right on cue, Mr. Speaker. Right on cue, they applaud that. And you know why they do that, Mr. Speaker? They say, look what we've done. We're paying down debt; applause. You see how it's all orchestrated, Mr. Speaker.

The fact of the matter is there was no incoming government in

the history of Canada that enjoyed the surplus, the opportunity, and everything going on the upswing than the Sask Party did in 2007, Mr. Speaker. History will show they are the only government that had all the booming economy, the money in the bank, and everything was moving forward. Everything was moving forward. They inherited that, Mr. Speaker. They inherited that. And that's why today when they say, oh, after two years, after two years of really tough slugging it out and really having a tough time, we managed to pay down 40 per cent of the debt after two years, and everybody in the finance world had to kind of hold themselves from laughing themselves silly.

Because people in Saskatchewan know. People in Saskatchewan know that when it comes to economic building, when it comes to making sure that you manage your money properly, when it comes down to making sure that you have a future that includes everyone — people of the North, the elders, people of all backgrounds, that you want to be inclusive of all people — the only person, the only group that really does that, Mr. Speaker, is the NDP, Mr. Speaker.

People in Saskatchewan know that, Mr. Speaker. And there's no question in my mind that the NDP is going to be coming back, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to be coming back in greater numbers. Because sooner or later, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan will have them figured out, and they'll realize that all they did was spend money and spin. Spend and spin, Mr. Speaker, spend and spin. They're great pretenders, and that's one of the reasons why we don't, on this side, for one second believe anything that their Minister of Finance brings forward as a balanced budget. And the point that he raises, we have \$15 million to the good. Well, Mr. Speaker, last year it was a \$310 million deficit as our Finance critic pointed out — \$310 million deficit. And who said that? It wasn't the NDP. It was the media.

So once again this year we're going into deficit again, Mr. Speaker. And yet they keep spinning and they keep spinning and they keep spinning. And I tell the people of Saskatchewan one simple message: when they spin like that, always remember that only the truth will set them free. And that's why, that's why, Mr. Speaker, they will not speak the truth about how they're managing the money and how they're making sure the budgets are balanced because they are not, Mr. Speaker. They are not. And that's the unfortunate reality of this particular government and of these particular members of that government, Mr. Speaker.

So again I'll go back to my point about northern Saskatchewan, the place where we needed the most help. And I think that Saskatchewan people are very generous and kind people and understanding people in general. I've met many of them, Mr. Speaker, all throughout the land. And they understand, they understand a number of key values in the province is also caring for your neighbour and making sure everybody is part, part of this great economy, Mr. Speaker.

And I would point out that northern Saskatchewan is being excluded, as many other groups are being excluded, and that is shameful, Mr. Speaker, because northern Saskatchewan does a lot for the province. So instead of just pulling out all the resources — uranium or logging or the tourism industry — why

don't you put some back? Put some back instead of pulling and cutting and taking away from the northern part of our province, Mr. Speaker.

[19:45]

So again I point out, as we sit here today and listen to the budget debates, I'll tell the people at home basically the argument is . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . They've got three or four members on their side arguing with one member on our side, which is not fair, Mr. Speaker. It is not fair because they need, they need 12 Sask Party MLAs against one NDP, and that, Mr. Speaker, would make it a half-decent fight, Mr. Speaker. That's my point. It would make a half-decent fight over the values, over the history, and over how to govern this province right.

So they're short over there, Mr. Speaker. They're short on history. They're short on how to manage the money. They're short on being truthful with the people of Saskatchewan. And then the last four or five years, Mr. Speaker, the last four or five years, they have been pretending to be the government, Mr. Speaker.

And they can say, and they can say what they want about the New Democratic Party and about the history of people like Lorne Calvert and the history of people like Roy Romanow, Mr. Speaker. But thank goodness we had those guys in charge, Mr. Speaker, because one took back our province from the brink of bankruptcy, which was Romanow, and Calvert built the economy and started building hope for our people. And guess what? That economy and that hope spread all throughout the province — northern Saskatchewan, southern, everywhere, Mr. Speaker.

So as much as those guys want to pat themselves on the back, people of Saskatchewan know. People of Saskatchewan know you can't repay debt 40 per cent after two years of being in government. I don't even know if it was two years, maybe 18 months, and the Premier gets up with great fanfare: hey you guys, we're paying down the debt 40 per cent. And everybody says, okay, okay. And what he didn't say was, well the NDP left that money there. So, Mr. Speaker, they didn't want to say that.

They should always have — and that's what I always say — always at the end of your speeches say but. And the reason why you should say but is, you say, but we want to thank the NDP for that, Mr. Speaker. That's what they should say.

But do you know what happens in right wing thinking, Mr. Speaker? In the right wing thinking they say, okay let's wait for the opportunity. We see Saskatchewan's star is rising in 2001, all the people saying Saskatchewan's economy is building. They're doing the right things in Saskatchewan, and things are moving in the right direction. These right wingers sensed an opportunity, so they came along and they started working together with the federal Conservatives, the Reform Party. They formed this alliance in the dark of night, and they said, let's all go after the NDP, they said.

And, Mr. Speaker, after six years of paying down debt, making some tough choices of rebuilding this economy, of course there

is many people within the NDP that had to pay a price in terms of having all this energy, Mr. Speaker. It takes a lot of work, hard work, hard work to rebuild the economy, Mr. Speaker, and many of the MLAs that served under those administrations, Mr. Speaker, worked very, very hard. And after 16 years of that thing, they too can get tired, Mr. Speaker. They're only human, and that's the most important thing.

And these guys come along, and now the best thing they can do whenever they get in trouble, whenever they get in trouble, there's two things they'll do, Mr. Speaker. They'll go back to their spin. Of course that's what they do, and they'll start patting themselves on the back. And they'll make an announcement, some kind of announcement that'll try and change the channel on what they're doing wrong, on what they're doing wrong. And the other thing when they get into trouble, Mr. Speaker, they say, oh but you guys done that. They right away, they go against, they talk about the NDP, Mr. Speaker.

You know why they do that, Mr. Speaker? Because they don't have a history in Saskatchewan, according to them. They've been in government for five years. What is their history? They say, oh we're not Conservatives. We're not Reformers. No, we're not Reformers. We're not Liberals either. We're not sure what they are, Mr. Speaker.

So the point is, the point is, the point is, I say to the people of Saskatchewan, thank goodness that we had good leadership under the NDP to build this economy, Mr. Speaker. Thank goodness, Mr. Speaker. And the same qualities of that government come from some of our opposition members, in particular the critic for Finance when he tells people we are, we are going in deficit, when he sounds the alarm bells that we've got to build a better strategy for the money we have now. It's called a legacy fund. We've got to make sure we protect the environment, the workers' rights. These are all things and values that are important to the New Democrats, Mr. Speaker. It is not important to them.

And I predict, Mr. Speaker, I predict that within the next five, six, seven years that half of that caucus will be on some of the boards that they're giving all the resources to, the board of directors, and the people of Saskatchewan will be left holding the bag. And that's why it's important, that's why it's important we argue now about the future of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Some of those guys are just visiting. They're just visiting, Mr. Speaker. Mark my words: they're just visiting. And I tell the people of Saskatchewan one simple thing is that whenever they talk about the NDP or they self-congratulate themselves or they try and fool you, go back to your history and remember the history, and it will show very clearly which government, which party built this economy and brought hope to the people of Saskatchewan.

They are still doing it to this day, Mr. Speaker, and that's why when four of them get up and start patting themselves on the back, us here — the nine members right across the way, Mr. Speaker — we quietly hold our confidence because we know, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day the people of Saskatchewan will know the truth. The boom was coming. The resources industry were going to come. People were flocking to Saskatchewan. They just simply inherited.

Now they say it's a great right wing experiment that worked, Mr. Speaker. That's what they claim. And we say in Saskatchewan that people know the boom was coming. And what we would have done differently, Mr. Speaker, we would have taken care of the people that need it the most. We would have made sure that everybody shared in the opportunity of Saskatchewan.

And all we've seen from these guys, Mr. Speaker, was cuts to the areas that could least afford it and that's northern Saskatchewan, to the Aboriginal people and to our seniors, Mr. Speaker. That is a shame. It's an absolute shame. And I'll point out, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Saskatchewan will certainly review and they will judge this government accordingly. And when that time comes, Mr. Speaker, I point out in many of my discussions, that they will not put the people of Saskatchewan in debt like they did last time because there's too many people that are watching what they do. They are too many people that are watching what they are doing.

We are sounding the alarm bells now as we speak. But, Mr. Speaker, I hope and I pray that there'll never, ever be a government that has a \$15 billion debt in the Crowns, in the General Revenue Fund, to try and rebuild from that. The NDP did it. The NDP did it because we had a great leadership at the time. And, Mr. Speaker, no matter what those guys say across the way they'll never, ever take that away from the NDP, Mr. Speaker.

And that's why I'll stand up here for the next four years opposing any budget they bring forward. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to rise in the House and take part in the budget debate. Mr. Speaker, there was an MLA once said, when you're in opposition, you can say anything you want. And I think we just heard a magnificent display of exactly that.

Mr. Speaker, I've been in the House all day today, and I've listened to the members opposite contribute through the day by way of members' statements, by way of their participation in the budget debate. And one of the things that I have found absolutely fascinating today, not because of what they said because there's usually not much in there that usually, that warrants a lot of interest, but what I found interesting is what they didn't say Mr. Speaker.

The news this weekend was dominated by the federal NDP leadership debate. It went on and on, debate after debate, vote after vote, issues with how the voting system worked. And you would have thought, you would have thought that one of the Saskatchewan members of the NDP B-team would have got up and would have congratulated Thomas Mulcair, would have got up and said something, that they'd gone there or participated or something. But nothing, not a bit. I don't know whether they take no pride in it. I heard the member opposite talk about the legacy of Calvert and Romanow, but nothing about their federal brethren. Just nothing at all. I don't know whether this is because the legacy of Lingenfelter lingers on in their lonely lives or whatever is taking place over there, but I found it

absolutely fascinating that not one of the nine over there would get up and congratulate their new federal taskmaster, Mr. Speaker. Anyway I leave it to them to decide what's important or not important in their lives.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member from Canora-Pelly for doing what no other provincial Finance minister in Canada has been able to deliver this year. Our Finance minister has tabled a balanced budget focused on keeping the Saskatchewan advantage of sound fiscal management, sustainable spending, and a strong economy. Mr. Speaker, I want to say right now I am going to be supporting the motion and not supporting the amendment that came by way of whatever handwritten epistle came out of them earlier today.

Mr. Speaker, usually when members get up and speak, they usually have some personal comments to make. I didn't speak earlier in the House when the House opened and would like to make a few thank yous now. Mr. Speaker, my mother turned 90 earlier this year, and a very active follower of politics. And I've usually incurred a bit of personal humour at my own expense at it, but I will say that she followed the provincial election very closely, hosted a tea party for the various candidates who were there. She met the current member from Saskatoon Nutana when she was over there and passed a comment to me after the member . . . [inaudible] . . . She's not Pat Atkinson, but I think she's going to win. She may not win this poll, but she's going to win. My mother, being 90 years old, was exactly right as to what happened in that constituency. So my congratulations to the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

**An Hon. Member:** — She's a lovely lady.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — I heard her say that she's a lovely lady, and I've thought so for my entire life. She's been good to me. Very politically astute, I don't think she's ever voted the other way, but she certainly recognizes the competition from over there.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to advise as well my mother-in-law, Sandy's mother, also is well into her 80s and has recently become a SaskTel Max customer. So to the folks at SaskTel, they have now got a new convert. It took no end of time and a trip out there so we could teach her how to use the remote control, but it's working fairly well. And she wants to commend the folks at SaskTel for . . . [inaudible].

She lives in Rosetown. The member from Rosetown, I know, has been a good MLA. I hate to admit that out loud, but he certainly has been. And my mother-in-law is a supporter of his and has voted for him in the past, so I thank him for the good work that he continues to do, looking after his constituents.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I'd like to acknowledge some of the people that I have the privilege of working with who provide support and assistance. I'm incredibly fortunate to have many great people working with us in the office and in the ministry. In my constituency office I have Gordon Rutten, who in another life is the mayor of Martensville, and Dustin Bisson, who work very hard. And Dustin is also a university student and I understand is going to be working in this building.

In this building I have an admin team of Jean Watts and Laine

Goertz. I have a communications assistant who is off on sick leave right now, Judy Langford. And I have two very resourceful, hardworking ministerial assistants, Mathew Glover and Marina Willimont. Marina is new and is working out incredibly well.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment briefly on my chief of staff, Denise Batters. She has been with the Ministry of Justice since we formed government. She recently returned from Ottawa where she spoke before the House of Commons standing committee on health as it considered Bill C-300, the *Federal Framework for Suicide Prevention Act*. I think we're all incredibly proud of the work that she's done and the role that she's taken in prevention of suicide. She is not just an asset to my office but an asset to our government and to the province.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to recognize deputy minister of Justice, Gerald Tegart, and the very good people that work at the Ministry of Justice. I'd like to specifically recognize ADM [assistant deputy minister] Susan Amrud who is off recovering from surgery and want to wish her a speedy recovery and hope that she gets back to work soon. We are also fortunate to have deputy minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety, Mike Carr, and the very hard-working employees that work in that ministry as well as the fine folks from the Workers' Compensation Board. All of these people do a great deal to ensure the safety and well-being of the workers in our province.

I think as a province we're very fortunate to have a professional, hard-working, knowledgeable public service, and I think all MLAs would want to congratulate and thank them for the good work that they do. Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I didn't recognize and thank the individuals who work in this building, legislative staff, Pages, and the people that do the outstanding job of keeping the building looking very well.

I know that I'm recognized as playing the odd prank, and one of the people that had been my victim in the last year or so is Robert Park that works in legislative services. He is the person that sends out the email notices as to when meetings start, and I would reply back, "When does the meeting start?" when it was the headline in there or "Where is it?" when it was right in it. And then I would reply back that I wasn't going to go unless he guaranteed that supper was going to be served, or what was the dress code?

Anyway he sent back a reply to me when I had asked what supper was going to be served, asked me what I wanted. I told him that I wanted a ham and Swiss. He met me outside the committee room door with a cart, with a white linen tablecloth, a flower, a bottle of Perrier and a ham and Swiss sandwich, with a white tablecloth over his arm. So anyway, I thank him for that. But the reason I want to specifically recognize him, he and his wife, Kendra, had a baby, Robert Harrison Park, on March 15th. And that's their first one, and I would like to congratulate them on behalf of all members.

[20:00]

Mr. Speaker, we just finished a campaign. It was a significant hard-working . . . And I had a great campaign team and want to recognize just a few of the people: Henry Dyck, Lynne Agnew, Gene and Pat Humeny, Rene Stock, Ronnie Meyers, Rita

Flaman Jarrett, Earl Priddle. And, Mr. Speaker, if I didn't recognize and thank my wife, I would be in great trouble and would spend a lot more time sleeping in Regina because I would not be allowed home. I want to thank and recognize Sandy for not only being good and hard-working but also putting up with a lot of my bad jokes and ill humour. So I thank her. She's been wonderful.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk now about some of the budget things and things that offer my home community of Saskatoon . . . My constituency of Saskatoon Southeast, like communities all across Saskatchewan, is growing incredibly fast. My constituency had 16,000 voters. Not that I want to recognize any other constituencies, but I would point out Saskatoon Centre had 7,000. And anyway, I'm glad to see that we're going through the redistribution.

Saskatoon will see municipal revenue sharing increase to \$42.14 million. This is an increase of 11.3 per cent from the previous year. More importantly this is an increase of 137 per cent from 2007-2008.

Mr. Speaker, we are proud to be leading the country in so many areas, and this budget is designed to ensure that everyone in our province is able to benefit from the Saskatchewan advantage. In this period of global uncertainty, it's about making prudent choices and sustained value programs. We're making life more affordable for Saskatchewan people. At the same time, we have to ensure that our government's spending is affordable and sustainable, and sometimes it means difficult choices.

This year we are forecasting 2.8 per cent economic growth. That is the Saskatchewan advantage, Mr. Speaker, a combination of sound fiscal management, sustainable spending, and a strong and growing economy.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a very few minutes to tell the members present about the things that are taking place in the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General to build on the Saskatchewan advantage. Our budget this year will support our province's growing economy through legislative amendments that increase protection for investors and consumers and promote a favourable business environment in our province. We will continue our efforts to reduce crime and improve public confidence in the justice system through a three-pronged approach of prevention, intervention, and enforcement.

The capital budget of the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General is \$14.5 million. The bulk of that money, \$11.4 million, will go towards the renovations of the Saskatoon's Queen's Bench Court House in order to accommodate the transfer of the family law division to that facility. It is an example of our government's commitment to ensure that everyone who uses our courthouse facilities in the province can do so safely and have access to the programs that they need.

We are moving ahead with plans to install a new computer IT [information technology] system in the maintenance enforcement office. The staff in that office does a tremendous job of helping children in our province by getting money into the hands of custodial parents, who collect over 90 per cent of the money that's due to them.

Staying with the technology, we're also going to continue the implementation of the criminal justice information system, and we're going to expand our video conferencing facilities for our courts. The use of video conferencing saves both time and money by allowing some court appearances to happen without the accused actually having to be physically present in the courtroom. This benefits both victims and witnesses by allowing them to sometimes deliver testimony without having to be in the same room as the accused.

Members of this House will also recall earlier when our government made the decision in 2008 to raise the victim surcharge collected on provincial offences. That increase has helped hold offenders more accountable and has provided us with more funding for important programs and services. The surplus in the Victims Fund is allowing our government to expand our successful victims services programs to 100 per cent of the province. It was my pleasure to announce that expansion just last week at a Saskatoon conference of victims services workers and volunteers. The announcement was received very well by that audience.

Up until now we have been proud to support 18 police-based victims services programs serving only 87 per cent of the population. This will increase it to the remaining 34 police jurisdictions and 100 per cent of the population. It comes at an additional cost of \$1.2 million, which is paid for entirely by the Victims Fund. No money for that will be coming from the General Revenue Fund. Mr. Speaker, this brings our expenditures on police-based victims services to \$3.5 million a year. Mr. Speaker, we increased that surcharge so that victims would get the services that they very much need, and by doing so, it allows us to help victims of crime across the province.

Mr. Speaker, our ultimate goal is of course to lower the rate of criminal activity, and therefore victims of Saskatchewan will be better off. We're investing in that area, Mr. Speaker. We will spend an additional \$700,000 to expand our high-risk violent offender response initiative to the communities of Prince Albert, Melfort, and Meadow Lake. By working with their colleagues in adult probation and police services in the respective communities, our team is targeting violent offenders both before and after they enter the so-called worst of the worst category. Saskatchewan people have told us clearly that they want protection from serious high-risk and long-term violent offenders. Mr. Speaker, we are listening — but not just listening; we are taking action. This is a phased-in platform commitment. We are keeping our promises to the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to switch hats and tell the members about some of the highlights of the budget from the Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety. This budget contains an increase in funding for the ministry of \$529,000, or 3.1 per cent over 2011-2012, which will address some of the past operating shortfalls in the areas including salaries and information technology expenses. It will allow the ministry to maintain focus on the very important work that we do for the people of Saskatchewan.

The ministry is firmly committed to its mission of ensuring safe, healthy, and productive workplaces. This is especially important for Saskatchewan's continued economic growth and

prosperity. Mr. Speaker, we have a specially high risk in areas of construction, oil field work. These pose an usually high challenge because of the rapid growth in this area. We need to commit additional resources to those particular areas.

The initiatives outlined in the ministry's plan speaks to this year's budget theme of keeping the Saskatchewan advantage by fostering a competitive and productive labour environment and encouraging healthy, safe, and fair workplaces and ensuring that our labour policies are up to date and competitive and managing our programs and services in the most efficient and effective manner possible to ensure the best use of public funds.

Mr. Speaker, Labour Relations and Workplace Safety is committed to eliminating workplace injuries and deaths through strengthening *The Occupational Health and Safety Act* and through inspections, investigations and enforcement of workplace standards. We are also committed to important public education initiatives and partnership such as our collaboration with the Workers' Compensation Board on the further development of injury prevention strategies through WorkSafe Saskatchewan.

We will continue our efforts to improve service delivery in the needs of our clients, especially with timely resolution of labour standards complaints and WC [workers' compensation] compensation appeals through the office of the worker's advocate. We will continue to assist workers in the province who have filed a workers' compensation claim and who wish to explore an appeal of a decision on that claim. We will continue to provide conciliation and mediation services to collective bargaining processes where required. Our government maintains its focus on eliminating workplace injuries and deaths and will continue to make occupational health and safety inspections, investigations, and education a priority.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite would have you believe that this budget is not what the people of Saskatchewan want. Really, Mr. Speaker, if the members of Saskatchewan . . . want to discuss what the people of Saskatchewan don't want, I would like to just ask them to reflect back on November 7. I'd say the people were very clear about what their intentions were on that day.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is a chance to vote for something positive. It is a chance not to be negative. What I would like to do, Mr. Speaker, is encourage the members opposite to seriously consider voting for something rather than merely voting against something. Mr. Speaker, this is a budget that the members opposite can and should vote for. If not collectively, I would like each one of the nine members over there to sit down, have a look at this budget, and decide whether or not they can support it. Because, Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of this budget that's very, very good, and there is nothing in this budget that is not in the best interest of this province.

Mr. Speaker, a government that is truly in touch with the people it serves, it has a responsibility. It has a responsibility to provide important services and, Mr. Speaker, this budget goes a long ways to doing those things. And, Mr. Speaker, this is a responsible, carefully crafted budget. We're not going to make promises that we can't keep. We're not going to go overboard and spend money that's unnecessary.

The people of this province place their faith in this government to live within their means. And, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we're going to do. We're not going to fall into the economic trap that has snared other governments. We're not going to make false and unnecessary promises like they did across the way. We saw what happened to them during the election. They promised billions of dollars of unnecessary and unaffordable things. The people of this province will not be fooled by that kind of games. We're going to keep our spending sustainable and affordable. And, Mr. Speaker, we will keep the Saskatchewan advantage. I will not be supporting the amendment. I will be supporting this budget. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Sutherland.

**Mr. Merriman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand here today to join in this budget debate.

Last week I had the privilege to attend my first budget, thanks to the constituents of Saskatoon Sutherland. In my first five months as your MLA, I've tried to represent the diverse group of people that are part of the constituency of Saskatoon Sutherland. It's an honour to be here representing you. I have met many constituents since being elected in November, whether it be in my office or at community events. It's a privilege to be here to represent you here today in this legislature.

Before I begin, I would like to extend my thanks to some very important people: my wife Leane, for allowing me to be away from home four days a week while I'm serving in Regina; our kids Courtney, Carter, Cassidy, and Keely for helping out at home while I'm not there. Also my parents, Ted and Marie, who are watching and tuning in while on vacation in Palm Springs. I'd also like to thank the people who had contacted me to discuss the budget and their positive feedback. I would also like to thank the Premier, the Minister of Finance, Treasury Board, and all the ministers and staff that have worked to keep the Saskatchewan advantage in this budget. I'd also like to thank my CA [constituency assistant], Danielle, who has helped me with my transition into government.

The message I took from the budget was to allow sustained economic growth while living within our means. This is an important point, Mr. Speaker, because no decision was taken lightly within this budget. The programs are sustainable and are focused both on the short- and long-term benefits for this province. We are unique in that our province is able to move forward with a balanced budget — the only one in Canada.

This budget is all about keeping the Saskatchewan advantage. What exactly is the Saskatchewan advantage? It's an opportunity for my children to see the world and then to call this province home — a province that has all of the opportunities of everywhere else in this great country but still the uniqueness of our culture and our people.

As a government we have some great strides forward in this province. You may have heard the phrase, we have more work to do. That's why I am joined by my 14 new colleagues here to assist the Saskatchewan Party team to keep the Saskatchewan

advantage that started back in 2007.

Our population is at an all-time high, Mr. Speaker. Just last week Stats Canada released its population estimates, putting Saskatchewan at an all-time high of 1,067,612 people. Never before have we seen so many people in this province, Mr. Speaker. We have not seen our population increase this much since 1953. While the residents of this country are experiencing net losses, Saskatchewan is one of only two provinces in Canada to maintain a net in-migration. That means, Mr. Speaker, that we have more people coming in than going out.

I remember, Mr. Speaker, the days young people were fleeing the province in droves in search of greener pastures, when every young family was faced with the question, do we move away, or do we stay here and persevere? Well I am glad to see that now the world is bearing witness to the potential of this province that I saw many years ago.

[20:15]

What attracts people to our province? In last week's edition of *Bridges*, I read a story of Ian and Lisa Corrigan who moved to Saskatoon from Ireland in 2011. According to Lisa, they came here because of the quality of life and the opportunities that Saskatchewan presented. This budget maintains a high quality of life here in Saskatchewan by keeping our economy strong, sustainable, and continuing to grow to attract people from other provinces and other countries. That's the Saskatchewan advantage that we're talking about, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is also about keeping our promises. In the last election campaign just a few short months ago, we promised first-time homebuyers tax credit. We are keeping this promise by delivering \$1,100 non-refundable tax credit. Mr. Speaker, many of us remember purchasing our first home. It's overwhelming at times to deal with all the costs: a down payment, lawyer's fees, moving expenses, property taxes, etc. This new tax credit will help alleviate some of the pressure for first-time homebuyers.

We are keeping our promise to provide up to \$2,000 over four years to new high school graduates — the new Saskatchewan advantage scholarship. This 2,000 will help new post-secondary students with their tuition payments here in the province. Mr. Speaker, I have a daughter in high school right now, and I am so pleased that she will be able to take advantage of this scholarship. I know many Saskatchewan high school students and their parents are happy to hear about this announcement.

We want Saskatchewan to be the best place in Canada for persons with disabilities. We promised to increase the monthly benefit for people under the Saskatchewan assured income for disabilities or SAID program. This budget includes \$17.8 million to enhance this program. What this means, Mr. Speaker, is individuals enrolled in the SAID program will be receiving more money every month to improve their quality of life. In June 2012, couples living independently will receive \$230 more per month and single individuals living independently will see \$200 more per month. These increases will make a huge difference in the lives of the people in the SAID program.

We will also increase the number of individuals eligible for this

program through the new assessment process. This will open up the door for over 7,000 new people living independently to become eligible for the SAID program. I am so proud to see our government standing up for those most vulnerable in our society.

We promised to increase the seniors' income plan, a supplement that will help low-income Saskatchewan seniors. In the 2009-10 budget, our government raised the maximum monthly benefit from \$90 to \$190 for single seniors, more than doubling the amount that was set under the previous government, an amount that had not been increased since 1992. In this budget we have committed an additional \$50 per month, with another \$10 per month every year after that for the next three years. This means by the end of the term our government will have tripled the amount low-income seniors receive every month, Mr. Speaker. Again we are standing up for society's most vulnerable people.

One of the most important components of the budget that will have a very positive impact on Saskatoon Sutherland, will be the investment of affordable housing. Because of the diverse demographics in Saskatoon Sutherland, finding affordable housing can be a challenge, as it is across the province. We have committed to addressing this issue, and I think of no better way through initiatives announced in this budget.

We introduced a new corporate income tax rebate on new rental housing in the province. This means that more people will be building rental units, increasing the supply of affordable housing. This income tax rebate removes a huge barrier for the development of rental housing.

This budget also includes a \$2 million funding increase for rental construction incentives and the affordable home ownership program and \$9.2 million for the rental development program to develop an additional 200 rental units in communities where long-term housing is needed. This results in 12,600 new affordable homes of which 10,000 are rental units. By taking this responsible route, we ensure the sustainable construction of affordable housing in our province.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, Bill Madder at the Association of Saskatchewan Realtors had this to say about the initiatives: "Over many years, we have had a real shortage on the rental side, so I think this is a big help. I think it's a potential home run for the provincial government." Steve McLellan, president of the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, said that the housing move was a positive one, stating that "One of the biggest challenges of our growth is lack of housing for new people, immigrant, and new people moving home. But overall, they've struck a good balance."

This budget also includes innovative health care spending. Mr. Speaker, we know someone at sometime who has had to wait for surgery. It's hard to watch a loved one suffer when we know the surgery is going to alleviate their pain. That's why our government has increased the health budget. We are putting patients first, and we want to ensure that no Saskatchewan resident waits more than three months for surgery by 2014. The Saskatchewan Cancer Agency was given an additional \$16.9 million in this year's budget. CEO [chief executive officer] Scott Livingstone said it will allow us to maintain, improve

access to cancer services over the next year.

One thing Saskatoon Sutherland constituents should be aware of is the amount of provincial income tax they will pay in 2012 is substantially less than five years ago. For example, a family of four with an income of \$50,000 will save \$2,638 per year in 2012 compared to 2007. This works out to about \$220 per month, which a family of four, means a lot. This extra money could mean that children who were not able to participate in activities can do so now.

Keeping the Saskatchewan advantage is exactly what the budget does, Mr. Speaker. This is a balanced budget that keeps our promises. Our spending is sustainable to keep our economy growing. All Saskatchewan citizens, whether they have been here their entire lives or just the last seven months like the Corrigan, enjoy a life second to none.

Here are just some of the positive headlines that we have seen in the news. Global news, January 9th, 2012, "Sask leads Canada in non-residential construction." The *Leader-Post*, February 8, 2012, "Sask leads pack in building permits." The *Canada Newswire*, March 20th, 2012, "Saskatchewan to lead the provincial economic growth rates through 2013." This is not just luck that our province has one of the strongest — it is the strongest — economies in our nation. It is in part due to the government's fiscal responsibility through sustainable spending. It is also thanks to the good people of Saskatchewan.

I previously mentioned our unique culture and people. We share a distinctive spirit, one of hard work, dedication, and pride in where we live and where we come from. We can keep Saskatchewan's momentum going and continue to lead the country in coming years. After years of being a have-not province, Saskatchewan citizens deserve to be where we are today, leading the nation in so many different ways.

Mr. Speaker, this is my time I've been allotted. I spoke to the items of the budget which have a positive impact on our lives, our Saskatoon Sutherland constituent families and our province, most vulnerable. Before I finish, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I am disappointed in the reaction from the members across the floor. My disappointment is that all of their comments have been negative. They have yet to say one positive thing about this budget. I don't expect them to support the entire budget, but there must be something in there that they see as good for Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, this is why I will be supporting the motion put forward by the Minister of Finance. This is why I will be supporting this year's budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

**Mr. Cox:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today and join the debate on our 2012-2013 *Keeping the Saskatchewan Advantage* budget. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was delighted to be able to sit in this Assembly and listen to our Finance minister lay out the financial plan to keep Saskatchewan moving forward, keeping our budget balanced, keeping spending sustainable, and keeping our economy growing — basically,

Mr. Deputy Speaker, doing all the things we promised in our campaign.

But before I get back to the budget, Mr. Speaker, if I may, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people that are most important in my life. And of course that is my family. To Dallin and Janelle, Carla and Broc, Calvin and Jess, and certainly to my wife, Linda, I thank them for all that they have done for me, for the support they have given me, and the dedication and for covering for me when I am gone for so much time. I thank them all very much.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank my CA, Lillian, who has just embarked on a new job, as I have. And as of January 1, she took over the office for me in The Battlefords and she has done a remarkable job. And I would like to take this opportunity to thank her, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd also like to recognize some very hard-working and dedicated people from my constituency. On Thursday, March 22nd, we held the annual general meeting for the Saskatchewan Party, The Battlefords constituency association. I would like to recognize and thank the people who have agreed to let their name stand for the directors and for the executive of our constituency association. Glenn, John, Theresa, David, Ron, Gregg, Gary, Ed, Dale, and Dave will be our directors for the next year.

Terry Lynn Cann will be our president again, and I thank her sincerely for all the work that she has done and will continue to do, I'm sure. Shane Murdoch is our vice-president; Carolyn Pernitsky, our secretary. Al White will be our treasurer again this year. Our council rep is Dennis Cann and membership Chair is Harvey Walker. Once again, thank you to each and every one of them for all of their dedication. They are a great team. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we heard our Finance minister talk about the budget that was delivered here 100 years ago, the size of that budget or the lack thereof, and the significance of how our province has grown since that time. Mr. Deputy Speaker, 100 years ago, this province was growing. Politicians of the day were optimistic and were planning for growth. Today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are again experiencing dramatic growth. The latest figures show 17,000 people in the last year alone, the greatest increase since 1953. And again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our Sask Party politicians are again optimistic — and they're rightfully so — and are planning for growth. And that is why this government has brought down another balanced budget, a budget that will keep the Saskatchewan advantage and keep Saskatchewan moving forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, over the next few years, we are going to be able to celebrate many, many 100th anniversaries because it was around 100 years ago that this province was being developed. And we are fortunate now to be able to enjoy all that this province has to offer because of the hard work and the foresight of our forefathers. And that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is why we need to keep moving this province forward with balanced budgets and be ever vigilant to ensure our spending is sustainable, and that we undertake programs to keep our economy growing.

And then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our future generations, our great-grandchildren, our great-great-grandchildren will be able to enjoy 200th anniversary celebrations all over this great province. And that is what keeping the Saskatchewan advantage is all about.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, of particular interest to me and to the constituents of The Battlefords is that finally in this budget we have a line that sets out funding of \$5 million for planning and redesign of the North Battleford Saskatchewan Hospital. I say finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the previous government gave us promises and photo ops, but never a budgetary commitment such as we now have. I know the residents, the patients, clients, and staff of our existing hospital will join me in thanking this government and our Health minister for this long overdue commitment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, since this budget was announced last week, we have heard comments from many sectors of our province, some stakeholders that sometimes have not always been pleased with the provincial budgets but who realize that this budget is about keeping our economy growing, about ensuring that our programs are sustainable into the future, and that our budget is balanced.

[20:30]

Mr. Speaker, here are a few of the comments that we have heard. From the Canadian Home Builders' Association, "Saskatchewan 2012-2013 budget keeps momentum going, helping communities grow." They strongly support our plan for affordable housing, a plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that will help develop approximately 12,600 new homes for Saskatchewan people. This development will be made possible through such programs as our plan to reduce corporate income tax by 10 per cent on revenue from rental property constructed under and qualifying for this program. Other programs like the assisted home ownership plan, the rental construction incentive, first-time homebuyers tax credit, Habitat for Humanity, and the rental development program all combine to help build more homes for our growing population. These programs, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are all outlined in our budget and our funding commitment. Our investment in affordable housing for Saskatchewan people is \$344 million. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is keeping the Saskatchewan advantage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my constituency alone in the past few months, we have seen the construction of 44 low-income rental units and affordable housing 21-unit condominium. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's taking action to create level entry and affordable homes for our Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, two other comments I'll highlight now are: firstly, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, who welcomed the priority placed on education in the provincial budget; and then secondly, from the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, who said they were pleased to see that education was recognized as foundational to the province's growth. They were of course, Mr. Speaker, referring to the commitment we made in this budget, a commitment of \$1.74 billion of funding to school boards in this province — a 5 per cent increase over last year.



Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my own constituency alone, this has resulted in an increase of funding to our two school boards of \$3.27 million. As well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our education funding will also include \$112 million for major capital projects, funding for 500 new child care spaces, bringing our total to 13,240 spaces. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is our commitment to our young people, our commitment to the future of this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, two more comments we have heard are from the vice-president of cities for SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association], Jim Scarrow, who said:

The continued investment of one point of PST revenue in municipal operations acknowledges the provincial interest in the services our [municipal] governments provide to the people of Saskatchewan.

Or from Dave Marit, SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] president:

... the substantial increase in revenue sharing for municipalities is demonstrative of the Provinces' appreciation for the growing demands on municipal governments.

Mr. Speaker, these increases in funding have been an increase of \$165,000 for the city of North Battleford and an increase of \$84,000 for the town of Battleford. Over the past four years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the per cent of increase for these two administrations has been: for the city of North Battleford, 127 per cent increase in four years; and for the town of Battleford, it's been a 100 per cent increase — double what it was at that time. That is our commitment to municipalities, to keep Saskatchewan moving forward, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget increases our spending on agricultural programs by \$13 million to a total of \$430.8 million. Almost three-quarters of this amount will go to risk management, like AgriStability, AgriInvest, and crop insurance. We have increased crop insurance, for example, to a record \$174 per acre — that's almost double what it was in 2007.

Mr. Speaker, this government is fully committed to continue funding to these very important ministries — Municipal Affairs and Agriculture — as we very much value their importance to the people of Saskatchewan and their contributions to our economy.

Mr. Speaker, this is our time. Time for Saskatchewan to take its rightful place as a leader in this great country, a leader in agriculture production with the recent announcement that we have now surpassed \$10 billion in agricultural production and taken the lead over Ontario, a leader in the percentage population growth with 17,000 new residents in the last year, a place among the leaders in employment opportunities, health care initiatives, potash production, oil and gas production, in uranium production, and in caring for our youth, our seniors, and those with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is our plan to ensure that we continue to lead this country in so many ways and to keep the Saskatchewan advantage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank the Minister of Finance for his tremendous job in preparing this budget and the Minister of Social Services for seconding it. And I will not be supporting the amendment. I will be voting to adopt this budget.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a great pleasure to stand in the House yet again for another budget debate, the fifth balanced budget that we're going to put forth, we put forth, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know, before I get into the whole, the premise of the debate and all the great things it's doing for the province, I want to thank some people. You know all the ministers have great staff, I know, and I'm blessed to have some great ministerial assistants: Graham Stewart and Dustin Clark, a new member of my team and my office. And together those two gentleman are going to do great work, case work for the communities and the municipal leaders in this province and for the MLAs in this province.

I also wanted to recognize Linda Roy, our new senior admin assistant that joined us upon the retirement of the former senior admin assistant, and Linda's doing a great job. I was able to lure her, bring her into my office from the Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration. I gave her a different job opportunity that she's thriving and doing very well in. And lucky for me that she kept the Minister of AEEI [Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration] well informed, great timetable. She's always done that with me, giving me my schedule for the day, so I wanted to thank her for that.

And then of course I want to now thank the chief of staff of my office, Angela Currie. She's an amazing leader in the office. If people listening tonight and for all the MLAs should be aware of this, of course, there is this new revenue-sharing calculator that's on the MA [ministerial assistant] website. It's a website cabinet chose for 2007 to . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yeah it works. Good point. Yes, it actually does. It really is a game changer, one that actually shows the real figures. It really does. From 2007 to 2008 until this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Angela came up with the idea working with the Ministry of MA and some ITO [Information Technology Office] staff to put this particular piece on, that everyone can do a drop-down screen and look at their municipality, look at their town, village, city, whatever it might be to see exactly what the . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — And it works.

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — And it works. It does. It works great. Thank you.

And it's one of those kind of tools that the municipal leaders are going to be able to show to their stakeholders — they are ratepayers like we are — what in fact is actually out there right now for revenue sharing, how in the last short while, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from us taking on government, in the last year

of the NDP government to this year, Mr. Speaker, is about \$110 million increase in revenue sharing, 87 per cent lift in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that's money that the municipal leaders are using to keep our overall mill rates down, our tax lifts to a reasonable level, unconditional funding that they can use as they see fit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for things like infrastructure needs as well.

So we turn to the municipal leaders in this province for their great dedication. And it's not the elected officials as much as it is the actual staff that work day in, day out in the municipal offices to listen to the ratepayers, to focus on the needs of their communities. And I want to thank them as well tonight for their great work.

I have to take time to thank my constituency assistant as well, Lora Hunter, who is dedicated to the job of keeping me and the constituency of Prince Albert Carlton in touch, focused on the needs of our constituents.

But you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? It's one of those things that, in the last election, just a few weeks ago, what happened for Prince Albert Carlton was a pretty phenomenal thing. In 2007 I won. I was blessed to win by 61 votes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**An Hon. Member:** — Only.

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Only 61 votes. After all the hard work. Yes it was. I know it was an uphill battle, but I took that constituency from a long-time NDP riding from, you know, a particular party that was very strong in that city. However in this last election, Mr. Deputy Speaker, again with a great team on my side, I won by almost 1,700 votes this time. Yes, 1,700 votes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say that was because of actually one person, the Premier of this province, his vision. I give him full credit for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, under his leadership and the Finance minister that I work with in Treasury Board, our former member from Melfort, Rod Gantfoer, and the current Finance minister now that has put this budget together and the last couple of budgets.

We see people turning to this party because of our fiscal stewardship. We are very strong on making that recommendation, and we move on to balanced budgets, sustainable spending, being very proud of that record, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because it's one of those things that the taxpayers in this province recognized for our first mandate, which I say helped me get elected with even a stronger majority this time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that's a good point . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No. No. It was not me. It was the team of men and women that I work with, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I'll tell you what. This is the strongest team I have ever been a part of. I played in many, many great sporting teams: football, hockey, and such. But this particular, this bench right now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is some of the strongest I've ever had to work with.

And I'll tell you what. Going forward in the next four years with the leadership of the Premier and the leadership of the ministers we have today — and those that will come after us,

for sure — we're going to see this same focus going forward, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of a very strong, balanced budget, sustainable spending, and making sure the people of this province get exactly what they asked for in the last election: a government at the time with a campaign commitment platform which showed limited spending for sustainability but still maintaining the promises that we wanted to make to the people of this province to move Saskatchewan forward, part of the Saskatchewan advantage.

I'd like the party opposite that had some wild spending spree, something somewhere, I don't know, between 5 and \$8 billion — I'm just kind of a ballpark — 5.5 billion that they couldn't, they had no other way to make it sustainable without tax lifts, tax increases to the people of this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's why the people of this province sent this party back in for a second mandate, and I believe we'll have a lot more mandates to come, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I've touched on the revenue-sharing piece as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and what it brought to the province over the last number of years under this government. And one thing back before the 2007 election, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was that there was a need for predictability for the municipal sector when they had to wait every year, budget after budget, for the previous NDP government to lay a budget down to know what they got for revenue sharing. And it was a very small amount compared to what the NDP claimed was a big surplus money in their bank account. In the last couple years, they sure never got much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But they wanted a predictable, measurable tool, and they asked for that one point of PST. We delivered that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So now today, they know that they have 9.5 per cent lift in this year's budget, and they know it's 15 per cent more next year, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So that's predictability that the municipal sector asked for.

One thing about the riding of Prince Albert Carlton is it's a very progressive riding. A lot of families live in that riding, but I'm also blessed to have a high school, Carlton high school, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's got the largest enrolment in the province for a high school. And it's like many of our schools that over time that the NDP, previous NDP government left in a state of somewhat disrepair, never looked to the leadership of the school boards and school leaders there to give money to, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So what happened in the last budget? We had money forwarded to do functional planning for the Carlton high school gymnasium. And in this year's budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the money will come now to actually build that high school gymnasium, to be able to give the opportunity for all these students in this school to take part in extracurricular sports along with having provincial level of sporting activities at that school. So I'm very proud of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There's a few more things, of course, that this budget allows us to do. Of course by being measured and being balanced, our spending has been to the point where we still have a surplus, which is what this government wants to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But we also have what's called a Saskatchewan advantage. We're seeing people move back to this province like no other time before — 17,000 more people than we had last year, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So one of those things now we're

seeing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is there's a need for an influx of cash for things like our advanced education to ensure that we have opportunities for our students and for those people that want to take in part in that, for immigrants moving to this province.

There's one part of this budget I'm very, very happy with. It's somewhat self-serving from myself as a father who . . . I should step back. I'm remiss in not thanking, recognizing my family. I love my wife, Charlene, and my two daughters, Alyssa and Mackenzie. Alyssa this year will be graduating, Mr. Speaker. I'm lucky that she has a very high average in high school. She's going to, she's already been accepted conditionally to the University of Saskatchewan, my alma mater. I'm very proud of that school. And she's already got guaranteed a \$500 entry scholarship. So as long as she stays with the high marks and the great distinction honours, she'll get more money to go to school . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The Minister of Advanced Education has recognized, like so many of my colleagues do, that she takes after her mother, Mr. Speaker. Thankfully, because if she was after her father, she'd be barely getting by and scraping with a 65 average to try to get in Arts and Science like I did back in many, many years ago, Mr. Speaker.

[20:45]

So I can say now as well that my younger daughter, Mackenzie, is also an honours student at high school right now, and I'm looking forward to her goal. She wishes to be an engineer and work in the, actually of all things, she wants to work in the space program. So I'm very proud of that, that goal she has.

My older daughter is going to start in Arts and Science next year in Prince Albert. She's not sure what she wants to do yet. She has mused with her uncle to be a lawyer, a corporate lawyer, which I'd be very proud of, of course. But anything she wants to do, my wife and I will be definitely supporting her in that endeavour. And I'm sure she'll take what she's learned in high school from the great teachers at Carlton into the university endeavour, Mr. Speaker, and she'll do very well there as well.

The one thing about my daughters I talked about in many of these budget debates is this government looks at the future of our children. But I've always talked about the future of our children across the aisle here as well, our grandchildren and stuff as well, nieces, nephews. The most important thing that a government can do is build upon a strong economy to ensure that the future of our children's time in Saskatchewan, if they wish to stay here — and they will be because we see more people coming back to Saskatchewan — will be strong for them as well.

And I know one thing is that we're hearing from economic leaders across Canada that we're set to lead the nation again yet, Mr. Speaker, next year. So these are private forecasters as well that are telling us great things. So we don't have to just talk about the great things we do. We have private forecasters telling us this. We have financial institutions telling us this as well, Mr. Speaker. So it's one of those things that we bring with this budget debate — endorsements.

We've heard from the municipal leaders, SARM and SUMA to

date, that in the media are talking about the revenue-sharing piece for sure. We've had my mayor from Prince Albert talking about the rental incentive as well. So we're seeing that we're getting these other endorsements from other groups.

The STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation], the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association] have talked about the funding formula for education, Mr. Speaker. And it's one of those things that as a government — and this is our fifth budget, like I've said, balanced budget, Mr. Speaker — that as we move forward, we continuously look for the stakeholders that we serve in this province, not just the ratepayers and taxpayers but the stakeholders, to tell us if we're doing a good job.

There is still work to do, Mr. Speaker, to be sure, on that one, but we look to our stakeholders that give us very strong advice and counsel every year as we prepare the budget in our consultation phase, moving forward from this point on to next year's budget as well, that tell us how good we've done, what has to still be worked upon to make it better. And the one thing we've heard from some of the stakeholders, of course, is within a strong province comes a strong health care system.

And the Minister of Health has done a great job in his tenure so far that — not just so far, he'll keep doing it, I'm sure, as well — that we've seen continuously increasing budgets for health, but that's money that has been put to good use. The regional health authorities are seeing an increase this year, Mr. Speaker. That's money that can be used into all the different services that have to be fulfilled. We have the Saskatchewan surgical initiatives, which is a \$50 million increase alone, which is going to see less and less wait times, Mr. Speaker.

And one thing I am very proud of, that the Minister of Health and I were able to take part in a fundraiser out in Calgary many years ago for the STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society] system. We were invited out there. And to see some of the great women and men out there that have that board, their focus to serve the people of Alberta. Now we have that here in Saskatchewan with the STARS helicopter ambulance, Mr. Speaker. So we're going to see another \$5.5 million increase this year. And, you know, it's Dr. Powell and his lovely wife, Linda, I believe, that we see them on time and occasion in Saskatchewan. They're very strong supporters of this program and they speak of the fact that a government has finally seen it, and to see the province as we're seeing it now, booming, expanding, that this need can still service this province and augment our land ambulance systems already in place, as well as our air ambulance system already that we have in this province as well. So it's one of those things that, as the province is growing, we see the Ministry of Health under the leadership of this minister as well as the Premier, focused on what's best for the Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker.

You know, there is one other thing I think that's . . . It's been talked about a bit today, is this colorectal screening program province-wide of another \$4 million. Now you know, as a man who is getting up there in age, it's one of those things that we have to talk about these kind of things, Mr. Speaker. It's good to have that kind of support system in place for us, for early detection, because there's many men in this province that need to have that service provided, along with women as well. We know that. But we need to have this . . . [inaudible interjection]

. . . Much more comfortable.

The things that we're looking at, the idea is that this province is providing services to the population, Mr. Speaker. And we'll see this whole issue of longevity based on new health funding moving on. That's going to have an improved quality of life which is all part of the Saskatchewan advantage, Mr. Speaker.

You know, there's many more things in this budget that we've done — I've touched on the Carlton High School gymnasium — but we should also focus on some of the new projects that we have. We're going to fund some new schools this year. We're going to fund some previously announced schools in last year's budget as well, and some of the communities that have seen some increase in population, Mr. Speaker. So it's again a province that's focused on building this prosperity, building this province to be the best place it possibly can be, Mr. Speaker. Because I know I want to stay in this province. I don't want to see my daughters move and have to start somewhere else and hopefully . . . and then, of course, stay out there and I've got to move to them. I'd rather have them stay in Saskatchewan if everything, opportunities, arise here for them to build their families and get their careers going.

And you know what, Mr. Speaker? I think that as we move as a government . . . And hopefully we'll vote a lot more mandates. We don't take anything for granted on this side of the House at all, Mr. Speaker. We work every day to ensure that we conserve this province and the people that have voted us in to ensure that we build that trust. We take it for granted never, Mr. Speaker. We will make mistakes; we'll always learn from those mistakes, Mr. Speaker. But the most important thing in the budget is that we maintain a balanced, focused budget. We also have the Saskatchewan advantage which is maintaining our election promises still, Mr. Speaker. It's going to keep our economy strong. This is the focus of this year's budget under the leadership of our Finance minister. We saw that budget tabled just last week.

We saw a very strong message, Mr. Speaker, that this budget did have some spending issues with it. We had to make sure we had sustainability moving forward. And as we move forward with this planning for next year's budget, we'll see stakeholders asking us for certain things. But everything has to be balanced in the context of sustainability, Mr. Speaker, and that's why this budget achieves the goals set for the province in the campaign of 2011, Mr. Speaker.

We set, in the first couple of weeks of the actual election campaign, we were announcing something new every day. And then we didn't have anything more to announce because we gave a very strong mandate to move forward within a fiscally responsible government and we wanted that message to come on very loud and clear during the election campaign. So we didn't give lofty promises. We want to tell the people of the province that we're going to be fiscally responsible stewards of their money, Mr. Speaker. It's their money that we have to be very cautious of. It's the money that comes in from all the resources, as well, that pay for the services in this province. And they want to see, I believe, they want to see year after year a government and a leader, a premier who and a Finance minister who is showing that we have this focus still moving forward within a context of a strong province moving forward,

population increase rising, Mr. Speaker.

So I guess, Mr. Speaker, I see my time is coming to an end now. So I would love to go on. I have many more volumes I can pull from, quotes and stuff as well, Mr. Speaker. But there are many, many members on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, that want to talk and speak about the budget and how it relates to their ridings and then thank all the people that got them elected and they work for. So, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat, and I will be supporting this budget. I will not support the amendment by the NDP, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Massey Place.

**Mr. Broten:** — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure this evening to join in the discussion on the budget that we received last week in the Assembly.

First off, Mr. Speaker, I do want to take this chance to thank my constituents. I do get a chance to speak to different pieces of legislation from time to time, but at budget time it's always nice to be able to pause for a moment and say thank you to constituents for the support that they have placed in me as I'm doing my best to represent their interests here in the Assembly.

I also, Mr. Speaker, of course want to say thank you to my friends and family for their support over the last few years, Mr. Speaker. And of course I would also like to thank my wife, Ruth, and our daughter Ingrid for their support over the last years that we've been married and the years that Ingrid has been around. And I appreciate that members in the Assembly are also appreciative of the support that my wife and daughter provide to me.

Mr. Speaker, this budget was a budget of mixed-up priorities. It was a budget, Mr. Speaker, where members on the other side, Mr. Speaker, put supports on positions I know that don't sit very well with Saskatchewan people — some questions, Mr. Speaker, about where this government actually sits when it comes to helping Saskatchewan people whether they be seniors, whether they be people in the North, whether they be individuals employed in the film industry, Mr. Speaker — a number of problematic positions that we see coming forward from members opposite.

Now just before I rose to my feet, Mr. Speaker, the Health minister was saying, well you don't talk about all the good stuff. Well, Mr. Speaker, when you're spending billions, when you're spending billions, they will inevitably get some things right, Mr. Speaker. That's the nature of a budget this big. But when we look at the detail, when we look at the examples that members opposite are putting forward, what they are asking of Saskatchewan people, I think there, Mr. Speaker, we have some problems.

First, Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about one change that the members opposite have brought forward, and that's changes to the drug plan, changes, Mr. Speaker, that will require seniors in this province to pay more, actually a 33 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker, in their prescriptions per month. I know many individuals in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, who are seniors. And after this change came down, they've been calling me and

talking to me about how this would most certainly affect the bottom line in their household as they're living on fixed incomes; how there's two individuals and that, two seniors in their relationship, in their household, and they're each on prescriptions, a number of them, and how this will have a real effect.

Mr. Speaker, we see another take from seniors and that's increasing the rates for hospital trips through an ambulance or trips in an ambulance, Mr. Speaker. And right there, we see an increase of up to \$275 per trip. Another place, Mr. Speaker, where members opposite are asking to take from seniors is those that are living in long-term care facilities, for hygienic supplies. And we see there, Mr. Speaker, that the saving that they will be taking by expanding this is \$854,000. And, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to ambulance trips, taking more from seniors, they're taking \$675,000.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if it was these two items, Mr. Speaker, I could understand . . . Well I couldn't really understand because it's about treating seniors in the province well. But then in the same breath, Mr. Speaker, in the same session as we debate legislation, as we look at the legislation the members opposite bring forward, we see them expanding the number of politicians in the province, Mr. Speaker. We see them see wanting to increase the number of politicians that are here in the province at a cost of millions of dollars.

So the problem we have here, Mr. Speaker, is members opposite are more than happy — more than happy, Mr. Speaker — to take millions more from seniors through programs asking them to pay more. But then, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to taking some of their own advice, they're more than happy to add to the number of politicians in the province at a cost of millions of dollars. And I know that is not sitting well with many Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when we were in the adjourned debates discussing electoral boundaries and the one, the topic was to increase the number of MLAs in the province and I said, Mr. Speaker, this was puzzling to me because I haven't heard about it, Mr. Speaker, from Saskatchewan people. In the previous election, I went door to door, as all members in this Assembly did. That's what you do. Not once, Mr. Speaker, not once did I have someone on the doorstep say to me, you know what, I want to pay more for prescription drugs in the province and while you're at it, could you also spend more please on adding to the number of politicians in the province. Not once did I have that conversation with someone, Mr. Speaker, in this province.

So my question, I asked members in adjourned debates, I said, Mr. Speaker, I said to members opposite, please find these individuals and bring them to the legislature so we can all see who these individuals are, Mr. Speaker, that want more politicians in the province. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because I don't think they really exist. Well a few of them may exist, Mr. Speaker, but they happen to be the members on the front bench right there. Because people in Saskatchewan do not want more politicians. They do not want to spend millions more, Mr. Speaker, on politicians.

And what, Mr. Speaker, is most troubling, what does not sit well with Saskatchewan people is when members opposite tell

them that they need to pay more for prescription drugs. Mr. Speaker, then they are also in the same breath, in the same breath telling Saskatchewan people that they need more politicians at a cost of millions. That does not make sense. That does not sit well with Saskatchewan people.

The member from Moose Jaw North does not like this conversation, Mr. Speaker, because he knows his constituents don't want more politicians. And I know he has, I know he has a problem with that. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, he was the one that took this to the inner circle and told them that they should add to the number of politicians in the province at a cost of millions, despite telling seniors in the province that they need to pay more for their prescription drugs. But, Mr. Speaker, that is something that the member opposite will have to take to his constituents and hear from them.

We also see, Mr. Speaker, in the area of advanced education, we see, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite are asking Saskatchewan students and apprentices to pay more. We see, Mr. Speaker, tuition going up in the province at the same time, Mr. Speaker, as the government says they don't have the funding in order to keep tuition at levels which would be, which would provide accessibility for students. Then they asked, Mr. Speaker, for more funding. They asked for millions of dollars in order to increase the number of politicians in the province.

[21:00]

And this is the contradiction, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite have in their positioning here. They talk about, in so many instances in this budget, Mr. Speaker, where they want to take more from Saskatchewan people, where they're asking Saskatchewan people to give more to them, either through prescription drugs or through tuition as two examples, Mr. Speaker. But then in the same breath, Mr. Speaker, they say we also need to spend millions more on politicians in the province, something most Saskatchewan people do not agree with in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, and something that members opposite, they need to explain to the public why they're going down this path of asking Saskatchewan people to pay more. The members opposite saying they don't have the funding for programs in order to put off increases such as members have suggested through this budget, but then at the same time asking for millions more for more politicians, I think that is a problem.

Mr. Speaker, we also, as has been discussed extensively today in question period and there was activities in the rotunda, we also see the elimination of the film tax credit, Mr. Speaker, and how this affects hundreds of families here in Saskatchewan and how, Mr. Speaker, the existence of this program has been very beneficial to Saskatchewan people, to the Saskatchewan economy. And, Mr. Speaker, there is a very sound argument to be made for the existence of this program from an economic perspective, understanding that for dollars spent it's bringing in far more into the province, and the multiplier effect and how it helps businesses in Saskatchewan. There's the economic case to be made. And for the individuals that are employed here, for the families that live here, for the people that pay taxes and buy services in the province, that is a good thing. And I know, Mr. Speaker, many members, perhaps not the most vocal members, but I know many members on the opposite side understand and appreciate that as well.

But there's also the cultural argument, Mr. Speaker, that the film industry plays in the province, the important role that it plays in the province in telling our stories and in providing a good profile to the province. And we can think of, I mean, the prime example that people have been talking about in the last few days is *Corner Gas*, Mr. Speaker, and how we've had the people closely involved with that program saying it would not have happened, it would not have taken place, Mr. Speaker, without the credit. So we know there is a strong economic and cultural case, argument for having the film tax credit here in the province.

So on the one hand, Mr. Speaker, we have members opposite saying we don't have funding for this program. It's not something that we are able to afford at this time. But then again, Mr. Speaker, they turn around at the exact same time and say, we want millions more for more politicians in the province, Mr. Speaker. They say . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The member from Moose Jaw has complained again. He sure has a lot to say from his seat, Mr. Speaker. And I look forward to his participation in this budget debate.

But, Mr. Speaker, we know that it will cost millions of dollars in order to have more politicians in the province. We know, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite have said we don't have the funding, we don't have the dollars to have the tax credit program for the film industry even though, Mr. Speaker, there is a strong economic and a strong cultural case for it to be there. But in the same breath, they've got millions for more politicians in the province; something, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't sit well with many Saskatchewan people, especially those that are closely involved in the film and the tax industry.

Mr. Speaker, also in my own neighbourhood, something that I've been talking about a great deal is the need for a new school in Hampton Village. Mr. Speaker, whether it's parents that are living in Dundonald or parents that are living in Hampton Village, we know that there is significant pressure on St. Peter School and Dundonald School. And this is something that I've been speaking about in this Assembly for some time and through the committee process as well. Mr. Speaker, in this budget there's not support for that Hampton Village school in order for it to be established, or schools, a public and a Catholic, as the two divisions will be working on that and coming up with a plan that is appropriate for the people of the area.

Mr. Speaker, there isn't funding in this budget for a school for Hampton Village, something that my constituents need. But there is, Mr. Speaker, what we hear from members opposite, what we hear is their priority is adding to the number of politicians in the province at a cost of millions of dollars. I know my constituents, Mr. Speaker. I know the people living in my community, Mr. Speaker, would most certainly prefer that the resources that would be spent on the additional politicians that members opposite want, that those be put towards Hampton Village school.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is full of mixed-up priorities. We see members opposite here where they're asking Saskatchewan people to put up with less. But at the same time they're happy to spend millions more on politicians, Mr. Speaker. I think that's

mixed-up priorities. And for that reason, I won't be supporting the budget. I'll be supporting the opposition's motion to the budget. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

**Hon. Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to join the debate tonight in this illustrious House, a place at which many long and engaging debates have happened historically. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm reminded that this June it will be 13 years since I first walked into this building. And I've had the opportunity to witness some very engaging debate on the floor of this House. I've participated in a few of those, and I hope tonight I can leave my mark one more time on this very important subject of the debate of the government that we are discussing here tonight.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to offer to you my congratulations on your election as Speaker. I know that this is a job that you have prepared yourself for over a number of years of involvement in this House. You've played a wide variety of roles. You've had a particular and special interest in the rules of this House. You've gone so far as to order and put in your library obscure collections of legislative rules and historical precedents. I know that you're anxious to use as many of those as you can, and so I will keep my remarks fully above board so you don't have to be tempted by any of those arcane rulings that have happened from time to time.

I'd also like to offer my congratulations to our new Deputy Speaker, who has sat in the chair for a while this evening. And he heard I was going to be speaking next and, as he is also my seatmate when he's not in the Chair up there, he decided that discretion was a better part of valour and decided to do something else more important than listen to me speak. We're going to get even with him at some point, Mr. Speaker, and I'm looking forward to the opportunity. I heard the Justice minister talking about his penchant for practical jokes, and maybe we can send the Justice minister after the Deputy Speaker to unfold some chicanery of some sort.

Mr. Speaker, this budget has as its title *Keeping the Saskatchewan Advantage*, and while I will address my comments to the budget and some of the specific characteristics of this budget that I think are really important for the province and for my constituents because I haven't been able to speak too often previously, I do want to digress a bit to talk a little about the election of this past fall. I have some thank yous that I of necessity need to express on the record tonight. But I also really want to focus on the important part that people play in my life and any successes that I may have enjoyed as their elected representative.

I can't and I ought not to omit the very important part that my family play in my life. I've heard it said, and it's true by my own experience, that politics can really create a lot of pressure on a family and because of the time commitments, the travel commitments, the obligations of the job, we don't get to spend enough time with our families. And my wife has been a real trouper over these number of years. She has a job in a community a long ways from Regina, so she spends most of her time at home in the community of Eastend and from time to time comes to Regina. And about the time she's coming here,

I'm going back to the constituency to attend to events that I have been invited to or constituents who've made arrangements to come to my office and wanted to meet with me. Whatever the requirements are in my constituency, I put a high priority on that, and it has come at the expense of my family. And I want to thank my wife publicly, who is probably sleeping right now in anticipation of going to work in about two hours. But on the record, I want to say thank you for her faithfulness and her support as I have played this role on behalf of the constituents of Cypress Hills.

The other people in my family, of course, are my son and daughter-in-law and my two grandchildren who live in Red Deer. And my son has gotten involved politically in that community. He has attached himself to a constituency association there and does some fundraising and organizing on behalf of the MLA in Red Deer-South. And that's really been an interesting and eye-opening experience for him because it's given him some appreciation for the kind of work that goes on behind the scenes to make elected office possible for people who choose that avenue of vocation. And I'd like to recognize my son and my daughter-in-law and my grandchildren, Aimee and Jachin, who are growing up much too fast and who I don't see often enough.

I have a daughter who has gone to Ontario to pursue post-secondary education, and she shows a little bit of political interest too. In fact she was writing an essay the other day and emailed me quickly and she said, I have a 12-page paper I have to have in tomorrow morning and, just like her dad, she's left it to the last minute. And so I gave her some topics that she might pursue, and I think she was up all night researching the paper. But it was on Canada-US relations, if you can imagine that. And I think that's a pretty broad topic, and I think she found enough material to fill 12 pages. Nevertheless, I miss her. And she's a good kid. She worked here in the legislature for a while. She worked on some campaigns on behalf of colleagues. And I hope that her future is not politics necessarily, but in the area of music performance which she loves and is studying right now.

Mr. Speaker, the election results just last year were so flattering and so embarrassing, I almost don't want to comment on it. But, you know, the people of Cypress Hills were among the very first people in this province to support the Saskatchewan Party. And they have never waned or flagged at all in their support for this party and this government.

And I personally have been the benefactor of that support. And I'm pleased to report tonight that in every successive election since the by-election of 1999, the support for this government has gone up in popular vote. We started out at about 52 per cent, and in this most recent election, we ended up at 83 per cent of the vote — just a hair below that. Now if I was going to run again, my seatmate from Arm River here is suggesting we'd be going for 100, but I may not get that opportunity.

However, having said that, I guess what it suggests to me is that the people of Cypress Hills are very pragmatic, pragmatic, sensible, common, down-to-earth people. And they don't want flash. They don't want hyperbole. They don't want exaggeration of information, of fact and so forth. They don't want spin. They want solid, sustainable leadership. And I believe that this budget has represented those very principles,

those characteristics of the people of Cypress Hills in such a way that they have found this budget and this government completely appropriate to their support.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think that this particular document is not only going to be well received by the people of Cypress Hills. I think it will represent their characteristics, their best interests, and their desires, Mr. Speaker. They want leadership that is in the best interests of the province. They want practical solutions to tough problems. They don't want a government that runs away from issues or tries to hide their head in the sand. They want government that will lead with a firm hand and in a pragmatic and prosperous direction. And so, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to represent the constituents of Cypress Hills, but I'm pleased to report their support for this budget in this House through this opportunity on the floor tonight.

[21:15]

You know, basically there are two or three things that are really important to the people of a large rural constituency like the one of Cypress Hills. They want to know that the important services that they have come to rely on are going to be available to them. And they want to know that they will be provided in a cost-effective measure and that governments will take those elements and create programs and funding for those programs in a way that is sustainable for not just this year, not just next year, but for years to come.

When I look at what are the principal concerns of my constituents, they boil down to two or three or four items every time. And first off, I think, would be sustainable and reliable infrastructure, highways in most instances, but secondly the delivery of health care services. That is a very important area of concern for people in small communities, as the ones of Cypress Hills would be a great example. And so those two issues, I think, are dealt with in a very straightforward and pragmatic way in this particular budget. And for that reason alone, Mr. Speaker, the people of Cypress Hills would find this document really quite acceptable.

The highways spending — and I'll start there because I have some interest in transportation issues that are relevant to this particular jurisdiction — highways spending this year in the \$581 million range amounts to the second highest budgetary allotment for highways since this government came to office in 2007. We spent a lot of money on highways in the first year or two of our administration. We tried to catch up some of the backlog of repair work that was so desperately needed, and even though we put our best efforts forward, mother nature had a different idea and washed away some of our success or undermined some of our success. So in our first term of government, we ended up spending \$2.2 billion or a little in excess of that on the highways of this province.

The government has made a commitment in this term to match that \$2.2 billion. And that is a lot of money. It's going to be very well spent. There is an urgent need for expenditures in highways, and we've seen some of those urgent needs realized in the constituency of Cypress Hills over the last couple of years. And so for the most part, we have benefited from some government expenditure.

We got a project done — and I'd like to thank the current Highways minister for this project — the road from Highway 21 from the community of Leader north to the South Saskatchewan River. That road was a terrible mess, and it got done this past year, much to the satisfaction of the people in the immediate area of Leader and across the river in Eatonia and some of the surrounding communities. That was a very important link for those road travellers that depend on that particular highway. As you know, Highway 32, which was identified as one of the worst roads in the province, was completely rebuilt by our government in the first three years of our mandate. And we've had some work done on other highways in the Cypress Hills constituency.

But the point I'm trying to make is even though \$2.2 billion is a lot of money, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to rebuilding TMS [thin membrane surface] roads, of which we have about 5400 kilometres to repair yet at a cost of about \$700,000 per kilometre — if you've got a calculator in front of you, just punch those buttons in and see what the total comes to — you're looking at about a three and a half billion dollar expenditure just to improve the thin membrane highways of this province. And you haven't even started to spend any money on twinning projects, passing lanes like there's been promised for Highway 10 from Balgonie to the Qu'Appelle Valley. You haven't spent any money on maintenance or wages. You haven't spent any money on snow removal. That \$3.5 billion would be just to rebuild thin membrane highways in this province.

And so the challenge before us is great. And that's why it's so important that you lay out a plan of action and an expenditure, so that not just the ministry knows how much money they have to work with but every contractor in the province who does road work has a pretty firm idea as to what kind of work and what level of work they might expect and whether or not they should buy new equipment or maintain their employment quotient at the existing rate. They should be able to plan very effectively as a result of knowing this going forward. So having seen in this budget the commitment to highways at the second highest level ever in the history of this province, is a very important signal to the people of Saskatchewan, to the people of my constituency, and to all those involved in the road building business that we're serious about addressing this infrastructure deficit.

Mr. Speaker, on health care, this is an enormous field. You know, we're spending record money in health care again. And yet there are some very specific initiatives that I think the people of Cypress Hills will see as critical to their own personal health care needs. We're going to see an increase in funding to the rural health districts, and those districts are kind of closest to the delivery of services in the various communities around the province. They know what their needs are, and this extra funding should help them address some of those needs. There aren't very many health regions that can't find a way to properly and appropriately spend that additional apportionment. And so I think that's very helpful.

I think the way we're going to be spending money to provide a locum pool of doctors for relief in rural communities is absolutely critical to the ongoing delivery of health care services in towns that so often find themselves sort of at the whim of the existing doctor or at the emergent needs of an

existing doctor who has maybe dedicated days on end to providing medical service and through exhaustion needs some time away or, because of his limited time with his family or her family, they need a break. And without their presence, health care may come to a standstill; health care delivery might come to a standstill in many of these small communities. So this locum pool is so important to the ongoing delivery of service in towns like that. It's a great idea, and I'm looking forward to seeing that accomplished successfully.

The money going to additional surgeries, you know, the chronic complaint I heard about health care was around hip and knee surgeries and the issue of getting into a clinic in a timely manner. And I remember several examples of people who were absolutely crippled up and rendered incapable of doing virtually anything because they were either on a cane or on a crutch, supporting themselves as they gimped around on a bad knee or a bad hip. And so anything we can do to shorten the agonizing wait time for patients that are suffering from those orthopedic disabilities is absolutely critical, not just to their physical rehabilitation but to their emotional and mental benefit as well because so many people, when they're immobilized with that kind of pain and discomfort, lose all interest in so many of the other activities of life worth enjoying. And so I think this is one area that is so vital to the successful delivery of health care to residents of the province.

I'm really pleased to know about the children's insulin pump program for young people 17 to 25 years of age. As you know, Mr. Speaker, diabetes is becoming a much more common ailment in the population of this province. And having that kind of capacity available to young serious diabetics is critical, not just to their health but to their enjoyment of life as well.

I think the almost \$17 million increase to the Saskatchewan cancer care agency for drugs and for medical and operating costs and funding new patient referrals for chemotherapy treatments and mammograms is really an outstanding contribution to longevity and the addressing of the increasing prevalence of cancer in our society.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think some of these areas of expenditure have been largely overlooked, I think, but they're absolutely critical to the enjoyment of life for the people of our great province. And this budget has accomplished some very important increases in these vital areas as well. The list is quite long in terms of specific money to very clearly specified areas of health care concern in this province. And so I would like to congratulate our Minister of Health for his attention to those areas.

And we talked a little bit about some of the other spending that's happening in the constituency of Cypress Hills. I focused primarily on highways. But I know for a fact that there are a couple of capital projects that are going to be undertaken in the constituency.

We, the Minister of Health and I — it's close to three, maybe three and a half years ago — went to Maple Creek and told the people there that they were going to get a new long-term care facility. And in the intervening time, that project was expanded to become a much larger health care delivery facility. It's known as the southwest integrated health facility, and in this



budget there is funding to start the construction of that project. I understand the tenders for that particular facility are only a matter of maybe days or weeks away, and the whole community is excited about this. I'm going to be in Maple Creek on Friday to look at the initial designs for the new facility that are being offered up by the architect and the planners. So there is money in the budget for that project, and we expect to see a start of construction in the very near future.

I understand that the Education ministry has put money aside for a project in Leader for a significant improvement to the school there. And that has been long-awaited, and they're quite excited about that as well.

And you know, the Education ministry has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on capital projects that were in need of completion, were in need of attention for almost a generation under the previous government. We had schools throughout this province where roofs leaked so bad that whenever it rained, students had to move to a different part of the school. And we had mould issues in community schools throughout the province. And we've had temporary and portable classrooms utilized in so many communities where something serious needed to be done about the infrastructure, and it was ignored by the previous administration. And I'm pleased to say tonight that we're seeing that investment in schools and capital projects in schools all around the province. And it's a real, real benefit to those communities and those students.

Not only are we seeing an increase in spending in terms of capital projects, but this budget provides a solid base of support for educational funding in the schools for the benefit of the students themselves. And I know the critic for Education and the Finance critic have stood in this House repeatedly and said, this budget shortchanges education. Well the STF doesn't think that. There's several quotes that I could provide on the floor of the House tonight from the STF that express appreciation for the commitment to education in this budget. They apparently weren't consulted by the opposition on their position, but nevertheless that is the reality.

The Saskatchewan School Boards Association have taken a very strong stand in favour of this budget, and I would be happy to repeat some of their comments if it's necessary for the edification of the opposition. We may get to that yet if I don't run out of time.

Mr. Speaker, well let's see. Maybe I can find just one here. I hope it's the best one of several here because we did see quite a few of them in terms of education. Well here's one. Here's one here from the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation news release. It says:

**The STF Welcomes Priority Placed on Education in the Provincial Budget**

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation welcomed the provincial government's pledge that Pre K-12 education is a priority in this year's provincial budget.

Let me quote Steve Allen, the president of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation:

The increase to funding is welcome and the fact that education is placed as a priority for the government. We think education is an investment. It's an investment in not just infrastructure but in other things. It's an investment in children, in people in the province. That's very important. We do welcome the increases that are there.

Steve Allen, president, Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation.

[21:30]

I've got, frankly, I've got pages here of positive comments from a variety of sectors, including the municipal sector, including the heavy construction sector, including other people in education. Boy, the list is really quite extensive, Mr. Speaker. Well I wish I could read them all if I had time, but maybe what we'll do is just table the document, and then it'll get on the record.

Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign last fall, this government was very careful not to promise more than it could deliver. In fact we took a very prudent and careful approach to promising the people of Saskatchewan anything for future implementation. That was in direct contrast to the promises of the NDP who never met a spending commitment they didn't like. And, Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague from Prince Albert Carlton indicated that it was about a \$5.5 billion list of spending priorities — and maybe more, maybe less — but somewhere in that range.

Out of the number of commitments that we made, I just want to indicate for the record tonight that I have a list of 26 campaign promises made by the Saskatchewan Party for a very inexpensive amount of money. And I looked at this whole list. And every one of those, every one of those 26 commitments that were made have already been acted on by this government. It was either in this budget document or in our Throne Speech earlier in the year. And, Mr. Speaker, that is the hallmark of a government that can be trusted, a government that keeps its word and does what it says it will do. And this is another example of how critical keeping the trust of the people of Saskatchewan is to the Government of Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Party government that was elected in the fall election.

Mr. Speaker, we set a pretty high bar after the election in 2007 because, at that time, we had about 125 or so election promises we made. And over the course of the first three years, we kept the vast majority of them, and just a few were carried over into the fourth year of that mandate. And when the people of Saskatchewan realized that we were a government whose word could be taken seriously, who would do what it said it would do, they were prepared to give us a mandate in this most recent election. And we're going to do whatever is necessary to keep the faith with the people of this great province.

And so, Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to have been able to participate in this debate. I just, before I close, want to make a couple more comments. At the outset, I indicated that I had a great deal of success in the election. I won't take personal credit for that. It was as a result of teamwork. We had an outstanding Premier who offered leadership to our election campaign. We've had a strong performance as government over the

previous four years.

But there's a team at the local level that worked very hard so that all of us can enjoy success. And I'd like to acknowledge a gentleman by the name of Norm Lavoy, who cut his teeth on Liberal campaigns a number of years ago but who came onside as my campaign manager, and he worked very hard. In fact he was a bit of a slave-driver. And if it hadn't been for him, I'm not sure that I'd have gotten as many doors knocked as we did. But he had an objective, and we were going to meet that objective. And even if I didn't get them all knocked, if it took him knocking doors with me, side by side, we were going to meet that objective. And so he was travelling with me every day, virtually, from community to community around the great constituency of Cypress Hills.

You know, I want to recognize Norm Lavoy. I wanted to talk about Jay Meyer and Jillian Stevenson, Dennis and Sherry Webster. And of particular importance are Beth Humphrey, Glenna Gordon, and Carol Wiebe, Kristen Koester. These are people who . . . I'm sorry, I said Carol Wiebe. I meant Carol Miller, Kristen Koester. These are people who came to my office every day and worked on that campaign. And we had volunteers in communities all throughout the province . . . I'm sorry, all throughout the constituency. And without that kind of support, without that kind of help, no campaign can be successful. And so I want to recognize those people tonight for their help.

In conclusion there's been quite a bit of debate in this House about whether or not we need three more elected members in this august Assembly. And I know what the arguments are in favour and against. And I also know that with the increase in population in this province, there is going to be a need for additional representation at some point. And we can do it now, or we can do it, you know, five years from now and deal with it then.

But here's the reality for constituencies like mine, large rural constituencies. Today I represent one voter per square kilometre. It's pretty easy to be critical of increasing members when you are sitting in an urban constituency, or one very near Regina, where you can get across the constituency in 10 minutes and think that that's the reality for everybody.

But in my case, in several of my colleagues' cases, their constituencies are large. They're remote. They're a significant driving time away from Regina. And it's not that technology doesn't allow those people that we represent to contact us. We do have telephones, surprisingly enough. We even have email addresses that work. But that's not the issue, Mr. Speaker. It's not whether my constituents can get to me — because they can if they want, even if it takes a couple of hours of driving time — but it's whether I can get to them when they need me in their community. The question is: can I get to them in a timely way?

And you know, the closest community to my home base is 20 minutes away. But if you drive to the far end of my constituency, it's a two and a half hour drive up to the community of Leader. I spend a couple of hours in the community at whatever function they've got. I drive home for two and a half hours. I can't do that every week. I can't do it every month. I have 25 distinct communities in the constituency

of Cypress Hills. And if we didn't add just two or three more seats to this House based on the growing population, my constituency could conceivably get significantly larger as boundaries are redrawn according to the law that's now in place.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we're familiar with the phrase about justice delayed being justice denied. Well in the case of democracy, access delayed is virtually access denied. And I worry about the argument that's being made, you know: we don't need more people here to represent this growing population; we don't need the increased expense. If that argument had been used many years ago, we wouldn't have had the kind of representation and the kind of good government that was provided to this province and the leadership that was provided to this province at a time it was critical in the growth and development of this great province. So it's easy to make a generalized condemnation of three additional people when you don't have to live with the inconvenience and the incongruities and the challenges of representing a large rural area.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just place that on the record tonight in defence of some of the things the government is undertaking. Because it's important that the people of these rural communities and constituencies like Cypress Hills and Wood River and some of the others that they be given the same access to their elected people that those in more populated areas currently enjoy. And I think that when you look at that comparison, there is a fairly legitimate argument for increasing the size of representation and the number of elected people in this House.

So having made as many points as I could in as little time as was given to me, Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to say tonight that I'm firmly in support of the budget. I will be voting against the amendment.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And it is indeed a pleasure to rise and participate in this budget debate. And according to my calculations — I used to be a Finance critic at one time — I think it's the ninth time that I've had a chance to look at budgets in our province. Now, Mr. Speaker, the first few, the first four, I believe, were when I was in opposition. And at that point, I had an opportunity to be Finance critic, and I understand what a difficult job that can be at times. But, Mr. Speaker, without hesitation I would say that each of those budgets had many, many positive things in them, many things that we can be proud of in Saskatchewan. Each budget builds on the last one, and, Mr. Speaker, that's indeed what this budget does.

Mr. Speaker, it's a great time of year in spring when you look forward to the great opportunities that our province has ahead of it, and it's a great time for a budget such as this that shows the Saskatchewan advantage, Mr. Speaker. That's indeed what we have here today.

As other members have done, I'd like to thank those who help me do my job on a daily basis: my constituency assistant Kaitlyn, Marilyn before that. Both of them have done an

excellent job, and I thank them for the work that they do. And also in my ministerial office, Marlin and Jacquie and Jared and Marlene and Tenille, they all work very hard to make sure that I have everything for question period. You know, every day you may forget one or two things, but they make sure that it all comes together here.

And then you have to hope for a question, a question. And every day you come in here, and you hope for a question, but not very often, Mr. Speaker. When I first came in as Minister of Crowns, I used to have a question every day, and I miss that, Mr. Speaker. I do. I do. But they say that's a good thing. They say that maybe you're doing a good job. But I can't use that logic either because my seatmate gets questions every day, and he's doing an excellent job.

Mr. Speaker, balanced budgets, that seems to be the topic that we have here today, and we indeed again have a balanced budget. Members opposite have posed the question: don't you guys get tired of talking about balanced budgets? Well, Mr. Speaker, the answer is, never. Because with balanced budgets come paying down debt, making sure that the future of the province is sustainable and affordable, and, Mr. Speaker, that's indeed what we do.

As Premier Wall has said — and all of us on this side have heard that many, many, many times — Premier Wall has said . . . I'm sorry. The Premier has said . . . Forgive me, Mr. Speaker, I'm new in the . . . No. It's funny, how you're elected and you're a rookie in the first four years and then the second four years you're somewhat of a veteran and then in the third four years you're already a little long in the tooth, Mr. Speaker. Not saying that that's happening, you know. But indeed I'm enjoying it.

What the Premier says to us time and time again is that the only day that's better than today in Saskatchewan is tomorrow in Saskatchewan. And that is indeed something that we all enjoy hearing. I'm not sure if the members opposite enjoy it all that much. They probably do because they probably believe that they will get a turn again in government. But, Mr. Speaker, we will do everything on this side of the House to make sure that doesn't happen because, Mr. Speaker, what we hear from our constituents is that they are not going back. They are not going back to the years of the NDP, Mr. Speaker. What they want is balanced budgets into the future.

I very, very recently had a chance to hear from a couple of chief economists from CIBC [Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce] and Scotiabank. And what did they have to say about our budget? What did they have to say, Mr. Speaker? That we're only, we're one of only three jurisdictions in North America that have a balanced budget — Newfoundland, North Dakota, and Saskatchewan.

[Applause]

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Absolutely. Absolutely. But I think, you know, Mr. Speaker, the greatest compliments come from your rivals. You know, when you get a compliment from across the way, you take that. You don't get them very often but they do come. For example, and the member from Regina Dewdney was mentioning it, when you get a compliment from

the land of the Blue Bombers, from Manitoba, when they say, "Saskatchewan is kicking Manitoba's butt," Mr. Speaker, that is indeed, that is a compliment of the ultimate sense, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is indeed a quote, and that is indeed in the *Winnipeg Sun*.

Mr. Speaker, we talked about the new road, Mr. Speaker, in previous budgets. And I've said, we've built upon previous budgets, and that's what we have here. We wanted to take the road that Saskatchewan residents would like to travel, a high road indeed, one with a better quality of life where every person in this province can participate in ensuring that we have a better, better quality of life. And now more than ever, people in Saskatchewan can say that because there are more people here — 1,067,000, Mr. Speaker. This is indeed something that we can all, we can all be very proud of, Mr. Speaker.

[21:45]

And this is very evident in the growing constituency of Saskatoon Silver Springs. Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity, and one thing I enjoy about elections is going door to door to every door if possible and talking to people about what their vision is for Saskatchewan, what they would like to see happening. And, Mr. Speaker, make no mistake about it, they want to see growth. They want to see a positive outlook. And, Mr. Speaker, that's indeed what our government brings to them.

And even if you go down the streets in Saskatoon Silver Springs, you get surprised by the people that are there and where they've come from — people from Germany, people from England, people from Ireland, more to come I'm sure from Ireland. And, Mr. Speaker, that is something that indeed enhances the mosaic and the culture of our province, and I'm so proud to say that our government maybe had a little part in doing that. We know that it's the private sector that leads the way, but, Mr. Speaker, we indeed want to make sure that we continue to do that.

Another thing that they talk about in Saskatoon Silver Springs, about the growing constituency, is the need for schools. And, Mr. Speaker, this budget came through in spades — two new schools for the Saskatoon Willow Grove area in the Saskatoon Silver Springs constituency, something that I'm very, very pleased and I know that the constituents are. And I know that members in this House are very pleased when new schools come to their area.

I had the opportunity of going to the Saskatoon Teachers' Association convention on Friday and hearing some of their speakers. And one of the speakers was asked by the directors of education and other officials saying, what would you do? How would you build a new school, and what would you have when you walk into it? And you know what he said, Mr. Speaker? Do you know how lucky you are to have new schools? Do you know how many jurisdictions across North America don't have that opportunity? And he went on to say what he would see. And I think that's something that we all have to take into account, Mr. Speaker, because we are the benefits of a growing economy. We have the stewards of that, of the budget and of the economy going forward, and that enables us to increase the quality of life. Whether it's hospitals, whether it's schools, Mr. Speaker, we're very proud when it indeed does happen.

Now that wasn't always the case, Mr. Speaker. I can remember standing in my place in opposition, lobbying the Education minister at the time for a school for Saskatoon in the Arbor Creek area, Mr. Speaker, and it never came. The NDP had some pretty good times as well, and that school never came. The people of Arbor Creek today, they remember that that plea fell on deaf ears, Mr. Speaker. So I can tell you that it's much, much better to have an opportunity to say . . . And schools will come to other constituencies as well, whether they're represented by government members or opposition members, Mr. Speaker, because it's the right thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk also about something that is very important when it comes to this budget, and that is indeed the revenue-sharing portion of it. And members earlier talked about the revenue-sharing model. And I don't know about you, Mr. Speaker, members on this side of the House, but when I look at something, I like to picture it as far as a graph or something. I relate well to visuals for sure, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — I can't see that from here.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Well what it says, what it says — and members on this side of the House, if they'd just wait a minute here, I'll be able to tell them about it — revenue sharing in Saskatoon has gone from \$17 billion in 2007 to 42 billion in . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Million.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Forty-two million in 2012. Mr. Speaker, what that is as a percentage increase is 137 per cent, Mr. Speaker. And that is indeed, Mr. Speaker, something that is very, very important because Saskatoon is a growing city. Saskatoon is a city that is indeed seeing the benefits of what's happening across the province. And, Mr. Speaker, what an increase from \$17 million in 2007 to \$42 million in 2012-2013, it enables the city to have a vision, to have more bridges, to have a police station, Mr. Speaker, that they're looking at. River Landing is coming along, an art gallery. We do indeed, we are very fortunate in Saskatoon in having a very, very accomplished, very competent mayor, one that indeed has a vision.

And, Mr. Speaker, what the residents of Saskatoon Silver Springs and residents across the city and across the province are looking for are governments that work together, whether it's the municipal government, whether it's the provincial government and the federal government, those that work together to accomplish things.

And as the mayor likes to chide, this bridge that's coming on in 2013 took 100 years, Mr. Speaker, 100 years to come together, and is so pleased to see that indeed it'll come in 2013. Mr. Speaker . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — What did the Opposition Leader say about municipal though? We've got to take money from those guys.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — That's right. We've heard that earlier here, Mr. Speaker, that members of the opposition said that we should take money from SARM, take money from

SUMA, take money from the municipalities across the province, Mr. Speaker. We've heard them say it once or twice, somewhat quietly in the House here, but, Mr. Speaker, I think we're going to hear more about that and those words in the near future.

Mr. Speaker, we have many university students in Saskatoon Silver Springs. And every time I talk to them about their studies and I talk to them about their future plans, they talk about the tuition, the tax credit, and say that it's one more reason why they stay in Saskatchewan, one more reason for them to look for that job. And, Mr. Speaker, you know what they're doing? They're finding those jobs here in Saskatchewan. They're making Saskatchewan home. They're doing something very differently than they did under the NDP, where they looked outside of Saskatchewan into different jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker.

The municipal revenue sharing increase to \$42 million from 37 the year before is in fact an 11.3 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker. And you know, we get in the House and we talk about our opinions and what our constituents . . . But, Mr. Speaker, I always like to throw in a quote or two, and I'd like to quote Mayor Don Atchison when he says, with a 10 per cent tax credit they're putting in the number of homes and rentals that could possibly be built, I think it falls very nicely into the plans that the city has. Of course he's talking about the tax credit and the use for affordable homes.

We have seen many budgets that are just about the numbers and about people. It's the second budget of our Finance minister, Mr. Speaker, and I think all members in this House and people watching at home can see the emotion that he put into it and how proud he was when the member from Canora-Pelly talked about making it a better day for Saskatchewan residents.

I know I'm very thankful to live in this province, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to raise my family in the great city of Saskatoon, as many of us have families. They're extremely busy, extremely busy households. The doors seem to always be revolving in our household, whether it's to hockey or swimming or dance or band. And, Mr. Speaker, at this time I want to take the opportunity to thank my wife, Trish, for all that she does with our kids back at home when I'm in the legislature and fulfilling my responsibilities here.

Our son, Carter, is 14 years old. He loves hockey. He loves hockey so much that I texted him about 10 minutes ago and I said that Dad might be on TV; you might want to watch. He said, Dad, I'm watching the Flames game. So he's probably making, he's probably making a good choice there. Mr. Speaker, my daughter, Paige, is 12 years old. She's turning into a very, very accomplished swimmer, and she's enjoying the Shaw Centre in Saskatoon and certainly involved in dance and other activities that keep her very busy.

And one story that the kids and Trish always tell me is that when they're out buying clothes and they come to the till, and every time that they meet somebody up at the till, they talk about the PST exemption on children's clothes for 17 and under. And that again is an election promise that we made and an election promise that we kept, and indeed, Mr. Speaker, that is something that we are very proud of.

When I talk about people in my life, I have to mention my mother who also is a watcher of the legislative channel. But I know that the Jets are playing tonight, and I know they're playing Ottawa. And the media also asked me, if it's a choice between the Jets and the legislative channel, what does your mom do? And well I just say, you know, they can ask her about that sometime because I know what the answer would be. We're certainly in prime-time television here, Mr. Speaker. I know that and I understand that, but it's getting close to the playoffs, and so she might be tuned in to another channel.

Mr. Speaker, she's living in an assisted living home in Speers, Saskatchewan. She receives wonderful care and companionship, and she even gets the odd visit, she says, from her MLA, the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook. And she certainly appreciates that when he comes up.

Mr. Speaker, when you talk about care, that's something that relates to this budget as well, Mr. Speaker. I quoted from the mayor earlier, and I want to quote, and from Rosalee Longmoore, the president of SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses], someone who is very familiar to all members, certainly my seatmate. And here's what she had to say:

We are interested in the budget's potential to work towards addressing patient and workplace safety, improving access, and reducing surgical wait times. SUN is looking forward to continuing our collaboration and partnerships with the government and the ministry to see exactly how these initiatives and resources can be used to further enhance the quality of care in the best interests of Saskatchewan patients.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in the past I haven't agreed with everything that SUN has to say, but I can tell you that indeed that is a classy quote, and something that I think we'd return the favour and say that we look forward to working with them as well.

My seatmate, the Minister of Health, has done an outstanding job in this regard, a record investment of \$4.68 billion — billion dollars this time, Mr. Speaker — in 2012-13, a 4.9 per cent increase. And, Mr. Speaker, I've spoken with many constituents, and health care continues to be a topic that they bring up. They tell us time and time again and tell me when I'm in the constituency that they're pleased with the improvements that our government has made in reducing surgical wait times. They are pleased to hear the key investments in this year's budget for the cancer agency. They are pleased to hear of the expansion of the colorectal cancer screening program and the STARS helicopter program, Mr. Speaker, that we have heard about over the course of the last year. Diabetes, to name a few.

And of course the children's hospital is something that's near and dear to my heart and to many members' hearts. And to see it come along, to see it . . . I had an opportunity to meet with the board of the health region and to talk about the planning process and how that is coming together, and we're certainly excited. And I know constituents from Saskatoon Silver Springs have been asked to participate in planning the facility, those who have had children that have stayed in the hospital, and they wanted to use their expertise. Mr. Speaker, all of this, what it does, it improves the life and well-being of Saskatchewan residents. We are very, very fortunate indeed to be able to do

that.

I want to touch very briefly, Mr. Speaker, on my responsibilities in this House and talk about the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation. For example, they spend some \$766,000 on community sponsorships and ensuring that 42 per cent of their workforce is of Aboriginal descent, Mr. Speaker.

I also have the opportunity to be Minister of First Nations and Métis in the province. And I can tell you that I began today with a very, very special occurrence where I attended the youth meeting of the FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] and had an opportunity with my colleagues, the Minister of Advanced Education and the Minister of Education, to talk about the education and employment task force going forward. We're very, very excited about it, Mr. Speaker, not because it's a government initiative, but it's something that leaders of First Nations and leaders of the Métis and leaders in government as well have sat down and said it's something that absolutely needs to be done. And it's something that will be done, and it receives funding in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we've had other members talk in this Assembly about the situation for First Nations and Métis. And the member from Athabasca — and I think we all agree he's one of the most entertaining speakers in the House for sure but, Mr. Speaker, that's indeed correct — you can check his facts and you check them closely and you'll see that they're off the mark by quite a bit. Because indeed, Mr. Speaker, what has happened for First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan is that, in this budget, is that they have had an increase of 2.8 per cent, Mr. Speaker, some \$4.7 million in this budget. Mr. Speaker, that applies to northern Saskatchewan as well, that there is an increase in the budget for people in the North so they can participate in the Saskatchewan advantage as well.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that my time is drawing to a close, and I just have a couple of other things that I want to talk about, Mr. Speaker: \$350,000 to support the First Nations and Métis engagement with the children and youth agenda. Mr. Speaker, that's a committee that I've had the opportunity to serve on, and I can tell you it's a very rewarding one. At times it's very, very disturbing to hear about the situations that are there across Canada, but it indeed is something that you feel that you can make a difference on. And I am pleased to have that opportunity. North American Indigenous Games are coming in 2014, that's something that I look forward to very much, Mr. Speaker.

[22:00]

Mr. Speaker, I know that there is many, many other members that want to have the opportunity to participate in this budget debate. And indeed, I began by saying how fortunate I am to have this opportunity for the ninth time, but indeed to learn from people in this Assembly. And I think we all learn a great deal from the Minister of Finance, the member from Canora-Pelly. Members on this side of the House have an opportunity to observe him in caucus and all members have an opportunity to observe him in the House, and he does a wonderful job. He talks about the Saskatchewan advantage and makes sure that it does happen, Mr. Speaker. And the fact that Saskatchewan has grown by 17,000 people, the largest

population growth in one year since 1953, is very, very positive.

So, Mr. Speaker, the member for Canora-Pelly continues to be a mentor of mine. He brings passion to this Assembly, and indeed when he delivers a budget, it is inspiring. And that's what we had this year, Mr. Speaker, an inspiring budget that at a time when other governments are running large deficits, increasing debt, cutting services, our growing economy and population means that we can lower taxes, reduce debt, and improve public services within a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker.

So we are keeping our election promises. We are keeping the Saskatchewan advantage. This budget will achieve these goals, Mr. Speaker. It'll make life more affordable, improving the quality of life for all residents from youth to seniors, Mr. Speaker, and everyone in between. So with that, I would like to thank all colleagues in the House for this opportunity to participate in the debate. Of course, I will be supporting the budget because it has the long-term interests of the province in mind, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Arm River-Watrous.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to join in the budget debate. Like the member from Cypress Hills has mentioned, we've taken part in quite a few in our time. But the budget is a thing, when I've listened to all the MLAs and you're following later in the night, you've listened to a lot of the speeches, and I know that the MLAs on this side are talking basically about the same things I want to talk about, but not only that, it's why we're doing that.

It's the same thing that the people, that our constituents tell us in the election, which I've taken part in a few over my time. And when I travel through the election, whether it's in the town of Loreburn or two and a half hours away in my drive to Wynyard, the constituents talk the same thing, whether it's on one side of my constituency or in the other. You know, their priorities are the same, which is health care, education, balanced budgets. They want a responsible government. They want a government that is going to move this province forward in a responsible manner. And when we've been talking to, when I'm talking to at election time to my constituents, you know, it's not the MLAs that develop this budget, you know. It's the constituents that have done it. It's their ideas that they brought forward to us. They're a part of this budget. They made this a priority.

It's the way that . . . the success that this government has had under our Premier is because the one thing he tells us: you listen to your constituents. You listen to what they have to tell you. You bring their ideas to the table. When we sit around the caucus table, it's every member here that's on this side of the House brings their constituents' concerns to the table, and we work them out. That's what helps develop this budget. So it's just not the government's budget, it's a people's budget, Mr. Speaker. It's the people in my constituency, it's the people of all the constituencies in this province that have developed this budget and moved it forward.

And the member from Cypress also talked about the size, and my constituency is fairly huge. It's a two and a half hour drive

at least from one end to the other. I have 20 towns, villages, hamlets, resort villages. And the priorities with them are all the same, Mr. Speaker, you know, over the many years of travelling to them towns and going there.

And one of the priorities — I've listened to many of the speeches on this side, and they've talked about many of the things I want to talk about — one of the things that hasn't been mentioned yet in this budget that I want to talk a little bit about is the rink program. And that's something we've all heard about over the many years that we've been in, you know, many of us that have been here in the legislature or have been elected, was the cost of running the local rinks. And the local rinks in a town is the centre of the town. I mean in the wintertime right now, it's hockey right now. I spent the weekend . . . And people are talking to me about the budget. Because provincials are on, Mr. Speaker, so if you want to talk to constituents, you go to the local hockey games.

And my constituency is pretty rife when it comes to hockey. I'll just quickly mention, when it comes to provincial championships, I believe I have, the Kenaston Blizzards are Provincial D champions, the Davidson Cyclones are Provincial C champions, and the Drake is a Provincial B champion. And one good thing about my constituency is growing. So I think in the next year or two, I'm probably going to have a town big enough that we can enter in A provincials, and we can sweep all four of the titles.

But when we talk about at the rinks, that was one of the programs that we brought forward. Because over the years, you know, the rinks just aren't . . . right now at hockey time. In the summertime, what goes on there are auction sales, are family reunions, are homecomings, are sports days. Every rink, whether it's a curling rink or the skating rink, is a hub of that small town in my constituency. That's where many events, almost any event of any size, will take place. So when they said, you know, how can you help us? And so we'd come out with a program — \$2,500 for any size of rink. So it'll help each and every one of my towns that have a rink. I think right now we've said we're roughly, we're looking at probably 750 rinks that will be able to qualify.

And I tell you what, Mr. Speaker. When I was going around there, they're quite pleased with that program. I mean they know they need help. I mean the cost of everything keeps going up, whether it's electricity, the power, or the natural gas, or just your ordinary inflation costs of running a rink. And you know what? The rinks, as is many events and many things are held in my small towns, it's volunteers. They're volunteers that keep these rinks going, that keep these small towns going, whether it's the Elks Club, the Kinsmen Club, the Lions Club, Optimists, you know, many groups that participate and take part to keep the small towns rolling. So any way that we can help them over the time is very well acknowledged.

And one of the things when I was at the rink this weekend watching hockey was, you know, people were talking about the budget. I mean they come up to you. They know you're the MLA for the area, and they want to talk about the budget, you know. And one of the first things they always talk about, it's a balanced budget because they do not want to run a debt in this province. They do not want . . . They want this province to

move forward and . . . [inaudible] . . . they know they can do that because many . . . All these people, whether it's a farm, as I run myself . . . I was also a town councillor. You want to run a balanced budget. If you don't run a balanced budget, you're not going to last long, whether it's in a business or a farm or if it's a town council or an RM [rural municipality]. So we ask them people to run balanced budgets in the RMs, in the towns, in the RMs, and the varying organizations, so the most they can expect from us is the same kind, is to run a balanced budget.

And that was one of the biggest things, even at election time that I've been running now in government for, this is the fifth budget we've presented, and they've all been balanced, Mr. Speaker. And that's one of the things I've heard the most at the coffee shops, on the doorsteps when I go door knocking is, you know, that they appreciate the work we did on budgets and the balanced budgets working at . . . but also making priorities. The priorities being, you know, various things whether . . .

Agriculture is very important in my constituency, Mr. Speaker. Agriculture is one of the things that we've always committed to on that. You know, this is what we've invested another 13 million to top up 430 million in 2012, this budget, the second largest agriculture budget ever announced. And the programs that are out there, one of the best programs out there is AgriInvest. That allows a farmer to actually to plan his future, plan through if you have a down time in agriculture, as we all know that can happen. We've been lucky. We've had some very good years in agriculture.

There has been the flooding issues where we stepped up to fill that gap when there wasn't funding in the budget. And the farmers and the people throughout the province have appreciated that very much, you know, because it's a government that reacts to priorities, that can react to disasters and know that — you know what? — that we need a little bit of bridge funding for that, which we offered, in the flooding, throughout the last two years.

And now we knowing that . . . We're also introduced where you can get unseeded acres insurance because I think that's a program we're going to need in ongoing future. And that's what farmers realize. They realize, you know what, now that . . . You know, they don't like ad hoc programs. They know that you need to have certain programs and need to step up. And one of them was crop insurance, to know that there was a void that needed to be filled. We recognized that and the minister recognized that, and working with crop insurance and working with producers. And I know the producers that I talked to were, you know, those were things they brought forward. You know, they say, you know what? We just somehow we can enhance the insurance program because it is an insurance program. They know they have to pay into it in the good years, but it's also that they can collect in the bad years. We've increased the funding up to \$174 an acre, you know, this year with that and, you know, trying to adjust as agriculture's growing because agriculture is changing all the time.

You know, I've been in the farming industry all my life and the cattle industry, and you know, things have changed quite dramatically over the 30 years that I've been involved in it. And one of the things that I think government has to do is be able to react to the changing times, to keep working and adjusting the

programs every year and trying to work with the producers, which we have over the time we've met with them, spent a lot of time trying to develop the best programs through crop insurance and other programs through the cattle industry and all the other industries that are involved in farming, whether it's organic . . . We also have a potato industry in the edge of my constituency. We also have irrigation coming forward. I know I have a couple of constituents are growing Christmas trees and various, various enterprises that our people are stepping forward and in the agriculture scene.

So agriculture just isn't about just, you know, the old days — it's just about growing wheat. It's about the many crops that we've grown that are, have been added over the years. And also, you know, the steps we've taken to make sure that Saskatchewan was in the forefront of crop production when it comes to lentils, peas, I can remember — and they were just experimental crops — where, you know, one guy would just grow them, 80 acres, and there was very little research on them. And they've ballooned into being one of our major exports with the crops we develop. Whether it's yellow mustard, we're one of the, we grow most of the yellow mustard in the world. I think we grow 40 per cent of it, give or take, depending on some years. Our lentil production has been moving up every year, pea production with that. But we also recognize with that is, with the research money and the figures and the money that we've added to research development, I think is very important, Mr. Speaker. You know, one of the things we are addressing is, in research, is wheat because wheat, you know, is still a very important rotation crop. It's still a very important part of crops as a crop to farmers.

With that, and especially as the world is going to need more food and as the world is growing, the population in the world has been growing dramatically, and they're going to need food. And they're going to be looking to countries and provinces such as Saskatchewan to meet that need, and we're trying to step up with research and working with the farmers that we can ensure this, that this carries on, that we are leading, leading when it comes to technology, whether it's in research for crops but also for agriculture equipment. We've also moved ahead where our province is one of the leaders in agriculture, developing agricultural equipment, whether it'd be Bourgault Industries, the air seeder technology, the air drills, four-wheel drive tractors, a lot of the rotary harrows. A lot of the equipment that's being used around the world has been developed and been experimented here in Saskatchewan, you know.

And to move forward, one of the, in this budget, another priority that's mentioned is highways. You know, that's a very important part of the provincial budget. It's very important to just about every constituent. There isn't anybody that . . . Talking about highways is almost like talking about the weather, especially in my constituency where basically I have many highways intertwined through my constituency. What we have been doing is making highways a priority over the years. We've been working on it.

One of them is what we did with Highway 15, the investment in that making it a long-haul corridor and, with that, the extra funding that's going on. There's going to be the start of construction on it this spring. And I know that since I was elected that has always been mentioned to me quite a bit, and

when's some work going to be done on Highway 15? And I know when I was opposition, it was mentioned a lot. And we used to bring it here and, you know, well we're just fixing the potholes.

[22:15]

So we've developed a five-year plan. And that came from constituents. They say, you know what? You need a long-range plan on your highway system. You know, you just can't be going, just trying to fix like the previous government was, just fixing potholes here and there, just, you know, fixing a kilometre here, a kilometre there. What you need is a long-range plan. And that's something we've developed.

We also prioritized the highways that need work. And we're making a list on the work, the needs, so the constituents can see and the people of Saskatchewan can see what we're doing further down the road as we're working towards improving the highways in this province. And we have per capita more highway miles than any place in Canada, so I mean it is a challenge.

And with that always comes increased funding, and we have increased the funding quite dramatically since we were elected in 2007. And this year we've also increased the funding to highways, making it a priority and also trying to meet the twinning needs that this province has and also developing, you know, the centre, the hub here in Regina, also working with the city of Regina to develop what's the long-range plan for how to move transportation, how to move goods throughout this province, which are the best ways to move them down which highway, how to . . . working with all the interested parties on that end.

One of the other priorities, as with just about every about MLA here, is health care. Whether it's long-term care facilities, we were working . . . Watrous is, right now, is in the stages of building that. That was a long time coming. That was one of the health facilities that was . . . When it rained, the roof actually leaked. They had buckets in halls that was there. When it was raining, the roof was leaking in the hallways and in some rooms, you know.

And they had their funding put together, I think, since about '92. And I know when I was elected in '99, they were, like you know, when is the government going to move forward on our funding? When are they going to bring their share to the table? We're here fundraising every day. Every day we're fundraising trying to raise money, trying to . . . Because you have inflation as the costs go up. So I mean every year they've got to keep raising that money. And it's hard because the people were asking them why . . . You know, when is the government going to give you their share? We've raised ours, but now we've got to go back because cost of construction has gone up, because cost of labour has gone up, because building costs have gone up. And so we have to keep going back and keep going back.

So when I was first elected, we also developed a plan to address 13 long-term care facilities in this province. That was huge. That was one of the most important things I think that we did as government — these facilities. And they were all in very bad shape because they had been ignored for many years at that end

of it.

You know, the people of Saskatchewan, I mean, and Arm River-Watrous, when they see that you're trying to work, trying to improve the quality of life, because that's what we were elected for, is trying to improve the quality of life, trying to improve it for the constituents that are here. And one of them, that was one of the main priorities, you know. So we developed that, and we're carrying forward with the funding this year. There is going to be some more that are being built, and in the next couple of years, all 13 of them are going to be built, Mr. Speaker.

You know that speaks to possibly the reason why, that there's 49 of us on this side — because you listen to the people. You bring their priorities here to the legislature. You develop it, and you develop that budget, and you develop that platform with that.

You know, another one is doctor shortages. I mean that's a challenge. That's a challenge, Mr. Speaker, in rural Saskatchewan. But we're working towards it. We're working towards it. The locum pool has been very well received in Arm River-Watrous. You know, coming from small towns, every one of my facilities is struggling to keep a doctor. And they've talked to us and said, you know, how can we work together? And the locum pool was very well received.

Another one was training seats that we needed to add, trying to build the capacity for doctors, also working to bring in more doctors from out of country. You know, those are things that we're working towards that are challenges. But yet they know that we're willing to face them and they know, the constituents out there, that we're trying. They know that there's challenges, but they can see we're making progress. And that is, you know, that is one of the reasons that this budget is very well received.

Like I was saying, when I was around on the weekend, I mean, everybody comes up to me and said, you know, this is a good budget. I mean, you know, you guys are . . . It's balanced but you're also identifying the priorities. You're also working what I would do. I had many guys and women say, you know what? If I was elected, you guys are doing the same thing that I would be doing if I was sitting here. You're talking about the same stuff and bringing the same stuff to the legislature that we were talking about back home at the coffee shop, you know, and that's very important.

The STARS program is another one when we're dealing with health, you know, as talking about like in agriculture, how things change. One of them is health care is changing. I mean, it's a great program in Alberta, and it's something that's needed throughout this province to be able to transport somebody in way quicker time to get the emergency there, get them to the hospital. They say, you know, the first 10, 15 minutes, 20 minutes is the most critical if you're to save a patient's life. And that is how STARS will deal with it, how it has that opportunity to save people's lives and to develop it.

You know, like we've talked about our constituencies, how widespread they are. And I mean, they are. I mean this is a very huge province, you know, very huge. And it needs to be addressed, how to get patients to the hospital as fast as you can



in the most critical time and to save lives. That, Mr. Speaker, is a priority, that's a priority of this government. And then sure we had to make, when it comes to budget, you have to make some tough, tough cuts. But I'll tell you what, when it comes to making them, the constituents say don't make them on health care. Don't endanger people's lives.

You know, the cuts we had to make, they were tough, but they were to put money into things that saves lives. I mean we've increased money to the Cancer Agency. We've also increased money for colorectal cancer. Those are the things that the people understand, that if you have to make a cut, do not make it there; do not make it to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency. You know that's something that we've added \$16.9 million . . . And I'll tell you what cancer is, it touches probably everybody in this legislature. There isn't anybody that you can't talk to out anywhere in this province where cancer hasn't touched their lives, you know. And making that, Mr. Speaker, a priority, you know, I'm proud of that, and I'm proud of the budget for doing stuff like that. And to me those are priorities. Those are the main things that you should be dealing with that you should be bringing forward in a budget. And those are things that we're addressing.

You know, when I've worked with my campaign team and I should thank them because having a huge constituency as I have: my business manager Ron Bessey, my campaign manager Clark Puckett, and Donna, and Lavonne, and my sister Dianne, and the many people that have worked with the constituency that large that I can hit every town. And we did. I remember some other member had mentioned, you know, it was a challenge to hit every town, and we did. There wasn't one town that we did not door knock on and ask them what their concerns were, you know and picking up things. And I wouldn't have been able to do that without that team. There's no way. Plus many other people that actually just, you know, gave a day here or an afternoon day there. But them five people, basically we door knocked.

Went out every day. Every day. There wasn't a day . . . Except Sundays. We didn't door knock on Sunday afternoons. Sundays, we took that day off. But other than that, six days a week we door knocked.

And at nights, I attended events where I could. You know, in the fall there was a couple of steak fries, a couple of things going on along them times where you can go and you can touch people, talk to them, feel them out on direction. And I tell you what, you know, they were very happy with the first four years. And I was hoping that they would. I feel honoured that they would give us one more chance, another term because, you know, as the member from PA [Prince Albert] had mentioned, I mean it's the constituents that are important here. They're the ones that put us here. They're the ones that expect us to bring this stuff forward and that and, you know, that's why we're here. And I wouldn't have been able to do that without my team going out door knocking every day.

My constituency assistants that basically take the phone calls when we're here in the legislature every day. You know, I have Clark, Donna. I have Lavonne there. You know, they work hard. We're here every day. I'll get out when I can and you check and ask them, by phone you're dealing . . . But they're

the ones on the front line that are taking the calls, picking out the information, trying to help the constituents, didn't matter who they voted for. I mean they're just there to help who they can, Mr. Speaker. You know, those are priorities.

You know, some of the other priorities we made is with the SAID program. The SAID program is an income support program for people with disabilities, you know. But those are another priority that people like, that where you're trying to help the most vulnerable of our society, that's showing that you care. When you make that, you know, your priority which we have to support low-income families, seniors with support programs on income programs, those are what should be the priority, Mr. Speaker. Those is why the reason that we're here. And this budget addresses each and every one of them. You know that's why this is a good budget. We've had four budgets before that, and I think each one of them was good. We tried to address the priorities of this province.

One of them ones is, another one is keeping promises which we did over our last election promise. We made 100 promises — over 100. We kept each and every one of them. And that means something to the people when you go door knocking and you point to them down the list of the ones that we've made. You know that that's the reasons that there's 49 of us, here you know.

And as the member has said, credibility, and that you're working to ensure that you're keeping the province forward, you know, which we have with the economy. You know this province is in a boom. It's in a boom, you know, and there's people coming home. There's jobs here, and there hasn't been for many years. My towns have been shrinking except for the last few years. The last three years they're actually starting to grow again.

Population is coming back. And why? Because of our working with the business community, working with the municipal governments, revenue sharing. It was huge. I was on, like I mentioned, on town council. And I mean we had a pretty thin budget and we never knew what was coming from the government. And a lot of times it wasn't very much, you know. Now I talk to some of my councillors back home in the town I used to represent, I was a councillor, and I mean they actually have a surplus, a very large surplus. And I was like, I can remember struggling from year to year, you know, because we hardly had any money coming on revenue sharing from the government.

And as these towns are dealing with aging infrastructure, they need this extra funding to come in. And now they know what they're getting, and it's been a very substantial increase since 2007. It was a good increase again, and they know what they're going to be getting next year, and in the year after that, and the year after that, so they can actually plan for the infrastructure needs as they go on. You know, those are one of the most important things that municipal leaders have told us. I said, you know . . . And that's why they supported us wholeheartedly, you know. But we've sat down with them, what did you want, what did you want to . . . How did you want to move forward and be able to help us? And that's one way that we could actually help them move forward and grow with them.

You know, I can see that my time is growing short. I want to make sure . . . I think, from the gist of my speech, you can gather that I am supporting the budget and not supporting the amendment, Mr. Speaker. But not only, most importantly, am I supporting this budget, it's the people of Arm River-Watrous who are supporting this budget. When I talked to them on the weekend, it was them people that's supporting this budget. That's the reason why I'm here and I'm supporting it. Because if they told me, said, you know what, this isn't a very good budget, I wouldn't be supporting it. But I never had one person say that it was not a good budget, and so that is why I'm supporting the budget for the Arm River-Watrous constituency.

**The Speaker:** — It now being after the hour of 10:30 p.m., this House stands adjourned to 1:30 p.m. Tuesday.

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:30.]

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