



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

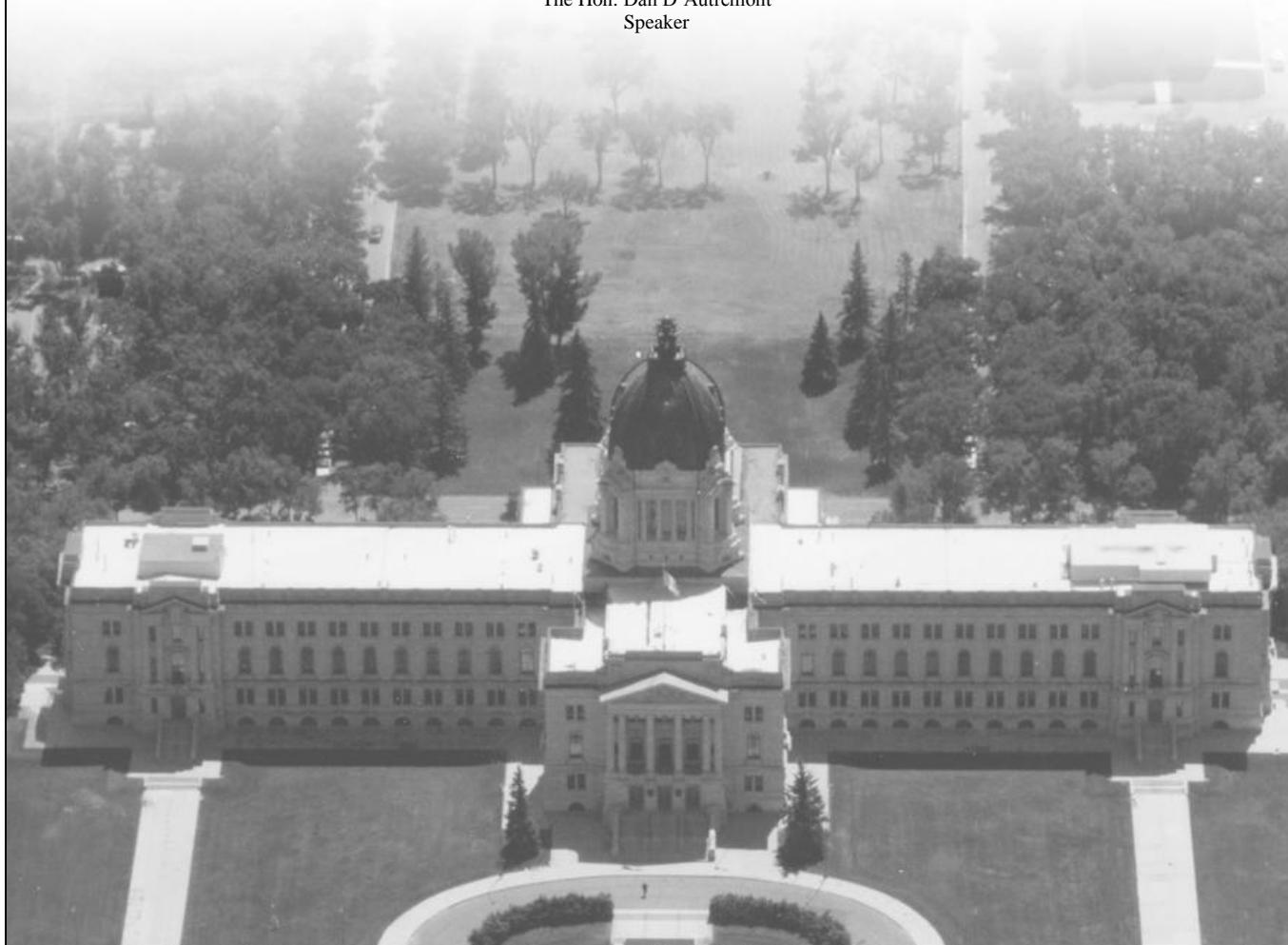
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. 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

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
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Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Brotan, Cam	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Campeau, Jennifer	SP	Saskatoon Fairview
Chartier, Danielle	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
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D’Autremont, Hon. Dan	SP	Cannington
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Doherty, Hon. 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, Hon. Nancy	SP	Martensville
Hickie, Darryl	SP	Prince Albert Carlton
Hutchinson, Bill	SP	Regina South
Huyghebaert, 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, Hon. Russ	SP	Regina Douglas Park
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McMillan, Hon. Tim	SP	Lloydminster
McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
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Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Moe, Scott	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Norris, Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
Ottenbreit, Greg	SP	Yorkton
Parent, Roger	SP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Phillips, Kevin	SP	Melfort
Reiter, Hon. Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Ross, Laura	SP	Regina Qu’Appelle Valley
Sproule, Cathy	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Steinley, Warren	SP	Regina Walsh Acres
Stewart, Hon. Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Tell, Hon. 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, Hon. Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Wyant, Hon. Gordon	SP	Saskatoon Northwest

[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

The Speaker: — It now being 7 o'clock, debate will resume on special order. I recognize the member for Regina Walsh Acres.

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. Steinley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'm happy to have a full house back after the supper hour, Mr. Speaker. And I'm going to continue where I left off, but I think there is some more thank yous I'd like to finish off with because I got interrupted a bit there at 5 o'clock.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is some people I need to thank, and first and foremost would be my constituency assistant, Heather Howell-Shiplack. She keeps the office running very well when I'm away, Mr. Speaker. And I think very much of the job she's doing and I appreciate the fact that she's keeping the people in the constituency aware of what our government is doing. I know that there has been calls about the budget, and people are pretty happy with the only balanced budget in Canada. And I thank her very much for her job, and we're going to be able to send out some newsletters here in the next couple of days and keep the people in Walsh Acres aware of what's going on here in the Legislative Assembly during the session.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of people within the community that I've had some opportunities to build great relationships with — some seniors, some young people, first-time homeowners, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank all of them for stopping by the office and stopping by and really telling me what's on their mind and give me a feel of how they think we're doing as a government and how they think the province is moving forward, Mr. Speaker. And I just want to thank the people for putting their trust in me and allowing me to stand in my space today and give a presentation on the budget 2013.

And right before I get to the budget, Mr. Speaker, once again I know that my beautiful wife is watching out there in TV land, and I want to say thank you very much. Thank you very much for putting up with me. And I know that there's a lot of time pressures in our relationship right now, and I'm going out and about in the session, and especially with our baby on the way, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say thank you and I really appreciate all the time you put in with me, with my job at going to events and all the hard work you do here at the building here as well.

An Hon. Member: — Her burdens are heavy.

Mr. Steinley: — Her burdens are heavy, as my colleague from Greystone just said, but that's just because she's seven months pregnant.

Mr. Speaker, this balanced budget is our sixth consecutive balanced budget, Mr. Speaker. And I want to start by talking about some of the investments that we've done in the great city of Regina, Mr. Speaker. And first and foremost I want to say that we're very proud as Regina MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] to say that we've had a strong commitment on revenue sharing with the municipalities of Regina, Mr. Speaker, and it's gone up to 161 per cent since 2007-08, Mr. Speaker. And I think the municipality of Regina really appreciates that and the fact that they have a revenue stream that they can count on year in and year out, and it continues to go up, Mr. Speaker. And I know that the revenue-sharing agreement we have right now with the city, we have a great relationship with the city of Regina and the mayor and the council. And we want to thank them for being great partners in moving forward some of the infrastructure issues we have in Regina, Mr. Speaker.

And I think one of those great projects moving forward is the west Regina bypass. It's something where, for my constituency, it's a thing that's going to really alleviate some traffic issues in the west part of Regina, Mr. Speaker. And we're very happy with the fact that we can look forward to more infrastructure investments coming here in the future.

Mr. Speaker, there's a couple more things that I think the people of Regina Walsh Acres are really going to appreciate. And I think one of the best things in this budget, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that we've had revenue sharing for education . . . no, sorry, Mr. Speaker, the education portion of property taxes will be remaining revenue neutral. And I think it's very important because this is something that affects people that are on fixed income. It affects seniors, Mr. Speaker. It affects first-time homeowners.

And I think moving the mill rate from 9 to 5.02 per cent, Mr. Speaker, is really going to help people be able to manage their finances. It's going to allow them not to have to have the raise of education property tax they felt under the previous administration. I know that it's a commitment we made, that under our watch, Mr. Speaker, we really didn't think that we would be proud of our record if we'd had tax revolts within municipalities across our province. So our main commitment was to make sure that we kept taxes manageable, kept them low. And I think this budget once again follows through on that commitment to ensure that people realize they can have more money in their pocket. I know in Saskatchewan the price of land assessment has gone up a fair bit, Mr. Speaker, and to allow these mill rates to stay revenue neutral was a very firm commitment we made, and I think we fulfilled that promise once again.

Mr. Speaker, there's a few things I want to talk about. Being one of the younger members in caucus, there's a few things that are close to my heart, Mr. Speaker, post-secondary education for one. I think the post-secondary education in our province over the last five to six years has improved leaps and bounds, Mr. Speaker. And I think that the fact that we've given some,

about 45 per cent more income, 45 per cent more income to universities over our first six years in government, Mr. Speaker, I think that speaks volumes of what our commitment to post-secondary education.

Mr. Speaker, we're also in this budget very proud to say that we're providing \$10 million for a student residence at the University of Regina. It's something where the University of Regina has asked for some infusion and capital funding, Mr. Speaker, and I think it's something that really speaks to our commitment to post-secondary education.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make some comparing and contrasting and comments. Mr. Speaker, I know that we've got six years of government under our belt now, and the side opposite always says, oh well you can't look back at what we did. That's not fair. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think in any situation where there's two different sides, you've got to look at both different sides and look at the record of the side that you're really comparing yourself to.

So between 1994 and 2007, tuition increased at the University of Regina by 88.6 per cent, Mr. Speaker. And we hear some rhetoric over there from the member from Rosemont and the member from Regina Elphinstone, and they always talk about how post-secondary education's unaffordable under this government, Mr. Speaker. Well I think if you compare our record to the members opposite when they were in government, and a tuition increase of 88.6 per cent, I think that might be unreasonable, Mr. Speaker. And I think the commitments they made, the commitments they made to post-secondary education actually would pale in comparison to the commitments we've made to post-secondary education.

I know that there's a couple of years where the members opposite maybe forgot about post-secondary education, so I'd like to run through their commitments. Some examples of the NDP [New Democratic Party] commitments when they were in government, Mr. Speaker: 1993-94, minus 1.3 per cent. That's a reduction, Mr. Speaker. 1994-95, minus 4 per cent — that would also be less, Mr. Speaker. '95-96, zero per cent; '97-98, a reduction of point six per cent, Mr. Speaker. And you know, that was a good year. Some post-secondary universities would consider that a good year, Mr. Speaker.

But you know, under our government, the universities of Regina and Saskatoon have never experienced a reduction in their funding, despite some of the spinning by members opposite and some of their rhetoric, I would say, probably empty rhetoric, Mr. Speaker. I think that they try and spin some examples of how things may be for post-secondary education. You say 2.1 per cent; maybe that's not much. Well I think if you'd asked the U of C [University of Calgary] and U of A [University of Alberta] if you got a 2.1 per cent increase in revenue this year from the government, I think they'd take that as a pretty good year, Mr. Speaker, seeing that post-secondary education in Alberta took a \$170 million hit.

But, Mr. Speaker, I know 2.1 per cent ... everyone would probably like a little bit more funding from a government, but you've got to remember all of this is within a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker. And I think that as long as you can keep a budget balanced, Mr. Speaker, and fulfill some of the commitments

you've made, people of the province are going to respect what you've done because you've kept your word. You've kept a balanced budget and you've done as much as you can for very important ministries, institutions like post-secondary education, Mr. Speaker, like education, Mr. Speaker.

I know that the Minister of Education has done a fantastic job since he's become minister. Education is a very important portfolio for us. You know, looking into the future, we're going to need about 60,000 more workers by 2020, 2020, Mr. Speaker. That's in our plan for growth, which is our North Star which makes us ... That's how we make our decision when it comes to budget time.

And we have our plan for growth, and that's what we're going to do moving forward, is continue to look at that plan for growth — 1.2 million people by 2020, 60,000 more people working in the province by 2020, Mr. Speaker. And we're going to do that through keeping investments in post-secondary education and secondary education, Mr. Speaker. And the ministers of both those files are doing a fantastic job, and I'd just like to give them kudos on a job well done. Mr. Speaker ...

[Applause]

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, there's a few other things I'd like to get to before my time runs out. Mr. Speaker, and one of them is we have some differing opinions, Mr. Speaker, on how this side of the House feels about Crown corporations and how that side of the House felt about Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker. We understand that infrastructure in our province is one of the most important things and if not done properly is a barrier to growth, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they wouldn't understand what a barrier to growth was because they never experienced growth under their 16 years of reign, Mr. Speaker.

And I think that they need to take a couple steps back when they start talking about Crown corporations and how they have really been the backbone of Crown corporations because, you know, an example of how you feel, an example of how you feel about Crown corporations would be your investments and how much money you think you need to invest into those utilities, into that infrastructure, into SaskPower, into SaskTel, so that people can maintain the services that they think they deserve which are high, Mr. Speaker.

And you know, from 2000 to 2007 on average an NDP government committed \$568 million to Crown corporation infrastructure. You know, that might be okay in a province that's bleeding people like never before, Mr. Speaker, where you're losing 35,000 people. Perhaps you don't have to invest in infrastructure as much because, well, with less people obviously there's more there for the rest of us. So they probably didn't have to put in new tie-ins in for utility, probably didn't have to put more power in at rural Saskatchewan because people were leaving. But, Mr. Speaker, it's a different age and since we've been in government obviously the population has grown by ...

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

Mr. Tochor: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask leave to introduce

guests.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Eastview.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Tochor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tonight I would like to introduce someone special to this Chamber. And it's someone that we all share a common bond, and it is our family that allows us leave to serve the province. And I'd like to introduce Gracie McMillan who is in your . . . Gracie is the daughter of Tim McMillan and Ali from . . . the member of Lloydminster. And we're so grateful that Gracie would allow to share her father with us in here. Once again I'd like to have everyone in this Chamber please welcome Gracie to her legislature.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Walsh Acres.

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. Steinley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to say hi to Gracie as well and thank you for coming to our Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to continue on our conversation about Crown corporations and the lack of investment that the other side put into our Crown corporations over there in their term, their 16 years, Mr. Speaker. And maybe it might shed a little bit of light on why sometimes we, why sometimes we feel we have a little better record when it comes to Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker. Well maybe not a little bit; maybe a fair bit better, Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague from Regina Dewdney would say. Mr. Speaker . . . Regina Northeast.

Mr. Speaker, so I would like to say that since 2008 to 2012, Mr. Speaker, we've invested on average \$1.1 billion into Crown corporations, into the infrastructure of our province, into SaskPower, down at Boundary dam, Mr. Speaker, into SaskTel so we can run high-speed Internet across this province, Mr. Speaker. Investments for growth, Mr. Speaker, that's what it is.

It's something where, when it comes down to it, it comes down to a choice between managing decline and managing growth, Mr. Speaker. It comes down to wanting people to come to our

province, shooing people away from the province, Mr. Speaker. It comes down, Mr. Speaker, to wanting our young people to stay or having to have our young people go across the country, across North America, Mr. Speaker. So that we really need to be able to understand why this province is growing at the rate it is right now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes down to it, our Crowns are very important. They are important to us. They are important to delivering service. They're important to delivering power to our province. They're important to deliver the services our people need. They're important for growth for businesses, Mr. Speaker. And I think our investments show, pale in comparison, show how we really care about moving our province forward.

There's a couple of things I would like to go through and, you know, they talk about Crown dividends. Well fancy that. I found some information here when I was researching my budget speech. And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to go through a couple of years where there is an exponential increase in the percentage of money taken from Crown dividends. And actually in 2003 there was 89 per cent of dividend earnings were taken from Crown corporations — 89 per cent. And I am pretty sure we weren't in power in 2003, Mr. Speaker. And I think that might be one of the highest dividends ever taken from Crown corporations. Mr. Speaker, 2004, 76 per cent of earnings were taken from the Crown dividends.

[19:15]

Mr. Speaker, so when you look at our record versus their record and other situations, Mr. Speaker, I think it's amazing that members over there can sit atop their pedestal and preach about how the Crowns are so sacred, yet they continued to strip money from them to balance their budgets. They refused to invest in the infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, because the province was in a free-fall decline under their reign. And they wouldn't allow the Crowns to fulfill their mandates because they didn't allow . . . give them enough money to do so, Mr. Speaker.

So when Crown corporations are a topic, Mr. Speaker, sometimes maybe the members opposite should take a step back, get off their high horse, do a little research into their records, Mr. Speaker, and actually see if their investment could even come close to matching ours.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's a couple of comments about our budget that I'd like to go over and some third party endorsements, one might say, that I've read over the weekend, Mr. Speaker. And you know, there's some post-secondary education comments, if I could go back there for one second, Mr. Speaker. I know that the post-secondary education file is a file very close to my heart. And, Mr. Speaker, the U of R [University of Regina] president, Ms. Vianne Timmons, said when she looked at our budget, she said, and I quote, "When I look across the country, an investment at all in post-secondary education is good news."

You know, sometimes when you look at budgets, you can look at budgets in a context of other provincial budgets — ours balanced; theirs not, Mr. Speaker — but you can also look, you can look at some fantasy wish list that an opposition might bring forward. And when you can pick . . . obviously when you

compare something to a wish list, it might be pretty hard to compare that. But when you compare a budget, like most people do — the budgets in Alberta, budgets in Manitoba — you look at investments in education, post-secondary education, a vast majority of people are going to look at Saskatchewan and say, they made the investments where they're supposed to make the investments. It balanced their budgets and their people are going to be better off for it. And they're on a solid financial base, a solid base for moving forward into the future, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a couple more comments about Ms. Timmons's comments. She goes, "We've been working for the last three years on efficiencies and trying to change our campus so we were actually very well prepared for a 2.1 per cent increase."

People around the whole province know that, that they're trying to find efficiencies. People are trying to work within a good budget, Mr. Speaker, and they appreciate a government's doing the same things. And I think that when people trot out fantasy wish list, investments like they trot out in their platform in 2011, trotted out a platform written by their current leader, prepared by Dwain Lingenfelter, Mr. Speaker, and that platform called for \$5 billion of spending that no one had. The money wasn't there, Mr. Speaker.

So with the I have a dream platform that they ran on, Mr. Speaker, people realized it just wasn't able to happen. It wasn't able to happen. The money wasn't there. They were going to spend our province into a deficit, put that debt on the backs of the people of this province, Mr. Speaker. And I really think that that's why the situation's like it is now, and there's nine over there and 49 over here, Mr. Speaker.

And I think that platform, they should maybe just recycle that and start over, Mr. Speaker. But I think with the leader they've got now, you might just continue on that tradition, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there's a few more things I'd like to speak about our budget. Some that are . . . another one, talk about some health care investments, Mr. Speaker. And I know, working with the former MLA from Melfort who's now not with us anymore — we've got a great MLA from Melfort now — but delivering the STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society] program to Saskatchewan a couple years ago was probably one of the high points of my career as a researcher in this government, Mr. Speaker. It's a program the helps everyone in rural Saskatchewan, helps people when they need it the most, Mr. Speaker. And that's an investment that we're continuing to do with a \$10.5 million investment into STARS.

And I think it's a program that we've seen we needed, Mr. Speaker. STARS based in Regina has made the most trips of any STARS base since they opened up, Mr. Speaker: since inception I think around 250 trips. And that's a lot of lives being affected right here in our province. And especially in rural remote areas, that program some of the people really, really were looking forward to. And we're proud that the STARS, based in Saskatoon, is going 24-7 now, and it is saving people's lives. And it's something that's a fantastic program, and we're very proud to have in our province right now, Mr. Speaker.

I know that those members over there, when they were in government they said it couldn't be done. It couldn't be done. It will never be done in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And it's similar to when you set goals, Mr. Speaker. You shouldn't set goals because what happens if you don't make them. That's kind of the mentality that they've had over there for a while, Mr. Speaker. And it's what you would say, my colleague from East said this is a defeatist attitude. And I think that's something what the people of Saskatchewan just don't want to put up with any more, Mr. Speaker.

And there's a few more. I know that our Regina Qu'Appelle Valley Regional Health Authority has made some investments in the surgical wait time, Mr. Speaker, another \$10 million into surgical wait time. Mr. Speaker, these are affecting people's lives. It's letting people get surgical care faster. We're putting the patients first in health care right now, Mr. Speaker. And I think initiatives like this are really bringing people's expectations of health services up, and I think that's a very good thing.

Mr. Speaker, there's a few more things I'd like to speak about, and that would be our investments into student support and post-secondary education, Mr. Speaker. And one of the best things our government has done so far is that we're able to keep people in Saskatchewan, keep our young people in our province, is our graduate retention program, Mr. Speaker. Our graduate retention program is the most effective, the most efficient graduate retention program in the country. Young people are coming here in droves, Mr. Speaker, and I'm proud to say our government has brought that program in. And right now, Mr. Speaker, that program is a \$63.9 million touch, Mr. Speaker. And it's a value-added proposition that brings people to our province and brings talented people to our province and adds to our workforce, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, funding to universities, federated and affiliated colleges, has gone up 7.7 per cent; funding to technical institutes, up 3.6 per cent; funding to regional colleges, up 2.6 per cent. Mr. Speaker, this needed to be done for our growth plan. Our growth plan says you want to have 60,000 more people working in our province by 2020. And these investments in post-secondary education is adding 300 positions at SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology]. Mr. Speaker, those are investments that are going to keep young people in our province, have more people working in our province, add more First Nations and Métis people to our workforce, Mr. Speaker. And that's the commitment that we've made, and that's the commitment that we're proud that we've delivered on, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan advantage scholarship, Mr. Speaker, is a \$4.6 million touch to the budget. Mr. Speaker, we fulfilled our commitment on the Saskatchewan advantage grant for education savings so parents are able to plan for their children's education. Honestly this is something that is very close to my heart. My son, when he's born, we're going have to obviously start an education savings grant, Mr. Speaker. We want to be prepared for wherever that might lead him. Hopefully it leads him down a path to a hockey career, but if that doesn't happen, well we'll have the education savings plan as a fallback plan so he can go to university, Mr. Speaker, and find a great job in Saskatchewan because it will still be a very

prosperous province at that point in time.

Mr. Speaker, there's a lot more things I'd like to talk about, but I'm probably going to end off speaking about our budget allocation of \$6.5 million to the Creative Saskatchewan fund, Mr. Speaker. And I think that's something where the minister worked very hard on this file, and he brought in a great program that many people across the arts community was very much in favour of.

But, Mr. Speaker, there's a couple of people over there with the negative nine that were probably a little bit upset about this. And, Mr. Speaker, the critic, the member from Saskatoon Riversdale, and I quote, said that this "... shows that the province hasn't listened to filmmakers." Mr. Speaker, it said:

... there are lots of details that remain to be seen, but in general the new fund shows that the province hasn't listened ... with the new fund is that it divides money with other arts and "is not going to stimulate the film production here in Saskatchewan."

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not really sure where she's coming from. She just says it's not going to stimulate the film industry, Mr. Speaker. There's a lot of other industries in the art community, I believe. And I think there's a lot of industries — music, digital, Mr. Speaker — and I think there's a lot of industries that find it interesting that one person over there only cares about one part of the arts industry, and that's the film industry, Mr. Speaker. And I think that this is a good program for the whole arts community. And I think it's something where people need to really take a look at it and see how it affects the whole group, not just one portion.

Mr. Speaker, there's a few other things that I'd like to get on record, Mr. Speaker, but for now, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be able to be here to represent the people of Regina Walsh Acres. I'm proud that I'll be supporting this budget and not the amendment, Mr. Speaker. And this is the sixth consecutive balanced budget for our government, Mr. Speaker, and I think the people are proud to have one of the only balanced budgets in the country. And I think the people of Saskatchewan are going to accept this budget and be very happy with it going forward. It sets a solid foundation for our province moving forward. And I'm very proud to be a part of this government. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to make a few comments on this balanced budget that was released by our Finance minister last week, Mr. Speaker. The theme of the 2013-14 budget is one of balanced growth. Mr. Speaker, I might add that this is this government's sixth consecutive balanced budget that they've tabled in this House.

Mr. Speaker, this balanced growth budget controls spending and continues to make investments to ensure a better quality of life for all Saskatchewan people, and it delivers on the commitments that we made in the growth plan that was released last fall. Prudent fiscal management, Mr. Speaker, is the key if

we are to achieve the initiatives laid out in our growth plan, the initiatives like achieving 1.2 million people in our province by the year 2020, Mr. Speaker. And we are on track to do just that.

Mr. Speaker, last year in 2012 there was over 21,600 people that now call Saskatchewan their home. The total population in our province now, Mr. Speaker, is over 1,089,000 in this province.

Mr. Speaker, at the outset here I would just like to take a moment and say a few thank yous. And first of all, I'd like to thank just the staff in this building that make all of our job a little bit easier each and every day — the caucus staff, Mr. Speaker, the ministers' staff, and all the other staff that help all the MLAs get their job done and help them represent their constituents in their everyday life.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take a minute and thank my constituency assistant, Sally Fitch. She works hard. She's efficient in our office there, and she's just a comforting voice on the other end of the phone when people contact the constituency office in Rosthern-Shellbrook. I would like to take a moment to thank her for all she does.

And I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, representing a constituency and living four hours away, which requires some time away from home, if I didn't take a moment to thank my family: my son, Carter and my daughter, Taryn and my wife, Krista. It is truly an honour each and every day to represent the people of Rosthern-Shellbrook here in our province's capital, and I thank my family that allows me time to do that.

And lastly but definitely not least, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to thank all the municipal leaders and the volunteers, not just in Rosthern-Shellbrook but across this great province, that they are really and truly the people, Mr. Speaker, that where the rubber hits the road and our government initiatives and programs from all levels of government are enacted, these are the people that really put it into place in an efficient manner. These are the people, Mr. Speaker, that lend their time and their expertise and their efforts to many of the programs and make Saskatchewan the great place that it is here that we know today.

Mr. Speaker, at the outset I'd like to enter some comments with last week's balanced budget that was tabled in this House as they regard to health care. Mr. Speaker, overall the health care budget was increased by three and a half per cent or \$162 million. This includes expansions for such programs as the Alzheimer Society First Link with four additional sites for that program: North Battleford, Swift Current, Estevan, and Prince Albert. Mr. Speaker, North Battleford and Prince Albert are communities that will be utilized by patients in the Rosthern-Shellbrook area, and this significant investment in the Alzheimer Society First Link program is greatly appreciated by the residents in our constituency.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency also has a boost in funding this year. Mr. Speaker, cancer is a disease that affects most if not all of our families in this province, and investment in its research and its treatment, Mr. Speaker, is money that is appreciated by many. As well, Mr. Speaker, there's \$10 million additional made available for the

Saskatchewan surgical initiative which will enable us to get closer to our goal, Mr. Speaker, of ensuring that no patients in this province wait more than three months for their surgery.

Mr. Speaker, there's close to \$10 million that have been available for primary health care, and this includes such new and innovative initiatives as collaborative emergency centres. Mr. Speaker, these collaborative emergency centres have got rural communities excited. They're a new and innovative way to look at providing access to health care in our rural communities. And I know in Rosthern-Shellbrook there's communities that are looking at them with excitement and building towards the hope of opening one in the near future.

[19:30]

Mr. Speaker, there's new money to continue building our rural locum physician pool. Mr. Speaker, the rural locum physician pool is a great benefit to our rural communities where we have many . . . a smaller number of physicians practising in a group. And when one of the physicians leaves for a period of time, we were able to draw on that pool and provide the continuity of service and thus the access to service for those rural people, Mr. Speaker.

The rural physician recruitment incentive has new money this year as well. And again, Mr. Speaker, this is another tool in the tool box for health regions and rural communities as they are on the hunt for physicians in their recruitment efforts and also in their retention efforts, Mr. Speaker. This will go a long way to providing access for our rural communities as well as sustainability in our rural communities.

And as well, the continued support for our STARS air ambulance. Anytime we are travelling or if we live outside of our tertiary centres where we have the very best care in this province, Mr. Speaker, the STARS air ambulance guarantees us that we . . . or provides us with the swiftest access to that high-quality health care.

As well in this health budget, Mr. Speaker, there's been significant capital investment with an excess of \$160 million that has been provided for new and existing capital that is under construction across our province. These includes initiatives such as the Moose Jaw hospital, Mr. Speaker, as well as the helipad at the Regina General Hospital, as well as continued funding for the 11 long-term care facilities across our great province. Mr. Speaker, I know one of these facilities is in a neighbouring community to Rosthern-Shellbrook, in the city of Prince Albert. And I know another facility is in the community of Shellbrook, an integrated facility that will be opening here this summer. And the community of Shellbrook as well as surrounding communities are very excited and looking forward to that.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to continue my comments on the balanced budget that was tabled in this Assembly last week with respect to agriculture. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's contribution to the global food supply in 2011 was absolutely staggering. Mr. Speaker, 58 per cent of the world's lentil exports and 55 per cent of the world pea exports were produced in this province. And, Mr. Speaker, 38 per cent of canola and 34 per cent of the world mustard seed exports as well were produced by

Saskatchewan agricultural producers. Thirty-three per cent of durum and 6 per cent of chick pea exports also came from Saskatchewan producers. In addition, Saskatchewan is the largest beef producing province in the dominion of Canada.

In 2011, our agri-food exports set a record at \$10 billion. They exceed \$10 billion. In 2012 there was an additional 9 per cent increase to \$11.1 billion in agri-food exports from Saskatchewan. This increase, to put it in perspective, Mr. Speaker, is 75 per cent above where we were in 2007. Saskatchewan agriculture exports and agri-food exports have a major impact on our provincial economy as they account for over a third of all of our Saskatchewan exports. And Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, remains top of agri-food exporting province in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, about a year ago the Premier sat down and talked with government MLAs and asked us to go and travel the province and talk to Saskatchewan people and discuss the state of the province's economy and our services and ask them for their opinion on how we could move forward and keep what has been a pretty good thing, to keep it going. And, Mr. Speaker, as a result of those consultations, the Premier released *The Saskatchewan Plan for Growth* last fall.

As it pertains to agriculture and the Saskatchewan plan for growth, we have four major initiatives that we will look for. Mr. Speaker, we're going to work with producers to increase agri-food exports by an additional 50 per cent by the year 2020. This is to \$15 billion from our 2011 number of \$10 billion in agri-food exports. We will work with primary agriculture to increase their production by 10 million tonnes. And we will increase value-added production in this province.

We will establish Saskatchewan as a global leader in biosciences, and this has begun with the record budget investments in agriculture research in this budget that was tabled here last week. Mr. Speaker, agriculture research is at a record level at over \$27 million, and this includes \$3 million for the Global Transportation Hub at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. It also includes funding the Growing Forward 2 agreement, as well as money, \$1 million, for the rehabilitation of irrigation bridges in our province. Mr. Speaker, our crop insurance program is at a record funding level of \$198 million with this 2013-14 budget. This'll provide our ag producers with \$194 on average per acre coverage.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, this agricultural budget is the fourth highest budget that this province has ever announced. This is in stark contrast to what's happened just a few years ago. Mr. Speaker, the average agriculture budget over the last six years since the Sask Party has been in government have averaged \$405 million dollars. The six years previous to that, Mr. Speaker, the last six years that the NDP were in power, the average was \$273 million.

When the NDP were in government, Mr. Speaker, they refused to address the education property tax disparity. They closed 31 agricultural offices. They cut extension services. They eliminated the GRIP program. They literally tore up the contracts with their producers, Mr. Speaker. They increased crop insurance premiums without increasing coverage. They cut spot loss hail twice. They ignored agricultural disasters and

they blamed the federal government for all their problems. Mr. Speaker, in addition to this they lost taxpayer money in private investments such as SPUDCO and Navigata.

Mr. Speaker, while in government, and as they attacked rural agricultural producers, they continued to also attack rural Saskatchewan as they closed 52 rural hospitals, closed rural schools, ignored rural roads and highways, and offloaded costs onto their RMs [rural municipality].

Mr. Speaker, this is the NDP record when they were in power. And more recently, last year after the provincial budget was tabled, the leader of the opposition was asked for his comments on the budget, and I quote, "There are a number of areas where they could have left money for films. And one of the things they could have done is look at some of the initiatives around agriculture and look at some of the things they've done for municipalities."

Mr. Speaker, they say the best indicator of future behaviour is past behaviour and, Mr. Speaker, the NDP's past behaviour while in government and more recently their comments on last year's budget leads me to surmise that if they were ever given a whiff of an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, they would pick up exactly where they left off with their attack on ag producers and rural Saskatchewan.

On behalf of the people associated with agriculture and the rural constituency of Rosthern-Shellbrook and all of the constituents therein, Mr. Speaker, I'll be supporting this budget and not supporting the opposition's amendment. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Prince Albert Carlton.

Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to crawl out of a snowbank at 7:30, 8 at night. I want to thank the particular columnist for putting a tweet out today that he hadn't seen me since the snowfall of the last weeks rose to 5 feet. So I would like to acknowledge that I worked my way out of the snowbank and I'm here tonight to talk about the great budget — the sixth consecutive balanced budget, I might add, Mr. Speaker.

So now we'll start off the speech. I mean I've always talked about the great balanced budgets, amongst other things we've done as a government, when I've been up on my feet, Mr. Speaker. But of course I've always wanted to thank the people that got me here. I want to thank the constituents of Prince Albert Carlton who in the first election afforded me the opportunity to work in this great Chamber by a 61-vote margin, Mr. Speaker. But in the last election, the last election, I want to thank Mr. Lingenfelter because, because of him, I am here with over 1,600 ... [inaudible] ... And you know what, Mr. Speaker? That platform of the 2011 election was definitely the primary reason why we are ... I want to thank the member from Kindersley. He's encouraged me to run again and win by a larger margin now that we have a new member over there who's in charge of the NDP. So thank you for that.

But I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that one thing as a government we've taken most of our guidance from are the stakeholders that have really worked to build this province and

made this province what it is. And you know, I look at my family and my daughters, Alyssa and Mackenzie. They're the next future stakeholder group in this province. Right now I've got Alyssa in university, first year, studying in arts and science to most likely take a path in nutrition or health sciences or some endeavour. And my youngest daughter, Mackenzie, will be in university next year. She graduates this June and she's looking at working in a science field, Mr. Speaker. And I'll tell you what. I couldn't be any prouder of my daughters for the accomplishments they've made in their lives, at school academically, their friends, their peer groups that they're associated with. And you know, I think that all of us in this House who have children, whether they be very young children or, like my seatmate was talking about expecting his first-born, or to like yourself, Mr. Speaker, who've got grown adult children, and other people in this Chamber who've got grandchildren, and maybe some in this office who've got great-grandchildren, I'm not sure, in this Chamber. But we do what we can in this particular Chamber day to day and as a government to ensure that their future is brighter than it was the day before, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to say that a government that takes responsibility like we have to balance the books, to show that we have a very strong fiscal responsibility moving forward, Mr. Speaker, to ensure the quality of life is there for not just our families but for the families of everybody and for the future families in this province, ones who are moving to this province like no other time before, Mr. Speaker, take up the opportunities. Take up the opportunities that haven't been seen in decades in this province, Mr. Speaker, that we are seeing these people moving into or moving back to Saskatchewan.

And I know one thing I want to talk about tonight is in respect to my daughter's future. But I want first of all to thank my lovely wife, Charlene, for putting up, as most of us have realized ... being very patient, but also for all of us in this House who've got spouses, significant others, family members who support us every day that we leave this House and return to our constituencies, there's somebody there always telling us that you've done a good job. Those are usually people in our families because we get some mixed reviews some other time. And in my house, Mr. Speaker, I can say that with Mackenzie and Charlene, it's usually 50/50, as my colleague from Greystone mentions, that I come home on a Thursday night and it's like, you know, dad, you did pretty good, and well you could do better in this. But as overall, I walked out, I left this House on Thursday and I come back Monday afternoon and it's still here waiting for me, Mr. Speaker. I love this job and I love my family for supporting me.

Again moving on now to the constituency of Prince Albert Carlton. My colleagues have already addressed a lot of the highlights in the budget. I want to be more specific about Prince Albert. I know that my colleague from Prince Albert Northcote did a great job today talking about the significant measures we've done in this particular budget to maintain our focus on Prince Albert and the area. You know it's the few things I want to talk about are really significant to the future of the prosperity of my riding.

Revenue sharing, of course, is up across the province, Mr. Speaker, and in my riding 149 per cent since 2007-08. In this

last budget, due to the great work of the Minister of Government Relations and the staff and the individuals in SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association], SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], and New North, we're seeing revenue sharing and a new pool of money being distributed. And in Prince Albert it means just over \$800,000 increase. And in Prince Albert that means that gives the city council an opportunity to use those monies as they see fit unconditionally to better the quality of life for all of us in our great city of Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker.

You know, a budget should also be, you know, forward looking in how it does its business going on forward. And I've talked about my daughters in school, and a lot of people in this province have university-age students. Some are in SIAST as well, some children who will be going to school in the next few years. You know what? And the province that looks at that particular growth initiative, what we're seeing now with families, those are the people that are going to fill these jobs that we have in this province today, in the future, and also develop themselves for the next level of employment skills as the job opens up to them in the next three or four years.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? That the Saskatchewan advantage scholarship is one thing I want talk about, how we've taken it into consideration, and we've been able to, you know, advance that cause. I want to thank members in Treasury Board, year after year, and the Minister of Finance and the previous minister of Finance for recognizing that's got some potential for all of us.

I know the Minister of Finance had his granddaughters here on the budget day. You know, we look at what we're doing as a province now, that we're going make this a stronger province for his grandchildren because we want to make sure they stay here. They have opportunities and schools, and they have opportunities to explore any career they want to and have an opportunity to be a dreamer and dream of the future, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And you know, what else is important is that once our children finish university, it's to stay here in this province.

And you know what? I think that there was a time, I know there was a time that a lot of people left this province. And I've talked about it before. I'm not going to harp on that. When they left university, a lot of my friends took off and went to Alberta and BC [British Columbia]. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? Now with the opportunities that our children have for the, you know, the actual retention portion, the graduate retention program that we're funding year after year, it's one of those kind of initiatives that we are affording these students to stay in the province after — start a career, become successful, stay within the actual province. And you know, it should work out for most of them I believe to get a large portion if not all their portion of their tuition back, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[19:45]

And why would you not support that as a government? Why would you have to think that wouldn't be a good idea? The previous government didn't have those kind of programs in place. And I'm very proud to be part of a government that saw that initiative as a promise in 2007 campaign, and we're going

to maintain that promise moving forward, Mr. Deputy Speaker because it gives us a foot up, an edge on other provinces, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to make sure that our best and brightest stay in the province. And those others who want to come from other parts and promise to help, you know, buoy up our population numbers and the booming economy will come here as well, and we're seeing that that particular program is extended to them as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So I'm very proud of that as a member of this government.

And you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I think there's a few other issues that I want to just quickly talk about before my time comes to an end here. You know what? In my riding, I talk about Carlton Comprehensive High School. We put together a plan last year to start funding the gymnasium project. Which I might add, the high school in Saskatchewan that has the highest number of students enrolled than any other high school: Prince Albert Carlton Comprehensive High School. So the third gymnasium allows and will afford the opportunity for these students to take part in extracurricular activities, sports programs. And with the size of this new gymnasium, the opportunity is afforded to Carlton to host some provincial events as well, I understand. So I want to thank the Minister of Education for that funding continuing on. So thank you so much for that. That's an excellent initiative.

You know, there's one more thing that Prince Albert people don't really understand is the level of commitment that we have I think to basic infrastructure needs. You know, we funded the — it's not a sexy, glamorous project — but the water treatment plant, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that provides a future of safe water for the people of Prince Albert and area. That's important as well moving forward.

This government has the commitment going on, Mr. Speaker, that we commit to a project. We see the project to the end. And the government asks, okay, that money's been spent in that area now. What's next? We're always having a tranche of projects that are always waiting for us and the ministers always bring forward. I know that, and MLAs do as well. But the government sees the future. They're going to pick those projects that have the best and most ready, available, safe water supply, which is important for everyone in this province, is number one. I understand that. But infrastructure as we're seeing moving on for hospitals, bundling school projects, those are all the kind of things that our growing, booming economy needs, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it's important for us to recognize that.

You know, there's other things of course that this particular budget has moving forward. And I think there's going to be a lot more members that have a lot better grasp of their own ridings, so I'm going to let them talk about what's in their own particular ridings, constituencies.

But there's a couple of other points that have to be talked about within this budget I think are important. It's the idea that as a province we have a responsibility to recognize that there are still out there, people out there and families who still need support of government. And the Minister of Social Services has done an excellent job in her tenure, as the previous minister did as well, to provide finances and initiatives for not just families but, you know, single mothers and young individuals who need

a hand up sometimes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And you know what else? The seniors. I mean that's the core group that built this province for us. The seniors are still looking at staying in this province. We want to make sure they have the opportunities as well to thrive in a booming economy. So I want to thank the minister for increases to the SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] program and SIP [seniors' income plan] as well. SAID not so much for maybe adults right now but it'll be coming down the road when they turn of age. And you know what? The families are being supported because of that program right now, and as time goes on, they can stay in this province and still have those opportunities. We recognize that as a government, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I think I'm going to probably take my seat now because I know other members want to spend more time and they want to talk. And you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I hear by the great encouragement here by the members that they wish me to continue for a while longer, so I might just do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just a couple of minutes, just a couple more minutes. They asked for it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They're going to get it now. So I'll tell you what — here we go. I just wish . . . I can't believe the encouragement I get from this side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a great bonus to be in government, I suppose, and have great support from my peers around this side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But you know what? I think we have to look at the fact that every one of us does this job for a reason. I would hope that every one of us does this job to make it a better place than we found it, and every day you come to work, you should always make it a better day than it was the day before. And I think that on this side of the House, I know for everyone's sake on this side that we talk at caucus meetings. We talk at coffee time. We talk at lunches. You know what? We work hard, as I'm sure the other members across the way do, to actually make sure that this province is the best province in the country.

And I want to thank the members who took part this year in the full budget process. I know it was a gruelling process, but we did something very important. We have a responsible budget. We kept spending to a minimum, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We still provided programs and initiatives moving forward, but we're within the context of a balanced budget, and I look forward to support this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and not the amendment. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — I recognize the member from Melfort.

Mr. Phillips: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in the House today to enter debate on the 2013-14 balanced budget, balanced growth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I get into my comments in regards to the excellent document, budget document, I'd like to say thanks to a few people who help me day in and day out to do my job and of course first and foremost my wife, April. And you hear many of us members at a time like this, we talk about the better half, and I would suggest that it has never been more

true than in my case, and I can never thank my wife enough for her support.

My constituency assistants, Laurie and Peggy, keep the office running smoothly when I'm in Regina, and they try their darnedest to keep it running smoothly when I'm back home, but a little bit tough to do. And my constituents, well, they have treated me with kindness, with respect, and with friendship in every RM, village, reserve, town, and city, and I appreciate that so much. In short, the past 16 months have been a great learning experience and in general just a great experience.

Mr. Speaker, the goal of this government is to make Saskatchewan the best place to work, to live, and to raise a family in the Dominion of Canada. This includes supports where supports are needed, helping people to meet their challenges, and protecting the vulnerable when protection is necessary. That, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is why this government works so hard to build an economy. That is why you hear us, hear this government talk about the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, why we talk about the fastest growing province, why we talking about the building industry, why we talk about the mining industry, the tremendous jump in weekly earnings for all Saskatchewan workers — all this and so much more. That's why Saskatchewan has a growing and vibrant economy.

And I'm very pleased, very proud to be part of a government that has produced six balanced budgets in a row, a budget that is balanced in government operations — and you can tell that by looking at the General Revenue Fund — and balanced in overall government operations including Crown corporations, investments, etc., in the summary financial statement.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have spent a good part of my time on this earth in business, and for the life of me I cannot understand why anyone would suggest doing away with the GRF [General Revenue Fund], the books that actually show the operations of this government. To me it just doesn't make business sense. And that may be the reason why there's a call for it and that would be a lack of business sense. But for the rest of us, it's just plain common sense. This is a balanced budget that is recognized by all the major banks, a continuation of the budgets that have given this province a AAA credit rating, a budget that shows the strength of Saskatchewan, a budget that shows the pathway to future growth and a pathway to 1.2 million people in our province by 2020.

Now one of the items coming from the Melfort constituency, one of the items that I take a lot of a pride in this government for is the new transition house funded for Melfort. There is far too much domestic violence in Saskatchewan, and domestic violence is almost always directed at women, and this is the first new transition house built in Saskatchewan since 1989. You know, it would be the wish of all of us in this Assembly that a shelter from domestic violence wouldn't be needed, but the sad fact is is that it is needed in our province and that . . . This government is responding to that need.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Louise Schweitzer who has lived and breathed this — she's executive director for the North East Outreach and Support Services — and the entire board of directors. And I'd also like to congratulate the councils of the city of Melfort, the towns of

Tisdale and Nipawin for their support of this regional centre.

In keeping with the North East Outreach, they are organizing an international men's march to stop rape, sexual assault, and gender violence. This takes place in Melfort on May 9th, and the participating men will be wearing ladies' 4-inch high heels in a beautiful red colour. I will be taking part in this mile long walk, and should the Minister of Justice's schedule permit, he will be walking alongside of me. And just for interest sake, I checked and apparently there is a pair of size 14 red pumps if the member from Regina Dewdney would like to take stroll with us on that evening . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Are you going to be walking? Good, good. You know, it's going to be fun, and it's going to be a good cause. And it is going to be absolutely terrifying for those 4-inch heels.

And when I speak of terrifying, it brings my mind back to the speech in the House last Thursday by the former deputy leader of the opposition, the member from Athabasca. The member feels that this government should get with the program. I guess the program is to run deficits such as our neighbours to the west — who he says is good government — a \$6 billion shortfall in the next two years. And come to think of it, you know, that's pretty close to the \$5.5 billion program that they had, so I could really see why it would be good government in his mind.

During the member's speech, he took time out to visit some sort of galaxy of revisionist history. He spoke of the crushing deficit that stopped the NDP government from providing good government during their 16-year reign. And without a doubt the deficit . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, to ask leave to introduce guests.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — Carried. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Greystone.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for this opportunity to introduce guests. All have been here in the legislature this afternoon. They are working with dietitians of Saskatchewan. We have Rylan Haas. He's with the Saskatoon Health Region, and he's a dietitian there. Stacey Wiens from North Battleford is also a dietitian. Lana Moore, the registrar of the Saskatchewan Dietitians Association, in from Rosetown. We have Tammy Ives, dietitian with Dietitians of Canada, and she's also from Saskatoon. Roseann Nasser from a very well-known family here within the province works for the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region and is also a dietitian. And Candace Kopek with Sun Country out of Weyburn and is also a dietitian.

I would ask all members of the Assembly to join me and

welcome these individuals to their legislature and offer our thanks for their important work regarding the health and happiness of people right across the province.

[20:00]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — I recognize the member for Melfort. I recognize the member for Melfort.

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. Phillips: — It was worth saying twice. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was just speaking about the member from Athabasca. And he spoke of the crushing deficit that had stopped the NDP government from being good government during their 16-year reign.

And as I was saying without a doubt that the deficit was large. However the method used to lower the deficit was to close 52 hospitals, to break legal agreements with farmers, to cut routine maintenance of highways, of schools, of what remained of our health care system. They slashed money to municipalities. They continued to underfund seniors, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They whacked and slashed everything in sight, and they hacked it too.

I would suggest that they didn't control the deficit. It was the people of Saskatchewan that saw the infrastructure crumbling before our very eyes, who saw monster tax increases and who saw a government that could not and would not build an economy. That government's idea of economic development was to sue the federal government for more equalization.

But the member said, well it was all the deficit. Well let's look at the record. In 1998 the government debt was \$8.1 billion. By 2001, 2002, they had pared the deficit down to \$7.5 billion. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's pretty good. They brought it down \$600 million. Not bad. However during the period between 2001 and 2006, they managed to raise the deficit on two different occasions, finally lowering it a little bit. At the same time, they were collecting hundreds of millions of dollars in equalization payments. In fact they were getting paid from the have provinces in Canada a total of over \$4 billion in their 16 years. That's how they fought the deficit: \$4 billion in equalization.

You know, so often . . . Well let's go on to what happened after that. The \$7.2 billion debt was left to the Saskatchewan Party in 2007. It's been reduced down to \$3.8 billion today with even more to drop in the near future. This has been done while we've been increasing funds to municipalities by 108 per cent. We've been increasing the seniors' income program plan from \$90 per

month, \$90 per month to \$250 per month, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have been putting \$2 billion into highways. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's more. There's so much more.

You see, Mr. Speaker, the opposition always followed the creed that Saskatchewan needs help. We don't need help. Somehow they feel that we just can't measure up. And that fascinates me because where does that come from? But let's look at some recent examples and that famous quote of their last leader that they would rather have unnamed: Saskatchewan is a wee province, and the province will always be in and out of equalization. This province with this potash, with this agriculture, with this oil, diamonds, uranium, and we're going to be in and out of equalization. I think not. But they throw up their hands, and they say that's not us. No, no, that's that guy who was out of here on election night. Wasn't us.

But yet we hear that the opposition talked about the education system. We're in a ranking; we're running sixth and seventh. We have excellent teachers. It can't be our teachers. It can't be our students. So it needs a little tinkering with the system. But no, that can't be done. Their answer is just throw another boatload of money at it and that'll do it.

Or how about their national leader? This is fun. If the Canadian dollar is equal to the American dollar, that's got to be some sort of disease caused by Western Canada, that our business and our workers cannot compete if the dollars are at equal value. I think not. I think they're wrong, that we can compete any day, any time, and we'll prove that.

The negative nine across the House howl in distress at the notion of looking for efficiencies in health care. Of course they do. Just close them. That will be the answer. Don't have to look for efficiencies.

And I hope you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will forgive us if we burst out laughing when they talk about long-term care beds, a need that this government in this budget is working very hard to catch up on. But you see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the opposition closed 1,600 long-term care beds. Sixteen hundred. That will cost this government around \$800 million to catch up on that. They talk about a credit card debt. We're paying the credit card off that they left.

After all, who knew that the baby boomers would be coming along? Like it seems to me in the last maybe 40 years we saw that coming, 50 years. They closed 1,600 beds. And they did the same thing with schools. They did the same thing with hospitals and highways. And it's really, really very sad.

This year alone this government will be spending \$800 million on the infrastructure in Saskatchewan, actually 847.5. An incredible amount again this year. But we are paying off the credit card debt that they talk about that they ran up during their 2001 to 2006 . . . And we're still trying to catch up. And I must admit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, after only 16 months in the legislature, I still wonder why things happen.

Last week in the question period, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, second in command of the negative nine, asked a question about education finance. And then instead of listening to the answer, he heckled, "And you changed the start of the

school year." On the budget, really? He wants to go there? I don't think so. I hope that I'm never in this House long enough that I understand everything that comes from the negative nine. I'm proud of this province. I'm proud of our people.

I was at a STARS gala in Melfort on Saturday evening. We haven't got the final figures yet, but they raised a tremendous amount of money for the STARS program. And it's what we do. It's what Saskatchewan people do. And we don't need the negative nine chewing away at our pride because they have done that too many times in the past.

But as I conclude my statement, I am very proud of this budget. Is it all things to all people? No. Can it be? No. But it is a budget that helps many people. It helps grow the population. It helps to grow business. And the Saskatchewan people have probably what will be unique in all of Canada — a balanced budget.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this budget with pride, and I will be voting against the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Tochor): — Point of order. I believe the member has to be sitting at her desk in order to speak in the Chamber. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure this evening to rise and speak to the budget that was just introduced last week and certainly speak in favour of the proposed amendment that our party's put forward. It certainly is an amendment that needs to be considered seriously because there's a number of deficiencies in the budget. And I'll take a few minutes at this point just to provide some of my comments on the recent budget that we heard.

First and foremost, like many of my colleagues have been doing, I'd like to just take this opportunity to say a few words of thanks to some people that are important to me. And first of all is to my son Sam who's sitting at home, often spending a lot of nights on his own while I'm here in Regina. And he's been very supportive and not very demanding. So for a 17-year-old, I think he's a pretty good kid. And he's not all that interested in politics, but he certainly is supportive of what I'm doing and curious about sort of the goings on and what's happening here in the legislature. So I want to thank him for being patient and understanding.

And certainly I think I'm very fortunate to have probably two of the best exes that a woman could have. I have very supportive ex-partners who are helping out on the home front and making sure that Sam's needs are taken care of. So I want to thank them as well because they're just certainly very . . . They're good guys, and they are helping keeping things going at home. As many of my colleagues have indicated, you know, we don't do this alone. We are supported.

And next up of course is my good friends that are there for me when I need them, and in particular, the friends that support me in the cultural activities I'm involved in. As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm very interested in the music world, and certainly being able to play music with my friends is one of my great pleasures and certainly gives a different perspective on

what's going on here in the House.

So for example on Saturday night I was able to play with a couple friends at a fundraiser for my constituency. And we had a lot of people come out, and we had people with kids . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I hear from the Minister of the Environment he wasn't invited. Well certainly next year we'll make sure he's on the list, and he can come and dance. I will make a point of that, to ensure that he can come and share some of the celebrations when we get together with friends and we celebrate community and we celebrate our kids and our future and certainly connecting with all generations within the party. So those kinds of opportunities remind me of why I am here and what's important, and it is being able to have a community where we support each other and look after each other.

Saskatoon Nutana is a great constituency, and I just want take a couple minutes to acknowledge the people that live in my constituency and why I live there and why I chose to live there almost 30 years ago now, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I settled in Saskatoon Nutana largely because of the arts community and the vibrant culture that exists right on Broadway Avenue which is the heart of Saskatoon, and it's the heart of my constituency. It's a wonderful place to be able to live within walking distance of. And I don't spend, you know, five minutes on the street on Broadway, and I run into many people I know, people within the community that are very keenly observant of what goes on here in the legislature, what goes on within our party, and what goes on within the province.

So there's a lot of really sharp people in Saskatoon Nutana and a lot of really talented people. I often refer to my constituency as a triple-A constituency, and in particular we have a lot of artists; we have a lot of academics, and we have a lot of activists. And sometimes they're all three.

There's some really, really involved people in our community who are taking on issues well beyond the boundaries of the constituency or the city or even the province. There's people involved in world issues, in justice issues. There's people that are heavily involved in all kinds of political movements. There are several award-winning novelists and poets within my community. And, of course, with the University of Saskatchewan being so close, there's a number of academics.

So it's such an honour to be able to represent such a vibrant and diverse community and one that really, really cares about what goes on here in the province, here in the legislature. And those are the people I hear from regularly, as I say, walking down Broadway Avenue or attending any of the many cultural events that occur within the city. And I have to say that I want to connect with them as best I can. And that's what I try to do in my role as their MLA and certainly look to them for advice and guidance, because there's some incredibly intelligent, articulate, caring individuals within my constituency that are there to provide assistance and support when needed.

So again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a real pleasure to be able to represent . . . More than a pleasure. It's an absolute honour to be able to represent those folks that live in Saskatoon Nutana.

[20:15]

Some of the things I hear about more than others in my riding are, there's two issues in particular, and one is the issues seniors are facing in my riding and the other is generally lower income people that are having difficulty with housing. And that's one of the things I want to speak to as I get into the details on the budget, is just the simple oversight and lack of attention that this government pays to the needs of those people within our city and within our province.

Certainly, you know, we hear for example the member for Melfort going on about long-term care and the successes of this government in long-term care. I would suggest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's not quite accurate. And indeed we'll want to address that in a couple of minutes.

Also what's missing I think in this budget is any sort of realistic rental housing alternatives for people who are struggling. This government seems to pay more attention to people who can afford to buy their own homes, and that's simply cutting out a large number of people within our population that are not able to do those kinds of . . . to buy their own home. And to not have alternatives and release the pressure on the housing market in some comprehensive and meaningful way means people will continue to suffer. They will continue on fixed incomes to see more and more of their monthly income devoted to housing pressures and rental pressures. And the sad result of that is that they will have less and less available for quality of life, for simple things like buying food, medication, clothing. And there's a lot of people that are really struggling in Saskatoon Nutana. And I know throughout the city and in a lot of the urban areas, this is a real issue for a lot of people.

Now when I look at the highlights of the budget in the news release that the government released, there are a couple of things that I think really make a lot of sense and I'll just mention those briefly. First off is as always, and I said this last year in my comments, we believe that the SAID program is one that's of great value and great importance to the people of Saskatchewan, and so any support that this government adds to the SAID program is one that I personally think is important and commend. As always, given that our role here is to hold the government to account, it would be I think always appreciated to see more and more support for a program like SAID.

Another area that I'm pleased to see support from this government in is the support for women's shelters. And I know the member from Melfort who spoke to the fact that this government is opening a new transition house in Melfort, that's a very, very important part of this budget and I think one that needs to be commended. Also the extension to the P.A. [Prince Albert] YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association], again these beds are really, really, critically important.

And I always think of my friend Heather Pocock who's worked in this area for probably close to 30 years now in women's shelter issues. And she currently works with the sexual assault services of Saskatoon doing some really important work in children's education, grade 5 program with a puppet show where they take it to the schools and it's teaching children how to be aware of . . . how to deal with the situation when they find themselves in where they're being abused, sexually abused. And the program is called Free to Be Me and it's a really positive message for those children. And the work that's being

done by sexual assault services in that area is incredible, and this is becoming more and more popular in schools to the point where I think Heather's basically run off her feet right now. I think she's done over 80 schools since January on this program. And what happens is when these kids are empowered to realize they have a voice, they actually do report, and it has provided that kind of outlet and safety for children who are living through the horrors of sexual abuse at home.

And she also worked at Interval House in Saskatoon for many, many years, and I just see the toll it takes on the people who work there when they see these women coming in in incredibly dire and dangerous circumstances, who have nowhere else to go. And as my colleague from Saskatoon Centre spoke about this earlier, the sad part of this is that we need more beds, that the need seems to be increasing. And if we could only see a situation where we needed less beds, then rather than having to expand these programs that we'd see a decrease, that would be the goal, I think, a real celebration for our province and for the women in this province and men and children who live with the horrors of abuse.

So those kinds of programs are ones that we will always support and encourage and hope that this government continues to maintain and support. As I said earlier, you know, as our role as holding this government to account, we would like to see even more support for those types of things but are always encouraged by the positive moves that have been made in that area. So that's something we do appreciate.

There's a number of particular areas I wanted to address tonight in my comments. There's just a few things I want to touch on and different areas that are highlighted in the budget. Obviously there is a lot of detail in a budget like this, and as we go through the estimates we will have opportunities to ask a few more questions from the government as to the changes and the decisions that have been made with regards to this year's budget.

But first of all in terms of employment training, and particularly for First Nations, this is something we know that has been identified by people like Eric Howe who's indicated the critical importance of ensuring that First Nations people have the proper education and are able to engage meaningfully in our society and in the workforce in Saskatchewan. And his report indicated that if we were to employ First Nations at the same rate as Alberta and Manitoba, we would increase provincial employment by almost 6,000 employees and grow that number as much as possible. So we're lagging even behind Alberta and Manitoba, our neighbours.

So what is it? Why is that happening? Why can't we engage more First Nations people in the workforce? I think this is a very serious question that this government has skirted around but hasn't been able to successfully deal with it, and we continue to challenge this government to take that very, very seriously.

There doesn't seem to be any new ideas or solutions in this budget to ensure that there is opportunities for everyone in Saskatchewan and that we need to see First Nations and Métis people given the opportunity to be trained and get into the workforce. We know that there was an announcement from the

joint task force on improving education and employment outcomes for First Nations and Métis people. We saw the announcement last year. We're still waiting for the initiatives on what's going to happen with that task force. It's been impending for some time now. So it's hard to provide comment on that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when there isn't anything coming out of that task force. We are promised, keep being promised that the report is forthcoming. So again, we're waiting to see how that's going to turn out.

The government is trumpeting their increase of 5 per cent for the First Nations and northern forest protection workers, but really what we're seeing is an increase of \$100,000. So it depends on how you characterize a lot of these increases, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we see percentages being used when the amounts are small, or we would be seeing amounts being used when they look impressive. But really I think if we were . . . I'd like to be able to compare all of these increases against the increase on population. Because in my view, a 10 per cent increase is meaningless if the population's growing 20 per cent. And so I think a lot of these numbers are . . . What we see happening is a lot of spin, and I think, you know, that certainly we're going to be working hard in the committees to ensure that, under the estimates process, that these are real increases and not just shifting numbers so that the percentages look good.

We see a cut of 50 per cent, for example, to the First Nation and Métis Consultation and Participation Fund — we'll be asking questions about that in estimates — and even almost a \$1 million cut to the First Nations and Métis engagement. So it's hard to understand how that is seen as progress.

And we all know that until all of us are prospering in this province, we haven't succeeded. And there are many, many people being left behind and falling through the cracks. And you've heard us say that before, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we'll continue to say it because it's true. And prosperity is not for . . . if it's not for everyone, it's really not for anyone. And we need to really take a serious look, and I don't see that in this budget. I don't see this government really taking a serious look at these issues.

Even from the Saskatchewan School Board Association we see a comment on this budget saying that only 30 per cent of Aboriginal students are graduating from high school in Saskatchewan. And what this government announced in the budget, and this is from the Saskatchewan School Board Association president Jane Foord, is that the increases here amount to 0.001 per cent of the total education budget. So it's one one-thousandth of the total education budget. And she said it's “. . . simply unacceptable if the goal of eliminating the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student achievement gap is to be realized.”

So yes, there's increases in education, but they're unacceptable. It's not enough, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we need to find a way to make those changes real so that we can start seeing those numbers for First Nations more reflective of what our prosperous society should show.

In terms of advanced education, we see this government forcing debt and tough decisions onto our post-secondary schools. They're getting less funding than they need and much, much,

much less funding than they asked for. Today another 100 employees are being cut from the University of Saskatchewan and this is in addition to other cuts. We see a broken promise from the Sask Party forcing U of S [University of Saskatchewan] to max out its debt limits so that they can finish the construction and completion of the Health Sciences Building. We see tuition going up at a time when students are already dealing with, as I indicated earlier, very high costs of living including very high rent. So until there is some relief for students in terms of rent, it's really impossible for many students to survive, given another tuition hike.

So you know, there's a certain element of stubbornness here. We see a government refusing to pay for the construction of the Health Sciences Building, starting along the path to pay for it and then just saying, oh we don't feel like finishing this so we're going to just ask you guys to take on that debt, forcing the U of S board of governors into a very awkward situation. And then now what we see as a result of that is cuts in programs, cuts in staff, deep cuts in administrative supports. And I think the sad thing is that learning is the ultimate loser here.

I look at, you know . . . I'm a big fan of a liberal education I guess, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I'm very proud of my oldest son, Zachary, who's taking a course right now in liberal arts at Concordia University in Montreal. And when he was home at Christmas, it was just fascinating to see how his little brain is absorbing all these things he's learning and reading. Actually, it's not a little brain; he's got a fairly big brain.

But what he's doing is he's learning literature. He's learning philosophy. He's learning art history. And these are synthesized classes where he's being put to question guys like Plato and Socrates. He's thinking about what they're saying and what they said at the time and how that applies to issues of today. And certainly we get into all kinds of really difficult and tough conversations about women's rights, about what is democracy. And he's watching with interest the movements like Idle No More and the Occupy movement. And it's just this beautiful young 19-, 20-year-old brain that's trying to figure the world out.

And I'm just so pleased that he has the opportunity to take a liberal arts education to sort of expand his ideas. And he's not focused yet on the big job at the end of the degree or the big salary that's going to come about. That's not of interest to him at this point. I know that at some point I hope he will find gainful employment, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But right now the learning that he's encountering as a young man is going to last him his whole life. And he will continue to question, and I think that's the most important thing that any education can do, is give an individual an ability to question and always seek better.

And unfortunately when universities are being forced to focus strictly on the bottom line and have cuts in those kinds of programs where young minds are challenged to expand, I think it's really a sad state, especially in what we hear so much about as a prosperous economy that we are living in right now. So it's a shortfall that concerns me, and I would certainly encourage the government to take a better look at these kinds of things in the advanced education area for sure.

We know that the increases that they are receiving — and the government has talked about that — they're there, but it's clear from the universities' perspective it's not enough. We see increases of 2 per cent where we know universities need increases of around 5 just to maintain the status quo. So the cuts are deep. I mean, the increases are cuts in a certain sense. And that's really a difficult situation to put in, put the universities and the other advanced education institutions.

[20:30]

So some of the quotes that we're hearing from in response to the budget that came out last week for . . . And these are careful statements by these people because they understand, you know, you don't bite the hand that feeds you. But for example the president of the University of Regina said last week:

This isn't the increase we were looking for. We've been looking for efficiencies though for the last three years and we'll continue to do so. It's going to be a challenge, but I think we have the same challenge the province has.

So universities understand that they have to look for efficiencies, but what we know is the efficiencies in this case mean cuts, staff layoffs, and tuition hikes. So those are things that in such a prosperous time is a bit puzzling to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how it is that this government cannot keep pace with the growth in the province by supporting growth in our important institutions like advanced education.

Another area I want to make a few comments on is in agriculture. We see a couple of interesting comments in the agriculture . . . separate pages in the Estimates: a large budget reduction for agriculture this year, 21 million. And we see that much of that comes from regional services. So that's a question I'm going to follow up in estimates, Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$11 million from regional services. So where are these government programs . . . What cuts are actually happening there? What kind of services are going to be lost as a result of this cut?

Something, for example, that was very interesting to me: 31 positions are being cut from the Livestock Services Revolving Fund, which means there's only going to be 10 people left because 31 staff have been cut. This is an important program for producers, and they deal with all kinds of fees and they collect fees for livestock brand inspection, for pesticide applicator licences and other provincial services. All these fees are going up, and yet we know that the government is cutting services. There's services for the Cattle Marketing Deductions Fund, and even the Horned Cattle Fund, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So we have more questions, certainly at the estimates stage, to find out exactly what's going on here.

I think one thing that does make a lot of sense is an increase in spending for irrigation bridge rehabilitation, and that's to support the long-term growth of irrigation in the province. And indeed as we see extreme weather becoming more and more of the norm here in Saskatchewan, the chance of drought as we see drought happening in the central United States in the last year and perhaps again this year — they're forecasting that — so we know that irrigation is going to become more and more important. And certainly water security and all the issues that are related with climate change are going to have more and

more of an impact. So we need to see irrigation supported and see long-term growth in irrigation. So that is something that we could support again. I'm not sure if 1 million is going to be enough, but at least it's a move in the right direction for the support for irrigation.

We also know that there's a whole lot of changes in AgriStability and AgriInvest. And we're looking to see what's going to come out of the Growing Forward 2 program. Unfortunately there's no detail on that right now. There's some indication from the ministry that there will be an additional \$25 million in the federal-provincial framework from the previous framework.

So we know that that's coming, but we see a decrease in AgriStability of \$52.4 million. So here we have the minister who came out last fall and indicated his disappointment with the federal government for the deep cuts that they are inflicting upon agriculture, and in particular the AgriStability program, and yet he himself had already agreed to the terms of that agreement a month before he came out and made that announcement. So it's not really clear to me what it was he did to support Saskatchewan producers when the federal minister announced that they weren't going to support. And certainly he didn't . . . He said he was disappointed, but we don't see exactly any large scale effort or, you know, even a vocal sort of outrage other than one comment he made to the media in the House here last fall. So we're not sure where this government is with the federal government.

We see the federal Agriculture minister really going after farmers in a big way, especially last year in the budget, in the 2012 budget. And we see the cancellation of the excellent community pastures management program. We see the failure to continue support for the tree nursery in Indian Head, and this is another very successful program that has helped thousands of farmers over the years across the Prairies. We don't see any initiative on the part of this government to take responsibilities for those programs to ensure that they continue to provide those services to the agricultural community that is using them.

And I think the bottom line of this is something that will eventually show that this was a poor decision on the part of this government, that the community pasture program — and I'm talking about a bottom line that includes the social and environmental impacts on these lands if they are privatized, as this minister seems very intent on doing — time will reflect poorly on that decision because we know that the management of these pastures has been critical to the success of the biodiversity in those pastures, as well as the protection of endangered species, but also for the farmers themselves.

And we find this minister often saying he's going to listen to the patrons and that the patrons are the best stewards of the land. In the case of the community pastures, what the minister has failed to point out is that the patrons drop their cows off, and they're actually managed by the managers. They drop the cows off in the spring; they pick them up in the fall. They call it cow daycare. And what happens is that they don't actually manage the land. They drop the cows off, and then the management is taken care of by the pasture manager. So that's something this minister hasn't pointed out and hasn't seemed to appreciate: the importance of the role of the manager for those

particular pastures and the reasons why they were created in the first place.

The other thing is we see at least this ministry has the ability to put some money aside for crop insurance. This minister understands that things can go wrong as far as crops go. We don't see that when it comes to planning for flooding in the provincial budget. And indeed we don't see any sort of planning at all in the budget for emergency flooding, despite the fact that we know that there are record snowfall in a number of areas here in Saskatchewan. So we see the crop insurance increase is, well a large increase, and that's something I think that producers appreciate.

What's interesting in the crop insurance increases is that there's now an opportunity for private reinsurance and for a crop insurance program to stabilize the premiums. And I would think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a program that's probably available . . . it's not available to all farmers because it's only available to those who can best afford it. And so it's good for them that they have the resources available to afford it, but it's not a program that will be available for all producers. So it seems to be a special carrot for those who can actually afford to do that, but my concern is for those who can't afford it and that their level of insurance won't be quite the same.

Moving on to education, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We see a number of issues on the education front. And certainly my colleagues have been raising concerns about that and we will be looking at more questions on the thinking behind the education portion in the budget.

Again there's way more students now enrolled in schools as a result of the growth in the province — 4,500 more students enrolled in 2012 and 2013. We get 40 portable classrooms. So if you want to do the math, we're looking at one new classroom for every 115 new students.

And we have a minister who is not able to tell us what he thinks the maximum class size should be. Certainly we see a ministry that is able to tell us they need more minutes in the day, they need to ensure that school doesn't start until after the Labour Day weekend, and they also need standardized testing in order to measure performance. So those are three areas where this government and ministry's been very active in its opinions on education.

But when we asked the minister whether or not he has an opinion on classroom size, no, he walks away from that. He's not interested at all in giving us an opinion on that, despite the fact that when we ask about standardized testing there seems to be no coherent response from that ministry and from the minister in terms of why we need to spend that money on standardized testing. Millions of dollars are going to pay for this testing instead of teaching, and we see \$6 million being allocated in the budget for standardized testing.

We're also seeing a move on the part of the Sask Party to move out of funding and building schools out of the provincial and public funds. And they're using . . . you've heard much from us in the last few days about the use of public-private partnerships for school constructions. This is not an area that we feel comfortable about because we know from the evidence that's

out there that these are expensive in the long term.

And when we talk about a credit card budget, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we're talking about, is using these types of programs to defer debt. And it's clearly an effort on the part of this government to remove that debt from the now and put it into the future. And it's like the member from Regina Walsh Acres' new child that's coming along. That child will be the one that's responsible for this debt. It won't be dealt with by this generation. It will be next generation's. That's short-sighted. It's unfortunate.

And there seems to be a stubborn streak in the Sask Party that insists that this is the way to go when there are other areas which needs a lot more attention, for example, school supports. There has been no restoration of the more than 300 educational assistants that the Sask Party has taken out of the classrooms. This has a direct impact on students and on families, and there's just an insistence that this was necessary. And we don't see any sort of revisiting that and recognizing that there was a mistake made, and the students continue to suffer.

As I indicated earlier, only 30 per cent of Aboriginal students in Saskatchewan graduate from high school. There's only a fraction of the amount, less than one thousandth of a per cent, is being put into solving that problem. And there's no plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So there's concerns in the education front, and I know other of my colleagues will be commenting on this as well. But I think this is one of the areas where this government had an opportunity to shine, and they basically dropped the ball.

And I know there's comments that we've received from the Saskatchewan School Boards Association and the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, which is not always two groups that you will hear on the same side of the page, Mr. Speaker. So I'm not going to go into their quotes because other of my colleagues have quoted those quotes already. But the concerns are there, and we want to make sure that we keep pushing the spotlight on these kinds of issues.

Another area that I think has been critically overlooked, and that's the environment. We see cuts again to the environment, Mr. Speaker, cut again, the whole budget; 2.6 million is gone. We see climate change, Mr. Deputy Speaker, cut by 20 per cent. So what was seen as a successful program, the go green program, has basically been decimated. There was some talk a couple years ago about creating a climate change institution. There's no mention of that whatsoever now. We see 56 staff cut from the ministry. The message there is that the environment is not important. And if this minister is supporting those kinds of cuts, he's obviously not interested in making progress in the environmental area. For example Fish and Wildlife Development Fund staff has been cut by more than half, from 15 down to 7. It's a deep cut to that one particular program when we see cuts all over the place.

We see \$3.2 million that was allocated for municipal environmental protection eliminated. It's gone. And we know that this municipal environmental protection was responsible for protecting people through the regulation of municipal and industrial development. It's just simply gone.

Wildfire management has been cut 4.5 million, and it was cut 3.8 million last year. So those are some deep cuts that the Ministry of the Environment has sustained. And we live in a world where we know environmental issues are going to have more and more of an impact on us, both economically because of the things that we see like extreme fluctuations in weather . . . And we don't see any initiative on the part of this ministry to make positive change in that area.

We also see an increase in \$15.5 million for the Water Security Agency, and it's not exactly clear why this increase is there. So we will be asking questions in estimates about what that grant is for and what it's meant to do.

[20:45]

But beyond that, the one area in funding where there is research that I think is a good move, but again not nearly enough, is in the boreal caribou research project. We have outstanding international commitments there. We have national commitments there that haven't been met. And so this seems to be a start, but we're starting with \$250,000 in funding. So we need to go a lot further than that. \$250,000 is a good start and it's a good . . . It's important for the government to get involved in this project because we have obligations to do so, and I know that the people involved in that project have been calling for support for a long time. So finally there's some support there. I will be talking to people involved in that project to see whether they think that's enough support or whether there's still outstanding obligations that this ministry needs to pay attention to.

In terms of health, we see a 2.3 per cent increase, and we know that that simply is not going to even hold the line, Mr. Speaker.

One of the biggest concerns, and I mentioned this earlier, is in the lack of support for long-term care. We see the same announcement every year about long-term care projects. All 11 of the long-term care projects that are listed in this budget were announced in 2009. So this is simply a recycling of announcements that were made in the past, and we don't think that that's supportive at all of the desperate need of long-term care that we have.

In fact a lot of the calls I get in my constituency office are often from children of seniors, so adults who are looking after their elderly parents, and the only way they can get their parent into long-term care is through the hospitals, by taking them in to emergency. And they know there's a way to work the system. People have figured out a way to work the system. But that simply is appalling actually, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that people have to figure out how to work the system so that their loved ones can be looked after in a proper long-term care facility. This simply isn't enough, and by recycling these announcements, it puts on an aura of this government that they're actually looking after long-term care. But until we see those beds, Mr. Speaker, we know that this government has a long, long way to go.

There's all kinds of staff being cut in health. We do see an increase in Central Services spending of 550 million. And we don't know for sure, but we're suspicious that that might be because there's now two ministers instead of one in the area. So

we want to ask more questions about that.

Also we see that a promised hospital from years ago in North Battleford is now going to be done through a public-private partnership. Last year there was a promise from this government to allocate \$100 million in this year's budget to build that hospital. That's another broken promise of this government, Mr. Speaker. That money has not been allocated, and instead we see this government turning to the short-term P3 [public-private partnership] funding model instead of dealing with the need and the public funds to support this facility and the people of North Battleford for their health care needs.

The only other area in terms of health I want to mention, well there's a couple more points. One is where is . . . What's really missing in this budget is the support in the North. Now we know that there's a report that indicates a desperate need for more long-term care in the North, and this government has simply ignored that report. The only planned northern long-term care facility from the 2009 announcements has been cancelled because the RM cannot afford its share of the funding. Now, Mr. Speaker, again this is a desperate need in an area that's important for our province, and for whatever reason this government has ignored that need.

We can go to Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker. We see this government here refusing to listen to the people of Moose Jaw. They're replacing the hospital, but it's a third smaller than the existing one. And as we indicated a couple weeks ago, it will not include the hyperbaric chamber, the only one of its kind in Saskatchewan. We're going to lose . . . The Moose Jaw people are not happy at all. They've been signing petitions by the thousands. And I think that those thousands of people are wanting to be heard, but we're not sure that the members from Moose Jaw are paying attention at all. I think they're probably out of touch completely with what the people of Moose Jaw really want.

I turn to Highways and Infrastructure. Again we see the push to use public-private partnerships to build highways. This is definitely a deviation from the norm, and again I think it's just another opportunity for this government to defer debt because we won't have ownership of these, the things like the Regina southeast bypass, and we know that there's already lawsuits associated with that particular project. And if they're going to look to private partnerships to support and fund these things, we know that it's a buy now, pay later scheme. This is the credit card budget of 2013, Mr. Speaker.

We're seeing a quote from the government about heavy preservation of highways of \$86.3 million which will include at least 280 kilometres of highways, and we know that 280 kilometres is less than point zero three per cent, so point zero three per cent of Saskatchewan's asphalt roads. So given all the resources that this government has and seems intent on burning through, why can't they do more for the highways, Mr. Speaker? We're going to keep pushing on that and asking questions on that.

Finally, the last area I want to speak to tonight is on the North. And this is probably the more glaring omission from this budget. It's been completely ignored. We know that there is no long-term care for the people in the North. There's no

long-term care for the people of the North. There's nothing specifically for housing in the North and nothing to improve damaged or inadequate highways. Simply nothing.

There's a report from 2010 that La Ronge alone needs 46 long-term care beds. The community has 16. When this issue was raised in November last year, the minister said it will take time to add the number of long-term care beds needed in the province. Well the question is, Mr. Speaker, how much time? How much more time does this government need? There's nothing in this budget for long-term care beds for people in the North.

Wollaston Lake, we know there was a promise by this government to build an all-season road to that community. This government has done nothing to construct that road. Members from Hatched Lake First Nation came to the legislature in October. The Sask Party government has still refused to build the road, and there is nothing in this budget to build it. And that's why this First Nation has been forced to extraordinary measures to deal now with private companies to build the road which is going to cost close to \$100 million.

This government refused to restore the fish freight subsidy that was eliminated in last year's budget. And this has really hurt the commercial fishing industry and put a number of First Nations jobs at risk. So when we hear this government talk about First Nations jobs and the creation of those, we know that there's some empty promises there because we see there's no support whatsoever for things like the fish freight subsidy which enables First Nations people to continue living the lifestyles of their traditional culture, Mr. Speaker. So there's obviously a lot of work that's needed.

And when we look at First Nations employment, we know that there are a large percentage of First Nations live in the southern part of the province. And as FSIN Chief Perry Bellegarde indicated, the budget does not focus on trying to get more First Nations people working in the province in Treaty 6 area, Treaty 4 area. Why take a plane to Ireland, Bellegarde asks. The fastest growing segment of Saskatchewan's population are indigenous peoples, so invest in that segment. That's the key thing.

So we see just a complete lack of foresight in terms of how to approach the issue of engaging First Nations and finding meaningful employment, ensuring that the training is there and not just for mining jobs, Mr. Speaker. That's important, but First Nations need to be engaged in all sectors of our economy — in agriculture, in health care, in education, in all sorts of areas — and not just mining. So I think this government talks about its achievement there. I think they're short-sighted, and it's a very narrow aspect of the labour force and of the professional development of professions in the province. And I think there's just a whole lot more needed in that area. And I think it's important to leave my comments on the note of First Nation engagement and bringing First Nations people in a meaningful way into the lifestyle that many non-First Nations peoples are enjoying, like ourselves for example.

And so we need to see more of an effort from that from this government, and sadly it's not there. So at this point, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to support the amendment that was introduced by my colleague last week. I think it's a very well-written

amendment. I think one that bears considerable attention by the members opposite. I think they need to take time to carefully reflect on the intent of that amendment and take it seriously. They quickly ridiculed it without even having an opportunity to actually stop and think about it a little bit, Mr. Speaker.

And so I'm hoping that as we go through this debate, they'll start to see the wisdom in that amendment and they may actually consider supporting the amendment at some point. So I will speak in favour of the amendment and certainly will not support the budget as it now stands. Thank you.

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

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. Our crowd's quite lively here this evening, Mr. Speaker, as we approach the 9 o'clock hour. It is my pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to rise in my place today and join in on the budget debate, the sixth consecutive balanced budget brought down by this government, Mr. Speaker. I want to congratulate the Minister of Finance, the member from Canora-Pelly, for delivering this balanced budget.

But along with the Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker, I also want to take a couple of minutes and recognize those colleagues on this side of the aisle that serve on Treasury Board. Having served on Treasury Board myself, Mr. Speaker, through a budget process, through a budget cycle, I know the long hours that those members put in working on a provincial budget. And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, having sat through those long hours as we prepared the provincial budget, it is a dedicated and worthy endeavour on behalf of the members on this side of the aisle, Mr. Speaker, that serve on Treasury Board, and I want to take my hat off to those members as well, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as well I want to pay tribute to the officials, the members of our professional civil service that serve the public of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. I want to point out that the officials in the Finance ministry who work alongside the Minister of Finance spend some long hours in developing the provincial budget and getting things in order for the delivery to the Assembly. As well, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out the officials that work with each of the individual ministers and their ministries as they go before Treasury Board to present their individual budgets and have to work alongside the treasury board analysts and the members of the Ministry of Finance in developing the provincial budget, Mr. Speaker, and take my hat off to how well served the people of Saskatchewan are by our professional civil service here in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a couple of minutes as well and just point out the people of Regina Northeast, my constituents, the people that afforded me the great opportunity to come and serve in the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan back in November of 2011 on that historic election. Mr. Speaker, I spent a lot of time, as I talked about this last year during the provincial budget debate, the amount of time I spent in Regina Northeast in door knocking and meeting the people of Regina Northeast at their doorsteps — whether it be in their business or at their home — and listening to their concerns, Mr. Speaker.

Just this past Sunday I had the opportunity to attend an event in

the Glencairn Community Centre called Community Connections, Mr. Speaker. I know my colleague from Regina Dewdney was there to bring greetings on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan. It's a cultural community centre that bisects the constituencies of Regina Dewdney and Regina Northeast, Mr. Speaker. I had the opportunity to attend this event that is put on by some volunteers. And the idea behind it is to bring together newcomers to our province, Mr. Speaker, not only newcomers to our province but indeed, in a lot of cases, newcomers to Canada from throughout the world.

And it's an opportunity for them to gather, Mr. Speaker, in a community hall and talk about their experiences in coming to Canada, to celebrate their own individual cultures, to learn from each other, to share some refreshments and some foods from their homelands, Mr. Speaker. And I can tell you that these individuals have embraced living in this province despite the fact we're now towards the end of March and we've still got 6 feet of snow out here in the capital city.

These people have moved to Saskatchewan. They're taking up jobs in Saskatchewan. They're contributing to our cultural mosaic not only in the city of Regina, Mr. Speaker, but indeed the province of Saskatchewan. And I take my hat off to Councillor John Findura who's been active in that area in organizing that particular event, Mr. Speaker, and the volunteers that work with him.

I had the opportunity to attend the event, as I indicated. I met a lot of individuals there, Mr. Speaker, who thanked me and wanted to thank the Premier and thank this government for the opportunities that have been afforded them as they move to this province and take up jobs and reside with their families and start building their lives, Mr. Speaker.

I also had a number of individuals come up to me during that event and congratulate me, Mr. Speaker. They wanted me to pass on the congratulations to the Minister of Finance and to the Premier for this balanced budget. They wanted to tell me about how they appreciate the fact that the province is being run in such a fiscally responsible manner, Mr. Speaker. And I said I would definitely pass on that information to the Premier and to the Minister of Finance and again take my hat off to the Minister of Finance.

[21:00]

Mr. Speaker, one of the things I experienced when I was door knocking a couple years ago, 18 months ago or so during the election of November of 2011 and the lead-up to that election, as I talked to the men and women and the residents of Regina Northeast, was they kept asking me questions as to why the official opposition, the NDP, were being so negative about everything here in the province of Saskatchewan, why they continued to just run down the province of Saskatchewan with their former leader, Mr. Lingenfelter, Mr. Speaker. They kept asking me, why can't they ever say anything positive about the province of Saskatchewan?

And now, Mr. Speaker, now what I hear from the people of Saskatchewan is they continue to ask me, when we look at a balanced budget like this, the sixth consecutive balanced budget, the only balanced budget presented last year in the

Dominion of Canada, Mr. Speaker, now people say to me, all we ever hear from the NDP is it's not enough. It's not enough.

I just heard the member from Saskatoon Nutana give her budget speech, Mr. Speaker, and on virtually every area of the budget, on virtually every area of the budget, Mr. Speaker, she talked about the fact we need more there. We need to have more resources put there. There is not enough being spent there, Mr. Speaker.

There is eleven and one-half billion dollars being spent this year on behalf of taxpayers of this province. Mr. Speaker, it is a balanced budget without raising any personal income taxes or any corporate income taxes. And the NDP on virtually every area of this budget have said it's not enough.

I say to the members, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, now is the time to stop with the platitudes to the people of Saskatchewan. Now is the time to start telling them how much. How much are you going to spend in health care? How much are you going to spend in education? How much are you going to spend in post-secondary education, Mr. Speaker? They refuse to say that. They refuse to say that, Mr. Speaker, and the people of Saskatchewan are telling us on this side that that is enough, Mr. Speaker. They're tired of listening to the NDP criticize everything in this budget, Mr. Speaker, without talking about how much they would spend in those particular areas.

Mr. Speaker, why don't we talk a little bit about the investments being made through this budget into the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker? And more particularly I picked out some of the highlights in the areas under quality of life, in the areas under infrastructure and labour force development, Mr. Speaker, that I think are not only applicable to the people of Saskatchewan, but I'm more concerned right now with the impact on the residents of Regina Northeast, Mr. Speaker.

And I looked at these different areas. This is new spending on top of what we've already been doing in this province, Mr. Speaker. And again I heard from members opposite who, by the way, said last week when the new Leader of the Opposition was elected, that they were going to try and find good things to say about the government. They were going to give the government credit whenever there's things come up, Mr. Speaker, that they thought the government was doing well. I've listened to a number of the speeches across the hall, Mr. Speaker, a number of speeches from across the aisle with respect to the budget so far, Mr. Speaker, I have yet to hear any member on the opposition side say anything good about this budget, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what we have seen under the quality of life area in this budget is a \$131.8 million increase for regional health authorities, Mr. Speaker. We know two of the largest regional health authorities in the province are in Saskatoon and Regina and we know that an additional \$131 million contributes, along with a \$10 million increase, Mr. Speaker, for the Saskatchewan surgical initiative to reduce surgical wait times. Now here's the interesting part about this, Mr. Speaker. This is new money in the health care system. This is new money going to help all the residents of the province of Saskatchewan, including the announcement, Mr. Speaker, last year of the Plains Health Centre coming back to the city of Regina, Mr. Speaker. And I

congratulate the Minister of Health for making that announcement.

But the interesting thing about this, Mr. Speaker, on every single one of these initiatives, is the members opposite are going to vote against this. This is money that's going to be spent in the province of Saskatchewan in health care. Health care, Mr. Speaker. They have said time and time again, so far in their budget speeches, it's not enough. You need to spend more. Mr. Speaker, we're spending \$132 million extra, on top of the already very high budget with respect to regional health authorities, and we're going to add an additional \$10 million for a total of \$70.5 million towards the Saskatchewan surgical initiative to reduce surgical wait times, Mr. Speaker — the number one issue I hear about in my constituency office — and those members are going to vote against it, Mr. Speaker.

We have \$2 million for an innovative home care services pilot program here in the city of Regina, Mr. Speaker, our capital city. I was chatting with the Minister of Health earlier today. We were chatting about this and I'm looking forward to see the results of this particular pilot program here in the capital city of Regina, Mr. Speaker. \$2 million for a pilot program. Those members are going to vote against it.

\$350,000 increase to expand Alzheimer's First Link, Mr. Speaker. I understand that's a sevenfold increase for the Alzheimer's First Link program. New money being spent. The members opposite will stand up and say, it's not enough; you need to spend more. Mr. Speaker, they're going to vote against it.

\$76.1 million, Mr. Speaker, for child and family services, community-based organizations, our CBOs involved in child and family services, \$76.1 million in this province, Mr. Speaker. And those members are going to vote against it.

\$800,000 for women's shelters across the province. A new transition house in the city of Melfort, Mr. Speaker, that the MLA from Melfort did a great job in making . . . in bringing that issue to light for our government, Mr. Speaker. I understand it's the first women's shelter to be built in this province in 20 or 30 years. As well as additional funding for transition houses and existing facilities in the cities of Regina and Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker. This is badly needed in our province. This is badly needed in our province, Mr. Speaker, and those members are going to vote against it.

\$9.2 million increase for the third year in federal-provincial affordable housing agreement, a housing agreement, Mr. Speaker, to bring affordable housing to our province. The NDP are going to vote against it.

\$264.4 million, Mr. Speaker, a \$27 million increase. Increase. The members opposite say you've got to spend more. The members opposite say it's not enough; you've got to spend more. An increase for municipal revenue sharing, Mr. Speaker. This represents a 161 per cent increase for the city of Regina since this government took office in 2007, Mr. Speaker.

I was talking to some of the city councillors in the city of Regina. I was talking to the mayor here, Mr. Speaker, on budget day. The mayor, His Worship Michael Fougere, came up to me

and shook my hand and thanked me, Mr. Speaker. I know the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Minister of Government Relations here was the one that brought that budget forward. He wanted me to pass on his thanks to the Minister of Government Relations for that increase in revenue sharing, Mr. Speaker. And those members are going to vote against it.

Mr. Speaker, a \$700,000 increase to enhance and expand the Building Partnerships to Reduce Crime initiative, to reduce crime initiative, Mr. Speaker. We've got a great program going on in the city of Prince Albert. We've got . . . The new deputy minister of Corrections is the former chief of police in Prince Albert. I happen to know the existing chief of police in Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker. It's a great model to work from. We're going to expand that across the province. And those members are going to vote against it.

Mr. Speaker, 27.4 million, a \$3.2 million increase for the seniors' income plan. Mr. Speaker, this is a bit of a sore point with the members opposite because, and they know it, they didn't increase the seniors' income plan by one dime in 16 years in office. Not by a dime. Not by a dime. By the time this term is over, Mr. Speaker, our government will have tripled, tripled the seniors' income plan. And those members are going to vote against that, Mr. Speaker. They're going to vote against increasing funding for our seniors' income plan in the province of Saskatchewan.

We'll go on in infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. \$63.6 million for economic corridor projects such as the Regina west bypass — absolutely needed here for the city of Regina, Mr. Speaker — the Estevan bypass, passing lanes on Highway 10, and completion of the Highway 11 twinning initiative. The member for Saskatoon Nutana just talked in her budget speech, there's not enough money being spent in the highways budget, Mr. Speaker; we have to spend more. I simply ask the question, how much more? How much more should we be spending in the highways budget and where are you going to find the money for it? These increases, Mr. Speaker, and those members are going to vote against it.

\$6 million, Mr. Speaker, for SaskBuilds preparatory work for P3 opportunities, including the Saskatchewan Hospital at North Battleford, a P3 approach to new school construction, and the Regina southeast bypass infrastructure. Now the member for Regina Elphinstone who represents the city of Regina, you would think would want to support that, Mr. Speaker. I have a constituency on the east side of Regina. I hear over and over again about the congestion, the traffic congestion problems on the eastern side of the city of Regina, Mr. Speaker. This government's going to explore a new southeast bypass, and those members are going to vote against it, including the member for Regina Elphinstone.

117.4 million in student supports, an increase of 19.6 million or 20 per cent, Mr. Speaker, a 20 per cent increase — the members opposite say it's not enough — which includes 63.9 million in refundable and non-refundable tax credits for the graduate retention program, the most generous program in the country of Canada, Mr. Speaker. 34.5 million for the Student Aid Fund, this additional fund for our post-secondary students, Mr. Speaker. 7.5 million for the Saskatchewan advantage scholarship and 6.5 million to establish the Saskatchewan

advantage grant for education savings, Mr. Speaker, a brand new program. A brand new program for our post-secondary education students, Mr. Speaker, and those members are going to vote against it.

Mr. Speaker, I did some analysis as well. We've had tax changes done in this province by our Minister of Finance such that a single mom, Mr. Speaker, a single mom making \$25,000 a year in the province of Manitoba pays almost 400 per cent more in income tax, provincial income tax in the province of Manitoba governed by the NDP, the NDP in Manitoba, than that single mom would pay here in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We think that's good public policy. They're going to vote against a budget that has that kind of incentive and that kind of support for single moms making \$25,000 a year, Mr. Speaker.

I want to touch a little bit about my own portfolio, Mr. Speaker, the Parks, Culture and Sport ministry, and just look at some of the investments we've been making into that particular ministry, Mr. Speaker. And I can tell you that in our provincial parks, for example, we will be spending thirteen and a half million dollars a year, thirteen and a half million dollars a year in capital infrastructure in our provincial parks, the 34 provincial parks throughout the province, Mr. Speaker. If you total up the amount of capital dollars that have been spent in the last six years of the previous NDP government versus the last six years of this government, Mr. Speaker, it is in excess of a 200 per cent increase in capital dollars into our provincial parks in the province of Saskatchewan.

We had record visits last year to our provincial parks, Mr. Speaker, over 3.5 million visitors in our provincial parks, both people from the province of Saskatchewan and our tourists from outside the province of Saskatchewan bringing their dollars into the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And they're going to vote against that kind of capital infrastructure for our parks.

We have over \$1 million to support our regional parks, Mr. Speaker, our regional parks system throughout the province. I spoke with the president of the Regional Parks Association at the budget speech last week, Mr. Speaker. He shook my hand and thanked me for the support this government is providing our regional parks.

\$100,000 for the RCMP Heritage Centre here in the city of Regina, Mr. Speaker, \$100,000 to support the RCMP Heritage Centre, matching \$100,000 from the city of Regina. And those members are going to vote against that, Mr. Speaker.

And our culture sector, our culture sector, Mr. Speaker, one of the areas I am very proud of what we've accomplished in this budget. Mr. Speaker, the overall budget increase is 3.1 per cent on our expenditure side, and those members say we need to spend more. Those members say we need to spend more. Mr. Speaker, there's . . .

The Speaker: — I would like to remind all of the members on both sides of the House that there is no use of telephones in this Assembly. If the member wishes to use the telephone, he may leave the Chamber to do so.

I recognize the Minister of Parks and other fun stuff.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have described my ministry as the ministry of fun, as have many of my colleagues, so I appreciate the recognition on that side.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to talk a bit more about the monies that this government, this Minister of Finance, this Premier have delivered in our cultural sector, in my ministry, Mr. Speaker. Year-over-year estimates will allow an 18 per cent lift, an 18 per cent lift on cultural spending in my ministry this year, Mr. Speaker.

We have \$5 million for the film employment tax credit in this coming fiscal year, \$5 million still available for the film industry in this province, Mr. Speaker. We have a \$1 million transition fund, a \$1 million transition fund provided by the Saskatchewan Arts Board that all of our creative industries, Mr. Speaker, are accessing as we speak to help them develop and commercialize their product. We have over \$1 million in support for the sound stage, Mr. Speaker, over 73,000 square feet. This government's been providing over \$1 million on an annual basis to support that sound stage and keep it available.

And, Mr. Speaker, we also have the creative industry growth and sustainability fund, \$1.5 million that continues into this next fiscal year, Mr. Speaker. It's being moved over from the Arts Board through agreement with them into Creative Saskatchewan, and Creative Saskatchewan is up and going. And, Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to say that we have \$5 million — new dollars, Mr. Speaker — in an investment fund in Creative Saskatchewan for all of our creative industries to access, to provide support for them financially, Mr. Speaker.

I had the opportunity over the last seven, eight months to be involved in this consultation process with our creative industries in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that on budget day, on budget day to a person, they thanked us. They thanked this government for that \$5 million investment fund, the likes of which they've never had access to in the history of this province, Mr. Speaker, and I can tell you they were delighted.

But I can tell you they weren't very happy with, Mr. Speaker . . . is the comments from the Culture critic that's been pointed out by various members over on this side, Mr. Speaker, during their address to the budget speech. And what I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing. It's disappointing that the members opposite, the members opposite continue to focus in on just the film industry in this province as comprising our creative sector, Mr. Speaker.

We know that our creative industries are made up of music — I think the member from Nutana talked about that — the film industry, digital media, visual arts, crafts, publishing, and the performing arts, Mr. Speaker. And when asked, the NDP Culture critic, the member for Saskatoon Riversdale, Mr. Speaker, said there are lots of details that remain to be seen. But in general, in general, Mr. Speaker, the new fund shows that the province hasn't listened to filmmakers, hasn't listened to filmmakers, Mr. Speaker.

We've been working with all the representatives from the

creative sector for the last seven, eight months, Mr. Speaker, and she continues to point out just filmmakers. She goes on to say her concern with the new money, the new fund, is that it divides money with other arts and is not going to stimulate film production here in Saskatchewan. It does nothing for the economy, and that's the bottom line. That's the bottom line, Mr. Speaker. There's 5 million new dollars in this budget this year, Mr. Speaker, as well as \$5 million in the film employment tax credit as well as a \$1 million transitional fund over from the Arts Board, Mr. Speaker, an 18 per cent lift, an 18 per cent lift in our cultural sector in this budget, Mr. Speaker. And the member for Saskatoon Riversdale, the Culture critic, says it's not enough. That's the bottom line. It's going to do nothing for our economy.

[21:15]

So I can't imagine what a music producer, Mr. Speaker, or a publisher or someone in digital media . . . woke up the morning after the budget, having their morning coffee and opened up their newspaper and read that, that their contribution to our province, Mr. Speaker, their contribution and their particular artistic genre does nothing for our economy, Mr. Speaker. It does nothing unless they're a filmmaker. And I think that's divisive politics on the part of the members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

I'm proud, proud, Mr. Speaker, of what we've been able to accomplish in this budget in my Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport. I'm looking forward to getting into the estimates of this particular area, Mr. Speaker, with members opposite. I am going to be supporting this budget and not the ridiculous amendment put forward by the members opposite. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Deputy Whip.

Mr. Makowsky: — Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to rise in the House and represent the people of Regina Dewdney and talk specifically about the balanced growth budget.

A few thank yous before I get into the substantive part of my comments, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance. Before I got into government I didn't realize how much time is spent in Treasury Board. And basically for the folks at home, they look at a line-by-line item of every budgetary expenditure of the Government of Saskatchewan, some \$11.6 billion. And from October to when the budget's dropped, Mr. Speaker, they put in a lot of time, so I'd like to thank those folks.

Of course I'd like to thank my constituents, Mr. Speaker. I'm really enjoying my time in my role as an MLA, and I enjoy representing them every time I can. And it's a good experience for myself, and I again thank those folks for putting their trust in me and electing me on November the 7th, 2011.

I'd like to thank Brittany. She's relatively new to our office, Mr. Speaker, but she's doing great work on behalf of the people from Regina Dewdney.

Certainly last but not least, Mr. Speaker, I have to thank my

family. Of course all of us know how important families are in this business. They share us with our constituents, Mr. Speaker. So we're very thankful for the sacrifices our family make, and specifically my family, my wife, Tami. She's the best one around. I got very lucky, Mr. Speaker. We've been through a lot of ups and downs, but she's always kept us together and kept us going. And my three sons, Nicholas, Ryan, and Blake. I think they're watching right now. Certainly very proud of them and, you know, they're enjoying their time growing up here in Saskatchewan, and it's a good time to be here in Saskatchewan.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, a few days or a day after the budget, my son Ryan mentioned to my wife, he was kind of concerned and he said, he said to my wife — I wasn't home — how come there's no red ink in Saskatchewan? He was really concerned that, you know, how is his teacher going to mark his tests? How is he going to write with a red pen? He was a little concerned by that. And I wish I was home. I would have mentioned to him, well son, the market's really down on red ink in Saskatchewan. We haven't needed it in the last six years. Or I could have said, I suppose I could have said, well just about every place else in the world has totally used it all. It's all gone.

So now, Mr. Speaker, just quickly here an update on Regina Dewdney for my colleagues and the folks that might be watching around there, excuse me, around the province tonight. There's a lot of new buildings, new construction happening all the time, just like every place in the province, every constituency: a new commercial office building on McAra Avenue north of Victoria Avenue; a new Royal Bank going on, going to be starting soon on Quance and Prince of Wales; a new private care home. I mentioned this I think in my last speech, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately there was a small fire that set them back a little ways, Mr. Speaker, but it looks like they're back on track. It's going to be a new private care home, and it's going to be specifically for folks with dementia or related diseases. So it's not good to see it, but certainly with a Canadian every five minutes being diagnosed with some form of dementia, those types of care homes will be needed. It's on Heseltine Road in my constituency, Mr. Speaker.

I think a lot of times when you go on Victoria Avenue East, Mr. Speaker, you think of the big box stores, the Wal-Marts, the Costcos, etc., but all along Quance there's a lot of small sort of local businesses thriving along Quance, and more and more you see extending west along Victoria Avenue, Mr. Speaker. There's a lot of, I think, business optimism in my constituency and right across the province.

And when I think about it, Mr. Speaker, there's not a whole lot of land. I think when I moved to the area in 2003, there was obviously a lot more available land. There's just a little bit south of the Victoria Square Mall now and, outside of rezoning, that'll be it. So that speaks to the growth of the area.

Again I spoke about Parkview Village before on Fines Drive, 71 units of social housing. It's coming on the market. It's being rolled in. I drove by there a few days ago. There's people living there now. There's cars. There's families there. There's a \$9.6 million investment from our government that was not from this budget, Mr. Speaker, but that has already been allotted. And it comes in at half the cost of replacing those buildings. If we would have just left them, we would have lost those buildings.

There was basement problems. So this government, this minister, stepped up with \$9.6 million, 71 units, Mr. Speaker.

Specifically for Dewdney in the budget, Mr. Speaker, two portable classrooms for Glen Elm School. The renovations to Campus Regina Public continue, Mr. Speaker.

And \$6 million to SaskBuilds to prep for the southeast bypass, Mr. Speaker. I know that's certainly a big issue in my constituency. Victoria Avenue East runs right through the heart of Regina Dewdney. I know this is a big issue as well in . . . my colleague from Wascana Plains, Mr. Speaker. It's one of the busiest areas in the province for traffic, Mr. Speaker. It's the No. 1 Highway, No. 1, a highway that goes right through the city, Mr. Speaker. There's lots of truck traffic and there'll be certainly more and more as more businesses come online to the Global Transportation Hub.

Satellite communities — White City, Pilot Butte, Balgonie — there's a lot of people moving there and that come into the city, so it's a very congested area, Mr. Speaker. So when you come into the city, there's seven lights that all those cars have to go through on Victoria East, seven traffic lights. And that leads to congestion when you have those big semi-trailers with two trailers and a lot of people coming in from outside the city, Mr. Speaker, and a lot of people through the city. That's certainly a needed project, Mr. Speaker.

I know we're looking at a P3 project for that, Mr. Speaker. I know earlier in question period today there was a lot of fearmongering by the members opposite about looking at P3s. I'm not sure, based on how question period went for the member from Rosemont, I'm not sure . . . We might not get a few more. We probably won't get any more questions in the next little while about those.

You know, I hear from certainly the members opposite that the growth plan or the idea of growth, it only benefits a select few people, Mr. Speaker. Some say it's growth just for growth's sake, but certainly nothing can be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. This budget shows that. On page 1 of the budget it says it's not just for growth's sake but it's what growth pays for, Mr. Speaker. And every Premier's speech I've listened to in the last years, he's made the case, Mr. Speaker.

And I think this budget particularly shows the importance of what growth does for our province. When resource revenues are slumping a little bit, Mr. Speaker, years past it would've been a big problem for the government. There would've been slashing across the board, or if the members opposite were in power, big taxes increases, I imagine, and massive deficits. But you know, we look at what's happening in Alberta, \$6 billion in the hole. We haven't seen that in a long time, whereas we tabled another balanced budget, Mr. Speaker.

So here's some of the things that growth does pay for, Mr. Speaker. People with disabilities, the funding has gone up by \$126.8 million since 2007 when we took government, a 62.4 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker. New transition houses, many of my colleagues have talked extensively about this. I might just point out a few though for families of victims of domestic abuse, Mr. Speaker. Seniors' income plan again, a near tripling since it was brought in in 2007. New paratransit services,

particularly for smaller centres in our province, Mr. Speaker, a doubling of the capital grants for those paratransit services.

Services and supports for people with Alzheimer's, Mr. Speaker. I think that's a very important initiative by the Minister of Health. You know, it just helps give services and supports for families that are newly diagnosed. And there's good programming in Regina and Saskatoon. This helps it move into some of the smaller communities in our province, Mr. Speaker, to have that support when a family member is diagnosed with that disease. So that's a good thing.

It was kind of interesting what one of the members opposite said about that new funding and that new program, Mr. Speaker. The member from Rosemont in his reply to the budget speech, he mentioned, "We're pleased to see that the NDP's specific request for funding for the First Link program for Alzheimer's patients . . . will see some funding." Well, Mr. Speaker, leave it to the NDP to self congratulate themselves, give themselves the old pat on the back. I think they overestimated a little bit their influence on that decision, Mr. Speaker.

You know, the new Leader of the Opposition said he would give credit where credit's due. I didn't think . . . He gave credit when it's not due, Mr. Speaker. You know, if it was me I might have thanked the minister. Well maybe, you know, you don't expect the members of the opposition to congratulate the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Health, but you might want to congratulate Joanne Bracken let's say from the Alzheimer Society who's put in hundreds of hours probably advocating for Alzheimer's patients around the province.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I would have thought after the last election there might be a sense of humility from the members opposite, and they might have changed their ways just a little bit. But I think statements like that, it really proves that, you know, it's just the same old NDP. I think Dwain Lingenfelter would have just fit in just fine with that same group of people, Mr. Speaker. So that's too bad to hear things like that.

One more quick thing, Mr. Speaker, is that quick response home care pilot project in Regina helps keep seniors in their own home longer. That's happening here in the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region, Mr. Speaker, and it helps defer placement in long-term care which helps the system not have so much congestion, Mr. Speaker.

Quickly, Habitat for Humanity, they've doubled the funding. The Ministry of Social Services, they've doubled the funding, 40 new homes. Since '09, 90 homes built, Mr. Speaker. I know it's just a great program — \$50,000 towards each home from the Government of Saskatchewan. It combines with high school students who help build those homes. The new owners get a chance to work on those homes. I believe they put 500 hours in of sweat equity, Mr. Speaker. And that's great to see.

And I know when you look at a budget, you think about a million here, a billion there. You start to, you know, not really think about the people that are impacted by those announcements of those homes. And I know the minister was at a key ceremony this morning when a family, a new family to Saskatchewan got a chance to have their new home, Mr.

Speaker. And that's, you know, that's the story behind the money, Mr. Speaker. And you see the look on those kids' face. I know several of my colleagues from Regina have been at those ceremonies, and it's just a special moment when families from here in Saskatchewan but also around the world, that have been through things you probably wouldn't believe if you heard it, and they come here to Canada and Saskatchewan and they get a new home.

And what's really sad about that though is the members opposite are voting against that. They're voting against that, those folks getting that new home. It'd be interesting if one of those members had a conversation with those people that were in those situations and came here and got a new house, what their rationale for not supporting this budget would be, Mr. Speaker.

Let's see what Dennis Coutts, the CEO [chief executive officer] of Habitat for Humanity, what he said. He had a lot of good things to say and that's great, Mr. Speaker. "The Hon. Minister June Draude's hard work and unrelenting passion to solve housing issues in Saskatchewan serves as a model for the entire country."

He also went on to say, "We are the envy of the country. I applaud the Government of Saskatchewan for keeping their commitment for more housing to help low-income, hard-working Saskatchewan people."

And again I think he's right. We're the envy of the country. I don't think a lot of other jurisdictions are rolling out programs like this. They're slashing. They're cutting because they have to. They're in deficit. We're not, Mr. Speaker. Again it's too bad we don't have support from the members opposite.

[21:30]

Just real quick a few other third party quotes I'd like to share with the members of the House and people watching at home. Our mayor here in Regina, he said:

Overall this is a positive budget for the city of Regina. We continue to grow and prosper and it's very important to . . . that. The province is our partner in sustaining that growth and meeting the needs of municipalities across the province.

Someone else said . . . Hold on here. "Yes, we're overall very, very pleased [Mr. Speaker], quite frankly. We're still one of the only provinces in the country to have a balanced budget, and we can't forget the significance of that."

So, Mr. Speaker, there's a few things I didn't say . . . Sorry, Steve McLellan said. I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure a lot of people had said something similar to that as well, Mr. Speaker.

There's a few things I heard that I didn't like as much though, Mr. Speaker. I heard from the members opposite, a few of them have already labelled this a credit card budget, particularly the member from Rosemont. Well that's interesting, Mr. Speaker. There's more revenue than expenditures in this budget. You don't need a credit card for that. I think he's not quite understanding that situation.

I saw as I was watching TV — I believe it was Thursday morning — and the member from Rosemont live on TV, he was fearmongering again about P3s. And he talked about the great credit rating of the province; we're in a strong financial position. So I think he was advocating the province taking on more debt, and that is certainly a situation where you'd need a credit card. And I wonder what credit card or how many credit cards the province would need after those members' last election platform, Mr. Speaker. It would be quite a few — a 5 billion-plus-dollar budget deficit that would be needed, Mr. Speaker, and obviously the people of Saskatchewan didn't want to go down that road again.

The plan advocated by Dwain Lingenfelter and the member from Massey Place, the new Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, this was their budget, Mr. Speaker, the tree booklet. It would have risked all the hard work the province, the people of the province of Saskatchewan had done for many, many, many years, Mr. Speaker, and got us to the position where we are today. That would have been gone in one fell swoop. Thankfully the people of Saskatchewan soundly rejected that government or that former government that got us, you know, in a tough situation, Mr. Speaker. So I'm so glad that we rejected, the people of Saskatchewan rejected that to the tune of 49 to 9, Mr. Speaker. And the way I count, Mr. Speaker, that's seven converted touchdowns to three field goals over there, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on. There's a few other things I wouldn't mind talking about. But, Mr. Speaker, I think what I'm going to do is let my colleagues continue on. It's been my pleasure to represent the people of Regina Dewdney and my family as well, Mr. Speaker, and on behalf of those people I just mentioned, I am going to be supporting this budget. Thank you.

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

Mr. Michelson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to start out by congratulating the people on this side of the House. Throughout the summer, they talked to their constituents, they visited with them, they found out their concerns, they brought it to caucus, discussed it over . . . what budget items that needed to be discussed, and together they put it together into the hands of the Finance minister. Him and his ministry spent a lot of time, a lot of effort in putting in the details of this budget, this \$11.6 billion budget. And I congratulate him and his ministry for what they have done in putting this together.

I also thank him for the presentation he did to the Moose Jaw Chamber of Commerce luncheon on Friday. There was some concern obviously when the highway was blocked for some 30 hours leading up to Friday's luncheon and, you know, a little concerned if he couldn't have made it. I was kind of looking at possibly being able to do the presentation, although as difficult as that would have been it would have been kind of cool to be the Finance minister for a day. Fortunately he, with the knowledge he had and the Ministry of Highways opening the roads, the minister got there, did a great job for the people of Saskatchewan or for the people of Moose Jaw rather at the chamber of commerce luncheon in Moose Jaw. So thank him for that. Thank him for the amount of work that he's done with his ministry on this budget, this budget of growth and keeping

Saskatchewan moving forward.

And keeping Saskatchewan growing is . . . We've done this in the budget. It's the sixth balanced budget that this government has produced. It's a responsible budget with prudent management and controlled spending. The excellent presentation by the minister was much longer than I'm allotted time here today. But I'd like to take a few minutes and just go over some of the key issues that I look at when I see the budget — key issues in health and education, agriculture, the economy at large, and the better quality of life for all of Saskatchewan citizens. It is a plan for improving housing for the service of vulnerable adults and children, increasing levels of care rates for residents of approved private service homes, assisting seniors through income in the seniors' income plan, further enhancement to the Saskatchewan assured income for disabilities program as well as infrastructure and agriculture. This budget contains investment in infrastructure improvements, all with a vision that looks far into the future, Mr. Speaker, all within controlled spending, all within a balanced budget.

This budget provides for the good of the people of Saskatchewan and it does it in a sustainable, responsible way, and it is balanced. This budget provides the needs for citizens planning for the future, and it's balanced. Yes it is. Balanced in meeting the needs of today. Balanced in looking for the future, for our children's future and far beyond. Balanced in providing growth, strengthening our economy. Balanced in the quality of life and balanced both on the general revenue and the summary statement. It is rightfully labelled balanced growth for 2013-2014. It is within this document which the future plans of the province are based upon. That is why such effort has gone into the details, making sure it prepares for the future and yet it does control spending.

Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest challenges of growth is making sure that we have the infrastructure we need for our growing economy. The infrastructure was left in a deteriorated state for decades by the former NDP government that was out of touch with the people and the needs of Saskatchewan. You'll recall that schools were run down, highways appalling to a point of not being passable. At the end of their term, 52 rural hospitals were closed, plus the newest provincial hospital at that time, the Plains hospital closed. There were 1,600 fewer long-term beds during the NDP term in government. People were leaving the province. There was no growth. There was no plan, only their mindset of managing decline.

Mr. Speaker, the lost investments like SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company] and Navigata and Channel Lake, yes even Guyana and Coachman Insurance, they lost millions of our taxpayers' dollars in a declining economy.

During that NDP tenure, year after year the population declined. Our kids grew up here. They graduated from high schools and technicals and universities, and then they moved on to other provinces.

In fact roughly 10 years ago . . . And the Premier alluded to this last Wednesday about the NDP government's press release about 10 years ago — the out-migration is now at a slower rate in the province of Saskatchewan. Isn't that a disgusting way to

promote the province, the out-migration is slowing down? That's like saying, we're not as lousy as we were, but we're there. Or we're not expecting growth, just slowing the poverty slide of this province. In fact the statement was made by one of those members: the more people that leave, the more there is for the rest of us. What a terrible, what a terrible mindset to be in by people who are supposed to be, Mr. Speaker, in a leadership position.

But, Mr. Speaker, that's not the case with the Saskatchewan that we know now. That's not the case with the Saskatchewan Party government. The Saskatchewan Party government is caring for people. They're managing wisely. We're growing the economy while balancing the budget. And this is the sixth balanced budget of our government.

We believe Saskatchewan has great potential for growth. This budget plans for growth, plans for sustainable growth, a balanced plan providing quality of life for all of our citizens and rightfully entitled a balanced growth budget.

New record population figures show that Saskatchewan continues to grow. Over the last six years, Saskatchewan has been the place to be or the place to return to, which is a stark contrast from the depopulation that used to be the pattern of the NDP government. Saskatchewan today is setting records. Firstly, they are setting records in population, 1,089,807 people. That's over 82,000 people increase since January of 2008. And it's on target to reach the goal of increasing population to 1.2 million by 2020. A larger population, more investment. More investment, more jobs. More jobs, a broader tax base. Growth benefits all of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Last week I, along with the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow, participated in the official ribbon cutting of a new business in Moose Jaw, Blue Whale Financial Solutions. I want to congratulate Joe Moffatt and his wife, Krista, who opened this brand new office in Moose Jaw. You know, during that opening celebration, I happened to talk to a gentleman from Sun Life out of Regina. His name was Brian Kilback. I was fascinated by his recollection of his years as the centre manager. And he said just a few years ago he used to get one or two calls every six or eight weeks about somebody that was moving back to Saskatchewan. But he says, Warren, I get six to eight calls now daily, just from people that are moving back. A big increase from the people that are moving back, an opportunity for them to increase their business and build new places, new buildings . . . business.

Agrocorp Processing is a new agricultural processing company that will be opening this summer in Moose Jaw. It's a large processing company, a high-speed loading and cleaning facility to handle peas and lentils, oilseeds and grains, with a capacity to handle 250 000 metric tons of diverse products. It's a new job, a new company creating jobs, hiring people, helping to build our economy. There's other growth opportunities that are in Moose Jaw, as they are in every corner of this province. They see the potential, they see the opportunities, they see the opportunities for growth, and growth is good, Mr. Speaker.

Increased population, increased investment, creating new jobs, higher weekly wages, lowest unemployment, and a balanced growth budget to take us into 2014 and beyond. This budget is

balanced in the General Revenue Fund and on the summary financial fund, and Saskatchewan is the only province that had a balanced budget this fiscal year. And with all other provinces and other jurisdictions throughout North America struggling with economic downturns and high unemployment, Saskatchewan leads and will continue to lead in growth again in this fiscal year. This budget focuses on balanced growth. And, Mr. Speaker, I don't have time to go into a lot of details of the budget document; however, I do want to centre on a few of the items.

Our government is committed to improving health care for the people of Saskatchewan. A record \$4.84 billion will be invested to continue to reduce surgical wait times, thereby improving the quality of the life of the people of Saskatchewan. This is an increase of 41 per cent over the past six years, demonstrating our commitment to improve health care for Saskatchewan people and our goal to ensure that no one waits more than three years for surgery. You'll recall that the NDP, when they were in power, had the longest surgical wait-list in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, \$3 billion of funding is going to regional health authorities to provide health care through hospitals, health centres, and long-term health facilities. Again when the NDP were in power, 1,600 long-term beds were closed.

Mr. Speaker, cancer has touched the lives of everyone in this room, I'm sure. Last year our family was saddened by two deaths in our family — Connie Anne Walchuk, my niece, and my sister, Marie Meckling, both died from cancer. I was pleased that this government understood the need for care, and this year the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency will receive \$150.7 million to provide enhanced cancer care service. Mr. Speaker, this is an 8.6 increase over last year, and it's a 90 per cent increase to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency over the past five years. Funding allows the agency to operate prevention and early detection programs, conduct innovative research, and provide safe patient- and family-centred care.

[21:45]

There will also be \$3.7 billion toward operation of a new PET/CT [positron emission tomography/computerized tomography] scanner at the Royal University Hospital. Two hundred and forty additional physicians are practising in Saskatchewan today compared to 2007. And an increase of \$2 billion will support the doubling of post-secondary training seats to 120 to further boost physician numbers in Saskatchewan. And to the people of Moose Jaw and the Five Hills Health Region, there's \$50 million to continue the plans and start construction for the replacement of the Moose Jaw hospital.

Mr. Speaker, I couldn't be more excited about the opportunities that are presented through the Moose Jaw hospital. This is a state of the art hospital. The planning has gone on for a year now. They've actually had people — they were the finest contractors in the business, architects — working with the medical staff from the Moose Jaw Health Foundation, the Five Hills health foundation, along with some of the citizens and former patients from the area.

They've rented a warehouse where they've actually set up

models of how this hospital will work and how the flow of patients will come because it's centred on patient care, Mr. Speaker. If something doesn't work, they reconstruct it and look at it again. Mr. Speaker, this is a state of the art facility, and it's ready to start construction early in the spring and go forward. And I'm so pleased that there's \$50 million in the budget to forward that construction.

There's further investment for rural health and rural family physician recruitment and continuing investment in the STARS helicopter ambulance. Health care is the largest expenditure, and I've presented some of the items included in this balanced growth budget. This balanced growth budget is there to benefit all of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, my time is running quickly, but there's a lot of things that are covered in this budget in support of the students and post-secondary education. The government keeps a commitment to provide more housing. Housing is a huge issue, and in the program that was brought out last year from the Saskatchewan plan for growth by the Premier, it was announced that there would be 114 new housing rental units through the Minister of Social Services.

This is a great opportunity for our city, for 140 new units being added to the market. And what happens, the people that are living in these rental units, these public units, they have the opportunity, the first opportunity to buy the units they're in or they can move into the new ones when they're ready. By moving into the new ones, it doesn't cost them any more because the formula is on the amount of income they have. But they will increase because they've got safer, new accommodations that are economically more efficient than the ones that are probably 50 to 60 years old. And it's a win-win for the people of Moose Jaw, adding 114 residences to a tight marketplace.

Mr. Speaker, I would be amiss if I didn't mention this in conclusion, that in response to the opposition critic, the member from Regina Rosemont, when he talked about a credit card budget. Mr. Speaker, the reckless spending that was offered in their campaign platform with Dwain Lingenfelter, it outlined a \$5 billion proposal for expenditure to try and buy the election — \$5 billion, Mr. Speaker. They talk about a credit card, credit card budget and they were willing to risk and willing to force the people of this province \$5 billion in debt just so they could win the election. It's totally ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. It was smart of the people of Saskatchewan to see the real, the real value of that behind Mr. Lingenfelter and the NDP. And yet they endorsed that, and they called this balanced budget a credit card budget.

Mr. Speaker, it could be nothing further from the truth. This is an honest budget. It's a balanced budget. It's the sixth balanced budget, Mr. Speaker. I will not be supporting the amendment made by the NDP opposition. But I will be supporting the government, the budget that was presented by our Minister of Finance. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to respond to the budget speech, Mr.

Speaker. I am mindful of the time, and I believe I am all that stands between my colleagues and adjournment of this House, so I'll try to keep my remarks fairly brief.

Mr. Speaker, over the next 40 minutes or so I will hope to talk about the budget, obviously, and my constituency. But first, Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank my constituency assistant, Marcie Swedburg, who has served just absolutely in a dedicated way the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy even before I became the MLA in 2006. Marcie has served capably and dedicated in a dedicated fashion and faithfully to the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy for going on 13 years, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank her.

I also want to thank, Mr. Speaker, the staff in the building that work in my ministerial office — Brenda, Trent, Michael, Crystal, Andrew, and Jessica — who do a tremendous job each and every day, not only serving me but also interacting with constituents from all across this province who from time to time will contact the minister's office.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank all of my family and my friends back home who do such a great job in supporting me and providing me with the opportunity to do this.

Most especially though I want to thank Amanda, the love of my life, Mr. Speaker, and who this summer we will be celebrating 14 years of being married, 14 years. And, Mr. Speaker, there is not enough time in this session or in this legislative sitting to tell the people of this province how much I appreciate her and just how much joy that she brings to my life. So I want to thank her.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to, I want to talk a little bit about the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is an incredible time of growth in the constituency, Mr. Speaker, regardless of what part of Weyburn-Big Muddy that you happen to be in, Mr. Speaker. We are seeing, particularly in Weyburn, Mr. Speaker, record development, record growth, record numbers when it comes to construction starts, building permits, new housing starts, Mr. Speaker. We are certainly seeing significant population growth. And I think we're seeing as well, a government, the provincial government working well with the city and with the municipalities that surround the city.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to, while I am on my feet and talking about the city of Weyburn, I do want to congratulate the mayor of Weyburn, Debra Button, my friend Debra who was recently elected the president of SUMA, the first female president of SUMA in the over 100-year history of that organization. And she certainly is doing a terrific job as our mayor and will, I know, at this new responsibility that she has been given.

Mr. Speaker, when I look back at the five, six years I guess that this government has been in office, revenue sharing alone, which is an important piece to all of our municipal partners to help them deliver services to the citizens that they serve, Mr. Speaker, the city of Weyburn has seen 169 per cent increase in revenue sharing. And it certainly has been a significant jump when you look at, in a sheer dollar amount, from about \$800,000 back in 2007 to well over \$2.2 million in revenue sharing, Mr. Speaker. And they are certainly putting those dollars to good use.

We're also seeing, I think, as much of the province is seeing, significant increases in property value. And we wanted to make sure as a government that we were doing what we could to help offset our portion, the education portion of those increases because of assessment and reassessment this year. We are seeing for, Mr. Speaker, I believe for residential alone the value of property in Weyburn jumped from \$253 million to \$575 million between assessments, Mr. Speaker. When you look at the provincial average, I believe which is around the 75, possibly 70 per cent increase in residential value, in the city of Weyburn it has increased by 130 per cent, Mr. Speaker. So certainly it is good news that this budget commits significant dollars to try as much as possible to get to a revenue-neutral position across the province when it comes to education property taxes.

Speaking of education, we are, Mr. Speaker, seeing a significant renovation to our high school, Mr. Speaker. Up until really this time, Weyburn's high school has been a grades 10 to 12 with the regional college as a part of the high school. We're seeing a transition to a new grade formulation configuration where grades 7 to 12 will now be a part of the high school, and that's a part of approximately \$60 million renewal of the high school which will then include the regional college as well as a community performing arts centre, which is very exciting for the city and for the people of the area. The city has put up, I believe, \$6 million towards the performing arts portion and the community is raising \$4 million, and they are very close to achieving that goal. And so I want to recognize the board members of the Triple C Centre which now will be known as the Cugnet Centre after a significant donation by Ken and Joanne Cugnet and their family of, I believe, it was a \$1 million donation, Mr. Speaker, to that very worthwhile endeavour.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to, while I'm on my feet and speaking to the budget, I haven't had the opportunity since last fall to recognize the high school and the high school students who last fall hosted the Canadian student leadership conference. Over 1,000 students and chaperones attended over about a week-long period, and it was certainly fantastic as well.

I don't think I can not mention I think our favourite son of Weyburn, Graham DeLaet who, Mr. Speaker, with the Bay Hill invitational finishing today, he tied for 50th, which actually for him wasn't actually that great of a finish because he's been top 10; he's been top 15, Mr. Speaker. But with today's finish, he's now the 110th best golfer according to the world golf rankings. He's very close to breaking the top 100 in the world and, Mr. Speaker, he comes from Weyburn, Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pretty close to ending the speech but not quite. Mr. Speaker, I do want to talk about the health budget. Certainly it represents 42 per cent of the budget, \$4.84 billion this year projected expenditure. Mr. Speaker, this is about a 40 per cent increase over the six-year term of this government.

Mr. Speaker, what we have done in this budget I think is done a number of things. First we've recognized the significant growth that we're seeing in this province — over 80,000 people that are now living in Saskatchewan over the last number of years. We know that that's putting pressure on regional health authorities, so we've increased regional health authority budgets by an average of four and a half per cent. \$29 million

of that, Mr. Speaker, is to deal directly with population growth.

Mr. Speaker, as well we are, as came up today in the House, we are working with our regional health authorities to bend the cost curve on health care. We know that 10 years ago, the health budget in this province was \$2.3 billion, and as this budget is closing within five days, it'll be roughly \$4.68 billion. Mr. Speaker, in 10 years the budget of Saskatchewan Health has doubled. And we know across Canada, we know in Saskatchewan that those rates of increase of 5 and 7 and 10 per cent are just not sustainable.

We need to bend the cost curve, so we're working with our health authorities to put a target on efficiencies, not just talk about efficiencies but actually put a target on efficiencies, Mr. Speaker. And we have every confidence with a budget for regional health authorities that has grown by \$1 billion in six years that we believe that the budget is in place that can allow regions to manage the growth, manage the pressures, manage demographics and still provide, Mr. Speaker, better health, better care at a better value. We believe that we can achieve all three at the same time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, and I think that we will show in Saskatchewan that we are as well positioned, if not better positioned, in Canada compared to all of our provincial jurisdictions. In fact when you look at our budget this year, Mr. Speaker, three and a half per cent increase for the health budget, that compares to British Columbia at just 2.3 per cent and even in Alberta, even though they are running a \$6 billion deficit, at a 3 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker. So even with the Western Canadian provinces that have already reported and tabled a budget, Mr. Speaker, a three and a half per cent to date is the highest percentage increase.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk about just a few initiatives. As well with about \$130 million increase to regional health authorities, Mr. Speaker, for their operations, we've also increased the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency by \$12 million. It's about an 8 per cent increase. More significant than that though, Mr. Speaker, is that over the six-year life of this government and the six budgets that this government has introduced, a 90 per cent increase in the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency budget, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as well on top of the money that we are providing in base funding, 130 million additional dollars, bringing us up to about \$3 billion — over \$3 billion. I believe it's \$3.03 billion in regional health authority budgets.

We're also continuing with our surgical initiative. The Treasury Board and the cabinet saw fit to increase that. And we certainly appreciate it because it will help us to get to our goal of being able to provide surgery within three months by the end of 2014. We know Regina's going to take a little bit longer, Mr. Speaker. But it really shows the power of setting goals and setting your mind to those.

Mr. Speaker, an additional \$10 million in this year's budget will bring the surgical initiative in year 4 to \$70 million, Mr. Speaker, which will go directly to regions to be able to bring down their wait-lists for surgery, Mr. Speaker. The four-year initiative, when 2014 comes to a close, March 2014, we will have spent an additional \$180 million on the surgical initiative over and above what regions were already spending to deliver

surgeries, Mr. Speaker. And it has meant that we are leaders in this country when it comes to addressing surgical wait times which have plagued governments of all stripes across this country for far too long, Mr. Speaker, and Saskatchewan is once again reasserting its leadership in health care policy in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to mention — and I know members are conscious of the time, Mr. Speaker — I also want to mention just a few other initiatives in the budget which members have already spoken about. Mr. Speaker, this summer I had the opportunity, I think it was late summer, to sit down and meet the Alzheimer Society, Mr. Speaker, where they made I think a very compelling case to expand the First Link program, Mr. Speaker.

And I am very pleased that Treasury Board and that my colleagues were in agreement that we increase their budget by \$350,000 so they can expand a very important program, a very important link for families who have family members who are diagnosed with Alzheimer's and other related dementias. Mr. Speaker, this will allow this very important program to be expanded beyond Regina and Saskatoon into the communities of Swift Current, Prince Albert, North Battleford, and into the Sun Country Health Region. It'll be based I believe out of the city of Estevan. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased about that.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I think when we talk about long-term care and the treatment of our seniors, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to talk about the dollars — \$163 million in this budget for health capital, setting aside the \$50 million to the Moose Jaw hospital, which I hope to briefly talk about in a few minutes, Mr. Speaker. But this will mean that of our 13 long-term care facilities that were announced a couple of years ago, one is finished in Watrous, Mr. Speaker, and that's up and running and serving the people of that community and area very well. Five more we believe will be complete by 2013 with an additional six in 2014, Mr. Speaker.

As well we know that it's not just about institutionalizing seniors. It's about offering a continuum of care whether they need support in their own home, whether they need support perhaps through the personal care home supplement that is available through the government or whether it be through long-term care, through government-run long-term care or perhaps privately run long-term care. We want to make sure that that service and that help is available for our seniors, Mr. Speaker.

And so we're pleased to look at a program, be able to pilot a program here in the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region, Mr. Speaker, that has been showing promise in other areas like Ontario, the Home First/Quick Response, Mr. Speaker. This will allow seniors that are living in their home some . . . What it will be, Mr. Speaker, is more intensive but for a shorter time additional help for seniors perhaps after hours, outside of the normal hours of home care, so that perhaps we can keep that senior in their home even longer, Mr. Speaker, so that we can defer that placement into long-term care for maybe a few more months or so that we can defer a visit perhaps to an emergency room or to an acute care bed in the middle of the night perhaps, more . . . some intensive support after hours, Mr. Speaker. So we're very . . . hold a lot of promise for this program, hope to

pilot. We will pilot here in Regina, Mr. Speaker, but hope to see it be delivered in other regions across this province in short order.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk briefly, Mr. Speaker, about some rural initiatives. And I have to begin my comments by thanking the Minister for Rural and Remote Health, the member for Biggar, who has been just a real pleasure to work with in our new roles, the new role that was created by the Premier last summer, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the member for Biggar has provided a tremendous amount of support to me and to the ministry in looking at different types of policies. In fact it was the member from Biggar early on in his time heard about a program in Nova Scotia, called collaborative emergency centres in Nova Scotia, last summer. He went to Nova Scotia, looked at those. And, Mr. Speaker, we're pleased that there is money in the budget to launch a number of those sites across the province to give additional support to people in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I know the time is drawing near. Mr. Speaker, I know members are . . . I know they'd like me to go on further. But, Mr. Speaker, with that I would say that I will not be supporting the amendment. I will be supporting the budget. I'm very pleased to do so on behalf of the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy, Mr. Speaker. And at this time, I would move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that this House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved that this House do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. This House stands adjourned to 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:09.]

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Premier

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Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Bill Boyd

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Minister Responsible for The Global
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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
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