



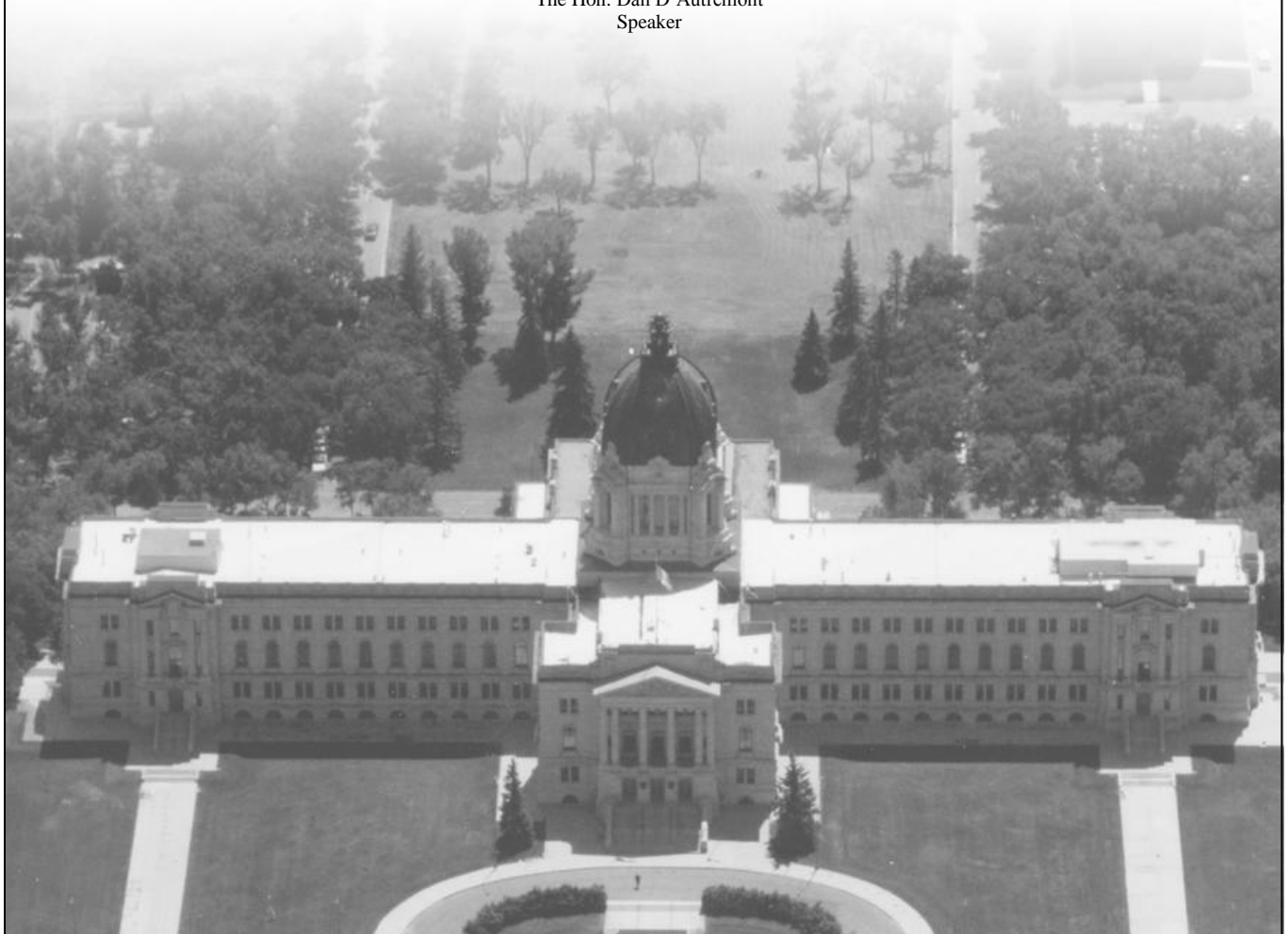
SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

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

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 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
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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 the special order. I recognize the Opposition Whip.

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. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll continue to make comments on the budget and talk about some of the areas where, I guess, certain areas that were not touched on. And I guess people were hoping that the government would see some of the projects and some of the issues that are facing northern Saskatchewan and community members, I guess, in general throughout the province. And we'll talk about some of the areas where this budget does not touch that.

And for those joining us this evening, I did open with some positive comments about the budget on some of the areas where we see we worked with the government and pushed that forward. So those are positive comments, and sometimes you have to make sure to be fair when we have, I guess, areas where we work together for Saskatchewan residents. We want to acknowledge that and all of the good things the government can do when it puts its heart and mind to what needs to be done.

But having said that, you know, we talked about the roads in northern Saskatchewan and got a chance to raise the concerns. And we look at Wollaston Lake, and I want to talk about Wollaston Lake. You know, here you have the leadership having to go out and find a process because the government wouldn't commit to their obligation that they promised in February of 2008. We were hoping that money would be in this budget to fulfill that obligation and the government again turned a back on Wollaston Lake. And we've raised that and the leadership has been here. We were hoping that that money would materialize in this budget because the government was talking about the North and moving on some areas in northern Saskatchewan. So we thought, maybe the budget. But in the end we found out, again, this government has turned their back on northern Saskatchewan in many different ways.

And I mean, some may say, in some areas with the . . . You look at the revenue going up with the sharing with municipalities and the 1 per cent of PST [provincial sales tax] and I want to make it very clear. It isn't that the government increased the budget to municipalities with revenue sharing; it's clearly, it's 1 per cent of the PST. And that percentage is because there was more collected of PST, money collected by people buying. And that's good. We see that. That's good for

our economy overall. So municipalities seeing an increase. But let's be . . . and make it very clear, it wasn't because this government decided that it was going to target more money for municipalities. It's clearly because the amount of spending and the PST has gone up. So revenue went up on individual spending. Whether it's business, whether it's individual, the PST went up. So that's where that increase comes.

So I don't think this government should take credit for that, like making it sound like . . . And that's all right. I mean some individuals may want to make that sound like that's a great deal, and that's good. And if individuals get some income, municipalities get more income, good for them. It helps. But I don't think that's going to help their infrastructure needs. This is for the organizational dollars they would use to run the organizations for their operations. So to be very clear, it's not going to help them with their infrastructure and the challenges that a lot of northern communities are feeling.

Whether they're in rural municipalities, whether you're in urban, whether you're in the North, Saskatchewan municipalities are having challenges. We know that and they've expressed that with the government, and I think they were hoping there would be more money for infrastructure. But for whatever reason, the government has chosen to spend their money elsewhere. And that's the decisions of cabinet and government to do that.

So when we see that area, we talked about the income coming in. And I know Prince Albert, for one, clearly have made it very clear. They thought . . . And maybe they gave the government a chance to reconsider in the budget that the government went the wrong way. But unfortunately the government won't listen to the two MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] and the MLAs in that area that are Sask Party. They just will not co-operate with them.

So they don't want to work with them and I guess they don't really get that much say at the end of the day. So having said that, I think the people of Prince Albert and the North who would utilize that new bridge . . . But when you talk about economics and you're talking about the growth, and the government wants to talk about the growth but doesn't want to help in making sure that growth moves forward, whether it's Prince Albert's second bridge or towards the North, they like to take the revenue out and spend it elsewhere. They don't like to give it back. But that's just one area we can talk about.

The other area, you know, I want to talk a little bit about and I think is important, when we talk about northern Saskatchewan health care and we see what's going on. Government announces that it's made a very small increase in the budget to health care, you know. But at the end of the day you're watching individuals. You're watching the health regions talk about it and the challenging that they're facing, and we hear about Regina and Saskatoon and just where they are starting out the year with their new . . . So it's going to be interesting to see where the health regions go.

And then on top of that, we have a government who says through the lean process or . . . we want to find \$54 million. They want them to find. Well I think some of those health

regions are doing an excellent job and they're trying to do what they can do to meet the patient needs. But where there are challenges and where there are shortfalls and where there are not the residents of our province being put first, we will make that very clear and we will do that as an opposition to bring their concerns forward.

So in this budget we see under health care — where were we? — and here's where we see this. We talk about long-term care. We talk about our grandparents. We talk about, you know, the moms and dads that are going into these long-term care facilities, that need these long-term care facilities. And on one side we see the government as a pilot. They look at home care and they're doing a little bit of a pilot and that's great. That's good. And it may help some individuals with home care, and that's good, but there's a lot and there's such a need for long-term care.

And the government talks about, I think they mention 11 of the facilities they announced years ago and they're just re-announcing it. And we've talked about the photos they . . . [inaudible] . . . more photos — photo ops, we call them. And I've referred to that and people have them, and we see those challenges going. So the government really isn't making any new announcements. It's just again recycling its announcements to hear itself say it's looking at long-term care for our seniors, and it isn't. Truly, I think the numbers will show and the facts are what they are. And the public will start to see that.

Now you can build a brand new facility in any community and you could call it long-term care, and let's say it's 58 beds, it's 50 beds. But if you have 100 long-term care facility that's old and you decided to shut that down and close it down but you've got a new one that has less beds, you're no further ahead. And a community is struggling. It's wondering, well what the heck's with that? Really, how does that make any sense? It doesn't make common sense to do that. So that's the kind of challenges that I think people are asking. If you're giving me a new facility but you're closing down beds in another facility, how are we gaining when we need more beds, not less? And yes, we want to have new ones. And that's fine. So this budget doesn't deal with that at all for seniors.

And if we look at La Ronge for instance — and that's just one health region; we have others in the North, communities that are saying they need long-term care — but we look at the study that the health region did in my community of La Ronge. You look. We need a unit that would hold 48 beds. We currently have 16. Fourteen are used as long-term; two are respite. It just isn't enough. The report was very clear. It was a critical, code-red rating that it got.

Well here we have an opportunity for government to do something after they've seen the health region do the work that they needed to do and a follow-up. And here this government again has turned their back on La Ronge, on our seniors, on individuals that we should be fighting for, northern seniors, seniors who just ask . . . who have done . . . the pioneers. And you talk about them. You talk about individuals who have, who have made this province what it is today.

But the Sask Party wants to take credit for that, and it's a sad reality to see that. They figure that in 2007 everything changed,

and that's how they want to spin it. Well you go ahead and play with that and see how that works for you. At the end of the day the people of this province know. They know. You could try to spin it the way you want, and it's interesting to see some of the challenges that'll come out of that.

So we look at long-term care, and we see our seniors are not getting what they deserve and what they need. And this government has to do better when it comes to this type of, I guess, a budget item where they don't deal with long-term care the way it is. It's going to catch up with them. And we know that.

So for those seniors I hope this government will not take its bullheadedness and move ahead on some of the other priorities it sees, like more MLAs. Like those are some of the challenges where some people are wondering, where does that come from? And when I say that that's the challenges people see, that this government has its priorities and those priorities aren't what seniors and what, I guess, middle-class income earners are earning. And they're struggling, and they're finding that.

And that takes me to the next thing. When you talk about middle class and you talk about they're doing their best work, you know, some of our families, middle-class families, you have the husband and wife and they're both working hard. And they're trying to make sure that there's a quality of life for their children, whether that's sports, whether it's schooling. So they try to provide a quality education, and they want that for their students. They want to be able to make sure that their kids can go to post-secondary, university, whatever. So they're trying to save for their retirement; save for their children.

And this government, of course, we see the universities going. There's more and more that students and the families are going to have to pay for their education because of the way this government's handled the university. And we talk about post-secondary and we see it at both of our universities. And we see the announcements. The Opposition Leader today clearly, in question period, made it very clear about the budget last year. Now that's coming to effect. Last year's budget is affecting this year. So you see the layoffs that are coming ahead with the university. Now here we're going into a new budget and we don't know yet what impact that will have on layoffs, what type of damage will it do the universities and where is the commitment. So he made that very clear today. They're going to have to watch this very close and we will be watching it very close to see if this budget will address that. But so far we can see it did not address that.

Now having said that, we'll go on to education, talk about the quality of education. Everyone wants in the province our children to have a good quality education, K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12]. And that's clear. We see from the Saskatchewan school boards and you see the comments they're making and you talk about graduation rates of our Aboriginal students. When we talk about First Nations and Métis, we're just not talking about northern Saskatchewan. We're talking about First Nations throughout this province and Métis who live within our urban areas, and there is lots of them. And we see this government, by this budget, you have failed them miserably. You have failed them. This is not going to do what needs to be done to deal with it. And it goes further than that.

So again you have turned your back on an organization that's saying we're willing and we have to do a better job. So here you have an organization and you have school divisions trying to deal with the graduation rates of First Nations, Métis, so that they're in comparison and try to do all you possibly can so that First Nations and Métis graduation rates are the same as all Saskatchewan residents.

And I think everyone in the education, I guess, in the education system is trying to work that, whether it's the board of education, whether it's staff, whether it's teachers, whether it's support staff. And we see how many support staff we have lost with this government's budget. And could they have done better? Yes, they could have done better. They could have given more money to deal with some of the situations. And we don't see that happening and that's sad.

And you're saying you want to give First Nations and Métis . . . And some of the members talk a story and they like to be in the photo ops. But I don't see anything happen. No commitment to the First Nations and Métis with the education with the small amount that they're targeting. It isn't going to do justice to what the problem is. Now that tells me something. If you think you can put a little band-aid on it and that's going to make it go away, it isn't. It's a sad reality.

When you have a population that's so young, and we look under the age of 25, the average overall population. And I've said this before even with my own grandchildren. Clearly, clearly, clearly we see that that's not going to happen. Within my own family I see that as not happening. You have a young population.

So having said that, very clearly, this government has missed some targets that it needs to address. And the concerns that were brought forward to this government, they can't say they didn't know about it. They don't know about the problem. Because Professor Eric Howe has made it very clear. It's an economic disaster. If this government . . . And it's this government. He points at the Sask Party. And ever since they took over in 2007 we see the unemployment rate of First Nations and Métis going up and up and up, and it's getting worse and worse under their watch. And why is that? Because they truly aren't committed. If they were committed to it, they would say, we'll deal with this.

And you can say what you want over there, members opposite. Very clearly, if your government was committed to dealing with this, this wouldn't be a problem. And it wouldn't have been starting since you took over government year after year, steady unemployment rate of First Nations and Métis going up. Now you look at First Nations. It's about 22 per cent. Métis is about 12 per cent. What type of record is that when you have the rest of the province at an unemployment rate . . . And they brag about it. They are happy to say it's 3 point some per cent. And we're happy for the province that the unemployment rate is good. But there is an area where this government has not done justice to the people, that they deserve to do better and they deserve respect, and they need that.

Now here is an opportunity for this government to deal with the situation. But will they? No. Here is an opportunity to talk about the growth plan. They talk about where . . . and you talk

about the professor, Eric Howe, saying it's an economic disaster. If you're not going to spend the money on educating First Nations students, making sure that the graduation rates are comparable, if you're not going to spend the money on training and employment programs, and if you see the programs that this government has cut year after year from First Nations and Métis programs, why would any government, why would any government want to cut any type of program that assisted helping First Nations and Métis with training? Clearly, why would that be? Why would that be?

[19:15]

So having said that, they can sit here and say what they want and they can say all that they want to say, but at the end of the day, the numbers and the programs and the numbers of First Nations and Métis that are unemployed are clearly what the issue is. Now they can't hide from that. Clearly you can't hide from that, their commitment. You can't hide.

So having said that, unemployment. Now you talk about unemployment, clearly, and we look at unemployment, and why? Why wouldn't a government want to do better? Why would they not want to do a better job? Clearly they've made a decision — it is not their priority. First Nations and Métis are not a priority with this government. They've made that very clear. We see that on many different areas and many different files.

And you'd look at the budget, and the duties to consult and accommodate. Why would they cut any money? Here's a program that the Crowns have an obligation to duty — to consult and accommodate First Nations and Métis. And instead of using those dollars, they've cut the funding to these programs. So that what? So they could do less. So they could do less because they don't want to consult First Nations.

They don't think . . . And if you look at some of the correspondence, will this budget deal with some of those situations? No. They don't want to because they've turned their back, because they don't think they have a right. But it will get challenged in court. And that's the only way that this government seems to handle situations, it's clear — it's court. Sometimes the court has to clarify for this government because they're bullheaded. They just want to go ahead with their own direction, and it doesn't matter. They don't want to consult. They don't know to show the respect that deserves.

All people are asking and Aboriginal people are asking, people of this province are asking, is the government to consult them, talk to them, share. But what do they do? They move ahead on their plans. And then they want to come to you after they do something, just like this budget, and they'll say, well this is what we were proposing. And we see some of the questions we're getting asked. So there's interesting things developing here as time goes on, and I think it's going to be clear.

Now we'll go into housing, housing in northern Saskatchewan and the rest of the province. How is it that a government who says it wants to support affordable housing can sell off 300 houses, and then in the budget they announced a small amount, and they want to increase, for who? Who's going to get that money? Who's going to get those opportunities to build those

houses. Insiders? Friends? Who is it? Is it going to be an independent body? Is it going to go to housing authorities? I don't think so. I don't think they're going . . .

If you look at the program, what they're going to do, they're going to make it worse and worse. And it's going to be harder for them to deal with the issues that we're faced with right now, Saskatchewan families are faced with — affordable living. And you look at some of the challenges that we had, individuals in this House. We've seen individuals come to this legislature that had to come and get the government . . . to lobby and bring the concerns and the media and everything to have their rents . . . We've seen their rents going up 70-some per cent. That doesn't even make sense.

So does this government and budget address that? No it doesn't address that, not at all. But they're going to pick and choose what they want, so this budget's going to pick and choose. They will pick and choose how they want to spin it because that's what they do, the best thing that they're good at. And I'll give them credit. They spin. They like to spin.

But do you know what? The public and the media is starting to pick up on it. And you know, you look at some of the comments, and it was interesting to see Murray Mandryk's article today in the *Leader-Post* and *The StarPhoenix*. It was a very interesting article, very. He shed some lights on some of the things that's going on, on some of the trends and concerns. So I think people and the public needs to pay attention to that article and read it. I think it's an interesting article and it makes it very clear.

So having said that, you know, we talk about housing. In northern Saskatchewan, you know, we want housing to be available for people. And we want programs that were up there that helped individuals to, you know, whether you were starting a new home, if you're an individual, or you had rent-to-own, there was programs in northern Saskatchewan to assist individuals to own their own home. It was a good program.

Maybe the government came in and they wanted to review that process. There's nothing wrong with that. Review it. But you don't just cut the whole program off and say, we don't like that. It's gone. We don't want this social housing anymore. We want private housing. We want the private sector to take over. And you know what? We want our friends to get some of this money so that they can build these houses, affordable houses for people.

That is the wrong way to go. We have organizations and we have people who volunteer to sit on housing boards and have done an excellent job and continue to do that. They have done an excellent job. Don't take away from them. Give them the support they need to make sure that housing is available. But does this government do that? No, it goes ahead with its bullheadedness and it's going to go ahead and do what it wants to do. It has its agenda and it's going to get it.

And we look at this budget and we look at the privatization area. That's another area with this budget. People are watching the way they're using the assets and the budget. And if you look at the assets that come into this government's coffers from our Crowns, now that is interesting, you know. You look at the

Crowns and individuals — they want and they used to have, you know, the cheapest bundle of utilities in Canada under the previous NDP [New Democratic Party] government. And that's a record, something we can stand behind clearly. But will this government give that? No, they won't. Is this budget going to address that? No, this budget doesn't address that. It doesn't even go near that, because you know why? They've been taking so much money from our Crowns because in special dividends, for whatever reason, because they want to call their so-called balanced budget — they're calling their version of it — but if you look at the Provincial Auditor, got a different opinion.

You look at what's going on. And we need this government to come clean and start providing the accountability that the auditor has asked for, to report the finances the way the auditor is recommending, the way the rest of Canada does. And it might have been the way previous governments did it and they . . . [inaudible] . . . But that doesn't work anymore. People have switched over to something else and there's a process and a way of doing it that makes it easier for the public to understand them. And that's what we need. So we show the true debts and we show the income. It's very simple and it needs to be done. And that's an area.

Now we talk about renovations — and I want to go back to this because this is important — renovations and people wanting to repair their homes. Sometimes we have to make sure that there's money in this budget to do renovations and repairs. And sometimes there are major repairs to homes that people live, whether they're your own home you own or whether it's the housing authority's. And it seems like the housing authorities are getting governments turning their back on the housing authorities even. I don't believe they're going to get any money, increase of money. And I believe that the way they're dealing with it, they might be handling the way they get their funding to do maintenance differently. So we've got to watch all this stuff. It's going to be interesting to see what happens at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker.

Now having said that, I talked about the options of home. We talked about education. We've talked about health care and we talked about the good job that the health care providers are providing, the front-line workers. And they are there. But sometimes they need something by government. Government controls the budgets. Government controls what they will do. And we've seen our leader talk about those questions that he's had.

Now it's interesting, you know, to see and since then to talk about a time where government says, we want more jobs for Aboriginal people. We want more jobs in northern Saskatchewan. And then you have the Premier who goes to his annual Prince Albert supper, whatever they want to call it, and he makes comments. And it was interesting to see that one of the Métis locals over in the Prince Albert area is very upset with the comments of the Premier and what he talks about. And he kind of refers it to his . . . Wall said that the best programs for First Nation/Métis people in Saskatchewan, it's not programs at all. It's Cameco.

And some people are finding it, well you're trying to say you want to turn over everything to Cameco. So you want Cameco to take care of housing. You want all these programs that have

been priority for northern people. And not only in the North, in the South, you expect Cameco to do this.

The government has an obligation to do the duties, consult and accommodate. Let's make it very clear. The government has that obligation to do that. So be very clear. And you know, at the end of the day, at the end of the day, you can have communities. You can have communities who want to say they're doing really good under this government. That's fine. Some communities. But let's just make sure that northerners . . . And I say northerners, as the family, come together and they take care of one another, and they make sure they look out for their brothers, sisters and their cousins and their extended family. They don't just take care of their family. They stretch it out and they make sure everyone's taken care of. And I've watched some of those elders and I've watched some of the leaders and how they do that. It's not just their community. They make sure when they're negotiating and they're doing, everybody benefits. And that's truly about the North. I have learned that from northern people. They truly, they truly, they truly take care. They truly take care of citizens. They truly care of northerners. They take care of their family, their extended family. And that is something to be very proud of and they're very proud of. So I give credit.

Now having said that, you can see why there are being concerns raised when you have a Premier going on and making these type of comments, programs that would be better for Métis and First Nations. He talks about the best program would be Cameco for them. And that's alarming to individuals. And I'm glad that the public is starting to talk about it. And you know, I don't know if Cameco is aware that the programs that the government is supposed to be responsible, the government wants to hand off to Cameco. I don't believe Cameco's going to be so happy. I can't speak for them, but I know if I was them I would be wondering, well, why are we going to be taking care of all these programs? So that's going to be interesting to see how Cameco deals with this type of situation when you have the Premier going off and saying that.

Now having said that, you know, you look at a program, the Aboriginal employment program. A program I say that did an excellent job. It truly did. It took partnership. It took Aboriginal individuals. It got them into training opportunities. And you know what? It got them to work. It got them trained. They got the skills that they needed to so that they're not on assistance, so that they could have a better quality of life for their family and that's what they want. It gave them a fair chance. And this government seen that, that it was working. So what does it do? It cancelled the program. And they should be ashamed of themselves for what they've done there. And do they come up with a new program? No, they don't.

And then they want to run around and wonder, as they cut all the Aboriginal programs in this province since they've taken over government 2007, then they want to have a task force or they want to have a review or they want to have a study. Well Aboriginal people, northern people, are tired of their studies because these guys don't do anything with them anyway. So there's exactly what it is.

Where's their commitment? In this budget will it show any commitment to the issues? No, Mr. Speaker, it won't. They're

not committed to doing that. They just like to have photo ops, talk about what they're going to do at the end of the day. The challenges are going to be there. It's going to be there for the leadership in the North. It's going to be for the leadership in our province. And that government does not listen. It doesn't consult.

And we see the way they handled files, the film tax credit. We've seen what they've done with that, questions constantly being challenges. We see what's going on when government takes public dollars and they introduce them and they're handing them out on, you know — what did they call it? — the handshake deals. The word, you know, here's what it is. You take public dollars and you just hand them out like there's no accountability. What is gone with that?

And if you look at . . . The public's watching this, and they're watching it closely. And it's not going away. It truly isn't going to go away. If they think, you know, it's going to go away, it's clearly . . . If you look at the article that I talked about today in Mandryk's column, clearly, in *The Star Phoenix* and the *Leader-Post*, it shows. And it's showing a trend. He talks about that. And it's scary that this is the way public dollars are being dealt with. And he refers to it.

These guys like yelling out all the time. You know, since I've come here they yell about SPUDCO. And it was interesting to see. It was interesting to see that they want to talk about that now. But it's interesting when you start comparing, and if individuals are going to start yelling about that, that's going to be interesting where it evolves.

So that so-called word, you know what? We'll wait and see what happens because I don't think this is going away. And I think as it's opened up, and as the public gets a hold of the information, what you're doing with their tax dollars — and I remind you, hard-earned tax dollars — that people expect you to do better, to do better for our students, to do better with our children who are going to post-secondary, who are going to university, our students. And not only that, to make sure that you do what is right with dollars, hard-earned dollars that people in this province work hard and they pay their fair share . . . Trust me, they do.

And then you have a government who wants to charge . . . And you know, it's fine. They want areas where they want to increase. They want to increase 20 per cent for tobacco and then they want to also increase the alcohol and tax. They're going to be getting more revenue from the off-sale, which is fine, the selling of alcohol. That's fine. Are they going to target those money and those profits, are they going to target them to deal with the addictions, with the addictions that are facing our province? Addictions — clearly are they going to deal with that addiction? Are they going to make sure that if you're going to make regulations and you're going to make changes that make alcohol easier, accessible to our young people, to people in our province, will you then provide the addictions treatment? When those individuals say, I no longer can make it, I'm struggling — will you provide those dollars for the addictions? I don't believe so. I don't believe so. I don't believe that this government cares. And we're talking about serious health problems when it comes to addictions, youth suicide. We talk about all this and there's organizations working hard. And what does this government

do? It blindsides. It does things that are opposite of what groups are doing.

[19:30]

So how is this government in tune with Saskatchewan people? This government should be ashamed of itself when it comes to the track record on addictions and on what they're providing when it comes to mental health, as well when it comes to dealing with the addictions problem. Now having said that, there are so many other priorities that individuals have in this province. But the government has made its decisions, and whether it's education that's suffering, that will pay a price, whether the health regions will pay a price, whether Saskatchewan residents will pay a price because of this government's budget.

And it likes to spin and wants to spin it that everything's good. And when you listen to the auditor and you look up some of the findings and you look at the IPAC [International Performance Assessment Centre for geologic storage of CO₂], you know, you look at that situation. If you look at what's going on and the trends going on with this government and friends getting certain benefits and certain ones getting special treatment, that's what the public is starting to see. And the government will pay a price for that because you have a budget where you could have done a lot more for Saskatchewan people, and you should have done a lot more for Saskatchewan people. You should have done the right thing.

And maybe those backbenchers should have done a little bit of more fighting for northern people as well as southern, rural, urban — maybe they could have spoke up; maybe they should have spoke up — and Aboriginal people as well. They have Aboriginal members over there. Speak up. Fight for what's going on. Don't allow this government to not. Do what you can do, whether it's the Prince Albert bridge, whether it's fighting for Aboriginal people, whether it's fighting for Saskatchewan citizens, our seniors, our young people who are trying to get a quality education and a post-secondary. This government has not dealt fair with the people and the finances of this province to deal with the priorities of Saskatchewan people. And you have not, you have not in this budget dealt with a lot of the issues that people have brought forward, whether they're issues, concerns, whether they're truly impacting those communities.

You have missed in this budget. You've got some credit. We have given you credit. Our leader has given you credit, and I know my colleagues have. I have. Where? You've done some good things. Right on. Good. When we see things helping Saskatchewan people and it's benefiting Saskatchewan people, we're saying yes. Common sense things we'll support. But when it's not, then our leader and our party will stand up for the people who are not getting fair treatment by this government. And you know, I will not be supporting the motion. I will be supporting the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources.

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure tonight to enter in the debate about the sixth balanced budget put forward by the Saskatchewan Party government, Mr.

Speaker.

But before I get into the nuts and bolts of this year's budget, I would like to take the opportunity to I guess first off make a few thank yous. Thank the ladies who work in my office in Lloydminster. We have a very busy office there. We try to be very active, and I think the service we provide is terrific — getting back to people, ensuring that people are heard, and moving issues forward. So thank you to Caren and Marilyn for the hard work that they do in the office.

Mr. Speaker, many of my colleagues have done the same thing, but we thank our wives and we don't do it often enough. But, Mr. Speaker, it is something that I'm very blessed to have such a great wife that is so supportive and such a great partner for me with the work I do and the girls we're raising. So thank you to my wife.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have one other thank you to make. It wasn't one that I had thought of right away, but the fact is I left my speech on my desk over the lunch hour, and when I came back, scrawled in a slightly different handwriting was "seatmate." So, Mr. Speaker, seeing how that my seatmate was so kind to help me write my speech, I really should thank the member from Martensville for being a good seatmate, handing me notes when appropriate, and when my speech is lacking, she even takes the time to beef it up a little.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk a little bit about Lloydminster. It's a great town. It's one of the fastest growing cities in all of Canada. It's consistently named one of the most entrepreneurial cities in the country. And, Mr. Speaker, it's a place where a young man, a young woman with ambition, with drive, can start off with almost nothing. If they're willing to work hard, very quickly, Mr. Speaker, they can start making something of themselves and very quickly really be doing well. And I've seen it many times where a young person will get a job driving a semi, driving a truck, a pressure truck. After a year or two, they've saved enough money to buy their own truck. After a couple years of that, they buy two or three and start hiring people. And, Mr. Speaker, that story has repeated itself over and over in Lloydminster. It is true entrepreneurship, and it has made our town a very exciting and dynamic place where people from all backgrounds, all qualifications, with one common ability of willingness to work and to put themselves forward can really do well.

An interesting thing happened not long ago, Mr. Speaker, in Lloydminster. Me and my wife were at one of our favourite restaurants. It's a shawarma shop. A young man who's moved here from Lebanon named Mo — I think it's probably short for Mohammed — but we have got friendly over the last couple of years. He's moved to Lloydminster. He's gotten married in the last year and has just a three-month-old little baby girl, Mr. Speaker, new to Canada, new to Lloydminster.

He's an example of a young person with drive and ambition. He struggles with what many people in Lloydminster do, hiring enough staff. And I think he works about 20 hours a day, seven days a week. And just recently he has brought on some more staff. But he makes a great shawarma and I'm a little bit addicted to it. It's something me and Ali and my girls like a fair bit.

But one day, Mr. Speaker, we were in there. We were enjoying our lunch, and an interesting thing happened. We're sitting looking out the window and a big white panel truck pulls up out front and three gentlemen jump out, in black pants and white shirts and hats. They were Hutterites, Mr. Speaker. And one ran next door into the 7-Eleven and the other two came into Mo's shawarma shop. And my first thought was, I'd never really put together the German cooking style of the Hutterites and shawarma. It just didn't dawn on me that that would be the type of food that they would necessarily be attracted to.

But an interesting thing happened. They talked to Mo for a few minutes, and the young man ran back out to the truck, grabbed a couple of bags of potatoes, and in and sold Mo a couple of bags of potatoes. And I thought, this is a Lloydminster story where people that had come to Canada 100 years ago to build a better life have been terrifically successful, are a great part of our community . . . The Hutterites just north of the North Saskatchewan River are a fantastic part of our local community and, Mr. Speaker, they are engaging in entrepreneurial business with the newest newcomers to Saskatchewan, the newest wave of immigration. And, Mr. Speaker, it's stories like that that make Lloydminster great, that make Saskatchewan great, and we're seeing more and more of that all the time.

Mr. Speaker, looking more directly at this year's budget, a quote came to me that I thought really stands out to this budget and how this budget differs from maybe some budgets and history of the former government in the past. And, Mr. Speaker, this is an E.E. Cummings quote and it is, "The three saddest things are the ill wanting to be well, the poor wanting to be rich, and the constant traveler saying 'anywhere but here'." And, Mr. Speaker, that is something that I believe is truly encapsulated in this budget, in the success of Saskatchewan in recent years relative to what was in the history of Saskatchewan over the years previous.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the three saddest things, the ill wanting to be well, the thing that dawns on me, Mr. Speaker, is in this budget we directly address this issue. We address the collaborative emergency care centres that our Minister of Rural and Remote Health has been championing that will be making a meaningful difference in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and something that health care affects everyone in Saskatchewan, and that commitment is a major part of this budget.

Also the \$2 million for innovative home care services, Mr. Speaker. This is something that I think both sides of the aisle will agree that home care is going to be a fundamental piece of ensuring health care, of taking the pressure off of our health care system by putting targeted investments into home care. Another is the Alzheimer's First Link. Again, Mr. Speaker, I think both sides of the aisle would agree that supporting our Alzheimer's families is crucial, support to those families. It's a support to our entire system, Mr. Speaker, by taking the pressure off the system by putting those supports in place.

And maybe the most obvious and the most emblematic of the past five years of this government has been our investments over the past four years on surgical wait times. Mr. Speaker, when we took over government, the wait times in this province were the longest in the country. It was an embarrassment in a

national context and in a Saskatchewan context. We had neighbours, we had relatives, everyone in this province was touched with a wait-list of one, two years, Mr. Speaker. A bold target was put forward that nobody in Saskatchewan should wait longer than three months for surgery and, Mr. Speaker, we are in the fourth year. We've seen terrific success, and this year's budget carries on that work with great commitments to round out the four-year target and get those wait times down where they're acceptable.

When I reflect back, Mr. Speaker, to budgets in the past that the former government put forward in regards to wait times and some of the issues around them, I was reading through a news article from 1996-97 when the NDP's fifth budget . . . And it outlines civil service cuts. It outlines grant reductions, and there's a specific mention in that time period about wait times. And about the same time, the Fraser Institute brought out their list, and it was wait times for surgeries are the worst in the nation according to the Fraser Institute. The government's reply to this, Mr. Speaker, was that no one really knows how long the wait-lists are.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is telling on a couple of different fronts. One, they were the longest in the country as articulated by a third party. But, Mr. Speaker, this was in a *Globe and Mail* article from the 29th of March, and the fact that they didn't know how long the lines were, they were two steps away from even setting a target. Because if you can't quantify how bad things are, how do you know what an appropriate target would be?

Mr. Speaker, I think that that, Mr. Speaker, that would have something to do with the ideology of the members opposite and them not wanting to do any sort of testing in our schools because they wouldn't set targets. They wouldn't know how long the lines are or, Mr. Speaker, where the investments needed to happen.

But on health care, Mr. Speaker, the saddest thing is the ill wanting to be well. In this year's budget, we're seeing that the ill will be getting well, and that is very important here in our province. Mr. Speaker, the second saddest thing is the poor wanting to be rich, according to E.E. Cummings' quote.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to reflect first on the record of the NDP and some of the stuff that I picked out of former budgets that the members opposite brought forward. And the one that stands out for me is again 1996-97 budget. And the members that sat on that side of the House then, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party members that have then migrated to this side of the House under the Sask Party, and Arlene Julé, accompanied by our minister for Social Services, made some very big issues of what they saw as flaws in those budgets.

And one was the food allowance, Mr. Speaker, for families. The poor that were in shelters back then, our most vulnerable people, Mr. Speaker, were forced to live on \$4 a day worth of food. And Arlene Julé, our minister of Social Services, took on the challenge of living on \$4 a day, Mr. Speaker, and they couldn't do it. After a couple of days, they realized, Mr. Speaker, that that was a ridiculous amount, something that has been addressed by this government, Mr. Speaker, really from when we became government and even further addressed in this

year, Mr. Speaker, where our Minister of Social Services corrected another injustice. Families would come into shelters, Mr. Speaker, and only one child would be recognized. Following the changes made this year by our Minister of Social Services, now all the children are recognized, all . . . If there is five children, five children get funded as opposed to one child being funded for food, Mr. Speaker.

But going back, Mr. Speaker, to when they were . . . the NDP were in government, their minister at the time was Lorne Calvert, the future premier of the province, NDP premier. And Lorne Calvert said, Mr. Speaker, that . . . and I'll quote here from the news article from the *Gazette*:

Earlier this week, Social Services minister Lorne Calvert provoked anger when he suggested that disabled residents of group homes are getting more money for food than the average Saskatchewan person spends.

Now, Mr. Speaker, at \$4 a person per day, Mr. Speaker, I would question his math. I'd question his judgment and I would say that that was shameful. Mr. Speaker, in *The StarPhoenix* article at that same time, I'll quote again:

The \$4 daily food allowance the government provides to disabled adults living in group homes is more than what's required to feed the average Saskatchewan resident, says Social Services minister Lorne Calvert.

Mr. Speaker, that was a time when the poor, Mr. Speaker, were not treated with the respect they needed. Where our most vulnerable disabled adults living in group homes, Mr. Speaker, were not treated with the respect that we would expect and that now is in place here in Saskatchewan. The flip side of that, Mr. Speaker, is today in Saskatchewan we see we have the fastest growing incomes in the country. That we've raised our food allowances in shelters. That opportunities abound and that this government, Mr. Speaker, has endeavoured to put a level playing field for all citizens.

[19:45]

Mr. Speaker, the third point made by Mr. E.E. Cummings in his quote is that the third saddest thing is that the constant traveller says, anywhere but here. And again, Mr. Speaker, a great story to tell in this year's budget. We have the fastest growing time period in our population in over a hundred years. We see the people are coming to our province from across the country, from around the world to find opportunity. They're bringing their families.

Mr. Speaker, you can't go anywhere in our province without seeing it, whether it's the potash mines, the oil fields, the uranium mines. We just in recent times have even seen a resurgence in the interest in the forestry sector, Mr. Speaker, as lumber prices have started to rebound. And we see investments, Mr. Speaker, in that field as well.

Mr. Speaker, the flip side of that is under the former NDP government the "anywhere but here" line was most eloquently articulated by a press release put out by the NDP in 2003 where they boastfully said in their press release, "Outmigration is at the lowest level in four years." Well, I bet you there was a real

pat yourself on the back party with that one. I think that the next line would have been, you know, as people are speeding towards the border, we've seen them slow down from 130 kilometres an hour to just 110. Their efforts to get out of our province are only half as great as they were in the past.

Mr. Speaker, that is foolishness. The reality is in 2005, Mr. Speaker, when that quote came out, Saskatchewan was a great place to be. Today in Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan is a great place to be. And, Mr. Speaker, we now have the economic pieces in place. We have the cultural and social pieces in place to create the environment where people are very keen to make this their home, to raise their families in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to talk a little bit about some of the reasons that I think that that is not just important today but is important in the long term as incredibly sustainable. Just this week the figures came out on the investment intentions. This is put out by the *Saskatchewan Business Magazine*. They interview from across the country and they put together a list of business intentions for investments across the country. Saskatchewan has seen our business and our investment numbers go through the roof in recent years. This year, \$20.5 billion of public and private investment — the bulk of that, the large bulk of that is private investments, Mr. Speaker — oil and gas and mining, 8.2 billion; agriculture and forestry, 1.3 billion; housing, Mr. Speaker, \$3.7 billion worth of investment in our province. This number is double, is over double what it was just a few years ago.

And, Mr. Speaker, the reason this is important, these investments are going into our province today, are going to serve our province for 100 years. We look at potash mines where the shafts were sunk 50 years ago. Mosaic had their 50th anniversary of their mine sinking here this past fall. They've got a 50-year, Mr. Speaker, plan to mine out of that shaft still ahead of it. So all the development we're seeing today, this \$20 billion, Mr. Speaker, it means this is the first step. This is the foundational building blocks of what will ultimately be the continued growth and prosperity, the jobs, the full communities, the full schools, the skating rinks, Mr. Speaker, for generations to come. At Esterhazy, 50 years on there are young men, young women going to work in that mine today whose fathers and grandfathers, Mr. Speaker, were there when the mine was first sunk back 50 years ago.

Now the potash industry has had quite a storied existence in the last 50 years, a large portion of it thanks to the members opposite and the economic policies that they put forward through the '70s. But, Mr. Speaker, more of that in a little bit. The other interesting thing, Mr. Speaker, is what does \$20 billion of investment, \$20.5 billion mean relative to what we have? If you do the math, it works out to about \$20,000 for every man, woman, and child being invested in our province for long-term sustainability. If we look at other provinces like Ontario or Quebec, those numbers are less than \$10,000, less than half the investment going into those provinces as is going on here.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think that that speaks to the investment climate that we have in Saskatchewan, one with stability, stable royalties, stable taxation, stable political climate, Mr. Speaker, that allow these long-term investments to be put in place with

confidence. And in other provinces that is not the case. And reading recent headlines coming out of Eastern Canada where Quebec is committed to raising their royalties, that they think that that won't have a detrimental effect on their mining and investment industry, Mr. Speaker, that is a different path than we're taking here. It's a different path than what the members opposite continue to put forward. And, Mr. Speaker, I know that the members opposite sometimes feel like we're putting words in their mouth, that we say they are talking about royalty reviews and we can't trust the NDP, that they have a history of this sort of thing. Well, Mr. Speaker, they keep reconfirming it for us.

And this past weekend I was reading through the *prairie dog*, as I do most weekends, Mr. Speaker. And there was a great article in here, Mr. Speaker, about . . . And I'm going to quote. It was "Talking To Cam Broten." So, Mr. Speaker, on the front cover it says, "Cam Broten. Meet the new NDP leader." And, Mr. Speaker, I couldn't put it down. It was a page-turner, if you will. And I thought that a couple of the points that he had brought forward in his interview were worthy of discussion during this speech. And the first, Mr. Speaker, was in regards to raising royalties and what it would do to the investment climate here in our province . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well he doesn't even beat around the bush. He comes right out and says, "I've said . . ." and I'm quoting here, Mr. Speaker, "I've said there needs to be a royalty review and I'm committed to that . . . job as Opposition leader . . ."

So, Mr. Speaker, they talked about raising royalties in the campaign. They were thoroughly rebuked, Mr. Speaker. They talked about raising royalties I believe in their Dwain Lingenfelter orange book that again was Dwain Lingenfelter and the current NDP leader put together. And, Mr. Speaker, we know that. And I'm going to quote again here, Mr. Speaker. The only person that has signed this book is in fact the current Leader of the NDP. And at the end of the first page . . . Maybe I will start at the top of the first page, the transferral letter. It says, "Dear fellow New Democrats," and at the bottom, I'm going to read the last line. It says, "We have listened to your ideas. We share your dreams of a better Saskatchewan." Well I can appreciate that. And I continue to quote, "Working together, we can turn those dreams into a reality. Cam Broten, MLA, Chair of the policy review task force."

Mr. Speaker, this document was the Dwain Lingenfelter playbook. It was put together by the Leader of the Opposition, and instead of distancing himself from it, instead of saying that this document from their campaign that was thoroughly rebuked, that led to nine lonely seats, Mr. Speaker, on the opposition bench, instead of saying that this is something that we're going to run from, in fact, no. He's now leader. He's going to embrace the Dwain Lingenfelter ideology. He's going to continue on that path of continued, Mr. Speaker, negative . . . He wants to create a climate where we don't have the investments, where we don't have the growing population, where we don't have the type of Saskatchewan that so many people have waited for, are living, and hoping continue.

Now, Mr. Speaker, while I have the *prairie dog* out, there was one other thing that caught my eye. It doesn't necessarily tie in to the royalty section but it is something that again I thought was worth mentioning. It was to a question to the member, the

Leader of the Opposition. The question was, "How concerned are you about the party's presence in rural Saskatchewan?" You know, I think that's a legitimate question, Mr. Speaker, because rural Saskatchewan is a fundamental piece of our province. It's the heart and soul of our province in many ways. And, Mr. Speaker, it has been a place where the members opposite have been absolutely absent for over 15 years, Mr. Speaker, and 25 years I hear, Mr. Speaker.

I know that in my riding that we haven't seen a member from the opposition in years. In fact I've considered hosting an NDP leaders debate in our riding myself just to get those ideas exposed, because no one in Lloydminster would believe that there were members that were putting forward royalty reviews and advocating raising royalties on all the extractive resources. Because, Mr. Speaker, I think that it's important that we air these types of ideas and let people know in the light of day that the hard-working men and women of Lloydminster . . . that the members opposite are espousing such things.

Mr. Speaker, the thing that I want to point out about the rural Saskatchewan is, "We need to focus on building strong rural communities because that's what people want. And that's what we are good at as New Democrats . . ." Mr. Speaker, I can't believe . . . Like I respect that they should reach out. I would be pleased if they did. I think that's good for our province. I think that it would be good for their party. But, Mr. Speaker, to claim that they are good at building rural communities is the farthest thing from the truth. The people on this side of the House, the people of rural Saskatchewan lived through the 16 years of abandonment led by the closing of the hospitals, the shrinking school populations, the property tax, Mr. Speaker, that was never-ending. Rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, paid a dear, dear price for the 16 years that the members opposite were in government, Mr. Speaker.

And I would like to see them do the outreach. I would like to see them connect. I think it would be good for our province. But to try and claim that what they're good at is building strong rural communities, Mr. Speaker, that is a little more than I think most people can take.

Mr. Speaker, as I get into a little more about my portfolio and some of the things in this budget that relate to that, another quote that jumps out at me is a Benjamin Franklin quote. And it says, "Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement, and success have no meaning." Well, Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more.

Now those words had very little meaning when the members opposite were in government. There was no growth. There was decline. There was systemic decline across the health care system, across the economy, across the population, across the school-aged children, Mr. Speaker, in our province.

And, Mr. Speaker, that is no longer the case. This budget truly articulates a vision that has growth and progress and, Mr. Speaker, where we can see all over our province that we are going to continue to see improvement, achievement, and success.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think that part of that is ensuring we have the right investment climate. I think part of that is just telling a

story, telling the right story about our province, because for far too long the wrong story of our province was told. There were people, Mr. Speaker, there were people from outside our province that necessarily didn't know the great things going on here, and people inside our province and, Mr. Speaker, part of . . . people in the government that told the wrong story about our province.

And shortly after becoming Minister of Energy and Resources, I was touring a gold mine. And one of the geologists told me that when he went through university at Queen's University in Ontario, his profs used to say that you couldn't find meaningful properties for gold deposits in Saskatchewan or anywhere very far west because our geological time of our Canadian Shield was too young. It didn't have meaningful mineralization like the Canadian Shield does in Ontario and Quebec, and apparently those rocks are much older.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we now have four operating gold mines in our province. We have one that has poured its millionth ounce of gold just this summer. And, Mr. Speaker, we now know that that geological assessment is absolutely wrong. And, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that anyone that knows better spreads the word about how great the investment climate and opportunities are here in our province.

The one a little closer to home, Mr. Speaker, is the explanation I heard for years, outside of Lloydminster, where the oil fields on the Alberta sides were very, very prolific and prosperous, but on the Saskatchewan side of the border there were far less drilling, far less production. And I can remember NDP political leaders talking about why that was. And the explanation was it was a geological anomaly, that yes there was an ocean that covered most of the centre of the continent, but for some strange reason all the plankton seemed to die on one side of the border, and that's why they have such prolific reserves. Well the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that we have seen with the right business climate, with the right message out about Saskatchewan, that in fact the dinosaurs died on both sides of the border and that both provinces are in the midst of very successful economic times because of it. And, Mr. Speaker, that is something we are going to continue to do.

[20:00]

In this budget, Mr. Speaker, in specifics, some very important pieces in regards to energy and resources. Probably the largest was the uranium royalties, Mr. Speaker. It is something that the members opposite put in place about 13 years ago. To talk about how the changes happen, at that time, Mr. Speaker, in 2001, the NDP put together a royalty system that was based on assumptions. Costs were allocated based on projects. And over time, Mr. Speaker, it was expected that the costs would not necessarily reflect . . . would get further and further out of skew from the actual costs. So it would be very good in the short term, but in the longer term, Mr. Speaker, it would no longer be relevant.

And in fact that is the situation we found ourselves in. In recent years in Saskatchewan as we saw the growth, the prosperity, we saw construction costs, Mr. Speaker, increase at a faster rate than even inflation. And what that meant is that our uranium industry was no longer competitive for bringing on new mines.

Even though we have the richest uranium in the world, the most amount of uranium in the world, in recent years, Mr. Speaker, we have seen the investments going to places like Kazakhstan because we had a fundamental structural flaw in our uranium system.

Following this year's budget, Mr. Speaker, we now have a system that's based on actual costs. We know that mining companies can invest with certainty because it's no longer an assumption-based, and those assumptions that were so far skewed from the reality of the costs they would have is now brought back in line with actual costs.

The second piece, Mr. Speaker, is that we had a three-tiered system: 6, 10, and 15 per cent. For simplicity, Mr. Speaker, we dropped the lowest tier of 6 per cent, and we now just have the two higher royalty points at 10 and 15, with the split at \$22, Mr. Speaker. We think that this is not just an important thing for the Government of Saskatchewan and the royalties we'll collect. This is a fundamental piece for the growth that we want to see in northern Saskatchewan.

We know that northern communities, northern families want to have the same opportunities that those in the South do. And the mining industry, Mr. Speaker, has created jobs in the potash area. The oil industry has created jobs in Lloydminster, in Yorkton, and Swift Current, Mr. Speaker. In northern Saskatchewan, we are sitting on top of some fantastic uranium properties. And getting the fundamentals right and ensuring we have a system that adequately reflects cost is going to be fundamental in ensuring that we see projects move forward because it has been over a decade since we've seen a new mine come into production, Mr. Speaker, and we think that it is crucial for providing the employment and the growth that those communities want to see.

And, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to reach out to our members opposite. The member for Athabasca on occasion has spoken about the uranium industry. I believe that he is a supporter of the development and what it means to northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And, Mr. Speaker, I believe that he is confirming his support of this industry, and I am certain that the industry is supportive of that, Mr. Speaker.

The problem, Mr. Speaker, is his leader because it's been tough to get an answer out of him as to whether he supports the changes to the royalty system, Mr. Speaker, whether he supports the new mines, that if they want to come forward now, have an environment to do so. And in fact just last Thursday, he was asked three separate times: do you support this royalty change which will support growth in northern Saskatchewan? And on three separate times, Mr. Speaker, he was nowhere to be seen. He talked in platitudes. He talked in the triple bottom line. He came up with every reason he could not to either support it or not support it. He had time to look at it but, Mr. Speaker, he had no opinion. In fact he was looking for any out he could find.

So I would ask the member for Athabasca to lean over two seats, to talk to his leader, to express his concerns as to why this is the right thing, why this is important in his riding, in his communities and, Mr. Speaker, we hope for his support in this

regard.

Mr. Speaker, there's other examples, Mr. Speaker, of where we've had a hard time getting the Leader of the Opposition to have an opinion. And, Mr. Speaker, we need him to have an opinion at times. He is not just the Opposition Leader; he's the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

And, Mr. Speaker, we had a situation here about three weeks ago where the federal Opposition Leader, Mr. Speaker, again an NDP leader, went to Washington, DC. And, Mr. Speaker, for a little context, we right now in Saskatchewan have a bit of a challenge in our oil industry. We're producing, we're producing more oil today than we ever have before. We set a record this year, Mr. Speaker, for oil production. We are going to continue to have very prolific oil fields. The problem is we only have a limited amount of pipeline capacity, and we need to get it to market.

We currently refine more oil than we use, and we export it into Manitoba. But, Mr. Speaker, we have to get the rest of it to market. Traditionally most of it has gone to the Gulf Coast, to Texas. We're looking at outlets to the West Coast. We think that those will be important. Industry is also looking at options to take oil to the East Coast, Mr. Speaker, to Montreal. But in the immediate term, the Gulf Coast and Texas are the next options that we need to have, Mr. Speaker.

The Keystone XL pipeline is in the news every day. There's a national effort for provincial leaders, our ambassador, the Prime Minister, the minister of trade federally, the minister of energy and resources federally, Mr. Speaker, have been in Washington, have been in Chicago, have been in New York talking about the importance of this project not just for Canada but also for the United States.

And it is important for the United States, Mr. Speaker. We think there's a great case. There's a great safety record. There's a great route, Mr. Speaker, that has been approved by all the states that it runs through. And, Mr. Speaker, we're now waiting on the president, President Obama, to approve it with a presidential permit.

With all this effort going forward, Mr. Speaker, it is reminiscent of the BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy] crisis where all of Canada bound together to try and find a market for our cattle. Today all of Canada is bound together to try and find a market for our oil. All but, Mr. Speaker, one small group, a small group of NDP. The federal leader, the federal deputy leader have both been in the United States, in Washington, actively lobbying against an access outpost to export our oil. And, Mr. Speaker, when we needed them the most, they did the exact opposite things. If they would've sat on their hands, it would've been better than what they did.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if Mr. Mulcair can take his words back. In fact I know that he can't. I would ask that, Mr. Speaker, that he retract them or do what he can to put the toothpaste back in the bottle. But we can't control him; we're not a federal party or neither a federal opposition.

But his provincial counterparts, Mr. Speaker, they had a role here too. When Mr. Mulcair was in Washington speaking

against the interests of the people of Saskatchewan, where was the Saskatchewan NDP and the Saskatchewan NDP leader? Mr. Speaker, they were hiding under a pile of coats. It took two days, Mr. Speaker, for the Leader of the Opposition to find his way out from under the pile of coats, out of the coatroom to give a lukewarm response to say that actually he thinks he was in favour of the Keystone XL. And, Mr. Speaker, he wasn't sure. And the reality was, Mr. Speaker, in the past he hasn't been. It's only recently that he's had the conversion to support the Keystone XL — one day too late and a little too short.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take him back about a year. We had a vote here in this House on this very issue, on the Keystone XL. And, Mr. Speaker, it was a private member, the member for Thunder Creek, the member for Thunder Creek put forward a motion, and the motion, Mr. Speaker, was:

That this Assembly calls upon all parties [all parties] in the federal Parliament of Canada to unite in support of the Keystone XL pipeline project . . .

Mr. Speaker, we had a very simple, very non-political statement, Mr. Speaker, that we voted on: that we would ask all parties. We didn't name anyone. We didn't embarrass anyone. We just wanted a united stance from the legislature of Saskatchewan.

And what happened, Mr. Speaker? We talked about it for three separate weeks on private members' day, and then we had an opportunity to vote on it. And we had a standing vote where each member could stand up and be asked, do you support the Keystone XL pipeline and that we would ask the federal government to support it. Everyone on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, voted one way. We voted that in fact we wanted a common stance from Saskatchewan, and we wanted the federal government, Mr. Speaker, to also have a common stance in support of the Keystone XL.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm looking at the results here. There was 37 that said yea. And, Mr. Speaker, with just a quick scan through the names here, Mr. Speaker, I see quite a strong correlation that all 36 are on this side of the House. So I asked myself, who said nay? Well there were six, Mr. Speaker, the nimble six. And, Mr. Speaker, what six would vote against the Keystone XL pipeline? Well it would seem that all six of them, Mr. Speaker, including the Leader of the Opposition, voted against the motion to support the Keystone XL pipeline.

Mr. Speaker, when we needed them most, they were nowhere to be seen. They show up two days late and give a lukewarm response. I know it isn't always easy to be the leader. It isn't always easy to have a federal counterpart. But when the people of Saskatchewan need you to stand up, you need to stand up. That is leadership, Mr. Speaker, and that was sorely missing.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP have been finding themselves in a difficult spot here for a little while in regards to oil development, in regards to oil sands development. And, Mr. Speaker, just going through the headlines recently, there's been several articles. And I know that the members opposite can't control their counterpart, but I think the ideology shows through in the vote and in much that goes on.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there was an article in a very great newspaper, the *Meridian Booster* from Lloydminster, and the headline is “Alberta NDP joins oilsands bashing.” Well, Mr. Speaker, the quote that I’ve highlighted here is, “‘The oilsands has given Alberta and Canada a black eye . . . [in] the rest of the world,’ provincial NDP Leader Brian Mason said.” Mr. Speaker, that is not the kind of common front we need when we’re sending a common message to the Americans that this is important to our country and important to their country.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to oil development, Mr. Speaker . . . and we have a great chance in northern Saskatchewan for our oil sands. We think that they’re going to move forward at some point, Mr. Speaker, in the medium term. Cenovus has bought the property off Oilsands Quest. In the fall land sale, Mr. Speaker, two other oil sands properties were picked up by another company to start bringing them, Mr. Speaker, into the exploratory stage. We have I believe it’s close to 37 000 square kilometres of potential in our oil sands where there may be oil sands development. We see what is happening in Alberta and the growth that it’s providing and the jobs and the opportunity. We think that it’s important for the people that live in northern Saskatchewan to have the same opportunity.

But, Mr. Speaker, we had a bit of a debate here in Saskatchewan on that a couple years ago. And in fact we had a group come to the legislature, as many do and, Mr. Speaker, they were protesting. They did not want to see development in Saskatchewan’s oil sands, and they had a protest out front. I believe it was fossil fools day and they had people dressed up. And, Mr. Speaker, that’s fine. I think it’s great that people come to their legislature to lobby government, to make a statement. But what is challenging, Mr. Speaker, is that members from the NDP were out there lobbying with them, were protesting the Government of Saskatchewan to shut any option for oil sands in Saskatchewan. And the most troubling thing is, Mr. Speaker, the leader, the former leader of the opposition was out there. The member for Athabasca, Mr. Speaker, joined them. The protest proposed oil sands development in northern Saskatchewan should be shut down. And the member for Athabasca was out front, probably carrying a sign, Mr. Speaker, saying no development in my riding, Mr. Speaker.

We have to confront, Mr. Speaker, these sorts of challenges. We think that any development in northern Saskatchewan and southern Saskatchewan has to meet a very high and rigorous standard for environmental responsibility. And, Mr. Speaker, that is across our province and an absolute responsibility that we expect to happen. But with that caveat in mind, Mr. Speaker, we want to see the opportunity and jobs that projects like this can bring forward. And I would ask those members to join with us and bring it forward.

[20:15]

Mr. Speaker, I am going to move through a little bit here, Mr. Speaker, talking about their federal leader as well on the Dutch disease. This is something, Mr. Speaker, that I think also needs addressed. They have a federal leader that has bashed our province, has bashed Western Canada, that our success is hurting where he represents in Eastern Canada. Mr. Speaker, we fundamentally disagree with that premise. The strength in

Western Canada is a strength for all of Canada. The export market for the manufacturing in his province is our province. And, Mr. Speaker, we want that leader, the federal leader of the New Democrats, to recognize this. But more than that, we want the provincial leader, Mr. Speaker, to again get out from under the pile of coats, get into the rotunda, and refute any statement that bashes our province and the great work that’s happening here.

Mr. Speaker, with these comments about the portfolio that I oversee, I just want to wrap up by saying I think that this is a budget that is going to continue to keep the advantages here in Saskatchewan, that continues to move our province forward. It’s a fiscally responsible budget. It’s a budget that’s going to serve us well in coming years. And, Mr. Speaker, I’m very proud of the work that our Minister of Finance has done in his leadership as Finance minister and of Treasury Board. It’s something that I think our whole province can be proud of, that we are likely to have the only balanced budget in the country. It’s going to be something that is recognized nationwide and probably beyond that.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to confirm that I will be supporting this budget. I call on the members opposite to recognize the value and the important pieces in this budget and support it as well. And with that, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I’m going to begin tonight by just recognizing the work of some young people in the province of Saskatchewan. Earlier this afternoon I made some comments about a group of Moosomin Baptist Church youth who, when informed of a friend of theirs father facing a challenge with cancer, organized a fundraising event in the community. And I had the pleasure of attending a couple of the events that happened on the weekend. In fact, Mr. Speaker, one of the things they put together was a beef supper and they actually set three settings starting at 5:30, 6:30, and 7:30, and each and every one of those settings, Mr. Speaker, was sold out. Not only that. A number of young people took the task of gathering articles to be used in the silent auction as well as working together with the recreation director to put on a fundraising hockey game involving a hockey team from the community of Melville.

Everything being said, Mr. Speaker, these young people whose motto was, we believe in prayer, not only spoke of helping the family financially but spoke of how they could reach out to the family in a spiritual way. And as a result of their work and effort, Mr. Speaker, I mentioned earlier about the fact that some \$36,000 had been raised. At the moment I chatted with them they were still waiting for some of those numbers to come in.

Mr. Speaker, I think that speaks very well because on many occasions we actually hear of young people and the things, the difficult challenges they get themselves into or how they get involved in very negative opportunities in the province. So I think that speaks for young people and that there are young people in this province who are thinking not only of themselves but of others.

And then tonight at the reception for the Saskatchewan Council

for International Cooperation, I was talking to a young university student who spoke of one of the initiatives they have implemented. And what they have done is they're raising funds and helping support I believe it's four young girls, and I forget the country that they've come from, giving them the opportunity to come to this country and to get an education. And I thought here again, Mr. Speaker, is a prime example of what young people can do and the fact that there are young people who are very considerate out there. And I want to commend these young people for the work that they are doing and thinking of others rather than themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to extend my thanks to my constituency assistant. As of July 1st, a young gentleman by the name of Jeff Cole took over duties as the CA [constituency assistant] in the office, and while I had Tina Durbin there for some 21 years, she today is enjoying the opportunity of getting to spend a little more time with her granddaughter. Jeff has stepped into the role and is certainly doing an excellent job so I want to say thank you to Jeff. And Audrey McEwen continues to work in the office.

As has been said, Mr. Speaker, this job would not be very easy if it wasn't for the fact of supportive family and I too am very supportive of my wife, Lois, and our family. And quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, one of the great joys of family is not only having children but having grandchildren, and it's a real pleasure, an enjoyment to have the grandchildren come to visit or go to visit them.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is all about growth, and the theme of the budget is balanced growth. And why are we talking about balanced growth? Because we're thinking of those young people that I spoke about today, and just spoke about. We're thinking about our families. We're thinking about our children, about our grandchildren, and the fact that as this province continues to grow and move forward we want to make sure that it grows forward in a balanced way and that there's balanced growth.

One of the issues and one of the challenges we face at this time, Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Finance said, yes there's some challenges on the revenue side of government. But because of growth, while there's been challenges in the resource sector, we've picked up a lot of those shortfalls just because of growth and taxation. Even with the lower taxes, even with the taxes we've lowered to 5 per cent, those taxes continue to bring revenue to the province of Saskatchewan, allowing it to move forward with growth.

And what that has done, Mr. Speaker, it has allowed this budget and this Finance minister to present a fiscally responsible budget which in the General Revenue Fund and the summary financial statements is balanced. Regardless of what others would try to say, these funds are balanced. Mr. Speaker, if you look at the General Revenue Fund, you will find a surplus of \$64.8 million, and on the summary financial statements a surplus of \$149.8 million. Mr. Speaker, surpluses tell me that the budget is balanced. And we've found a balance between maintaining a balance and a surplus while at the same time providing services and trying to meet the needs of the people of Saskatchewan.

We're balancing the need to control spending with the need to make important investments. Part of the expenditures in this year's budget, Mr. Speaker, are going to people who probably have the greatest needs in the province of Saskatchewan. And I believe it was the member from Cumberland was talking about challenges seniors are facing, and the fact that this government is letting them down. Well let me say, increasing the seniors' income plan to \$250 a month, triple of what it was when this government formed office in 2007, I'm not exactly sure that's letting seniors down, Mr. Speaker. I think that's showing that this government is committed to meeting the needs of seniors, and especially those who find themselves on very low fixed incomes.

We're also providing an increase in funding of close to \$20 million for community-based organizations that provide 24-7 care for our most vulnerable citizens, including those with disabilities. Mr. Speaker, I think that speaks for itself. When you're thinking of those least fortunate amongst yourselves, I don't think one can argue that we're not as a government stepping forward to meet those needs and help those organizations.

And I know in my constituency, there are a number of individuals working in these community-based organizations. If it wasn't for them, wasn't for their desire and interest and compassion for people with disabilities, a lot of those people would be basically hidden in some structure, some care home, without any real care or concern. And you just have to go to some of these organizations like Pipestone Kin-Ability Centre and just see how welcoming these individuals are. So, Mr. Speaker, I think we are proving that we care and are willing to reach and help those with the greatest needs amongst us.

As my colleague, the member from Melfort, said — and the Minister of Finance; he referred to the Minister of Finance — putting money into a new women's shelter in the province of Saskatchewan, partnering with the federal government and the local community, Mr. Speaker, this is certainly the right way to go. Working with other levels of government to meet the needs of people and in this case building a new women's shelter, the first new women's shelter in the province of Saskatchewan since 1989, is that, Mr. Speaker, is that an indication that this government doesn't care about those with needs around us? I think, Mr. Speaker, our actions are speaking louder than our words.

Mr. Speaker, this budget also continues funding for capital funding projects, especially hospitals and heavy care centres. We see the new Moose Jaw hospital continues to move forward, children's hospital in Saskatoon, and a number of rural heavy care and integrated facilities that are moving forward. I think that's another indication, Mr. Speaker, that we recognize the need.

Unfortunately some 20 years ago, the government of the day — I believe the members sitting on the opposition benches, although most of the members sitting there right now may not have been there at that time, but that government, Mr. Speaker — did close 52 hospitals. And we saw the impact of the closure of those 52 hospitals. And there isn't a day when I stop by the hospitals in Regina to visit with people, I don't hear people bringing up the topic of the Plains health care centre and the

fact that, the impact it could have today if it was still here amongst us.

So while we can't replace all those beds immediately, Mr. Speaker, this government and this budget continues to provide the funding to put the beds in place so we can address the issue around surgical wait times, so that we can address the issues of families who are dealing with elderly parents or grandparents who unfortunately need the care that's provided in our heavy care homes. And we're also putting in place funding for the recruitment of doctors and the retention of our young medical graduates. Mr. Speaker, this budget, despite the challenges it's facing, is putting the money I believe in the right places, the places where it's needed most.

I would like to speak of my community of Kipling as well. Mr. Speaker, for the first time that I can remember, our community was without medical service. We had no doctors outside of sporadic time periods since September of 2012. Recently a group of locums has agreed to provide care, and from what I'm hearing, the people of the community are very pleased with the service they're getting. And we also have a medical . . . a doctor from out of country who is now in the SIPPA [Saskatchewan international physician practice assessment] program who is committed to coming to the community, and I'm hearing that there certainly are opportunities for other doctors considering coming to the community.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is reaching out to not only meet the needs of Saskatchewan people but to also find ways of how we can move forward as a province and continue to grow this province. Many of my colleagues have quoted from different people who have made comments about the budget. One individual, the director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, said this: the Saskatchewan budget released today, you're not going to find a better one in Canada this year. I think that speaks very well of the budget presented by my colleague, the member from Canora, the Minister of Finance.

This budget also has continued support for municipal people across the province of Saskatchewan and one of the areas where it is providing support, and I'll get to that in a moment, is in the area of local rinks. An issue that's been a problem for years in this province is community rinks and the high costs, especially power. And this budget is making available 1.7 million so that community rinks . . . communities will be able to maintain and support their rinks and making them more affordable.

This budget also, Mr. Speaker, puts money into transit to assist people with disabilities by providing . . . increasing the funding to increase, accelerate the renewal of the paratransit fleet, allowing the program to expand to an additional eight communities. Mr. Speaker, I think that speaks very well of what the budget is doing to provide and enhance the growth of this province.

One other area, Mr. Speaker, that went over very well and that municipal leaders across this province are really pleased to see is the fact that when the Saskatchewan Party formed government, we made a commitment in 2007 to share one point of the provincial sales tax with municipalities. Prior to that, Mr. Speaker, municipalities had to wait until the provincial budget to finalize their budgets to see whether there was anything

coming from government to assist them in addressing their needs. Now they need no longer wait. They know that 1 per cent of the tax will be coming to them, and that as a result, they're able to do a better job of preparing their budgets. In fact, Mr. Speaker, as a result of provincial growth, the 1 per cent . . . that one point on the provincial tax this year, saw an increase to \$264.4 million through provincial revenue sharing. And, Mr. Speaker, that's an increase of \$27 million or 11.4 per cent which is being shared with municipalities, both urban and rural and northern.

[20:30]

Mr. Speaker, I think the comment from Debra Button, the SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] president, says it well:

Saskatchewan's villages, towns and cities are experiencing unprecedented growth. Urban governments across the province are on the frontline, providing the services and infrastructure we need to attract business and new residents. The government's investment in our communities will go a long way to helping us meet the demands of growth.

And then Al Thomarat from the Home Builders' Association said:

We are very pleased with the budget. It does stay the course. It's balanced. It stays on track. We want to continue the momentum we see in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many other areas that we can speak about in this budget. This budget invests in education. Mr. Speaker, as we have seen over the past two or three years, school boards are now having to deal with increased enrolment. What did we see prior to 2007? We actually saw school boards having to deal with decreased enrolments and how were they going to move forward, and trying to determine how they're going to provide the programming as they saw enrolments decreasing. We're now seeing enrolment increasing, and this budget has put more money into education. In fact it's one of the highest educational budgets in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the school operating fund this year will be \$1.775 billion, up 40.6 million from last year, an increase of 2.3 per cent. Mr. Speaker, I think that speaks well about the growth of this province and how this province is moving forward. Is this going to address all the issues in education, Mr. Deputy Speaker? No doubt we're probably going to have some pushback from some of the school boards but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the realities are, the increase in funding to school boards will address all of the contractual agreements that school boards have to meet as they move forward.

And in many cases we'll be seeing also capital funding in education. And one of the new schools that's going up is going up in the community of Langenburg, the constituency, in the constituency of Saltcoats. And, Mr. Speaker, I know the people in that community are certainly pleased to see that this government stepped forward to meet the needs of a growing community and a growing economy.

Mr. Speaker, back in 2007 this Saskatchewan Party went into that election saying we were finally . . . We were going to address the issue of property taxes and we were going to ensure that property owners weren't carrying the burden of funding education taxes. I remember the former premier of this province, Premier Calvert, when he was the premier of this province, I believe at SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], he basically said, the status quo is not on. And how many years, how many years did we see the then NDP government say the status quo was not on, but it never changed. It never changed.

Well since 2007, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we all know what has happened to property tax. The burden of funding education has been shifted. It's taken away from the property owner and put at the feet of the provincial government. The provincial government has been stepping forward to put the money into education and ensure that it is shared equally and fairly around the province. We still have some hiccups, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I believe as we move forward and work together we certainly will meet that goal.

The fact that . . . Speaking about that property tax, Marilyn Braun-Pollon made this comment: "The fact that they're holding the line on education property tax relief for the majority of businesses in the commercial sector is good news." Not only is it the commercial person, but it's the property owner across this province who has now been able to see their property taxes more reflective of their abilities and also the fact that it's the provincial government that should be picking up that load, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is a budget that is planning for growth. This is a budget that's not only balanced but there's money in this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to work with individuals who would like to improve their way of life, whether it's the adult basic education program, putting more funding in it to address the waiting line for ABE [adult basic education], putting more funding in place to address the issue of job skills and the fact that there are . . . there's such a shortage of workers in many, many of the skills and many of the trades, Mr. Speaker. There's money being put forward to address those issues. There's money being forward to encourage and work with First Nations young men and women. And I just chatted with a couple of our First Nations young men and women at the budget speech and each and every one of them said they were really impressed and were really encouraged by the budget, the fact that we recognize the need to help First Nations young men and women become part of a growing Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, a comment here, and I quote, "No question about it, the biggest single issue facing the business community today is where the labour force of today and tomorrow is going to come from." The budget speaks to that. There's an increase for skills training. That's very positive. We're happy to see that. We're happy to see that. Control on spending, which is also very positive. So overall it's as steady as she goes. People are going through skills training and getting jobs and that's what it's all about.

Mr. Speaker, speaking about . . . or Deputy Speaker, speaking about jobs and job opportunities, this evening, also at the reception, I chatted with a couple who have come from

Bangladesh, I believe it was four years ago. They didn't just come to this province to make Saskatchewan home and to build something for themselves. They are now putting back into their own country. They've established an educational program and skills training and computer training. And, Mr. Speaker, I was quite impressed to just chat with that couple as to how they were so grateful to this country and this province for what it was offering them. And now they are turning and they're giving back to their home community of Bangladesh. So, Mr. Speaker, this budget speaks about growing the province of Saskatchewan.

One other area that I want to speak about is Saskatchewan's highways. Mr. Deputy Speaker, one highway that I've had the . . . unfortunately it's taken me a long time to get it to the forefront, Highway 48. And there was a section right in my constituency, right in my hometown that wasn't developed. You could get onto 48 highway at White City and you'd be going along on a beautiful piece of pavement. You'd hit the community of Kipling and, as most people said, for the past number of years it's been a goat trail. And then you'd get off of that goat trail at No. 9 and you'd move from . . . you'd go down No. 9 through Wawota at a beautiful highway.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, last year's budget put the money in place to begin the construction of that last phase. And this year's budget, it will see the completion of that Highway 48. And I guarantee . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . That's exactly right. The Minister of Highways says we got the bender last year. We're going to get from bender to No. 9 this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And the only thing that will dictate as to how quickly we complete it is how quick the snow melts and some of that water disappears, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But I guarantee, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when that highway's complete, it's more of a direct line to a number of places. It's a direct line to southeast Saskatchewan. It's a more direct line to Moose Mountain Provincial Park even going through to Manitoba. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're looking to the completion of that.

There's so many things in this budget that, even though there were limitations the Minister of Finance had to deal with, yet this budget put money into areas and sectors where we really need to see our economy grow, sectors where we knew we needed to take care of those who are less fortunate and help them along, and also plan for our children's future. The fact that it's balanced, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fact that we continue to claw away at the provincial debt, I think shows sound leadership by the Minister of Finance and by the Premier of the province, the member from Swift Current.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand here and have had the opportunity to just express some of my thoughts and to speak about some of the things that this budget is doing and stand in support of this budget. I certainly will not be supporting the amendment because of the fact that this budget speaks for itself. It's a balanced budget building in a growing economy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too am very pleased to rise this evening to support our Finance minister's balanced

2013-2014 budget. I say balanced budget because this budget is balanced in so many ways. It's balanced in terms of finances with \$64.8 million pre-transfer surplus in the General Revenue Fund and a surplus of \$149.8 million in the summary financial statements. But I would also like to point out that it is balanced in our approach to improving quality of life for Saskatchewan residents. It is balanced in our commitment to replace and invest in infrastructure. And finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is balanced in our support for a growing economy.

It will be my pleasure to expand on each of these pillars later, but firstly I want to offer a great big thank you to two ladies who are very valuable in taking care of my office back in The Battlefords and handling literally dozens of constituent concerns and requests each month. I can't thank them enough for all that they do. Lil Robinson and Gail Heintz are very key members of our team in The Battlefords. Their concern and compassion for our constituents is incredible and greatly appreciated.

And of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I take every opportunity that I can to thank my wife, Linda. She's been a big part of my journey to get here and she supported me through all of these endeavours and offers me the opportunity to be away as much as I can. I thank her very much.

This budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this 2013-2014 balanced budget, is the result of a tremendous amount of work, both on behalf of the Finance minister and his ministry staff and also all of the long hours put in by our Treasury Board members. And, Mr. Speaker, let's not forget about all the pencil sharpening each of the ministries did to hold the line at a 3.1 per cent increase in expenses. I can only imagine the difficult decisions that they had to make, and I appreciate all of their work.

I've already mentioned that our budget is balanced in terms of the General Revenue Fund with a \$64.8 million surplus and \$149.8 million surplus in the summary financial statements. So now I would like to move on and talk about how this budget outlines our plan to improve quality of life for all Saskatchewan residents. We know our economy is strong, but we also know that there are those among us who are struggling, those who may, because of circumstance, need a hand up, may need help, some support from their government. That is why, Mr. Speaker, we have increased our support for seniors with a \$3.2 million increase in seniors' income plan, which includes a \$10 a month increase plus a maximum \$25 per month for clients living in special care homes. That brings the seniors' income plan to \$250 per month, a substantial increase of \$160 from the \$90 that the previous NDP government froze it at for 16 long years.

We are also committed with helping those in the rental market with a \$3.8 million increase for the Saskatchewan rental housing supplement.

Some of our disabled citizens are very pleased to learn that we have implemented the first instalment of our enhancement to Saskatchewan assured income for disability, a program that we are committed to increase by \$100 per month for people in residential care and by 350 and \$400 per month for singles and couples respectively, who live in independent arrangements.

Mr. Speaker, let's take a brief look now at what this budget

holds for health care. Fully 41.9 per cent of this budget goes into health care. We are continuing to build on the tremendous progress we have made in reducing surgical wait times by further investing another \$10 million to bring our total commitment to \$70.5 million. This, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will result in 7,000 additional surgeries over last year. We have also committed \$350,000 to expand the Alzheimer Society First Link program.

Our total health budget of \$4.8 billion is an increase of \$1.4 billion since 2007. We are committed to improving health care. Additionally, we are investing \$163.9 million in infrastructure in this budget. These capital projects include a hospital for Moose Jaw and \$70.6 million for long-term care facilities. And I'm delighted to see \$6 million allocated through SaskBuilds to analyze proposals and determine the most efficient ways to finance our new Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford.

[20:45]

This, Mr. Speaker, is in sharp contrast to the record of the previous NDP government that closed 52 rural hospitals, 16 long-term care centres involving the loss of 1,200 long-term care beds. We will ensure that our seniors are not treated that way. While we are on the subject, we certainly could have used 173 doctors and 455 registered nurses that fled Saskatchewan to work elsewhere. Mr. Speaker, they left in the last five years of that NDP government, a shameful record. Since that time, we have 274 more doctors practising in Saskatchewan and over 900 more nurses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's also compare our records on infrastructure, spent in our infrastructure spending — or lack thereof in their case — \$325.5 in the last six years of the NDP rule and \$975 million in our first six years. The way I do math, that's triple the amount. Mr. Speaker, instead of closing hospitals, we are building new ones. And we try . . . and finding solutions to provide health care in rural Saskatchewan where they closed hospitals. One such initiative is providing \$250,000 for rural physician recruitment and another is \$3 million for rural locums.

Another initiative, Mr. Speaker, that I know is of great importance in our area, and to my colleague from Cut Knife-Turtleford, is the \$9.8 million for primary health care which will establish four to five collaborative emergency centres, one of which may be located in Maidstone. This is the way we improve health care.

Of course, funding that is very near and dear to my heart is the \$150.7 million to provide enhanced cancer care services. That's a \$12 million increase over last year. Mr. Speaker, I certainly echo the words of Michele Arscott, the vice-president of corporate services, Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, when she said, and I quote, "The agency is grateful for the continued support to allow us to provide better care and support for our programs." I know we all live for the day when this dreaded disease and others like it can be cured.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we talk about quality of life for Saskatchewan residents, we certainly make children and families our priority. One of the advantages of the growth we are experiencing, Mr. Speaker, is that it provides us the

opportunity to do more for our children, more for our youth, and more for our families. We are taking advantage of that opportunity by investing \$13.7 million in this, the third year of the Saskatchewan children and youth agenda budget.

Additionally we are investing \$6.6 million for the First Nations and Métis education and employment, one and a half million dollars to add 300 more spaces for adult basic education. Of note here and a request that I have had, I've heard from educators, is early learning programs. Towards that end we have dedicated \$589,000 to create 15 new programs for vulnerable three- and four-year-olds. As well, since 2011-2012 we have increased funding for 1,500 child care spaces, bringing our total number to approximately 13,740.

Hand in hand with quality of life for all Saskatchewan residents is access to affordable housing. That is why we will invest 344 million in 12,600 new housing units by 2016. As evidence of our growth, rental starts in 2012 hit 1,072 units. That's more than in the years from 2002 to 2009 combined.

Mr. Speaker, here are a few more of our housing initiatives and objectives: 240 new home ownership units to the affordable home ownership program; 1,300 new rental units under the rental construction incentive at a cost of \$6 million to the province; 40 new homes through Habitat for Humanity; and construction of 140 new government-subsidized rental units, cost shared with the federal government under the rental development and capital rent subsidy programs.

Mr. Speaker, we know that education plays a huge role in making lives better. And in preparing for our continued growth, that is why we have made pre-K to 12 [pre-kindergarten to grade 12] education funding a priority in this budget. We have increased this funding by 6.7 per cent. School operation funding will be \$1.775 billion. We are very pleased to see that our enrolment will increase more than 4,500 students in 2012-2013, a sharp contrast to the 3,500 students a year we were using several years ago. We know that this will require more space for our students, so this is why we are planning 40 relocatables to be in place by the fall of 2013.

You know, Mr. Speaker, since we took office we have repaired over half of the schools in Saskatchewan, part of the legacy that was left by the former NDP government. But we know there is still more to do, and that is why we have allocated another \$119.6 million in capital funding. In my own constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have allocated \$19.85 million for the Light of Christ Catholic School Division for their school division year-end. And for the Living Sky School Division, we have allocated \$62.955 million for their school division year-end. That is our commitment to education for Saskatchewan students.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight our 2013-2014 commitment to infrastructure in this province. Again, we know we inherited a huge deficit in this area. But we are, because of our growth initiative, making great progress in rectifying this situation. In this 2013-2014 balanced budget, our capital spending component is a whopping \$847.5 million. This brings our total investment in infrastructure to \$5.8 billion since '08-09. That, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is more than double the investment from the previous five years, and we are not done

yet. Our plan for growth calls for an additional \$2.5 billion over the next three years.

I remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, travelling to other provinces in 2005-2006 to attend interprovincial functions, and after the no-time-change jokes and the flatland cracks, the next comment usually was that we had the worst highways in Canada. Well we are definitely taking care of that situation. In our first term, our highway budget was \$2.2 billion and our commitment this year is \$280.8 million of our total \$576 million maintenance operation budget to highway construction. That's this government's commitment to improving highways.

But highways are not our only concern, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We know we must continue to support our municipal governments so that they too can handle their infrastructure and growth initiatives. That is why we have once again increased revenue sharing to a record of \$264.4 million. That's an 11.4 per cent increase and 108 per cent higher than it was in '07-08. Overall our funding to municipalities this year will be \$362 million.

Mr. Speaker, in my constituency this is making a tremendous difference. In the town of Battleford, revenue sharing in 2007-2008 was \$407,000. Today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that figure has been increased by 123 per cent to \$909,000. In the city of North Battleford in 2007-2008, the budget received \$1.15 million. This budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget allocates a whopping 155 per cent increase of that figure to now be a commitment of \$2.95 million. That's our support for The Battlefords.

And finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to talk briefly about the phenomenal growth in this province. And unlike our member opposite from Regina Lakeview, I do believe our growth is phenomenal, not a "mythical boom," as he suggests.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I think I could fill all three galleries in this Assembly with residents from The Battlefords, residents who would stand one by one and tell their story: how their businesses have flourished; how their wages have gone up; how they now have affordable housing; how they can now have their surgeries in a timely fashion and not have the longest wait times in the nation; and certainly how they enjoy having their sons and daughters stay in Saskatchewan, living and working here.

Let's just take a look at one factor that illustrates the growth we are experiencing. According to SaskEnergy, they now have the highest customer base ever. Here's a few of the annual energy hookups. In the year 2000, there was 3,121 hookups. Then in 2002, a big drop down to 1,164. In 2002, it rebounded a little bit to 2,217. 2003 dropped again down to 1,783. 2004, it was still flat at 2,082. 2005 dropped again to 1,654. '06 was 2,908; '07, 4,364. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's a pretty good indication of what was happening in Saskatchewan during the NDP years.

So now for comparison, let's just take a look at the trend after our party, the party with a vision for the future, formed the government: 2008, 6,009 hookups, an increase almost equal to all of the hookups in the whole year of 2003, and a hundred more than in 2005. In 2009 we had 4,721, still a pretty good increase from '07. 2010 climbed to 1,533. 2011 continued that trend again, 5,803. And look at 2012, Mr. Deputy Speaker —

7,386 hookups, a 27 per cent increase.

The Saskatchewan Power hookups pretty much mirror this phenomenal increase with 4,226 new connects in 2008, steadily increasing until 2012 with a — get this — amazing 10,345 hookups. That's 144 per cent increase. Can we call that a boom, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Yes, I think we can.

And yes, Mr. Speaker, this budget recognizes that growth and continues to provide the businesses and individuals in this province with the support they need to facilitate that growth — support for families, support for seniors, support for First Nations and Métis, support for the disabled and those most vulnerable. It recognizes the need to build and expand our infrastructure, to continuously be improving our highway system, to invest in services like natural gas and power to serve our ever-growing population. It also emphasizes importance of good health, timely surgeries — not huge wait times — attracting doctors and nurses, creating education and employment training opportunities for all of our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, because of all of these aspects of this budget, and also the many more that my colleagues have presented and for reasons I have outlined here, I will be supporting the original budget motion and not the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's going to be a privilege to rise and address the budget, being able to go on a little bit longer than what I normally get to when I get to stand in this position, because after I get going just for a little while, the Speaker keeps going like this to me all the time. I usually only get . . . Most of my speeches are a minute long. So this could be a challenge now, going for the next couple of hours.

Mr. Speaker, it's always a privilege to stand in the House and respond to the budget speech — a very good budget speech this year again — a balanced budget, the only one in Canada. Before I get into my remarks though, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to thank a number of people that allow me to fill the position as the MLA for Indian Head-Milestone but — that's the most important position — as well as then the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure and a number of Crowns.

I want to start with my constituency assistant, Nicole Entner-McCullough who looks after the office in Balgonie. I think all of us here on this side and I'm sure all members, all 58 members, Mr. Speaker, of this House would thank their constituency assistants. When we're doing our job around the province or in the city, for example, in the capital city, they look after the calls that come into our office and deal with those constituent concerns and casework very, very well. And I can say that Nicole has done a great job since we've become government. She started with me about in 2007 and has done a great job for the five or six years. And so I want to thank her for that.

I also want to thank the people that work in the office of the Highways, in the minister's office for Highways and Infrastructure, Chris and Amanda and . . . Oh I should have

written them down — Karalee and Kim and Clay. I want to thank them all for the work that they do each and every day to make sure that I have the information I need on a regular basis to deal with the concerns that come in from constituents, from MLAs. They do a great job in that office.

[21:00]

I've been blessed ever since I've had the privilege to serve as a minister, whether it was the minister of Health or now Highways and Infrastructure, and the great staff that I've had, quite a few staff over the number of years and maybe that's a reflection of the minister that they have to serve, but a number of staff that have done a very good job on really I guess maybe on my behalf but more importantly on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. Is it time to wrap up already?

Okay. I also want to . . . Yes, that's probably more than a minute already. I also want to thank the people within the ministry. This is my first opportunity. This is a little different feeling than over the past number of years, probably over the past eight years. Five years that I've replied to the budget speech I was the Minister of Health and three years prior to that I had been the critic for Health, so about eight years when the budget came around and the budget speech was read, most of my attention was on health care. And I can tell you that it's been about eight months since there has been a shift in cabinet and I have new responsibilities. You don't lose that interest in health in eight months and I was just as interested in what was going on in the health file as I was in the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure.

What I'm really wanting to get back to though is I had great staff in the Ministry of Health when I worked there, under the leadership of Dan Florizone who is I'll say one of the best — I probably have the best now, Rob Penny — but when I was in the Ministry of Health I had the best at that time who was Dan Florizone. But under the leadership of Rob Penny in the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure and the ADMs [assistant deputy minister] and all the staff in the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure, I am very blessed to be able to work with them as we go through the different issues that are put in front of us each and every day.

I would be remiss especially though . . . I want to again thank the leadership of the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure but I would be remiss if I didn't thank the hard-working men and women that have put up with . . . We think, I've said in the media earlier this week that we think this winter has been long for us as citizens. You can't imagine how long it has been for the men and women that are trying to keep our roads and our highways safe and clean of snow and ice over this winter that started on October 22nd, the first snowfall where they put their plows on, and they've been going steady ever since. I should probably have the number, and I think it was mentioned in a member's statement, the amount of tonnes of salt that had been put on our highways. Probably could talk about the amount of diesel that's been burnt through the trucks, making sure that our highways are safe. I just want to say, on behalf of all the citizens of this province and especially a very thankful government, thank you very much to the men and women that have kept our highways clean for safe travelling.

I had an interesting situation, I think it was on Friday of last week. I was out in Balgonie. And I was just pulling out of Balgonie and I saw a couple of Highways trucks that were just stopped, had just stopped. I think the guys were just running into Subway to grab a sub, to get back out on the highways again. And you know, it's kind of interesting. I just wanted to turn around and talk to them, and just thank them, just as a motorist. And that's what I did. I didn't identify myself, and I doubt that they would know that I was the minister at all, from just talking to them. But I wanted to thank them.

And it was interesting. The one fellow said, well thank you very much because at that day Gormley had had a talk show on the highways, and there were a lot of people phoning in dissing or being very negative. And it would be very tough, I would think, after spending probably how many hours of overtime, making sure that our highways are safe, clean, so that we can drive and all they were hearing . . . And I'm sure he had a very hard time listening. He probably wanted to turn to another station. You know, I would've myself. But he said, all I could hear of this morning was people complaining about the work that we are doing. And we're working 24-7, as hard as we possibly can.

I mean some of these storms have been unprecedented. This winter has been unprecedented for the amount of snowfall. And I just, you know, I just think it's unfair when citizens of our province phone in; they don't know the work that these people have gone through. So I've already thanked them once, but I do again want to sincerely thank them and tell them, don't worry about the few complainers out there because the vast majority of people in this province respect and admire the work that they do here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard other members talk about, you know, their family and how supportive their family is to make sure that they can do their work that they do. And I want to also thank my family. Actually I really only want to thank Cindy for the support because really the boys have been absolutely no support to me over the last couple of months and years. You know, I don't really know if they know that I'm an MLA or a minister or anything else because they've been, they've been pretty busy.

I do just want to just say just a couple of words on each one of them. We have two boys, Craig who's 21 and Mark who's 19. They're both obviously into the snowboard business. They're professional snowboarders. I had an opportunity of talking to Craig just earlier tonight about an hour ago, and he's in Spain right now at a World Cup event. And Mark certainly is getting most of the press, and rightfully so, but Craig is doing a very good job too. He ended up 17th today in a World Cup event in Spain. There is 150 that started, and he ended up 17th which puts him in the top about 9 or 10 in the country, which allows him then to be on the national team going forward next year. So he came through an injury at the very end of last year, started slow but finished not too bad at the end of this year. And we'll have a hopefully a busy filming season from now on. The competitive season is over. Now they get into filming and going into trying to get video parts that go into different videos that are sold, and they make a little bit of money that way. So Craig has done very well.

And of course Mark has had an unbelievable year. He started in

December winning two golds in a Dew Tour stop in Breckenridge, then the X Games, which everybody . . . a lot of people saw, I should say, not everybody, getting a gold and a silver there. And there in Vail just recently at the US [United States] Open getting a gold there, I think. Yes, a gold there. We had the opportunity of getting down to Colorado and seeing those three events. We don't catch him when he's over in Europe, which he was last weekend and finished first at the . . . No. Geez I can't even remember. I think it was second at the . . . Wow I'm getting red. I can't remember. But anyway he finished in the top two, first or second, at the European X Games, just got home on Sunday. He's been home for a couple of days and is leaving right away again.

So they've both had an amazing winter, and it's amazing how many people are recognizing me, certainly not as the Minister of Highways but as Mark's dad which is kind of really quite flattering. Anyway so they've had a good time, and that's enough on that.

I do want to get to the budget and the excellent budget that was read by the minister on Wednesday of last week. As I said earlier that this is, and many have said on this side of the House, a balanced budget, you know, a fifth consecutive balanced budget by this government, Mr. Speaker. And it doesn't matter whether it's on the summary financial statements or on the GRF [General Revenue Fund].

Now the member from Athabasca is already kind of laughing from his seat. You know, I guess what he would laugh about is because I don't really know if he would know what a balanced budget was. They talked a lot about a balanced budget in the NDP years, Mr. Speaker, and never did quite get there, never got around to it. But, Mr. Speaker, this is balanced both on the GRF and on the summary financial statements, Mr. Speaker.

It really does, it really does, when you look at what is happening in other provinces, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it puts us on a different level. We are very, very fortunate, Mr. Speaker, that we have . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the member opposite is yelling we have nothing to do with it. Mr. Speaker, it is the people of Saskatchewan that have everything to do with it, Mr. Speaker.

Was the NDP . . . I'm sure they thought they had everything to do with it. But here in Saskatchewan and under the Saskatchewan Party government, it is the people of Saskatchewan, it is the resources that we're blessed with, Mr. Speaker, that's what happens and that's what causes a government to balance a budget. It certainly isn't the opposition, Mr. Speaker. It is hard work by these members that get us to that point, but it is the people of Saskatchewan that allow this budget to be balanced, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the . . . Oh wow. The member from Athabasca has got an awful lot to say tonight. It's a good thing because, Mr. Speaker, there doesn't seem to be a lot coming from that other side recently and even tonight, but there seems to be one spokesman from the other side, and he said all the work was done in the previous years, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the work that was done under the NDP's 16 years was out-migration, a population decline every year under the NDP. That's the work that was done, Mr. Speaker.

Since we've come to government, we have seen the largest population this province has ever seen. 1,089,087 people now call Saskatchewan home, Mr. Speaker, 21,000 more in the past year and 82,000 since our government took office. A huge increase, Mr. Speaker, and you can see it in every community that you go into.

I am blessed to serve the constituency of Indian Head-Milestone, and when I go to Fort Qu'Appelle or Indian Head or Milestone or Avonlea or a number of the communities around the constituency, some very good communities, Avonlea, Rouleau, Wilcox that unfortunately I may be missing come the next election — and the member from Thunder Creek is going to pick them up and I'm a little jealous over that — but great communities that have seen growth over the last number of years, huge growth, Mr. Speaker.

And I can tell you in Milestone in the last number of years, they opened up 25 lots and within three years they've all been sold and all been built on but two. They've been sold, waiting for a home to come in. Twenty-five new homes in the last three years. And in the last 25 years, Mr. Speaker, prior, there had been four homes built in Milestone. That is the variation that we see in the past number of years.

The optimism that we're seeing, Mr. Speaker, has been huge, and I can just honestly tell you when I talk to people within my constituency, yes there are pressures, yes there are issues, but the one thing they are almost unanimous and not quite 100 per cent . . . I see Gunnar Passmore in the gallery every so often. He's not quite unanimous, but most people would say they never want to go back to the dark old days of the NDP, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they will say that perhaps not everything is perfect under our government, but we'll never go back to the dark old days of the NDP.

Boy, he's got a lot to say tonight. He's a lone, he's a lone wolf over there speaking out, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the province is doing well, absolutely. And there are pressures in certain places, but we know that the growth is positive. And we can see it in so many ways, whether it's in population growth, whether it's in business, whether it's in jobs. It's an amazing record to have that we have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, Mr. Speaker. That's an unbelievable number because it wasn't very long ago when people were leaving the province for sure to find opportunities in other provinces. But I don't think you have to go to too many Roughrider games or concerts or whatever and you run into people that have just moved back to Saskatchewan, many people that are repatriating from other provinces, from Alberta, from Ontario, many people coming from other parts of Canada.

But what has been really interesting, I have found over the last year or two since I've had the opportunity of travelling the province, is the number of immigrants, people coming from other countries, whether it's Ireland — certainly has been a huge influx — whether it's been the Philippines. And I remember back in 2008 and '09 when we went on the recruitment to recruit more nurses into Saskatchewan from the Philippines, roughly about 300 more nurses, of course, the NDP were dead set against that, Mr. Speaker. We have seen huge influx of people.

I was down in the Redvers, Carlyle area, and I was amazed at the new hotels that have opened up in Redvers and Carlyle — you know, communities that haven't seen growth like that or building like that for decades. But it was interesting to also stay in the one hotel that we did in Redvers as we were at a wedding this past summer. And the people that were working at the desk were all newcomers to Canada and to especially Saskatchewan. And it wasn't settling in Regina and it wasn't just settling in Saskatoon. They were settling in Redvers and they were settling in Carlyle.

Certainly the oil boom there has really taken off and agriculture is doing well. But all the supporting industries, when our economy is growing and doing well, when the oil and gas industry is doing well, when agriculture is doing well, when potash is doing well, the spinoff jobs, the support services that need to be there — whether it's in hotels, whether it's in restaurants — all of those support services are there growing in rural Saskatchewan, something that we have never seen for many, many years, Mr. Speaker.

I think probably, and maybe it would be only the member for Athabasca could go back far enough and would remember the first renaissance of the province, when people were moving into this province from all over Europe and other provinces. But it's probably been since the early '20s that we have seen a renaissance like we're seeing here in the province, Mr. Speaker, something that everyone in Saskatchewan should be proud of.

We're certainly proud of it as a government, not that it is necessarily because of the Government of Saskatchewan, but I would say it would have something to do with the attitude shift of a government that is welcoming businesses and residents into the province as opposed to trying to nationalize businesses and chasing them out and the jobs that went with them, outside the province, Mr. Speaker. That's a huge attitude shift, and I think that's what this province has seen more than anything else in the last five years is an attitude shift to welcome people in as opposed to chasing people out, Mr. Speaker.

[21:15]

And I would say it's a great deal of credit to the Premier of this province as he goes around, not only across Canada but down into the States and across Europe and sells the style of life that we are blessed with here in Saskatchewan. He's probably the best salesperson we could ever have, Mr. Speaker, going around spreading the message, the hope, and the vision of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. That is resonating around the world and we're seeing it because droves of people are coming to this province, Mr. Speaker. Very proud of the work that not only the Premier is doing, but also the Finance minister to ensure that the future of our province is bright because of just another balanced budget by the Saskatchewan Party government, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'd be remiss if I just didn't touch on some of the highlights in health. A heck of a Health minister during the budget deliberations obviously, because we see a real nice increase, 3.5 per cent increase in spending in this year's health budget, bringing it to \$4.8 billion. I used to remember trying to figure out what's \$4.8 billion a day. It's a lot of money per day. I don't know exactly but I would say about 14 million. If

somebody could get on the calculator real quick and help me out, that would be nice. But about \$14 million roughly a day, each and every day just spent on health care. You know, a 3.8 per cent increase or going to \$4.8 billion is a . . . \$4.8 billion divided by 365. \$4.8 billion is about a little over \$200 million increase from last year because last year it was about 4.6.

And all we've heard from the opposition is, you need to spend more. It doesn't matter how much we spend; they need to spend more. But I have yet to hear from them on their side. They've got a few of their catch phrases, a few catch lines as to how you could, you know, if you wanted to spend more you could not do this or you could not do that. We certainly heard that if we didn't do three more MLAs, how many more hospitals they would be able to build. If we didn't have three more MLAs, how many more highways we could build and how many long-term care beds we could add to the province if we just didn't add those three MLAs. They really like to catch that one. And lately they've talked a little about some of the renovations in the building, which are very nice to see, and a change in the Premier's office as far as hardwood. But it's amazing again how much they could do with that \$20,000 if they could ever get their hands on it. Because when you ask them, they need to spend more money. They want us to spend more money. Where would you find it? Where would you cut? Well we know the member from Lakeview would certainly cut in rural Saskatchewan. That's nothing to be surprised, Mr. Speaker, but they very seldom ever come up with an alternative.

It's one thing to criticize. Absolutely remember being on the opposition benches, but we came up with alternatives that were doable that would make this province move forward, Mr. Speaker. And we've heard very little from that side.

So on the health side, I think, as I said, the Minister of Health has done a very good job. And before I move off health, as the numbers are coming in soon I hope, that there has been a huge expenditure in health — not only on the capital side, to see 13 long-term care facilities move forward; not only on the capital side, to see a children's hospital move forward; 13.15, I was just a little high on the 14 million, but about \$13 million a day is spent on health care each and every day. Huge expenditure.

So now I can go on to highways, and we're moving on to highways as that's the responsibility that I have. It has been a very interesting transition over the last eight months to learn more about the Ministry of Highways and see the great work that the Highways staff do and the expenditure on highways.

We had made a commitment in the 2011 election campaign to put \$2.2 billion into highways and infrastructure in this province, a record amount of spending over a four-year period of \$2.2 billion. With this budget combined with last year's budget, we're well over \$1.1 billion, or well over halfway to meeting our campaign commitment.

And I think that's one thing that people of the province have looked at and I think really have respected, that when we make a commitment — and making a commitment of spending \$2.2 billion on highways and infrastructure is a huge commitment — that we followed through on our commitment. The four years previous, from 2007 to 2011, I think that was a bit of a hallmark of the government to make sure that we kept the promises. We

did keep those promises, and we're continuing to, well over halfway on the highways commitment of \$2.2 billion, well over the 1.1 after the last two budgets.

This budget is \$156 million that will be spent on highways. There actually will be more spending than that done in this coming fiscal year. The budget is \$576 million. We had put in \$50 million at the end of the last fiscal year in about September that was to be spent if we could get it spent, you know, on projects leading up to the freeze in 2012. Of course the snow came a little bit early, as I said, October 22nd. We weren't able to move all that money out. That money is still there. So we've got \$576 million along with the \$50 million that we put into highways last year. I think people will again this year get frustrated at times as they are trying to make time going up and down our highways and running into orange zones because there is so much construction, maintenance and capital, Mr. Speaker, over the next number of months making sure that our highways are in good shape.

Some of the highways that will be worked on this year are Highway 15, and I certainly heard lots from the member from Arm River on that. Highway 22, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you'll be happy about that. Highway 41, 42, 51, 58, 305, Highway 55, none of which are in Indian Head-Milestone.

So we've done a lot of work although . . . Some of the major projects that this government will be moving on, some of the megaprojects, about \$63.3 million for megaprojects, starting with the Estevan truck bypass, Mr. Speaker, doing work on that to make sure that the huge increase in truck traffic in that Weyburn-Estevan area and especially in around the Estevan area . . . All that truck traffic on 39 Highway is funnelled right through the main street of Estevan — heavy trucks, dangerous goods, and everything else, Mr. Speaker. It will be great to see the route moving around Estevan so that a lot of those trucks will be diverted around Estevan. And I know the member from Estevan is very, very supportive of that and has been a great lobby for that community over the past . . . well she's been here for quite a few years.

Some of the other projects that we're working on, megaprojects that we're working on, is the west Regina bypass. And anybody that has had the opportunity to drive to Moose Jaw over the last year and a half will see the work that's being done on No. 1 Highway, whether it's the traffic lights there on No. 1 Highway which is only there . . . They're only there temporary until the overpass is done. You can see the main girders are across the highway that will hopefully be open later on this summer. A major interchange so that people can, that truck traffic can get to the GTH and, more importantly, when they leave the GTH and come back to No. 1, that they can turn on to No. 1 in a safe manner. That work has been done as well as twinning all the way up to Dewdney will be work that's completed.

Other work that is part of the megaprojects that we're working on in this fiscal year will be . . . and this is very important that we make note that this was announced a couple of years ago, a year and a half ago at least, well before I became the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure. But a passing lane project on No. 10 Highway from Balgonie out towards Fort Qu'Appelle, where passing lanes will be put on No. 10, huge traffic volumes in that area, want to put the passing lanes in and see how effective they

are. They've been effective in other jurisdictions. We had them in our province many years ago, moved away from them. The way they're redesigned now have been fairly effective, so that work will be moving forward through this summer and certainly glad to see it. As I said, that work, that was decided on well before I was the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure, but we have the funding to move forward on it.

Some of the specialized programs that I want to talk about is in municipal transportation infrastructure — \$25.5 million to the MREP [municipal roads for the economy program] program which is really to SARM to make sure that they have money to repair bridges and culverts and a number of those things, Clearing the Path projects. It's an increase of \$2 million over last year.

I do know that SARM was looking for more, and I can certainly appreciate it because I know they've got pressures in the rural communities . . . the rural roadways I should say. We're able to see an extra \$2 million as well as an extra million on top of that, which really brings it up to 26.5 million from the Ministry of Agriculture. That's putting \$1 million dollars in just to deal with some of the bridges over the irrigation canals that we have in parts of our province. So really it's about \$26.5 million that will be going to rural RMs [rural municipality] that will deal with the pressures that they're seeing on their roadways, and as I said, \$1 million dollars particularly for bridges over irrigation canals. Seven point nine million or almost \$8 million to the urban highway connector program is certainly important and 700,000 to support community airport improvements.

So it is a budget that covers a number of bases in the highways area, and we do know that . . . I will say, I will be a predictor that probably some time in the next three to four weeks we're going to hear of some highways that are in pretty rough shape. That is not uncommon in Saskatchewan. Any time you go through the freeze-thaw cycle, and this year it's going to be a quick thaw cycle I would imagine, there are real pressures that are put on the highways. Certainly potholes and heaving, all of those things, as well as the water concerns that we have moving forward are definitely pressures that we're going to see. But we have the budget in place certainly and the preparedness.

I know the Ministry of Highways has been working on making sure their equipment is ready and up to speed to make sure that they can deal with some of the issues that we're going to face, I would say, in the next month to month and a half in our province with the huge snowfall that we have, the flooding, and of course the freeze-thaw cycle that we go through.

For anybody that's been south, I often . . . I never looked at their roads. Maybe it's just a function of the business, but I had the opportunity to be in Phoenix for about five days not very long ago. And I often thought, like wouldn't it be nice if we . . . Their highways are so nice and smooth, but they don't have too many 30 below days, you know. They just don't have that freeze and then thaw where there's heaving and shifting like we do in our province. It's a natural fact, so I know there's going to be pressures and there's going to be some complaints.

What I will say, with \$576 million, well over \$200 million, well over \$200 million for maintenance, they may not . . . the highways will take some, they'll be some pressures on those

highways for repair work. We are committed over . . . through the summer to make sure that repair work is done. And I can say generally that our highway system, by the time we hit July and August, is far better than what the people see it in April. So I'm asking for motorists to be patient as we get, as the Highways ministry gets out there and fixes those roads as we go, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, one other responsibility that I have and was touched on in the budget is SaskBuilds. Very proud of the work that SaskBuilds is doing. It has worked hard to do a five-year capital plan of all the capital in our province, looking at whether it's health or highways or post-secondary, making sure that we have a five-year capital plan and now working on more of a 10-year capital plan because of some of the capital builds extend past five years. So working on a 10-year capital plan to move forward.

Other provinces have had a capital plan, a government capital plan. We haven't in the province of Saskatchewan, so SaskBuilds has worked very hard under the leadership of Brian Manning to make sure that we have a strong capital plan moving forward.

But the other part of the capital plan is looking at alternative financing, looking at how we can properly fund these capital projects, Mr. Speaker. And certainly P3s [public-private partnership] have come up over the past, well yesterday and a few days, maybe a few other times in question period. We think this is an alternative. If it makes economic sense for the province, that's the work that SaskBuilds is doing over the next number of weeks and months to make sure that these projects, megaprojects move forward.

I mentioned in question period all the other provinces that have moved forward with P3s. If we look at all the municipalities — certainly Manitoba government, provincial government — but the city of Manitoba and their Mayor Sam Katz is a strong proponent of P3s as we move forward. Mr. Speaker, this is something that we're not ideologically bent on, but if it does make economic sense, we're going to certainly move towards it, which is unlike the opposition, Mr. Speaker. If you just say P3 they just automatically say no. It is an ideology thing, Mr. Speaker.

[21:30]

But unfortunately, as we learned yesterday in question period, you know, it's a little bit like the left hand doesn't know what the other left hand is doing. They're really kind of offside with their federal cousins, you know, whether it's on P3s where their federal counterparts have said, you know, there are savings that can happen; there are some efficiencies, even though this NDP has been completely offside. Which kind of reminds me of the week earlier when the federal NDP was completely against Keystone but then this provincial government was with Keystone.

Mr. Speaker, I wish I was, you know, a bit of a bug on the wall to listen to the conversation between the new Leader of the Saskatchewan NDP and Thomas Mulcair, just to see how that conversation is going. Do they say, where are you on this subject? Because if you're here, we're going to be there, Mr.

Speaker. They just don't really quite have any idea where they stand. Mr. Speaker, a lot of flip-flopping for sure. But what I have noticed, Mr. Speaker, more than anything else over the last three or four months from the NDP is the ability to say one thing and words in one direction, but their actions are absolutely opposite. And I can hear the member from Athabasca again chirping, the lone wolf on that side, chirping from his side of the benches, Mr. Speaker.

He's talking about what we should do in Highways many, many different times. He stood in this place and said we should build a second bridge in Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker. As I said, when he was the minister they couldn't fix the bridge they had, let alone build a second bridge.

I've heard both members . . . well the two members from the North are here. They talked, and I heard the member from Cumberland talking an awful lot about how much we should put in northern Saskatchewan. I will put our record of the Saskatchewan Party up on northern Saskatchewan spending, and especially in Highways, against five years of the NDP any day of the week, Mr. Speaker, because they are absolutely . . . [inaudible].

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I'm surprised those two members are here, Mr. Speaker, with the job that they did for northern Saskatchewan, and especially the member from Athabasca. We have spent more money . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the member opposite is asking me to name one thing that we've done in northern Saskatchewan. Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is a road that's going to connect a Cameco mine and develop prosperity, Mr. Speaker, called 914 . . . Well the member laughs. You know, he asked me to identify one. I identify one, Mr. Speaker, and he doesn't want to hear it, Mr. Speaker.

Airport in Stony Rapids, is that another thing, Mr. Speaker, that we could identify in northern Saskatchewan? Mr. Speaker, the hypocrisy coming from that side just doesn't end with the member from Athabasca, even though I think he's one of the strongest proponents for the hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker. But it's on many other levels, Mr. Speaker, many other levels.

It wasn't very long ago that the member from Lakeview, the member from Lakeview talked about ISC [Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan]. He was a minister at the time responsible for the legislative instruments committee. ISC was in the Crown protection Act and it was deliberately at the eleventh hour taken out of the Crown protection Act. That Act definitely would have had to go past legislative instruments committee for this to happen, but the member at that time who was the leader of the opposition just simply forgot. They took it out of the Crown protection Act, Mr. Speaker, because they had intentions on moving it to the private sector, Mr. Speaker. That is no secret, Mr. Speaker, except to them. They can't quite come to grips with it. But again they think it's a crime that our government would move on ISC when that's what they were planning on doing. All the evidence points in that direction, Mr. Speaker. Again it's another example of the NDP saying that we shouldn't do something that they had plans on doing, Mr. Speaker.

Again the member from Rosemont also talked an awful lot

about P3s and they were dead set against P3s, Mr. Speaker. If you look at the record of the NDP when they were in power, they were intent — I was going to use a word before intent — they were intent on moving forward with P3s, Mr. Speaker. They had an inclination that they thought this would be a good idea. They sent delegations out to British Columbia to deal with Partnerships BC, which is the P3 organization. We have the letter that says what would the delegation be interested in. They are interested in the practical application of P3s for schools, hospitals, and Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker. Once again they can talk about it but, Mr. Speaker, if we act on it there seems to be some sort of a problem.

Now the lone wolf is going, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, because I'm just going to wrap up. I guess I can wrap up now that he's left, Mr. Speaker. But I will say . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh I'm sure he's here right now. Mr. Speaker, this budget is a balanced budget, the only one in Canada. Mr. Speaker, it has been five consecutive balanced budgets by this party and this government. Six balanced budgets, Mr. Speaker; this one still has to be voted on. That will be the sixth one, Mr. Speaker. But this one will most definitely move forward. I am quite confident that we have the forces on this side to move that budget forward to make it the sixth balanced budget, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be supporting this budget and with the colleagues, the great colleagues that I get to work with each and every day that lobby hard for their constituencies — very, very hard for their constituencies — and make sure that we that have the opportunity to serve in Executive Council know what's needed. I think this budget has heard those concerns as well as the concerns of the general public. That's why I'm supporting this budget, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is such a privilege to enter into the debate on this budget and it is such a privilege to have the opportunity to represent Saskatoon Riversdale. It is still such a pleasure and such a privilege to represent the community that's been my home for most of my life, Mr. Speaker.

Before we get into the budget debate, I think it's always important to say thank you to some very, very important people in my life who keep me going and allow me to be able to serve my community to the best of my ability.

My family is huge in my life. I live just a few blocks from my childhood home. My parents actually still live in my childhood home. So my parents, my mom and dad are a huge support, not just emotionally, but the reality is when you've got young kids, which I have — I have a 15-year-old and a 5-year-old — and family and on-the-ground support is really important. So my mom and dad, I have to say thank you to them.

My sister Michelle and her husband, John. My sister Michelle, I know I've said this many times here, but is like a second mother to my kids and really enables me when I come to Regina to know that my kids are well taken care of. Ophelia's dad, Blair, is a huge, huge help. He had taken a leave of absence for the first two years that I served in this job, from his employment, and just returned last January. And again I couldn't do this job

without the support. My child care providers, Aryn and Carly, are absolutely amazing. A nice little group of children. There's about four kids that come together and Aryn and Carly take great care of Ophelia and the rest of the children.

Dionne. I have a good friend who makes sure that during session I'm always well-fed, which I really appreciate. I know all of us in this job struggle to find time to exercise or to eat well and it's really nice to have those supports to ensure that we at least have some of the balance in our lives that we should.

My next door neighbours, Anita and Graham, especially in light of all this snow. I'm not a great snow shoveller. Graham has been amazing. And the drifts outside my house are almost as high as me, Mr. Speaker, and so Anita and Graham are great neighbours. I think I've had to shovel my own walks twice. And they're always there, whether it's fixing my door or bringing me a loaf of bread or something good to eat.

Really important for me to mention my kids. I know the Highways minister had an opportunity to chat about his kids, and really, I think a lot of the time, my kids are the reason that I'm here in this legislature, Mr. Speaker, and chose to run for the nomination and then subsequently as the candidate in Riversdale.

Hennessey and Ophelia put up with an awful lot having their mom come to Regina for about 20 weeks of the year and not be there and hands-on. Hennessey's an amazing kid. She's in grade 9. She just got her learner's licence yesterday, Mr. Speaker, so that's created a little bit of anxiety or stress for me. But she's a good kid and is now behind the wheel of a car. And thankfully her dad is the one who has taken on the job of the driving. So Hennessey's pretty awesome, as is Ophelia who just turned 5 a few months ago. And Ophelia is in maternelle at the francophone school in Saskatoon and is quite an amazing little person too. So those are my . . . I always get a little choked up when I talk about my family, Mr. Speaker, so forgive me for that here.

But I also have to say I have an awesome staff who really do a great job of supporting the people of Saskatoon Riversdale, dedicated and committed to ensuring that people who come into our office have the best possible service. Vanessa is on maternity leave with her beautiful little guy, Montgomery, and her kids Benjamin and Faith. Judy who is filling in for Vanessa, actually coincidentally enough, is in China right now on a holiday, and people who filled in my office very capably — Kent, Puck, and Cody — have served very well. So again our staff, I know for all of us, our staff make our job so much easier.

Someone that I don't want to forget . . . or people that I don't want to forget is our caucus office staff here in Regina, Mr. Speaker. We're a small staff in the opposition, but they do absolutely amazing work and are here early in the morning and into the wee hours, Mr. Speaker, for example poring over a 300-plus page FOI [freedom of information], do all the little things, Mr. Speaker. The staff prepare us, make sure that we are doing the best possible job too. So a big thank you to our caucus office staff. I know sometimes they don't get the kudos and the appreciation that they should.

And I also want to thank all the people in Saskatoon Riversdale who still come by the office or I meet when I'm out and about, who always have words of wisdom or thoughts or things to share with me. And aside from my children obviously, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of Saskatoon Riversdale and what they share with me is really the reason I'm here. So I think it's important to say thank you to the people of Saskatoon Riversdale.

Now on to the business of the budget here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that the government often likes to . . . I keep calling you Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my apologies. The Deputy Speaker was in the Chair for quite a while this evening, so my apologies, Mr. Speaker.

I know that this government often talks about, well why isn't the opposition more positive? Why do we not say more good things about the government? My first counter to that is, well our job isn't here to praise the work of the government. And I think they do a pretty fine job of doing that themselves, Mr. Speaker. I would say that modesty and humility certainly are not the hallmarks of this particular government. So I think they're doing pretty well themselves on the praising front, so I don't think that they really need our help on that. And our job actually is to point out the places where this government is falling down. And in this particular budget, there are some serious, serious, serious areas of concern for people that I know in Saskatoon Riversdale and across the province, Mr. Speaker.

But I do want to take a moment to give the government kudos on a couple things that I think really stand out for me in particular. I'd like to talk about the transition house in Melfort to support women and children who've experienced intimate partner violence. I know that they've been working on this transition house for several years in Melfort. It's desperately needed. I believe in 2010 in September they had submitted an application, the North East Outreach and Support Services. They've been working on this for a long time.

I had the pleasure of visiting Melfort back in I think it was the summer of 2010 and touring North East Outreach and Support Services who are the proponents of this shelter, Mr. Speaker. And they had told me stories about having to send women and children from the northeast to Yorkton, a long way, a long way away from their home communities, because there were nothing to serve the northeast area.

There is a shelter in Prince Albert but it was often overcrowded. I believe in 2012 they had to turn away about 2,000 individuals who came to the Prince Albert shelter. So building this transition house in Melfort is much needed and much appreciated, and I would commend the government for doing that, Mr. Speaker. It was absolutely imperative.

[21:45]

I would also encourage the government to think about a long-term strategy to deal with intimate partner violence. We had a study about three weeks ago that showed Saskatchewan's rates were way, way, way, way too high, Mr. Speaker, just not acceptable. It's not someplace that we should brag about having high numbers.

And so aside from their support of this transition house in Melfort and the support that they've offered, I believe to P.A. [Prince Albert] and Regina, I would encourage the government to seriously look at a comprehensive strategy to deal with intimate partner violence because a transition house isn't permanent housing. It is a temporary stopgap. And I would argue that parts of that strategy would include housing. I know that there's been a few studies done that flag the cost of housing as being incredibly problematic in terms of supporting women and children to leave abusive relationships, Mr. Speaker.

Housing, child care, a good income — there's all kinds of things that keep people stuck in relationships that are abusive. So again, I just want to commend the government for the transition house in Melfort.

I think it's important to mention the support of First Link. There's an increase to this program by \$350,000. First Link is an important link to support those with Alzheimer's and other related dementias. And I know now that they're going to be able to expand the program beyond Regina and Saskatoon. With our aging population, we have many challenges here in Saskatchewan, and I know that expanding First Link is one small piece of that puzzle.

Also the home care pilot project is, I think, worthy of support as well. It's great to see a pilot. And I hope that this pilot is successful and I hope that this pilot is expanded. One of the most effective ways of supporting seniors, I believe, is keeping them in their homes, in their comfortable environments. And I just don't believe this; I think statistics bear this out and evidence bears this out.

So supporting the home care pilot project, and hopefully it's successful and the government builds on that, as we have an aging demographic here. Baby boomers are set to retire this year, 2013 onward — en masse actually, is what one of the predictions is. And I know this is worthy of, I think, some kudos to the government for doing this as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But there was some clapping on the other side of the House when I did say some positive things and I appreciate that, but there's many things that I have to say where I think this government is lacking and lagging behind. So I don't think there'll be too much clapping from the other side of the House now.

I think that I want to talk a little bit about some of the rhetoric we've heard from this government. We've heard everyone get up on the government side of the benches and talk about the sixth balanced budget as a talking point, but I would argue that it's not such a reality. I actually sit here and wonder how members opposite can stand in their place and with a straight face talk about how they have six balanced budgets.

All one needs to do is take a look at page 57, and when they talk about their cutting of debt, all you need to do is take a look at page 57 of the budget summary to see the summary statement of debt. So in 2012, the actual debt was 8,502,100,000. Forecasted in 2013, 9,610,500,000, which is an increase. Estimated in 2014, 10,445,800,000. So I don't know how you can argue that you have a balanced budget if you've been increasing the debt year over year, Mr. Speaker. That doesn't make sense to me, and I wonder if actually some of the

members opposite have looked at budget documents and some of the numbers themselves.

I would also point out that there's maybe some budget tricks going on on the other side of the House. All we need to do is take a look at the PDAP [provincial disaster assistance program] budget line. So this government has talked about a balanced budget. All we have to do is look at the PDAP budget line: 2.65 million has been allocated for this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In the technical briefing last Wednesday, asking questions about the rolling average, what has been spent, I believe it was the last three years, it was 105 million spent on PDAP claims on average in the last three years.

So I have to point out for the members opposite that 2.65 million is considerably less than 105 million. That's about 102 million off the mark. So I suspect that would probably throw your, skew your supposed surplus a little bit out of whack if you actually budgeted for what the last three years have produced, especially when we look at the snowpack out there. Especially when we look at the news stories, everyone in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is preparing for flooding. And hopefully it won't come. Hopefully the melt will happen in an orderly fashion, as orderly as mother nature will let it happen.

But the reality is it's a lot of spin and PR [public relations] when they talk about their balanced budget and about debt being reduced. The reality is you just have to look at page 57 of the budget document to realize that in fact this budget is not balanced and debt is on the way up. So that is one thing that I'd like to mention, Mr. Speaker.

I think that another place that I'd like to talk a little bit about is on education. And you know what? I'm going to start again by giving the government props for increasing pre-K [pre-kindergarten] investments. That is one . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The government says, well what would you do differently? Particularly I think investment in education is absolutely critical. If we're going to turn around people who perhaps don't have the best start in life, if we're going to make a difference 20 years from now, we have to start now in seriously investing in early years, which includes child care, pre-K, kindergarten onward, Mr. Speaker. But I'll give the government props for increasing the pre-K spots. That's absolutely critical.

I also have to point out that there's some serious flaw in their child care and in . . . Well I have to point out that we've got child care on one end, pre-K, and then kindergarten. So this government . . . I'll talk a little bit more about child care in a moment. But kindergarten, the reality is this government has forced school boards to have to make incredibly difficult decisions.

In my own constituency and throughout Saskatoon, full-day kindergarten has been cut. In my constituency that is a huge blow to so many families. I have families who speak no English. Many of the refugees who come to Saskatoon — not just immigrants, but many of the refugees who come to Saskatoon — start their life in Saskatoon Riversdale and Meadowgreen and have huge language struggles. They've never held a pencil. Many of them have spent their birth onward in refugee camps, very challenged experiences. Full-day

kindergarten is hugely important for other children who've maybe not had, maybe not started at the same places as some of our children have, could really benefit from full-day kindergarten. Talk to an educator and find out how very important that full-day kindergarten has been in preparing children for grade 1 and onward, Mr. Deputy . . . Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my apologies again.

An Hon. Member: — He's the real deal.

Ms. Chartier: — He is indeed the real deal, as the member from Greystone has pointed out for me.

So I want to talk a little bit about this education budget. So there's been a cut of more than 190 million to educational agencies, down to 775 million. This government has committed to pay millions of dollars for testing instead of teaching, close to \$6 million, which is, that's not for programming. That's for software, Mr. Speaker. That is for software and the administration of that software.

So \$6 million, what could that \$6 million do in classrooms in communities throughout Saskatchewan? The reality in this education budget, \$80 million is going to pay for pension obligations. And the government has talked about building new schools, bundling them together. We've heard the Premier talk about bundling schools together as P3s, and I will talk a little bit about P3s later. So huge, huge problems.

So what are some of the third party agencies or outside stakeholders, people not in this legislature, saying about education? Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, the STF president, Colin Keess, pointed out that no funds were identified to support student learning and student engagement. He says, "It's glaringly evident that the additional 3.9 million has been allocated for data collection through standardized testing, as opposed to classroom supports."

The Saskatchewan School Boards Association has this to say:

"As a result of the government's decision to fully fund pre-K to 12 education in Saskatchewan, school boards are on a fixed income determined by the province and individual school boards have little flexibility to respond to challenges within school divisions," said SSBA President Janet Foord . . .

"Currently, only 30 per cent of Aboriginal students graduate from high school in Saskatchewan," said Foord.

And:

"Today, the government announced a \$3 million investment in First Nations and Métis education — that amounts to 0.0016 percent of the total pre-K to 12 education budget. This is simply unacceptable if the goal of eliminating the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student achievement gap is to be realized."

So those are what some third party individuals have to say about the government in this.

I want to talk about some personal examples, things that I hear

both in Saskatoon Riversdale and throughout the city of Saskatoon, and some of the challenges. I'd like to talk about some of the challenges that our educators and families are facing, Mr. Speaker. And again I would argue that education and a solid education from those early years onward is really what's going to ensure that our province continues to flourish, Mr. Speaker. But they're not going to flourish when we have classrooms with 31 children. I was speaking with a teacher, a grade 1 teacher, Mr. Speaker, who has 31 children in her classroom. Twenty-two of those are boys and nine girls — 31 children in a grade 1 classroom. How is that providing a good start to children, Mr. Speaker?

I was chatting with another teacher, actually. In her classroom she has four English as additional language students. This is no word of a lie. This is not hyperbole, but the English as an additional language teacher comes into this classroom and sees students 10 minutes a week — not 10 minutes a day, not 10 minutes half a day — 10 minutes a week. These children in her class, these English as additional language children, some of them who speak no English at this point, 10 minutes a week, Mr. Speaker. That is hugely, hugely problematic. And that is in one school.

A more affluent east side school, about two months ago there was a parent gathering, actually. It's not just educators who are concerned. It's parents who are concerned. There was a parent gathering. They called a meeting. They are very concerned about class sizes, Mr. Speaker. And this is a government who is not willing to cap classroom sizes, Mr. Speaker, which we think is hugely problematic. They're willing to regulate schools in all kinds of other ways — standardized tests, set school hours, all kinds of things, making sure the school year starts after Labour Day — but they are unwilling to cap class sizes, which has a real impact on learning for individuals.

A school in Saskatoon Riversdale last year, Mr. Speaker, last year one of the learning assistant teachers at one of the schools that has a very high newcomer and a very high First Nations and Métis population, the special education teacher, they were out of classroom space in the school. Mr. Speaker, no classroom space. This EAL [English as an additional language] teacher was teaching in the hallway. She had a table in the hallway. So children who first of all . . . you don't want to stigmatize or marginalize children any more than they already are. I know teachers do their very best to ensure that there isn't a stigma to receiving extra support, but the reality is there often is. And it's even worse when you are getting this support in the hallway, Mr. Speaker, which is not acceptable.

My colleague from Saskatoon Nutana was chatting with someone who actually was teaching virtually in a closet, Mr. Speaker. So there are many challenges and pressures on the education system, and I would argue that if you're going to pick a place to invest, education is absolutely imperative, Mr. Speaker. And again, I would say that the no cap on classroom sizes is hugely problematic.

[22:00]

So I think the government has fallen down on education and needs to do some serious work. The standardized testing, some of the literature on standardized testing, looking at an article

from *Education Week*, the article is called “Teachers Place Little Value on Standardized Testing: survey finds other assessments deemed more important.” This is from *Education Week* on March 28th, 2012. I’d like to quote:

[K to 12] Educators . . . on the panel emphasized what they said were the limits of standardized tests in their current configuration, saying such assessments are not well-matched to contemporary teaching and learning goals. “How can you get critical thinking in a bubble?,” asked Cate Dossetti, a teacher at Fresno High School in Fresno, California.

Another quote:

Teacher-effectiveness authority Charlotte Danielson added that “not a single one of the 21st-century skills can be assessed on a multiple-choice test.” She said that the appeal of standardized test scores is that they “give you a number” but that teaching is too complex to be captured in that way.

So those are a couple of thoughts from some American educators who have seen and experienced standardized testing first-hand.

Mr. Speaker, I have one more article, a Canadian study actually, from the *Canadian Journal of Education* in 2011. It’s called “High-stakes Standardized Testing and Marginalized Youth: An Examination of the Impact on Those Who Fail.” One of the things that the study points out that:

Interviews with youth indicate that the unintended impact of high-stakes testing is more problematic than policy makers and educators may realize. In contrast to . . . [literate] policy’s aims to help promote the “well-being” of all learners and “equity” within the educational system, youth attest to feeling “shame” and show further marginalization due to this testing mechanism.

So those are just a couple of studies. There’s a quote around marginalized youth and standardized testing from the same article:

There is a considerable amount of literature on how social inequalities along racial, social class, and gendered lines are reproduced and sustained through school practices . . . Arguably, standardized testing (re)produces these inequalities . . .

So we have some serious concerns about this government’s desire to test, not teach. I’ve heard it from educators. I’ve heard concern from parents.

It was interesting in question period today when the minister got up and he said, as an educator, that parents were asking for standardized testing, that he could . . . Standardized testing would be better to articulate concerns to parents than he could as an educator, which I don’t know if he really meant that or not. But the person who knows the student the best in any classroom is the teacher. And I think that we’re not cardboard cut-outs when we go into school, and we certainly shouldn’t be cardboard cut-outs when we come out. But the goal should be

able to make sure that we’re putting in place the supports to ensure that children have what they need to achieve their full capacity. And standardized testing doesn’t seem to be one of those, Mr. Speaker.

So we have some huge problems with the government’s approach, as do educators and parents, Mr. Speaker. The minister hasn’t been able to articulate a clear vision of why we’ve gone in this direction, and we’d like to see some evidence of that at some point because it absolutely makes no sense. This is not a common sense approach, Mr. Speaker.

On the education front, under that same portfolio, under Education is child care. This is something that, as a mother of young children and who has many friends who have young children, over the last 15 years . . . I have a big span between my children, so I’ve gotten the opportunity to talk to a broad age range of people over the last 15 years who’ve been in the thick of child rearing young children, Mr. Speaker.

So in this budget, the government is committed to creating 500 more child care spaces. They committed to 500 spaces in last year’s budget. But I need to point out that as per a written question that I asked just last week, of those 500 spaces — it’s not quite as rosy as the government would make it look — of those 500 spaces, only 185 of those spaces are actually operational at this point, Mr. Speaker. But if anyone thinks . . . And they all have been allocated, but the reality is they’re not operational. So a child care space that isn’t operational serves no one any good at this point in time.

But I want to point out some numbers here for the members opposite, Mr. Speaker. In 2009 there were 14,536 live births; 2010, 14,978 live births; 2011, 14,577 live births; 2012, 15,035 live births. So that’s about 60,000 births in the last five years, Mr. Speaker. So these children are all under the age of five, and presumably some of them need child care spaces, Mr. Speaker. Their parents would need child care spaces. And so 500 a year is not something to brag about, Mr. Speaker.

I think some of the . . . The reality is child care, from my perspective as a feminist, child care enables women to be engaged in paid labour, which many women choose. I’ve been an at-home mother too and . . . But I think most people recognize that child care, it’s still women who are primarily responsible for caregiving, that the reality is that still happens. And child care, having quality, affordable, accessible child care allows women to be engaged in paid labour. So from that perspective, that’s absolutely imperative.

And that’s part of an economic development strategy. If you’re facing labour force shortages and your citizens can’t work outside of the home because they can’t find child care, that’s hugely problematic. So not only are we not creating enough spaces, but we’ve heard last year, Mr. Speaker, we had two delegations . . . Twice a delegation of child care directors came to talk about the struggles with staffing. They say that early learning and care educators are not following behind them, partly because it’s not paid incredibly well. So these child care directors, some of them who’ve been in the field for 20-plus years, are very worried about the lack of EKE, or early childhood educators, following behind them.

I still actually need to confirm this via the written question, but I was talking to a manager last week actually at a child care facility who had said . . . And this is an organization that has many years experience providing child care in the city of Saskatoon, a very well-respected organization. And they've not asked for any of the 500 spots in recent years. And why not? She says one reason they haven't asked for spots is because they can't fill the staff. They can't hire the appropriate staff. And she pointed out . . . So I still need to confirm this, and I'll do this through a written question. But she said that there were only 10 early learning and care educators who graduated in, she said Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. So I want to clarify that.

So you're creating 500 spaces, but you're only graduating 10 level 3 ECE individuals to staff those spaces? So I think there may be a disconnect between creating spaces, making sure that we have the qualified staff. So that is a huge problem, Mr. Speaker. But again I would point out that 500 child care spaces a year with 60,000 live births in the last four years is nothing to brag about, Mr. Speaker.

I would argue that there's huge challenges with subsidies as well. The turning point, this is . . . The turning point is the point at which you no longer receive the full subsidy and you start to lose some of that subsidy is when you make \$1,640 — \$1,640, Mr. Speaker. That is not much more over minimum wage. I want to point out that this has not changed since 1983. So that is not a good thing, Mr. Speaker, the fact that people who make \$1,641 presumably start to lose some of the subsidy. So that is hugely problematic.

Along some of the subsidies, two child care directors have told me that the length of time it takes to process a subsidy application . . . So if someone comes into your child care and they want a spot and you want to ensure that they have a spot, so you start providing child care. But it can take anywhere from six to eight weeks to process that subsidy application. So you guesstimate, well they think that they're making this much if they happen to be on a government program. So they think they're making this much. You estimate that, oh they'll get this much subsidy and they have to pay this much of the parent portion. But because it takes six to eight weeks, it's six to eight weeks . . . They may find out at the end of the eight weeks that they're not eligible for subsidy or not as much subsidy as they thought. So then the child care has some debt.

And when people are on a low fixed income, trying to come up with the extra money to pay for that debt is very difficult. So either what happens is . . . Well what happens is the child care carries that bad debt. But that individual who's been using up that child care space, because they can't afford it even with the subsidy, they end up dropping out of the child care. So you have someone who is using child care to get an education or to be employed, and then they end up dropping out of the child care. And then you've got a huge problem there, Mr. Speaker.

I think something else that I'd like to flag, some concern, is this government does not know how many people are currently looking for licensed child care. You can't tell me, Mr. Speaker, that there can't be a measure developed or some way . . . Manitoba has an online child care registry. The Ottawa capital region has an online child care registry. There has to be a way to be able to determine, not just with the number of live births

or how many young families are in a particular area, but we have to figure out a way . . . or this government, the onus is on this government to figure out a way — how many child care spaces do we need, Mr. Speaker?

And I would challenge the government to think about that. How can you create a program and build on a program if you don't really know what the needs are? I think you need to fully understand what you're dealing with, Mr. Speaker. How many people want licensed care? In order to be able to have a plan to support people to access licensed care which supports education, which supports employment — and as I would argue, it's an economic development strategy — if you don't have care, you can't work, Mr. Speaker.

And I know we've heard in this legislature and beyond that there are some challenges with people finding employees. I know that one of the other challenges is finding licensed child care outside of the Monday to Friday, nine-to-five workday, or we'll say eight to six just for argument's sake. There are people who work at places, often service sector lower waged employees, who would be eligible for child care subsidies but there's not licensed child care available to them at 6 in the morning or at 8 o'clock at night, Mr. Speaker.

So I would challenge the government to think about a comprehensive strategy for child care that quantifies the numbers of child care spaces that we need, that addresses the subsidy situation, that addresses not enough staff. There are so many things, I'm sure . . . I'm the queen of sticky notes, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure that I'm missing something on this front but . . . Oh, I did miss something.

Actually in written questions I had asked about the range of subsidy paid out in 2012. You'll be interested to know, Mr. Speaker, that we paid a 25 cent subsidy, Mr. Speaker, to some family somewhere. And I think this will involve further questions in estimates or further written questions. How much does it cost to process a 25 cent subsidy, Mr. Speaker, and how was that paid out? Is that a direct deposit? Is that a cheque? So I think that that clearly illustrates that we have some challenges here in child care.

And I would encourage the government to seriously think about looking to our neighbours to the east and implementing a serious strategy around child care, and not ad hoc and not done on . . . [inaudible interjections] . . . The members opposite are saying, how many did you create? Well first of all, I have been here for three years, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the reality is this is 2013. This is 2013. If we want to talk about balanced growth, not having a child care strategy in place is not balanced growth, Mr. Speaker, not balanced growth at all. This is 2013. Let's deal with the child care challenges that we have to ensure that families have the supports, that families have the supports they need to fully engage in employment and education, Mr. Speaker.

All one needs to do . . . Actually I was wrong. I have much more to talk about child care. All one needs to do is look at some of the news articles of even just the past couple months. I have a couple here that talks about, well people struggling with the qualifications, and that goes to staffing levels. But "Nanny shortage in Saskatchewan." This is from *Global Regina* on

Thursday, February 28th:

Families in Saskatchewan looking for a live-in nanny are finding them in short supply. With daycare shortages forcing many parents to look elsewhere, nannies are now in high demand.

[22:15]

So daycare shortages. So people are turning to nannies. "Need for nannies surging in Saskatoon" posted February 13th, 2013 from CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] News.

Nannies are a hot commodity in Saskatoon, a fast-growing city with a young demographic.

While many parents say they would prefer to find spots for their children at licensed daycares, for some families juggling shift work and two careers say nannies are often the easiest option.

So we have another article from Thursday, February 7th, 2013. This is a Global News article. In Saskatoon:

A growing, and younger, population is putting the squeeze on childcare providers in the province.

On Wednesday, Statistics Canada released figures that named Saskatoon as the fastest growing metropolitan area in Canada along with having the youngest median age.

This is creating issues for parents looking to work but unable to find a daycare provider.

One person feeling the pinch is Angela Brown. She recently moved back to Saskatchewan from Alberta with her husband and two young children and although she managed to secure a part-time spot for her 4-year-old daughter at Parents' Child Development Cooperative, her 15-month-old son is still on the waiting list.

"To have a place that you trust and that is reputable and the child enjoys is huge," she said. "If you don't have that, your days at work are awful," said Brown.

Brown has yet to rejoin the work force since neither of her children have full-time placements at child care facilities.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's not me saying that we have a child care challenge. There are many people in Saskatchewan saying that we have a child care challenge, Mr. Speaker. I think that the . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will move on to culture, the culture and parks portfolio, which is mine. And you'll notice I have many, many thoughts on this file, Mr. Speaker, so I hope . . . many, many, many thoughts on this file.

So one thing that we have to talk about here is the Arts Board. This year happens to be the 65th anniversary of the Arts Board, and the Arts Board is the body that supports the creators in being able to create, Mr. Speaker.

So one of the things that we've heard this government talk about is the 5 per cent increase to the Arts Board allocation this year, which is much needed and incredibly important and very appreciated, I'm sure. But I think we need to take a look at this government's record on the Arts Board on this the 65th anniversary of the Arts Board. Thank goodness the government saw fit to increase their allocation by 5 per cent, because if we go back to 2007-2008, the last NDP budget, the Arts Board allocation was 10.534 million, Mr. Speaker, 10.534 million in 2007 and '08.

What did we see under this government 2008-09? We saw clawback, Mr. Speaker, \$6.094 million. 2009-10, we saw a marginal bump, 6.338 million. 2010-11, we saw a hold the line budget again, 6.338 million. 2011-12, 6.433 million. So we did see a marginal increase. But last year, what did we see for the Arts Board? We saw a status quo holding the line budget, \$6.433 million.

Mr. Speaker, what does a status quo budget mean? A status quo budget means that you can't keep up with your annual costs, Mr. Speaker. So I'm very glad that this government has seen fit to give the Arts Board a 5 per cent allocation. But their track record for the Arts Board has not been stellar, Mr. Speaker. It has not been stellar. And the numbers . . . All they need to do is take a look at the estimates and see that there is nothing to crow about on this file.

We can look at the Western Development Museum, which is an institution I know . . . The one that I'm very familiar with is the Western Development Museum in Saskatoon. And we heard last year, there was quite a furor last year with a holding the line budget for the Western Development Museum which forced them to close their doors on Monday, which in fact . . . and staff took unpaid leave. They didn't fill vacancies, which has an impact on the public, Mr. Speaker. The Western Development Museum in Saskatoon actually, coincidentally enough, has just won some awards from RV magazine and should be very proud of that. But it's not because of the support of this government, Mr. Speaker.

I know in my own experience, the Western Development Museum in Saskatoon, for me growing up, visiting Boomtown was a wonderful experience. It was, and it continues to be. Over the years, actually in the last government, the building the prairie gamble was . . . or it's called Winning the Prairie Gamble, but creating that exhibit has further enhanced the Western Development Museum. It's a big thing for children to do, for school groups to come and visit. But it's also a great way for all the newcomers who come to Saskatoon or any of the other three communities where there's WDMs [Western Development Museum] — in Moose Jaw, North Battleford, and Yorkton — it's a great opportunity for newcomers to have a sense of the province that they're coming to, Mr. Speaker.

And it also . . . What else does the Western Development Museum do? It highlights innovation. There was a great exhibit on the cobalt bomb just last year, Mr. Speaker. So we have not . . . This government has not shown great support for the Western Development Museum. And again having spoken to the executive director there some time ago, she said a status quo budget . . . I believe she said her annual increase in cost, if you hold the line, is \$100,000. That's for maintenance of utilities,

all those kinds of things. So their budget goes up by about \$100,000 annually. What did this government do in the last four years? In '09-10, 3.99 million; '10-11, 3.99 million — so a status quo budget — '11-12, an increase of 60,000 to 4.059 million; and '12-13, it was a status quo budget; '13-14, a status quo budget, Mr. Speaker. So we are challenging some of our institutions here that, I think, contribute a great deal to the quality of life here in Saskatchewan.

I think one of the things that I'd like to talk about is the film employment tax credit. We heard a little bit about it today, Mr. Speaker. We heard a little about it today again when we discovered through a freedom of information request that this government last year made a decision to cut it, and that after they made a decision to cut it, they decided they'd better do some quick research on it, Mr. Speaker, just a few short days before they were going to announce the decision to cut it. So this was all about PR and spin, Mr. Speaker, because apparently they had not done a thorough analysis of the program. That's hugely problematic.

So we've heard from this cultural minister saying that, oh well, we've got Creative Saskatchewan now. And he's been quite critical of me arguing that Creative Saskatchewan is not a replacement for the film employment tax credit. The reality is, you know what? It does, in fact, raise the bar for some of the other creative industries and people are cautiously, cautiously optimistic. I know talking to many of the other cultural industries, they are cautiously optimistic about, they are cautiously optimistic about this . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . It's quite funny, Mr. Speaker. Those members opposite are saying shame on me, Mr. Speaker. That is absolutely hilarious, Mr. Speaker.

So the reality is, Mr. Speaker, many people in the creative industries outside of film are cautiously optimistic, but they saw how the film industry was treated this year, and this government has a long way to make up in terms of trust because people are not quite sure if this is all that it's cut out to be.

But you know what, Mr. Speaker? You could raise the bar for other creative industries without killing one of the creative industries that brought in huge production values, Mr. Speaker. So we could have raised the bar for other creative industries instead of raising them for some and cutting for the others, Mr. Speaker. And I have not spoken to a single person in other creative industries who thought the film tax credit was a bad thing. So although these members are trying to paint this as, well the member from Riversdale only supports film, the reality is I've not heard people in other creative industries say that the film employment tax credit was a bad thing. In fact they saw the benefit. They saw their specific industries benefit from a strong and vibrant film industry. So we did not have to kill one industry to raise the bar for others, Mr. Speaker.

So you know what? I actually haven't had an opportunity yet today to review the Creative Saskatchewan legislation. It's been a busy day and I'm looking forward to doing that tonight and tomorrow. But you know what? The one thing that I have heard from these creative industries, they're very concerned. They're cautiously optimistic but they were concerned about not having members of their industries on the board for Creative Saskatchewan. So I'm curious to see how that's all shaken out

in the legislation, Mr. Speaker. They were concerned that the minister and the ministry did not want members from the creative industries on the board of Creative Saskatchewan, which they said was absolutely imperative.

Also one thing to flag in this budget, that the money for the creative industries, for the industry associations, the one thing I know the creative industries have said is that money has to be there to support them. They are the link to the creators, Mr. Speaker. And there's many questions that are going to be asked in estimates, but I understand that money for the cultural or creative industry organizations is only in place until the end of August. So I have some questions in estimates to figure out. There's one budget line that's up, there's one that's down. What does that all mean? So there's still many questions to ask, but the bottom line is we could have raised the bar for every other creative industry without chasing hard-working folks from Saskatchewan.

And you know, I have to say too that a couple of weeks ago, our first week back, the member from Indian Head-Milestone — I just heard say something from his seat — it happened to be three of the members, the member from Indian Head-Milestone, the member from Estevan, and the member from Kindersley, actually two weeks ago was saying, oh Danielle, you've made a mountain out of a molehill. We haven't heard from . . .

An Hon. Member: — We never said that.

Ms. Chartier: — You did in fact. These members did in fact say this. They were saying that they had not heard from anybody in their constituencies, Mr. Speaker. Those three members . . . Perhaps the member of Estevan didn't say I made a mountain out of a molehill. Perhaps it was her seatmates, but she did in fact say she didn't hear from a single person.

So all I want to say, Mr. Speaker, is when you talk, I can tell you that there are hundreds of people who have been negatively impacted by this, Mr. Speaker. You tell these people, Mr. Speaker, a gaffer who was in Saskatchewan for 27 years from BC [British Columbia], who's made his home in Saskatchewan for 27 years and helped build the film industry, that he couldn't work here in Saskatchewan anymore. So he's now moved back to his home community of BC but it's really hard to set up shop in a new community, Mr. Speaker. So he's working in BC.

An Hon. Member: — Film credits wasn't here for 27 years.

Ms. Chartier: — No, no, no, I didn't say the credit was here, Mr. Speaker, as the member from Milestone keeps heckling from his seat. I said he was here for 27 years and helped build the industry, Mr. Speaker. That is what I said. So you tell him that there weren't huge personal costs for this. You tell the couple, the two producers who are now . . . Actually one of them comes from Nipawin. So I'm sure that . . . and helped produce amazing crop dusting program actually. The two producers are now living in Toronto. And you know what's really . . . I mean it's wonderful. She is pregnant. She's having a baby. Her family here in Saskatchewan will not get to grow up, will not get to be with their grandchild as their grandchild grows up, Mr. Speaker, because of a short-sighted, nasty cut from this government that apparently didn't involve any economic analysis before it happened, Mr. Speaker. A really

talented woman who is now in northern Canada, Mr. Speaker, working as a film commissioner. She had organized a digital conference, Mr. Speaker.

You tell these people. And this is a drop in the bucket. I had the opportunity 90 seconds last spring to read the start of a list of people who've left Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And many, many people have left Saskatchewan. But it's children who are being separated from their families or from their grandparents.

There are people who are having to choose another career because their career here in Saskatchewan has ended. You can't earn a living, Mr. Speaker, in the film industry here in Saskatchewan. The reality is, Mr. Speaker, that the \$60,000 cap that was on the place, in place on this transition grant that the government had put in place does not, does not, will not do anything, Mr. Speaker, for bringing in production from anywhere else, Mr. Speaker.

Does this government think other provinces, other investors from elsewhere, their money isn't good enough, Mr. Speaker? Seventy per cent of money in the province spent in film came from out of province, Mr. Speaker. Seventy per cent of that was new money to Saskatchewan. Does this government not appreciate that? You talk to any filmmaker who says they are in fact entrepreneurs. It doesn't fit with this government's narrative that they talk about attracting and retaining young people to Saskatchewan. In fact around the film industry, they have pushed them out, Mr. Speaker. That is exactly what has happened.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:30.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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

Vermette	2953
McMillan	2958
Toth	2964
Cox	2967
McMorris	2970
Chartier	2975

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