



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

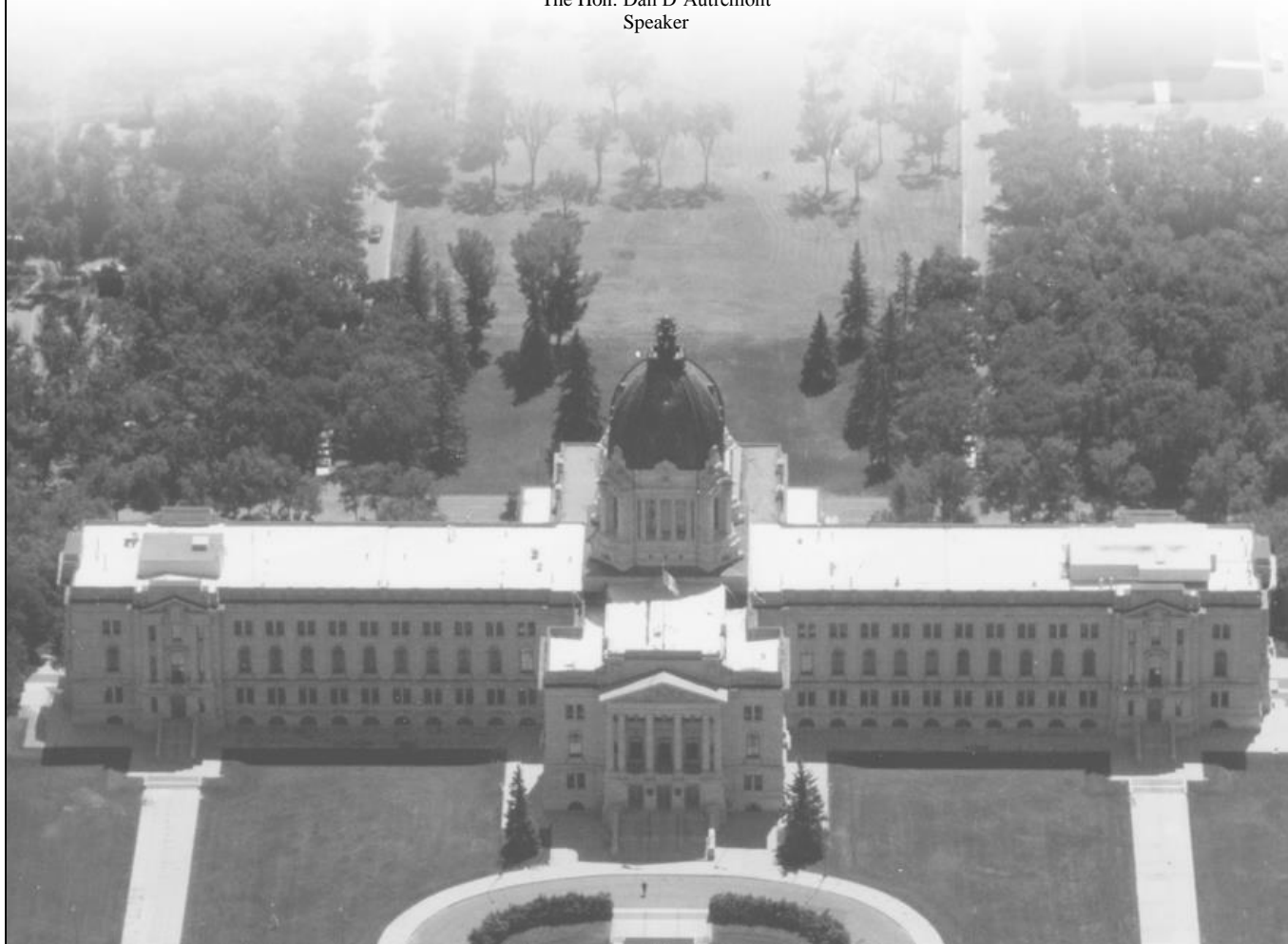
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**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)

Published under the  
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The Hon. Dan D'Autremont  
Speaker



## MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. Dan D'Autremont

Premier — Hon. Brad Wall

Leader of the Opposition — Cam Broten

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

[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

**EVENING SITTING**

**The Speaker:** — It now being 7 o'clock, debate will resume. I recognize the member for The Battlefords.

**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. Cox:** — Back again by popular demand. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe I left off this afternoon talking about how appreciative the residents of Saskatchewan were with the debt reduction that we've accumulated since we've taken power — interest savings of approximately \$1 billion.

I'd like to move on now and talk about the fourth pillar of this budget, which is investment and infrastructure. And the fifth pillar, this budget invests in people, Mr. Speaker. Now I would like to elaborate just a little bit on the last two components of this budget.

Mr. Speaker, this budget outlines how we plan to implement many of the commitments featured in our Throne Speech of last fall. It is of significance to note here that we have a plan. For those in this Chamber not familiar with that concept or even how to spell it, that's p-l-a-n, plan. You know, Mr. Speaker, that is what originally attracted me to this party. We have a plan. Back I think it was in '04-05, our leader at that time, and now the Premier of this great province, had a plan called a vision for the future. Now we have continued our planning with our new growth plan, 2020 and beyond. We have set ambitious goals and we have mapped a path to achieve those goals.

Mr. Speaker, what a sharp contrast from the members opposite with no vision, no plan. Just like several years ago, when then Health minister Len Taylor was questioned by media about the sad state of health care, he commented something to the effect, there's no sense setting targets because we probably can't reach them anyway. That's not an attitude you'll find in this government, Mr. Speaker. We set targets. We set goals, and we have a plan to achieve them.

Let's highlight a little bit about our investment in infrastructure before I conclude with comments on our investments in people. In this summary budget, we see a grand total of \$2.9 billion in capital investment. That is composed of nearly \$887 million in government capital projects like schools, highways, and health care. We have also committed \$2 billion for Crown investments like SaskTel, SaskPower, and SaskEnergy. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we did inherit a huge infrastructure deficit of some \$16 billion but we are addressing it. Our highways budget alone this year

will be \$664.5 million, with 405 million of that going to capital projects. But we know we have more to do.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to spend a little time to reference some of the commitments we have made to invest in people in this province. Mr. Speaker, the accounting professor opposite says our budget offers crumbs to the people of Saskatchewan. I would just like to read a quote here, Mr. Speaker. And this is from Murray Mandryk on CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] radio on March the 21st. And he's talking on the budget day criticisms, and I quote:

I thought their criticism generally was really bad. I don't think it was focused. They were talking about families and this was a budget that really didn't hit families hard.

I totally agree with him on that. Mr. Speaker. I took the liberty of googling the word crumb and I found two definitions: (1) a tiny bit of something, and (2) a small particle. Well, Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at those crumbs, some of those tiny bits or particles in this budget.

I wonder if First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan would call the \$189 million — an increase of 4.4 million from last year — contained in this budget to help improve their quality of life, their opportunity for employment, their educational achievements, would they call that a crumb? Not likely, Mr. Speaker. What about funding such as \$1 million for pre-K programs for high-needs areas or 15.3 million for on-reserve policing or 6 million to address the recommendations outlined in the joint task force? Not something that they would call crumbs, Mr. Speaker.

Something I noted in this budget was \$11 million targeted for qualified independent schools, historical high schools, and our Sakewew First Nations High School located in my constituency of The Battlefords. I wonder if the students of those institutions would call the \$11 million a crumb? I don't think so.

And, Mr. Speaker, our programs are working. We are seeing progress. In June of 2012, 13.2 per cent of apprentices were of Aboriginal descent. As late as mid-February of this year, 2,000 students at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] were self-declared Aboriginals. That's nearly 10 per cent of the total enrolment. And speaking of students, Mr. Speaker, \$82 million in funding for the grad retention program that benefited some 55 students, they may not call that a crumb either.

Last week I had a friend of mine come down to hear the budget speech, Mr. Speaker, and he brought his daughter with him. She's a second year commerce student at the University of Saskatchewan. She was talking about her older brother who was graduating I believe this year, very focused on staying here in Saskatchewan and very, very much appreciative of the opportunity to apply for the grad retention program that can be . . . It's a great program that allows students to stay in this province and get up to \$20,000 back. Yesterday I met a young lady who's a third year nursing student at the U of S as well, and both she and her mother were very excited about the prospect of being able to apply to get some funding back. She's looking forward to coming back to The Battlefords and practising in our own Union Hospital. I'm very happy to see

that.

Add to this funding, Mr. Speaker, \$7.5 million commitment for the Saskatchewan advantage grant for education savings and a \$7 million commitment for the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship. That's what this government does for our students. Coupled with the 134 million in student support programs overall, there is an increase in funding for the post-secondary institutions, a 3.79 per cent increase or \$16.8 million, which brings our total investment to \$668 million.

Something that school boards in my area have asked for is funding to increase a community bandwidth for rural schools. We have responded with an \$11.3 million to do just that. That's not a crumb, Mr. Speaker. No, I don't think it is. Nor is the \$2.2 million for 500 new child care spaces or the 2.1 million increase for the adult basic education seats, which brings our total seats to 8,250. I think those people who have been long waiting to get into those adult basic education seats so that they can participate in the opportunities available here in Saskatchewan, I think they would strongly disagree with that opposition member.

Mr. Speaker, our funding and our support for social programs in this province are making a difference. This year we have committed \$8.7 million to families, youth, and children at risk. That's a total of 62.5 million since 2011 which, by the way, was new funding at that time.

We are ever increasing our support for our seniors with another increase in the seniors' income plan to \$260 a month for individuals and \$225 a month for a couple. Mr. Speaker, this is in sharp contrast to that NDP [New Democratic Party] government that never increased that rate for 16 long years.

Today a family of four earning \$75,000 in this province pays the lowest amount in Canada for taxes and utilities.

Mr. Speaker, in this 2014-15 budget, we are committing a total of 394.6 million to our municipal authorities. That's an increase of 152.7 million from '07-08 which represents an increase of over 63 per cent. From our last budget in 2013-14, we have increased spending to municipalities by \$32.8 million. I don't think any of our municipal leaders will call that a crumb.

In my constituency, the amount of revenue sharing to the city of North Battleford has increased from 1.16 million in '07-08 to today's figure of 2.87 million. For the town of Battleford similar increases, from \$407,000 in '07-08 to \$883,000 today. Overall in this province, Mr. Speaker, municipal revenue sharing has doubled since the '07-08 budget. Such funding provides much needed support for libraries, policing, transportation, parks, rinks, and numerous other programs.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, a few comments on this government's commitment to health care for all the citizens of Saskatchewan. Our 2014-15 health care budget is approximately 40 per cent of our core funding. At \$5 billion, it is up \$144 million or 3 per cent over last year.

Spending allocated to regional health authorities is up \$107.5 million to 3.25 billion, a 3.4 per cent increase. Our funding for the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency this year alone is \$155.7

million, Mr. Speaker. And as someone who is keenly interested in the work done by that agency, I certainly don't consider that a crumb.

Now again closer to home, I was delighted to see committed funding of \$2.5 million for ongoing planning for our Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford. This is indeed good news for all those anxious to see that new hospital become a reality.

And speaking of our Saskatchewan Hospital, that brings to mind another issue we hear about in this Assembly quite often lately. We hear a lot of criticism from the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues about how are our efforts to provide the best possible health care to patients in the most efficient manner.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I, along with my colleague from Cut Knife-Turtleford, have attended three different 3P [production preparation process] planning sessions and our Health minister attended the final report out. You know what? I have never seen a member of that opposition in attendance at any of these week-long planning sessions. I really feel that before he can criticize our lean initiative he should at least attend one of these report outs. He would quickly see that the amount of effort and work that front-line workers contribute to this process.

And yes, Mr. Speaker, they are guided by consultants from John Black and Associates, who also come and provide much needed expertise to this planning. And I must say that at all three of those sessions I didn't see one single paper airplane flying around — not one. It is truly amazing to see the interaction between various components involved in providing health care in that facility. Whether it was doctors, nurses, psychologists, dietary staff, housekeeping, maintenance, clerical, and the patients themselves, they all had input in how to run the best, most efficient hospital possible. I think the opposition would be well-advised to listen to some of their comments.

Mr. Speaker, before I close I would like to offer my sincere thank you to everyone who worked so hard at preparing this steady growth budget, from the months of deliberation by our treasury board to the hours of meetings and all of the work our Finance ministry staff has dedicated, and certainly to our Finance minister.

I think Murray Mandryk summed it up best on CBC on March the 19th when he said, "I actually love what Ken Krawetz has been able to accomplish in this, perhaps his last budget." Well I certainly don't agree with that final comment, but that's all right. Mr. Speaker, he goes on to say, "He might be the best Finance minister I've seen at managing the line-by-line costs." I certainly agree with that final comment, and I concur 100 per cent.

I would strongly urge our NDP members opposite to vote in favour of this budget. How could they vote against such things as a \$2.9 billion investment in infrastructure, funding for schools and senior homes in their own constituencies, \$189 million funding for First Nations and Métis people, a highway budget of \$664.5 million, senior income plan increased to 260 a month? How can they oppose \$394.6 million in support for municipalities, 52.4 million increase in education funding, 2.1

million for adult basic education seats, and finally a 3 per cent increase in health care spending to \$5 billion?

Mr. Speaker, how could they get up in the morning and look at themselves in the mirror if they oppose this budget? I know that I couldn't do that. So that is why I'll be voting in favour of this motion, and I strongly oppose the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Sproule:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And as always I'm very honoured to be able to rise in this Assembly and have an opportunity to comment on the actions of this government, in this particular case on the budget that was released last week. And I have a number of comments that I look forward to sharing with the Assembly this evening and certainly with the folks at home who will have an opportunity to view this broadcast or look at it in *Hansard* at some point in the future. So I'm anxious to get on the record and provide my comments.

One of the things I thought I'd start with, Mr. Speaker, is perhaps giving the rest of the speech that the Finance minister never gave. And when we heard him speak last week he spoke a lot about the increases in funding that you find scattered throughout the budget document. And I thought maybe we should look at some of the decreases as well because he didn't speak a whole about those.

So I've highlighted quite a few of the areas in this budget, because we know it's a razor-thin budget and I got thinking, if there's that much increase in spending in those areas, there's got to be decreases elsewhere. So I thought, well where would those decreases be? And I just went through and highlighted quite a few of them, and I'd like to share them with the Assembly and certainly to get those on the record as well.

[19:15]

So if you start on page 15 of the Estimates, we see there's a schedule of capital investments by ministry. And the first one that jumps out at me is the estimated capital investment spending by the Ministry of Education. And there we see a decrease of \$23 million. So that's a fairly significant decrease in spending. If you go further down the line we see Government Relations — and this is just capital investments — there's going to be a decrease in spending there of 3 million. In Health there's a decrease in capital spending of about \$70 million. In Justice we see a decrease in spending of about \$7 million and in Parks, Culture and Sport there's also a decrease of about 2 million if you take out the 50 million that's being used for the new stadium. And in Social Services we see a decrease of \$3 million in capital investments, in terms of what was spent last year to this year.

So there's quite a few decreases there. In Health in particular, if you want to break it down a little bit, we see a decrease in spending on long-term care facilities of almost \$50,000. It was 70 million forecast last year and estimated this year is 27 million. So I guess that's about \$43 million there. On hospital projects, we see last year was \$50,000, this year . . . or \$50

million and this year is down to 16 million. So there's a fairly large decrease in capital investments in terms of hospital projects and long-term care facilities.

There's a number of other ones. For example, in Social Services we see a decrease in case management project of about \$4 million. We also see a decrease of almost \$4 million in the transition from Valley View Centre and we know there's still a lot of work to be done there, Mr. Speaker. So those are just some of the capital investment decreases that the minister didn't talk about in his speech.

Now if we want to go to the votes themselves, if we look at the Agriculture estimate, we see a significant number of decreases there. In research and technology, it's down 1 million. In land management, it's down about 2.3 million. And of course, the biggest decrease in the Agriculture vote is in business risk management which is down almost \$40 million. And we know some of the reasons why that is happening, Mr. Speaker. But certainly it's not a good sign when we see those kinds of decreases in those kinds of programs in the Agriculture vote.

Then I'm going to move on now to vote 13, which is Central Services. Where do we see decreases there? Well vehicle services is down, well not a whole lot, about \$150,000. Courthouses project management, down over \$10 million. So that's a bit of a decrease. Property management is down a couple of million dollars in the operations of property under Central Services. So those are some of the things that the Finance minister didn't talk about.

In the Economy, which is vote 23 in the Estimates, we see a decrease there. Revenue and corporate services is down \$8.3 million, Mr. Speaker, so that's a decrease that the Minister of Finance didn't talk about when he gave his speech.

We do see in the Economy though, on page 41 of the Estimates something that is I think a good thing. I'm very happy to see and it's an expense that is long overdue, and that's the remediation of contaminated sites. And we do see an estimate of around \$5.3 million this year to begin that work. And, Mr. Speaker, I certainly think that is a good thing and an increase that is one that's long overdue.

Also in the Economy, we see an actual cut in half of the ethanol fuel tax rebate. So rather than it costing \$16 million, it's down to \$8 million. And that's an allocation for that tax rebate. No indication from the Minister of Finance why or why that is occurring, but of course we'll have an opportunity in committee to ask more questions about some of these.

We even see the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership being cut, in terms of economic development, and that's despite what we know this government professes to be in terms of its aggression in seeking out new markets for export. So that's interesting.

Also in the Economy, these are some interesting numbers, Mr. Speaker. We see \$2 million less in youth and adult skills training. We see a couple of million dollars less in skills training benefits, and we see about half a million dollars less in immigration. These are under labour market development initiatives. So I'm not sure. I know we have a work shortage

here. And why those numbers are lower, we don't have any information from this Minister of Finance. So we'll have to ask those questions, as well, in committee.

In Education we see pretty much a status quo in vote 5, but we know that teacher benefits and pensions are a big part of that, and that if you see a status quo budget with inflation as it is and costs associated with teacher benefits and pensions, it's probably a cut as well.

And I mentioned earlier some of the capital acquisitions. The budget for Education is quite a bit down. It's down \$17 million in terms of capital asset acquisitions. So it's on page 45 of the budget, if the member opposite wants to have a look at that. So vote 5, page 45, capital asset acquisitions last year for Education were \$38 million and they're down \$17 million now, to \$21 million. So that's what it says on that page, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . We're talking about this budget and if the member wants to be reminded, we're in 2014. So maybe we should move forward a little bit. Move forward to 2014.

Also we see a cut in central management and services in Education by about \$300,000. So there's another cut that the minister didn't talk about.

Now let's move to the Environment. There's some very significant cuts here, Mr. Speaker, ones that are quite alarming when you hear the rhetoric coming from that side in terms of how they're advocates for environmental protection and saving our future environment. And I think this is really appalling when you want to really look at it. Climate change, that's one of the top-of-mind issues for many, many people these days and we see here a cut in this budget of about \$1.5 million. But, Mr. Speaker, that's on top of a cut of, I think it was around 15 million if I had my information, from when they first started, and they're now down to \$2.8 million.

So it's really alarming and concerning when you see this government trying to blow its own horn on its environmental record and then you see these kinds of cuts in these valuable programs.

Let's look a little further. Wildlife management, what do we see there? A cut of \$6 million, \$6 million in wildfire management. And this is our North, Mr. Speaker. So it's something that we need to be more protective of and we certainly don't see . . . Kind of hard to hear myself over this rattle, Mr. Speaker, but it's kind of entertaining as well, I suppose. Should I perhaps sit down and have a little listen? Interesting.

The other thing I want to point out in terms of the staff complement on a lot of these, if you look over the years since this government came into control, and I think it coincided with their desire to have this lean program, was that they chose an arbitrary number of 15 per cent, 15 per cent cut in the public service with no rhyme or reason. Just a number pulled out of a hat.

So you see these cuts happening all over the place and we see it again this year. In Environment there's definitely a cut in staff. The Fish and Wildlife Development Fund staff are now gone from that vote, so God knows where the money's coming from

for that. I know they've off-loaded it onto the fish and wildlife folks that are now taking over the management of that fund. So those costs are buried somewhere and it's I guess our job as the opposition to kind of try and find out where those costs went. But certainly we know that when you see cuts in staff in a ministry, the contracts are somewhere out there. So it's very concerning.

Further on in Environment, if we look at something like even reforestation, we see a cut of \$300,000. This is concerning. We know that the backlog in reforestation is decades old. And when you see these kinds of cuts, it's concerning.

We hear some of the members talk about how their children are finding jobs here in the province because of this government. But this is one of the cases where this government has chosen a tendering policy that's given preferential treatment to some out-of-province companies. And in fact, my son won't be able plant trees in Saskatchewan this year because there isn't enough work and the local company he's worked for won't be able to hire him. So he actually has to go to Alberta to do his summer work so that he can go back to university in the fall.

So it's not all, you know, wine and roses, Mr. Speaker. And I think we have to be careful to point that out. That's certainly the role that we serve here on this side, is to shine a light on all the activities that are located within this budget.

Another example here of a huge cut in Environment, vote 26, is on page 54 and we see the forest fire capital projects cut by \$6.2 million. That's a very large cut for that kind of wildfire management. I mentioned it earlier, but that's exactly where it's coming out of is the forest fire capital projects. So we're going to have a lot of questions for the minister when it comes to committee so we have a chance to find out what exactly is meant by all these estimates.

In the Finance vote which is vote 18, there was an interesting line, and this isn't so much something the Minister of Finance didn't talk about because it's not a decrease, but what it is is a tax credit. And it kind of caught my eye because we know how much this Premier is against tax credits. He seemed to take great exception to it when he eliminated the film employment tax credit and was very vocal about his concern about tax credits and how detrimental . . . or somehow that it was like a grant, and he took great offence to that.

Well there is a \$15 million tax credit in this budget under vote 18 for the research and development tax credit. So somehow that may have escaped the attention of the Premier because we know he's ideologically opposed to tax credits. Or somehow maybe the Minister of Finance convinced him that this was one that he shouldn't get too upset about and leave it in the budget. At any rate, it's described as a tax credit support for corporations that invest in research and development to encourage economic growth and diversification in Saskatchewan.

So we're going to want to take a really close look at that and see if it is delivering the same kind of benefit that we would have seen with the film employment tax credit, which basically supported an industry that brought significant returns to the province of Saskatchewan, both financially, economically, but

also in the other capital that we are so proud of, and that's our sense of self and who we are as a province. So that's a significant loss and we'll want to ask the ministers, I think, a little bit more about why the inconsistency in their approach to tax credits.

Vote 30 is Government Relations. Where do we see the cuts there that the Minister of Finance didn't talk about? Well municipal and northern engagement is down \$12 million, Mr. Speaker. And I think that's something that's got to wave a real big flag for the folks of the North when we see that kind of cut, \$12 million cut in that program for Government Relations where, you know, we know that the North is an area that struggles to begin with, and to see a cut of \$12 million in that kind of engagement is something that is quite concerning.

There's more detail on that in terms of the . . . page 71 where that line item is described a little bit further. But we see cuts in urban revenue sharing, cuts in rural revenue sharing. We see a cut in the major infrastructure component of the Building Canada Fund. We see another cut in the Saskatchewan infrastructure growth initiative. So those are a lot of the cuts I think that this Finance minister had to make in order to be able to talk to us last week about some of the other funding initiatives that he did leave in the budget.

Under Health there's some interesting cuts. I talked about the decrease in infrastructure funding. We see a \$77 million decrease in provincial infrastructure projects. And there's also a decrease — this is vote 32 on page 75 of the Estimates — we see a decrease of \$3 million in the drug plan and extended benefits. And now I don't think that people are less sick now than they were; at least we certainly haven't heard this government claim that. So I think on a projection basis, in terms of the growth in population, we're certainly going to have a lot of questions about why there's a \$3 million decrease in the drug plan.

Again, I mentioned earlier that capital asset acquisitions for the Ministry of Health are down about \$80 million. We know there was lots of talk of projects and lots of talk of plans in terms of health infrastructure, but we certainly don't see any of that in this budget. So we'll have a lot of questions about that as well.

In terms of provincial health services, we see a drop of \$4 million to the Canadian Blood Services. We see a drop of \$4 million in immunizations. And again, who knows what's going on? The minister certainly didn't talk about it in his speech, so we will have to ask a significant number of questions on that. And I'm sure our able Health critic will be doing exactly that in the estimates for Health.

[19:30]

Another one that's very interesting that I'm really surprised the minister didn't talk about is Innovation Saskatchewan. This is a flagship for this government, something they've been very proud of in terms of being, I guess, innovative. And they also had the Enterprise Saskatchewan were kind of their two flagships. We saw Enterprise Saskatchewan sink last year I think in the budget. It's now been sunk.

And now Innovation Saskatchewan has taken a huge, huge hit.

Last year the estimates for programs in Innovation Saskatchewan were \$28 million. This year they are under \$12 million. That is a decrease in over \$16 million, Mr. Speaker. That's a huge change and we see most of that is in the program side of the vote. That's vote 84 on page 90. And we're going to have a lot of questions about why they're scuttling this ship as well because we know it was one of the flagships of this government. But why are they cutting it by, what did I say, \$16 million? And when we're talking about a budget that is proposing a surplus of \$71 million, you can see very quickly, Mr. Speaker, how all these cuts are having a significant impact on the bottom line for this government.

Let's go to Justice, vote 3: major capital projects there also down \$8 million from last year. So there's cuts for the Justice folks. Although we do see, and this was an interesting one, I think my colleague from Lakeview mentioned it when he spoke to the budget, but the justices of the peace salaries have gone up by \$2.5 million. So I think that's something that's been long overdue. And I keep thinking those are the guys who marry us, but they also do a lot of important things in the court system as well.

Another vote that's close to my area and I'm responsible for as a critic is the Parks, Culture and Sport vote, vote no. 27. And we see a number of programs here that have taken a real hit. And certainly I want to be able to have an opportunity to ask questions of the minister about these decisions when we have the estimates in committee.

We see the Community Initiatives Fund is down \$2 million. We see building communities is down \$2.4 million. We see the Culture budget is down \$3 million, and we also see the Provincial Capital Commission budget is now down \$3 million as well. And then there is also . . . yes, I think overall it's about \$8 million that we see cut from the Parks, Culture and Sport budget on those programs.

So we do see a \$50 million increase in the Regina stadium project, which makes the numbers look a little more interesting when you look at the bottom line. But when you drill down into what's going on in the other programs, other than the Regina stadium project, we see that there is a loss of about \$8 million in this one ministry alone, Mr. Speaker. Very concerning, and certainly we're going to have a lot of questions about that.

We're also just keeping an eye on staffing. We see, you know, with the numbers that there used to be several more people working in this ministry, and it's hard to measure from year to year because Parks was in and Parks was out and all those things. But we know that overall the full-time equivalent staffing is dropping, and certainly that means less programs and less services available for the people of Saskatchewan.

We see even in the Community Initiatives Fund — which, if I understand this correctly, is the profits from the casino — this year those are down a couple of hundred thousand dollars as well. So those profits are decreasing or at least whatever is being provided to the Community Initiatives Fund. So again those are just some of the things we noticed in the Parks, Culture and Sport vote.

Another interesting increase that we I think heard the minister

talk about a little bit was the vote 86, and that's the SaskBuilds Corporation. And we know this is the way this government is managing their expensive P3 [public-private partnership] projects. And certainly my colleague from Regina Rosemont is being very diligent in examining those things, and I'll talk about that a little bit more later. But there one of the increases is to support this government's efforts to enter in some complex and unnecessary P3 projects that don't have the accountability or the transparency that we think that they need.

Social Services, we see some cuts as well. For example in client support there's a \$5 million decrease. And why is that, Mr. Speaker? We didn't hear from the Minister of Finance, and we're not sure why, but we'll certainly be taking a look at that. If you go closer, you'll see it's in case management project and it's actually down \$5 million. So there's another \$5 million.

Also in housing and program delivery it's also dropped \$1 million. So these are the kinds of programs that a lot of people in need rely on. When we see million-dollar cuts in program delivery we have to be concerned, Mr. Speaker. And those are the kinds of things that the Minister of Finance did not talk about when he was making his presentation to the Assembly the other day.

So I know that he didn't have a lot of time to talk about all of those things, but you'd think he would have mentioned a few of them. But he seemed to focus, as is his right, on what you could call the rosy side of things.

But you know, we know that with this kind of thin budget, I guess he's just got to sell it. That's right, Mr. Speaker. And so we know that he's giving a little rah-rah, and there's lots of cheerleaders over there as well. I think maybe the government might want to start handing out pompoms because there's lots of cheerleading going on. But really, we have to take a very close look. Why is it that this government's revenues are . . . In fact I can talk about that next because I'm going to move on here a little bit.

When I examine the numbers that were provided in the documentation, we see that this government is calling this budget *Steady Growth*. But really, Mr. Speaker, the only thing I can see that's growing is the debt. And if you look at it, the charts are going way up here. So perhaps people want to take a look at this. But if you look at the statements on schedule of debt, that's on page 66 of the . . . What is this called? *Steady Growth* . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I think, yes, the member of Walsh Acres might want to turn to page 66 and have a look at that.

What do we see for the budget forecast for debt last year? We saw about \$4.4 billion was last year's public debt forecast. What happened? This year it went up. It's now at \$4.643 billion. So we've lost . . . The debt has gone up \$300 million just in public debt of treasury board organizations. And then if you want to go down to the bottom of the page, and when you include the CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] Crown organizations, we see that public debt has actually gone up, that would be \$1.6 billion. That's just in the public debt in the last year. So yes, \$1.532 billion is what we see in terms of steady growth for this government.

So that's one of the things that I've found really hard to understand when we're talking about steady growth because revenues have not increased a whole lot. We see a lot of what the deputy minister of Finance referred to as volatile assumptions. And if you look on page 36 of the main document here, they have indicated that there are several assumptions built into the current forecast that present both upside and downside risks. Crop production, for example, is significantly impacted by weather and is therefore highly volatile.

And, Mr. Speaker, I don't think they went far enough here because we know that crop production is volatile but so is crop pricing. And if you look at the commodity price assumptions for wheat and canola, for example, we see an actual being presented for 2013 for wheat per metric ton was \$257 per metric ton. Last week the price on wheat was \$220 metric ton, which is lower than this year's prediction. We're already a quarter of the way into the year. Three weeks ago it was \$176 per metric ton. So the experts that I've spoken to feel that these assumptions are quite aggressive and quite optimistic. And certainly we'll be keeping an eye on that.

But you know, these kinds of assumptions will have a real impact on the bottom line when the actual numbers come in. We know that this is a budget and these are simply projections, and this government has to do the right thing from their view and spin it as well as they can. We certainly saw that from the Minister of Finance in terms of what he focused his comments on.

But we know that this is a very volatile budget based on some volatile pricing. We saw it in the decline in potash prices last year. And with the grain transportation catastrophe as it's now sitting, I'm not sure that these prices are going to be ones that will hold out. So we'll certainly be keeping an eye on that, Mr. Speaker.

Another thing that really kind of struck me as odd, and I think it's kind of clever as a matter of fact, is the very bold statement that there are no new taxes in this budget. Because there is a new tax; it's called the oil and natural gas well levy. And, Mr. Speaker, if you look up a levy, anyone who looks up levy, the definition in the *Collins Thesaurus of the English Language* says that a levy is a tax. You know, so maybe some of the members opposite would call it a tax, but we know that this is a tax.

And these are fees that were being paid, prior to this tax being imposed on the oil and gas people, it was paid by the taxpayers of Saskatchewan. It's directed, it's a tax that's directed specifically to certain activities but, Mr. Speaker, it's a tax. And I think it's a bit cute or coy for this government to suggest that there are no new taxes. We know that this is going to bring in another \$120 million, I think, into the coffers. And if it wasn't for this levy, we wouldn't have a balanced budget, at least balanced in terms of how this government describes it.

So a levy is a tax. And I think it's a bit disappointing that this government chose to say there's no new taxes in this budget, when clearly there are. And certainly it's an appropriate tax. I think it's important for the oil and gas industry to pay their share. These are expensive, expensive procedures that have to be covered. And as the document indicates, it's going to help



maintain a competitive, efficient, and effective regulatory regime. And that's exactly the kind of thing that these types of taxes are for, and should be in place. And in fact we'd like to see more action on regulation in the oil and gas area, and we'll certainly be asking more questions on that once we have an opportunity in estimates and in the committee stages to do so, Mr. Speaker. We're looking forward to that.

Another disappointing feature, I think, for everyone in Saskatchewan was the failure of this government to start acting on Peter MacKinnon's recommendations in the heritage fund proposals. And I think a lot of people, certainly people I talked to in Saskatoon Nutana are very interested in, why is that Norway can do this and we can't? And Norway has a very active oil and gas industry. They have a very strong social net. We see that they're very progressive in terms of issues facing people in terms of poverty and addictions and they seem to be way ahead of us. And people are asking me, why is it this government, with all the money that's flowing in from all the different natural resources that we have, why can't we have a heritage fund too?

So that's something else that I think this government really let the people of Saskatchewan down on. They haven't been able to figure out how to benefit people in the future from the riches and the resources that the people of Saskatchewan are extracting today. And it's certainly, I think, quite disappointing on the part of this government that they weren't able to act on those recommendations. And based on what we see, they may never be able to do it. So there's something seriously wrong over there if they can't figure out how to get this heritage fund happening, considering that most of these resources are not renewable and certainly won't be here in the future once they're extracted.

I know that, Mr. Speaker, you'll recall that just before the budget was released, the opposition listed a number of priorities that we were hoping we would see in this budget. And disappointingly, I think, others of my colleagues have pointed out, only one of the seven on our must-have list actually made the list and made it into the budget, and that's disappointing. We were certainly looking for an end to those contracts, the cash-rich contracts for consultants when they're implementing efficiency procedures such as the lean program. And we know there's lots of ways to deliver these kinds of programs and different ways to implement them. But certainly what we're hearing from the choices that are being made from this government on that contract are disappointing and we were hoping to see a change of heart there. We haven't seen it.

Another thing that we were very disappointed was we introduced Bill 606 for minimum standards, one-on-one care minimum requirements for seniors in long-term care. And I think that's probably the most disappointing for me of all of our lists, Mr. Speaker, is the failure of this government to recognize the importance of providing those seniors with those rights and ensuring that they're enshrined in the budget document but also in recognizing it in legislation. And it's very disappointing to see that this government fails to take those seriously and implement something that the seniors can rely on and count on. And there's families as well. We hear stories of people who are struggling to find care for their loved ones and in many cases are being told there is no options for them. And, Mr. Speaker,

that's not where we want to be here in Saskatchewan.

[19:45]

We wanted to see the rerouting of the standardized testing money into teaching and assistance for students, maybe increasing the number of educational assistants, and what we see is just a change of the name. At least that's something we're going to have to dig into once we have a chance in estimates, Mr. Speaker. But disappointed to see that there seems to still be some money allocated for testing rather than investing in students.

On the education front, we were also hoping, and as we've been calling for is a plan. That's spelled p-l-a-n. A plan to reduce class sizes. A plan to implement appropriate class-size caps and prioritizing early years. We don't see any kind of plan at all on that front, Mr. Speaker. And it's a void and it's something we called for and we're very disappointed that there isn't a plan in this budget for that type of priority.

We wanted an acceptance of the transparency and accountability bill that we brought in for the P3 system because we know that those kinds of systems are going to cause a lot of problems for this government. We're calling it ill-advised and we would like to see more thought rather than just firing more money into SaskBuilds, Mr. Speaker. Maybe we could do some proper research and this government could take a careful look at some of the failures in the P3 scheme and make sure that the deal that's for our people and for our students and for our children is one that's appropriate.

We wanted no increase to the education tax. That was the one bullet that we were happy to see is that this government sent up a lead balloon I guess and thought that they'd float this idea of increasing education tax to pay for infrastructure. Obviously that was not well received. And I'm not sure of the reason why they did that because I don't think they ever really intended to do it but they were just sort of distracting people from some of the realities in this budget in terms of the cuts that have had to be made and shrugging their shoulders and saying, well you know, no new taxes — although there is new taxes. So we're stuck with this hold-the-line kind of budget.

And finally the last bullet we had asked for was an action to address the high costs of living and increased out-of-pocket expenses for Saskatchewan families who've been paying more for fewer services from the government. And we know there's seniors' care is up. There is more for supplies, more for kids' classrooms. SaskTel, SaskPower, SaskEnergy, they're all getting more expensive. And we really hoped that we would see a budget that didn't only talk about the province but actually talk about people and the effect that the rising costs of living is having for families here in the province.

So fairly disappointing on that side, Mr. Speaker. And certainly I think it's something that we're going to keep talking about and hoping to see an improvement on, but it's not entirely obvious that that's going to be the case.

I think that's . . . I'm getting pretty much near the end of my comments here, Mr. Speaker, but at this point I just wanted say some thank yous. Many of my colleagues are taking the

opportunity to do that and I would like to do that as well.

First and foremost, I want to thank my family. So my son Sam, he is in grade 12 this year, wrapping up high school and he's doing a great job and certainly able to manage without mom around when we're here. But on that account, I also want to thank his dad who definitely holds things together when I'm not around, so I really appreciate that. And Sam's pretty good at looking after himself too. So I'm thankful for a good kid to leave every time we come down here to Regina.

Also thankful for my constituency assistant, Deb Aitken. She's almost been with me for a year now. She started in April last year and she's definitely made the office a bright place and certainly is keen to help out the people of Saskatoon Nutana. And she's done a great job dealing with all of the concerns that people bring to our office.

I also really want to pass a big thanks to our caucus staff. And as is obvious, we are small in number, and I think I've said it before, but we consider, you know, ourselves to be fairly nimble and we really have to be. I've got three ministries that I'm responsible for in terms of critic area plus a number of Crown agencies and corporations. All my colleagues carry a fairly heavy load in terms of the work that we're asked to do, and we wouldn't survive without our caucus staff. So a really big thanks to all the folks back in the caucus office who have been helping us out and supporting us as we do our job as the official opposition just to hold the light to the activities of this government and to continue to shine a light on the activities and the decisions that this government makes.

And I also, you know, I think there's a lot of people who are supporting us out in the province and I want to thank the people who take the time to bring their concerns to our attention and really care about what happens here in the province and understand the role that politics and this Legislative Assembly plays in their lives. There's a lot of people who don't get engaged, and I really would like to see more people engaged and I'm thankful for those who do.

So on that note, Mr. Speaker, based on the comments I've presented tonight and our disappointment in a number of the initiatives that we don't see in this budget, I won't be able to support this budget and I certainly would encourage the Assembly to consider the reasoned amendment that the official opposition has introduced. Thank you.

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

**Hon. Mr. McMillan:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to join in the debate on the budget, Mr. Speaker, and a great budget it is. But before I get into the details I'd like to speak to specifically tonight, I am going to take the opportunity, as the member opposite did at the end of her comments, at the start of mine to say a couple of thank yous.

We get to take to the floor to talk about our constituencies and the important things that are going on in our province a couple of times of year and I think it's important that we also take these times to thank the team that we have to help provide the services that all of us do in our constituency offices. Marilyn

and Caren in my office in Lloydminster do a great service to the people of Lloydminster. They provide a service of representing the citizens of Lloydminster to the government as opposed to what sometimes happens I think, Mr. Speaker, in some governments, where you're representing the government in the city which you represent. And Caren and Marilyn are two very engaged, involved community leaders and to have them in my office is a great pleasure to work with them and I appreciate them very much.

Mr. Speaker, also an opportunity I think to thank those in our families that help out a great deal. And, Mr. Speaker, this is something that I don't do often enough and when I do do it, I usually screw it up and end up embarrassing both myself and my wife and I hear about it when I get home. And I think it comes down to, we find it most difficult to thank those that we appreciate the most. And I certainly appreciate my wife very much and she does so much for me and enables me to represent my constituents in a way that I think is appropriate and, Mr. Speaker, it's with her support and her guidance. She's a great giver of advice, I can assure you. On occasion she's a moderating voice, a voice of reason and calms me down, and on other points, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that she is a little bit polarizing and holds me to account on some of my positions as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that I'd like to get into some discussion in general about the budget. I guess first off, we have a balanced budget, a budget that has come about with a great deal of work. I have the great pleasure of sitting on treasury board. That is the board, Mr. Speaker, that reviews the budgets of the different ministries, that has a great amount of discussion, and a committee that I think does a lot of good work. It's a committee, Mr. Speaker, that is headed by our Finance minister and I've had the pleasure of being on his committee, his treasury board for three years now. And each year I think that the process gets better.

It is a process in which discussion is encouraged, where debate, where disagreement is welcomed, and often there is passionate disagreement. But it's also an environment where everybody's voices are heard, everybody's point of view is thoroughly vetted, and I think good decisions are made in that sort of environment. And I think that the quality of this budget is very reflective of the environment that our Finance minister sets in that and the tone that he personally sets on the importance of the decisions. The big decisions, the little decisions — they're all big decisions, Mr. Speaker, with our Finance minister. And the courage that he brings to that job, it makes all members on treasury board, in cabinet, and in caucus, Mr. Speaker, really comfortable and allows everybody to put the input that they think is appropriate into a budget like this.

Mr. Speaker, I represent the constituency of Lloydminster. A little bit of an overview on the changes and some of the things we've seen in Lloydminster in the past year. Lloydminster is a great city. It's one of the fastest growing cities in the country over the last few years, even over the last 15, 20, 25 years. We are one of largest trading areas in the province. Maybe just a little bit bigger than my colleague from Yorkton.

**An Hon. Member:** — I don't know.

**Mr. McMillan:** — Well we'd be on par. We'd be very close, Mr. Speaker.

But a couple of stats that I've recently come across about Lloydminster is, you know, I think a lot of people will know that we've seen disparity in growth on the Alberta and Saskatchewan sides of Lloydminster in the last 25, 30 years. But in the last six years, Mr. Speaker, we have seen the Saskatchewan side of Lloydminster grow as fast if not faster than the Alberta side. And I think that that speaks to a few things, but specifically I think it speaks to some taxation policy, some development policy, some confidence that people have in our province. But some of the demographics that are being driven, Mr. Speaker, are very unique. When we look at Lloydminster on the Saskatchewan side, the average age is 27.9 years. When we look at the average age of people in Saskatchewan, it's 38.2 years. People in Lloydminster, Saskatchewan are a full decade younger on average than the rest of the province.

The people on the Saskatchewan side of Lloydminster are about seven years younger than the people who live on the Alberta side of Lloydminster, Mr. Speaker. Again I think this is reflective of tax rates. I think it is very reflective that Saskatchewan has the lowest income tax in the country for families, that we have the highest exemptions in the country. Families recognize this. They build their homes. They put investments in the ground following what is best for their families. And today they are choosing Lloydminster, Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and I think that we all can be very proud of that.

In the same article in which that number comes out of, Lloydminster has an average family income of \$109,000 per family. That's a full 20 per cent higher than the national average family income. So, Mr. Speaker, we're seeing very young, ambitious people moving to Lloydminster, and I think they're finding opportunity when they get there. They're certainly finding employment that is compensating them in a very fair and good manner.

This past year in Lloydminster, we have hosted some great events. We had the Hockey Day in Canada. It showcased our city, Mr. Speaker. It was an event viewed nationally. And I certainly heard from people that I know across the country that saw Lloydminster, saw Lloydminster in a very beautiful setting, in which it is. And I think that it's good for our province; it's good for our city to showcase ourselves in that manner.

Lloydminster is a city that can boast being home of Hartnell, of MacArthur, a couple of current NHLers [National Hockey League]. But it's also the home of Cory Cross and Wade Redden. And at Hockey Day in Canada there was a banquet held with a lot of ex-NHLers, and both those gentlemen were there along with about 10 other former NHLers — some great Saskatchewan boys, Mr. Speaker. And it was just great to see these hockey heroes that have been on national TV for decades, are idolized by millions, are in Lloydminster, are shaking hands and meeting people and they were just class acts. And it was something that we hoped our hockey heroes would be this gracious and this giving of their time, and I don't think anyone in Lloydminster that night was disappointed.

Mr. Redden had just announced his retirement about a week earlier. Wade Redden grew up a little bit north and a little bit west of me, and our parents knew each other. So it was great to see him there that night, shortly after his retirement, after such a storied and successful hockey career, something that I think our whole city is very proud of.

And, Mr. Speaker, before . . . Maybe I will leave that till a little later on. But, Mr. Speaker, we see Lloydminster as it's a growing community. We have one school that just opened here this past fall. It's a brand new, beautiful school. Today in Lloydminster we have another school — it's under construction — a great, a great big school, Mr. Speaker, to meet the growing population, the young population that's moving to our province and to our city. And projections for our city are fairly dramatic as they are for our province, but since, for the last 30 years we've seen Lloydminster almost double in size, from less than 15,000 people to today, over 32,000 people in the city of Lloydminster alone.

[20:00]

Projections, the low-end projections for Lloydminster, Mr. Speaker, by 2030 is just under 50,000 people in the next 15 years. The high-end projections is over 60,000 people in the city of Lloydminster by 2030. Just 15 years. Mr. Speaker, I think the school under construction, the one just opened, won't be the last school that we see in Lloydminster. With budgets like this, with the bundling of schools that we're seeing going forward, it's cities like Lloydminster, cities like Martensville, cities like Yorkton, cities like P.A. [Prince Albert], Mr. Speaker, that need this infrastructure, that need to see the developments and the growth and the thinking outside of the box as we are building for the great prosperity of which our province is building upon and continues to build going forward.

In this budget, Mr. Speaker, I just want to go over a few of the items that are specifically correlated to the responsibilities that I have. I'm going to start off with potash. We see in this year's budget . . . I'm on page 30 of the *Steady Growth* provincial budget document, Mr. Speaker. As I'm reminded by my colleague in the front row, it is a summary document. It is the first time that we have highlighted summaries, Mr. Speaker. We have put out summary financial statements since we formed government, but it is the first year that we have gone to highlighting them in a full manner. We're still putting out the operating account of government so that the people of Saskatchewan can see a transparent view of how we're spending the day-to-day funds which we collect from our citizens, but the summaries are now highlighted.

And on page 33, we have the calendar year commodity price assumptions that are built into this document. I'm going to start off with potash, Mr. Speaker. We see a number of \$273.93 for potash for the year 2014. Members opposite, members on this side of the House, will remember that last year we were budgeting at over \$400 a tonne for KCl [potassium chloride]. We saw some events happen in Russia and Belarus in June, Mr. Speaker. They had a marketing organization that was similar in nature to Canpotex, which markets Saskatchewan potash. And early summer, that organization broke apart and partners in it decided that they wanted to fundamentally change the landscape of potash in the world.

Potash is a commodity traded on the world markets, and this had a great effect, not just in Belarus and Russia, but around the world and specifically here in Saskatchewan with the great resources and great production that we have. Through summer, Mr. Speaker, we saw sales dry up as the big buyers in the world were looking for the floor. They didn't want to buy at a price that was not at the bottom with the new marketing realities. Coming through summer and into the fall, this here was largely resolved and we've seen prices that were a full 25 per cent off of where they were earlier in the year. So from 400 they dropped to 300, and that has been fairly consistent.

It seems like there is more stability now in that region, in that production coming out of Belarus and Russia. There is new ownership in the Russian Uralkali mining company. We think that this is positive for long-term security of supply and we will continue to monitor it very closely as it goes forward.

But I think it's encouraging that in this past year when we saw prices in the short term make a dramatic drop from over 400 to south of 300, Mr. Speaker, we also saw, following that day, we saw K+S go to the market to raise funds, to raise enough funds to take their mine from development, from construction to a fully operating mine. When asked by media, Mr. Speaker, the comments that K+S put forward were, we believe in the potash industry; we believe in the global population; we believe in the wealth that's being generated in India, in China, in the Oceanian countries, Mr. Speaker, and that food and the higher quality of foods is going to be something that will drive the potash industry for decades to come. And they weren't looking at the short-term price of potash; they were looking at the long-term stability of this industry. And they were also looking at where they would invest their capital. And nowhere in the world would they invest their capital but in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, BHP was asked a similar question. This past summer following the actions that were taken in Russia and Belarus, BHP also put forward \$1.6 billion to finish sinking the shafts in their Jansen Lake project. Again their view is that long term, medium and long term, this is a great industry to be in. Saskatchewan is the only place in the world in which they would want to develop a project, a project of this nature. It gives them the security of resource. We've got tremendous geology. But it also gives them security of political climate, Mr. Speaker. And they are moving forward with their project and continue to hit the milestones in which they've put in front of them.

We continue to see a lot of development from the juniors, many juniors moving projects forward. A press release recently came out, I believe it was just this past week, that a potash company has found what they think is a terrific resource. It is North Atlantic in partnership with Rio Tinto, and they are very pleased with the results of their drilling program and are looking to continue to move their project forward. We continue to see Vale's interest. We continue to see many other projects — Karnalyte, Mr. Speaker, putting together a project. So we know that we've got great resources, we've got a great business climate, and that these projects are likely going to be very important in Saskatchewan in years to come.

Moving on to oil and gas, Mr. Speaker, today we see on the world price for oil, around 99, \$100 a barrel. In the 2014 budget

assumptions today, we picked \$95 a barrel. And Mr. Speaker, we take an average of what private sector forecasters are predicting and we use a number that today looks very conservative. But we think it's a very responsible number, it's derived in the proper way, and it is a reasonable number to build a budget of this nature on top of.

We also know that this past year, 2013-14, we got off to a slow start in the spring with a lot of very wet weather. Rigs could not move in southeastern Saskatchewan, but even with that, Mr. Speaker, we saw record drilling of horizontal wells. In 2013 we had . . . In 2012 we set a record for oil production, all-time record for oil production in Saskatchewan. In 2013 when the numbers came out, we exceeded that by a fair margin, again breaking the record and setting a new record for oil production here in Saskatchewan. It's an industry where technology continues to develop, continues to change, change the face of the industry on the production side, on the environmental side, on the efficiency side, Mr. Speaker.

And we are seeing very interesting things across the province, what once would be considered science fiction, that people would not believe what you can do a full mile, mile and a half underground. Understanding the formation, understanding how to heat and move product, how to scrub a formation, how to open up fracture lines within very tight rocks to allow oil to migrate to a well bore, Mr. Speaker, it really would boggle someone's mind.

I think back to in the mid-'70s. The New Democrats at the time passed Bill 72 and it in essence nationalized the energy sector. We saw production fall off dramatically, and the thought at the time, and I quoted a couple of weeks ago the then premier of the province who said we are going to have to start rationing oil in Saskatchewan if we want our consumers and farmers to have oil in the '80s and '90s. If they knew then that today we would be breaking all-time records, and then re-breaking those, I don't think they would believe it.

In the Lloydminster area, Mr. Speaker, we deal with an oil that is very heavy and viscous, that is very difficult to get out of the ground, and over the years again a great number of technologies have been utilized. New pumps have come in. Screw pumps that can pump pretty much straight sand, oil, and water and produce truckload after truckload of actual sand, Mr. Speaker, along with the oil, has revolutionized our part of the province.

We also see micro SAGD [steam-assisted gravity drainage]. Husky has recently started putting in SAGD plants. They produce 10,000 barrels a day and have been extremely successful. Where traditionally back in the '80s we were getting 3 per cent production, 3 per cent recovery rates out of the formations around Lloydminster because of the viscosity and difficulty to get the oil to migrate to the well bore, that went up to 5 per cent with screw pumps. With the use of heat and steam and water floods, Mr. Speaker, and fire floods, we may get up into the 8, 10, 12. With the micro SAGD which is being utilized currently in two locations in Saskatchewan — Husky has now announced two more locations, one in Vawn and one in Edam, each of them 10,000 barrels a day — they're getting up to 60 per cent recovery rates. Just a phenomenal recovery rate of the oil and gas.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this does not happen without a great amount of research, without a great amount of engineering, without a great amount of science. And we see science projects going forward in our province where they do things as neat as putting down little pill-shaped capsules, tens of thousands of them down one well bore, and then pumping another well and recovering how many of them can be recovered and taking data that . . . Each capsule has a little microchip that can tell where it is and how long it's underground, and when they're captured, a great amount of data can be collected. And what they're figuring is there is wormholes that are created deep underground. And when the sand and oil are extracted, how the oil migrates through the wormholes is very important because they want to move out and get a greater production.

Mr. Speaker, we've had a debate here in this House not that long ago about pipelines. And over the last year and a half, this has been one of the fundamental challenges of the energy sector is, how do we get our commodities to market? And this has been something that we have been advocates for, we have been proponents for, and we will continue to. And I don't want to go into this debate again, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, where the rubber hits the road when we start talking about this budget is how much differential, how much of a margin is taken off our oil before we can tax it and get the royalties which are the rights and property of the people of Saskatchewan. It matters.

We in this budget have just around \$19 a barrel, Mr. Speaker, on the differential. We think that that is a very reasonable estimate. But that's \$19 that we collect zero royalties off of and that goes back to lack of pipeline capacity, costs of getting oil to market, challenges our industry has in getting their produced oil out to somebody who can use it.

And, Mr. Speaker, we see some great moves forward. The Trans-Canada is talking about the Energy East project. They're moving it forward. I heard an ad on the radio this morning about an open house here in Regina. That will be a very meaningful pipeline, about a million-two barrels a day. Kinder Morgan has some further work to do but they're talking about doubling their pipeline. Enbridge has been doing their main line expansion for a period of time. That will add substantial capacity to the central North American market.

And we had a vote here in the House just a week ago, Mr. Speaker, about Northern Gateway. And for all the reasons that we put forward on that day, I was very hopeful that the members opposite would support an environmentally responsible pipeline to the northern gateway. But the members opposite chose to vote against it. and though they wanted the National Energy Board's triple bottom line before they would support Keystone XL, that same requirement was not enough for the Northern Gateway. And one can only surmise as to what their challenges in regards to that pipeline are.

But tying back to the specifics of this budget, the member opposite who spoke just before me, spoke to the oil well levy that is initiated in this year's budget, Mr. Speaker. I believe that she quoted \$250 million of revenue. I would . . . 120. The reality is, Mr. Speaker, it's incremental, about 13 million. It is collapsing 10 separate fees and charges that the industry has been paying for a period of time and simplifying it. There's something in the magnitude of 20,000 transactions, bills that

our ministry would send invoices out to industry. They would then have to write cheques for 100, \$150 and send them back in 20,000 times.

[20:15]

With this new levy model, Mr. Speaker, we just send them one cheque based on the oil production and the well count each year. They then send in a cheque that, one cheque per year, and it covers the costs of the regulatory oversight. It's a 90 per cent cost recovery for the oversight and the services in which the government has in regards to the energy industry. And as I said many times on budget day, Mr. Speaker, the oversight does not change. The environmental responsibility is uncompromising. The need for these permits and this oversight is not in question, but being able to do it better, faster, more efficiently is something that we need to do and we need to do very well.

At budget day, we had some industry folks here. We had Jay Denney, the COO [chief operating officer] of Teine Energy. He looked at this and his comments to me were that yes, this will cost him a little bit more, but if he had to hire one more staff person to keep on top of these fees and charges, it would eat . . . The inefficiencies of that would far be made up for with a simple one levy system.

He also spoke to the issues of if there are delays because a piece of paper gets lost, if a turnaround time is too long, those costs can be exponentially larger for an industry, for a rig company, for an oil company than having a very efficient system. So the new levy system, Mr. Speaker, allows us to put forward an enhancement, a package that puts a guarantee to industry on how we will operate.

And a few examples will be, routine vertical well licence approvals, Mr. Speaker, traditionally of one to three days. With the changes that we are making here, Mr. Speaker, those will be same day. Routine horizontal well licence approvals, could've been and would've been eight days to 33 days. With the changes we've made, those will be same day. With the non-routine well licencing approval, it could've been five to eight days; now, one to four.

Mr. Speaker, the list goes on and on, but this level of efficiency and responsibility for industry is something that they've asked for, that they said, we want enhanced level of service and we're willing to pay for it. They may come to the Government of Saskatchewan and have to go to three different agencies before they can get approval to move onto a well and to drill a well. They may have to go to Environment and get a certain approval. They may have to go to Agriculture. They may have to come to Energy and Resources for a single well. We're looking to move to a single window.

We will still need to ensure that they are drilling appropriately, that they are in compliance with Agriculture, that they're in compliance with Environment, and that they're in compliance with Energy and Resources. But, Mr. Speaker, they don't need to have officials on their side going agency to agency to agency all within one government. We think we can do things better, and we have committed to do things better.

And in fact, Brad Herald of CAPP, the Canadian Association of

Petroleum Producers has said, this positions us — the industry, the energy industry — this positions us for the next decade of growth. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that that is something that everyone in this Chamber can be very pleased with because we want to see this growth. We want to see breaking of records for oil production for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to move on to uranium. We had a very good year in 2013. And in fact here in 2014 we saw, in the last three weeks, the first loads of uranium ore coming out of Cigar Lake. The Cigar Lake mine, Mr. Speaker, will be one of the largest high-grade uranium mines in the world. It has been under construction for about a decade. So to see that first load of ore come to the surface is a very important day for the industry, but most certainly for this province, Mr. Speaker.

We also in the past year have seen the first loads of uranium go to China to fuel their growing energy, electricity system there. China is the country in the world, China and India, that have some of the largest civilian commercial, industrial, nuclear reactor build-outs going on right now. And I want to give credit to the federal government who in the past year have signed nuclear co-operation agreements with both those countries, enabling Saskatchewan uranium to fuel civilian power reactors in both those countries. And it's great to see that our uranium is actually already delivering power there.

We have also seen in this past year that under the EU [European Union] trade deal, where we had a non-resident ownership policy in our uranium mines, that has now been modified to allow European companies — specifically Areva who has mined here for many years, and Rio Tinto who has bought the Roughrider property just a couple years ago — to move projects forward on their own, to develop projects and own more than 49 per cent of them. We think that is very important here in Saskatchewan. And we're already seeing news reports of their investments moving forward because of this change.

This past year, Mr. Speaker, we had some great discoveries as well. We saw the Patterson Lake South discovery, extremely good discovery. It's being talked about across the mining world. It is a step outside of what was traditionally considered the good part of the Athabasca Basin, something that did not have a lot of interest. And it really came from nowhere. And Alpha Minerals made it public shortly after — I believe the day after they received the information from the lab — that they have a high-grade uranium at low depth. And it had spurred a staking frenzy in that part of Saskatchewan, and this past year we have seen four times the normal amount of land be taken under disposition. And it has really tested our MARS [mineral administration registry Saskatchewan], and that is our electronic staking system that we put in place in 2013.

Another thing, Mr. Speaker, that I would like to highlight for the people of Saskatchewan is the diamond industry. We have watched Shore Gold move forward . . . the Fort à la Corne property for a period of time. But just a few months ago we saw North Arrow make some very impressive results known, and that is the Pikoo diamond property, which is about 150 miles straight east of La Ronge. This is a phenomenal discovery. It is core samples that have actual visible diamonds in it. This is very unusual. It's often that you would get core that would show kimberlites that have come from the right depth and the

right pressure to potentially have diamonds in it, and that is enough to move interest forward and to move projects forward. In this drilling program they actually found diamonds in the core.

And great story: I met the young woman who really spearheaded this research and found the diamond mine. And she is a world-class geologist that is doing work here in Saskatchewan. She started her project by collecting buckets of gravel, and working backward with indicator minerals, buckets of gravel from the woods — a very laborious project, getting it analyzed to work further north because they know that glaciers have scraped the overburdened South and that these indicator minerals are further south than where the cone where the diamond kimberlites may be. So over a couple of years working north until they got to the point where the actual kimberlites were. It's a great story and great for our province. And I think it holds some real potential.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think those are some of the highlights of our budget of the industry that is helping drive this population growth, that's helping drive the growth in our GDP [gross domestic product]. We're projected to be in the top two or three in the next several years, Mr. Speaker. And it's something that I think all Saskatchewan people can and should be proud of. It's something that has an effect on their everyday lives.

I was looking through the budget documents again, Mr. Speaker, and it showed average weekly earnings. Saskatchewan has had some of the fastest average weekly earnings over the last several years. When we won the election in 2007, Saskatchewan wasn't even at the national average. We were below average in regards to earnings. Today we're number two in Canada. We are the second-highest paid jurisdiction in the country, Mr. Speaker, and we continue to see the benefits of that.

And I think that that is a metric that's important, but it's not what's really important. It helps tell part of the story but not all of the story. And, Mr. Speaker, when I was preparing my speech to speak to the Northern Gateway, I was reading through news articles, and I read through one where the mayor of Kitimat was talking about all the activity and what it meant to her town and some of the great things that they were doing. And what really mattered was they were looking at putting forward a ferry service to allow neighbouring communities and Aboriginal communities to have access to the growth and the construction and the building and the jobs that were happening in Kitimat.

What doesn't matter as much, but what is somewhat symbolic, was she also said, there's things in Kitimat we never thought we'd see, and one was a Tim Hortons doughnuts. And I think that is a Canadian icon that in some people's mind — and I would say that I am guilty of it too — it kind of means our town is on the move or our town has made it. We've got a Tim Hortons doughnuts.

And when I read that, it made me think of when I first got elected in 2007. I know me and many of my colleagues, we were full of vim and vigour and we made some pretty passionate speeches, Mr. Speaker. And I can . . . It triggered in my mind that I spoke in 2007 shortly after the election about

hopes and promises and dreams that I hoped we would see in Saskatchewan.

And one of the small, little things that I spoke about was my city and some of the changes that I'd seen in it in recent years. And one was that we had three Tim Hortons in Lloydminster. And all three of them were on the Alberta side, and one was poised right there on the border that you could drink coffee and look across the border into Saskatchewan. But the straw curtain had been so strong that it had kept out investment. It had kept out population, and it had kept Tim Hortons out of the Saskatchewan side of Lloydminster.

So when I read that article about the mayor of Kitimat, it triggered in my mind that I think I need to update the House that in this past year, just months ago, Mr. Speaker, the very first Tim Hortons opened up on the Saskatchewan side of Lloydminster. And, Mr. Speaker, I do enjoy my double double. I enjoy Tim Hortons. But again, it's symbolic and it doesn't really matter.

But when I'm driving in from my farm into Lloydminster, that's what matters. I'm driving through a community that I have known my whole life, that I have known every farmer, every rancher, every house on that road, until about five years ago.

Today, Mr. Speaker, it's a 25-minute drive. It's a beautiful drive. You go through what we call the gully that ultimately feeds into the North Saskatchewan River. It's lush and green. It's as beautiful as any part of Saskatchewan. But there are houses, hundreds of them, Mr. Speaker, that continue to pop up all the way along my drive, and really anywhere you go in the Lloydminster area. There are quarter sections of land that are great fertile farm land which today are broken into subdivisions, rural acreage subdivisions. And it is because people are making good wages, that they want to give their family rural lives, that they want to live in our area, that they love Lloydminster. They've got great job opportunities. That's what's important.

When I go to my community hall, Milleton Hall, it's a hall outside of, north of Maidstone, halfway — well three quarters of the way — between Maidstone and the North Saskatchewan River, just a country hall, an old schoolhouse, where my grandfather grew up just a mile north of it. And it was a hall that for most of my life . . . We were the last generation of kids. There was no young people really for school, for field days, for 4-H days, for community dances. There were a few young people, but not like today.

When you go to the community hall, to the New Year's dance, to the Christmas party, there are young people, all sorts of young people. And it is because people want to live in our community. The young generation that traditionally would have possibly gone further afield to find opportunity are today finding it in and around Lloydminster, in and around Milleton. They're building homes. They're raising families. They're growing Saskatchewan. That is what is really important, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke earlier about the Hockey Day in Canada which we hosted in Lloydminster. That is iconic of Canada as well — hockey, Lloydminster, the great professionals we brought out of there, the cultural icon which hockey is. But

that's not the only cultural icon that goes on in Lloydminster today.

Just two weekends ago, Mr. Speaker, I was invited to the festival of Holi where the Hindu faith, Mr. Speaker, celebrates the changing of the season with colour. It's a festival where dyes, powdered dyes are thrown into the air, and everyone is coated head to toe with purples, reds, just the most vibrant colours. It's followed by ethnic dances, Indian dances. The food was served from the Gujarat region of India. And I asked, you know, why is this food Gujarat? And one of the hosts said, because many of these 250 people that are here tonight, that now live in Lloydminster, happen to be from the Gujarat province of India.

[20:30]

And it's very interesting that in my role in Energy and Resources, we get to meet people from around the world. I have met delegations from Gujarat. They are a productive, industrious part of India that utilizes our fertilizer, a great deal of it. And we now have a relationship where many people from Gujarat live in Lloydminster. Many people in Saskatchewan produce potash that is shipped to the Gujarat region, and it really makes me think of what a small world we have, what a rich world we have. And events like this, people like this really enhance life in Lloydminster and Saskatchewan. And I think we can all be very proud of our province. We can all be very proud of the people that call it home and very encouraged with the number of people that want to move to our province and want to call it home going forward.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that largely wraps up the comments I had about this budget. I would just want to sum up and say that this is a budget that builds on six other terrific budgets. We have had a principle of balanced budgets. We will continue to believe in balanced budgets. We will continue to believe in budgets that are responsible on the spending side. There is no tax increases in this budget. There is fiscal constraint, no question.

The member opposite that spoke before me articulated all the savings that she found in this budget, and I think she missed a few. And I appreciated the detailed work that she went to to find where we saved nickels and dimes. We did. She caught us. We balanced the budget, Mr. Speaker, not on the backs of taxpayers, not on the back of income tax, not on the back of property tax. We took a long look at the way we operate, the services that we provide, and we made some difficult decisions but what we think are responsible decisions, decisions that will help grow our province.

And with all that, Mr. Speaker, there are priorities in this budget. There is infrastructure spending increases in this budget, Mr. Speaker. There's a recognition that this province is growing, that this province will continue to grow, and that that growth is good for the people of our province and good for our future.

Now with that, Mr. Speaker, I would just confirm that I will be supporting this budget, and I am very proud to vote for it on that day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Parks,

Culture and Sport.

**Hon. Mr. Doherty:** — Well thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to join in with my colleagues and following on the heels of the Minister of Energy and Resources, the member from Lloydminster, in providing some comments to this budget, a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm going to apologize upfront. My voice is a little raspy. I'm on the downside of a cold here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Hopefully you can hear me, and hopefully my voice will hold out. I can get through my remarks, and we'll move through to the next speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, prior to getting into my remarks, I just would like to make a few comments, not unlike my colleagues, with respect to my constituency, the constituency of Regina Northeast that I am so honoured to represent here in the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a constituency that is comprised of multi-ethnicities, if you will, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as more and more people move into our province from not only other provinces in Canada but from around the world. I'm getting to meet folks from all different nations across the world that are bringing their talents and their skills and their dreams and their desires here to the province of Saskatchewan and to our capital city of Regina.

It's a constituency in the north end, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is comprised of Uplands, the residential area; the Ross Industrial Park, where the Co-op upgrader and many other manufacturing and warehousing facilities are located; and on the east side of my constituency, it's neighbourhoods like Glencairn and Glen Elm and Creek Side. And with the redistricting going on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the new boundaries, I'm going to apparently obtain some new areas that are going to make the constituency a little bit bigger on the east side. And I look forward to getting out this summer and knocking some of those doors and meeting some of those new folks that are going to be part of the Regina Northeast constituency.

As an example of some of the celebrations that go on in my constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just a couple of Sundays ago I was delighted to join colleagues of mine — the member from Qu'Appelle Valley and the member from Coronation Park and the member from Regina Dewdney — at a celebration of cultures, a community of cultures I believe it was entitled, on a Sunday afternoon at the Glencairn community centre. It was hosted by Phyllis Bamford, a community activist, an organizer, and a person of extraordinary talent; and Councillor John Findura, a good friend of mine here in the city of Regina that serves very capably on the city council. His ward coincides with parts of my constituency, and so we get to see each other quite often at functions.

At this particular celebration of cultures, on that Sunday, there was a number of tables and booths set up. Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor was there, along with members of Parliament and, as I said, colleagues from the legislature. And it was really a fun afternoon of a celebration of food, of music, of entertainment, and getting to know some of the new neighbours, if you will, in that area.

And of course it's always interesting to go to some of these

events with the member from Regina Dewdney because he is a celebrity in his own right. And it's always fun to watch. The moms and dads want to bring their kids up and get their picture taken with the Roughrider legend and someone who is so gracious in accommodating many of those requests. Even though he's there in a capacity as an MLA, he always falls back on the fact that he is a Rider legend. And to watch him interact with those folks and see the looks on their faces is always fun and interesting to watch. So I just want to thank Phyllis and John for organizing I think it's the third annual community of culture event at the Glencairn centre. And it was a lot of fun.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to just give a quick thanks to people that make my life a lot easier in doing this job, both in my ministerial responsibilities and as a constituency MLA, and that's of course my ministerial staff of Jason and Bob, Michelle and Morgan who just do tremendous work on my behalf and on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan in dealing with issues with respect to the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport and the Provincial Capital Commission. And then of course my constituency assistant, Mr. Ron Naidu, who's a retired professional civil servant who has been with me since day one of being elected back in November of 2011 and has done a tremendous job for me. As I share offices with the member for Dewdney and the member for Regina Douglas Park, our constituency assistants work together, so just a big thank you to them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is the third budget I've been involved in since being elected in November 2011. I believe it's the fourth budget of this particular Minister of Finance in his career, this government being elected in 2007. And it's an interesting process, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to talk just for a few minutes about the process of how the budget is developed. As a member of treasury board, I was privileged to serve on treasury board immediately after the election in 2011. In November the Premier asked me to serve on treasury board as a private member, and it was a very compact time frame at that particular time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the election happened in November of 2011. And of course that moves fast forward everything up into the process with respect to doing the budget so it's delivered in the spring session of the upcoming legislative session. So that was a steep learning curve for myself and I think some other colleagues on treasury board who are new to that process.

And then I was privileged to be asked to join Executive Council, the cabinet. In May of 2012, the Premier asked me to step off treasury board and take on some other responsibilities for the . . . two budgets ago. And then last budget, last year around January or so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Premier asked if I would rejoin treasury board and help out with colleagues there and doing this most recent budget.

And I think that's it's fair to say that the amount of work that goes on at treasury board, not only on an annual basis, with respect to issues of a financial nature for the government on a weekly basis if you will, but the amount of work that goes on with respect to the budget development itself is perhaps incomprehensible to a lot of people who have never been through it. And for the average person out there who has never had to experience going through the process of developing a



\$14 billion budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with all the complexities associated with government, it is a fascinating process.

And I think the work done by colleagues like the member from Martensville, the Minister of Central Services; and the member from Lloydminster, who just spoke, the Minister of Energy and Resources; my colleague, the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford, who spoke earlier on the budget; and the member from Arm River-Watrous, who brings a very unique perspective to the treasury board table . . . As we all know he's a farmer. And he's got a great passion for agriculture and kind of brings that coffee row mentality if you will, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as to what he's hearing out there in his communities and his constituency. And he does a tremendous job in the constituency of Arm River-Watrous.

And of course I think the longest serving member is the member for Kelvington-Wadena, who is the Minister of Social Services and I think has been on treasury board since we formed government in 2007, and has brought a . . . has taught me a lot about her perspective in approaching financial decisions on behalf of not only the government but on, more importantly, on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan and the people who perhaps don't have a voice. And that's, in a lot of cases, the people living with disabilities and the disadvantaged and those who are marginalized by society, if you will, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And the member from Kelvington-Wadena, the Minister of Social Services provides a great service in bringing that perspective and that voice to the treasury board table.

And then of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are ably and capably lead by the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Finance, the member for Canora-Pelly, who I have a tremendous amount of respect for. I know the Minister of Energy and Resources spoke about his admiration for how the Minister of Finance leads treasury board and leads the budget process. But having watched this particular minister up close on a weekly basis, if you will, when we're in the budget-making process and seeing his attention to detail, his professionalism, his concern for the people of Saskatchewan, where we're making these kinds of decisions that are going to impact people's lives and how seriously he takes his job.

And I say that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because you expect all of us to take our jobs seriously, but this is a gentleman that takes his job home with him. And he studies those numbers line by line. And he is very conscientious with respect to the decisions we make at the treasury board table that subsequently get made at the cabinet and the caucus table as to what impact that may have not only on his constituents but on the people across the entire province. And as I said earlier about those people who perhaps don't have a voice in these kinds of discussions, that particular Minister of Finance reminds all of us from time to time, when we're at the treasury board table, about who we're here to represent and what our jobs are and what it is that we're trying to accomplish in concert with our growth plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And so I think he has just done a tremendous job, not only in this particular budget but in the last three budgets before that, in representing our government as the Deputy Premier, the second

in command of our cabinet and our caucus, and then as the Minister of Finance and what he's brought to this particular province with respect to controlling spending, not increasing taxes, and still delivering services to the people of this province. And I congratulate him for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This budget, budget 2014-15 is entitled *Steady Growth*, and it continues our government's commitment to our growth plan released in 2012, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You might remember that. The Premier made that announcement up in Saskatoon at a chamber of commerce function and outlined our growth plan. And I remind the members opposite again of a plan.

And we've had a little bit of fun with this debate back and forth with respect to having a plan, and I think it was derisively called a booklet by members opposite when it was first released. And that's an interesting perspective on it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we've seen other booklets come in this Chamber from members opposite who . . . We can't find them anymore, either on their website or any reference to them when they're making reference to things that they might do in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But we do have a growth plan released in 2012, and it informs us in our decisions with respect to what we want to accomplish here in the province of Saskatchewan and moving forward. And this budget is in concert with that growth plan, hence the name, *Steady Growth*.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, budgets are an interesting document. They're an interesting compilation of statistics and line items and a lot of numbers obviously, and charts and graphs. And for the average citizen out there who never has to spend time looking at these things, they can be very complex and hard to understand. And I understand that and I get that. But it's our job as legislators to explain, when you take all those numbers and distill them all down, what exactly it is that we're trying to accomplish with respect to their tax dollars that they send to Regina and how we're going to spend that on their behalf here in the province of Saskatchewan.

So they are a fiscal blueprint, if you will, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that outlines the government spending plans for the ensuing fiscal year as we move into '14-15 beginning April 1st. But they are also a political document. A budget is a political document, and it is a political document because it represents the choices that a government, a political party makes with respect to what they're going to do with those tax dollars. And I'm going to get into a bit of that, the difference between our friends opposite and this side of the House when it comes to this document with respect to the choices that we're going make.

And I had to laugh when I heard recently . . . And Mr. Trudeau who's the, Justin Trudeau who's the federal Liberal leader was quoted as saying that, when asked a question about, well how are you going to balance the budget, and he said, well the budget will balance itself. And you know, I'm not trying to be partisan with respect to his view of how budgets are done, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I can assure you and I can assure people watching and I can assure Mr. Trudeau, if he happens to be listening — I doubt very much he is but if he happens to be listening, that budgets . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — He might be.

[20:45]

**Hon. Mr. Doherty:** — He might be. Budgets do not balance themselves, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I think we heard the Minister of Energy and Resources, just prior to my remarks, towards the tail end of his remarks, talk about the difficult decisions that we as legislators have to make in order to ensure that that budget is balanced. And that's exactly what we did in this particular document.

I've heard for years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, people criticize governments of all stripes, provincial, federal, as to what it is that enables them to not balance their budgets. What prevailing wisdom do they bring to the table that suggests to them that it's okay for governments not to live within their means? And I've heard it said many, many times at different social functions or in conversations with people and prior to me being elected and since I've been elected, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is people say to me is, you just live within your means. We have to do this in our businesses. We have to do this in our households. Why is it that government thinks that they can act differently?

And governments really only have several choices with respect to their financial blueprint, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And they can raise revenues through raising taxes. They can decrease spending. They can do a combination of those, or they can say that in a year or maybe a couple of years where we don't think revenues are going to meet with the expenditures, we need to provide, we're going to go into a deficit position. We're going to borrow money, take out a line of credit if you will, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Households are familiar with those kinds of analogies on financial management.

And what people have said to me is that the last thing they want to do is see their taxes raised. And the last thing, other than that, they want to see is for a government to go into a deficit position. So you know how much money you're bringing in at least through our estimates. Why don't you sit down and figure out a plan whereby you don't spend more than the money you take in? And that's exactly what this particular budget did, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We've heard from other speakers and the Minister of Finance on budget day that revenues are flat in this province. And that's through nobody's fault. There's no particular industry we can point at or individual we can point at or group of people we can point at to say, well you're not pulling your fair share here with respect to passing on revenues into the provincial coffers. It's just a reality. We are a commodity-based economy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we're going to see this kind of volatility.

What we're trying to do is flatten that volatility out, both on the revenue side and on the expenditure side, and we're seeing more of that come to fruition now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with these kinds of budgets that we take the approach on a line-by-line basis to ensure that we found savings to have the budget balanced. So this is a balanced budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with a projected surplus of \$71 million, and it has been presented on a summary basis. That is the first time in the history of our province that this, the provincial budget has been

presented strictly on a summary basis.

And members opposite had the opportunity for 16 years in government prior to us being elected in 2007. They talked a lot about it, but they presented their budgets both on a summary basis and on a GRF [General Revenue Fund] basis. And since they have been in opposition, they have been I guess asking the government repeatedly to only present the budget on a summary basis, and so that's exactly what we've done this year. They had the opportunity to do it during 16 years in office. They refused to do it. That was the conscious decision they made, Mr. Deputy Speaker, sitting around the cabinet table and the caucus table. As I said, these are political documents. They made a conscious decision to talk about it but not actually change it to a summary basis and present it to the people of this province in that fashion. We have done that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have done that.

This budget also has no tax increases. It's been talked about here. There are no tax increases. As a matter of fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a tax break because of the fact the Minister of Finance announced earlier this year he was indexing the personal exemption levels to the rate of inflation, which allows all of us, regardless of income level, in the province of Saskatchewan to receive a benefit by the fact that their personal exemption rates have been indexed to the rate of inflation so it increases that exemption level.

This budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, also controls spending while at the same time investing in infrastructure and investing in people. Those are the primary tenets of what we talked about in this particular budget. Now when I say investing in infrastructure, people say, well that's just a fancy buzzword for we don't quite know what that means. Well I think the people of Saskatchewan know exactly what that means. And I'm sure the Minister of Highways is going to talk about the hundreds of millions of dollars we are investing in highways and infrastructure in this province. I know the Minister of Education spoke earlier today about the amount of money going into schools and educational facilities in the province. The Minister of Advanced Education I'm sure will talk about post-secondary educational institutions and the amount of money we are investing into those particular institutions for the benefit of our students in this province.

And as a Regina MLA, I'm very proud of the fact that we are investing money into the development of a southeast bypass for the city of Regina. It's going to be very expensive, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the hundreds of millions of dollars. I'm sure the Minister of Highways will elaborate on that further. It's going to be an expensive proposition, but it's a necessary proposition for the transfer of goods and the movement of goods around our province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and for safety reasons for the people of Regina and for those that are coming into the city of Regina on the No. 1 Highway. And I know an awful lot of planning has gone into that so far, and it will continue to go into that as we develop that particular southeast bypass as it hooks up around with the GTH [Global Transportation Hub] and onto Highway 11 up to Saskatoon, and Highway 1 west, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now what do I mean by the most important aspect of this budget of investing in people? And again, that sounds like it's

rhetorical and it sounds like it's a nice catchphrase, and it's what all politicians say, is we're investing in people. But let me take that and just put it in context, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This budget here contains spending in the neighbourhood of \$14 billion. That's 14 with a lot of zeroes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And to put that in context, if you had 1 million people and you gave each one of them \$1,400, that would be the equivalent of \$14 billion.

We happen to have more than 1 million people in the province of Saskatchewan now. We happen to have 1,117,503, I think, if the number is correct, but it's in that neighbourhood, which we're very proud of. Because it's a metric that measures the success of our economy — not the government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the success of our economy because people want to be here. They want to move to Saskatchewan. We have kids that are staying here in Saskatchewan and not moving to other places because there are opportunities right here in the province of Saskatchewan.

So let's talk a little bit about where those dollars are being spent, as I hope my throat doesn't give out. When we talk about investing in people and what exactly does that mean, I just want to touch on a couple of areas, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Investing in people means increasing our health care spending in this province by another 3 per cent, just 3 per cent, so that we will invest almost \$5 billion into our health care system this coming fiscal year.

Now some would say on the opposite side, well 3 per cent, 3 per cent. And some out there watching this tonight or reading it in *Hansard* or listening to some of the media reports or media commentary on it think, well 3 per cent isn't very much. But, Mr. Speaker, 3 per cent on a \$5 billion budget — or less than 5 billion because it's going to come up to 5 billion — is \$144 million more we're going to spend in the health care system this year. And we're going to spend that money on people. We're going to spend that money in our hospitals. We're going to spend that money by delivering the health care services that the people of this province expect us to deliver.

So if you think about \$5 billion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on one item, one area, one ministry, the Ministry of Health, out of a total budget of \$14 billion, it's almost 36 per cent of the total budget this year on a summary basis, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is going to be spent on the delivery of health care services throughout the entire province. I think that speaks volumes as to the priority that we place on health care and health care delivery in the province of Saskatchewan.

Investing in people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, also means these resources in the health care sector are going to go into the surgical wait-list initiative to meet the three-month wait-list target. And I think the Minister of Health announced earlier today that we continue on track with meeting that three-month wait-list target. I know the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region is still having some challenges in that area, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But as I said a while back in a speech I gave, you know, there's nothing wrong with setting goals. I'm afraid of those who aren't prepared to set goals. I'm afraid of those who aren't prepared to tell you what it is they want to accomplish if ever given the privilege of being in elected office in government, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And so you set a goal. It might be bold. It might be audacious. The critics will come out of the woodwork and say it's not achievable; it's pie in the sky. And what I say to those critics, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is what if you don't achieve that goal? What if you only achieve 90 per cent of that goal? Isn't that better than where you were the day before? Every single day as we move towards achieving that goal, aren't we better than we were the day before, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

And so when I hear the Minister of Health set that goal out . . . And members opposite — and the member from Regina Lakeview knows this full well; he was a former minister of Health — scoff at the government for setting these kinds of goals and then ridicules the government if they don't quite meet the goals in the timeline that they said that they wanted to accomplish it. Well this budget continues to invest in that surgical wait-list reduction, Mr. Deputy Speaker, such that we can achieve the goal of having people wait less than three months, three months or less for their needed surgery in the province of Saskatchewan. I think that's a laudable goal, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We also have \$24 million to address the demographic pressures that our growing population contributes to our health care system. Now some might think that that's a negative thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Here we have growth in the province with new people moving here and therefore that presents challenges to our health care system. I argue differently, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The people moving here are adding to the vitality of this province. They're adding to the vitality of our economy and yes, at times they're going to require health care. This budget presents \$24 million to help out with those demographic pressures we're going to face.

Three point three per cent increase to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency to help plan, organize, deliver, and evaluate cancer care throughout the province — 3.3 per cent. Again we're going to hear some critics say, well 3.3 per cent isn't very much money. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that represents over \$4.9 million, additional dollars in the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency for the delivery of cancer care. And I dare say that there's not a member in this Assembly or anybody out there watching whose family hasn't been touched by cancer in some fashion. And it's a hideous disease, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's affected my own family and it's one that I think that we continue to address here in the province of Saskatchewan and continue to invest resources in because it is a priority not only of this government, but most importantly it's a priority for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We've also added resources for expanding the rural doctor locum pool and the rural family physician recruitment program. And I'm a Regina MLA, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but we are well represented from the rural areas in our province in our government caucus and I can tell you that there's not a day goes by that we don't talk about the attraction of physicians to our province, not just to the province but particularly to rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And the former Health minister spent a lot of time and attention to it. The current Health minister is also doing that. And I know rural members continuously bring up that issue, representing their constituents in their constituencies, their communities, to the Minister of Health and the Minister of Rural and Remote Health as to what

we need to do to continue to put resources towards that priority, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Investing in people also includes a huge increase in the Social Services budget, an addition of \$66 million or a 7.4 per cent increase to help those most vulnerable in our society, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that speaks volumes to the priorities of this particular government. I think that speaks volumes to the priorities to the families of this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I commend the Minister of Social Services who continues to represent those kinds of views at the cabinet table, at the treasury board table, and at the caucus table about representing those most vulnerable in society that, as I said earlier, perhaps don't have a voice. And I know there are a lot of advocacy groups out there and those who work towards helping out folks that are less advantaged, and they do tremendous work in our province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And our government is listening to them. This government is listening to them.

This means increasing the seniors' income plan benefits, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is an area the members opposite don't like us to talk about. And I don't blame them for not wanting to talk about this particular issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because for 16 years, for 16 years as I said . . . These are political documents because cabinets and treasury boards and caucus, government caucuses got together and they made conscientious decisions —conscientious decisions I should say, not conscientious — conscious decisions to where they were going to spend taxpayers' dollars. And for 16 years the members opposite, when they were in government, the NDP didn't increase the seniors' income plan by so much as a dime, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not so much as a dime.

So you can just imagine that discussion sitting around the treasury board table when the minister of Social Services of the day would come in and say, I think we need to increase the seniors' income plan. And they looked around at each other, and they made the conscious decision, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to not increase the seniors' income plan. That went on for 16 years, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I think, shame on you. And I heard about that on the doorsteps when I campaigned in 2011, Mr. Deputy Speaker. People said to me, this party, the NDP, their actions don't match up with their words, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They talk a good game, but their actions don't match up with their words.

And so I hear in the House here on a fairly regularly basis the Leader of the Opposition and the Health critic raising issues with respect to the care of our elderly in this province. And it is a priority for this government, and it continues to be a priority for this government. And here's why I get a little perplexed, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Here we have a party that was in power for 16 years, didn't raise the seniors' income plan. The most vulnerable seniors in our province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they didn't raise their income plan by so much as a dime in 16 years.

Every single day they get up in the House, and they ask questions about elder care in this province. This government, by the end of this term, through this budget and the ensuing budgets, are going to triple the seniors' income plan monthly benefit to our most vulnerable seniors in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And they're going to vote against it. They're

going to vote against that. So every single day they get up and ask questions about elder care in this province. Then we propose a plan to help out those most vulnerable seniors in our province and they stand up and they say, well we're not going to vote for that. We're not going to vote for that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that is the fundamental difference between the conscious decisions this side of the House made with respect to a political document and a fiscal blueprint like this budget, and the decisions those members make and continue to make, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I can assure you, when it comes time for the next election, we are going to remind every single senior citizen in this province, every single senior citizen in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they continue to ignore their needs. They're going to vote against the budget that's going to end up tripling the seniors' income plan by the end of our term, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I also want to talk about the additional \$3.7 million for the seniors' care urgent action plan and an increase to the seniors' personal care home benefit income eligibility threshold. I heard the member from Saskatoon Nutana, who I have a lot of respect for — she's my critic in Parks, Culture and Sport and I've known her since university days, Mr. Deputy Speaker — talk at the end of her speech about caring for people in this province. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just find the incongruity with respect to, how can you stand up and talk about caring for the people in this province, particularly the most vulnerable? We present options through a fiscal blueprint to assist those most vulnerable in the province and then they stand up and they say, well we're not going to vote for that though. We're not going to vote for that. We're not going to offer up any alternatives, but we're also not going to vote for your plan. We're going to remind people of that when it comes to election time, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[21:00]

This budget also focuses on people by investing an additional \$61.3 million or a 55 per cent increase in benefit increases for the Saskatchewan assured income for disability program. A \$20.4 million increase for community-based organizations that help Saskatchewan people with disabilities, as well as additional funds for the disability tax credit and transit assistance for people with disabilities, Mr. Deputy Speaker, further confirming our government's commitment to make Saskatchewan the best place in Canada for people with a disability to live.

And I know the member for Coronation Park, who's involved with the disability program, talked about that and gave some quotes and I think it's worth repeating one of the quotes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This isn't the government saying this. We all see this on budget day where we go out in the rotunda and we hear different municipal leaders and leaders of various groups talk to the media, and I have one here. It says, this is Amy McNeil, the executive director of SARC [Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres] as quoted in the *Leader-Post* on March 20th, the day after the budget:

[We are leading] . . . the country, if not North America and the world, in supports for people with disabilities. And it's something the Saskatchewan Party should be very

proud of.

This was a deliberate, conscious decision, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A deliberate, conscious decision by this government, by members of treasury board, by the Minister of Social Services, by the members of cabinet and our caucus. It informed the budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because it's a priority area not just for the government but most importantly for people living with disabilities. It's a priority area for people living with disabilities who were ignored by the members opposite. And when we're doing these kinds of things, when you have, you know, leaders in the disability community standing up and saying, we're not only a leader in North America but perhaps in the world in supporting people living with disabilities, I can't for the life of me believe why the members opposite, the NDP, the New Democratic Party of Saskatchewan, is going to vote against that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I just can't for the life of me see why they can't put partisan politics aside for one vote, for one vote on a budget that's going to help out our most vulnerable seniors and people living with disability.

They're going to have to answer for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When they go on the doorstep with the election coming up in April 2016, they're going to have to explain to families who have a person living with a disability why they didn't support increased supports to them. And I'm going to look forward to their answer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I'm going to be able to stand proudly and tell them we have supported people living with disabilities and we will continue to do so.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are dozens and dozens of other examples of this budget investing in the people of this province, and I am sure other members will outline their specifics. I just want to touch on two more before I take my place.

There is concrete proof that this government is committed to not only building our economy but building this province and investing in people, and I think that the one that stands out for me the most . . . Well, Mr. Speaker, for years and years in this province under successive NDP governments, we saw a steady flow of our young people moving away to other provinces, primarily Alberta, hitting the No. 1 Highway, and the Premier makes light of the fact that the, you know, the most often purchased graduation gifts was luggage for people who were graduating from post-secondary educational institutions. And moms and dads would buy them luggage and help them pack up as they moved off to Calgary or Edmonton or Vancouver or Toronto or whatnot.

You know, the Saskatchewan taxpayer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would spend literally millions and millions of dollars educating these young people, both in the secondary system and in the post-secondary system, only to see them leave to get a job or create a business perhaps in another province. And the NDP sat on their hands and did absolutely nothing even to the point where, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe a senior cabinet minister said, well they're all leaving. That's great because that just leaves more for the rest of us to share back here at home. A flippant comment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because families were being torn apart. Families were being divided. Young people had to move to other provinces to pursue their dreams with respect to having a job, getting a job, perhaps getting married, putting down roots, and raising their own family, and have to

come back to Saskatchewan to visit grandma and grandpa. And the NDP were making comments about the fact, well now there's more for the rest of us to share. And I thought how out of touch can you possibly be, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So you know it either was the fact that they just didn't care or they didn't have the wherewithal to come up with a plan to try to keep these young people at home, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So when this government was elected in 2007 under the leadership of our Premier and under successive Advanced Education ministers, this government sat down to devise strategies to try to keep these people at home — our young people, our best and our brightest, our future as we always talk about, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we all get an opportunity to go to these high school graduations and meet these young people who are unbelievably bright, who are unbelievably capable, who are the salt of the earth, if you will, with respect to their entrepreneurial spirit and their desire to do better and their desire to contribute back to their communities and to their province. And yet they had to go elsewhere looking for these jobs.

So programs like the graduate retention program that allows students to stay here or move back to Saskatchewan after graduating from post-secondary institutions and can recover up to \$20,000 of their tuition costs over seven years, this year's budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, provides for \$82 million this year for this program — an increase of \$18.1 million or 28.3 per cent over last year's budget — proving full well, proving full well this program works, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Our young people are taking advantage of it. They're staying here in Saskatchewan. They're contributing to our economy. We have 117,000 more people in this province since we came to office. They're not all people who have moved here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They are people who have stayed here. They are young people who are getting married. They are young people who are having families of their own now in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we're seeing this program work.

I recall recently at the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention during the bear-pit where we had, I don't know, 1,200, 1,500 delegates from across all of Saskatchewan, the rural municipal elected leaders, in the bear-pit. And cabinet's up on stage in the bear-pit. And I think it's a 90-minute session where any delegate can get up, ask any question of any minister or the Premier. And it's probably the most intense question period we have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, much more intelligent than what we see here on a daily basis from time to time, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And this young lady got up and unprompted . . . I'm assuming for many of us. None of us seemed to know who she was. But I believe she worked in an RM [rural municipality] office. And she got up and there was a question made about young people leaving the province and how they're staying at home here now. And this young lady got up and gave a testimony I thought was very powerful. And I was sitting beside the Minister of Highways, and we talked about that because this young lady said it was precisely, precisely because of this program, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that she stayed in Saskatchewan. And she was now working as an administrator or someone working in the

RM office and she thanked the government for it.

And that's a classic example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of what we see right across the province for people from small-town Saskatchewan to big-city Saskatchewan staying here and taking advantage of this program. This budget provides an additional \$18 million to help those kids stay in this province, and they're going to vote against it. They're going to vote against it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This budget also adds an additional 700 seats to the adult basic education program as we continue to try to eliminate that wait-list and help those people who want to complete their education and enhance their prospects at finding meaningful employment in our province and contributing to our economy — 700 more seats in the adult basic education program to eliminate that wait list, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I know my time is running short, and I was going to get into . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Voice is still kind of holding out.

**Hon. Mr. Doherty:** — Voice is holding up, yes. Talk just a couple minutes about some of the things in my own Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I heard the hon. member from Nutana, who's my critic, outline some of the things that she saw in the estimates and indicated that she was looking forward to asking some questions in committee. And I look forward to having that discussion about some of those things.

And I think she said that my particular budget is down some \$8 million, if you take out the \$50 million. I like how they do that. Just take out the \$50 million as if it doesn't exist that we're contributing to the stadium being built here in the city of Regina that's going to contribute not only to this economy but to our provincial economy. But somehow let's just take that \$50 million out. Therefore your budget's actually down \$8 million. And they're going to say that's a cut, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They're going to say that's a cut. My budget's up \$50 million, but let's just take that out because it's for the stadium — this is from a Saskatoon MLA — and your budget's actually down \$8 million. So she looks forward to asking those questions of me.

Well I can tell you, I'm proud of the fact that my budget is down \$8 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Why? Because some of those programs have come to an end. Some of them no longer exist and don't need the funding that they had before. Some of them are due to timing with respect to, for example, the Legislative Building dome, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a timing issue with respect to cash flow. And I'll look forward to having that discussion with the hon. member.

But what I can talk about is the record investment we have in areas in my particular ministry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. For example, some \$15 million this year into provincial parks. And yes, we had some difficulties earlier, a few weeks back, with respect to the start-up of the reserve-a-site, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I acknowledge that. As a matter of fact, I briefed the hon. member on it personally to let her know what was going on. And we went full tilt within the ministry and our service provider to work on that particular issue, and I think we've got

it rectified, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We will continue to enhance that program for next year.

But what I can tell you is that reservations in that opening week were up 11 per cent over the year before and we had record visitations in our parks last year, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Why? I think it's because the fact that we invested in our parks. We have spent some \$44 million since coming to office in our provincial parks on precisely the things that the people who patronize our parks want to see: enhanced service centres, boat launches, picnic areas, electrified campsites. All the things that they were looking for from that party when they were in power, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who literally walked away from the provincial parks in this province. Why? Because they were in rural Saskatchewan, and we know that they had a strategy to walk away from rural Saskatchewan. They did it in the health care sector by closing 52 hospitals. They did it with regional parks, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They just stopped funding regional parks altogether. We now provide over \$1 million a year in capital enhancements for the regional park system in our budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So the total capital investments in our provincial parks have increased some 244 per cent in the last 7 years compared to the previous 7 years of the previous NDP administration. I look at other things with respect to the fact that we've created a new provincial park, Great Blue Heron Provincial Park, up north of Prince Albert in the Emma, Anglin Lake area. And I was up last summer to Blue Heron Provincial Park up north of Prince Albert in the Emma, Anglin Lake area. And I was up last summer to cut the ribbon on it if you will, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and had a chance to speak with a number of the locals and how excited they were that we were creating this provincial park.

And we're looking at doing another provincial park. Why? Because we know the people of this province want to see more provincial parks. They want to take advantage of the short summer seasons. We have to get out and enjoy the beautiful wilderness we have and the environment we have in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And this government will continue to invest in our provincial parks to enhance the experience for people to go out and camp.

As well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget provides a 3 per cent increase to the Saskatchewan Arts Board. A 5 per cent increase last year, a 3 per cent increase this year. That's an 8 per cent increase obviously over two years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, additional funding going right into the Saskatchewan Arts Board that's going to help out artists of all different genres across the province. And I can tell you that the Arts Board was delighted by that particular increase in this budget.

We've also got \$7.7 million in Creative Saskatchewan, in Creative Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We've got funding available in there for supporting our creative industries in this province. And I can tell you that the last report I had is that there was a number of applications went in from all different genres of the creative industries, from visual artists to publishers to musical artists to filmmakers, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all trying to access money through that particular fund. We're going to continue to support that fund. We're going to continue to support the creative industries in this province, all creative industries in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And

this budget speaks volumes about that.

We've also got \$550,000 in this budget for Main Street Saskatchewan. Members opposite might be familiar . . . well maybe not familiar because it's in communities outside of Regina and Saskatoon. So it's in the towns of Indian Head, Wolseley, Maple Creek, and Prince Albert. And I can tell you that the MLAs I talk to that represent those areas, it is a very welcome program in those communities, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I heard time and time again from them, continue the Main Street program here in the province. And we're going to do that. We're setting up the parameters for the next intake on who's going to be eligible for accessing those dollars.

But I can tell you in some cases, I think it's in Wolseley, for every dollar the government provided through the Main Street program, \$17 came out of the private sector, Mr. Deputy Speaker — \$17. It created jobs. It revitalized the downtown main street of that particular community. And it created new businesses in that community as it's doing in all the other communities in Main Street Saskatchewan.

ArtsVest, we have another \$250,000 in artsVest in this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I was at a launch this morning in Moose Jaw with someone you would be familiar with, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a former Speaker of this Assembly, Mr. Hagel. Former Speaker Hagel is the Chair of this theatrical production company called RuBarb Productions in Moose Jaw, the third professional theatrical production company in the province of Saskatchewan now. We've got one in Saskatoon and Regina and now we have one in Moose Jaw. Why, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Because they were able to access money through artsVest.

ArtsVest is a matching program that was piloted here in the province of Saskatchewan on a province-wide basis — came out of Ontario where they did it locally in some communities; we did it province-wide — that allows various different artists to access private sector dollars because they're getting it matched by the government, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It allowed this production company to come to fruition. And K+S, who's a potash company for members opposite, was there this morning, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to provide I think it was \$25,000 that they offered up as private sector donation to get this particular organization going. So the beautiful community of Moose Jaw will now have a professional theatrical production company there, and we are proud to be part of that announcement this morning.

And finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on my particular budget, I'm proud of the fact it doesn't show up in this budget, doesn't show up as a line item in this particular budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it is very important for the sport, culture and recreation sector in the province. That's the extension of the lottery licence, the renewal of the lottery licence for another five-year period, commencing April 1st of this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And what that's going to do is, I think last year there was some \$60 million came out of lottery proceeds to be divvied up amongst some 12,000 different organizations across the province. And the Government of Saskatchewan takes a 3.75 per cent lottery licence fee out of the proceeds of the sale of lottery tickets in the province of Saskatchewan. It was as high

as 12 to 15 per cent under the previous government at some times, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they worked around with different formulas. At times that they were running surpluses, at times that they boasted about having \$2 billion in the bank, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they were charging outrageous licence fees to take money out of the lottery system in this province for General Revenue Fund coffers, and starving the sport, culture, and recreation sectors in this province.

[21:15]

This government, in its infinite wisdom, in 2009 signed a five-year agreement with a 3.75 per cent lottery licence. And what the sector asked us to do was to match that again for another five years because it provides stability to those organizations. It allows them to hire coaches and managers and executive directors with a five-year stability program in place. And that's exactly what we did, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we responded to the needs of that sector. They are very, very grateful for it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I'm very proud of that.

So as I close off my comments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that I want to compare and contrast again the idea of budget development and decision making with respect to budgets and the fact that a group of women and men sit around a table, the caucus table, the treasury board table, the cabinet table, whether it's an NDP government or a Saskatchewan Party government, and they make decisions, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They make decisions where they're going to spend the people's money. They determine those priorities through their discussions at the cabinet table and the caucus table, and they have presentations from ministers and officials.

It's not a different process that the NDP went through. I look at the decisions that those men and women made during 16 years in government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I look at the decisions that I've been privileged to be a part of with respect to this Minister of Finance, the treasury board he has led, through his term as Minister of Finance, and I see how he has guided his treasury board colleagues, his cabinet colleagues, and his caucus colleagues to the end points of the decisions we've made with respect to where we spend the people's money in this province. I can see why the people of Saskatchewan threw them out in 2007 and elected this Premier and this government, 2007, and re-elected us in 2011.

Now I say, with all due respect to my colleagues across the floor, we've heard many, many times about transparency. And the Finance critic has talked at length about, open up the books, we need more transparency. Well, there's another issue with respect to transparency, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that is, this government laid out its fiscal plan for the people of this province. It stands by it. It shows it exactly what our priorities are in this province. So I thought, well we're going to hear an awful lot of criticism from members opposite as to what they don't like in the budget. Perhaps they're going to offer an alternative view. Perhaps they're going to be bold enough to tell the people of this province, if we weren't prepared to spend money in this particular area, here's where we would spend the money.

We heard from the member from Regina Lakeview a couple of years ago where he was going to take money for the film

employment tax credit, and that was from agriculture and from municipal revenue sharing. He was going to take money from those particular areas to put into the FETC [film employment tax credit], Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's fine. We can have that kind of debate in this Legislative Assembly.

So I thought as I was preparing my remarks I would go to their website because we don't hear any policy put forward in this Chamber. We don't hear any alternative solutions put forward in this Chamber by members opposite. So I thought, well it must be on their website because their Leader of the Opposition has been leader for over a year now. Surely to goodness he has met with his caucus, fellow caucus members, and has sat down and decided what are their priorities with respect to how they would spend the people's money. Unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's nothing on their website with respect to how they would spend the people's money.

So it's one thing to talk about transparency. It's one thing to say, to stand here and criticize the government for areas that they wouldn't spend money in. But the people of Saskatchewan are telling us — they are telling me certainly at different functions I go to — well if they don't like that, what do they like? What would they do? Where would they spend our money? And unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, none of us on this side can answer that. Well I don't know if any on that side can answer that question either, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But here's the difference. This government, this Premier, this Minister of Finance, has laid out our priorities very clearly for the people of Saskatchewan. We controlled spending, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We did not raise taxes. We invested in infrastructure, and we invested in people. I will be supporting the main motion and not the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very pleased to rise this evening and to support the budget motion that was presented by the Minister of Finance last Wednesday and supported by the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook on Thursday.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I too would like to take this opportunity to say a few thank yous to my family; my kids, my son Terry, my daughter Trish; my four grandchildren, Beau, Bailee, Shelby, and Tristan.

As other members can attest to, our families all make terrific sacrifices so we can do our jobs. So I just want to let them know how much I appreciate their love and support. And also other members of my family, Mr. Speaker. I come from a big family. I have seven siblings and my mom still lives in Estevan, so I also want to thank them for their support.

My constituency assistants, Rosalie is my full-time and Wilma is my casual. And first impressions are the lasting impressions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and when the people come to the office I am so happy that they treat the constituents with courtesy and respect, the courtesy and respect that they all deserve. So thank you to them.

And also to the people of the Estevan constituency for allowing me the privilege of representing them for the past 14-plus years. Sometimes it doesn't seem that long. Sometimes it seems longer. But I'm very proud of my constituents and the constituency I come from. And by the way, Estevan does have two Tim Hortons.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would also be remiss if I did not thank our caucus staff here in this Legislative Building. We have a tremendous group of men and women in room 203 that work tireless hours to serve the MLAs here, and I would like to thank them.

Mr. Speaker, I had a chance to speak to many people over the last weekend, and they were all very, very pleased with this budget. They were happy that it was balanced. They were happy that this budget had controlled spending, not increasing taxes, and also the investment in infrastructure and the investment in people. And investing in people is a priority for this government.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance minister a short time ago, I believe it was in December, announced that an indexation factor of point nine per cent would be applied to Saskatchewan's personal income tax system for the 2014 taxation year. This factor fully indexes the 2014 Saskatchewan personal income tax system to the national inflation rate. And Saskatchewan residents will see a \$6.5 million in annual tax savings from the indexation of the provincial income tax system in this year of 2014. And the combined effect of the indexation of the tax system since 2007 is saving Saskatchewan taxpayers a total of \$109 million in 2014. This indexation is something that will benefit every person in this province, and it is also something that the NDP would never do, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to start my comments by speaking about something that greatly affects the constituency of Estevan and to say how pleased I am with the announcement regarding the twinning of Highway 39 and No. 6. I know I speak for everyone who travels on that road south of Regina down to the US [United States] border. And this budget included the preplanning stages for this busy corridor. And as you know, Mr. Speaker, this corridor does run from Regina down to the United States. It's extremely busy, and it's the kind of traffic that warrants twinning.

I can remember when I was first elected in 1999. When I used to go home, the traffic was mostly cars and just half-ton trucks I might run . . . or I shouldn't say run into, I might meet about 40 semis. And I took special notice last Thursday when I drove home, and I met 183 semis that were heading up from the border. So the traffic has just increased unbelievably.

And as I said before, this is a major corridor with the US. And I think the Portal crossing is one of only two or three in the province. I know there's one at Regway, and I'm not sure if there's one in the western part of the province.

But I was also very happy when the Minister of Highways recently announced that Highway 39 would be repaved from west of Estevan to Macoun. Of course Macoun is my hometown. And last week I saw a letter to the editor that the member from Athabasca had written in *The Estevan Mercury*,



and he was saying that the repair of that stretch of highway shouldn't happen. And I certainly hope he doesn't think he scored any points with the local people out there because they've been asking for this for the last probably year and a half. And I am just pleased that the Minister of Highways has acted on that so promptly.

And this government has made historical investments in infrastructure, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And this is in part due to the fact that when the member from Athabasca was minister of Highways in the NDP reign, infrastructure wasn't even in their vocabulary. And I do again want to thank the Minister of Highways for this commitment.

Mr. Speaker, investing in people, those with disabilities, children, family, and seniors. Regarding seniors, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP have always claimed ownership of issues regarding seniors. And when they were in government, they closed long-term care beds. They closed 52 rural hospitals and the Plains hospital. And many seniors didn't and still don't like to drive in the city of Regina. So if they had to go to the Plains hospital, it was located on the outskirts of the city, and seniors felt quite comfortable driving there.

I think of my father. My dad passed away in 2003, but he just didn't like driving in the city of Regina. If he had an appointment, he didn't have a problem with driving out to the Plains. But that hospital was closed by the NDP. It was built for the people of southeast Saskatchewan. It was closed by the NDP with absolutely no consultation with the people from southeast Saskatchewan at all.

And I remember there was someone in politics, I think it was, I think maybe it was the Liberal leader at that time, was going to chain himself to the hospital doors or something like that in a revolt of this because of the lack of contact that the NDP had with the local people down there. And who knew that a few years later that same party would be forming a coalition government with them. But their answer has always been to either raise taxes or close facilities, and unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, sometimes both.

I can also remember when, Mr. Speaker, when the NDP were going to increase long-term care fees in this province, and I'm sure a number of my colleagues will remember that as well. They were going to almost double them and just literally kick the seniors out of their beds. And then the minister, the then minister of Highways, Mark Wartman, was sitting, chirping from his seat over here. And he said, yes, it's the right thing to do. And I think that statement kind of haunted him for the rest of his political career, Mr. Speaker. And I also think that, I think they took him, some money from his highways budget, so that was an expensive statement to make at that time. They shifted it from highways to health.

Also, Mr. Speaker, and other members have spoke about this, the seniors' income plan. Under the 16 years of NDP reign it was never increased once. It was \$90 a month when they formed government in 1991. It was \$90 a month when they were defeated in 2007. And in stark contrast, Mr. Speaker, since 2007, the maximum monthly SIP [seniors' income plan] benefit has increased from \$90 to \$250 for single pensioners, and from 72.50 to \$215 for each member of a two-pension household.

Another increase to the program's monthly benefit is scheduled for July of this year, 2014, when the maximum monthly benefit will increase from 250 to \$260. So that means by July 2014, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it will be an increase of 189 per cent from 2007, and I know that there isn't a senior in this province that doesn't appreciate that increase, long overdue and long neglected by the NDP.

But, Mr. Speaker, other members have touched on or will touch on different programs on issues regarding seniors and different areas of this budget, so I'm not going to go into every detail. They're all important, but I don't want to be too repetitive here.

I will just touch on education, that this government is committed to the education of our youth. Children are our most precious resource, Mr. Speaker, and we have to remember that your education is the only thing no one can ever take from you. The children are the leaders of tomorrow. And, Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina Rosemont has stated many times that classes are too big, and that's one thing the NDP never had to worry about when they were in power. People were leaving this province in droves. They were closing schools. In fact, Mr. Speaker, they closed over 176 schools. I believe it was a school a month they closed.

Regarding Advanced Education, this budget provides increased operating funds to post-secondary institutions, investments in student support, and funding for key capital projects. Support includes tax credits for the graduate retention program, also the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship, Student Aid Fund, and the list goes on, Mr. Speaker.

[21:30]

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to take a minute to talk about agriculture. And I am very happy with the expansion of the crop insurance program to include livestock, and also investments made to the AgInvest program.

And speaking of agriculture, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I couldn't believe my ears last week when the member from Saskatoon Nutana in question period saying that farmers . . . She figured farmers were hoping that they didn't have a bumper crop this year. She was speaking about the backlog of grain, and she says that, I'm sure farmers are hoping that they don't get a bumper crop. Like I just don't get this. I live on a farm and I'm in contact with producers constantly, every day of my life, and I have never ever heard one farmer say that.

And when you think about it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, producers are investing hundreds of thousands of dollars, perhaps millions of dollars in some cases. They seed the crop. They buy fertilizer. There's pre-emergent sprays. There's post-emergent sprays. The cost of the seed, the fuel. And then later on of course there's swathing and harvest, not to mention their time. And they have hired labour and the cost of equipment, the cost of the land. And for the life of me I just can't imagine we're having a conversation with a person involved in agriculture when he's there and, man, I just spent half a million dollars on fertilizer and this cost me this and, boy, I hope this crop doesn't grow. Like think about it.

I mean you know, that statement just shows how out of touch

the NDP are with agriculture. And of course that statement is right out there with that same member's comment when she, I think it was in the spring session or maybe it was a year ago, when she referred to community pastures as cow daycare. I mean that one did take the cake.

And another thing regarding agriculture, Mr. Speaker. Today was the 13th question period in the spring session. I don't have an exact tally in the number of questions that have been asked. But the grain car backlog, that's the most important issue facing this province today, and the NDP leader, that member from Saskatoon Massey Place, has not asked a single question about it. And you know, the NDP took a revenge on rural Saskatchewan in 1991 and they are continuing that today by that leader totally ignoring the producers of this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have lived on a farm all my life. I still live on my farm. I consider myself a small farmer. It used to be kind of an average farm, but farms are getting bigger and I'm not expanding my farm. I rented half of it out, and I kind of help with the other half being a gofer. They won't let me operate any of the machinery. It's something to do with clutches and things like that, so they don't let me do that.

But I'm just so thankful for the leadership our Premier has provided, and the Minister of Agriculture, and how they know the importance of this industry and have been there for producers in the past and will be in the future.

There is so much more I could say about this budget, Mr. Speaker, but there are also others that want to speak on it. And I would just like to read a couple of quotes from people and organizations that I thought were very interesting.

Marilyn Braun-Pollen: "We commend the province for not taking the easy way out, but instead controlling their spending by making some tough decisions." That was from a release on March 19th. And Marilyn Braun-Pollen also said, "It's encouraging to see Saskatchewan deliver another balanced budget with a forecast surplus of \$71 million." Steve McLellan: "I give it a thumbs up, no question."

Debra Button, SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] president: "The government's investment in our communities will go a long way to helping us meet the demands of growth." And she also had another quote. Pardon me, this is David Marit, SARM president, saying, "During a time of fiscal constraint, we commend the provincial government's ability to secure a balanced budget while maintaining current funding levels for many important programs and initiatives that benefit rural Saskatchewan."

Janet Foord, who I know very well. She's from the same community I am. She's the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association] president, and Janet said, "We're happy that the government's put the education as a priority this year. We knew it was going to be a tight budget, so we're quite happy. We're also happy to be working with them and having the conversations go forward."

And I'll just finish with this one, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's also from Debra Button, SUMA president and mayor of Weyburn. And she says, "I do sit on the Federation of Canadian

Municipalities, and I can tell you without a word of doubt that they are very envious of what we have managed to accomplish with partnerships we have with our provincial government and revenue sharing. Their question is always, how did you do that?"

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to thank the Finance minister, cabinet, treasury board, and all the officials who worked so diligently in preparing this budget. I would like to say what an honour it is to serve under this Premier's leadership and the great group of men and women that I have the pleasure of working with every day. And I am pleased to support this balanced budget motion, and I will not support the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to join into the debate regarding the 2014-15 budget, Mr. Speaker. I've had the opportunity to stand in my place since 1999. Sometimes it was over on that side. It's more fun on this side, Mr. Speaker, when you can reply to the Speech from the Throne or the budget. Any time you can talk about your constituents and the people that allow you to fulfill your duties in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege. And that's usually during the Speech from the Throne and the budget.

I have had the opportunity to be part of many budget speeches and debates back and forth. Not as many as the member from Moosomin and not as many as, for example, yourself, Mr. Speaker, but since 1999. But I can tell you, after attending a lot of those debates back and forth, and regardless of what time it is at night, whether it's 9:30 at night or 3 o'clock in the afternoon, I can tell you that, so far anyway, this budget debate, back and forth, has to be one of the quietest ones I've ever experienced. I mean you would not even know there was an opposition in the building, Mr. Speaker, by the response that we're seeing from that side of the House, Mr. Speaker. And I know they're certainly few in numbers but the job of the opposition is to hold the government to account and to be part of the budget debate. And quite frankly, it is sorely missing. They really have not been around. They haven't hardly been heard, Mr. Speaker. It is the quietest one that I have seen since 1999.

Having said that though, Mr. Speaker, it is 20 to 10, I guess, and I have been told that I will be the last speaker of the evening. Now I've also had the opportunity at times to speak just before people have waited a long time for supper. That's not a good position. But I can tell you I feel worse on this one when people are sitting here waiting to go home but they have to listen to me before they get to go home. That's not a very comfortable position for any of the members on this side of the House.

But as I said, this is an opportunity to thank many of the people that allow us to do the work that we do. I want to start with my constituency assistant, Nicole Entner-McCullough, who runs the constituency office in Balgonie for the great constituents of Indian Head-Milestone, does a great job handling any of the concerns that come in, handles them very well herself and refers them to me. It's been a great working relationship for the last number of years, for about six years I believe, Mr. Speaker.

Also I would like to thank the people in my office: Clay, my chief of staff — here in the building I should say — Karalee, who is a great admin assistant, keeps us going in the right direction; David and Adam who have just joined the staff. I look forward to working with them. The first few weeks and months have been great. I certainly look forward to working with them. And all the staff that I've had in the past. A person doesn't realize how reliant you are on that staff within your minister's office or your constituency office, Mr. Speaker, because as a minister and as an MLA at times we're all spread pretty thin, and those are the people that really keep the wheels on the bus, Mr. Speaker. So I wanted to thank them.

The other people that I want to thank, and it's very poignant because we're in the middle of the speech, of the budget debate, would be the Minister of Finance who has done a great job over the last number of years. Of course he was elected just at an election prior to 1999 when I was elected. So we've had a lot of workings back and forth. And he has really been a tower of power, a rock, for not only us when we were on the opposition side but more importantly on the government side, whether it was in the ministry, as a minister of Education, and now the Minister of Finance, Deputy Leader, Mr. Speaker, has done an excellent job. And I think this budget is very reflective of the work that he has done along with the treasury board members.

And I want to also recognize all the treasury board members. And there's a couple sitting just behind me here that have spent hours and hours and hours in that treasury board room. I know as the Minister of Highways, not nearly maybe as many visits as I used to have when I was the minister of Health, where we had spent a lot of time in treasury board, but we spent a fair amount here as the Minister of Highways. And I think that's only one ministry of all the ministries that they hear from and they have to wade through good idea after good idea.

I don't think there are any of us that go in there as ministers that think any of our ideas should be kind of put off to the side for next year or any other year. I personally think every idea that I come into treasury board with are the ones that should be approved. And I want to thank the treasury board members for the work that they do, and the Minister of Finance, to make those tough decisions. Because as was said many times before, it's never a decision between a good idea and a bad idea. It's a decision between a good idea and a good idea. And they have to be the ones that kind of land the budget to where it is. And so congratulations to the Minister of Finance, as well as all of treasury board. They do a great job.

And finally with my thank yous, I would be remiss if I didn't thank the people at home, my family, Cindy at home who keeps the house fires burning when I'm not there for sure. And we don't have to keep the house maybe quite as warm as we used to because there's not as many people around as there used to be. It's a pretty vacant house now.

Of course we have two boys, Craig and Mark, who I've said to many people that, you know, there's name recognition and there's popularity. Mark happens to have both. I sure don't. In fact I barely have one of them, as far as name recognition as a minister, but Mark certainly has elevated his game, I guess you could say, as far as being recognized not only here in the province but across the country and maybe around the globe.

And Craig, our other son — Mark competed, of course, in the Olympics and was successful — and our other son, who was there, it was kind of interesting to be in Sochi and to be able to visit with both of them, one as an commentator and the other one as a competitor.

We were watching — just one really quick story and I won't go on on this — but it was really interesting to stand, it's called the bullpen, where you're at the bottom of the slope run. And literally we would look up into the announcers' booth and you could see Craig up there, and then you looked this way and you could see Mark coming down on the slope run. So it was a pretty, pretty interesting time. And it's an exciting time now — totally nerve-racking at the time. I would never wish that on any parent ever again because it was very, very difficult. But it all worked out.

And I think probably from my perspective, one of the most gratifying things was when we came back home to Saskatchewan, and Mark came a week or two later, but the amount of congratulations. And it doesn't seem that you can really walk down the street right now, and especially right after the Olympics, where people from all over the province were just proud and were so gracious commenting on it. And you know, we were at SARM, and there was a few hands, rounds of applause.

But it didn't matter. I remember meeting with an RM . . . I said I wasn't going to go on with this for very long, sorry. But I remember meeting with the RM around Frenchman Butte which is north of Lloydminster. And we were just sitting down to talk about a possible road conversion there, and the first thing they needed to talk about were the Olympics. And then about an hour later I was meeting with the RM of Torquay, pretty much in the opposite corner of the province, and the first thing they wanted to talk about were the Olympics, which made me kind of put it into perspective on how wide a recognition this is. As they say, the Olympics are the biggest thing in sports, and if you get recognized there, you're pretty well known.

So we are very, very blessed. But what I wanted to say is thank the province of Saskatchewan and really the people across Canada that have been so gracious and recognizing the accomplishments. Thank you. So to the budget, and again I don't want take too terribly much time, but there are a few things that I really think are extremely important that I want to talk about. I want to talk about the basis of the budget, that it's balanced . . . [inaudible] . . . there's no new taxes, controlled spending, investments on infrastructure, and investments in people. I want to touch on that first of all. Then I want to talk a little bit about the highways budget and \$664.5 million of highways spending, a record amount of spending on highways this year.

[21:45]

And then I also want to touch on a little bit of our role as MLAs and why we come into this Chamber and what we do when we're here. Because I want to talk a little bit about the opposition and some of the stands that they have taken, and certain members in particular that have come into this Chamber and have had, you know — this is maybe not a fair term — but a one-trick pony. They've only had one issue, and they've been

on their feet. And every time they're on their feet, they talked about one specific issue. And I want to touch on that a little bit because I'm going to, and it's no secret, I will be supporting the budget and I will be rejecting the amendment.

But I think there needs to be some serious soul searching from members on the other side who come in here on a daily basis and talk about one specific issue. And if it is addressed in the budget, I think they have an obligation to their constituents, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the tradition of voting against budgets — and it hasn't always been that case with all opposition members — but, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding that, I want to finish with that even though I've kind of put half of it out on the table here already.

The first piece is a balanced budget. We are truly the envy of every other province in Canada. I think it must be a little lonely for the Minister of Finance to go to the FPTs, federal-provincial-territorial meetings, and be the only Finance minister really that can boast about a balanced budget, a budget that also looks at dealing with most of the spending issues that were faced. But keeping it balanced is extremely important, Mr. Speaker. Seven years of consecutive balanced budgets puts this province in a position for growth that we have never, ever seen before. And it's truly the hard work, again, of the Finance minister, the ones previous . . . the one previous, Minister Gantefoer, and of course our current Finance minister.

And that's not easy when you think of the fact that you haven't had a tax increase, Mr. Speaker, in this budget. It would be very easy . . . I've listened to the members opposite talk about what we haven't spent. In fact the member from Saskatoon Nutana talked about it earlier. She talked about what we are spending . . . She didn't really talk much about what we are spending. All she could do is look at what we weren't spending, Mr. Speaker.

We know that if the NDP ever get into power again, and I don't think that's for a very, very long time, Mr. Speaker. But if they ever get into power again, Mr. Speaker, the one thing I will guarantee the taxpayers of the province is expect almost all of your taxes, whether it's property tax, whether it's personal income tax, Mr. Speaker, all of those to increase.

Because it wasn't very long ago that a former minister of Finance from that side said, after coming through an election, would we talk about increasing taxes during an election? Of course not. That would not be popular. He was right there, but right after the election, Mr. Speaker, they increased the PST [provincial sales tax]. I think that would be exactly what the members opposite would be doing if they ever came to government again.

That isn't the case with this government, Mr. Speaker. This government's last resort, very last resort, would be any sort of tax increase. And I think the people of Saskatchewan are realizing that brand that I think is starting to stick with our government is that the very last resort would be tax increases. That's why, on a tough budget when revenues are flat, Mr. Speaker, there is no shortage of places that people would like to see us spend money. The only way you could ever do that is if you increase the taxes, Mr. Speaker. We've held them flat, and I think the people of the province respect that. And we'll see as we go to the polls in a couple of years how that plays out. But I

think it's a good brand that's certainly in place.

I touched on the controlled spending. There isn't a ministry or a constituent, an MLA that wouldn't have areas in their constituency or in a minister's responsibility that we couldn't see increased spending — absolutely you could. And they're all very good ideas, Mr. Speaker, for the most part. Mind you the couple from the NDP . . . I don't know about a couple from the NDP, but for the most part on this side I can say that every idea that's come forward as far as increased spending has been thought out. It's a good idea. Of course you can't do them all, and that's why controlled spending is so important.

Investing in infrastructure and investments in people are the last two kind of cornerstones of this budget, and they're very, very real. That's why I want to touch on just briefly about the highways budget. As I said, Mr. Speaker, the record amount of spending in highways will be going forward — 664.5 million, an incredible spend, Mr. Speaker. The budget itself — it took me a little while to get to this point — but the budget itself, a \$14 billion budget. What does that work out to a day? Because 14 billion seems to be a pretty big number and a lot of zeros. What does that work out to a day? It works out to \$38.5 million spent each and every day. What does that work out? \$1.6 million.

\$1.6 million spent every hour in Saskatchewan would equate to a \$14 billion budget, and from what I've heard on that side, it just isn't enough. I don't know. If \$1.6 million per hour in this year's budget isn't enough, what would be enough for the NDP, Mr. Speaker? We've never heard that. They can throw out numbers and they can throw out wishes. But they never, ever talk about what that would be accumulative, other than we know that in the last election it was a \$5 billion increase in the budget of spending, Mr. Speaker, totally unrealistic.

But what does \$664.5 billion look like in the Ministry of Highways? Well, it includes \$405.2 million invested in transportation capital, in other words, new infrastructure that will be completed around the province. That's a huge spend on new infrastructure. That's land purchases. That's building a ring road around Estevan for example, who my colleague beside me here, the member from Estevan, has been very strong for her community, extremely strong for her community, and has raised this issue on a regular basis. That's why we are glad to be able to see that move forward because of her strong lobby, Mr. Speaker. It's a great project, and we look forward to seeing that move forward.

Also, supporting RMs and city municipalities for example, Mr. Speaker, an increase of over \$500,000 this year to the MREP [municipal roads for the economy program] program . . . no, to the urban highway connector program, bringing it to \$8.4 million. And of course last year we saw the MREP program which is for the rural municipalities increasing by \$2 million to 25.5 million.

Extremely good investment into those municipalities, both urban and rural. More to do, absolutely more to do on that front, because the rural municipalities are seeing growth. The urban municipalities are seeing growth. This money goes to them as far as being able to invest in, for example, rural Saskatchewan bridges, culverts, that type of thing. In urban Saskatchewan,

again bridges and other roadways, such as this year we are able to do a section of the Ring Road matching dollars. In fact the city of Regina went past the matching dollars and were able to repair some of their infrastructure.

\$250 million will go to repairing existing roadways that we have, whether it's the thin membrane highways or secondary highways recapping; \$37 million to bridges, five major bridge rehabs and numerous culvert replacements, many initiatives like that, Mr. Speaker.

It really is a budget that not only deals with the existing infrastructure and keeps it up to date, but also into the new infrastructure. For example I can say again, I've heard from the members opposite and the member from Regina Rosemont who would talk about the traffic on Dewdney. And we're very aware of that traffic that's on Dewdney and some of the challenges that that would have. That's why it's so important that we continue work on the bypass around Regina — east Regina bypass or west Regina bypass, depending on which section you're talking about — looking at that as a P3. The member opposite opposes P3s even though it will deal with the very issue that he's been raising on a daily basis and how important that is.

Mr. Speaker, there's also pre-construction work that will be done with the twinning of 6 and 39. There will be work done with the four-laning between Estevan and Bienfait, also between Saskatoon and Delisle. Passing lanes that haven't been used in the province for many, many years between Balgonie and Fort Qu'Appelle have been very effective. We're looking at using those passing lanes then from Delisle on to Rosetown where the traffic is very heavy, and also work on 16 Highway from Saskatoon to Clavet is an extremely important corridor that certainly needs work.

Just kind of in closing on the highways budget, because I could go on forever, and I'm not going to do that. But it's interesting. Since 2008 we have made 267 kilometres of major highway improvements, 1,080 kilometres of rural highway improvements. We've repaved over 2,300 kilometres, improved a total, since 2008, 8,600 kilometres of provincial roadways. That's the distance from Regina to Mexico City, is what our government has improved on the roadways. More to do, absolutely, and I heard it at SARM. Some of the thin membrane highways or TMS [thin membrane surface] highways are seeing a lot of traffic, especially within the oil field, and some of the work that needs to be done on those.

I'm glad that some of the RMs are looking at conversions, moving a thin membrane highway that takes very little traffic because people don't want to drive on it and converting it, working together, into a super grid that can haul primary weights and, Mr. Speaker, into the future perhaps an asphalt surface into the future if that was the case. But at least the roadway will be taking heavy traffic, primary weight traffic and keeping it off those thin membrane road surfaces.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, just in closing, I really think it's important that we look at the job that we do when we come to this building. We stand up for our constituents. We lobby hard for our constituents. And, Mr. Speaker, when a government listens to those lobbies, listens to the arguments put forward, I

think it's incumbent on us to follow through and back those decisions.

Mr. Speaker, I can think of three that are very, very evident, Mr. Speaker, regarding this past budget. I've already touched on the member from Regina Rosemont, who I know is going to vote against the budget, except he has been in here for about six years and he has had one pet peeve. And that pet peeve is no more GRF, only summary financial statements. That's all he has talked about when it comes to the finance issue or the finance file, Mr. Speaker. He wanted to see summaries. He brought it up in committee. He brought it up in question period. He brought it up in every opportunity that member had to speak. Mr. Speaker, this budget is based on a summary financial statement, Mr. Speaker. That member has one duty, and that's to vote where his mouth has been for the last six years, Mr. Speaker. We will be seeing on Thursday if that member can stand up and vote with his feet instead of just talk with his mouth, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, another member on that side, Regina Elphinstone, has talked about a couple of schools, and day after day he will read petitions on those schools, whether it's the petition regarding a gym at Sacred Heart — very good rationale absolutely, and he's got all the arguments behind it. Also he's lobbied hard for Connaught, Mr. Speaker. Those have been the two issues. If you were to ask him what are the issues in his constituency, Mr. Speaker — even though I don't believe Connaught is in his constituency or maybe Sacred Heart; if they are or not, it doesn't matter — he has got one issue in his constituency, and that's the shape of those two schools. And he's brought it to the government's attention day in and day out, Mr. Speaker, whether it's on petitions. He hasn't asked any questions. He's had his member from Regina Rosemont ask those questions.

But he has got a duty to stand up for his constituents in this House on Thursday, Mr. Speaker, when this budget is voted on because the two issues that he raised, the two schools that he raised have been mentioned in the budget. There is money in the budget to fix them, Mr. Speaker. If he stands and votes for the amendment, and not in agreement with the budget, Mr. Speaker, each and every one of his constituents had better know that, Mr. Speaker, because quite frankly he has not raised another issue in this House except education, whether it's through petitions. And he doesn't have the nerve to stand and vote for his constituents, what would be best for his constituents, Mr. Speaker. His constituents will remember that in the next general election, Mr. Speaker.

And my final point, Mr. Speaker, the member from Cumberland. Now you know, not to be too negative, but if there is a one-trick pony, if there is a one-issue MLA, I don't know who else it would be. Because in fairness to the member from Regina Rosemont, he's raised some other issues. Even though summary has been his main one, you know, and Dewdney is certainly becoming his issue, he's raised other issues. The member from Regina . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Cumberland.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — No. Elphinstone. The Regina Elphinstone, in his fairness, has raised only the two schools

recently, but has raised other issues in this House, Mr. Speaker. To fairness, he can try and rationalize, even though this covers what he should be doing, this budget, he can rationalize not standing in his place and voting for the budget.

But for the life of me, I cannot understand how a member could make the drive down from Cumberland for the last six years, Mr. Speaker, for the last six years, and raise one issue in this House, Mr. Speaker. And it was either in this House . . . And I remember for a number of years when I was the minister of Health, Mr. Speaker, we'd sit in committee, and every day in committee when we were talking about the budget, he would come in and he'd ask his set questions, when are you going to put a long-term care facility into La Ronge, Mr. Speaker? That was his issue.

In fact, you know I can tell you as Minister of Highways, he's the critic for STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company]. He'll weave it in. What about an STC bus to La Ronge and if we had a long-term care facility in La Ronge, Mr. Speaker. That is all he has talked about for six years in this House, Mr. Speaker. Well the budget addresses his very issue.

Now I understand that he's going to be whipped on that side and you better stand up for the motion. But if he was to stand up for his constituents and not for the member, whoever the Whip is, I guess it would be Regina Lakeview . . .

[22:00]

**An Hon. Member:** — It's him.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Oh, it's him. Well now he's really conflicted, Mr. Speaker. He's really conflicted. I wonder what he's talking about right now. He's saying, you know the guy makes a good point. I think I should stand up for my constituents, except I'm the Whip. I can't. Because the leader has told me it's a whip vote and I have to stand on behalf of the party.

Well I could tell you, Mr. Speaker . . . And I've been to La Ronge a number of times. I certainly don't profess to know it. But if the people in La Ronge were to vote, should he stand up for his NDP party or should he stand up for the constituents of La Ronge, I bet you it's 100 to 1 for the constituents of La Ronge, Mr. Speaker. So that member has a duty. Whipped or not, that member has a duty to stand up for his constituents on Thursday as other members do on that side, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell you . . . My last story here because I'm going too long. But my last story, Mr. Speaker, is the member from Regina Rosemont said to me . . . Oh I was saying that the member from Cumberland has to vote for this budget, and the member from Rosemont said, oh come on. You know, you're an MLA on that side. You're the member from Indian Head-Milestone. You never voted for a budget. And I go, guess why? They closed seven schools in my constituency. They didn't open up one long-term care facility, Mr. Speaker. They let the highways crumble. And you wanted me to vote for an NDP budget? Had they addressed some of those issues that I had at that time — and if I wasn't the Whip at that time, thank heavens — I would have maybe even thought about it. But when you're a one-horse pony and you come into this place and you lobby day in and

day out and you've only got one chance to vote for it, Mr. Speaker, let's see whether he stands up for his constituents or he stands up for the NDP.

I'm standing up for this government and a budget that's as good a budget as anywhere in Canada.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

**Ms. Wilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to stand here today and speak about the 2014 budget debate. But first of all as everyone else has done, I should thank my family: my husband, Doug, and all my extended family, the four children and the daughter-in-law and son-in-law and our six beautiful grandchildren. And they are the great support at home. They keep me very grounded, so I am blessed to have them.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank my CAs [constituency assistant]. I have a satellite office in Big River and Jason Beebe is there looking after things. And in my main office near Prince Albert just north of the city, I have Marcus Abrametz. And thank you to Joan and Bev and Cora. They are also helping out at the office when we need them.

I'd also like to thank the people of Saskatchewan Rivers for all the support they have given me over the seven years that I have been elected. And I'd like to describe how this budget will affect them. I was very grateful for my colleagues giving a lot of support and dialogue regarding the budget. So thank you to the member from Canora-Pelly and the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook who seconded it.

Saskatchewan Rivers is home to many scenic areas and parks. Our constituents are very, very lucky to live in that beautiful area, but we do have a lot of tourists and travellers coming through. So consequently I am very interested in what happens in the environment and the parks.

And I was very proud to see that our government has invested in the parks by increasing 244 per cent in the past seven years. Provincial parks have had an attendance record of 3.7 million visits in 2013. The first new provincial park to open in nearly 20 years occurred in Saskatchewan Rivers; the Great Blue Heron Provincial Park was designated in 2013. Mr. Speaker, I think Saskatchewan provides high-quality holiday times for all families, and we are investing in people.

Mr. Speaker, the government is also investing in safe and reliable health care. I'd like to make mention that our government's next major health facility investment will be in Prince Albert, with the 2 million provided to begin planning the renewal of the Victoria Hospital which serves so many people in Saskatchewan Rivers and beyond.

Cecile Hunt, the CEO [chief executive officer] of the Prince Albert Parkland Health Region said, "It's a very supportive gesture to the needs of Prince Albert and surrounding area. As a health region — I speak on behalf of my board of directors also — we're very pleased." That was regarding the budget of 2014.

Mr. Speaker, along with my colleagues from Batoche, Prince

Albert Carlton, and Northcote, I had the privilege and honour of sharing in the celebrations of the grand opening of the Prince Albert Carlton gym. This was a great day for the community of students, as the whole area will benefit from access to this state-of-the-art facility. It's also a fitness and activity centre, and I think the individuals and different sports teams will have enhancement and quality there. This will also be able to host major provincial tournaments, and I think it will be a financial boon to the region in Prince Albert area. Also, the majority of the work was performed by local contractors, which was a great benefit to our local economy and area.

The overall investment by the government for the provincial school infrastructure since 2007 is approximately \$700 million. This new Carlton gym will have a great future, and our entire area will benefit from this facility. More students will have a greater opportunity to explore, learn, and achieve in Saskatchewan.

And over the winter, I had the opportunity to speak with several school groups. Mr. Speaker, thank you for attending the group in Debden regarding parliamentary democracy in legislation. Our young people are in need of a lot of information, and I think you provided some good things for them that day.

Our government has also appointed a delegation to address grain transportation, and we have met with grain companies on behalf of the Saskatchewan producers to deal with the backlog of the grain movement. Working with producers and industry associations have been a top priority to ensure the challenges of grain producers are addressed.

I myself met with the northern fringe grain producers in Saskatchewan Rivers, and I was able to address their concerns. The grain movement remains a top priority with our government and we will continue to work with them and the federal government. Whether you operate a farm in rural Saskatchewan or across Canada or across the world, you need grain transportation, and I think our government is addressing it.

We value the farmers of Saskatchewan, and we measure our success by their success. We will focus on the work ahead, and we are dedicated to reaching the full potential of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, this agriculture budget of over 371 million will help the grain and livestock producers have the support they need to keep the farming industry strong and to continue to feed the world.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year I had the honour of presenting a constituent of mine with the Saskatchewan Award of Excellence at the district of Lakeland where he works. Reeve and council were on hand to share in our congratulations to this very humble man. Ernest Locke went above and beyond during the 2013 flooding that we experienced in the Saskatchewan Rivers constituency. He worked almost non-stop around the clock in one community, and he displayed a lot of compassion and great empathy for those affected, the distressed residents of this district. And I would again like to thank Ernie for his dedication to his community because volunteers do strengthen our province. Our government is investing in people living in rural municipalities, just like this fellow, across Saskatchewan Rivers.

This particular budget provides over 394 million of direct provincial support to municipalities like Lakeland. And I would like to quote about revenue sharing from Debra Button, the SUMA president. "As the president of SUMA today I'm very pleased with the amount of revenue sharing we are still getting."

Mr. Speaker, another wonderful example of the people of this province and right here in Saskatchewan Rivers is the Buckland Fire and Rescue volunteers. They received the Exemplary Service Award for their decade of service with fire departments. Those being honoured have volunteered at the fire halls for more than 20 years. And one of them is Tony Yungwirth, my neighbour, with 40 years of volunteering for this department. Buckland Fire and Rescue started with one truck and now have grown to 10. One volunteer described what he likes about being a fire hall volunteer.

Brotherhood, it's the biggest thing. It doesn't where you go . . . a brother's a brother's a brother. I can go into any fire hall at any time and if you need help with anything you just walk in and they'll more than help you . . .

That's . . . being a volunteer, living in a rural community.

Mr. Speaker, this budget contains investment in people and infrastructure: 124 million for important municipal infrastructure, 37.6 million to renew bridges and culverts in municipalities, over 25 million to support economic growth and safety on rural municipal roads. This budget is about people, and it's about people like the ones I've described in the Buckland Fire and Rescue.

Mr. Speaker, northern employment at mine sites in Saskatchewan set a record for the highest levels ever. Employed at northern mine sites are over 1,900 northern workers with 47 per cent of this workforce coming from northern-based company and contract workers. This budget provides almost 6.69 million for post-secondary institutions, educating and training people as skilled workers.

Earlier this month, I took the opportunity to visit and tour with President Bill Kordyban at the Big River saw mill. And through this visit, I was able to see first-hand and listen to the employees the impact Saskatchewan's economy is having on our towns and villages. It is so good to see the jobs and the towns thriving. Their second shift actually started today, with approximately 80 staff employed at the mill site and additional men and women working at harvesting and trucking the product.

Our government is investing in infrastructure to help people work in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan major Crown corps are projected to spend 2 billion on capital projects, up 100 million from the last. This will improve people's quality of life at home and work, Mr. Speaker.

We are a province of immigrants. We are the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of the ones that wanted a better life. This budget reflects that in our ability to have steady growth investing in people. This budget contains 2 million to begin planning the renewal of Prince Albert Victoria Hospital which treats so many of our Saskatchewan Rivers

residents.

Mr. Speaker, jobs flee because of factors like excessive taxation, top-heavy regulations, and misguided policies. This budget does not micromanage Saskatchewan people's lives or use the nanny state to control or become caretakers — in Margaret Thatcher's words, a state that takes too much from us to do too much for us. Mr. Speaker, this budget projects a future for unlimited possibilities, responsible spending, controlled spending, and no tax increases. This budget is about steady growth while not overspending and incurring future debt.

Mr. Speaker, I believe Saskatchewan's best days have not yet been lived. Her greatest deeds will be fulfilled by the next generation to come. Education is the investment our generation makes for the future, and that is why this budget contains investment in student success, putting students first, providing 24 million in funding for preventative maintenance for the many schools across Saskatchewan. We are building a foundation for good education. This government will not be spending our children's inheritance on failed stimulus plans or other misguided economic theories.

This budget contains funding to invest in learning opportunities and licensed child care spaces. This budget provides an increase of 1.2 million to support new pre-kindergarten programs as our families continue to grow, and this is of specific importance to all of us.

Mr. Speaker, this budget strengthens our economy by balancing the budget and encouraging the growth of the private sector. We are allies of business, which grows jobs and economy and the dignity of work and strengthens family values. Mr. Speaker, this budget allows men and women to flourish based on their hard work, their own vision, and their own personal responsibility.

Saskatchewan people are telling us they want a leaner and less intrusive government, where the government is subject to the people, not the other way around. Mr. Speaker, what I learned growing up on the farm was a way of life that was centred on hard work and thrift. Those values have stuck with me throughout my life.

This budget demonstrates balancing between the needs and wants of Saskatchewan people. Good government involvement leads to independence, good schools, quality roads, and health care. Mr. Speaker, a budget containing provisions for the vulnerable is the true test of a good government. There are increased benefits in seniors' income plan, personal care home benefits, and Saskatchewan assured income for disability.

When the government is spending your money, Saskatchewan people want, need, and deserve the government to be fiscally disciplined and accountable. This budget is about tapping Saskatchewan's energy to create prosperity and security. Ensuring a balanced budget is fundamental to building a strong economy and creating jobs. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I strongly believe it is our responsibility to guard the future of Saskatchewan. And in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I support this budget.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatoon

Meewasin.

**Mr. Parent:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is truly an honour and a pleasure for me to stand here in this Assembly today and enter into this debate on our 2014-15 balanced summary budget delivered by our Finance minister in this Assembly last week.

I'd like to just acknowledge a few people. I would first like to thank my wife, Sheila, who has been there for me and supports me at all times. When I first decided to try and get elected, she helped me and supported me on each attempt. Finally after several attempts, the good people of Saskatoon Meewasin constituency gave me the opportunity to represent them in this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, my wife, Sheila, has supported me through each campaign, win or lose, and today she still supports me, even though I'm gone so often, and Sheila has to rebalance her time to cook meals and take our three dogs for a walk every day by herself, and I am grateful to her. My wife truly is my best friend and she is my rock.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank my daughter Shanaya, who has always supported me and has been door knocking with me during every election since she was 12 years old — that's 10 years.

I would like to thank my CA Matt Donlevy for his help and assistance. Lastly I would like to thank my constituency executive who work tirelessly supporting me and our Saskatchewan Party government.

Mr. Speaker, this is the third budget that I have taken part in and, Mr. Speaker, it's the third balanced summary budget I'm proud to participate in. Mr. Speaker, the 2014-15 agriculture budget of 371.6 million will help to ensure farmers and ranchers have the support they need to keep the agriculture industry growing strong after record production levels and exports in 2013. Mr. Speaker, the budget is highlighted by nearly 79 million for strategic initiatives such as research and market development, an increase of 7.5 million from the previous year. Saskatchewan producers harvested a record crop of 38.4 million tonnes in 2013, surpassing the 2020 growth plan target of 36 million tonnes.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan students and post-secondary institutions continue to benefit from strong provincial support in this budget. Mr. Speaker, the budget provides an increase in operating funds to post-secondary institutions, investments in student support, and funding for key capital projects. The Minister of Advanced Education will receive 817.8 million, an increase of 24 million or 3.7 per cent over the last year to support operational increases and several key investments at post-secondary institutions.

Mr. Speaker, the budget makes post-secondary education more affordable by providing 134 million in student supports, including 82 million in refundable and non-refundable tax credits for the graduate retention program, an increase of 18.1 million; 7 million for the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship; 7.5 million in funding for the Saskatchewan advantage grant for education savings; 32 million for the Student Aid Fund to support grants and bursaries through the student loan program, which all of us know is important from when we went to school. Mr. Speaker, the budget also provides 32.6 million to



capital investments in support of post-secondary infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Economy will allocate 500,000 for the establishment of the manufacturing centre of excellence which will focus on productivity improvement, innovation, and workforce development for the provincial manufacturing centre. Mr. Speaker, the total value of Saskatchewan manufacturing shipments for 2013 was approximately \$15.2 billion, a new record for the province, up from 14.2 in 2012.

Mr. Speaker, overall funding for education has increased by 3.1 per cent. School operating funding which includes money collected from the education property tax will be 1.82 billion, up 42 million or 2.4 per cent from last year. This budget also continues to address the challenges of growth that some school divisions are facing by providing 19.2 million new funding for student enrolment increases.

Mr. Speaker, this government is continuing to invest in learning opportunities and licensed child care spaces. This budget provides an increase of 1.2 million to support 15 new pre-kindergarten programs and 2.2 million in increased funding to create 500 additional licensed child care spaces.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan will invest 5 billion in health care in this budget to continue the health system Patient First transformation and support improved access to high-quality care for the province's growing population. The funding is 144 million or a 3 per cent increase over last year's budget.

Mr. Speaker, the budget includes investments to reduce surgical wait times and emergency department waits. Advanced key capital projects develop additional collaborative emergency centres, improve services for seniors and rural physician workforce.

Mr. Speaker, capital investments total 95 million, funding for ongoing projects, including 16 million to complete the new hospital in Moose Jaw and 27 million to continue construction of long-term facilities in Biggar, Kelvington, Kipling, Maple Creek, and Prince Albert.

The province has earmarked 4 million to reduce emergency department wait times and improve patient flow. This includes an emergency department wait time initiative, development of a program to provide house calls to seniors with complex needs, and implementation of the hot-spotting concept. Mr. Speaker, in the coming year a hot-spotting pilot program will begin in Saskatoon and Regina to identify and assist these high-cost, high-use patients, helping them receive the care they need.

Mr. Speaker, this budget also invests 60.5 million in surgical wait-lists to support achievement of a three month wait time target in all health care regions by the end of 2015. Mr. Speaker, the 2014-15 budget provides investments and long-term care, home care, acute care, prescription drugs and other services for seniors. It also provides an additional million for improvement, 7 million for improvements to seniors' care including funding for the Home First/Quick Response pilot program.

Mr. Speaker, regional health authorities will use 3.25 billion, an increase of 107 million, to provide services through its cancer

centres in Regina and Saskatoon, offer prevention and early detection programs and conduct research. This represents a 4.9 million or 3.3 per cent increase over last year.

Mr. Speaker, this budget released by the Finance minister last week announcing there would be no tax increases in this budget, no personal tax increases, no education tax, no property tax increases, and no increases to the credit unions' tax incentives, Mr. Speaker, in fact nearly 112,000 people no longer pay any provincial income tax at all since 2007. The people of Saskatchewan have had the largest property tax reduction in the history of this province.

Mr. Speaker, it was reported that the Saskatchewan population continued to grow in the year 2013 by 20,000 people. This now means that Saskatchewan has a population of 1,117,500-plus people. This makes our province the second fastest growing province in all of Canada and puts us on our way to the growth plan goal of 1.2 million by the year 2020.

Mr. Speaker, this year's budget also sees the government moving to a summary focus which was recommended by the Provincial Auditor. This budget has forecasted a surplus of 71 million, taking into account all government business enterprises including commercial, Crown corporations, government service organizations which include ministries, boards of education, and health regions among others.

Mr. Speaker, for 2014-15 is projected at 14.07, revenue I mean, for 14.07 billion, down point seven per cent from last year, while expenses is estimated to be 14 billion, down point two per cent from last year. This year's budget invests in the infrastructure and people aligning with the goals and priorities of the Saskatchewan plan for growth.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan municipalities are receiving 394.6 million in direct provincial support in this year's provincial budget to build communities and enhance the quality of life for their residents. Overall municipal revenue sharing is more than double what it was in 2007, up 129.7 million. Saskatchewan's largest city, Saskatoon, will receive municipal revenue sharing of just under 46 million in 2014-15, up 159 per cent from 2007.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that all of the schools that are going to be built, 18 in both NDP land . . . And let's not forget the 176 schools the NDP closed. I hope that they vote for this.

Mr. Speaker, with that said, I will be supporting this budget which was introduced by our Finance minister last week. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — The time now being 10:30 p.m., this House is adjourned to 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:30.]



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