



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

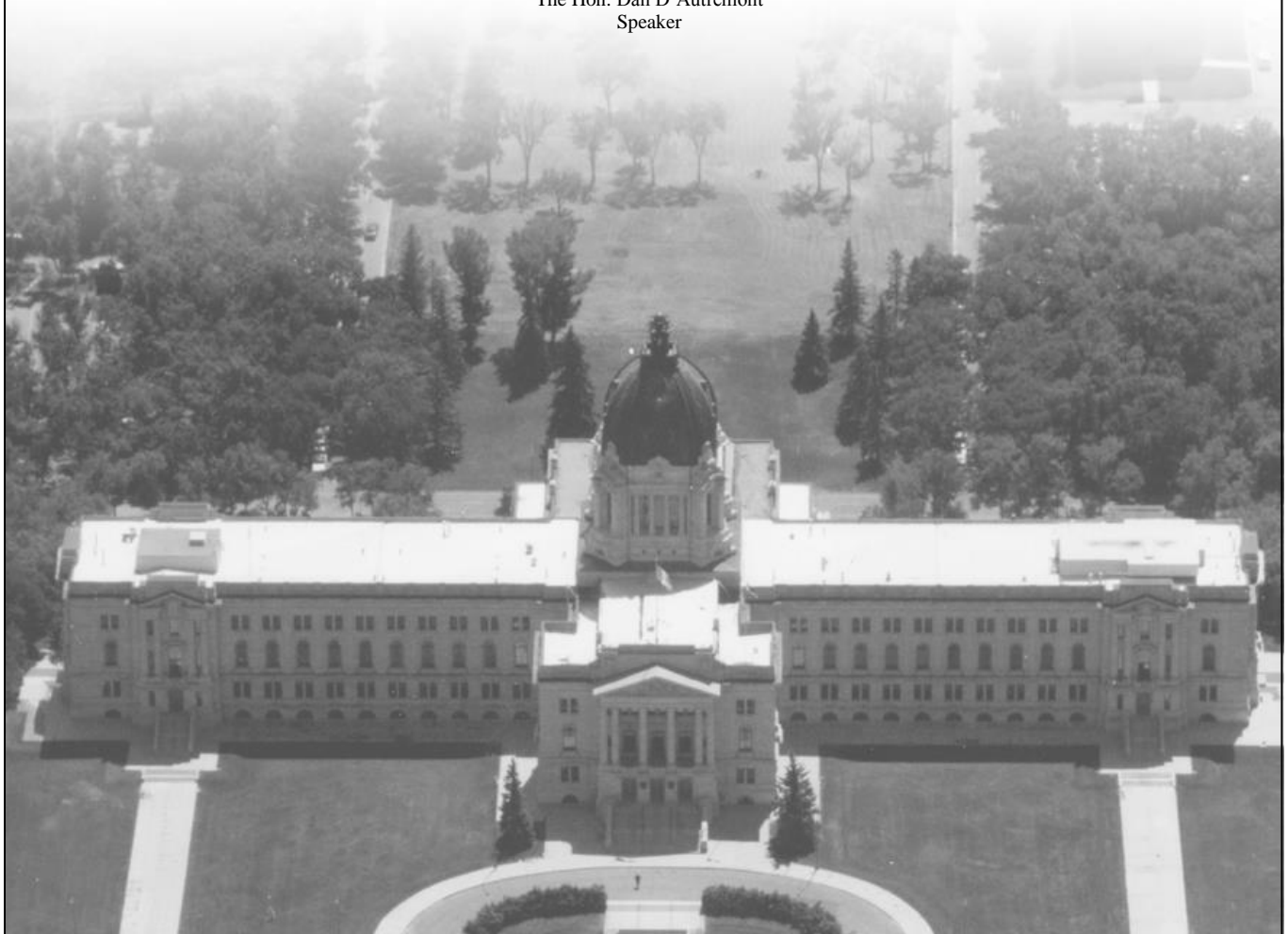
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Dan D'Autremont
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. Dan D’Autremont
 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — 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
Docherty, Mark	SP	Regina Coronation Park
Doherty, Hon. Kevin	SP	Regina Northeast
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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
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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 met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am going to make a request for leave for an extended introduction, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Premier has requested leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are fortunate today to have a number of guests in your gallery, and permit me to make the introductions to you and then through you to all members of the House.

Mr. Speaker, we will begin with friends from the Netherlands. In fact more specifically, His Excellency, the ambassador from the Kingdom of the Netherlands has joined us today, Mr. Cees Kole. He is joined by someone who's no stranger to this Assembly or the public life of the province, Judie Dyck, the honorary consul for the Netherlands to the province of Saskatchewan. And then from the government, Mr. Speaker, Norma Morrow, senior protocol officer, is joining them as well as Laurie Hutton, international officer.

Mr. Speaker, we want to welcome His Excellency to this Legislative Assembly. We want to thank him for furthering the relationship between our respective peoples, our nations, but also with a specific focus today certainly on the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We have certainly links in our province to the Netherlands, in part because of the number of people in the province who trace some heritage to the Netherlands, and also very much due to the seminally important moment in the history of Europe when so many Canadian soldiers played a big role in liberating the Netherlands from Nazi occupation, Mr. Speaker.

While His Excellency is here, he has already been about the business of his country and in the furtherance of the relationship with our province. He's been to the Boundary dam clean coal project, Mr. Speaker, the largest per capita public project in terms of CO₂ mitigation, Mr. Speaker. We're grateful for the interest of the Netherlands because they too have a lot to show the world, to teach the world in the area of CCS [carbon capture and storage], the Netherlands being a significant energy producer in terms of oil and in terms of natural gas, which of course will be of great importance, even more than it has been, going forward. Based on the events in the Crimea, we know the strategic importance of the Netherlands to a stable, safe, and secure Europe, Mr. Speaker. And we want to acknowledge that today as well.

Mr. Speaker, His Excellency has been meeting with ministers. He has been looking at issues around trade, innovation, and education. And so we want to thank him, and we want to thank Judie for their presence here, for the meetings they've held. And we want to say thank you as well for the relationship that we have with the Kingdom of the Netherlands and with the people of the Netherlands and welcome him officially and formally to the Legislative Assembly of the province of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, we also have a distinguished group, a welcome delegation from our twin province in the People's Republic of China, the province of Jilin. I'm going to make the introductions and just ask each of our guests if they would just give us a wave when I mention their names. Joining us today is the vice-chairman for the Provincial People's Congress of Jilin, Mr. Wang; Mr. Jin who is the director general of environment and resource protection; Mr. Wang, the deputy director general, foreign affairs office of Jilin province; Mr. Shi, director of rural economic management station of Jilin province; Ms. Huang, director of European and American affairs division, foreign affairs office, Jilin province; Mr. Zhu, deputy general manager, Haoyue Group of Jilin as well. And joining them from our Ministry of the Economy is Victor Zhang, and also international relations Executive Council officer Yang Geng.

Mr. Speaker, the twinning relationship between the province of Saskatchewan and Jilin dates back now 30 years to 1984 when then Premier Grant Devine and leadership from Jilin signed and formalized the relationship, Mr. Speaker. And it's been an active partnership. Very recently, I think it was in February, the Minister of Advanced Education and Jilin renewed their agreement to establish exchange and co-operation relationships in primary, secondary, and post-secondary educational issues, Mr. Speaker. This remains a top priority for the Government of Saskatchewan's growth plan, that we would further educational partnerships in Asia and specifically in China and more specifically with our sister province who are grateful for that.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan and Jilin are twins. We also share some common characteristics. Jilin is a prolific producer of agricultural products in China, Mr. Speaker, and they're also a major producer of petrochemicals. That industry is also important to Jilin. These things we share in common, in addition to now three decades of working together. And, Mr. Speaker, we hope for many, many more decades going forward in terms of this relationship between Saskatchewan and Jilin. And we welcome our friends and our partners from Jilin province in the People's Republic of China here to the Legislative Assembly today.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the Premier in extending a welcome on behalf of the official opposition to the delegations that are present here in your gallery today, Mr. Speaker.

To Ambassador Cees Kole, we are very pleased that you are in the province today. And of course there are many reasons why we respect and appreciate the Netherlands. You know, we can think of some of the things like good cheeses and good beer and

a good place to vacation and also their ability to win medals when it comes to speed skating, Mr. Speaker. But more importantly we appreciate the Netherlands because of the role that they play in Europe and the role that they play in the world. And we think of the important role that the Netherlands has played within the EU [European Union] post-World War II. But we know that that there are current challenges as well, as we all think of the stability that we want to have within Europe and throughout Eurasia.

So I would like to on behalf of the official opposition extend a word of thanks to the ambassador for his role and the role of the country he represents. And of course to say a special hello to Ms. Judie Dyck, no stranger to functions around Regina, representing and doing a fine job as honorary consul. So I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming the ambassador from the Netherlands.

And I would also of course extend my welcome to the Chinese delegation from Jilin province. As the Premier accurately pointed out, this a relationship that has gone on for some time, and the exchange of ideas, the exchange of knowledge of course is very important, the exchange of people. And that's a partnership that has been built up over years and has been to the benefit of both sides of the friendship, Mr. Speaker.

So I would on behalf of the official opposition welcome this delegation to the province and wish them all the best as they tour and visit and have discussions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure I get to introduce a couple of gentlemen in our gallery today. We have Mr. Dave Knight, general manager of Sakâw Askiy Management. They hold the forest management agreement with the Government of Saskatchewan and coordinate the management of the FMA [forest management agreement], Mr. Speaker. They have eight member companies, two of which are First Nations. Joining him today is Mr. Terry Kuzma, woodlands manager for Carrier Forest Products. Carrier operates the Big River saw mill that I think we heard about in a member's statement earlier this week, Mr. Speaker. These two gentlemen are also joined by one of our devoted public servants, Shane Vermette.

These gentlemen are here today as we're going to be talking about a little later on the timber dues, Mr. Speaker. And these three gentlemen, and they represent a far broader group, have done a substantial amount of work, working with basic numbers and working our way forward to find a very market-based system, Mr. Speaker, and it is no small task and a service to our province and to the forestry sector. So if all members could join me with welcoming them and thanking them for the work and service they've done to our province.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Lakeview.

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join the minister in welcoming the guests from the forest industry in Saskatchewan to the legislature. They are building on a long tradition we have in this province of making the most effective

use of our forest assets, and I know that they are continuing to build on that. And we're looking forward to the announcement today around a new taxation structure which will complement what they're doing and also make sure that the resources are used in the most appropriate way. So with that I'd like to welcome these members to the legislature.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to welcome a delegation that's seated in your gallery and maybe request extended leave, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member has requested leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, members. We have a delegation here today that are all wearing purple. I guess you could say they're doing so with purpose. It is Purple Day, a global day to recognize and call for awareness as it relates to epilepsy. And it's a pleasure to have friends join us here today as well as family.

So I'd welcome to their Assembly here today, we have certainly some very courageous children, some great families. I would introduce my sister Shauna Weninger — if you can give us a wave, Shauna — her son and my sidekick, Nolan, who's a courageous young man also dealing with epilepsy; my other nephew, Carson, who's also courageous just on a whole host of other fronts. And some very good friends seated beside them, Steve Ryan and Haley Ryan, if they could give us a wave, and their son, Knox. Knox, if you can give us a wave. He's a courageous young man living and dealing with epilepsy as well. Members might also recognize Steve and certainly his brother who plays a little bit of football. Nice to have you here today, Steve.

I'd also like to welcome a constituent and good friend, Jacqui Cameron, who's here today. She's not joined by her son Rylan here today, who is an 11-year-old and maybe the biggest Rider fan in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and an incredibly courageous and brave young man as well who's also living with epilepsy.

And it's through this delegation here today that I've learned an awful lot about epilepsy and the challenges for young people dealing with it, for all people dealing with it, certainly for families. There's a couple of other people I should reference there, some good friends of the delegation that are here and friends of myself as well, Jennifer Britton that's here today. And we have two young friends I think of Nolan and Carson, and that would be Trey and Angel. And if they can give us a wave. So I ask all members of this Assembly to welcome this fine delegation to their Assembly. Thank you.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for greater support of education. And we know that education is one of the most vital services the government provides to citizens, and that this government has failed to deliver a long-term plan and vision and the necessary resources to prioritize the delivery of educational excellence, that this government has failed to deliver a real plan to close the Aboriginal education gap, support English as an additional language students, support community schools in their communities, and students.

And we know that this government would rather talk about standardized testing than hear from teachers and parents about addressing the real needs of today's classroom, and that this government has adopted a P3 [public-private partnership] privatization approach to building the new schools the province needs, even though the scheme will cost more than traditionally built schools and will leave out community needs in the designs of the schools. And, Mr. Speaker, we know that we must build the best education system for today and for Saskatchewan's future. I'd like to read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly call on this government to immediately prioritize education by laying out a long-term vision and plan with the necessary resources to provide the best quality education for Saskatchewan that reflects Saskatchewan's demographic and population changes, that is based on proven educational best practices, that is developed through consultation with the education sector, and that builds strong educational infrastructure that serves students and communities long into the future.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I do so present. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents as it relates to the safety on Dewdney Avenue and the important need, immediate need of rerouting the heavy-haul truck traffic from Dewdney Avenue. They note that it's unacceptable for this government to delay any longer addressing a problem created by that government and ensuring the safety of all, Mr. Speaker.

[13:45]

And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly call on the provincial government to immediately take action as it relates to the unacceptable danger, disturbance, and infrastructure damage caused by the heavy-haul traffic on Dewdney Avenue west of the city centre, to ensure the safety and well-being of communities, families, residents, and users; and that those actions and plans should include rerouting of heavy-haul truck traffic, receive provincial funding, and be developed through consultation with the city of Regina, communities, and residents.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

These petitions today are signed by concerned residents of Regina. I so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition. And this petition's in relation to housing, as many northern residents benefited from the rental purchase option program also known as RPO. These families were very proud homeowners in their community. And unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this government stubbornly ignored the call to maintain this program. Instead it cancelled the RPO. That means the dream of home ownership is destroyed for many families. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly cause the Saskatchewan Party government to restore the RPO rent-to-own option for responsible renters in northern Saskatchewan, allowing them the dignity of owning their own homes and building the communities in our province's beautiful North.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed this petition are primarily from Beauval, but many, many others have signed many, many other petitions. And I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Batoche.

Purple Day for Epilepsy

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I stand to recognize the International Day for Epilepsy or Purple Day. Mr. Speaker, epilepsy is a condition of the brain characterized by recurrent seizures. Purple Day works to bring awareness about epilepsy in an effort to dispel harmful myths and to inform those who live with this condition that they are not alone. There are approximately 50 million people living with epilepsy. That is an estimated one in every 100 people or 1 per cent of the people around the world. Here in Canada, more than 300,000 citizens are living with this condition.

There is currently no cure for epilepsy. However, through surgery, medication, and lifestyle changes many people are able to control their seizures.

Mr. Speaker, Purple Day was created by Cassidy Megan, a young girl from Nova Scotia who lives with epilepsy. She wanted to bring awareness about epilepsy in an effort to fight against the stigmatization of this condition. In 2009, with the help of the Epilepsy Association of Nova Scotia and the Anita Kaufmann Foundation, Purple Day was launched internationally.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in recognizing March 26th as Purple Day and thank Cassidy Megan for all her work to make this day possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, as mentioned today, March 26th is Purple Day, the global day for epilepsy awareness. I stand today to speak to this important cause, not only to offer support for people living with epilepsy and their families, but also from seeing the challenge first-hand through my family. My nephew has epilepsy. I've shared in the stresses and the challenges. I've also learned directly from constituent families like Jacqui Cameron and her courageous son, Rylan. It's from these experiences that I know recognition like this and actions are so important.

In 2008, Cassidy Megan, a 9-year-old girl in Nova Scotia living with epilepsy, founded Purple Day. Cassidy's goal was to ensure people living with epilepsy never felt alone. The importance of the goal cannot be underestimated. Many of us are touched by epilepsy. It's a condition that affects thousands of Canadians, and each year 15,000 more people learn they have epilepsy in Canada.

Many have described dealing with the condition as a feeling of being powerless — powerless to stop the attacks or supporters and family feeling powerless in their inability to help. We are not powerless. As a society, it is our job to raise awareness and to create a better understanding. Our governments must also do a better job of supporting research, providing supports, and a much better job of ensuring that specialists are available for those in need in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all my colleagues to join with me in recognizing Purple Day. I call on all members to take a moment to learn about epilepsy and to focus on improving supports, and how we as a society can end the isolation of individuals and families dealing with epilepsy.

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

Theatre Company's New Office and Rehearsal Space

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday the grand opening of RuBarb Productions Incorporated's new office and rehearsal space took place in my constituency and was attended by the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport. Mr. Speaker, RuBarb Productions was founded in 2006 with the dream to give opportunity to local artists to develop their art and passion for the arts right at home in Moose Jaw. It united the facilities and talent of Moose Jaw and area to form an exceptional organization presenting high-quality live theatre experiences to the community, including Broadway musicals such as the phantom, *Anne of Green Gables*, *The Sound of Music*, and others.

The opening of the new office and rehearsal space is an important step for this dynamic, community-based arts organization. Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan supports RuBarb Productions through a SaskCulture capacity development grant as well as through artsVest Saskatchewan. RuBarb also received \$20,000 in funding from Creative Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, community theatre contributes to the economic strength of our province. It brings revenues into our communities, and those dollars help businesses, organizations,

and community projects. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating RuBarb Productions on the opening of their new office and rehearsal space. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cumberland.

Inter-school Winter Games

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 3rd Annual Inter-school Winter Games which took place on March 5th on the Kiskinwuhumatowin reserve, a former residential school site. The games were created to bring students from the Lac La Ronge Indian Band schools and the Northern Lights School Division together to have fun competing in different trapper-style events. The games were a great chance for our northern communities to compete in athletics, but also lasting friendships would be made. Mr. Speaker, I also have to mention that there were also excellent skiing and snowshoe races, which stirred a lot of excitement.

Mr. Speaker, at this year's games, we had six communities taking part in the festivities, including communities Grandmother's Bay, La Ronge, Stanley Mission, Hall Lake, Sucker River, and White Buffalo. Mr. Speaker, each event was exciting and the excellent sportsmanship was shown throughout the week. The meals were great. A big thank you to all the volunteers who helped make this a successful community event.

Mr. Speaker, the students' teachers were treated to a good time by their host Project Venture, which is a Lac La Ronge Indian Band project that focuses on hands-on learning for students, on the land and in the classroom. Mr. Speaker, I want to especially thank Kevin Jackson and Chris Ratt, as well as all the education staff who helped out at this year's event. It truly was a great success. Tiniki.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for The Battlefords.

Company Named One of Best Diversity Employers

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise before you today to recognize and congratulate Cameco, which has been named for the fifth year in a row one of Canada's best diversity employers in 2014.

Mr. Speaker, this is in recognition of the fact that approximately 40 per cent of Cameco's workforce here in Saskatchewan are of First Nation and Métis heritage. Cameco has received this award in the past, Mr. Speaker, and it's primarily because of their excellent record of Aboriginal training, employment, and workforce development. This recognition follows Cameco's recent listing as one of Canada's top 100 employers as well as Saskatchewan's top employers.

Mr. Speaker, Cameco is committing over \$80,000 in scholarships to help U of S [University of Saskatchewan] graduate students pursue their studies in northern governance and development. Fourteen students, including FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] Vice-chief Simon Bird and former Meadow Lake Tribal Council chief, Helen Ben, will receive \$6,000 each to help them conduct a research internship in a number of northern Saskatchewan communities.

We heard recently, as highlighted by the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford, that Cameco has now produced its first ore from the Cigar Lake mine. This has been a long-awaited announcement and one which I have a keen interest in, since my daughter Carla is the project accountant for Cigar Lake and is quite excited that this very expensive project is now beginning production.

Mr. Speaker, Cameco continues to be a great corporate citizen in our province, and I would ask all members to join me in congratulating them on this recognition and thanking them for their ongoing efforts working with our northern and Aboriginal peoples. Thank you.

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

Innovation and Opportunity Scholarship Award Ceremony

Ms. Jurgens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday I was honoured to provide greetings at the Cumberland College award ceremony in Tisdale on behalf of the Minister of Advanced Education. It was a great opportunity to meet the future leaders of our province and learn about their various programs and future ambitions.

The ceremony was held for the recipients of the Saskatchewan Innovation and Opportunity Scholarship. This program funds scholarships focused on innovation and excellence, Mr. Speaker. The scholarship is targeted at students in emerging fields of study where innovative work is being done. The opportunities category of the scholarship is targeted towards the priority areas identified in Cumberland College's strategic plan that are important to the industry and community the college serves.

For 2014-15, our government will commit \$5 million in funding for the Saskatchewan Innovation and Opportunity Scholarship program. This will be matched by scholarship funding raised by the post-secondary institutions, the private sector, and community-based partners. Mr. Speaker, this flexibility will allow institutions to attract partner donors and provide student assistance to students that is appropriate to the level and field of study.

Our government will continue to make investments in people by providing funds for post-secondary education to support our labour market needs.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating the students who received the Saskatchewan Innovation and Opportunity Scholarship at the Cumberland College award ceremonies, and to wish them all the best in their studies. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Coronation Park.

Services to Children and Families

Mr. Docherty: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the member from Saskatoon Centre stood in this Chamber and said, "... this government is cutting front-line workers in the child and family

services division." That's just factually wrong, Mr. Speaker. There are no cuts to front-line child protection workers in the child and family services division in this budget.

However, as the member from Saskatoon Centre knows, we have hired 90 new front-line workers to improve services to children and families. This budget increased funding by \$8.7 million to the child and family agenda to continue its cross-ministry approach to helping Saskatchewan children, youth, and families. This budget also increased child and family CBO [community-based organization] services by \$12 million. We are moving to a model of more community-based delivery of child welfare services, something that fits with the recommendations of the child welfare review panel.

Mr. Speaker, this is an incredibly important file that concerns some of our province's most vulnerable children. There is a lot we could be debating about in this Chamber today, a lot of real issues affecting families. On our side, we welcome that debate, Mr. Speaker. Instead, we are hearing incorrect information from the members of the opposition. That type of discourse is not helpful when dealing with issues as serious as these. I ask the member from Saskatoon Centre to stand in this House, retract his comments, and admit what the facts on this file are.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Supply of Pediatric Neurologists

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last May I raised concerns about the shortage of pediatric neurologists in the province, and I appreciate that there has been some improvement on this front over the last year. But I also know, Mr. Speaker, that the need is not being met. And I know, Mr. Speaker, that families have come to the legislature today on World Epilepsy Day to highlight the need for further improvement. So my question is for the Premier: could he please provide an update on what the government is doing to meet this need?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member opposite for his question, and we want to thank families that have joined us here and other families from across the province who are raising awareness about the needs in this particular area. And I also want to acknowledge and thank the Leader of the Opposition for recognizing progress that is being made, though he points out more is needed to be done. He won't find an argument on this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, we have the complement of three pediatric neurologists now. We are working on succession planning and recruitment. Mr. Speaker, that's my understanding in terms of the human resource plan for the area, Mr. Speaker. And I would also point out for the House that we've taken the issue of specialists in all areas very seriously and the area of pediatrics very seriously as well, Mr. Speaker. That is why today there are 25 per cent more specialists overall practising in the province today than there were when we took office. And there are 27 per cent more pediatricians practising today in the province than

when we took office, with acknowledgement that we need to continually improve to provide the optimal services that families need in Saskatchewan.

[14:00]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Broten: — What many families with children who have epilepsy are saying is that the pediatric neurology wait-list is very long and families are spending a lot of time in Calgary as a result. And, Mr. Speaker, I can't imagine what it's like as a parent to worry about the consequences of untreated seizures on a child or to have to travel regularly to Calgary for regular medical appointments.

So again I appreciate that there has been some improvement over the last year, but I know, Mr. Speaker, that the need is still not being met. The families that are here today, Mr. Speaker, deserve some answers, as do the many families in the province who are affected and living through this, Mr. Speaker. So my question to the Premier — and he talked about the complement — can he at least provide a timeline for when a full complement of pediatric neurologists will be available in our province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, members will know that the issue of physician recruitment — and this is true certainly in the specialties, but not limited to specialties — is a challenging one here and across the country. And so to answer the member's question directly, it's very difficult to say, by this date this province is going to be able to have the optimal number of doctors we want in any particular area, just as it would be the case for any province in the country to be able to give those specific dates.

Mr. Speaker, I can share with members here and with the Leader of the Opposition though that this particular area is also manifesting itself a priority in terms of what we're doing with residency positions in the province. Mr. Speaker, specifically you will know that this government has invested in additional residency seats here in Saskatchewan, significantly higher than they were just when we took office.

Mr. Speaker, there's an effort on the part of the regions and the Ministry of Health and the post-secondary institutions to match specifically residency expertise to areas like pediatric neurology, Mr. Speaker, so that while we are providing the residency training here in Saskatchewan, we can also begin to focus those efforts towards specific specialties, in this case pediatric neurology.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Costs and Benefits of Lean Initiative

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Switching gears, Mr. Speaker, last Thursday morning the Premier said on the radio, "We don't have a lean consultant in this province." My question to the Premier: why did he say that?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, as we've learned from this particular member, and we'll want to check the context, I can only say that, Mr. Speaker, the province of Saskatchewan went through a request for proposal process when we decided to head down lean, as so many other health care institutions and so many other public and private sector agencies around the world have done.

And, Mr. Speaker, we made a selection. That selection cost the province about point one six per cent of the health budget every year, Mr. Speaker — \$40 million over the four years. We've already saved more than the overall cost of the contract in savings to taxpayers as a result of the lean initiative, and we've seen significant improvements in terms of patient-centred care. That's why we're going to continue working on it.

Mr. Speaker, we're certainly open to improvements and adjustments as we go forward with this consultant and with front-line workers, for whom this program has been implemented in the first place, as we seek to hear from them directly. And including, Mr. Speaker, we welcome input from members opposite. We welcome again the Leader of the Opposition to redact the names of all the emails that filled his inbox that provided input to him so that we could see the input and seek to improve the lean process in Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, we've seen how this Premier deals with criticism when it comes to lean, and that's demanding apologies, Mr. Speaker. It is not an open and an open-minded approach in any way, shape, or form.

Dale Schattenkirk is a kaizen lean black belt, which certainly sounds like a lean expert to me. His consulting company is based right here in Regina. He does lean work in health care, Mr. Speaker, in other provinces, albeit for a fraction of the cost that this government is paying. In fact Schattenkirk has even done work for government in the past.

So it's baffling, Mr. Speaker, why on last Thursday the Premier would go on the radio and say, and the context was clear, Mr. Speaker, and he said, "We don't have a lean consultant in this province. We're going to have one after this four-year project." My question again to the Premier: why did he go on the radio and say to Saskatchewan people that this government had no choice but to hire a US [United States] consultant? Why did he say that there's no lean consultant available here in our province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, in terms of the scale and scope of lean right throughout the health care system, we did put out an RFP [request for proposal]. And Mr. Speaker, there was not, including the gentleman that the member references I think would probably verify this, there was not a consultant here able to achieve, able to take on a contract of this scale, Mr. Speaker. That was certainly the understanding of the government, which would be why . . . Well, Mr. Speaker, the members are, Mr. Speaker, members are laughing. The

members are laughing. But this particular individual did not come forward and participate in the RFP for that precise reason. In fact I believe, Mr. Speaker, I believe the record would show that there was many, many positive things said about our lean by this particular consultant in this particular interview, in this particular interview.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would say, I would say that again with the lean project we're talking about, we've already achieved more savings than it costs, and we're seeing improvements in patient-centred care. We're involving the front line, Mr. Speaker. We'll seek to improve the lean process, but in terms of the principle to better care, delivered more efficiently for Saskatchewan people, we're going to carry on, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, on the radio the Premier clearly said that there is not a kaizen consultant in the province, Mr. Speaker. The fat contract that we see going to the US consultant really is unbelievable. Dale Schattenkirk, Mr. Speaker, the kaizen lean black belt from right here in Regina, has quite a few questions about this government's cash cow contract with John Black and Associates.

He doesn't agree with how the contract is structured. He thinks it's strange that this government is spending \$40 million on it. He questions the use, the excessive use of Japanese terminology; questions, Mr. Speaker, the need for senseis to be flown from Japan and paid \$3,500 per day, Mr. Speaker. These concerns are not coming from someone who is anti-lean. These are coming from a lean expert who is right here in Saskatchewan.

My question to the Premier: will he listen to these concerns, admit he made a mistake, and scrap this cash cow contract?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, what we'd seen from lean are savings to the taxpayer greater than the cost of the contract. Only the NDP [New Democratic Party] would advocate that we would cut, that we would eliminate a project that is saving more money than it costs to the government, Mr. Speaker, while improving patient care, while reducing the time between diagnosis and care, while eliminating the number of cancellations in terms of mental health, while saving money in how we manage inventory, while saving money in how we manage the vaccine system.

Mr. Speaker, we're not going to cut a program that affords nurses more time to be in front of the patient and working with the system. We're not going to do it. Now we will look to improve it, Mr. Speaker. We've heard members opposite. We've heard front-line workers in the system. The Minister of Health is considering these improvements.

Mr. Speaker, we've asked the Leader of the Opposition to just redact the names of those who's filled his inbox who have concerns — health care workers, he said, that have talked him — so that we can earnestly, earnestly, seek to improve the system. He's not done that yet, Mr. Speaker. And we hope that he will in the future because we will continue with lean because

it saves money and provides better care, and we seek to improve it, Mr. Speaker, as we do with all initiatives of the Government of Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — Both sides of the House have now had an opportunity to blow off some steam so please let's listen to the questions and the answers. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, we've seen how this government treated the Birns family. We've seen how they treated the Bayliss family, Mr. Speaker. The approach for the open-minded approach, this new-found listening ear that the Premier has when it comes to lean, Mr. Speaker, to me is not quite believable. Mr. Speaker, will I question a contract that is \$40 million to a US consultant? Absolutely. Will I question a contract, Mr. Speaker, that flies in Japanese sensei and pays them \$3,500 a day to speak with health care workers here in the province? Absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

And it's others that are questioning as well, Mr. Speaker. The kaizen lean black belt from right here in Regina doesn't just question the lucrative contract that this government signed. He questions the wisdom of the approach that we see that this government is implementing when it comes to lean. He questions why this government, Mr. Speaker, is setting up at least 15 permanent kaizen promotion offices, especially questions, Mr. Speaker, the hype that this government has created around its lean project. Again, Mr. Speaker, these concerns are coming from an expert right here in the province, someone that is pro-lean, saying, Mr. Speaker, that this government's approach is misguided and over the top. My question to the Premier: will he cancel this fat, cash cow contract?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, just yesterday, or maybe it was two days ago, the Minister of Health was interviewed in the scrum and asked about these same offices that now the Leader of the Opposition asks breathlessly about. The Minister of Health indicated very clearly to the members of the media — and this scrum would have been monitored by the staff of the Leader of the Opposition — that there are no additional costs to the kaizen office, Mr. Speaker. The total cost of this contract, the total cost is point two per cent of the Health budget, exactly the same as the former NDP minister of Health spent in Five Hills District, Mr. Speaker, with the notable exception that this has already paid for itself in savings, Mr. Speaker.

So he can get really, really loud about specific parts of the contract — fair enough. The bottom line is this: lean has saved more tax dollars than it costs. The bottom line is this: patient-centred care improvements are being made in the system. The bottom line is this: companies right across this province are engaged in precisely the same exercise, Mr. Speaker. And one more bottom line: we will seek to improve the current lean, including taking the member's views, Mr. Speaker.

And again I say to him if he's concerned on behalf of those health care workers that have filled his inbox, just redact the names. Just take the names out. Send that input over. We can

use it to improve lean and continue with it in the province of Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, over the last two years they've spent over \$17 million on kaizen promotion offices, creating another whole level of administration, Mr. Speaker, and bureaucracy within the health care system. We keep hearing major concerns about this lean project. We hear from nurses and front-line providers, Mr. Speaker, that are concerned that this government has lost its way, doesn't have a focus on patient safety, and doesn't have a focus on quality of care.

Ken Rasmussen, a well-respected public administration professor, says, "Lean is yet another in a long list of shiny objects that government claims is a magic cure." A lean supporter on Twitter says, "\$40 million. I can't stop laughing. Premier Brad Wall's getting fleeced." And now we have a lean expert from right here, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan who is questioning this government's approach to lean.

With so many concerns, Mr. Speaker, I wonder what it actually will take for this government and for this Premier to listen to the concerns that people are raising. What will be required, Mr. Speaker, for this Premier to listen to the people of Saskatchewan and cancel the fat, cash cow contract?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, it'll take more than one tweet the member has to repeat in two different question periods. That's what it'll take. Day after day this Minister of Health, and I have as well, stood up in my place, we've read quotes from his . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — The Premier may continue.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Day after day the Minister of Health has stood in this place — I have too — and read quotes from the SMA [Saskatchewan Medical Association], his former employers, the doctors of the province, who've said this is transformational.

He's read quotes from nurses. He's read quotes from patients, Mr. Speaker. He's read quotes from those involved in the health care system that say this is a transformational process and one that must continue. Mr. Speaker, that member has stood up, Mr. Speaker, referenced some things that have been in the news, things that we're interested in to seek improvement to the system, and read the same quote from one tweet, Mr. Speaker.

Now we know, because he's said so, we know that his inbox is full from health care workers who are concerned about lean. And earnestly, we want to hear from them. Why will he not take their names out — if his inbox is full, if he was telling the truth — just take the names out, take the names out of those people so they're protected and send them over, Mr. Speaker? So we can seek to improve lean, a project which has done what? Already saved more tax dollars than it costs, Mr. Speaker.

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

Provision of Home Care

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, the home care program in the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region is stretched so thin that it is not able to meet the needs of new clients and it's cutting services for existing clients. This has been happening since last week, but the Premier, the Health minister, and the Rural Health minister knew nothing about it yesterday. To the minister: why is this government not paying attention to the basics in health care and seniors' care like the home care program?

[14:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Friday the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region did send out a memo that had been referenced in the House yesterday by the Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Speaker, I think it was perhaps a different interpretation than the Leader of the Opposition has indicated when he raised his questions yesterday, to say that people were going to be turned away from the home care system in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, that wasn't the case. For a short period of time, which Regina Qu'Appelle has indicated, is that they are having demand issues, capacity issues within home care. For a short period of time, Mr. Speaker, what Regina Qu'Appelle will be doing is exploring and implementing some strategies on the short and the long term to help deal with these capacities, such as prioritizing those with the highest needs, Mr. Speaker, as well as tracking all service requests and referrals, and looking to see if there can be services provided at the treatment centre, which will I think be an effective way in the short term while they deal with this short-term issue.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Health minister couldn't even properly explain the problem. On one hand, the Health minister said this is probably just a short-term surge in demand for home care. But on the other hand, he said the reason for the increased demand is that the government is moving people out of hospitals a lot more quickly. Well if that's the case, if this government is pushing people out of hospitals when they still need nursing care, then the increased demand for home care is not going to be a short-term surge.

To the minister: which is it? Is it just a short-term surge in demand, or is this the new reality because people are being discharged more quickly?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, I just want to correct the member opposite in reference to what I said yesterday after question period. Mr. Speaker, what Regina Qu'Appelle has had some success in in the last number of months is streamlining the process for when patients are ready to be discharged from

hospital. We've seen that's having a positive effect in terms of the capacity issues are not what they were only several months ago, where we saw both of the hospitals in Regina at over capacity. But, Mr. Speaker, that does not mean that people are being discharged too soon from the hospital. I would hope that the member opposite, the member from Riversdale, wouldn't want us to keep patients in the hospital longer than they actually require for their treatment, and when discharge needs to take place.

Mr. Speaker, what we have done, we've invested, I think significantly, in home care over the last number of years. The Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region is adjusting to what they think may be a short blip in demand. But they will be adjusting their plans accordingly, depending on whether or not this is just a blip in time or whether or not it is a longer standing issue.

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

Ms. Chartier: — The Health minister said yesterday that the home care program is fully staffed up, but it still cannot meet the demand and take on new clients while also meeting the needs of existing clients. That means there are significant restrictions on new clients, and existing clients are experiencing cutbacks. And the minister said yesterday that nearly everyone will wait a lot longer for services. To the minister: how many home care clients will have their services reduced, and what criteria is being used to make those decisions?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, I don't believe I said that all home care or a majority of the home care individuals, clients would be waiting a lot longer for services. What the region is going to do is look through the roster, first of all, of staff to see if there are additional staff in casual positions that can take on additional hours. They're going to ensure that all their positions are optimized properly to ensure that they are staffed up and being able to offer services in a timely fashion.

They're looking, on a short-term basis, to see whether or not there are a private option in terms of nursing services, companies that do provide nursing services, that can provide some additional relief. They are reviewing all of the caseload to determine whether or not individuals that are on the caseload for home care still require the services that they did when they first went on the roster for home care. And they are going to maximize the capacity of the treatment centre by adding extra staff, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we're hopeful that this is just going to be a short-term issue that they need to work through, and be able to provide . . .

The Speaker: — Next question. I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Student Testing

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After all the concern, confusion, and waste, it appears that the government has decided to simply plow ahead with its standardized testing agenda, something that's outdated, something that's old-fashioned, something that's wrong-headed. Now it doesn't

seem they're very proud of that fact, Mr. Speaker. It was sort of buried in the budget documents, it would appear, and it had that almost \$5 million allocation for student achievement software. It was really just slipped in amongst other budget items.

So my question to the minister: was the quiet announcement because no one from that government has been able to explain why students need standardized testing in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we've got a number of different comments that have been made by different people, different positions taken with regards to evaluation of students. And I know the member opposite is a former teacher and I know he attended recently the Regina teachers' event with Alfie Kohn. And I guess I would probably be more inclined to pose a question to him as where specifically he is and where his party is on that testing and evaluation of students, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — What a joke, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: how much money is in this budget for standardized testing, wrong-headed standardized testing?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite doesn't appear to want to engage in that kind of discussion, but I would like to tell him some of the comments that have been made about marks and about evaluation of students.

Mr. Speaker, CTV [Canadian Television Network Ltd.], March 12th of this year, they reported on this issue, and I'm quoting, "Our marks are recognized throughout the world and Canada's still the world leader in education. There is no real crisis here. We are doing great." Marc Spooner, U of R [University of Regina] professor of education.

Mr. Speaker, I also have another quote from Pasi Sahlberg who spoke in Saskatoon recently: "... testing itself is not a bad thing. I am not an anti-assessment person . . . Problems arise when . . . [they] become higher in stakes and include sanctions to teachers or schools as a consequence of poor performance."

So everybody talks about testing and a method of evaluating students and, Mr. Speaker, that's where we're at.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the minister's answers . . . He has no answer here today. I mean it's bizarre. It's embarrassing. We've got many people that are watching here today that know how many dollars have already been wasted by that government. In fact they haven't been clear on that front. Was it \$6 million last year? Was it \$8 million? And there was a simple question about the dollars in this budget.

And we have to remember that this government is wasting these dollars at a time where there's needs in our classroom that should be better supported in the classroom, supporting teaching instead of testing, Mr. Speaker. We don't see any of

that. And this government's been all over the map on this front. It's been confusing, I know in the fall. Now it sounds like they're just full bore ahead. But he won't share with Saskatchewan people how much he's spending on this front. But last fall he said he's taking a pause on this front. Now it seems it's full bore ahead.

I think it's time that that minister realized the realities of today's classroom, that he did the proper thing, that instead of pressing pause, he press stop, that he press delete, and he stop wasting dollars in this area that's wrong-headed, put them to work in the classrooms all across Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to confirm again that we put all forms of evaluation and all forms of review on testing. But, Mr. Speaker, I would like to read where those members are. I would like to read from transition material prepared by the Ministry of Education, information that was prepared in conjunction with the change of government in November 2007. And this is something that was prepared by the officials that those members opposite left . . . [inaudible]:

The Assessment for Learning Program will cost approximately \$2.25 million this fiscal year to produce test outcome information. Since 2000, the department has increased its large-scale assessment activity in Grades 4 through to 11 in response to increased emphases on accountability within public administration, and to Saskatchewan's standing on international test results. The Assessment for Learning Program has grown from measuring 11,000 students . . . annually to over 70,000 students in multiple grade levels since 2003.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's what those members have left behind. And, Mr. Speaker, we're sitting down with people like Patricia Prowse, Russ Mirasty, and, Mr. Speaker, we're going to take this carefully and we're going to do a lot of listening and do it right.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Streamlining Timber Dues System

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to announce changes to *The Forest Resources Management Regulations*, creating a streamlined timber dues system that is more market-based and consistent across the industry. Forests are a resource that we have in abundance. In fact, over half of Saskatchewan is forested, representing 34 million hectares, an area larger than Great Britain.

For close to 100 years the forest industry has been key to the growth in many communities, such as Carrot River, Big River, and Meadow Lake. There is a lot of good news coming out of the forestry industry. We have seen a steady recovery from the economic turmoil following the US housing crisis that struck the industry in 2007. For example, seven of our 11 mills have returned to production. The increasing demand for forest

products such as lumber, pulp, and oriented strand board from the United States and Asia is helping the industry to build its sales and expand its markets.

Last year the sector generated over 650 million in forest product sales. And, Mr. Speaker, following on the changes and modernization to the uranium royalties a year ago, following on the levy system collapsing 10 fees and charges in the oil system to make it more streamlined, Mr. Speaker, we are doing a similar thing here with the forest sector. Our government wants to see this industry continue to grow. We are ensuring that this remains the case, thanks to a new streamlined timber dues system that is efficient, competitive, fair, and sustainable.

The streamlined system was developed in consultation with the industry. It takes effect on July 1st, 2014 and combines five different dues systems into one. This change will help ensure that we can sustainably manage our Saskatchewan forests and generate revenues for our province and for our forest industry.

The changed dues system builds upon several important commitments of our government, including our commitment to economic growth, our commitment to provide a competitive business environment for the forestry sector, and our commitment to build sustainable management and long-term health for Saskatchewan's provincial forests.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to express my appreciation to the industry, to the Minister of the Environment, to officials from both the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Economy and, Mr. Speaker, to all stakeholders from the forestry sector, the forestry working group who spent countless hours making the new timber dues a reality. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Lakeview.

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Any time that government comes forward and listens to industry people in developing a way that the appropriate resources are to be shared with the province as trustees for the people of a province, I think that's a good time. And I will look forward to taking a good look at how these dues have been developed. It looks like they're following the line of a number of changes that have been made in various industries over the last 10 or 12 years, and I think that's a good thing.

I think one of the other factors though that we always have to balance here is that the province takes the role as trustee of the forests and of the lakes and of the rivers and streams that are part of the forest. And, Mr. Speaker, what we need to do is balance the cost that we all pay in protecting those things with the kinds of dues that come from the forestry industry itself. And I know that the forestry industry sees that long-term, that 100-year perspective, because it's about how long it takes for renewing our forests.

And so I will be looking very carefully at how these dues are structured but also how we cover the reforestation cost, how we deal with the firefighting cost, how we deal with the forest management cost in our overall structure. And I know that that's a concern of the industry and a concern of those people within the ministry. But I look forward to seeing the details. So good to go ahead with this kind of a change, but we also have to

make sure that there's a balance right across the board. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[14:30]

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

Transportation of Commodities on Rural Roads

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All members of this Assembly know all too well the challenges our producers have had in moving last year's record grain crop. Our government has been dealing with these issues for close to a year now.

Through the efforts of this government, grain is starting to move, but it's coming at a time when it's difficult to truck commodities. As roads thaw out, they get soft and can be damaged very quickly by heavy truck hauls. This is especially true in the thin membrane or TMS [thin membrane surface] system. These roads were never designed to handle today's heavy trucks in the first place. Over the years, we've seen what can happen to the TMS roads that have to carry heavy trucks. Saskatchewan has always dealt with this risk by imposing spring road bans that restrict the weight of vehicles on these roads.

Spring road bans, however, make transportation of grain less efficient and more expensive because farmers need to make more trips. Traditionally, producers have tried to avoid moving grain during the spring road ban period as much as possible. For many, that is not an option this year.

We're fortunate that through our government's record investment in the transportation system, we've been able to improve 8600 kilometres of provincial highway, including more than 1000 kilometres of rural highway surface. As a result, we have 14 600 kilometres of provincial highway that can operate at primary or secondary weights and aren't subject to road bans.

We still, however, have about 5000 kilometres of TMS roadways in the system. In light of the crisis in the grain transportation system this year, we are going to demonstrate flexibility in the enforcement of spring road restrictions. Shippers and farmers may apply to the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure for permits that will allow for heavier than published spring weights.

Circumstances where permits could be granted include roads where ministry staff determine heavier loads will not cause undue road damage during colder than seasonal temperatures. Haulers must hold a permit to access the heavier weights. Permit requests may be accessed and considered through ministry district offices.

TMS, or thin membrane surface roads, are a structure unique to Saskatchewan, and one of their drawbacks is they are very vulnerable to damage at this time of year. Our government feels this balance of urgency for moving grain with safety, and the need for other road users. Mr. Speaker, we're aware that this will not solve all the grain transportation issues.

That's why I also today drew members' attention to two projects my ministry announced, as I said today. This morning I had the opportunity to join with representatives of the RMs [rural municipality] of Golden West, Reciprocity, and Moose Creek, as well as a councillor from the village of Alida. Together we announced that 31 kilometres of highway, Mr. Speaker, you would know very well, Highway 361 from Highway No. 9 to Alida, and five kilometres on Highway 47 north of Stoughton, will be upgraded to super grids.

We know there are many low-traffic roads in poor condition that need upgrading for both safety and heavy-haul reasons. We have 5000 kilometres of thin membrane surface highways in the province. The cost of upgrading is about \$800,000 per kilometre to rebuild these roads to a paved standard. But many highways have traffic volumes less than 300 vehicles a day. A super grid is an engineered grid road that's wider and safer and supports heavy truck traffic. They can also be built at about half the cost of upgrading a TMS-paved road, Mr. Speaker.

These pilots have the potential to provide motorists with a safe and more reliable road surface. At the same time, they will expand transportation options for shippers, producers, and truckers. We are very pleased at the interest municipalities have shown in this super-grid pilot project so far. We look forward to implementing these pilots and looking for other places this solution might be applied, like areas that have seen significant truck increases due to the oil resource sector, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we're certainly glad to have the partners of the RMs on side with this announcement and look forward to more into the future. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the critic for Highways, Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to what the minister had to say. And some of our initial comments, Mr. Speaker, there's no question from our perspective we see that Saskatchewan is a rich province. We have so many opportunities over the coming decades and beyond that it's really important that we take as much of the opportunity to realize that opportunity and build for the future of our children and our grandchildren. But, Mr. Speaker, we see one of the greatest challenges that we face, immediate challenge that we face is the grain transportation crisis. We see that this is a huge challenge for the people of Saskatchewan, and in particular for our farmers, Mr. Speaker.

And even though I'm from northern Saskatchewan, I have the opportunity to listen to a lot of what my colleagues are speaking about when they talk about agriculture overall. And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that from the North I can see clearly the huge negative impact if the governments do not get this right.

When we see empty ships and full grain bins, Mr. Speaker, on our side of the Assembly, we think it should be the other way around, Mr. Speaker. It makes common sense to want to achieve that objective. And there's no question, Mr. Speaker, that we should recognize that this grain transportation crisis is a huge problem not only in southern Saskatchewan, but it really affects northern Saskatchewan people as well.

We have to make sure that we don't have the negative effect of billions of dollars of negative impact on our economy. That's why it's important that we continue supporting our farmers, continue supporting their industry, and continuing to respect what their challenges are.

In saying that, Mr. Speaker, as a critic, we also support lifting these bans. We think it's important to do all we can to make sure that we ease the crisis and the crunch when it comes to transporting many of our goods, not only for the farming community but for many of the other resource companies as well.

Mr. Speaker, we've been long critical of this government that they have been doing too many things too little too late. They simply have not recognized this crisis before. And now, Mr. Speaker, we're seeing an ad hoc approach of trying to resolve some of the challenges. And we say, shame on them.

Certainly from my perspective I can see a lot of farmers out there that are probably very upset with this government because, Mr. Speaker, all they have done is given lip service to the crisis. And they have not moved the grain; they have simply went to visit the rail companies and have not forced rail companies to do what they're supposed to do. They wrote a letter to Ottawa, Mr. Speaker, as opposed to taking a contingent of people to demand better service for our agricultural community.

No question, Mr. Speaker, that we see that this ad hoc approach that this government has to dealing with the grain transportation crisis is something that is not acceptable to us and shouldn't be acceptable to the producers as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, I also want to point out, I want to congratulate the RMs and the village leaders who were there lobbying on behalf of their farmers and lobbying on behalf of their region, and to congratulate them that that lobbying and that fight has paid off. We see some progress on some of the highways, Mr. Speaker, in terms of meeting some of the crises in those particular communities, and we congratulate them. But there's no question, Mr. Speaker, that we hope that this government will respond with even more investments into the rural road infrastructure that's completely necessary.

We also want to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that if there are some impacts on some of these roads as a result of lifting the ban, that this minister, we trust that this minister will do the right thing and mitigate those damages as quickly as they can. Because obviously, Mr. Speaker, we need a year-round road system that is adequate and that is able to move many other products, including grain, oil, and gas, and so on and so forth.

So, Mr. Speaker, I look at this as saying it is important that the people of Saskatchewan know that this government made a big mess out of meeting the challenge on the grain transportation crisis, that we as a province have failed to rise up and to address. There's no question in my mind when you hear the stories of empty ships at harbours where we see that this government has completely failed on the grain transportation front. And this step today is a very tiny step in recognizing that something has to be done. We need a better answer, a longer term vision, and a better response from the Saskatchewan Party

government when it comes to challenges of transporting our grains.

So, Mr. Speaker, no question in my mind, there are many areas of our province that have crumbling roads. So we need to do more to fix the roads. And remember, if we're a rich province we've got to do all we can to ensure that that wealth sustains us for years and years and years to come.

And this government inherited a booming economy, a growing population and, Mr. Speaker, they have not risen to the occasion to address the challenges and particularly the grain transportation crisis. Thank you very much.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the answers to questions 276 through 294.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has tabled responses to questions 276 to 294 inclusive. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the answers to questions 295 through 305.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has ordered responses to questions 295 to 305 inclusive. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 306 through 308.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has tabled responses to questions 306 to 308. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to order the answer to question 309.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has ordered response to question 309.

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. 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.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to continue where I left off. I won't back up too much because I know it

was interesting, but we'll start with, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan was born of agriculture.

In 1900 Saskatchewan produced 7.8 per cent of Canada's wheat and Ontario produced 84.7 per cent of Canada's wheat. By 1910, just 10 years later, 10 years, Saskatchewan produced 50.7 per cent of Canada's wheat and Ontario's share was down to 15 per cent. Agriculture is still huge in our economic ladder. Agriculture is still number two, second only to oil, and is still the cornerstone of Saskatchewan.

In politics, Mr. Speaker, parties sometimes pick a hill to die on. The NDP have chosen the Saskatchewan Party's lean program as their hill to die on. The lean program is a program that has cost 40 million over four years to lean out our health care system. It is a paradigm shift, a huge step forward, and will change the face of medicine, not just Saskatchewan but probably right across Canada.

The bonus of this lean program is that it can be used and adapted to other government departments. We are two years into the program and already we have saved over the 40 million invested. We can do these savings year after year. Does this not pass the common sense test? A program that costs 40 million over four years and has saved more than 40 million in two years, and it will continue to save. This program includes senseis brought in from Japan. The NDP say, this is wrong and just a waste of money. I ask, why is it wrong? They did the job we asked them to do and we are saving money. It's working. We're already saving more money than we invested in the program. Do the NDP have something against saving money or are they just against Japanese senseis? This program is a winner.

[14:45]

Let's just take a look at one of the former NDP government's programs when they were in power. They lost \$90 million on Navigata, a voice over Internet project that was in British Columbia, not even in Saskatchewan where it would create some jobs. They tried this in British Columbia and lost. They said, too bad, so sad. That's what happens in business; sometimes you lose.

Now they stand up and criticize a program that has saved in only two years, the total cost of the whole four-year project, and will continue to save. Mr. Speaker, the members on the other side keep using the term common sense. The NDP's Finance critic has said paying off the debt at this time defies common sense. They say our policies do not pass the common sense test. I would say that the NDP's negative comments on our common sense budget sounds like more nonsense.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard the acceptance of our budget by the general public. I've also heard the comments by the business community on a job well done, and how they really appreciate this budget. Now that's common sense from the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to use several quotes now by one of the founding fathers of the United States of America, Mr. Benjamin Franklin, a true philosopher and statesman. The first quote is as follows, "Beer is living proof that God loves us and

wants us to be happy." Mr. Speaker, that quote has nothing to do with the budget, but it's my favourite Ben Franklin quote. Now that I have everyone's attention, the second quote is very, very serious and is as follows, from Ben Franklin. I quote, "Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement, and success have no meaning."

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to be part of the team that brought this budget to fruition. We have followed the basic rules for another year of growth and prosperity, namely don't spend more money than you earn, and plan for growth. A big thank you to all, we can say, to the people who spent the countless hours to achieve this budget — caucus, cabinet, treasury board, and of course the Minister of Finance and his staff.

Once again I will repeat Benjamin Franklin's quote: "Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement, and success have no meaning."

I will close with one more Ben Franklin quote: "Well done is better than well said." To the Minister of Finance, my friend and mentor, I now say, well said, and above all, well done.

For all the above reasons, for all the reasons my fellow colleagues have expressed in their speeches, I will proudly support this budget and will definitely not support the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Jurgens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank my husband for supporting me. I want to thank my family. I'm soon going to be grandma for the third time. I want to thank my staff that are back home and the people that keep my office running smoothly: Trudy Deranger, Brent Gerlach, and Donna Barr.

Mostly though I want to thank the people of Prince Albert Northcote. I am so humbled and indeed honoured that they would choose me to be their representative MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly], and I'm so honoured to be part of the team of MLAs that are committed to help the future of Saskatchewan live up to its full potential.

Mr. Speaker, when I first joined this team of 49 MLAs, I really often felt like I was running, running to catch up to their experience, to their knowledge. They are really very much like a big family, and I do come from a big family, Mr. Speaker. I have nine siblings that keep me on my toes from time to time — Valerie, Kevin, Leon, Daryl, Janine, Sherry, Trevor, Travis, and Curt.

What I found is this common bond that we have is sprinkled with a variety of views, and what we end up with is a microcosm of Saskatchewan. Whether we have farmers or labourers, professionals or pilots, students, teachers, entrepreneurs, employees, parents, spouses, grandparents, whether our caucuses went to university or post-secondary or the school of hard knocks, whether they have grown up with barely two dimes to rub together or millions of dollars in their family inheritance — all have welcomed me and all have made me feel part of the team. So thank you, everyone.

What this does is it provides the strength to make tough decisions. It creates a base that surpasses the four-year plan that so many governments have. Let's take our eight-year housing plan for example or our plan for growth — *Vision 2020 and Beyond*. Mr. Speaker, we have listened, we are listening, and we will continue to listen to the people of this province.

Last week, Mr. Speaker, I had great hope that we would have a fruitful discussion. After all, the opposition — the negative nine — stood up and gave our Minister of Finance a standing ovation. Alas, the NDP did revert back to their partisan ways and in less than an hour they flip-flopped and then they delivered their standard fare — a great big helping of despondency and despair.

Mr. Speaker, I see time and again how once our people were set free — free from the NDP shackles of despair and despondency — our province started to grow. We've grown as a province. We've grown as a community and as a people. This freedom that sets in place the opportunity to create a new Saskatchewan is full of hope and excitement. We are working together. We are meeting the challenges of growth. We are greeting tomorrow with a fervency that this province has not seen for more than a century, one that has balanced the wants, desires, and dreams of our people with the inaction of the past, the crumbling roads, and crumbling infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, this is a balanced budget. This budget invests in people. It promises to support community . . . Our promises to support the community mobilization projects to reduce crime have been kept.

Mr. Speaker, when I door knocked on every door in my constituency, when I spoke to every single person that would speak to me, I took notes and I learned that feeling safe and reduction of crime were the most frequently cited issues. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased that our government has supported our voice and has provided money to support the action that our community took. The action that took the pioneering spirit of our pioneers, that took the collaborative efforts of the first peoples that came here, combined it with the community-minded determination of Prince Albert. And we created what is called the community mobilization program, but in Prince Albert we like to call the Hub and COR [centre of responsibility].

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of my community of Prince Albert. My community took a new approach, one never seen before in North America. The people of Prince Albert are leaders. Our people are helping themselves, their community, and their province. This community mobilization partnership is being adapted in our cities and towns across Saskatchewan and indeed in our country. With this budget there is increased funding so that we will now have 15 Hubs and three CORs in our province.

As well as prevention, Mr. Speaker, our government provided more funding for enforcement. Thanks to my colleague from Prince Albert Carlton, there are more police officers now than there were when the NDP ruled. Besides prevention and enforcement, our government has put funding towards the corrections institutes in Prince Albert. Now employees and inmates have a safer environment.

Not only are we keeping our election promises, Mr. Speaker, we are building on them. We set in place a growth plan. Our *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth: Vision 2020* set a goal to have 1.2 million people living in Saskatchewan by the year 2020. As of last count by Stats Canada, we have 1,117,503 people living and working here.

Mr. Speaker, with the 49 people that are MLAs on this side of the House we have all of those voices represented. We have another goal and that is to have 600,000 people working in our province by 2020. Our latest reports from StatsCan indicate that we have 551,600 people working here with full-time jobs. Not only that, we have an unemployment rate that is the lowest in the country for 14 consecutive months in a row.

Mr. Speaker, people are front and centre in our budget. In my constituency of Prince Albert Northcote there is a lot of wisdom, wisdom from seniors that have experienced life. I enjoy interacting with these people and credit my mom, Marian Froess, for instilling my love of seniors. When I was just a little girl, my mom would take us to visit her maternal grandma. Mr. Speaker, we were always excited to see the na na grandma because every time we went to see her she would say, "Na, na, na, look who's come to visit." Mr. Speaker, this woman was one of our pioneers. She lived until the age of 101. I was only 25 when she died, but I still think of her very fondly.

Mr. Speaker, the seniors in our province are just as special. That is why we provided \$4.5 million for the Home First/Quick Response pilot program that will provide innovative care supports to better serve our seniors. Mr. Speaker, if we had that program in place when my great-grandma was alive, she would have never ended up in a long-term care facility.

Contrast that with the record of the NDP. They dished up despondency and despair to those wonderful beacons of wisdom. Mr. Speaker, not only that, they have the audacity to say they are supporting seniors. But not once, Mr. Speaker, not even once did they raise the senior's income plan in the 16 years that they ruled.

Mr. Speaker, at this time of the year, many of us are filing our income tax. Some that are a little ahead of the game are finished. But everyone will have noticed, many will have noticed that we have an indexed income tax system. What that means, Mr. Speaker, is that each year, Saskatchewan residents will see \$6.5 million in tax savings. This year that adds up to a total savings of \$109 million since '07, the year the people of Saskatchewan asked the Saskatchewan Party to govern this province.

Mr. Speaker, people know what they need to spend their money on. And when we leave the money in the pockets of the people, they can decide where they want to spend it. Now a couple that earns \$50,000 per year will be keeping an extra \$2,775 to spend as they see fit, compared to when the NDP ruled.

Investments in people also include investments in education and improving opportunities for all of our citizens. For example, we are investing \$588,000 in new funding to expand English as an additional language. This budget also allocates \$189.2 million for program funding targeted primarily for First Nation and Métis organizations and individuals.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the members opposite are going to vote for or against the people of our province? Are the members from Cumberland and Athabasca going to say no to the First Nations and the Métis of this province?

[15:00]

Mr. Speaker, my community of Prince Albert has a very vibrant arts and culture sector. When I was campaigning in 2011, I remember attending the launch of the very first ever artsVest program in Saskatchewan. It was launched right in Prince Albert. This two-year pilot program has been renewed for another two years with renewed federal and provincial funding. The combined funding results in more than \$2.4 million of financial support to the arts and culture sector.

Mr. Speaker, Main Street was launched in April of 2011 as a three-year, \$1.65 million demonstration program in Wolseley, Indian Head, Maple Creek, and my community of Prince Albert. The program contributed to 41 new jobs in Main Street districts, 21 new businesses in Main Street districts, and \$2.73 million in private sector commitments to historic building rehabilitation and streetscape improvement.

Mr. Speaker, we have a 10 to 1 return on the province's investments in these capital projects. What we are finding is artsVest and Main Street programs are helping to create strong and vibrant communities.

Mr. Speaker, this balanced, steady growth budget also invests in infrastructure. In our growth plan we state that through municipal revenue sharing, SaskBuilds, and a future federal-provincial municipal infrastructure agreement, the Government of Saskatchewan will assist municipalities with infrastructure investments to meet the opportunities and challenges of growth. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 2014-2015 a total of \$257 million is being allocated in municipal revenue sharing, based on the formula of one point of the provincial sales tax, or as we like to call it, the PST.

Our province's third-largest city, Prince Albert, will receive \$7,265,631 from this budget. That is a 142 per cent increase from the '07-08 budget. Not only that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have capital investments in 2014-15 that 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 the long-term care facilities in Biggar, Kelvington, Kipling, Maple Creek, and Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition like to beak about how often our backbenchers don't have any say. Well our budget just contradicts that magnificently. If you look at all these projects and look at all the backbenchers, we are well represented. Mr. Speaker, in addition to the capital investments that I just spoke about, we are committing new funding to the renewal of Prince Albert's Victoria Hospital, the replacement of long-term care facilities in Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region, and planning for more long-term care beds in La Ronge.

Once again I ask the members opposite: are they going to vote for the people of the North? Are the members from Cumberland or Athabasca going to have the audacity to say no to their own people? We'll find out.

Two leaders from Prince Albert have this to say about the funding of the renewal of the Prince Albert's Victoria Hospital. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to quote Cecile Hunt, who is CEP for the P.A. [Prince Albert] Parkland Health Region, from CKBI Prince Albert, dated March 20th, 2014. And I quote, "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."

Mr. Greg Dionne, our mayor of Prince Albert, who was quoted in *paNOW* on March 20th, 2014, says this, and I quote:

"They announced today \$2 million to go to the Parkland Health District, to do the planning under the LEAN program," said Dionne. "When they start with giving money that way it comes right after that."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan continues to have one of the strongest economies in Canada, and it is forecasted to have the second-highest GDP [gross domestic product] growth this year.

Mr. Speaker, the voice of 1,117,503 people have been brought to the table where real decisions are made. They are brought by the 49 MLAs that form government. It was my colleagues that decided, together we are going to keep Saskatchewan's growth steady. What are those NDP going to say to the people of this province? Are they going to say no to our people? Are they going to say no to this steady growth budget? Are they going to dish up more despondency and despair?

Last week, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the MLA for Canora-Pelly, Minister of Finance, delivered the seventh consecutive balanced, steady growth budget that invests in people. That is significant. Here is why.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the Legislative Assembly website, one will find a code of ethical conduct for members of the Legislative Assembly. Within this code, under the statement of commitment it reads, and I quote, "We believe that the fundamental objective of public office is to serve our fellow citizens with integrity in order to improve the economic and social conditions of all Saskatchewan people." Mr. Speaker, our steady growth budget does just that.

I do support the budget as presented by the Minister of Finance, seconded by the member from Shellbrook-Rosthern, and I do not support any cut-and-crums amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to be able to get up and make a few comments on this budget. And I just want to start out by thanking the Finance minister, my colleague from Canora-Pelly, who put in an awful lot of hours, and his staff, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to mention treasury board. I don't think many people in the province realize how many hours treasury board puts in in putting a budget together, but especially one like this where revenues are somewhat tight and you have to find

savings on the expense side. And treasury board did a very good job on that and spent many, many hours, Mr. Speaker, actually right through holiday time and right after New Year's and before.

Also to our cabinet who put many hours in, and especially our caucus who — I appreciate the opportunity with the Saskatchewan Party — who had that opportunity to have input into things like the budget and everything else that we do on this side. And that's much appreciated, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — Hear, hear. They're great guys, I hear, too.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Very good guys. Mr. Speaker, there's again a balanced budget, a \$71-million surplus in a budget of in excess of \$14 billion, Mr. Speaker. So they've done a tremendous job in that respect. But I think the most important line there is that: a balanced budget with a surplus.

Mr. Speaker, since 2007, and I know some of my colleagues have talked about this already, but I think it's worth mentioning again that since 2007 we've had the largest income tax reduction in Saskatchewan history, the largest property tax reduction in Saskatchewan history, and nearly 112,000 people no longer pay any Saskatchewan income tax.

Mr. Speaker, this budget also, with lower revenues, had to control spending, and spending was down \$28 million. And I think in any business in this province, business owners would say that's a job well done. And again we owe it to our colleagues that worked on this budget endless hours and put a lot of time into it.

Mr. Speaker, no tax increases I think were received very well in my constituency. I know from the ones I talked to were quite concerned that possibly the education tax might go up. Or you know, they also think of the members across when they got in trouble, that the PST was raised on numerous occasions. I think they were worried about any taxes going up and were very relieved to find out, when they heard what the budget had in it, that there was no new taxes. And that was compliments that I got from constituents of mine.

Mr. Speaker, in my constituency also I know the people of Langenburg were very happy last year when the new school was announced for Langenburg. And the Minister of Finance has told me that there's \$5.57 million again this year to go towards the new school in Langenburg. And hopefully by 2016 we'll see that come into place and be able to be used by the residents of Langenburg. And I know they're very pleased with that, Mr. Speaker.

Another group I think that were very concerned and are very happy in my constituency, and for that matter, Mr. Speaker, right across the province, were the credit unions. And I think we all know that the credit unions provide a service in our small towns. When some of the larger institutions saw fit to close and move to the larger centres, the credit unions stuck with us. And I think that was important to the credit unions to keep their tax exemption, which amounted to about \$7.6 million, and also another capital tax exemption of \$5 million. So, Mr. Speaker, when you add that up, it's about \$12 million that they get in

these exemptions, and I know they certainly appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker, I know our health regions, and it varies across the province, but a 3.4 per cent lift for the health regions across this province. And again that's important to my constituents, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to take a minute and talk about some of the quotes from the movers and shakers that we have in this province, some of the leaders right across the province. And the first one's from Debra Button, SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] president, and she says, "The government's investments in our communities will go a long way to helping us meet the demands of growth." And that was one of the concerns that I know all municipal leaders had.

This one: "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." And that was Dave Marit, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I was in opposition for 12 years, and I went to a lot of SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] conventions and I went to a lot of SUMA conventions, and I honestly can't remember — very, very seldom, if any — that the people that represent these organizations out there had too much good to say about the NDP budgets or some of the things that they were doing out there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm sure you will remember well from many of us going to these conventions when some of the ministers would come over to convention and tell the delegates what was happening. And there would be a lot of boos right across the floor of the halls, whether it was SUMA or SARM, Mr. Speaker. In fact it got to the point where I almost felt sorry for the ministers to have to go over and actually defend some of the things that the NDP were doing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, while we're living in a province that the population . . . It's hard to keep track of the numbers where we're at today, but a few days ago here our population was at 1,117,503. And I know that number's not accurate now, Mr. Speaker, because it grows every day and it's grown since then. So it's just another positive for the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I've got a number of different quotes I could read you here, and I'll just read some of them. But here's another one where it says, "We commend the province for not taking the easy way out, but instead controlling their spending by making tough decisions." Marilyn Braun-Pollon. Mr. Speaker, another one from Marilyn Braun-Pollon: it says, "It's encouraging to see Saskatchewan deliver another balanced budget with a forecast surplus of \$71 million."

Mr. Speaker, Janet Foord, and I know some of my colleagues have read this one in but this one is really important, with some of the criticisms we hear from the member from Rosemont and some of the other members opposite. And this quote goes on to say, "There's always been a growing concern about infrastructure backlog that we have with our schools, our older schools that are in rural areas as well as our cities." So on top of

P3 announcements last year . . . And I think she was talking about the 18 joints. There's 18 joint schools, nine buildings out there that we're building that were announced last year, Mr. Speaker. But she goes on to say, "We're happy to see money coming to boards in the form of capital, new schools, renovation projects. I think it's a positive for us." And that was Janet Foord, SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association] president on CKRM radio, Mr. Speaker. So another positive and another, actually a compliment for the Finance minister and his staff.

But, Mr. Speaker, I find it really interesting as this budget goes on. And I'll get into the part of my speech where I have to make some comments on the members opposite, Mr. Speaker. As we've heard on many occasions in this legislature — not just this spring sitting, but I believe last fall — some of the members over there were asking for different things, Mr. Speaker. And the member for Elphinstone . . . And I could be wrong on some of these schools, but I think I'm right. Yes, I'm pretty sure I am. I think it was Sacred Heart, Mr. Speaker, that the member for Regina Elphinstone . . . And if I remember right, he had petitions and on many occasions had told us how dire straits that the Sacred Heart was needed, Mr. Speaker, in the city of Regina. Well, Mr. Speaker, when the budget come out, guess what? Sacred Heart is getting rebuilt. There we go, Mr. Speaker. The member for Elphinstone got what he wanted. I'm sure he will be supporting this budget.

[15:15]

Mr. Speaker, I think it's the member for Lakeview . . . It's Connaught School that they were also asking for on that side of the House on many occasions, and certainly needed from their news reports we see. And guess what? The Finance minister in this budget announced a new building for Connaught School, which is in dire straits and certainly needs that. So I would think that the member for Lakeview will want to support this budget. I think he will reconsider the amendment, and I think when he sees the light will probably support this budget tomorrow. And we'll be watching close to see that he does that.

The MLA for Rosemont — and I wouldn't want to miss out on that member, Mr. Speaker — numerous occasions did he ask for a summary financial statement. He forgot that the way we were doing the books in this province was exactly the way that the NDP had done them from 2004 on. That slipped his mind, Mr. Speaker. But he needed and wanted a summary financial statement. This year the Finance minister presents the budget, and he got what he wanted. And I'm sure the member for Rosemont will be supporting this budget, Mr. Speaker. I see him smile. I see thumbs-up. And I think we've got him, Mr. Speaker. I think he's reconsidered that amendment and will support this.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'd be remiss if I forgot about the member for Cumberland because on many occasions in this House that member has asked for a long-term care home in La Ronge. And, Mr. Speaker, he was sincere in his asking and he was consistent and, Mr. Speaker, the Finance minister got to his feet, announced the budget, and guess what? Long-term care home for La Ronge. Mr. Speaker, again I'm very certain that the member for Cumberland will be supporting this budget. He'll reconsider the amendment.

In fact, you know, from the number I've listed off here, I think we have a majority on that side. They may convince their colleagues to support this budget, make it unanimous tomorrow that this is the best budget in this country for any province to put forward, and they want to be on the record of supporting it, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I certainly wouldn't want to leave out the Leader of the Opposition because every day in question period we have the saviour of health care in the province of Saskatchewan getting to his feet. And I don't know if he hasn't a memory at all or he doesn't have a conscience, but he doesn't seem to remember what went on when the NDP were in power for 16 years. Well, Mr. Speaker, just in case he's a little bit off the mark here with what he thinks actually happened for those 16 years, I want to remind him and help him with that. And I know the member for Athabasca will agree with me on all these remarks because he sat with me, and actually for a few months as a Liberal. And then he sat . . . Well no he didn't. He jumped across and sat with the government, the NDP. And look where that got him, Mr. Speaker. It got him back in opposition on the other side. That wasn't a good decision, Mr. Speaker.

But the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, and just on one occasion that the Leader of the Opposition was telling the minister of Education at the time that they needed a new school at Hampton Village. And he went on and on about it. And he had good reason. He was representing his constituents.

And I remember the Minister of Education telling me, and I think he was telling some of our colleagues, that the Leader of the Opposition was invited to the announcement for the new school. Now, Mr. Speaker, if that was me and it was Langenburg school, and it was an NDP government . . . which would never happen; they didn't build any schools. In fact, I can't even count how many they closed in my constituency. But, Mr. Speaker, should somebody from the NDP side ever decide to build a school in my constituency and invited me, I would have been there with bells on. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? Politics aside, I would have thanked him for it and commended them for it, and I would have been on the record saying that was the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition wouldn't even come to the announcement. So it makes one wonder, does he get on his feet and say we want these things, and then when he actually gets them, he really didn't want them in the first place, because then he can't get to his feet and say we need these things?

Mr. Speaker, hypocrisy kind of to a degree comes to the forefront when I hear these things. And, Mr. Speaker, day after day, this member, the Leader of the Opposition gets up and he tells us how bad our health care system is. Did it again today. He doesn't like the lean project. He doesn't like lean. Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe they . . . And actually they did, didn't they? The member for Indian Head was telling me this. They were into the lean project, but again the Leader of the Opposition forgets this.

Mr. Speaker, we've looked for efficiencies in every department, not just Health, every department that government runs in here and we've found many. We've found through attrition that we didn't have to replace people that were retiring. And we

actually, I know in Agriculture when I was there, we have less staff than we had at that time and I know we're providing the same service we were before. But maybe when the members opposite were in government they should have looked at some of these things, and they might have more than nine members in opposition.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind you of some of the things that the NDP did in health care when they were government because I think, Mr. Speaker, it's important. When you see the member for Riversdale again today gets on her feet, last night in her speech, this holier-than-thou attitude about what is all wrong with health care. Was she not born for those 16 years and living in the province of Saskatchewan to see what the members opposite did in health care?

Mr. Speaker, I was in opposition and I heard one time from a very, very intelligent gentleman that when you're in opposition, you can say anything you want. The member for Athabasca knows what I am talking about. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have taken heed to that because they're saying anything they want, but in their case they have a track record, Mr. Speaker. They had 16 years where they dumped on rural Saskatchewan in this province day after day.

I remember my mother was in a care home, and actually my dad was in there at the time but he covered his ears. And why he covered his ears is because the member for Lakeview was the Health minister. And I remember going home on the weekend, and I can't repeat what my mother said. She was a pretty blunt lady. But the member for Lakeview as Health minister, they got in a bind and decided how they were going to solve that problem. They were raising long-term care fees to a minimum of 3,000 bucks a month. Now as I said, I can't repeat what she said but I can tell you she wasn't much in favour of it. And you know, at Lakeside Manor Care Home where they were staying — and the care was great; I know the member for Riversdale won't believe this but the care was super, the staff was super — there was 28 members in that care home and if I'd have taken a vote that day I'd have got them all because the NDP . . . Well I did in the end. No, I didn't. That's not quite right. I'd hate to be wrong. Mr. Speaker. When I first ran I think I got about half the residents of the care home voting for me and after the member for Lakeview was finished with it, I got about all but three.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's the same reason why there's only nine members on that side of the House. The member for Riversdale last night said there's a disconnect and she said it was on this side of the House. I think there is a disconnect and I think I know where it is because after the 2007 election, there was 20 members in opposition under the NDP and we were government. Well guess what? Usually after you have one term, there's a little falling off and then the opposition grows a bit and the government actually loses a few. Didn't happen, because in 2011 they're down to nine and we're up to what — 49? And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know this well. You're one of them. Mr. Speaker, what's going to happen in 2016 or '15 when the next election happens in this province?

Because I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, the people of this province do not forget the NDP's track record in this province. Mr. Speaker, on many occasions we've heard from this side of the House just a reminder to those members about how in health

care they closed 52 hospitals. And then, Mr. Speaker, they didn't quit there, because does anybody remember just out of the city here was the Plains hospital. And you know, I know it was a convenient hospital for people in the city of Regina but it was nothing as the convenience for people of southern and rural Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, many people don't get to the city as often so they're not sure where they're going at times and now they come into the city and try and get to the General and it's quite often confusing. The Plains hospital, you could see it for 20 or 30 miles out of the city and what did the NDP do in their 16 years? They saw fit to close the Plains hospital.

So, Mr. Speaker, now we're at 53 hospitals and rising. And you know, Mr. Speaker, what do they think happened to the nurses and doctors at that time that worked in those facilities? You know, they get up on a daily basis here and say, oh there's not enough care workers in this province. Remember what they did, Mr. Speaker, because in 52, 53 hospitals . . . and I can't even imagine how many nurses there were working in the Plains hospital. They did great work there. But right across this province, they chased all those nurses, either through retirement or leaving the province, out of this province.

And the member for Riversdale I know will want to stay and listen to the rest of this because there's some more good stuff coming. Mr. Speaker, as I said, when we came to power we were short, I believe around 800 nurses, were we not? And unlike the member that used to represent North Battleford, Len Taylor, when he was Health minister, who would not set any targets, our Health minister of the day, the member for Indian Head-Milestone said, we need 800 nurses and we're going to hire them. And that was part of our election platform.

And you know what, Mr. Speaker? We've exceeded that goal. So in the province today, certainly at times we probably need more nurses, but we have 800-plus more nurses than we did under the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, I thought it would be worth just reminding for a few minutes, Mr. Speaker, some of the things that also happened under the NDP. Because you know, it's frustrating when I hear the member, the Leader of the Opposition get up, you know, on his feet and look over at the Premier. And he's going to tell us how to straighten health care up. Here's some of the things also that they did between 2001 and 2006, and of course that was the NDP's last full five years in office. This province lost 1,160 health care workers. That was in five years under the NDP, probably about their last five years, and probably why they're sitting on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

At that same period, part of that loss was 455 RNs [registered nurse] and RPNs [registered psychiatric nurse]. Included in that number was 173 physicians. And isn't that interesting? The same people that are getting up on that side of the House and saying we need more doctors for rural Saskatchewan were the same people that drove them out of this province in the first place. I think hypocrisy comes to the forefront once again, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, they drove 155 pharmacists out of this province and 95 physiotherapists on top of that. And, Mr. Speaker, the member for Riversdale, I hope she's listening somewhere here

today, and the Leader of the Opposition, because in that 16 years they also saw fit to close 16 long-term care facilities. And we hear on a daily basis as if they were never in power, they didn't have a track record, Mr. Speaker.

Well I'll tell you that every member on this side of the House — whether you're an urban, whether you're from the city, whether you're from rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker — we remember well the track record of that NDP party. And I'll tell you something else, Mr. Speaker, that the people in the province of Saskatchewan, it's going to be a long, long time before they ever forget the record of the NDP and trust them to power in the province of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you may have thought already and just got from my few remarks here, I certainly will be supporting the budget. And I certainly won't be supporting the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Central Services.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In this Chamber there are a few people that you do not want to follow when you're speaking, and my colleague from Melville-Saltcoats is definitely one of those. That was an amazing speech, and I'm a little nervous now going after that. But I will do my best.

Mr. Speaker, I want to do what so many have done and thank those who have helped us out, helped us get here, and help us to stay here, Mr. Speaker. I had the opportunity a couple of weeks ago to have a member's statement on my constituency assistant, Whitney, and his 20 years of service to the people of this province. And I want to once again recognize Whitney and all the work that he does. I want to thank my staff in this building too — Tara, Tennille, and Kirsten — for all of their support. We have a lot of fun in our office. And I want to thank them for all that they do.

I want to thank my mom. I actually don't know that I've done that in all my years here, which is a huge oversight on my part. My mom is currently house-sitting for a friend of hers in BC [British Columbia] so she escaped most of our winter, but she's coming home tomorrow and she happened to get on a midnight flight. I have to go pick her up so it's going to be a long day, but I'm going to be happy to see my mom come home. And I don't think it matters how old we get; our moms are still pretty special people to us. So it's going to be good to see her coming home.

And I want to give a shout-out to my girls. And I call them my girls, and I think some people wonder once in a while where these girls came from because they're not technically mine, but my nieces Jasmine and Sharmaine. Jas just turned 20 and Sharmaine turned 17. I don't how that happened because I haven't aged a day. And they're getting to be the most amazing young women and I'm so very proud of them. They make my world a better place and they make me a better person.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Finance minister and my colleagues on treasury board. We spend an awful lot of time together. This is no small thing, putting this budget together.

We involve caucus as well. It's a long process over mostly the winter months, and I want to thank them. We have some lively discussions. We don't always agree on things but, Mr. Speaker, it's respectful and we listen to other people's opinions when we're making these decisions. And I think it's a really amazing process.

I've heard from actually former cabinet ministers, from members opposite where that wasn't necessarily the case when they were going through the process of making decisions. And I just want to thank the folks on this side for the respect that is shown to one another when we may disagree on issues trying to come to a conclusion or a decision.

[15:30]

Mr. Speaker, one other person I want to thank — I know I've done this privately, but I want to thank him personally — because I think it goes to what kind of caucus we actually have. I won in a by-election in March of 2007, and so I came into the Chamber not during a regular cycle. Your first opportunity to speak wasn't necessarily a Throne Speech or a budget speech. And we all know that our maiden speeches are kind of a big deal, and it's the one time you don't get heckled, which is kind of nice.

And so I was named Environment critic in the opposition when I was first elected. And so my first official speech in the House was actually supposed to be on I believe it was sewage and waste water regulations, which is not exactly what you want your very first speech to be.

And so the now Minister of Education came over and grabbed all my papers off my desk and said, this cannot be your first speech in the House. That's not how we do things. And he stood up and spoke to some kind of legislation or regulations on waste water and sewer to make sure that wasn't my maiden speech, which I'm quite thankful for. I actually, I don't think at the time I knew what I was talking about anyway. And so I want to thank him for that. And like I said, I think it is just an indicator of the kind of people on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

I want to talk about the good things that are happening in my constituency of Martensville. There's a new middle years school that's opened in Warman. And I want to publicly thank the city of Warman, the partnership between the school division, the province, and the city of Warman, that they're sharing rec space. And just recently the regional library has moved into the school library, and they're sharing spaces as well. And I think this regional co-operation and joint-use facility approach is what we want to see happen in this province. I think Warman is a shining example of how that can work.

Also have an expansion of a high school in Martensville that is going to be opened shortly. The new highway to Dalmeny opened last year, and the new highway connecting Warman and Martensville is scheduled to be opened this summer. And so I want to again thank my colleagues on this side of the House for recognizing the growth in my constituency and making sure that we're meeting those needs. New businesses are coming in all the time, Mr. Speaker. There are good things happening in my

constituency.

And I know that there's good things happening in the constituencies of the members opposite as well. And I know this has been said before, we've seen . . . I want to congratulate them actually for their consistency and their tenacity. It's not fun to stand up day after day and present petitions. It's not the most exciting part of your day in this House. But, Mr. Speaker, they did, whether it was the member for Elphinstone, the member for Cumberland presenting petitions in this House asking for things for their constituencies. And we've seen those in this budget, Mr. Speaker: Sacred Heart in Elphinstone, Connaught School in Lakeview, and the long-term care facility that was announced in the constituency of Cumberland.

And, Mr. Speaker, for all of their consistency in asking for these things, one after another they're standing up in their speeches and saying that they're going to vote against this budget. They're going to be voting against the very thing that they have been asking for. They're going to be voting against the very thing that their constituents sent them here to do on their behalf, Mr. Speaker. And I think that is an absolute abdication of their responsibility.

I understand it's the opposition's job to oppose, but at some point you have to do more than just be negative and be opposing, Mr. Speaker. These are the right things for the right reasons, and the things that their constituents have sent them here to ask for. Mr. Speaker, we have delivered those in this budget, and it is sad that they'll be voting against that.

But, Mr. Speaker, we shouldn't be surprised. This stubbornness, this refusal to recognize when something good is coming their way . . . I guess we can't blame them. It comes from the very top. It comes from their leader, Mr. Speaker. And we saw that last year in the announcement in Saskatoon for the joint-use facility, the joint-use schools all across this province, Mr. Speaker, including in the leader's own backyard in Hampton Village. And he refused to even attend the event. There was no recognition at all, Mr. Speaker.

So you know, those who follow their leader are going to pick up the traits that he demonstrates, Mr. Speaker. And we've seen that time and time again when we've listened to these budget speeches where not one of the members opposite is willing to vote in favour of this budget to make sure that the things that they were sent here to do actually happen, Mr. Speaker.

I was interested last night, Mr. Speaker, listening to the member for Riversdale. It wasn't . . . well I won't give a critique of her actual speech. But I was interested. Close to the beginning . . . We keep asking for where their plan is. Their platform's off their website. Their tree book, which I have a copy of, is no longer on their website. There's actually not much there. And we've been asking where their plan is. So at the beginning of her comments she said that the plan was coming, which I thought was pretty interesting, Mr. Speaker. She had actually said, what would the NDP do differently? And then she said, and I quote, "I'll get to that." So I was quite interested.

The member from Riversdale talked for an entire hour, and I was waiting with great anticipation for this NDP plan that she was going to be talking about, Mr. Speaker. And again,

absolutely no plan. It was a long, windy speech. It was quite enthusiastic; I will give her that. But again, no plan.

So this morning, knowing that I was going to be speaking today, I went back to their website to see if maybe overnight they put something there. No, no, it's not there. There's still nothing there. There is, I think, three links that you can go to if you can get past the bright, shiny pictures of their leader not holding a platform document, that's for sure. There are three links. There's one for senior care, one for education, and one for their smart growth plan, which sadly still talks about more eggs in more baskets. So that's their only economic plan . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, it's their agriculture policy as well, apparently.

So I clicked on the one for schools, Mr. Speaker. Considering my constituency, the demographics in my constituency, the growth in my constituency, schools are really, I would say, one of the most important things to me in my role as MLA. And when I'm talking to folks at home, schools are one of their top priorities as well. So I clicked on the link for their schools and, Mr. Speaker, I have to say I was . . . Well I shouldn't be surprised.

We come to this House day after day. We listen to the members opposite in question period. And we spend a lot of time during and after question period doing fact checking on what they bring to this House because, Mr. Speaker, it is a very rare occasion when the information presented on the floor of this House by the members opposite is 100 per cent factual. It's half a story. It's an interpreted story. It's a quote taken out of context. But, Mr. Speaker, I can't really remember the last time it was 100 per cent accurate, the information they brought here. And I think it goes to their credibility. The more your hyperbole goes up, the farther down your credibility goes, Mr. Speaker. And I don't think they've quite understood that. And it's on their website as well, this lack of credibility.

So I clicked on the education, the schools link. And on their website, it says, and I quote, "In growing communities, new schools are desperately needed but not being built." Mr. Speaker, I would challenge any one of those nine members over there to present us with one growing community that is not getting a school, including their own, the ones that they're voting against.

I have a middle years school in Warman. I've got the fastest growing communities in the province, and Warman is the fastest growing community in all of Canada, Mr. Speaker. And these communities are getting schools. There are schools going up in Warman. There are schools going up in Martensville. There's schools in White City. There's schools in Saskatoon. There's schools in Regina. Mr. Speaker, there's schools being built across this province.

So this is the thing that they have on their website is that we're not building them. Well that is entirely not accurate, Mr. Speaker. It's not even a 50 per cent accuracy rate. It's a zero per cent accuracy rate. And again, Mr. Speaker, they're going to be voting against the very schools that they asked for.

The other interesting thing on their very vacuous website — and I don't know, maybe they could hire somebody to just put

something on there because there isn't much — but at the very bottom of this page under schools and education, it has the little Facebook icon, and it says click here to like this page. Guess how many people liked it? Three. Not even their entire caucus likes their own education page on their website, Mr. Speaker. That's how bad it is. That's how completely out of touch they are.

And again the member from Melville-Saltcoats had mentioned this as well, referencing the speech of the member for Riversdale about being out of touch. Mr. Speaker, they're absolutely out of touch. They have no idea what's going on in this province. It's evident by the number of people that they got elected in the last election.

And then you look at their website. Three people like their education page. So I went to their seniors' page which has, you know, some other grand ideas, I'm sure, and only six likes on that page, Mr. Speaker. Again their entire caucus doesn't even like their seniors' approach.

So I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker, but perhaps the member for Riversdale, who I think is in charge of seniors, can just log on to her laptop and start clicking that like button to get the numbers up a little bit higher so it at least appears that people like what they're doing because in reality, Mr. Speaker, they actually are not.

Mr. Speaker, in the absence of a plan, the only thing that we have to go on that the NDP may stand for is documents that we happened to be able to print off before they all got taken off their website. So we have their election platform from 2011, and we have their tree book. But, Mr. Speaker, the election platform from 2011 called for \$5 billion in new funding. Where do you think the money's going to come from for that?

You know, we've seen the budget numbers this year. We've done a . . . We've made a concerted effort to make sure that our government spending is controlled so that we don't have to raise taxes.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to quote one of my favourite people, Margaret Thatcher. And I'm sure the NDP will be happy about this because I'm sure they love her too. And I quote:

Let us never forget this fundamental truth: the State has no source of money other than money which people earn themselves. If the State wishes to spend more it can only do so only by borrowing your savings or by taxing you more. It is no good thinking that someone else will pay — that "someone else" is you. There is no such thing as public money; there is only taxpayers' money.

So, Mr. Speaker, we look at the only information that we have on file from the NDP, and their priorities and spending plans for this province, \$5 billion. They've asked for at least \$1 billion over the last year in this Chamber for additional spending. And, Mr. Speaker, where did they think that's going to come from? The only way that they can pay for the things that they're asking for is by raising our taxes or, Mr. Speaker, by cutting programs that already exist in this province. And I'd be curious to know, Mr. Speaker, what exactly would they be cutting?

Would they be cutting the SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] program for people with disabilities? Would they be cutting the graduate retention program that is benefiting thousands and thousands of students in this province, Mr. Speaker, and is showing itself to be a great success? Would they cut spending to Highways? Probably. They've done that before. Would they raise the PST? Probably. They've done that before. Mr. Speaker, they won't tell us where this money is coming from.

And I referenced this in my Throne Speech last November. Their federal leader who we know that they take their orders from, their federal leader, Thomas Mulcair, had held up the NDP provincial government as the economic bright shining star of our country when it comes to economic policies in this country, Mr. Speaker. So I guess that's where they're headed. Spend more, tax more. That's their plan.

And, Mr. Speaker, if that's not their plan, then just show us. Get together on a weekend sometime. The member from Lakeview can drive you down to a Tim Hortons someplace in his Suburban. You can all sit around and have a coffee and put a plan together. Put it on your website. Maybe more than three people will like it, Mr. Speaker. It'd be interesting to find out, but at least give us the option to try.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to end by talking about lean a little bit. Members opposite haven't asked me any questions, but I've got some good information so I thought I would talk about a few things. And I don't think that the members opposite quite understand what lean is. They have brought the book, lean for dummies, into the House, so we know they have that. Maybe they should crack it to find out exactly what it is.

But, Mr. Speaker, lean is more than just saving money. Lean is about better patient care and patient outcomes in the health care system. Lean is about making sure that the citizens of this province who are accessing government programming access it better, Mr. Speaker, that we deliver our programs better to the people who are expecting those programs. And you will save money, Mr. Speaker, but sometimes it's just better customer service. And that makes a difference to you. Sometimes it's cost avoidance. And I don't think the members opposite understand these things.

I will give an example and then I will probably wrap up my remarks because I'm sure there's others who want to speak after me, Mr. Speaker. But in the Ministry of the Economy there is a backlog of applications for permits for horizontal well drilling. And so through the lean process they went through the ministry and looked at things where they thought they could make some improvements. And, Mr. Speaker, they reduced the time to conduct a technical review from 30 days down to one. That's a 97 per cent improvement rate, Mr. Speaker. And there was a 75 per cent reduction in the number of days to notify a company of a decision.

And, Mr. Speaker, it may just appear to members opposite that it's just process time. But let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, in the Bakken play alone, every well that is drilled is worth \$3 million to the economy of this province. What is the cost of not doing these things, Mr. Speaker?

I have quote after quote after quote from the amazing public service in this province, Mr. Speaker, who have gone through the training process. We've trained I think over 3,000 people in the public service. We have trained hundreds of leaders to carry on the work within ministries so that we can continue to improve, Mr. Speaker. This is not something that you just do for a year and then stop. This is an ongoing improvement.

And it was interesting. I think it was either yesterday or today one of the members opposite said, basically inferred that this was somehow going to be done. When are you going to be finished this? Well, Mr. Speaker, as soon as you stop trying to make improvements, you stop making improvements and you usually slide backwards. And then your programs aren't as efficient and you start spending more money instead of less. And, Mr. Speaker, this is an ongoing thing, and we're working hard to train the people inside government so they can carry on this work. But I won't go through all of those quotes today.

[15:45]

But, Mr. Speaker, I do think it is a very important process. And I'm proud to be the Minister Responsible for Lean and so very proud of all the men and women in the public service who have signed up to participate in this and are incredibly enthusiastic about this approach, Mr. Speaker.

I know that my colleague who spoke before me had gone through an entire history lesson for the NDP. And you know, great minds must think alike. You know, I was listening to the speech. I'm like, that's my speech. And he did a much better job than I did, so I won't go through all of that again.

But I do find it interesting, Mr. Speaker, that it seems for the members opposite, especially for the member for Riversdale who likes to sit in the House and shake her head no a lot, for them the only history in this province was some CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] stuff from the 1940s. I'm not quite sure what the leader's name was then. And then there was some PCs [Progressive Conservative] in the 1980s, and then there was us. And there's just these massive gaps in the history of our province politically, according to the NDP, because apparently nothing happened between 1992 and 2007 or at least we're not allowed to talk about it. And I don't know why. If they're proud of their record, why can't we talk about it?

And I'm not surprised they don't, Mr. Speaker. There's a lot of things that they did that nobody should be proud of and things that we are working very hard to reverse, Mr. Speaker — taking care of our seniors, building schools instead of closing them, building hospitals instead of closing them. And perhaps the members opposite could just take a moment and review their own history instead of just shaking their heads when they're presented with it, and work with us to make this province a better place, Mr. Speaker.

I will not be voting for the amendment from the opposition, and I'm firmly behind the budget of this government.

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

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm quite pleased to enter the debate on the budget, Mr. Speaker. And before I enter the debate, I want to briefly tell my colleagues, and in particular the members opposite, the fact that I upset our leader, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I upset our leader. And the leader said, for your penance, you're going to listen to not one, not two, not five, but eight of the government's response to the Throne Speech. And as I sat here, Mr. Speaker, my penance was . . . from the budget. My penance was painful, Mr. Speaker.

I had to sit there and listen to how they glossed over pre-1991, Mr. Speaker, when they were in government, of how they almost broke this province and how this province was on the brink of bankruptcy primarily because, Mr. Speaker, we were fifteen and a half billion dollars in debt. And the members opposite seem to forget that. And this is all about the budget debate, but they seem to gloss over that fact, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to go backwards a bit and talk about what the member from Martensville quoted and spoke about, Mr. Speaker. She spoke about, Mr. Speaker, about quoting Margaret Thatcher. She was quoting Margaret Thatcher. And I want to send to her a copy of an article that was in today's paper that talked about how Saskatchewan had the worst ranking of a government, that was overspending, a government that was not managing the finances properly, despite the largesse that they enjoyed. I want to show her that, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to expose the hypocrisy, when they stand up and they talk about Margaret Thatcher and about taxpayers' money, of how she has completely deviated from the course under that government. And how is it we sit here and we listen to how they speak about budgets and about money, about his taxpayers' dollars when, Mr. Speaker, people are ranking them the worst in the country when it comes to that particular issue, Mr. Speaker?

So I want to do the headline here, Mr. Speaker. It shows quite frankly that, and this is the headline, "Saskatchewan worst in 2013 fiscal accountability rankings." And that was on CJWW. And we sit here in opposition, and we listen to a quote from Margaret Thatcher by the member from Martensville. And I say to the member from Martensville, it's on today's paper. Why doesn't she read it? And she doesn't talk about the challenges that this places on future generations, Mr. Speaker. It's here in black and white, covered by CJWW, and it says, "Saskatchewan worst in 2013 fiscal accountability rankings." Worst in the whole country, Mr. Speaker. And then we hear her talk about Margaret Thatcher.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you can't say one thing in the Assembly, then all of a sudden the press shows that Saskatchewan is the worst in fiscal rankings, Mr. Speaker. When you talk about respecting the taxpayers' money, you can't say one thing in the Assembly and practice something totally different outside these chambers, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly what the member from Martensville just finished doing, Mr. Speaker.

And that's the hypocrisy that we see on this side of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, which is really the reason why many of us on this side of the Assembly sit here day after day, and we listen to some of the stuff that the Sask Party is putting forward.

And we know, we know, Mr. Speaker, that their history doesn't start when Saskatchewan was born. It didn't start there. Their history began in 1991, and they'll talk about 1991 and beyond. The Saskatchewan NDP were in power in 1991, but before that it was Grant Devine and the Conservatives. Those members across the way, they were in power prior to 1991.

And when the NDP took over office, Mr. Speaker, we were fifteen and a half billion dollars in debt, Mr. Speaker. Our interest on the debt alone, our interest on the debt alone was almost \$1 billion a year — \$1 billion a year.

So when I hear the member from Saltcoats rant and rave why we shut down 45 hospitals in rural Saskatchewan, why we shut down the Plains, Mr. Speaker, the fact is the cupboard was bare. The cupboard was absolutely bare. There was not a penny to be found. And thank goodness, Mr. Speaker, thank goodness that we had strong leadership under Romanow who had no choice, who had no choice but to take the tough decisions, the drastic measures. And the people of Saskatchewan understood that. They almost broke Saskatchewan prior to 1991. The Conservatives across the way almost broke Saskatchewan prior to 1991.

We had to go cap in hand to the federal government to try and salvage Saskatchewan as a province. Otherwise we were broke. We were so broke we couldn't even pay the workers that were working for our province. And it's surprising how none of them remembered that, Mr. Speaker. Not one of them remembered that. Not one of them spoke about that, Mr. Speaker.

Why does their history start at 1991? Because they're ashamed of pre-1991. That's the problem, Mr. Speaker. They're ashamed of the fact that we had to pay debt or interest, never mind debt, just the interest on the debt, of almost \$1 billion a year. Almost \$1 billion a year we paid on interest, on Tory interest, \$1 billion a year just on interest.

And, Mr. Speaker, how do you begin to rebuild, paying \$1 billion a year, when your Education budget's a third of the interest you pay each year, when your Health budget is just on par with the interest you pay each year. These guys almost broke the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. So when they talk about the NDP being in government for 16 years, it took us 14 years to clean up their Tory mess, Mr. Speaker. That's the bottom line. Fourteen years of the 16 years to clean up their Tory mess. That is the history of Saskatchewan and they ought to know that.

Now the member from Saltcoats spoke about my nomination, Mr. Speaker. And yes, Mr. Speaker, we did seek the nomination for the NDP and we were successful. I also know that he sought the nomination for the Saskatchewan Party and I think, if memory serves me correct, Grant Schmidt won that nomination. Grant Schmidt won the nomination over the current member from Saltcoats. So what happened is they said, well we don't want Grant Schmidt, is what they said. And we wondered, why wouldn't you want Grant Schmidt? Well because he's too closely tied to the Conservatives who put us in a hole and they might link us to the Conservatives. And yet they all hold a Conservative membership. So how does that work for Tory math?

So the problem, I'm sitting here saying, well you lost the nomination to Schmidt. Then your party said, well we better have a do over. And that's exactly what they done. They had a do over, Mr. Speaker. And lo and behold as the dust cleared, he became the nominated candidate for that area. Why? Because they wanted to distance themselves from the Conservatives who put us in that financial hole prior to 1991.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan and every single member in opposition and everybody that pays attention to the history of Saskatchewan will know that these guys are full of beans when it comes to the history of Saskatchewan, when they try and gloss over pre-1991. Saskatchewan wasn't born in 1991 when the NDP took over. The debt was born in 1991 when the NDP came forward and said, this is exactly what we owe. This is exactly what we owe.

When you have to pay 2 or \$3 million a day on interest, how do you rebuild the economy? How do you rebuild rural schools and hospitals? How do you rebuild Saskatchewan overall when you're paying \$1 billion — \$1 billion a year in interest alone? In interest alone, Mr. Speaker.

So again I want to share this highlight or this article with the member from Martensville, and it says, "Saskatchewan worst in 2013 fiscal accountability rankings." And I want the Page to take it over to her desk so, as she glosses over the history of Saskatchewan and she quotes Margaret Thatcher, here you go, evidence right there that you're not following what you're talking about. And perhaps, Mr. Speaker, they ought to get a reminder of their history, of how they have bungled Saskatchewan's history and how they placed a huge debt on today's generation, on today's generation, Mr. Speaker. And they have the audacity to talk about hypocrisy over there, Mr. Speaker.

So I'm going to ask the Page to take this article and put it on the member from Martensville's desk to show that she's got a short recollection of how the debt in Saskatchewan continues to really, really hurt the province of Saskatchewan for years and years to come. So go ahead, quote your Margaret Thatcher. But the reality is right here, black and white, and I'd ask one of the Pages to share it with her so she knows exactly what she's talking about, Mr. Speaker.

Now one other thing that's really important is, why are we not supporting the budget, Mr. Speaker? Why is the opposition over here saying, we're not supporting this budget? Let me tell you why we're not supporting this budget, Mr. Speaker. Forty million dollars-plus for a so-called lean initiative, for lean consultants — \$40 million-plus. And the tab keeps rising, Mr. Speaker. Why? Because they don't want to admit they made a huge mistake and it's a huge waste of taxpayers' money . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No, to the member from Martensville. A huge waste of taxpayers' money — \$40 million-plus. And she turns red in her seat. I would turn red too, Mr. Speaker.

And you look at the whole notion, whole notion of these senseis being flown in from Japan. The taxpayers are paying for that, member from Martensville. You know that the flight, you know, the cost of \$3,500 a day, the taxpayers are paying for that, member from Martensville. So don't quote Margaret

Thatcher and give this persona that you know what you're doing because the bottom line is this government has wasted 40-plus and counting of taxpayers' money on something called lean that isn't working, Mr. Speaker.

Now I want to do an analogy here of what I think that the government's trying to tell the people of Saskatchewan. When my wife and I shop, you know, we come once in a while, we'll go look at a new TV or something. And she'll say, look there's a TV on sale. And I'll have maybe 400 bucks in my wallet here. And she'll say, let's buy it. And I'll say, no. I like to keep my money. And she'll say, well it's on sale. So the salesman will come there and say, well, Mr. Belanger, it's actually 500 regular price but it's on sale for 400, so you're actually saving \$100. That's the logic that these folks are using on lean.

But when I walk out of that store, I'm \$400 lighter, Mr. Speaker, and I'm going to tell people that I'm saving \$100. So I'll go around telling everybody, oh I saved 100 bucks. Well if you saved 100 bucks, how come you're broke? You know the logic isn't clarified here, Mr. Speaker. Yes, okay, we've got a TV. We've got a TV here, Mr. Speaker, but I'm still short 400 bucks, and I've got to explain to everybody, oh I saved 100. So somebody says, well how do you save 100 when you're down 400 bucks? That's our argument here with lean.

How do you save money when you're paying \$40 million to a consultant? And you're saying, well this how we're saving the money. This is how we're saving the money. Well who is telling them how they're saving the money? It's the consultant that's telling them, this is how we're saving the money but at the same time give us 40 million bucks. Like that's absolutely ludicrous, Mr. Speaker. And the Minister of Parks is speaking up here in terms of what's going on.

And I was thinking one day here, when he made that mistake on the camp fees where he charged somebody — what was it? — 5,000 bucks for a campsite, an unserviced campsite. Anyhow that was going to be the example. And I thought to myself, you know, they should make that guy the minister of Finance because if you can get five grand for an unserviced camping site, that guy must be a genius. So they should make him the minister of Finance, getting 5,000 bucks for an unserviced lot. But then a day later he found out it was charged wrongly and that there's a whole bunch of mistakes with their lean initiative on parks as well.

[16:00]

So again I go back to my earlier point. You look at some of the . . . the whole notion of tax, a respect for taxpayers' rights, Mr. Speaker. We sit here, and that's one of the reasons why we laugh quite a bit on this side of the House because we see an inept government that's seven years old making so many mistakes, and yet they still stick to their line, their right wing line that Margaret Thatcher taught them, how to run the economics of Saskatchewan, but they don't even follow any of the principles about their own ideology.

Now the other thing that really concerns us, Mr. Speaker, and I want to credit the member from Saskatoon Centre on this one. When we talk about Social Services overall, when we see, Mr. Speaker, that since 2010 we've had 81 children in care that have

died, and that is an enormous, enormous responsibility to have to watch and be in charge of the number of kids in Saskatchewan. And as the Minister of Social Services, it is an enormous task. But after four years, you have 81 children that have died in care. There is something structurally wrong.

There is something structurally wrong because no matter how you try and justify any increase in staff . . . And the point that she made was we have an increase in staff but we have less children in care, so you would assume more resources, less children means better results. Mr. Speaker, in the last four years, 81 children dying in care is not acceptable, and it's not a better result. We need to explain how. And the minister made reference to having these children as an asset of Saskatchewan. Children are not assets, Mr. Speaker. They're live human beings, and they come from a story that a lot of us ought to hear about and a lot of us ought to know.

So we sit here. That's why we're not supporting this budget. That is why, one of the reasons why, we don't support this budget: waste of taxpayers' money, \$40 million for lean. We have 81 children dying over a four-year period.

And, Mr. Speaker there's still persistent structural problems over there because the ministers and the Premier just don't get it. You're making a huge mistake in a number of areas, and you just don't get it, and you won't admit it. And that's why, on this side of the Assembly, the NDP don't support anything that the Sask Party do, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to budgets.

Another one that often crosses my mind . . . The member from Humboldt is chirping from her seat. When we talk about the record of watching over our seniors, of watching over our seniors, everybody in the province has heard what happened at St. Mary's Villa. And the worst part is that we see documents and reports in the media saying that the faulty furnace was reported to the health district but nobody done anything about it. As a result of that, we've lost seniors.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that I think to me is not something that you should be chirping about in the Assembly, but you should have fixed a long time ago. When you have seniors in care, that we've been talking about as an opposition, of how your standards of care are simply something that we should not accept as an opposition.

Mr. Speaker, that's why we're opposing this budget because they're not doing enough to protect the rights of senior citizens across this province. They're simply not doing enough. So you're wasting taxpayers' money on lean. You're not responding to the crisis in child care when we talk about the number of deaths over the last four years. And you're not looking after the senior citizens that you should be looking at.

Now the other thing that is important, Mr. Speaker, as well, when we look at school capital, the priority of school capital, Mr. Speaker, this government done away with the top 10 listings and rankings. And it really confused a lot of people involved in education. Why did they do that, Mr. Speaker? Because they want to politicize the whole process of determining which schools would need priority in terms of funding.

And before this model was put in place, they had school board associations and many other organizations involved to determine based on need and based on a number of other principles such as safety. The list goes on as to why they had the criteria for the list, why they had multi partners that determined the list. And what this government done was they said no, we're going to revamp that. We're going to decide what schools are priority and that's it. That's another reason why we're opposing this budget, Mr. Speaker.

When you look at the notion of the American-based companies that are now issuing our hunting and fishing licence system thousands of kilometres away, thousands of kilometres away, the same way that the camp fees are now being administered, Mr. Speaker, that's another reason why we think that we shouldn't be supporting this budget because people in Saskatchewan can do that work. The people of Saskatchewan can do that work, Mr. Speaker.

Now let's talk about housing in general, not just the seniors' housing challenges and their health challenges that we spoke about. But one issue that really irks me, and I know it irks the member of Cumberland, is the fact that this Minister of Housing, the current member from Kelvington where she's sitting here and she is actually evicting working families out of homes in northern Saskatchewan. And what is their crime? Their crime is because they earn too much money. That's their crime, Mr. Speaker. And that's coming from a supposed right wing party.

And why are you evicting families, families that have worked many, many years to build themselves up through training so they can get those decent jobs? And they pay rent year after year, month after month of this rent, and they have the opportunity to buy this house. This government cancelled the rental purchase option for many of these working families. And I say shame on her and shame on this government for going to war with working families in northern Saskatchewan.

Why didn't you give them the opportunity to own their own home? Simply because you're vindictive against northern Saskatchewan for a number of reasons, Mr. Speaker, which I'm not going to get into. But why are you going to war with the working people who want to have the decency of owning their own home, of being able to build that home, of being able to maintain that home, of being able to sink equity into that home? And that's got to be the silliest decision that I've ever seen this government make when it comes to northern housing, Mr. Speaker.

And what did they trot out? They trot out the Habitat program. They've announced it three or four times and I pray, Mr. Speaker, that they don't announce it for every house they build, and for every phase as the house is being built. I hope that they have a broader vision to say Habitat for Humanity is a great program but we need to expand in other areas to make sure housing is affordable for many of our working men and women that are struggling to make ends meet on a day-by-day basis, never mind a month-by-month basis, Mr. Speaker.

So from northern Saskatchewan, the people that work and that have rented these houses for a year, give them the chance to buy this house and let them seek independence from you and from

that government, Mr. Speaker. I think it's really, really important that that message get to the minister of housing. And if you don't think, if you don't think that the working families are upset, they're very upset. They're very upset because you've taken the one opportunity that they've had to own that home after years of renting.

And basically this minister has said, from now on you're renting off us forever. And guess what? We're going to increase your rent as well. We're going to increase your rent from a cap of 850. You're going to be paying something like 16, 18, \$2,200 a month for your rent. And, Mr. Speaker, that's what this government's done and that's what this minister's done. And they refuse to go back and correct this injustice, and that's why we're voting against this budget because this government took actions that were contrary to the best interests of many working families in northern Saskatchewan by the silly notion of getting rid of the RPO.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is going on and on and on in terms of why, why we oppose this government and their spending patterns, Mr. Speaker. And I'll go through the list if they want. There's 49 of them, I've gotten through seven on the list, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things that's really important, I watch this and I kind of find this really odd. Being from northern Saskatchewan, I was privy to sitting with many people that were very strong rural leaders, Mr. Speaker, over the years.

And you look at Maynard Sonntag, Clay Serby, these are some of the guys, Lorne Scott, and as you sat with these guys you learned a lot off these guys, if they spoke to you about how agriculture works, Mr. Speaker. And then so northern Saskatchewan, you wanted to hear what they had to say because we don't have an agricultural community in northern Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, today now, I look at the agricultural community and they endorse the Saskatchewan Party. Quite a few of the rural areas supported the Saskatchewan Party. And now you hear their own Premier, their leader, getting up and talking about empty ships in the port of Vancouver, empty ships in the port of Vancouver. And if they don't resolve this grain crisis, guess what? Other countries are going to look at other suppliers, which means if we lose a customer on international basis, Mr. Speaker, for our wheat and for our other crops, Mr. Speaker, guess what? Guess what? Those customers are not coming back. These guys, they have customers that won't come back if Canada can't deliver. And what does that do? That threatens the economy of Saskatchewan as a whole. It threatens the economy of Saskatchewan as a whole.

The rails weren't moving the grain, Mr. Speaker. The province wasn't doing anything to help rectify the situation. And when push came to shove, and when we in the opposition started questioning why they weren't doing things, Mr. Speaker, why they weren't moving the agenda forward, Mr. Speaker, what was their response? What was their response? Oh, we wrote a letter. You know, I'm sure I can hear a collective cheer from the agricultural community when all they heard that this government, this supposed rural-based government, all they'd done to fight back for the farmers and the producers was they

wrote a letter.

And on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we shook our head and we said, shame, to them. Because the very people that helped them get here, they forgot about the agricultural producers, Mr. Speaker. And I say to the producers out there, the farm families, that this significant problem, this significant crisis is not being heard by the Saskatchewan Party government. And Ottawa is not going to do the necessary work that is going to help resolve that backlog of transporting some of the grain, Mr. Speaker. We know that. They won't fight the railway companies, Mr. Speaker.

So the most significant threat to our provincial economy — and even I understand that from the North — the most significant threat to the economy of Saskatchewan is this backlog of our products when it comes from the farm community, the agricultural sector of our province, Mr. Speaker. And this government's sitting on their hands. And all they did to react to this was write a letter, Mr. Speaker. And they had the opportunity when the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Ritz, showed up in Saskatchewan. And all Mr. Ritz done was simply got a pat on the back, and that was it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, you have to provide the leadership necessary to get that grain moving because you've got empty ships. And I can visualize that. You have empty ships in the port of Vancouver and you've got bins full of grain back home and nothing is moving. So, Mr. Speaker, if that isn't a crisis for the Saskatchewan Party, what is, Mr. Speaker? What is their crisis? So I say to them, they should be ashamed of how they have prepared Saskatchewan overall for this challenge. They should be embarrassed with the lack of action on that front. And they should do more than write a letter.

Now I understand that coming from northern Saskatchewan and, despite my limited involvement in the agricultural sector, Mr. Speaker, I can understand, geez, the grain's over here and the ships waiting for the grain are over here. Why aren't they moving it there? It's very simple, Mr. Speaker, and these guys sat on their hands and they didn't say a word. Not a word.

Now, Mr. Speaker, they wrote a letter. They wrote a letter, they said. And we sit back and say, that's it. That's all rural Saskatchewan and the producers who are really important for our economy, that's all they deserve as a response from our Sask Party government is you write a letter? I think there should be more leadership, more resources, and more action should have happened three months ago, Mr. Speaker. And that's why I'm opposing this budget because they have made a huge mess of this bumper crop that we enjoyed, Mr. Speaker. And they still can't get it figured out.

Every day producers lose money. And every day Saskatchewan loses money. And every day many families lose hope that our base in the agricultural sector . . . because this government can't figure out the very basics. And you know, what really upsets me as well, Mr. Speaker, on this budget, is they had all the opportunity. They inherited a booming economy, a growing population, money in the bank. And now this year, they have a record crop. The economy's coming along really well. We want to see that continue. And, Mr. Speaker, they've one mistake after another mistake, after another mistake. That's why we're

opposing this budget, Mr. Speaker.

Now we look at some of the other points. When it comes to education, Mr. Speaker, not enough educational assistants. They let go over 200, I believe was the number. And there's no cap on the classroom sizes. They cut the educational capital budget by close to 24 million this year. So, Mr. Speaker, you look at the cuts and the decisions that they've made around education, and what did they do in exchange for that, Mr. Speaker? They put more money around standardized testing. Now how does that work, Mr. Speaker, from our perspective? How does that work? You ought to put resources in the classroom to ensure that you're teaching the kids, that you are not teaching just a test to the kids, but you are teaching the kids in many, many ways.

And as well, Mr. Speaker, look at the P3s, the rent-a-school scheme. That goes back to our argument on this side of the Assembly, that when you do the P3s, you're punting debt down the road. You're punting debt down the road. You're not assuming that debt for that year. So what I always maintain, on this side of the Assembly, the reason they're doing that is they want to get the credit for the announcement this year. But somebody else 6, 7, 8 years from now will pay that bill or maybe 10, 12 years from now, they'll continue paying for that bill. And the fundamental argument that we have from the financial perspective is you shouldn't be punting debt down the road because it doesn't portray to the people of Saskatchewan exactly what our financial challenge is.

[16:15]

The other point I think is also important, Mr. Speaker, is how about accessibility? How about control of that privately owned school? Those are some of the issues that are just as important as the financial capacity we have as a province and the responsibility that we should assume when we're talking about P3. And what are we asking for in the Assembly, Mr. Speaker? Accountability and transparency. That's what we're asking for when it comes to P3s — another reason why we're not supporting this budget, Mr. Speaker.

If you look at the increases for SaskPower, 15.5 per cent over the last three years, Mr. Speaker; increase in monthly bills for SaskTel Internet, Mr. Speaker; increase in campsite fees; SaskEnergy increases; SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] increases, Mr. Speaker, these are all reasons why we're not supporting this budget, Mr. Speaker. And the list goes on, Mr. Speaker. The list goes on.

Highway 39 to Estevan, no commitment, just a lot of planning talk. The highway to Wollaston Lake, the highway to Wollaston Lake, great fanfare they announced the highway to Wollaston Lake. What happens three years later? They cancelled it, Mr. Speaker. They cancelled it, Mr. Speaker.

Thirty-five hundred dollars for sensei training, as I mentioned before. And what's the worst part about that, Mr. Speaker, is it's a total waste of money, a total waste of money. And they continue pumping that money into an American-based consultant, Mr. Speaker, simply because they refuse to admit that they're wrong. They're stubbornly dismissive of some of the concerns that the people of Saskatchewan have. And quote

Margaret Thatcher on your argument, the member from Martensville, when people ask you why you're wasting \$45 million. And see if that'll appease the anger of taxpayers that just can't stand a waste of taxpayers' money, Mr. Speaker.

Now we go back, Mr. Speaker. There's a number of issues. West Meadows horse racing are now suing the government because they made a decision to arbitrarily exclude one organization over another, Mr. Speaker. Fifty-one million dollars cut in health care. Flip-flopping on the heritage fund, Mr. Speaker, no money saved. That's another three reasons why we are not supporting this budget, Mr. Speaker.

No minimum care standards for seniors — another reason. Wasting money, as I mentioned, on standardized testing. Not enough support, Mr. Speaker, overall for our many front-line workers in health care that are telling them we need to do more to be able to work this province efficiently when it comes to health care delivery overall.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's a number of other reasons why we're voting against this budget and this government. The film tax credit. Who killed the film tax credit? It was a burgeoning, exciting industry for Saskatchewan. The Sask Party. Another reason why we're opposing your budget.

Environmental codes. Still waiting to have anyone introduce any environmental code. Is the environment not important to the people of Saskatchewan? You bet it is, Mr. Speaker. You bet it is. They've talked about it, haven't shown any leadership on that front.

Greenhouse gas emissions, still growing. Nothing to reduce them, Mr. Speaker.

The carbon capture project. Over \$150 million over budget . . . \$115 million over budget, Mr. Speaker.

The U of R residence. There's no support to finally build on the campus, Mr. Speaker. We need to get greater leadership on that.

Community pastures, Mr. Speaker, that's another issue that our critic has brought up. No support, no leadership, and no really strong will from the Saskatchewan Party government to work and to really work with the patrons to help manage these community pastures.

The Go Green Fund. They have eliminated that funding, Mr. Speaker. And it's almost like they think they've cleaned up the environment because the only thing that was really working well was the Go Green project. And they cancelled that, Mr. Speaker, to engage the public of Saskatchewan to the extent that they should.

Now I look at some of the places like Prince Albert. Laundry services were privatized, Mr. Speaker. The bridge wasn't built. And yet the members from Prince Albert and the members from that region are yet off on another promise to spend \$2 million on the planning of a new health facility. Well perhaps maybe they should resolve their first promises first before they go off on another jaunt and another opportunity to make more promises that they can't keep.

That's a simple message, you know, simple message. Maybe you should deliver on your promises that got you to office first before you embark on another promise of yours. You know, the people of Prince Albert are pretty sharp voters, and they'll figure you out once they know that they have not delivered, despite the support that was afforded to both members from Prince Albert and the surrounding areas as well, and the surrounding areas as well, Mr. Speaker.

There's no support from this government on the expansion of CPP [Canada Pension Plan], on CPP, to help everybody with pensions, Mr. Speaker. None. Very, very quiet.

Wolseley hospital is still not up and running, again a rural-based hospital, Mr. Speaker.

The rapid response team. This is a good one. The rapid response team for potash workers. Not helping, Mr. Speaker. There's many more job losses, Mr. Speaker. There's 120-plus jobs locally. There's 51 good-paying jobs in Esterhazy and other communities. And, Mr. Speaker, when the potash companies downsize all these employees, the only thing that the Premier spoke about and the Saskatchewan Party government spoke about was this rapid response team.

So the rapid response team, in my mind, I thought maybe it would be about four or five vans driving down there with people that could help with resumés, people that could help with counselling, people that could work with these families, and a bunch of other employees that would pick up these families.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the rapid response team probably consisted of one vehicle showing up a week late, and that was it. So why say things like rapid response team and nobody shows up at the work site? And the workers know that, Mr. Speaker. That's another reason why we're not supporting this budget, Mr. Speaker.

And again I go back to the Ministry of Social Services, \$5.5 million cut in salaries. And that was expressed today by our member from Saskatoon Centre who's been championing the whole argument that we've got to do more for our children in care, that we've got to be serious about the home care, that we've got to be serious about homeownership and a host of other issues that he's been bringing to this Assembly. But once again across the way all they want to do is gloss over the challenges and not really respond to the issues, and try and manage the people that are complaining as opposed to addressing the issues that really, really challenge our people of Saskatchewan. Another reason why we're not supporting the budget, Mr. Speaker.

And let's look at the tuition costs going up because they're not funding the universities enough, Mr. Speaker. They're not funding the universities enough so now the tuition is going up, and they've also authorized their debt to go up. They can go deeper in debt now and, Mr. Speaker, that's compliments of the Saskatchewan Party government, Mr. Speaker, despite having a booming economy, record revenues, and a growing population. This is what they've done to our universities, Mr. Speaker.

And there's very simple things that also help like the minimum

wage. We've asked them to index the minimum wage so people can actually try and make some decent money working on a lot of these minimum wage jobs. People are still waiting.

And you look at the Saskatoon bridges that people have been talking about. It's important for P.A. It's important for St. Louis. It's also important for Saskatoon. There's been no funding allocated to continue building on the success of Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. Another reason why we're not supporting this budget.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I look at North Battleford, another fine community, Mr. Speaker. They have been asking for money to help with their highways and their urban interconnection program, their urban connector program. Nothing in this budget to help The Battlefords area. You look at the Saskatchewan Hospital, the replacement of that. They're slow-walking that particular project. They're trying to look at a P3. People are asking all kinds of questions, what's going on there, Mr. Speaker. You look at the challenges that the community, a strong community like North Battleford is struggling with some of the crime rate. Nothing from this government to help address that.

So the list goes on as to what plagues many of our cities, and there's no responses from this government. That's another reason why we are not supporting this budget, Mr. Speaker. And the list goes on. I have listed 49 reasons why this Saskatchewan Party government budget is not to be supported by the NDP, Mr. Speaker.

Now I want to say a couple more things before I wrap up, Mr. Speaker. First of all, on the Premier's announcement at SARM — I think it was SARM or SUMA — when he was musing about increasing education property tax, and then the budget came along, there was no increase. So my argument on this side of the Assembly in the opposition saying, why would he muse about it openly and not be doing it? Did he get a raft of letters from people saying, don't do it? Or was he just playing the people of Saskatchewan? Or was he just playing the people of Saskatchewan by saying that? Then the budget comes along and everybody expects the tax increase to be there and then with great fanfare they say, oh there's no tax increases. And they want the people of Saskatchewan to applaud that, Mr. Speaker?

Well of course the NDP want to make sure that we manage our money well, Mr. Speaker. We want to make sure we manage our money well and not have any tax increases. That's one of the fundamental points of building a good, solid economy, Mr. Speaker, but what you shouldn't do is play on people like that. You shouldn't be announcing a tax increase and then turning around and saying, okay we're not going to do it. That is my point about managing the people, managing the message, and manipulating the whole process to make yourself try and look good through this budget. Another reason why we are not supporting this budget.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's tons of reasons why. There are tons of reasons why we're not going to be supporting this budget, Mr. Speaker. And one of the biggest, most fundamental points that I would make as the reason why we're not supporting this budget is debt is going up by \$1.5 billion as a result of this budget — \$1.5 billion. Now I don't know how much more we've got to do

to get it through the Sask Party thinkers over there — if there's such a thing as a Sask Party thinker — that you have record revenue. Okay? You've inherited a booming economy. Thank goodness the economy is still doing good despite some of your best efforts to destroy it. Thank goodness, Mr. Speaker, we have record population growth.

Thank goodness, Mr. Speaker, we had lesser debt and money in the bank when you assumed government because everybody in Saskatchewan knows that's what you inherited. That's what you inherited, and we all know that on this side of the House. And that's why when you start crowing about how you've saved Saskatchewan, we all start to laugh over here because it's still pretty funny to us of how you're trying to claim something that you had nothing to do with. That's the fundamental argument that I make on the doorstep. And we start laughing at that.

And the worst thing I think Saskatchewan people don't like is somebody claiming credit for something they didn't do. And the right wing, no matter what they say, no matter what they say, no matter how much they try to rewrite the history of Saskatchewan, they didn't build this economy, Mr. Speaker. They simply inherited this economy. I've said that to the Minister of Finance. Now I'll say it to the Premier. I'll say it to all the front bench. You just simply inherited the economy and the largesse that we enjoy as a province. We know in Saskatchewan's view, from our perspective, we have a great opportunity. We have a great opportunity to build on the richness that the province has.

And the Minister of Health chirps from his seat, and he talks about the hotels going up in his home community. And I think that's great, Mr. Speaker, but he gives the impression that he's out there with the hammer and nails and he's helping build those things. Mr. Speaker, it is the companies that were attracted here that are helping build the economy in Weyburn and throughout all the province of Saskatchewan, not the Sask Party government. So stop trying to connect yourselves with actually having the economy built because you simply inherited the economy and the largesse attached to that economy, Mr. Speaker. That's the bottom line. So the right wingers, no matter how much you complain, no matter how much you try and rewrite history, you simply had nothing to do with the booming economy that Saskatchewan has. You have simply inherited it. We understand that.

Now all we ask, all we ask in this whole argument that we have made time and time again is, don't mess it up. That's all we've said. What you do — and I like that, Mr. Speaker — what they ought to do is like all the backbenchers do when we have an issue or a bill coming forward. They're getting a bunch of pages delivered to them saying, you will read these documents. And just read those. Don't deviate.

So I'll ask the Saskatchewan Party government, don't deviate from the NDP plan on the economy. Just keep that in front of you, guys. Don't change the royalties. Don't try and mess with any of the alliances we had with the industry that develops a lot of the resources in our province. Continue working with . . . That's one of the areas that they're severely lacking, Mr. Speaker, is working with the organized labour force of our province. But please don't deviate. Don't try and put your right wing spin to it because you'll mess it up. You'll mess it up as

sure as I'm standing here, Mr. Speaker.

And that's one of the reasons why we sit here in opposition. We sit here and we kind of enjoy when they get up and they claim they've done all this. They claim they've done all that. They claim that they're the greatest things invented. Oh, but the world didn't start since 1991. Well, Mr. Speaker, in 1991 we assumed fifteen and a half billion dollars in debt as a province. In 1991 we paid \$1 billion in interest each and every single year that we were in office, Mr. Speaker. In 1991 our Education budget was less than a half of what our interest payments were. And I can go on and on and on.

And, Mr. Speaker, the greatest tragedy in Saskatchewan politics in my view, the greatest opportunity that we had in my view — and this is really important for me to express — is that imagine for a moment when our premier who I served under, Romanow, who was our premier, imagine what Romanow could have done with a billion dollars that he could have used for Saskatchewan's growth, Mr. Speaker. We could have been much further ahead today, much, much further ahead.

[16:30]

And now what really irks me is the right wing put us in that debt to begin with. And it took us 14 of the 16 years to rebuild. And they come back, when everything's going great, and all they do is be critical of the NDP, the people that done the hard work alongside of the rest of the people in Saskatchewan to rebuild this province, to rebuild our credibility, to rebuild our finances, and to rebuild our economy, Mr. Speaker.

And now we see they're making mistake after mistake after mistake. And simply we can't sit here allowing that process to continue. That's the reason why I'm voting against their budget and supporting our amendment, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To join in on the debate on the budget. And to give some opening comments, I'd like to start out with actually saying thank you very much to my CA [constituency assistant] who works in the office back in La Ronge, who cares about the people of northern Saskatchewan, who's a First Nations community member, Lac La Ronge Indian Band, and works hard trying to deal with the issues that are facing his community members, but also many others that have issues.

So I want to thank him for his dedication, his hard work, for the years he put in, and he is, he's a very dedicated individual. He cares about people and the man has a heart of gold. He cares about children, he cares about community members, our seniors, our elders. And he does a great job doing casework, trying to work with ministries to deal with some of the situations — the cost of living, whether it's housing — there's many issues facing northern residents. And the people that I represent in the Cumberland constituency, there's many challenges that they're facing when it comes to the cost of living to provide rents. And we see what this government has done. So I just want to thank him for his dedication.

I'd also like to thank my family, my wife, and my 17

grandchildren, and all my kids. I just want to say thank you for your dedication and support. And you know, sometimes it's not easy dealing with the challenges we deal with in life, and I just want to thank them for their support that they give me. And you know it wouldn't be easy for us without a supportive spouse and everything else. So I want to acknowledge my wife, Sandra, and my family.

You know, I want to start out talking about the community. The communities came together to fight for long-term care beds in the North, in the health region, the health region that I happen to represent as the MLA for the Cumberland constituency. I'd like to thank those who came together to fight for our seniors, for our parents, and for our grandparents so that they can stay in the North where their culture, their language, and their families are. That's so important. And many people came together. And I'm going to thank individuals and acknowledge them for the great work they did to raise the concern of long-term care.

And it's, you know, it was sad to see. And I know the Croft report identified clearly, from the 2009 Croft report that the health region, you know, went away, and the undertaking of doing that report to look at seniors' care, and it came out critical, code red, as they said, short. We needed 48 beds. So having said that, and the concerns that we were hearing . . .

And I want to, I want to now at this time . . . Since 2008 many of the community members have brought this concern to me as the MLA. I heard that on the doorsteps. I heard that from individuals. But I want to acknowledge a few of those individuals, and I think it's only right and important to acknowledge the good work that our community members did, that our region came together to support our seniors. And that's the right thing to do and they did that, and I want to thank them.

I want to start off by thanking Lorne Klassen, you know, Lorne Klassen. Lorne Klassen, clearly, clearly an individual who raised concerns, who was shocked to see seniors leaving, seniors leaving northern Saskatchewan. And as he told me, Doyle, he said, these seniors go down there. They're not used to the culture. They're not used to the language. They don't speak the language. People don't understand the sensitivity of these individuals. They're away from their family, their loved ones. Doyle, it's sad, he told me. They die down there. We bring them back and we bury them in the North. That is wrong. That is wrong.

And I want to thank Lorne Klassen for his dedication with the petitions, with circulating, doing all he could, raising those concerns not only with the opposition, not only with the member, but he also raised them with the government. I know he did a great job trying to do what he could do. It was about taking care of seniors, and it wasn't about politics. So I want to thank him.

Barbara Blyth, she's a senior in La Ronge. She's got terminal cancer. I want to thank her so much for her strong, strong words, her wisdom, and the way she conducts herself and the way she carries herself, a very proud woman. She just wants seniors in northern Saskatchewan to be treated right. She wants an opportunity to stay in the North. She said, Doyle, I want this facility; I want to be able to stay in the North.

And it's unfortunate, you know, Mr. Speaker. She wanted to stay in northern Saskatchewan. She wanted long-term care. So having said that, I want to thank her for that, the challenges, and her dedication.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I look at the communities within the health region. There are many, many within the health region that have done great work raising the issues, raising the concerns. And they have volunteered, whether it's on a committee, signing the petitions, whether they're just seeing me on the street, in a restaurant, in a grocery store, saying, you know, this is wrong. We need to do better for our seniors. They deserve better. And I want to acknowledge those communities that have done this. And there's many leaders, but we talk about the volunteers too. There's so many people who volunteered to do whatever they needed to do to help out.

Then we have the leaders of our communities, of the health region. There was leaders that are within the Cumberland constituency that came together, raised their concerns and will continue to raise, and supported the petitions, supported the cause, and saying clearly, clearly said, this is wrong. This is wrong to have our seniors leave their homes. So far away, whether . . . You look at the health region, it's huge. To see our community members taken away, that is wrong.

Now I also want to acknowledge individuals within the health region that were very supportive and did their part to do all they could. So I acknowledge the health region and their staff. I want to do that.

But I don't want to forget the many families who were dealing with their parents, their grandparents, whether their mushom or their kohkom, to have a place for them. And many of them didn't realize until they went and applied because they tried to keep their loved ones with them as long as they could. But when they did need to put them in long-term care, to get told and found out the waiting list was 40-some, or the waiting list was this long — 38, 42, whatever it was — that you'll have to take your loved one south to find a bed for them, take them away from the culture. And like I've said, and to those family members who never gave up, who never gave up, who constantly fight the battle, and some of them lost their loved ones, my heart goes out to them. They should've been in the North with their families and their loved ones. But having said that, I want to acknowledge them.

Some wondered, Mr. Speaker, if we could get the job done, if opposition could get the job done, if it could make a difference. Some wondered about that. If the petition would be effective, some wondered about that. And they questioned that. Was this the right thing to do? If a community and the communities in the health region could make a difference, some wondered about that. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, yes. Yes we did. Yes we can make a difference when we work together.

Now because of this pressure that the people of the region have put onto this government and because the public embarrassment has caused this government inaction on building long-term care spaces in northern Saskatchewan in the health region that I rent . . . clearly the government, the government because they were embarrassed to do it. A lot of pressure. And I give credit.

I stood here on behalf of the people, presenting their petitions to this government to get action. And the government, at the end of the day, the government did the right thing with some planning dollars to start a long-term facility in the planning stage for the health region, in the health region. Was that the right thing to do? Yes it was. It was the right thing to do. It's not enough, and we still have a lot of work to do. The planning will get started.

But many people were hoping they would get a facility. They wanted a facility. Well they got 500 for planning. We'll see how this goes. I'm hoping. I'm hoping. And we'll see where this goes. We'll see. The people will judge. That's fine. People will judge. It's a start, and I've said that. And it's on the right track to getting the planning.

But we don't want this to be a little snail pace that it takes forever to get a facility that we know and the government knew . . . And people have said this, Mr. Speaker. People have made it very clear. Since the 2009 report, critical code red, they know. The government knows. It's been explained through petitions, through letters, through everything, so they know. So we need the facility now. So there you go. I share that. Now, Mr. Speaker, there was many people to thank for the great work they did to get this in the budget.

Now having said that, let me tell you where this government did not do the right things with this budget. And I want to share them. What we didn't see in this budget, Mr. Speaker, what we didn't see in this budget, Mr. Speaker, for the people of the Cumberland constituency that I represent and am honoured to come here to represent.

We look at roads. We look at the roads in northern Saskatchewan, and I'm going to talk about some of the roads in northern Saskatchewan. You look . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And I want to talk too. And I've shared. And I've heard from leaders, community members who, in the North, clearly say, we didn't get the response we want in this budget to help us with our roads. And I'll talk about individual roads and say why the commitment from this government, they were, you know . . . And at the end of the day, they deserve better. They do. But here, we'll talk about this.

You know, Highway 123 to Cumberland House voted the worst road in Saskatchewan. It's going to be coming up. CAA [Canadian Automobile Association] will be voting again. Let's hope. Let's hope, you know, you can do a little work. We could wish that road would have the commitment of government to get the job done and especially on a road that was voted the worst road, Highway 123 to the Cumberland House, that represents a large community and, in my constituency, Cumberland House First Nations and the community of Cumberland House. The leadership, the community, we have served petitions on Highway 123 to take to government. The government could have done better. So that's one area.

We look at the paving promised for Pelican Narrows, Highway 135. And we look at leaders. First Nations, Métis community members expect better. They want their members, their community members, to travel on safe roads. And that, in this budget, failed that community. And they will judge, and I know that. They will. We'll have discussions and maybe more

petitions. They're talking, and they're doing what they need to do to bring this government to account. And we'll keep working.

Other members say, what good are petitions? Well let me remind you. They got La Ronge, La Ronge got themselves 500,000 for planning, and hopefully we'll get a facility, a facility, Mr. Speaker. So don't put the hard work that people put into signing petitions . . . When those members, Mr. Speaker, when those members, when those members put down individuals who put a lot of work into petitions because they care about a cause and they care about people . . . And they mock and say, what good does it make? I've said that already. Now I find it very shocking that members would even have the nerve to say that.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I think about the all-weather road to Wollaston Lake that was promised by this government in 2008. I was hoping in this budget, with record revenue, with the government always bragging about the growth plan, the economics that would bring into Wollaston Lake, this government would announce this road, the all-weather road to Wollaston Lake. And sadly this government turned their back on Wollaston Lake community. That is wrong. On First Nations community, that is wrong. On the municipality in Wollaston Lake, that is wrong. You turned your back.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Highway 102, La Ronge to Sucker River. Yes, there's pavement, falling apart, terrible shape. I was hoping. We petitioned this government another way, and we will continue. And those individuals tell me, Doyle, we're going to continue to fight to make this government do the right thing for northern Saskatchewan.

The road to Southend. I was there to visit. And I was there for the opening ceremony. They have a skating rink now, a dome. What an awesome skating rink that they have done for their community in Southend. The road to Southend is terrible. It's in terrible shape. You know, there's no gravel. The maintenance is very, you know, minimum maintenance that's done.

[16:45]

And I give credit to the workers. They only have so much that they can do with the resources that this government gives them to do, so I want to say that on that. Clearly the road needs to be taken care of. And the more commitment from this government to the leaders and communities of northern Saskatchewan and the community of Cumberland House, Southend, many of them, Pelican, this government . . . Wollaston Lake. This government has failed the people in the Cumberland constituency.

Now I also think about Far Reserve Road. There's also dusting. There's such a dust problem. There's traffic going to the regional dump, and the community has asked this government to help them. It's not just about dust control and spraying a little bit of calcium. It's about paving this road so that the dust that is affecting respiratory or these problems would be dealt with. And we'll continue, for those individuals, fighting. And we're going to continue asking for that to be done. And I know the leaders will continue to fight for that.

Now I think about the municipalities and the leaders, and we

look about infrastructure, infrastructure for municipalities, much needed infrastructure in northern Saskatchewan and the communities I represent but not only in the Cumberland but in Athabasca as well. We see the infrastructure, water and sewer. They need water and sewer. They don't have the resources to do the water and sewer. They don't have what it takes. They need help from the government. And they thought, they thought — many — and we thought and we were hoping they would have committed to helping out northern municipalities.

Now having said that, they can sit and say what they want, Mr. Speaker. At the end of the day, there's also roads in those municipalities and road maintenance within those communities that need to be taken care of on a regular basis. And when they don't have the resources and the government doesn't supply the resources that those municipalities need to supply the good work to those community members and the work that needs to . . . And it's about safety, Mr. Speaker. It's about safety. They need those dollars. They need the commitment of a government. And the government talks about a growth plan or, you know, the growth, steady growth, whatever. Don't forget about the municipalities in northern Saskatchewan and all over the province that have roads. So when I think about Cumberland constituency and the communities I represent, I talk about that clearly.

And we look, you know, at some of the landfills and the infrastructure that's needed in the landfills. We talk about the situations in many northern communities but rural Saskatchewan everywhere. I was looking at regional landfills or landfills in general. There is so much more resources needed, money by government, and did they get that money? I don't think so in this budget. They did not get what they need to deal with landfills, and that's terrible. That's unfortunate. And this government, this government has to do better for northern Saskatchewan and for municipalities to deal with rural or North or Cumberland. So I want to share that.

Now I want to talk a little bit about education. You know, safety is a big issue when it comes to the boards of education. And I was fortunate to sit on the board of education and I know that the boards of education are committed to safety, making sure our children have the best quality of education, have a safe environment. They do their best. But right now you have hand-tied them. They cannot generate their own mill rates so they have to go on what the government gives them or what the government cuts from them. And that is sad what this government has done with the capital budgets when we look at that.

When you look at roofs, and they're talking about the numbers, and I've heard different numbers, Mr. Speaker, 75 per cent of school roofs will fail in the next five years . . . The members can scream all they want. These are the facts. You've cut 23 million out of the capital budget for school divisions in this province when it comes to doing safety and taking care of our kids. And you should be ashamed of yourselves for that.

You talk about steady growth. How is that? How is that? How is that? You know we look at, Mr. Speaker, we look at EAs [educational assistants], the EAs. They could have put a commitment to making sure the resources were in the classroom, and they did not. They could have looked at smaller

class sizes. They ignored that. Goes to show you, goes to show you, they can talk. They could have put resources and supports in the classroom with the teachers to help our students, but they ignored that. That's clear in this budget.

Now they have millions for standardized testing. This government should put the money back into classrooms and back into resources of our children's education. That's what's needed by this government. And they haven't heard the individuals who have asked them. This is what needs to be done. This is the priority. You have made your choices. You have told the education . . . You don't consult them. You don't talk to them. You don't consult them. You don't talk. And that's sad.

You know I look at in this budget, Mr. Speaker, I look at clearly our northern trappers, our fishermen. They got nothing. The member from Athabasca talked about the housing, the shortage. And we've seen the RPO program, you know, the purchase, you know, the rental purchase option program that was out there to many northern families, not only in Cumberland but in the Athabasca and other communities where a program like this would be very useful to families to own their own home and to be proud homeowners. And I have served that petition in here for a reason, and we're going to continue, and I know individuals back home are going to continue to sign it and advocate. And we'll do all we can. That's clear, Mr. Speaker. That's clear. We'll do that.

Now we're going to talk a little bit about the housing issues. And we know many are seniors. The cost of rents have gone up for seniors, and that's wrong. And we're going to have to work that out with the minister and in estimates and we'll talk about those areas. That'll be clear.

One other area I want to talk about, you know, and it's sad when families lose their children, their loved ones. And we've had a number of them. I think four in a recent . . . just in a short period of time that have lost their life to house fires on our First Nations communities.

Education and training on-reserve is not just a federal responsibility, it's a provincial responsibility. And there was no money in this budget to deal with that, and it should. So this government has failed those First Nations communities that need those. And this government could do that. They could give training and they can give education to help on-reserve. Yes, they can. They can. If they wanted to make that decision out of this large amount of budget, they could. But we'll see what happens. It's up to them. The choice is there. But they could do that, Mr. Speaker. They could invest in that money to save lives of our children and our communities, and I challenge the government to do that. Do the right thing.

Now we talk about mental health. We talk about mental health and we see so many challenges. Front-line workers are doing a great job. They are out there. They're trying their best. And I've talked about that — addictions, the suicide rates in northern Saskatchewan — it's appalling, and this government should be ashamed of themselves, ashamed of themselves. You know, you look at the families and the grieving and the hardship that they go through because if the resources aren't there, the front-line workers are exhausted. They've done their part. They're doing

their part. There's not enough resources by this government. But this government picks and chooses what it wants to do. And that is sad, you know.

But I've talked a lot about the different things that have not and, in this budget, will not be addressed by this government's lack of commitment to dealing with the issues that face many in our province. And the government needs to do better for our communities in northern Saskatchewan, in the Cumberland constituency that I represent, but throughout our province.

I've talked about many things that were not in the budget, Mr. Speaker. I talked about many things that were not in the budget. What wasn't in the budget and what was?

What was there is millions more for lean consultants, for lean consultants. I want to be very clear. For lean consultants, we've got millions of dollars — millions and millions of dollars for lean. But we don't have money for a long-term care facility. We'll put the plan in, but we could have built it. We could have announced that the . . . [inaudible] . . . We could have done so much more, Mr. Speaker. But no, we chose to spend money, millions on the lean initiative. And there's a minister responsible for that. Let that minister deal with that and answer to those questions at the end of the day. Good. Let it, let it . . .

Now clearly, at the end of the day, I have said why, on behalf of the Cumberland constituency that I represent, the people that I come here . . . There is no way, no way, that this budget took care of their needs and their concerns. And they would be upset if I was to support this budget. That's why, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment and not supporting this budget, because it fails northern Saskatchewan, the people in Cumberland. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I have quite a bit to say today, but the members across never left me a whole bunch of time so I'll try to be as concise as I can.

First off, I want to thank my family, like many members have. My wife Leone, very supportive. Without her I definitely couldn't do this job. My oldest Katelin, in her third year of nursing in Regina here. Very proud of her. My younger daughter Rayanne, now Krahenbil, moving back from Ottawa to Saskatchewan in May, likely to pursue her business interests. In fact when she posted that she was coming home on Facebook, she had job offers right away. With her, my new son-in-law Austin Krahenbil will be back to pursue his career in geology largely, Mr. Speaker, due to the opportunities now available to our children back here in our new Saskatchewan.

I'm very thankful to my constituency staff, the legislature staff that helps us, the people in this room and that support this room, plus in our caucus office. Without them we couldn't do our job.

My seatmate, the member from Regina Dewdney, as the Deputy Whip does a great job. Working with him is a pleasure. He makes both of our jobs a whole lot easier. His sense of humour, his leadership qualities, his work ethic and dedication that he displayed on the football field, Mr. Speaker, we now benefit from our government and the people of Regina Dewdney

benefit from as well.

The people of Yorkton I'm very thankful to as well, to have put their trust, their confidence in me for allowing this privilege to serve them in this amazing building. I'm very pleased with the job done on this current budget. It means my children have an opportunity back here to build their lives and to move back to and build their lives, Mr. Speaker.

Our caucus, our cabinet, the hard work of treasury board, the Finance minister, his staff, all of them for their timeless work in delivering the seventh balanced budget. This budget, titled *Steady Growth*, dovetails with our Throne Speech and fits very well with our *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth: Vision 2020 and Beyond*.

A balanced summary budget of 14 billion with a \$71 million surplus, and \$105 million surplus in our government core operating account. That, Mr. Speaker, a budget with no tax increases, including no increase to the credit unions, and in fact through the indexing, the personal income tax is actually reduced this year. An overall spending decrease, a near record investment in infrastructure of 2.9 billion outside the Crowns, 5 billion in health care alone — keeping in mind the provincial income is expected to remain static this year.

Members across will criticize spending, but it begs the question, where would they cut? The members across ask for additional dollars for certain wants or initiatives. Where would they acquire it? Their last election has been pointed out. They had a \$5 billion spending promise with nothing to back it up. They haven't changed their tune, Mr. Speaker. Same old same old.

This is the only way that can happen: additional taxes, which would harm our family incomes, cost our jobs in our economy. We're growing. Our government intends to continue with the steady growth that we now enjoy. Independent sources expect growth in our province at over our 2.2 per cent forecast. However, Mr. Speaker, we've been calculating on the conservative side.

Some question, how can the government income be static with a growing economy? Well, Mr. Speaker, in this case one is the result of another. Lower taxes, investment — long-neglected areas by the NDP — and setting a competitive environment for people in business to do well reduces government income, however it sets the environment for the province to do well overall.

As is indicated by so many of Saskatchewan's indicators including job growth, average weekly earnings, manufacturing sales, retail sales, investments in new housing starts, valued building permits — the list goes on. We continue to remind ourselves, Mr. Speaker, however that a strong economy is not an end unto itself, but a way to provide better quality of life for all Saskatchewan people.

A huge amount of examples how my community be doing better, Mr. Speaker, but again time just won't allow me to do that. But there's investments in the college, in revenue sharing with our city, investments back in infrastructure, investment in the Crowns, investment into seniors, investment into people with disabilities, investments in education, investments in

health, Mr. Speaker.

So I just want to touch on a couple quotes really quickly, Mr. Speaker. Before I do I know the member from Athabasca's a very honest man. I know that because of this quote I have from the *Northern Pride* in Meadow Lake, September 17th, 2013, where he said, "The Athabasca NDP MLA said he's pleased with how things have been shaping up for the province financially under the reign of the current Saskatchewan Party government."

Mr. Speaker, I only have 30 seconds left. I can't get through all of these quotes. There's a bucket of them from independent sources outside of this building. Three people I want to refer to in my constituency: John Denysek, the regional director for Yorkton branch, Saskatchewan Abilities Council, sent me a personal message how happy he was with this budget. The end, Mr. Speaker: a big capitalized thank you.

Don Rae, president of Crusader Drilling and the chamber of commerce, very thankful. Mayor Maloney: the best revenue sharing deal. Other jurisdictions are jealous.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for entering this debate. I support this budget. I will not support the amendment.

The Speaker: — It now being after 5 p.m., this House stands adjourned to 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

[The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.]

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