



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

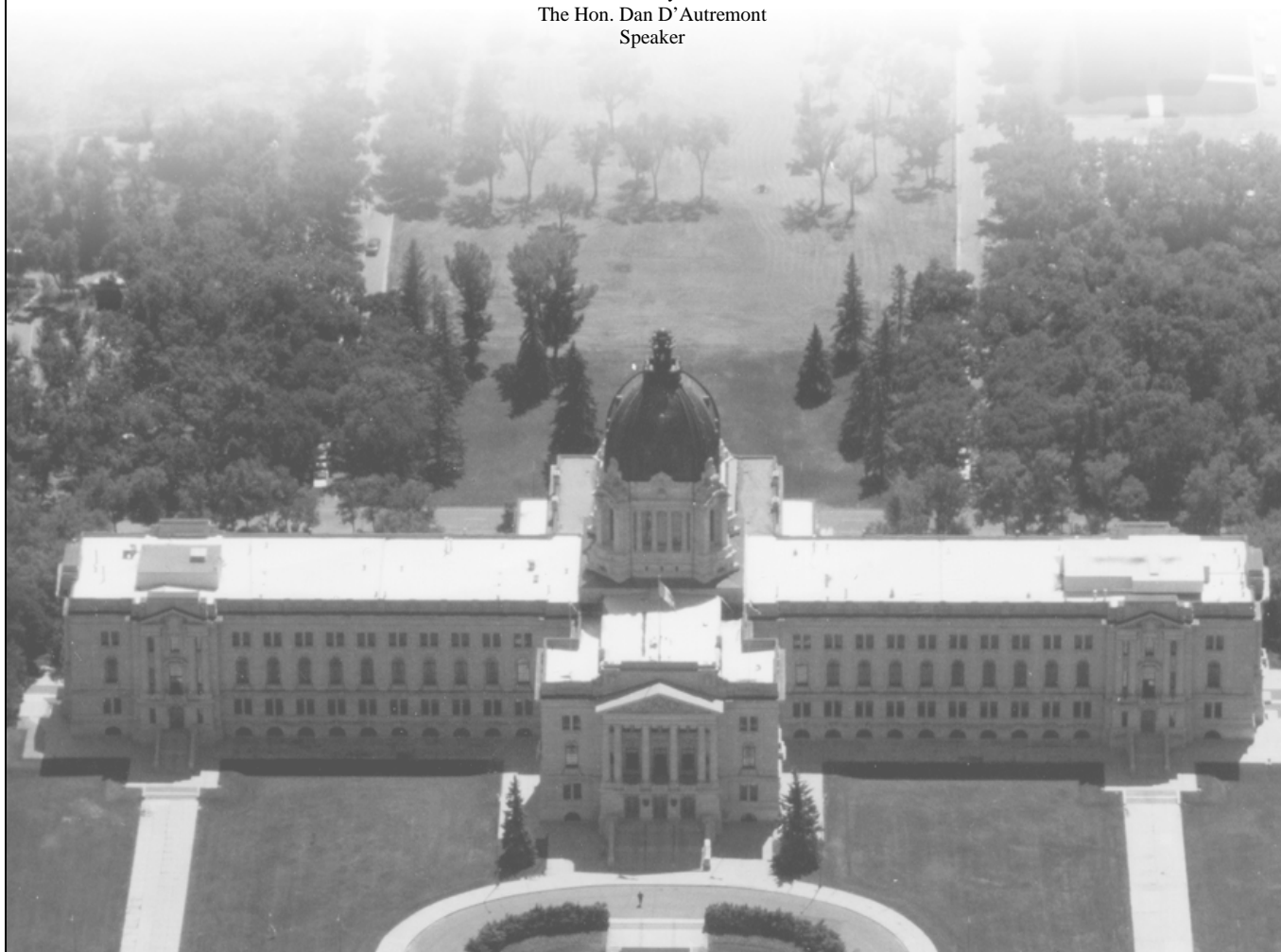
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

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



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Vacant		Prince Albert Carlton

[The Assembly resumed at 19:00].

EVENING SITTING

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

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

**MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY
(BUDGET DEBATE)**

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Krawetz that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Wotherspoon.]

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to rise and enter into the debate on the budget for the 2015-16 fiscal year here in Saskatchewan. It's an important time in our province as we've seen such a growth but some challenges as well. Yet we are doing well as a province, and we see that in terms of the revenues the province is gathering.

As I said just moments before 5 o'clock, I do have some comments to make. And I think there are really salient points about what this government has done to show its priorities and where its heart really, really lies. And I feel that, as I was talking about just prior to that, and I'll go into my main speech, but I think actually there was an editorial in the *Leader-Post* on the weekend that really summarizes what this term has been and how we started out, just three short years ago when we were talking about boundaries and redistribution of the new electoral districts here in Saskatchewan, and this government rammed ahead with three new MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly], bringing our total to 61.

And it was a choice, it was a choice that they had made. And they would have known at the time, they would have known that, is this a sustainable thing to do? Is this a sustainable thing to do? Because when you do this, when you say we're going to move from 58 seats to 61 seats, there are costs involved. And you better make sure it's worth it, that it's worth it particularly in Saskatchewan, because when we talk about Manitoba and Alberta, in fact the rest of Canada, we are highly governed, over-governed particularly at the provincial level.

And I just want to read parts of this editorial because I think it really shows where this government is at with its misplaced priorities and its pet projects. And unfortunately for the families and seniors of Saskatchewan, they're paying a price for it. And this government won't back down, won't back down when they know they are dead wrong. They just steam ahead. We see that with the John Black consultant getting \$40 million in his gravy plane. And this government, while it reduced the contract by a few short months, essentially plowed ahead no matter what. And we have, as an opposition, brought into the House many examples in the health area of how it's really gone off the rails,

really gone off the rails.

And this government will pour out its stats and pour out its speaking points but refuses to acknowledge what's happening to families and seniors and young people in this province. And it's those people who are truly paying the price for this government's obsession with its pet projects. Whether it's the smart meters or whether it's limousines in London or whether it's 228 per cent increase in consultants, it really doesn't matter. This government just won't back down.

But this is what this editorial says:

Given the elimination of "non-essential" government hiring and a pay freeze for politicians, it's curious that Premier Brad Wall's government has overlooked an easy and completely painless budget cut — axing plans to add three MLAs in next year's provincial election.

At close to \$700,000 a year in salaries, benefits and expenses, this is not chump change. Indeed, scrapping the new MLA plan would have gone a long way toward enabling Finance Minister Ken Krawetz to withdraw a painful measure in his 2015-16 budget.

It goes on to say, and I quote:

To save just \$1 million a year, the Saskatchewan Employment Supplement for low-income families will only be available to future applicants with children 12 and under, instead of up to 18 years of age.

The supplement helps the recipients with the cost of raising a family and transitioning from social assistance into the labour force. And as some critics have rightly observed, children don't get any cheaper to raise once they become teens — indeed the reverse is likely true as their food and clothing costs rise . . .

It goes on to remark that we have 58 MLAs already. Manitoba, with 157,000 more people, have fewer seats. And clearly right across Canada, you can talk about Newfoundland where I think they rolled it back by 10. They rolled it back by 10 MLAs. But this shows, this demonstrates where this government is at when it's got a pet project it's going to ram through, and it really doesn't, really doesn't care.

So, Mr. Speaker, obviously this budget is hurting families here in Saskatchewan and seniors. And this is only the start. We see the list of broken promises, the list of broken promises from this government, whether it's the active family benefit that's now being cut back; the senior drug plan that they've now cut twice, twice in eight years they've rolled that back; the student graduate retention program and what they've done there.

And of course the rainy day fund, the rainy day fund that had one time \$1.4 billion in it but now, in spite of record revenues, on how this government cannot control its appetite for spending, cannot control its appetite for spending, is now down to 200 million, \$200 million. So it really begs the question of where did the money go? And it's interesting when these folks over here talk about that, they like to start to answer that

question but they never can quite finish it. They never can quite finish it.

And what's interesting, and I will say this, Mr. Speaker, it will be very interesting in the speeches we hear this week. And we've heard it so far or I haven't heard it, and I think this may be the cause of the problem over there. These folks have a problem counting. They have a problem counting, and it's a problem by counting by tens. Quite often what I'll hear over here is they'll go 70's and then somehow they skip the 80's. And then we land at the 90's. You know they can count by 10: 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70. What happened to 80? What happened to the '80s? What happened . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, some of them say they were in high school so they're not, that they don't remember. What happened to the '90s? What happened to the '90s? But they love to go and talk about the '90s, but they go hand in hand, Mr. Speaker.

And I mean, they've woken up on this one. They forget all about the '80s. And I will say this: I will be very interested if any of them over there talk about the '80s in their speeches this week. They won't talk about that, and that's why we have a problem with this borrowed balanced budget because they can't get their math quite right. They have forgotten all of it. It's like they have collective amnesia, Mr. Speaker, collective amnesia. Nobody over there remembers the '80s. You know, and I just find that passing strange.

They will remember the '70s. I heard the member from Lloydminster going on quite eloquently about the '70s and then went on about the '90s. But what happened to the '80s? I want to know, what about the '80s?

So I'll be listening. And I know the Minister of Education is getting warmed up here, and maybe he's on tonight. He will tell us about the '80s. Because you know what's really odd? Some of them will say, I was in high school, but I know at least two of them were involved in the government in the '80s. Which two were they? Now there were at least two, and maybe it's a bad thing to talk about the '80s, but there's at least two of them that were very intimately connected with the government of the day of the '80s.

I mean, I'll leave that with the folks over there. And they'll get their speaking notes tomorrow about the '80s, and then we'll hear about that. But I bet tonight we won't hear a single thing about the '80s. They will go '70s, '90s, and I think that's a reason why we have a problem with the math over there.

Mr. Speaker, this really is not a good budget for the people of Saskatchewan. As I've said, there's all sorts of cuts. They've talked about how there hasn't been a tax increase. I don't know if PotashCorp of Saskatchewan would agree with that interpretation, and their stakeholders. And we saw that Friday morning they didn't come back with a vote of confidence in the budget of the day. In fact they know over there what happened with the stocks on Friday morning.

Mr. Speaker, when they talk about balancing their budget, but yet they have to borrow to balance the budget, this is really something that leaves a lot of questions in people's minds. But I really want to talk about a couple of areas that are very important to me, because as critic I have to raise those issues,

and one is about the disability strategy. And we were hoping that to see in the budget some placeholder of the money that's been set aside for the disability strategy, some recognition that there was going to be a significant investment in that strategy for folks who are living with disabilities because the government has made a lot of press about how they're doing the right thing. But we haven't heard a thing about that.

I am also really worried about what's happening in income assistance programs. And I'm really talking about social assistance; TEA [transitional employment allowance], the employment program, and SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability]. And, Mr. Speaker, you know it's interesting, it's interesting what's happening. And I do want to thank the minister for actually answering the questions. Last fall they didn't answer the questions, and we did get answers to this set of questions. Today I didn't get an answer to some of my written questions, and I'll talk more about that.

But interesting, interesting here, Mr. Speaker, the caseload for SAP [Saskatchewan assistance plan], TEA, and SAID at the end of February was 30,431 — over 30,000 almost 30,400 over, over that. When they took office, the caseload for income security programs was 25,998. That's 26,000. What we've seen since they've taken over in government is an increase of over 4,443 cases when it comes to SAP, SAID, and TEA. That's an increase, Mr. Speaker, of 17 per cent, a 17 per cent increase in families who are on SAID, SAP, or TEA. How can that be? How can that be when we've seen such a strong economy in our province in the last eight years? How can that be, a 17 per cent increase?

Well I have to say that we were pleasantly surprised in the Throne Speech when this government announced that they were looking at and they announced a poverty reduction strategy, that they were going to be taking a look at that. After many, many years of denying that that would help, they are now thinking of that.

But interestingly, and I would like to hear more about this from the members opposite when they get up to speak, what is happening with that strategy? Was there money set aside in the budget for that? We've not heard one thing about that, not one thing. The Minister of Finance didn't talk about it. The Premier's not talked about it. None of the people so far have talked about it. No one has talked about their hopes and fears. And yet we've seen, if the numbers they've given me are correct, a 17 per cent increase in the caseload for the Ministry of Social Services since the fall of 2007. That's not a small increase. Seventeen per cent is a significant increase.

So we need that strategy, and we need that strategy to have teeth. We need that strategy to have resources. And we can't wait a year from now to hear more about it, so I am really concerned about that.

Now the other thing I'm very concerned about is in fact around housing. Now of course this government, especially in Sask Housing, some of their announcements just don't make any sense over the last couple of years. And we're getting calls to the office. What does this mean? What does this mean? In their last announcement in January, they were going to do away with affordable housing in the cities, in 12 of the cities in

Saskatchewan. And of course this led to a lot of alarm in the tenants, 18,000 tenants who live in Sask Housing units across this province.

Sask Housing has such a great history of meeting the needs of seniors and those people, especially women, who are fleeing from abuse. And those sort of circumstances, social housing really was there to meet the needs of those who really need did the need. But there was also another group, another group about 4,500, 4,000 to 4,500 tenants, using a program called affordable housing which bridged the very low-income people, but usually families, to a situation where they might be able to save some money to either buy a house or get their lives in order so that they could rent a more affordable, private market situation. But now we hear this program is being cancelled, and it really is all social housing now.

[19:15]

And seniors are saying, well what does that mean for us? What does that mean for us? We're seniors. And there's some 11,000 seniors in Sask Housing units. And I really can't wait for estimates here because the Sask Housing folks will really have to justify why they are making this so convoluted for people who really need supports in their housing.

And yet we saw in this budget, in this budget we saw a reduction, a reduction of some \$5.4 million in programming for Sask Housing. You know, it went from 14.6 million down to 9.2 million. How can that be? How can that be? You know, we'd be very curious. The portfolio of Sask Housing at the very least deserves to be kept up, but we see a situation where we have a government here last fall in September walked away from a fixed-price contract with Deveraux. And interestingly Deveraux had just been awarded a project in Prince Albert that had a lot of questions about it, but here we had a situation last September where they were allowed to walk away from a fixed-price contract, you know.

And we've talked about this and how this does not give us any comfort about what's going to happen with P3 [public-private partnership] schools. If they can let Deveraux walk away from a \$10 million contract over \$400,000, what's going to happen with these schools, the P3 schools when they, if they get into a situation of difficulty? So we have some real, real issues with that.

Mr. Speaker, I also have questions about what's happening with child care spaces, but I also have questions about the child care subsidy. Here's a situation, the child care-parent subsidies is now at \$14 million — the lowest it's been since 2006. Now my chart doesn't go before . . . It could be even beyond that. In 2007 it was \$16 million for parents to have subsidies for child care spaces. And in fact this government took it up to 17.5 million, 18 million in 2012-13, and they've cut \$4 million over the last four years out of child care parent subsidies. What's happening there? We know, we know families need this. These are the same families that are counting on the employment supplements, the same families, the 4,500 families who really need support.

So when I say, when I raise the issue around these new MLAs, these three new MLAs and what does that mean for families

who are looking at cutbacks, we should be supporting families more with child care subsidies, not less. Not less. And here we are instead going to pet projects. Whether they be limousines in London, whether they be the smart meters, or whether they be John Black and his gravy plane coming up from Washington State or whether they be the new MLAs, we've got a real problem with priorities over there.

And, Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk about, I want to talk about my other area of concern is labour and occupational health and safety. And we were shocked, but we have seen this trend, we have seen this trend going with occupational health and safety — the decrease in inspections. And we raised those questions just awhile ago. We saw a 69 per cent decrease in inspections. So on an average of . . . In 2012 there was an average of 385 inspections. Now we're down to 120, and 94 per cent fewer violation notices. And the minister took notice of that and we're looking forward and we hope to hear about this new business plan.

But we are really concerned when we look at the numbers that back this up, that in fact there has been no increase in occupational health and safety inspectors. And if you think that the workforce . . . And this is a good news story in terms of the workforce has grown, and that's great. More and more people are working in Saskatchewan, but you would think that that would be the time to have more and more inspectors, more and more inspectors. It would only make sense. It would only make sense. But this government is actually having fewer inspectors and a plan that calls for fewer inspections. That doesn't make sense when we have the kind of sad record we have in terms of injury rates here in Saskatchewan. We're the second-worst in Canada. We've got to do better.

And I think one thing, if I could say to the minister right now, is go to WCB [Workers' Compensation Board], ask them for more funds for occupational health and safety. And this is the thing, this is the thing, that it actually doesn't cost the General Revenue Fund. It doesn't cost taxpayers any more money for occupational health and safety because it is funded, as the minister knows, by workers' comp. It's funded by WCB. And so that is a straight correlation between the two. It has no impact on taxes or any other source of revenue. It would have no impact.

So it would only be reasonable to say, we have more workers. More premiums are being paid for workers. Those workers deserve to have more inspectors. It only makes sense. I don't have the number with me, but I think — and the minister can correct me; I know his staff will review my notes tonight or tomorrow — but I think the workforce has grown by about 20 per cent. If it's fewer, they can correct me. But I think we need more occupational health and safety inspectors, and that's something that we'll be talking about in estimates. It's just got to be addressed. It's just simply got to be addressed.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think that we see a slippery slope when we see the ministry focusing on, and we raised this in estimates last year, about the fact that now you don't have to file minutes. It's a slippery slope when you start to not having to file minutes. You start not having to have meetings and, before you know it, it's not nearly as good a shape as it should be.

Mr. Speaker, our time goes by very quickly, and I want to say that it is a pleasure to hear and I want to hear from all sides about what's really happening in Saskatchewan. But I've got to tell you, this doesn't make sense for Saskatchewan families. It's not family friendly. I see the things and, you know, we are very proud of some of the initiatives that we've talked about, whether it's buy local, and we were happy to see the House fully endorse that, and we've talked about that in committee. Transparency and procurement, we have to wait and see where this government goes with that. Hopefully they'll endorse that plan. We know with buy local, they came in and in one of our debates, they were full dead against it, full dead against it. And I'm glad to see that they came on board with that.

I do want to say this. It's why I have to make a pitch about education funding. It will be interesting when I raise with the school boards in Saskatoon that they saw a 4.5 per cent increase. That was the number that was given out earlier today by folks, that that's what the school boards could be expecting. I don't know if we're going to get that in Saskatoon. We'll see.

The minister will go through a long list of schools that he's seen improvements. One that I am still waiting to hear about is asbestos removal in Pleasant Hill. Pleasant Hill School has been on that list for a long, long time, and I know the minister is very familiar with that school. It's a shame that a school that's now over 100 years old, very important in the inner city of Saskatoon, but it does have an asbestos issue. And I'm looking forward to seeing some address with that.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment. I think this government, while it's increased spending to record levels, full of waste, and failed to deliver opportunities to young people, fairness and affordability for families, and dignity and security for seniors. So I have to support the amendment; I will not be supporting the main motion. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And it's my pleasure to join in the budget debate this evening. As is custom, there's a few people I'd like to thank for allowing me to have this wonderful opportunity to represent the people of Regina Walsh Acres. And first and foremost I'd like to thank my beautiful wife, Larissa Steinley, for all the support she's given me the first three years of being elected. Time does fly when you're in this Assembly, and I can't believe this is our third budget that we're going to be speaking about. And I'm very much looking forward to discussing some of the things in the budget . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . my fourth budget, sorry. I believe the member from Regina Dewdney just corrected me; the fourth budget, thank you very much. And I'm very much looking forward to talking about some of the good things that are in the budget for the people of Regina Walsh Acres.

Secondly, I'd like to thank my constituency assistant, Heather Howell-Shiplack. She does a lot of work for us in the constituency office of Regina Walsh Acres. Obviously we spend a lot of time in the Assembly during the session, and it's their hard work that keeps us in tune with what our constituents

are feeling and what they're thinking in the constituency. And we're very happy to be able have such as great person as Heather, you know, to take those calls and forwarding their concerns on to us and then being able to reply to their concerns.

Mr. Speaker, I think this budget first and foremost is our eighth consecutive balanced budget, which we are very proud to be able to say that we've taken the opportunity to deliver balanced budgets based on the priorities we've heard from the people across Saskatchewan. We've had the opportunity to be out on the doorsteps of Saskatchewan. I believe this summer we hit 40,000 doors this summer, Mr. Speaker, and that's what we based our priorities on, the comments that we hear from the doorsteps across the province, Mr. Speaker.

Secondly, I think one of the most important things that we did that puts us . . . be able to comparing our record to the record from the members across the aisle, Mr. Speaker, is that we balanced this budget with no tax increases. These are the choices we think are very important and choices, the hard choices that we have to make. But I think when the members opposite were in government and they had the opportunity to make these choices, instead of making the hard choices, trying to balance the budget, they decided to balance the budget by raising taxes: raising taxes 17 times while they were in government, raised the PST [provincial sales tax] three times, raised income tax twice, raised business tax four times. And that doesn't even count all the education property tax hikes as a result of their failure to properly fund education, Mr. Speaker.

And I really think that members across the hall, across the aisle, they can heckle, but the member from Cumberland, the one thing he always wanted is . . . The member from Indian Head-Milestone said, he's a one-trick pony. And if one thing he wanted was a long-term care home, that long-term care home was in the last budget. And he voted against the long-term care home that was supposed to go into his constituency in La Ronge. How is that representing the people of his area, Mr. Speaker? And I think instead of heckling, he should maybe get on the phone and talk to his constituents and really find out what's important to them. Talk to the mayor. I think the mayor of La Ronge may know a little bit more about what the people up there want than the current member from Cumberland.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a lot about comparing our records because this isn't a referendum on our budget, it's a choice people have to make, a choice between what the current government would do or what the opposition would do if they had the pleasure, the honour of being in government, Mr. Speaker. And I think their record speaks for themselves.

And I think I want to compare some different ministries. We made the choice of spending. Our revenue is \$14.2 billion, and we made a choice to put three-quarters of that revenue into health care, social services, and education that includes K to 12 and advanced education. These are the priorities our government has, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and you can see those, our priorities, through the commitments we've made to those three ministries.

And I find it very interesting what the member from Saskatoon Centre was talking about how many people are on social programming. And I think he should do a little bit more

research, Mr. Speaker, because in 1995-96, 40,031 people were on social programs. That's the highest number in two decades. And that's when our province was losing people at an alarming rate because those members opposite, some of them that were in cabinet, were choosing to make priorities that didn't fit with the people of our province, Mr. Speaker.

So when he gets up there and talks about how many people are on social programming and then talks about SAID, that didn't even exist under their government. There was no programming for vulnerable people under that government, Mr. Speaker. For him to get up and talk about the SAID program, I think is disingenuous at best, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I think what I want to go on and talk about comparing the education records of our government to members opposite. Mr. Speaker, our capital investment is over 700 million in our first seven years. That's a 268 per cent increase compared to the members opposite.

The members opposite who want to talk about education, the member from Regina Rosemont gets on his high horse and talks about all the investments they would make. When they had the opportunity, they only invested \$190 million over seven years. And the member from Rosemont gets on his feet and talks about the capital infrastructure deficit that we have right now. Well we have that infrastructure deficit because we're trying to dig out of a hole that they left by not being able to put the maintenance money in, the capital money in to education facilities across this province.

[19:30]

I remember going to Waldeck School in the '80s. I'll talk about the '80s for a little bit because the member opposite wanted me to. So I was in grade 2, going to Waldeck School, and I remember at recess one of the most enjoyable things that we got to do at recess is, when it was raining, we got to go and empty all the water pails that were collecting water because there's holes in the roofs all over Waldeck School. So that's one of the things that we are able to do because that government in the '80s decided to invest money in schools. I was seven, Mr. Speaker, so I think that into the '90s, I believe, is probably when those members became, when those members became in government, that investment in education was just forgotten about, especially in rural Saskatchewan.

Although they did do something in schools in rural Saskatchewan. The member from Melville-Saltcoats . . . And I actually got his list here because he don't want to read it all off, Mr. Speaker. But I think I'll read off the investments that the NDP [New Democratic Party] made in education in rural Saskatchewan. Closed the school in Neville, Admiral, Piapot, Lang, Earl Grey, Kronau, Gray, Wilcox, Francis, Odessa, Glenavon, Moose Jaw, Willow Bunch, Briercrest, Crane Valley, Limerick, Macdowall, Prince Albert, Smeaton, Sylvania, Melfort, Uranium City, La Loche, Griffin, Golden Prairie, Windthorst, Lintlaw. Mr. Speaker, these are all schools in rural Saskatchewan, and there is four or five more pages that I think the member from Saltcoats does a much better job speaking about those rural schools than I do.

But I think it's important to know that any time there's a budget

that comes down, there is choices. You choose to invest or you choose not to. And 9 times out of 10, the members opposite chose not to invest in rural Saskatchewan. I might be giving them too much credit there, because it's probably 10 out of 10 times they chose not to invest in rural Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, but there are some things that they did invest in, some things that they decided to invest in. And this is their record so I would like speak about it. They decided to invest in Big Sky Farms. It was the NDP pig farm, \$26 million lost. They chose to invest \$90.8 million that they lost in Navigata Communications. It was a BC [British Columbia] cellphone company. They chose to invest \$35 million in SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company], a failed potato company. They chose to invest \$15 million in Channel Lake, a SaskPower and natural gas subsidy.

Two million dollars lost in Guyana, and I believe the member, one of the members talked about that's probably not the total investment they lost in Guyana because they had a lot of people fly back and forth from Guyana. And I think some of that money wasn't added into this \$2 million. Sixteen million dollars lost in NST Chicago, a US [United States] Midwest fibre optics company; \$9.4 million lost in Persona Inc. Newfoundland cable company; \$24.7 million lost at Retx.com an Atlanta dot-com company, Mr. Speaker. And the list goes on and on and on.

My favourite is tappedinto.com, a Nashville dot-com company. That cost \$6.7 million. Another that I think is very interesting is the \$2.42 million lost in Business Watch International which was a pawn shop company. So I don't know where else in Canada you can find a government that invested in a pawn shop. It'd be very interesting to see. I think they probably have a record for that, I'm assuming.

It is the same government that invested in the failed mega bingo. Like how do you lose money on bingo? I grew up in small town Saskatchewan. Everyone liked to go to a turkey bingo. I'm not sure how the captains of business over there couldn't make money on bingo. Rush Lake rec board made a lot of money on their turkey bingos, and the NDP government couldn't make a cent on bingo. That's an interesting priority that they had when they were in government.

Our Premier always says that the best indication of future behaviour is past behaviour. That's why the members opposite don't like us talking about their record because their past behaviour is something that they're not very proud of, Mr. Speaker. I think the people of Saskatchewan are really looking forward to them developing a plan so they can see if their future behaviour will mimic their past behaviour. They want to know, if you're going to talk about the government's investments and not having the right priorities, what are your priorities?

The member from Regina Rosemont stands on his feet after the Minister of Finance delivered a great budget, who I'd like to congratulate. I believe he'll go down as one of the finest Finance ministers in the history of our province. I think it's going to be a very sad day when the member from Canora-Pelly has his last day in this Assembly, and I think I speak for all of our colleagues in saying that he probably is one member that is unreplaceable. He has done an amazing job. His attention to detail, his passion for his job is something that inspires us all to

be better MLAs for their constituents.

And while I'm on this subject, I'd like to thank the treasury board, the members at treasury board and our caucus that did the hard, hard work to make sure that the priorities of the people of Saskatchewan are reflected in the budget that was presented by the Minister of Finance. And I think that they were able to do that.

That's why I would like to see a plan from the other side. The member from Regina Rosemont gets on his feet and says, you guys spent \$14.2 billion, record spending, and you spent it on the wrong things. But he never says what the NDP would spend it on, or he never actually puts down how much money he'd spend on their priorities either, Mr. Speaker. And I think it's incumbent on an opposition, yes, to be contrarian and talk about the things they believe the government is doing wrong, but it is also incumbent on them, a year out from an election, to start to say what their priorities would be, what they would do differently, how they would handle a \$700 million shortfall in oil revenue.

Wait a minute — that was the broken economics. That was, he was going to fill in the shortfall from oil by bringing back the film tax credit, right? I think that's how they figured they were going to be able to balance the budget. I'm not sure that's going to be enough to fill the \$700 million gap that oil has right now. I don't think so. And some of my colleagues are looking at me and looking a little uneasy about the decisions that might be made if that member had to do a budget, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to talk about some of the other feedback we've had on the budget so far and talk about some of the comments made by business leaders, by community leaders across this province about the budget that was delivered last Wednesday. And I think one of the things that is most important when a budget's delivered is how the most vulnerable in our society are being treated, Mr. Speaker. I think that's how you judge a society is by how the less vulnerable are being treated.

And one of the quotes I'd like to read is about some of the programs we have for disabilities. And I quote, "This is great. We are ecstatic. I felt like crying. We were just hugging each other, and we're very happy about the program (becoming permanent)." That's Janine Shurmer, mom of a six-year-old, Judah, who graduated from Lil Tots autism intervention program in Saskatoon. Mr. Speaker, I think that speaks about the commitments this government has, and the current Social Services minister and the former social services minister who did a fantastic job as minister, and shows how much they care about our most vulnerable, our most vulnerable children, and how our society as a whole is looking after each other.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about a few of the other comments that were made by community leaders, by John Hopkins; he's the Regina Chamber of Commerce CEO [chief executive officer]. He said, "We're very pleasantly surprised and relieved there's no tax increases here." Mr. Speaker, that is a very different approach than the opposition took. The opposition believe that when times are tough, you balance the budget on the back of people in Saskatchewan.

They always want to talk about where's the money gone?

Where's the money gone? Well I guess on this side of the House, we believe that the money does belong to the people of Saskatchewan, should go back into their pockets. So \$5 billion since 2007, because of the tax decreases made by this government, have gone back in the pockets of the people of Saskatchewan.

And I think that would be one of the biggest differences between this side of the House and that side of the House, is that a Saskatchewan Party government will always believe the people of Saskatchewan know best how to spend their money, and a socialist government will always believe that they think the government knows better to spend money than the people of the province. And I think that's something that we'll always run on. That's probably a platform for us, that people always realize that we don't think we should just keep on taking money out of people's pockets and wasting it on failed investments, Mr. Speaker, especially failed investments outside of this province.

Like I think we should put more money into the people's pockets instead of investing in Guyana or investing in Channel Lake or SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company]. And that's their past behaviour, and most people believe that would be their future behaviour if they ever got the ability to govern this province again, Mr. Speaker.

Another interesting quote on the budget that was delivered on Wednesday, Mr. Speaker, is, "Given the fiscal challenges, particularly with regard to oil, today the provincial government got the fundamentals right in balancing the budget." That's the Regina Mayor Michael Fougere. "We're in much better shape here in Saskatchewan than almost any other place in the world that's an oil-producing sort of place." John Hopkins, chamber of commerce.

We're calling it a good news budget, a business-friendly budget. As small-business owners, we're looking for three things: a balanced budget, sustainable spending, and no tax hikes. They're going to be pleased the government listened to them and their concern about the cancellation of the tax hike. They're also going to be pleased that this government didn't take the easy way out. It made some tough decisions. That certainly is . . . They deserve credit for that. [Marilyn Braun-Pollon, Canadian Federation of Independent Business.]

And Mr. Speaker, I really firmly believe that the people of the province . . . and I'm excited because we're going to go on the doorsteps this summer, this spring, summer and fall, and talk to the people of Saskatchewan and see exactly how they feel about this provincial budget. And I think when we're talking on the doorsteps and people in Regina Walsh Acres and people in Saskatoon Centre, they're going to say that this budget is appreciated. This budget reflects the priorities of the people of Saskatchewan.

I want to take a few minutes to talk about advanced education because there is some misinformation out there, I'm assuming being spread by the members opposite, about the graduate retention program. And I think it's a program that this side of the House wants to see sustainable, wants to see, you know, run in the future. It's not a walk back to the graduate retention program, Mr. Speaker. It's not a broken promise, as members

over there will parrot and talk about. It's a decision that was made to allow this program to be sustainable. People will still get their money back, Mr. Speaker, and I think it's fantastic that it's a program that the people of Saskatchewan, the young people of Saskatchewan will still be able to get money back — \$20,000 back over 10 years.

And they can yell across the hall and heckle and make fun of advanced education, but I think it's something that's pretty important to us. And the member from Regina Elphinstone, who was a former Advanced Education minister I believe, should know better than to try and commit some, make some misleading statements about a program, especially when it's a program that has brought 55,000 young people to the province of Saskatchewan. Eighty-three million dollars, 55,000 young people are working in this province, and it's fantastic, Mr. Speaker, that the young people in the province find it the place that they want it to be. They're not getting luggage for graduation just like they did back in the dark days of the NDP, Mr. Speaker.

And they can heckle across the aisle and talk about what their plan is, but they haven't really put anything on paper. If I was them, I wouldn't be heckling; I would be working on a policy to make sure that they can keep the nine seats they currently have. Because if the people of the province don't see anything from them but being contrarian and opposing everything the government does but not putting any policies forward, there are going to be a few less seats over there, Mr. Speaker.

And that's not being arrogant, that's just saying, eventually you have to stand for something. You have to stand for something. You have to actually go out and talk to your constituents. You have to door knock. And, Mr. Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Centre can heckle. I've door knocked my riding many times, Mr. Speaker. And I'm pretty happy to take this budget out and talk to the people of Regina Walsh Acres. I would say that he should probably spend a little more time in Saskatoon Centre talking to some of the young people in that area to see if they think that a party that has no policy is something that young people in Saskatchewan will vote for.

The reason that they don't like to see a population increase is that just means that there's more people moving to this province that will never vote NDP. And they don't want to see people doing better because they're going to say, well the government has to save us, right? That was basically their program in the '90s. And one of their high-up ministers, I believe, once said, good, the more people that leave, that just leaves more for the rest of us. How backwards of a statement could you have from a senior minister in a government? They want people to leave the province, then there'll be more left for the rest of us?

That is one of the most backwards statements I've ever heard in my life. And that's such an arrogant statement to make, and that's what people still don't understand from the NDP. There's never been contrition. The member from Massey Place, the current leader — and I say current because he may not have his job after the next election — and the deputy leader from Rosemont made a tree book, policy book promising \$5 billion in spending, Mr. Speaker, and didn't mention rural Saskatchewan once. They wrote a whole policy book and didn't say one thing about rural Saskatchewan. And they wonder why

all the seats on this side of the House represent rural Saskatchewan and they don't have one over there.

[19:45]

Maybe they should take a step back and find where . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The member from Wood River was talking about the manifesto. And I think it's going to be an amazing speech when he gets up, and I'm looking forward to it because he always delivers a great speech. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm very much looking forward to the day when the members can do more than heckle across the aisle. They can proudly stand up and talk about policy, have a policy debate, because I'll be looking forward to having a debate on what they would do when they're in government. But right now all they've said is, we'd spend more money, we'd spend more money; you guys are spending too much money.

And, Mr. Speaker, I am so looking forward to talking a little bit more about this budget and comparing some more records. In health, health care is one of the biggest priorities of people across the province, Mr. Speaker, and they see that our government keeps that priority, as they do, as the first priority. I'd like to talk about the health care budget, Mr. Speaker, and kind of the Saskatchewan Party government compared to an NDP government. The number of health professionals practising now compared to 2007: 423 more doctors or 24 per cent increase; 29 per cent increase in specialists; 44 per cent increase in pediatricians; 20 per cent increase in family practitioners; 2,600 more nurses of all designations, 20 per cent increase in RNs [registered nurse], 31 per cent increase in LPNs [licensed practical nurse], 74 per cent increase in nurse practitioners.

Mr. Speaker, the number of health professionals lost in the last five years of the NDP government: 173 fewer physicians, 455 fewer nurses of all designations, 155 fewer pharmacists, 95 fewer physiotherapists.

The number of people waiting now compared to 2007 for surgeries: more than 18 months, down 99 per cent; more than one year, down 97 per cent; more than six months, down 90 per cent. The NDP's record on wait lists: promised to cut surgical waits by 30 per cent in 1999; they actually increased wait lists by 61 per cent. That's their record. They can talk all they want about what they would do, but their record speaks more than their shallow words ever will, Mr. Speaker.

Saskatchewan Party record on infrastructure: over \$1 billion invested over seven years, built or building 15 new long-term care facilities, \$235 million for a children's hospital, \$100 million for Moose Jaw Union Hospital, 73 million transferred to regional health authorities for population growth.

Mr. Speaker, and this is something that's still important to the people of Regina. I hear it when I'm door knocking in Walsh Acres all the time. The NDP's record in infrastructure has spent only \$421 million on health care capital during the last seven years in government. They closed 52 hospitals, 53 if you include the Plains outside of Regina, which was one of the best health care facilities in the province, and they closed it down for petty political reasons because they wanted to make sure that they kept seats in inner city Regina. I can't believe the decision

that was made to close that health care facility. And the backlog of complaints that they probably got on that is amazing.

And you know what? They always talk about consultations. I wonder who you guys consulted when you closed the Plains hospital. Who do you think you consulted? I'd love the member from Regina Elphinstone to tell me who he consulted when they decided to close the Plains hospital. I think that would be an excellent conversation to have. They talk about consulting and how they like to speak with everyone, but when they were in government, which is another thing . . . Future behaviour is dictated by past behaviour.

I wonder who they talked to about closing the Plains hospital. Did they talk to the residents of rural Saskatchewan, southeast Saskatchewan? I wonder if they talked to the people in Cannington. I wonder if they talked to people in Estevan or Weyburn. I wonder if they talked to people in probably the south side of Regina even and said, you know what? I think we're going to close your guys's hospital. Are you guys okay with that? I wonder if that conversation happened. And I wonder if they had open houses and went and talked with everyone. I'm guessing that probably didn't happen, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't around at that point in time, but I've seen some flyers, some flyers that said, don't worry; your health care's going to get better if we close the Plains hospital.

Mr. Speaker, and long-term care is something that's very important to the Government of Saskatchewan. Our commitment to long-term care and our Health minister's commitment to long-term care can be seen by the investment that we're going to continue to put into long-term care homes. But they closed 19 long-term care facilities, 19 across the province. That former NDP government . . . I guess the former NDP government because now they're not NDP. They're New Democrats because the party's over, over there I guess because they've tried to rebrand themselves. They've rebranded themselves a fair bit, actually: CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] to NDP to ND [New Democrats]. I wonder where they're going next, but I guess that's something they should worry about, and not our government.

Mr. Speaker, there's a couple more things I'd like to get on the record before my time is over. One is comparing highway investments by our government to the former government, the NDP, ND now I guess. Mr. Speaker, improved over 8500 kilometres of provincial highway since 2007. Invested \$4.2 million in the Diefenbaker bridge in Prince Albert. Committed to building the southeast Regina bypass, the largest infrastructure project in Saskatchewan history. Over the past seven years the Saskatchewan Party government's invested \$289 million in the North — \$63 million, 30 per cent increase over the last seven years of the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP left a billion dollar pothole in Saskatchewan. And it's really interesting when we talk about leadership and ideas for leadership. When the NDP had their leadership nomination ongoing, can you believe the member from Massey Place didn't mention highways once? Not one policy on highways. That is unbelievable. So he runs a leadership campaign, doesn't mention highways because that's probably not important, then he's the author of a tree book, signed it, didn't mention rural Saskatchewan once in the whole

policy platform book they had. The member from Regina Rosemont must be shaking his head some days, I bet you. I can't believe that I lost that one, he's probably going.

Mr. Speaker, in 2003 when the Diefenbaker bridge needed repairs, NDP refused to even pay 50 per cent of the costs. So when the members from Athabasca and Cumberland stand on their feet and talk about investments they would make in P.A. [Prince Albert] and the North when their record shows virtually no investment, their record shows that they really didn't have that much concern about the Prince Albert bridge when they were in government, so now their rhetoric's really not matching their actions. And yes, they did want to invest in bingo. I still can't believe that.

Mr. Speaker, I think my time is coming short but there's just a couple more things I want to speak about, and that would be a couple more highlights that I'm going to be proud to take to the people of Regina Walsh Acres. And that is — I'm going to repeat myself — there is no tax increase in this budget. Mr. Speaker, that's putting, since '07, putting \$5 billion back in the pockets of Saskatchewan people. That's where the money went. Paying off \$3.3 billion, 40 per cent of the general revenue debt. That's where the money is going, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And saving \$300 million a year on interest payments that we'd have to pay if that debt was not paid down. \$8 billion in infrastructure since we formed government, more than double the investment of the party, the opposition party. \$1.3 billion for core infrastructure in 2015-16. That's the largest investment in infrastructure of any government in the history of our province, a 50 per cent increase over last year. \$248.5 million for K to 12 schools, up \$150 million over last year, and the largest investment education capital.

For the member from Regina Rosemont to stand in his place and say the Government of Saskatchewan does not take education capital infrastructure serious is just something that's factually incorrect and he's spinning numbers to make up a story that's just false, Mr. Speaker. \$256.4 million for health capital. I should quote the numbers from the NDP archives to see how much money they actually put into education. And I'd like to see the NDP archives over at Tommy Douglas House to see how much money they put into health care. And then I'd love to see the consultation archives they would have of who they talked to about closing the Plains hospital, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, 74.5 million for municipal infrastructure. And this is something I know for sure. I don't have to go back to the archives to see it. They clawed back money from municipalities to try and balance the budget. I think they clawed back over \$600 million actually, Mr. Speaker. \$2 billion for Crown infrastructure, Crown capital spending, more.

And I know, Mr. Speaker, if you want to go back into the archives of the NDP, their history of investing in SaskPower is ridiculous. It was held together by baler twine basically, Mr. Speaker. And \$23 million to continue twinning Highway 16 from Saskatoon to Clavet.

There's one thing I know, Mr. Speaker, is that I'll be proud to support this budget. This budget when I'm younger . . . When I'm older I'll be able to let my son Nickson go back into the archives and say that his dad supported this budget. And I think

it's something that he'll be proud of because I'm having . . . Actually my son's 21 months old and I'm having a baby girl in July. So when my children are older they can go back and see that their father supported a budget that took the people of Saskatchewan's priorities and put them in the forefront. I'll be happy to support the budget. I won't be supporting the amendment.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Carrot River Valley.

Mr. Bradshaw: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to get up and speak this evening to the budget that was just brought down.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I guess as everybody, we have to give some thanks to some of our people at home. I want to thank my CAs [constituency assistant], Shelley Meyer and Cindy Warner. They do a fantastic job working back there when I'm not around. And as we always say, we have to thank our families too, my wife Terry. And of course, I have our two children who I'm happy to say are working in this province, which is a lot different than what it used to be when, as it's been said many times, when they graduated they were given suitcases so they could go out to Alberta or British Columbia to go to work.

But, Mr. Speaker, I have a little bit of a story to tell about my wife. Now my wife had some problems last year and they originally thought it might be ovarian cancer, which is very serious, but fortunately it was not. But she did have a very large tumour. And I will say one thing, and I've got to give kudos to our Health minister for doing such a great job of moving the health forward in this province because from the time that she was diagnosed to the time that they had the operation — and it was non-cancerous, luckily — it was less than a month.

Now, Mr. Speaker, can you imagine if it happened in the dark days of when the NDP was still in government? When the NDP sat on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, she would still be waiting for surgery. And, Mr. Speaker, I think my seatmate over here said it right: maybe have to go to Alberta. But, Mr. Speaker, this was great for our family to see that move forward, you know, for a couple of . . . One, she desperately needed the surgery. Secondly, she got in there, got it done quickly, and now she can look after me a lot better than, you know, like I mean rather than waiting around. And Lord knows I need all the help I can get.

But, Mr. Speaker, you know, you take a look at this budget and the things that have happened with our, what is it, the eighth consecutive, eighth consecutive budget that is balanced. We have a wonderful Finance minister. We have a wonderful treasury board that worked very hard on trying to put this all together. And I know our Finance minister, we're really going to miss him when he leaves this House after I think it's 20 years in public service. And that's really going to be a sorry day to see him go, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we could talk about lots of various different things on the budget. We can talk about quite a few things that the NDP has said and actually didn't do. But anyway, I got a flyer and I could actually make this whole budget speech just on the flyer that I received in the mail here on the weekend, Mr.

Speaker. And it says, where did all the money go? Well, Mr. Speaker, all you've got to do is take a look at the infrastructure in Saskatchewan that this province, this government has been working on. You just take a look.

We have, you know, while the NDP shut down, what was it, 19 nursing homes, we have a new nursing home starting up over in Tisdale. And also, Mr. Speaker, you know, we've got a new high school going in over in Hudson Bay. Mr. Speaker, this is where the money is going. We are putting stuff into the province, into the province of Saskatchewan to be able to move the province forward.

[20:00]

Now the whole catch is, Mr. Speaker, that it says in this flyer, it says education . . . And I'm going to quote from this flyer that I got, Mr. Speaker. "Our kids' classes are overcrowded and underfunded. They don't get the one-on-one attention they deserve, and this government has an expensive scheme to rent schools from private corporations."

Well, Mr. Speaker, let's just take a look at what our minister, what this government has done. Let's take a look at the highlights of the education budget: operating, \$1.87 billion, a 52.8 million increase or 2.9 per cent over last year. Mr. Speaker, no school division is going to see a decrease, contrary to some of the stories that are out there running around. These are facts, Mr. Speaker, and we have to caution, these are facts.

There's no change in the education property tax. The capital spending, \$248 million, \$152 million increase or 158 per cent over last year, it's the largest budget-day allocation for school capital in the history of our province, Mr. Speaker. I for one can see some of that because we have got that new school going up in Hudson Bay.

Now let's take a look at the teachers. According to this, they're overcrowded. They're underfunded. They don't get the attention they deserve. This came in the NDP flyer. Anyways, let's take a look. Now from when we took office, there are 614 more school teachers. There are 200 more student support teachers. The psychologists are up 45 per cent. The speech language is up 24 per cent, occupational therapists up 53 per cent, social workers up 14 per cent. When it comes to helping the immigrant student, the number of the English as an additional language teachers is up 8 per cent.

Now this government, we believe not in just doing the talking. We believe in doing the walking. So consequently, as you can see, there's been an increase each and every year to the operating grant for school divisions, over 31 per cent increase since 2007, Mr. Speaker. These are some of the things that are coming through from our budget, Mr. Speaker. And this is a budget that's, let's face it, it's a tight budget. It was a hard budget to be able to make decisions on, but this government is committed to helping the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

And you know what, Mr. Speaker? We're continuing, continuing to do that without any tax increases. And of course where I'm from in northeast Saskatchewan, it's a large farming area. Do you remember, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure you do

because you come from a farming area also, what the taxes used to be on land, the education portion of the taxes? That has gone down. That has gone down, Mr. Speaker. We decided to leave money in the jeans of the people of this province so they can invest in this province, and that makes them want to stay in this province. It also makes people want to move to this province. Why do you think we've gone up 122 million people? Mr. Speaker, people are seeing Saskatchewan as the place to be, not the place to be from.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to talk about a few little odds and ends here because we don't have that much time. But you know, Mr. Speaker, we can go on to the health care and in it here, in their health care in this pamphlet they had, it says, health care, and I'm quoting, Mr. Speaker, "We're waiting far too long in emergency rooms and crammed into hospital hallways while this government has actually turned a bunch of patient rooms into offices for more managers."

Well, Mr. Speaker, yes, as my friend from Wood River says, they just closed the hospitals. They closed . . . How many hospitals was it? Oh I think it was 52, 52 plus the Plains. Now let's just take a look at what we have just in health care alone since 2007. We have over 400 more doctors since 2007, 2,600 more nurses of all designations, 700 more FTEs [full-time equivalent] in long-term care and integrated facilities. Yet day after day they come in here and they bring in some patients, and rightfully so, and I think that's up to them because some people do fall through the cracks. But that being said, they come in here and stand there day after day and say, oh just think of your grandparents. Just think of all these people that are in there and they're not getting the care they need. They need more staff. Well there's 780 more, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we are putting up — what is it? — 15 new long-term care facilities and, like I said, one up in my constituency. Mr. Speaker, these are things that this government, even in tough times, even in tough budgets, in this we are moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, it also says that the seniors, and I am quoting again, Mr. senior . . . Mr. Speaker. I guess Mr. senior. Sorry, I mean Mr. Speaker. "Seniors are suffering due to short-staffing and this government's removal of minimum care standards." Mr. Speaker, I think I just explained a bunch of that.

The other thing is on the seniors' income supplement. Just think of it. For 16 years, for 16 years the NDP had the grand total of \$90 going into it, and yet they claim that they're all for the seniors. Mr. Speaker, this government has increased it. It is now up to \$270 a month. Mr. Speaker, where were the NDP? They talk. They talk as if they're going to go out and help them, but what do they really do? What do they really do?

Mr. Speaker, you know, on this same — want to hear it? — the same pamphlet, it says, "You deserve a government that invests in your priorities." You know, they're right. They've got it. It's called the Saskatchewan Party Government.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP have a slogan that they like to use. It's not about the province doing well. It's about people doing well. But there again, their words don't match their actions. The action is done on this side of the House. The words are just . . .

There's words on that side, but the action is all done on this side.

Because let's see. Let's just take a look at this. You know, how well were the people doing when the NDP were in office? Well not all that well. First off they were paying a whole lot more tax. How well were the people doing when the NDP raised your taxes 17 times in their 16 years? How well were the people doing when the NDP was closing 52 hospitals, 176 schools, and telling people to fix their roads? Mr. Speaker, how well were seniors doing when the NDP closed 1,200 long-term care beds and tried to jack rates up to 90 per cent of their income? How well were they doing, Mr. Speaker? How well were young people doing when they all had to leave the province to find work? Well that wasn't real great.

Here's how the people are doing today. There's 122,000 more people living in Saskatchewan today. We've got the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, and there's more people working in Saskatchewan than there ever were before. They're earning more than they ever were before and keeping more, thanks to our lower taxes. More doctors, more nurses, a better health system, we've gone from the longest wait times in the country to one of the shortest.

Mr. Speaker, those are just a few, just a few of the odds and ends that we can bring out. We've done that, and I guess I'm not talking actually, specifically to the budget. I'm talking about this budget and all the previous budgets we have been putting forward, that we've been putting forward for the people of the province of Saskatchewan. And I can tell you I am very honoured and privileged to represent the Carrot River Valley constituency. And when I went home on the weekend, our mayor from Carrot River, Bob Gagne, came up and he said, kudos to you people for keeping up with the revenue sharing of our municipalities and our towns. He was ecstatic that we were still going to continue on with that.

You know, the NDP sat there and downloaded, downloaded onto the rural municipalities, downloaded onto the small towns.

An Hon. Member: — [Inaudible] . . . money for bingo.

Mr. Bradshaw: — And SPUDCO, money for bingo, money for SPUDCO, money for Navigata, all those things, but yet they could not help out the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

This is a government that believes in helping out the people of the province of Saskatchewan. This is a government that will continue to help out the people of Saskatchewan. And I think that in the end, in the end, come our next election, I think that you'll see the people of Saskatchewan sit there and take a look at how things used to be under the NDP, how things are now under the Saskatchewan Party government, and unless I'm terribly mistaken, Mr. Speaker, I know which way it's going to go. It's not going to be . . . It's going to be a sorry day for the NDP as far as what I can see, talking to people within my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, there are many, many things that we could talk about on the budget but I guess, you know, my time is awfully short here. And I could sit here and talk for the whole night on it, as far as what the NDP didn't do and what we are doing and

what our plans are to doing.

We actually have a vision, and our vision is moving Saskatchewan forward, and our province is going to move forward under this particular government, under this Premier. This province is moving forward like it never has before. And, you know, let's face it, when you take a look at those population numbers, under this government, the short time that we've been here, we have increased this province more than any other time since the days of Walter Scott, when he was the first premier, who had a vision, who had a vision to build this wonderful building and who had a vision for the province. Our Premier and this party has a vision for this province, and we are going to move forward on that vision.

The NDP's vision, well, who knows? We haven't seen it yet. You know, all we know is from the last tree book, and they wanted to spend \$5 billion, of course not figuring out where they're going to get the money.

But anyway, this government is a responsible, fiscally responsible government. The plans are moving everything forward. Even in tough times, we will not hesitate to move the province forward, and we're going to do that without raising taxes on the hard-working men and women of this province. God bless Saskatchewan, and I support this budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Jurgens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. "From many peoples, strength." This motto expresses Saskatchewan's multicultural heritage, the combination of First Nations and Métis cultures, and the key role of immigration in the province.

Mr. Speaker, for centuries we've had people coming to Saskatchewan, even though they didn't know that was the name of Saskatchewan, and today we have people coming to Saskatchewan. In fact, Mr. Speaker, our newest population figures show that we have 1,132,640 people that now call Saskatchewan home — that's Statistics Canada numbers. Mr. Speaker, that is Saskatchewan's growth rate that is the second highest in Canada, a growth rate of 1.56 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

We have a province that is made up of people of all races, all cultures, all colours, Mr. Speaker, all ages. We have the very young and we have the very wise, Mr. Speaker. In caucus we have a team that works together. We relish the good times. We pull together through the bad times. In 2007 the Saskatchewan people asked the Saskatchewan Party to govern. In 2011 they asked us again to continue to govern this province. They like what we're doing, and we do not take that mandate lightly.

[20:15]

Mr. Speaker, with the diversity on this side of the House, from north to south, from east to west, we have young and not-so-young members. We have members that have many years of wisdom and experience and those that can count their political experience in months. Mr. Speaker, we have women and men, some with many degrees, some with degrees from the school of hard knocks. We have rural and urban members. We

have members with skills in a wide variety of fields and professions but like I said, we have a team, Mr. Speaker. That is what's reflected in this budget today that was delivered last week. That is what we are debating and discussing. Mr. Speaker, I couldn't be more pleased with the budget that we have presented, the eighth balanced budget in a row, Mr. Speaker.

We have many thanks to our constituents, and I'd like to add mine at this time. Mr. Speaker, the people of Prince Albert Northcote asked me to govern and I take that so seriously, Mr. Speaker, and I thank them humbly from the bottom of my heart.

Mr. Speaker, as many here have said, it takes a strong support system to help you to deal with the political role that we have been asked. Mr. Speaker, my strongest supporter is my husband, Allan. My strongest critic is my husband, Allan. Mr. Speaker, we have three children. Some of them are married.

We have a daughter that is a teacher of English as a second language. I couldn't be more proud of her, Mr. Speaker. She has taken her skills to many countries, taught in Japan, and brought those skills back to Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, our son and his wife have two of our grandchildren. They live out in Ottawa. We're trying to work on getting them back. Cecily and Everett are growing bigger every day, Mr. Speaker. I always thought that kids, my kids, were really kind of smart, in fact pretty smart. But, Mr. Speaker, grandchildren are amazing. They are absolutely brilliant.

Our youngest son lives in Calgary along with his wife, Len — well that's the nickname she likes to be called — and our youngest granddaughter, Jasmine Victoria Jurgens. Mr. Speaker, she is a joy to behold and she already knows a whole lot about the IT [information technology] system, Mr. Speaker. Being that our son Tyler has an information systems degree, he makes sure to Skype with us every week or occasionally a couple of days during the week, Mr. Speaker. She knows the sound when the computer goes on, and she is waiting to see grandpa and grandma, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to just reflect back a little bit on November 6th of 2011. Our little granddaughter, Cecily, with the help of her father, wished me, "Good luck, Grandma." Mr. Speaker, that still rings in my ears and pulls at my heartstrings. Mr. Speaker, those grandchildren are absolutely wonderful. I recommend everyone to get some of their own.

Mr. Speaker, we have staff in P.A. My constituency assistant, Donna Barr, is an incredible woman. She brings so many talents to the table that I am pleased to leave the office in good hands when I'm down here doing the work that the people have asked me to do. Mr. Speaker, I have a casual assistant, Brent Gerlach, that also helps with the IT systems so that when I have Facebook and website work that needs to be done, he's right there, Mr. Speaker. I have a casual assistant, Pam, that steps in, bless her, just occasionally to answer the phones when I'm not there.

Mr. Speaker, the MLAs in this Assembly on this side of the House have been absolutely amazing, Mr. Speaker, whether

they have tons of experience or whether they're brand new. They welcomed me into this Legislative Assembly. They help me along with things that I maybe don't know so much about. I like to think that maybe I give them one or two ideas, Mr. Speaker, and I couldn't thank them more than to say, thank you.

Mr. Speaker, we have an incredible behind-the-scenes team of staff that help us with issues that we need to get together. When I go to the ministers' offices with issues that my constituents have brought to me, they are great. They help me out. They give us the answers. They help our people out, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, we also have a strong leader, Mr. Speaker, a dynamic, energetic Premier. He is a leader with a vision. He is a leader that listens. Our leader has a plan. We together are a great team and we take our responsibilities seriously, Mr. Speaker. A team that listens to the people, but we do more than that, Mr. Speaker. We then take action. So we have 49 members of the Legislative Assembly with every type of skill set that there could be, from farmers and football players, teachers and professors, pilots and parliamentarians. We have lawyers and leaders, health care workers, dieticians, social worker, lab tech, businesswomen, and businessmen. Mr. Speaker, we also have a team that moves forward into the future.

Mr. Speaker, let's contrast that with the leader on the opposite side of the House, Mr. Speaker: a weak NDP leader; no plan, no vision. Constantly says, well we'll get to it. Mr. Speaker, in fact the people that they attract to their party, their candidate in Prince Albert Carlton, had this to say: "There is no need for a plan. That deflects from the issues." Mr. Speaker, which team do you want to follow? Which team do you want to be a part of? Which team do the people of our province want to be a part of? I know which team I want to be a part of — the Saskatchewan Party team, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Prince Albert Northcote is a very dynamic constituency. We have a little bit of everything there. We have the very young and which I like to say are exuberant. We have the wise, which some people call seniors, Mr. Speaker. We have every level of education there is, from pre-K to post-secondary. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we have every level of university, every type of university. We have programs from the University of Regina. We have programs from the University of Saskatchewan. We have a campus of the First Nations University. Mr. Speaker, we have SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies]; we have GDI [Gabriel Dumont Institute]. Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on.

In Prince Albert alone, we have a microcosm of our population, Mr. Speaker. The only thing we don't have are canola and wheat fields. We have everything else. We have a bridge. We have a hospital. We have business, Mr. Speaker. We have a good life, Mr. Speaker, a very good life. The people in Prince Albert are happy to be in Prince Albert. Mr. Speaker, we are within an hour of almost any fishing and resort centre and tourism that you could imagine. Mr. Speaker, people are surprised when they come from out of province and come north to Prince Albert.

In Prince Albert, we don't call us . . . We don't say that we're from the North, Mr. Speaker. There's still a lot of province to

the north of us. But when we get to La Ronge, the people in La Ronge say they are from the North. I don't hear anything from the member from Athabasca or the member from Cumberland about the beauty of the North, Mr. Speaker, but I assure you we have a beautiful part of the province in our North.

An Hon. Member: — They're all doom and gloom.

Ms. Jurgens: — Doom and gloom, Mr. Speaker, all the time NDP doom and gloom. We can count on NDP being doom and gloom.

Mr. Speaker, recently we opened up the Highway 11, which is a double lane highway from Saskatoon to Prince Albert, so we are connecting the south to the north. Many people say that Prince Albert is a gateway, but it is also a gathering ground because that highway brings people into Prince Albert. Mr. Speaker, as well we have just recently opened the St. Louis bridge. That is a bridge that connects with the primary weight corridor all the way from Assiniboia in the south all the way to La Ronge in the north, Mr. Speaker, another corridor that brings people and goods and services into our city and into the North.

It is no secret that we have the Diefenbaker bridge, Mr. Speaker. In 2003 when the Diefenbaker bridge needed repairs, the members opposite, the members opposite refused to pay even 50 per cent of the cost. I do not know why they would not consider that the Diefenbaker bridge was an integral part of Highway 2, but their former Highways minister, Mr. Speaker, said the bridge wasn't an integral part. Perhaps they should drive north and come to P.A. to see that it is a part of our highway, Mr. Speaker.

In fact the NDP said, "It isn't the government's responsibility and I don't think it's something we are accountable for at this point." Mr. Speaker, that's a stark contrast to the way our Saskatchewan Party government believes that the Diefenbaker bridge should be dealt with. Mr. Speaker, when our bridge had difficulties and we needed to repair it, \$4.2 million to bring the bridge to primary weight standards, no questions asked. What did they do on that side of the House? They can spout and sputter all they want, Mr. Speaker. They dismissed the integral importance of that bridge, Mr. Speaker. We do not. We have different priorities. P.A. is important. We took that responsibility seriously.

We didn't stop there, Mr. Speaker. In 2012 we paid for \$1,697,493 for Diefenbaker traffic accommodations. As well, Mr. Speaker, we paid \$2,003,918 for paving repairs on the Diefenbaker bridge, completed in 2013. Mr. Speaker, we didn't stop there.

In 2011 . . . I want to talk about our commitment to the second bridge, Mr. Speaker. In 2011 the NDP promised they would build a second bridge in Prince Albert. Again all talk, no action. They had 16 years and during those 16 years when they had power, they did nothing for that bridge. They said it wasn't their responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, I do believe that when we are discussing record to record, it would be fair, more than fair, Mr. Speaker, to use seven years of their power to seven years of our record governing this province, Mr. Speaker.

So the members opposite like to talk about, perhaps we should talk about the '70s. Well, Mr. Speaker, how about in 1977 when P.A. needed a second bridge? The NDP study said no, don't need a second bridge. Don't need it until P.A.'s population grows to 50,000. Well, Mr. Speaker, the voice of Prince Albert has been heard. When our bridge went down and the people started talking about getting a second bridge, Mr. Speaker, I spoke to my colleagues. And, Mr. Speaker, last year my colleagues — thank you to all of them — agreed that we should partner to build a bridge that the city of Prince Albert asked for, Mr. Speaker.

In 2011 the NDP didn't have any funding from the federal government. They just promised. They can promise all they want. They can spout and sputter. Mr. Speaker, our commitment still stands. We are partnering with the provincial government and the city. To date, Mr. Speaker, our province has committed our share; the federal government has committed their share; the city has not committed their share.

Mr. Speaker, Prince Albert is more than a bridge. Prince Albert has people, has diversity. We also have educational institutions, Mr. Speaker, as I spoke about some of them in post-secondary. It doesn't stop there, Mr. Speaker. We have educational institutions. In fact, Mr. Speaker, when the NDP talk about, where did all the money go, Prince Albert can be very pleased to report that we spent \$14.7 million for the new École St. Anne School which was completed in 2011.

[20:30]

We can discuss the \$12.2 million for a state-of-the-art gym, Mr. Speaker, in the Carlton community high school. And we can talk about the \$389,000 for the restoration of King George School. That's where some of the money went, specifically into Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker.

We also have 338 new child care spaces and 14 new pre-K [pre-kindergarten] programs. Mr. Speaker, some of those programs are in the schools. I think that is a wonderful idea that our government decided to do, was to create pre-K schools that would be attached to schools. Mr. Speaker, many times we have single parents that drop off their children for pre-K, and at the same time drop their children off for school. That is what we do as a government. We don't talk just about dollars and cents, Mr. Speaker. We put into action our plan, and we see the results and the improvement to the families of our province.

Mr. Speaker, in this budget of '15-16, students across the province will also benefit from the inclusion of \$4.6 million for supports for learning funding for school divisions to continue funding announced in the fall of 2014.

Mr. Speaker, our budget very clearly indicated that we have more funds for additional English as an additional language support. Mr. Speaker, I have a teacher in the family who is a very brilliant teacher, very dynamic, determined, highly intelligent. She worked hard to get her advanced certification so that she could be highly qualified to teach English as a second language. In our province, we continue to bring people in from other countries. Mr. Speaker, what my daughter Shawna reports to me is that many times those children that are coming in have more than two other languages that they know before they ever

learn English. What a dynamic diversity that we are adding to our province for our future benefit.

Mr. Speaker, last week the Leader of the Opposition claimed we cut English as an additional language funding. Mr. Speaker, we have to correct the record because he is just plain wrong. EAL funds, or English as an additional language, are added. Last year we added an additional \$1 million commitment to support EAL. \$588,000 of that money went out in last year's budget, 2014-15. This year we commit the rest of the \$1 million, which is \$420,000, Mr. Speaker, to fund additional English as an additional language supports to deliver on commitments that we made to the school divisions.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to highlight our record that we do what we say we're going to do. On that side of the House, Mr. Speaker, all talk, no action, all sputter. Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we take action.

Mr. Speaker, this year we will also have \$6 million in continued funding to support government's continued response to the recommendations from the joint task force on improving First Nations and Métis education and employment outcomes in Saskatchewan. So, Mr. Speaker, why would we focus on First Nations and Métis? Well, Mr. Speaker, our minister, our Government Relations minister says it best when he says, and I quote, "A strong Saskatchewan economy needs the engagement of First Nations and Métis people if it is to grow even more." I think that's a pretty wise minister, Mr. Speaker, very, very wise minister, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to say that he is also the minister that I report to as a Legislative Secretary for northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

As we know in the North, there is a large number of First Nations and Métis people. In Prince Albert we have a large number of Métis and First Nations people. Mr. Speaker, on the advice of the joint task force on First Nations and Métis education and employment, our government is working to strengthen access to information services and supports that help people transition to school, to work, and to new communities.

Just last fall our government announced \$3 million to improve education outcomes for First Nations and Métis children. This will expand the use of Help Me Tell My Story. Mr. Speaker, our adult basic education investments are unique in Canada because 25 per cent of that funding, Mr. Speaker, is on-reserve funding, Mr. Speaker. That is a few of the many benefits that a growing, prosperous province can provide, Mr. Speaker.

To continue with our strong commitment to students, Mr. Speaker, we have in this budget \$32.5 million for the Student Aid Fund. Mr. Speaker, \$9 million goes to the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship, \$6.5 million for the Saskatchewan advantage grant for education savings. And, Mr. Speaker, for our graduate retention program — that we didn't remove, despite what the NDP tried to throw smoke screens up; we didn't remove it, Mr. Speaker; it is still there — \$88 million of non-refundable tax credits. It now is extended so that people that work in our province and have graduated can earn their tax credits, Mr. Speaker. We've also increased operation funding to technical institutes and federated colleges that will increase by 2 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I do have a preference for post-secondary education and, as I said, in Prince Albert we have many types of post-secondary education.

What I am going to share with you now, Mr. Speaker, is some of the enhancements that will increase our labour market programs because many of the businesses in our province say we need more skilled people to work in our province. One thing that we discovered is the adult basic education program had a wait-list. It's still a wait-list, but this year we are adding more seats, 200 more seats, Mr. Speaker, \$600,000 increase. What it does is it provides a record investment of \$25 million with a total program capacity of 8,780 seats. Mr. Speaker, one of the institutions in our city provides the ABE [adult basic education] program training and it is the Dumont Technical Institute, Mr. Speaker.

We also added provincial training allowance. We added the Canada-Saskatchewan job grant. We increased it for a total fund of \$4 million. We have employment assistance program for persons with disabilities.

We increased the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission by 300 additional seats, \$1 million, Mr. Speaker. What that does is it provides a total number of seats of 7,000 to our province, Mr. Speaker. But what does that mean? Mr. Speaker, what it means is that people are recognizing that they have a gap in their skill set. They want to join in our strong economy. They want to go and get the jobs that are out there, Mr. Speaker, because finally, after just seven years of a Saskatchewan Party government, a very short seven years, Mr. Speaker, we have the lowest unemployment rate in the country. We have more people going to school than ever before, Mr. Speaker. We have people that are ready to have a job and are ready to work hard for it.

Mr. Speaker, with the First Nations and Métis, we have provided an extra \$20.2 million in direct support. What it does is it adds 428,000 to the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies. Mr. Speaker, that's an increase of 24 per cent. You would think that the members across the way, especially the members from Athabasca and Cumberland, would be voting for this budget. They should be coming across the floor and shaking my hand for doing such a good job. They should be shake everybody's hand on this side of the floor, Mr. Speaker. We have added \$75,000 to the First Nations University of Canada. We have added more money to the Gabriel Dumont Institute and to the Dumont Technical Institute.

Mr. Speaker, since 2007-08, the provincial government provided \$477.5 million in funding to post-secondary institutions. How is this meeting our growth plan? Mr. Speaker, in our growth plan we say:

By 2020, the Government of Saskatchewan's goal is to ensure Saskatchewan leads the county in graduation rates and the graduation disparity between First Nations and Métis students and their non-Aboriginal peers has been reduced by 50 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, we set goals. We set a plan. We are following through on it, unlike the NDP opposite who say that it just gets in the way of figuring out whether we should deal with any of

the issues.

Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at what the vice-chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations has to say, Mr. Bobby Cameron. He says, and I quote:

The announcement of \$2.2 million to one of our FSIN institutions, SIIT, they saw a pretty significant increase, so we're pleased with that because we're getting more and more enrolment from our First Nations grade 12 graduates.

He goes on to say, and I quote, "Obviously that will go a long way in helping our students succeed in post-secondary education and trades." Mr. Speaker, Bobby Cameron was pretty excited about our budget. He says, "Considering the current physical environment, we can't be anything but pleased about the budget."

Mr. Speaker, I would invite the members opposite to vote in favour of our budget.

Mr. Speaker, let's look at another highly regarded person, Mr. Jeff Ritter of the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission. He says, "It was very nice to see the government support the increased demand that we're seeing for skilled tradespeople through the addition of 300 more seats."

Mr. Speaker, post-secondary education, one of the things that the NDP so much ask for, is being recognized as a positive by many people in our province. Mr. Speaker, Larry Rosia, the president and CEO of Saskatchewan Polytechnic, has this to say, and I quote:

We see our grant increase as a welcome investment in the future and really a vote of confidence in the work that we do at Saskatchewan Polytechnic. With the two per cent we will continue to seek opportunities to work with educational partners in the province and with industry to meet employer and student needs.

Mr. Speaker, you don't have to take our word for it. All you have to do is look around the province, Mr. Speaker. People are happy with our budget. People are pleased with what we've done as a Saskatchewan Party. Mr. Speaker, part of our budget includes health. In our budget, we spent the largest amount on health but, Mr. Speaker, between education, health, social services and assistance, we have nearly 75 per cent of our budget spent there.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would think that the member from Nutana, Saskatoon Nutana would vote for our budget. Those are the things that she asked for when she replied to our budget. Mr. Speaker, we're two steps ahead of the NDP. We are already doing it.

Mr. Speaker, regional health authorities this year will see \$3.3 billion for operating funds and targeted initiatives of an increase of \$55.7 million. We are committed to providing the best quality of health care for people in the province and for Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker, in Prince Albert alone, we had \$2 million in planning for the renewal of the Victoria Hospital that came

through in last year's budget. Mr. Speaker, we also had \$9 million for a family addictions treatment centre that was completed in 2013. Mr. Speaker, I do hope the members opposite are listening because that's where the money went. That's where the money went.

[20:45]

Mr. Speaker, we also increased in 2014-15, an increase of \$320,000 for the Urgent Action Fund for Prince Albert Parkland region. Mr. Speaker, we invested in people and to the seniors' supplement, the SAID, and the drug program.

Mr. Speaker, I'm deeply concerned about the NDP on that side of the House. Nine of them do not seem to be listening or, Mr. Speaker, is it because they can't hear? If their hearing is going, Mr. Speaker, I invite them to go to one of our brand new health care facilities that we have just recently built, and with one of the extra 400 doctors that we have in this province, it will not take them long to get their hearing checked, Mr. Speaker. If they need new surgery to improve their hearing, Mr. Speaker, we have the lowest surgical wait-lists in the province, Mr. Speaker. That is completely opposite what the NDP had under their work.

Mr. Speaker, we know that it takes more than a hospital — which we've replaced in Moose Jaw, which we will be building in North Battleford — it takes more than long-term beds. We've increased our long-term beds and replaced the 1,200 that the NDP closed down. Mr. Speaker, our health region sees Pineview Terrace, a 60-bed unit, Mr. Speaker. I invite everyone to come and take a look at the state-of-the-art long-term care facility. We increased it, Mr. Speaker.

In fact it was interesting when it was being built. Our health region submitted a plan to the government, and they said, no, no, no, no, you're not going to do that. You're going to increase those beds, Mr. Speaker. Increase the beds — did we ever hear that under the NDP? No we didn't. We heard, close the beds. We don't care, if you don't like it leave, Mr. Speaker. That's what people did — leave.

Mr. Speaker, it takes more than all of us working together. It takes more than people. It takes more than doctors and nurses. It takes more than hospital buildings. It takes people. Mr. Speaker, we supply the love to our loved ones when they go into those facilities. We supply the love when we have family members that need cancer treatments, Mr. Speaker. I am pretty sure that most, if not all, of us have been touched by cancer in one form or another, Mr. Speaker. We have increased the funding to the cancer centre. We've increased the funding to the health regions.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that the members opposite would vote for our budget because we also are fulfilling our medical training commitments, Mr. Speaker. We are working to continue to develop a skilled workforce. We have 100 medical training seats, 120 medical resident seats, and 20 new practitioner seats that we are supporting with this budget, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have health, education, and social services, and assistance that add up to 73.2 per cent of all government expenses. Mr. Speaker, that spending is forecasted to be \$10.4

billion. That is for this budget. It is an increase of 1.9 per cent increase from last year's budget. Mr. Speaker, what that is is an increase of 67.7 per cent since '07-08. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand behind the record of our government. We are working with the people of our province. We are working for the 1,132,640 people that now call Saskatchewan home.

Mr. Speaker, we have a total of \$5.5 billion for health care. Mr. Speaker, we also in Prince Albert, with our new Saskatchewan international physician practice assessment, or SIPPAs as we like to call it, we have three more doctors. Mr. Speaker, three more doctors for Prince Albert alone. So perhaps the members opposite when they need a little help with health care can come up to our lovely part of the province, Mr. Speaker.

SIPPA is a made-in-Saskatchewan program that assesses international medical graduates on their education and clinical ability before allowing them to practise medicine. Since 2011 this program has added 18 new practising physicians to the Prince Albert Parkland Health Region. Mr. Speaker, our community of Prince Albert highly welcomes these people to our province and to our fair city.

Mr. Speaker, we have a seniors' income plan that we've added to, Mr. Speaker. When the NDP say they are for the people, I don't believe them. All we have to do is look at their 16 long years of being in power. Mr. Speaker, \$90 per month for the seniors' income plan, \$90 for 16 years, and they said, that is all you're getting.

We don't treat our seniors like that. What we did was we said, in 2015-16 we will provide a total of \$26.5 million to the seniors' income plan to increase maximum monthly benefits by \$10 per month. Do you know what that adds up to, Mr. Speaker? That adds up to \$270 for single seniors and \$235 for each member of a senior couple. Mr. Speaker, how many seniors will be benefiting from that? Fourteen thousand seniors, Mr. Speaker, imagine. We are considering the people of our province — 14,000 seniors.

Along with those benefits, these seniors will also be entitled to additional health benefits such as one free eye examination every 12 months; chiropractic services to a maximum of 12 services per year; a reduced prescription drug plan, semi-annual deductible; a home care subsidy; and an exemption from many of the charges under the Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living program.

We didn't stop there, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We looked at other programs. We will be meeting our commitment to increase the monthly income threshold by \$50 to \$2,000 for the personal care home benefit when July 2015 comes around. Mr. Speaker, that benefit will be accessed by about 800 seniors. It was introduced in 2012 to assist our lower income seniors with the costs of living in a personal care home.

Mr. Speaker, that's what I call a government for the people. We share with our people. We share our benefits with our people. We work on what the people have told us we need to do.

Mr. Speaker, we didn't stop there. We added \$10 million to dedicated seniors' care, which will bring the total to \$14.5 million, which is a \$3.5 million increase dedicated to enhance

the Home First program. Mr. Speaker, the Home First program is important to our community of Prince Albert because we are one of the communities that benefit from the Home First program. Mr. Speaker, we are also adding \$4.7 million to reduce emergency department wait times. Mr. Speaker, that's an increase of \$3 million from last year.

Are we helping the people of this province? I would say yes, Mr. Speaker. The people of our province say yes. I've been out and about, as my colleagues have been, and we've been hearing the same thing, Mr. Speaker — good job. We like what you've done. Yes, it's a tough budget. Do we want more? Always, we always want more, Mr. Speaker. But we are doing a good job and the people are recognizing it.

Mr. Speaker, our government also committed to improving long-term care infrastructure in the province. As I said, in Prince Albert alone we got Pineview Terrace. In Swift Current they will be getting a long-term care facility, and so will Leader and so will Kelvington. They'll be getting an integrated care facility, Mr. Speaker.

The 2015-16 budget continues to invest in programs and services that benefit seniors. Mr. Speaker, through the Ministry of Social Services the province is fulfilling its four-year commitment to increase benefits under the seniors' income plan and the personal care home benefit. Promise made; promise kept. Mr. Speaker, on that side of the House they just talk, talk, talk, and never get around to doing anything of any substance, Mr. Speaker.

Let's look at what Ashley Martin from the *Leader-Post* on March 21st, 2015 had to say. The article title says, "Med Students [are] happy seniors' care [made] a priority." Mr. Speaker, Jessica Harris, second-year medical student and member of the University of Saskatchewan's Student Medical Society said, and I quote, "The government sees seniors' care to be a priority."

Mr. Speaker, I don't know what the members opposite are reading. I don't know what they're hearing. Mr. Speaker, when we talk to the people across the province, they know what we're doing in this province. They know what the budget says. They know how good a job we are doing.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's time to move a little bit further into our social services. Mr. Speaker, social services and social assistance adds up to a part of our 73 per cent of our budget. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's most vulnerable will benefit from continued investment in support programs for children, youth, and their families. In 2015-16 the budget will also address the needs of people with disabilities and those in need of housing. For example, we are providing \$7.7 million to help at-risk children, youth, and families. This includes foster care and extended family care, medically fragile children with complex needs.

Mr. Speaker, medically fragile children with complex needs, that hits home for Prince Albert. We have what's called Hope's Home. I was there when we had the grand opening, Mr. Speaker. It is a beautiful facility. It is set up specifically for children with medically fragile needs and their siblings, Mr. Speaker.

One of the stories from one of the people that use that facility kind of tugged at my heartstrings, Mr. Speaker. This lady was a nurse — well, still is — and for many years she could not work in Prince Albert because she had a medically fragile child, and she could not leave the child. And she knew a lot about medically fragile children, so she knew not to leave the child just anywhere, Mr. Speaker. When Hope's Home opened, she took that child and that child's sibling, took it down to Hope's Home, Mr. Speaker. What did that do? That added a better quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, that nurse wanted to work in our health care system. Mr. Speaker, that nurse wanted her children to participate in activities that child care will provide: lots of other friends, lots of new activities. Mr. Speaker, those children are happy to be going to work, as they sometimes call it, because they like to copy what their parents say. And, Mr. Speaker, that nurse is contributing to our society. She has a paycheque so that she can support herself, her family, and provide for the many needs of our community, Mr. Speaker.

We are going to increase the benefits to the Saskatchewan assured income for disability program for the fourth consecutive year with an additional \$5.7 million. Mr. Speaker, the people that work with the Saskatchewan assured income for disability program in Prince Albert was so pleased and told me, on that day of the budget, he said, I am so pleased that you took it upon yourselves to remember the most vulnerable in our society. I was really concerned because, in the days of the past, what the NDP did was raise taxes, cut programs, chase people out of the province. But, Mr. Speaker, our people that take care of people with disabilities, Mr. Speaker, they're telling us that we did a good job. Mr. Speaker, I hope the members opposite are listening.

We're also investing in social services and assistance to the tune of \$1.2 billion in this budget, Mr. Speaker. That's an increase of 3.2 per cent over last year's budget. What it includes are multiple ministries that provide programming and increased program utilization for people with disabilities. That's \$485.7 million, Mr. Speaker. That's up from last year.

[21:00]

Mr. Speaker, we already talked about the increase to the seniors' income plan, Mr. Speaker.

I am now going to turn to social housing. The transition will benefit people in greatest need. Mr. Speaker, in Prince Albert, our most vulnerable people will soon gain better access to affordable housing. It is because the decision to transition the affordable housing program into the social housing program will be occurring in our province's largest centres. Beginning March 1st, 2015, anyone who applies for government-owned rental housing in urban centres will only be eligible for the social housing rental program. Rent will be based on 30 per cent of the income.

Mr. Speaker, we didn't stop there. We are providing a 1 per cent funding increase to our community-based organizations. Mr. Speaker, over the session when . . . or over the beginning of this year, January, February, when we weren't sitting down in Regina here, the member from Saskatchewan Rivers and myself

had time to connect with some of our local organizations — the early childhood intervention program, Mr. Speaker. What those people told us really tends to tug at your heartstrings, and a 1 per cent increase in funding will be highly welcomed by them, Mr. Speaker. We have families that have special needs in terms of intervention programming. That's why it's called early childhood intervention program, Mr. Speaker.

They told us one story of this young mom who had trouble with alcohol, and her first couple of children had fetal alcohol syndrome, Mr. Speaker. It is very tragic because once people have fetal alcohol syndrome, they never get cured from it, Mr. Speaker. So with the ECIP [early childhood intervention program] program and the intervention of several programs combined, Mr. Speaker, they worked together to help that mom not drink through her next couple of pregnancies, Mr. Speaker. What did that do? That instantly increased the quality of life for those children, Mr. Speaker. Can you imagine, in the future those children do not have to struggle with fetal alcohol syndrome.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Saskatchewan Rivers and myself have the joy of watching our grandchildren being raised in loving homes and seeing how much fun they have with their parents. And like I said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think our grandchildren are really quite brilliant. The member from Saskatchewan Rivers kind of agrees with me as well. And it is something that we wish for all children in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. So when we can provide a 1 per cent increase to programs for our community-based organizations, we are happy to do that, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, safe, quality, and affordable housing is a priority for our government. It continues to support, we are continuing to support the federal-provincial Investment in Affordable Housing Agreement which has been extended to 2019 to fund new, affordable housing supply, home renovations, home adaptations, and rent housing supplements.

Mr. Speaker, housing in Prince Albert is a big deal. We have many program partners. Linda Boyer, our manager from Prince Albert Community Housing Society Inc., her and I have been ribbon cutting many of the facilities that she's opened.

Mr. Speaker, we have Brian Howell, our manager from River Bank Development Corp. Mr. Speaker, we have Habitat for Humanity. That program was brought to Prince Albert by Frank Moore many years ago, Mr. Speaker, and our city has benefited most highly from it. Mr. Speaker, we had our past president, Morris Sawchuk, who took the program out to other communities such as Duck Lake. Mr. Speaker, our current president, Duane Hayunga, is a fabulous man that continues to support the Habitat for Humanity. Mr. Speaker, they have just recently brought Rob Dalziel on board, the executive director. I know the fabulous work that he did for fundraising for the Victoria Hospital, so I'm sure Habitat for Humanity will be very pleased. Mr. Speaker, in this year's budget, we'll see \$130,000 for Habitat for Humanity.

We've seen housing for . . . Or let me finish talking about the Habitat for Humanity because I think it is such a great program, Mr. Speaker. I even took one of Allan's hammers . . . I did ask for his permission before I did it, but I turned it into a pink

hammer, Mr. Speaker, because I think if I'm going to go and volunteer for one of our Habitat homes and start pounding nails, I should be having a pink hammer. Mr. Speaker, he's a very gracious man and he gave me the pink duct tape to do it. Imagine pink duct tape. It was great, Mr. Speaker. So I have several pictures of me pounding nails.

Now it might sound strange to those contractors in the province that use air guns, Mr. Speaker, but we have to remember Habitat for Humanity is being built in a location that we'd have to borrow electricity from the neighbours. That doesn't make much sense, Mr. Speaker, so we ask for good old elbow grease and nails, hammers with pink handles to pound those nails.

Mr. Speaker, for a family to get a Habitat for Humanity home, they must contribute a minimum of 500 hours of work. There is no interest to the mortgage, but they do not get the keys to their home, the official keys to their home, until they've proven for a year that they are good community members, that they can make those payments, and that they know how to take care of their home, Mr. Speaker. Talk about value added to our province. Talk about a better quality of life for our province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What happens is, when they pay back their mortgage it is contributed back into the program and a pay-it-forward program.

Mr. Speaker, our president and past president have recently signed agreements with the Sask Polytech carpentry students. They've also worked with the federal penitentiary inmates that learn new and useful skills for building these homes. They have Carlton high school students that help to build the homes, Mr. Speaker. All of these are value-added skills training for our community. Mr. Speaker, it makes a difference.

Our housing has been built for grandparents with dependants, for young families with one dependant, for families with parents and grandparents, Mr. Speaker. I can think of one of the sod turnings that I had where we had a family, their parents, and their kids, Mr. Speaker. And we all know what little kids do so we had a pile of dirt, and the little two-year-old boy was crawling up and down and running around. And, Mr. Speaker, I said, wow, to the little boy. I said, you remind me just like my little grandson Everett. He is a going concern, Mr. Speaker. And with that, that little boy jumped into my arms and we gave each other a hug. Talk about a warm feeling for what we are doing for the people of our province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I said that housing is important for Prince Albert so I'm going to continue. We have \$15.7 million in provincial funding for over 300 new rental units that were completed or in progress. Mr. Speaker, we've helped 132 households achieve home ownership. Up until this budget year, so up till 2014-15 for the seven years that we've been asked to govern our province, \$550,000 for 11 new Habitat for Humanity homes.

Mr. Speaker, I could go and on. But what this adds up to, Mr. Speaker, is over . . . If we put all the housing together in one spot, Mr. Speaker, it would cover over eight square city blocks. That's a lot of housing, Mr. Speaker. That shows how we are committed to the people of our province, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that creates strong families. That creates a strong Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

This past year I also had the occasion to work with Donna Strauss and help her celebrate the 20th anniversary of Family Futures. She does great work for daycare in our province, Mr. Speaker.

We also have other community organizations and people that are working together to help create a better quality of life for our people, Mr. Speaker. In P.A. we've had many marches to celebrate peace and we get to see our peace officers such as Police Chief Troy, Deputy Chief Kelly Stienwand. Mr. Speaker, we like to honour our peace officers. To me, Mr. Speaker, their bravery should be highly commended and I commend them on this day in this legislature.

Mr. Speaker, one of the shining examples of how our community takes the lead is through what we call the Hub, Mr. Speaker. It's a community mobilization project that was started in Prince Albert. We took several organizations: policing, health care, addictions and mental health, Mr. Deputy Speaker, education. Everybody came together to create a prevention program to help people prevent the path of crime, Mr. Speaker. \$450,000 per year has been put into the Hub.

Mr. Speaker, this past budget year we've seen an increase in the Hubs across the province, or a community mobilization partnership to over a dozen of them. Mr. Speaker, it didn't stop there. It's going across the country. In fact, Mr. Speaker, that model is being looked at around the world and is being utilized in many different fashions. Talk about a success story. Talk about improved quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, I have some stats that since the implementation in February of 2011, what the Hub has delivered is some significant results in Prince Albert. From the baseline of 2010-2013, Mr. Speaker, our police service received 3,554 fewer calls for service. Mr. Speaker, our property crime rate has decreased by 29 per cent. Overall crime rate has decreased by 21 per cent, and violent crime has decreased by 38 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

The past director, Ken Hunter, did a fabulous job. Our current director, Glenis Clarke, is someone that I worked with. Glenis is a lady that comes up through the addictions and mental health field from the health region, Mr. Speaker, and she did a fabulous job. In fact, for part of my time as a registered dietitian I worked in our mental health and addictions centre in Prince Albert. What happened is Glenis taught me many things. I taught her a few things back, Mr. Speaker.

I had the occasion to attend the Addictions Professional Association of Saskatchewan event, Mr. Speaker, and we had Darren Tait who is an addictions professional that works in the health region. What he did was he brought in Skid Row CEO Joe Roberts. That event, Mr. Speaker, told us first-hand how this gentleman who was a skid-row bum, as he called himself, in the streets of Vancouver, turned his life around, made multi-millions of dollars. So he calls himself the Skid Row CEO, and he had a very compelling story to share with the people of Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker, one out of five people are dealing with or are affected by mental health and addictions. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that our government is working together to create a

strong Saskatchewan, because Saskatchewan is strong when our people are strong. That's why our government committed to providing greater supports for those experiencing mental health and addictions issues.

[21:15]

And to that end, I'd like to thank Dr. Fern Stockdale Winder and many others for their work to shape the recommendations that are included in a new mental health and addictions action plan. Working together for change, this 10-year mental health and addictions action plan for Saskatchewan is the culmination of extensive public consultation that puts a particular emphasis on the voices of people with lived experience. This action plan, which addresses the complex and often connected issues of mental health and addictions, includes the voice of family members, concerned citizens, and providers from across the human service sectors.

Our government has received and endorsed the report and remains committed to action that will improve the services provided to those living with mental health and addictions issues. Mr. Speaker, our government is a government for the people, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to point out that we have a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker. Okay, Mr. Speaker, we have a balanced budget. We have not raised any taxes. We have a family of four that, just for the 2014 year, for a \$50,000 income, will pay \$166. Mr. Speaker, let's contrast that to the NDP of the past. In 2007 under the NDP that same family paid \$2,302. Mr. Speaker, I think we are working for the people of Saskatchewan. We are strong. We are working to control spending, Mr. Speaker. We have no tax increases. We have investments in infrastructure. We have job creation. We have investments in people.

Mr. Speaker, our revenue tax sharing, Mr. Speaker, was a very beneficial event from our budget here, Mr. Speaker. What we did was we shared with everybody across the province, Mr. Speaker. And I would just like to share with you what SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] president Debra Button said about our revenue sharing, and I quote:

Today is a celebration, and I want to stress that. I feel very strongly that today the province sent a strong message to the cities, towns, villages, and our northern communities that we are a partner along with them in growing this province and planning for the future, with the economy and of course the growth that comes along with that.

Mr. Speaker, our people are strong. Our budget is strong. Mr. Speaker, "from many peoples, strength" — that is Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. "From many peoples, strength." I support the budget. Thank you.

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

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm very happy to stand up tonight and enter the debate on our balanced budget that is keeping Saskatchewan strong.

But before I get to that, I'd like to take a few minutes to thank

the people who are most important to me, and I'm going to begin with my wife. She's been with me through the thick and thin and she is still really and truly my biggest supporter. And I can't thank her enough but I'll just take a second to give her another thank you tonight.

Also want to thank my mom and dad who, you know, it's through them that I learned my work ethic. You know, they're both, I won't say well past the nominal age of retirement, but they're past the regular age of retirement, and dad's still going strong in the oil field and I think mom finally retired this year. We'll see, but I'm not sure. But they are going to take a month and they're going to go take a month off and go away.

Next I need to thank my children, my kids, my young men that I have now. They're really not kids any more. They're young men. First of all my oldest boy Geoff, in spite of some recent setbacks, he's graduating this spring from the U of R [University of Regina] in political science. So there's one that's got an intriguing future ahead of him.

I've got Dylan and Kayleigh. They're living right here in the Queen City with my two grandchildren. Those of us that have grandchildren here, it's a great club to be in. And they truly, truly are the apple of my eye, and that's Jordison and Jaxton. And I really enjoy the time we get together with them, my wife and I.

And Ryan, my youngest boy, right now he's off at school for a couple more weeks but he'll be back working at the Moose Jaw airport. And he also will be adding to our family this September. He's actually getting married to a young lady from Lumsden, Macey McGill, who is actually his high school sweetheart. She's staying in the province going to school and she's actually taking social work at Sask Polytechnic right here in Regina.

And last but not least is Kyle who is one of the many young men we've had the joy of coming through our house, and he's been with us for a long time. And he actually moved back last year from BC [British Columbia] where he was going to school, and now he works two jobs in Moose Jaw and has started a business with two friends, and actually finally moved out again last month. So we're kidless for a while, sort of, but not really, so that's nice.

So it's family that is so important to us and allows us to do our job here, so I just want to extend my thanks to them. I also would be very remiss if I didn't thank Laurie who runs my office in the great constituency of Moose Jaw Wakamow. We can all agree that we have amazing, hard-working CAs who look after the things while we're here at the legislature. So I want to send out a special thanks to Laurie Axten Kosior for the great job she does for us back in my office.

And I would also like to thank all the caucus staff — some of them are still around tonight. We've got Paula and Megan, John and Karalee, Sean, Lee, Kim, and Gary's back there working in the caucus office trying to keep us all up to date and keeping us all in line. So working with them in the caucus is always lots of fun.

And last but not least, I also want to sincerely thank the

constituents of Moose Jaw Wakamow. They are who gave me this honour to be able to stand here today and give this response to the budget, our eighth consecutive balanced budget.

I'd like to reflect a bit on the past year and many of the accomplishments for residents of Moose Jaw in the last year. A number of new businesses have opened in the past year, another impressive sign of growth and a growing economy in our province. We've got Smoke's Poutinerie, which if you haven't been out there yet, everything's poutine. So if you have an opportunity to get out there, give that a try. I would recommend it. Rock Creek Grill, the Grant Hall, Rowan Clothing Co., Common Bakery, Alliance Wellness and Rehabilitation, Liberty Home and decor, just to name a few of the new businesses in our city of Moose Jaw.

Moose Jaw is also home to many exceptional businesses and people who are so very generous in their time and commitment, especially to our new regional hospital. You've got Yara, Mosaic, the Leipert family, the JGL group of companies, the Moose Jaw Refinery, Golden West Radio, are just some of the many amazing companies along with service clubs and truly countless dedicated volunteers who have generously donated time and dollars to the Moose Jaw Health Foundation. The generous spirit of the people of Moose Jaw and surrounding areas will make this a top-notch facility.

For the many who are interested, the Five Hills Health Region has created a Flickr site which has updated photos of the interior of the hospital so you can actually take a look at the progress of the hospital as it's moving forward. It's truly incredible to see and definitely a facility that we are all proud of. I look forward to the opening of the regional hospital this year, and I'm certain that I will see an NDP Wakamow candidate at the ribbon cutting, and I'm sure she will enjoy working in the brand new facility.

A regional hospital is a prime example of where the money went. The opposition's new line is, where did the money go? Well I'd like to tell the members where the money went in Moose Jaw. So let's start with the MRI [magnetic resonance imaging] operating funding, two new homes for Valley View residents, healthy wait initiatives, the Moose Jaw Aboriginal association, discount bus pass program, Sunflower Manor, affordable housing, five Habitat for Humanity homes, the community rink affordability grant, upgrades to the Moose Jaw Community Association Centre, the drug treatment court funding, upgrades to the Moose Jaw Airport, policing initiatives, Headstart on a Home, Highway 1 repaving project. And again I want to remind the members opposite, a brand new regional hospital.

We had two cabinet ministers and a former . . . and a premier that was from Moose Jaw and they couldn't get that done. Between the member for Moose Jaw North in the previous four years and when I came on, we got it done.

These are just a few of the places the money went in Moose Jaw. I'd like to know what they would cut or what they would take away and at what price, what cost to the citizens of Moose Jaw. That's the difference, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the difference between the members opposite and the members on this side — the difference between a shovel and a wrecking ball. And I'm

going to have to explain that you guys. We're building schools, hospitals, highways. That takes a shovel. Well the members opposite for 16 long years used a wrecking ball to close 52 hospitals, close 1,200 long-term care beds and 176 schools including schools around Moose Jaw.

In this year's budget we're continuing to make strong investments in agriculture, advanced education, health, highways, parks, social services, municipalities, and infrastructure, just to name a few. And speaking of municipalities and infrastructure, the city of Moose Jaw has received revenue sharing, since I was elected, an amount of \$26.27 million, and that's since 2011. And 7.1 million is projected for the 2015-16 year. That's where the money went.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was a very busy year in the Friendly City. Visitors included Brad Paisley, Alan Jackson, the Doobie Brothers, John Fogerty, the Scotties, the Backstreet Boys, and the Saskatchewan NDP convention. Do you know what these events have in common, Mr. Speaker? Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you were thinking of an exciting atmosphere, cheering crowds or great enthusiasm, you wouldn't be quite right.

Each of these events was held at Mosaic Place last year but, Mr. Speaker, one of these things is not like the other. Each of them boasted capacity crowds, with the exception of the NDP convention which was attended by less than 270 voting delegates. And I just want to point out that the member from Moose Jaw North's nomination, at his nomination they had over 700 people there. Regularly at our contested nominations we have lots of people. Who's the star guest? And their star guest was none other than its federal leader. So the Backstreet Boys were right in this case with their song, "Show Me the Meaning of Being Lonely."

Now let's get to the good things in this budget, Mr. Speaker. 1.3 billion for core infrastructure, the largest infrastructure investment in Saskatchewan history. That shovel is in the ground, Mr. Deputy Speaker, unlike the members opposite who, I said before, used a wrecking ball to close schools, hospitals, long-term beds and drove our young people away.

This government is providing more money for health care, highways, education, social services, and municipalities. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? We did this without raising taxes. These are the choices this government has made.

[21:30]

The members opposite made choices too, Mr. Speaker. When they were in government — and I need to remind them again; they always forget — they raised taxes 17 times, stopped investing in infrastructure and closed facilities, closed 176 schools, closed 1,200 long-term care beds. They underfunded municipalities to the point there was tax revolts, I hear. I was pretty young and in high school back in those days too.

So education property tax hikes . . . And I want to quote a local Moose Jaw celebrity, Rob Carnie from Golden West Radio:

Remember when? Remember years ago when the provincial budget was delivered the big deal was booze

and smokes? It seems like that was a big story on an annual basis. Taxes on alcohol and cigarettes would go up, and there would be outrage from the masses.

I could go on, Mr. Speaker, and on and on and on about the decline under the NDP, but I would rather focus on the positives because that's the kind of guy I am. I like focusing on the positives of our province, its people, and our eighth consecutive balanced budget.

And to further quote Mr. Carnie: "Our provincial government will spend 39% of our budget on health and 26% on education. That's what we've called for and that's what they've delivered."

On that note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say a few other thank yous. I'd truly like to thank the Finance minister, the member from Canora-Pelly, for his leadership on this file. As this will be his last budget, his last balanced budget, I want to express my sincere thanks to him for his dedication to the people of this province, for his great advice, for his great counsel. And I will truly miss working with him.

And there are a few other founding members of our party that will be retiring. To the member from Moosomin, sir, your faith is simply amazing. It's truly been an honour working with you. To the member from Kelvington-Wadena, our former social services minister, working with you on that file truly showed me how much you really, really care.

And to the member from Melville-Saltcoats: if I can ever rile up the opposition and get everybody fired up in my speeches like you do in your speeches, I will truly be doing a good job. You have dedicated a large part of your lives in service to the people of Saskatchewan. I've been blessed to get to know you and to have had the opportunity to learn from you and to work with you. For that I truly am grateful. Truly.

So at this point, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank everyone for giving me the time to stand up, thank my constituents, my family, and my community of Moose Jaw. I'm just going to reiterate a few things for the members opposite in case they missed it, and I wasn't speaking loud enough. This budget contains no tax increases. This was achieved by controlling spending. Even with these revenue challenges, this budget makes investments, significant investments in infrastructure. This budget supports employment training and job creation, increasing seats for our young folks in apprenticeship, medical training, and adult basic education. And this budget keeps Saskatchewan strong by investing in our people. This budget is a balanced budget. It's about keeping Saskatchewan strong.

And in closing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting this budget, and I will not be supporting the opposition's amendment. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

Hon. Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure and a privilege to enter into the budget debate in the Legislative Assembly tonight, specifically the budget for the province of Saskatchewan, the eighth one for which I'm honoured to represent the constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers.

And as customary, I would like to thank again my family and supporters for the opportunities I have to serve in this historic building for the people of Saskatchewan and my ever-increasing, growing family, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who I might add, all live in the province of Saskatchewan. They work and they raise their families right here in the province. My husband and I were blessed on February 3rd with one more person to love, the birth of our seventh grandchild, Riley George Wilson. And he's very fortunate to live in this bountiful province, and he was one of the first to be born in the year of 2015. In the year 2014, over 15,000 people were born into the province of Saskatchewan, and that was the highest number since 1990.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to thank those who work and help in my constituency offices in Saskatchewan Rivers. The main office is in Red Wing, and I have a satellite office in the town of Big River. I'd like to thank my constituency assistant Marcus for taking care of the hardest moments that an MLA can experience and softening the edges. As we all know, they are in the front line, our loyal CAs. And I'd also like to thank Jason, Joan, Cora, and Jade here in the building for the great work that they do in and for the province.

I must also thank my political family on this side of the House, as well as the staff in the building who have been so supportive and helpful to me throughout this exciting journey I have embarked on through the direction of the constituents of Saskatchewan Rivers riding.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member from Canora-Pelly, the Minister of Finance, should also be congratulated. The hours he's gone in with the challenges arising this year has made this budget no small task. No item and no element in this debate so far is possible without resource revenue to support this government's eighth balanced budget that we need to continue to build new schools and new hospitals and make investments in infrastructure.

The economy is the driver, and rural Saskatchewan still is a very significant player. So with a robust and a thriving agriculture sector, this government will be able to provide the services that the people of Saskatchewan require to give them the quality of living wanted for all demographics. In terms of production and innovation that's growing around agriculture, manufacturing exports are increasing, and the world wants what we produce. The importance of the agriculture sector is becoming an increasingly vital part of our economy. And that is why, in this budget, agriculture continues to receive a strong support, in this year's budget containing over 71 million, including 26.7 million for agriculture research and innovation.

As a former 4-H leader, I was really interested in seeing our government provide 4.2 million in industry assistance for support of organizations like the 4-H Council of Saskatchewan and the Western Canadian Agribition. This budget will continue to provide effective business-risk-management programming for the needs of all agriculture producers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was also honoured this year to tour the campus at the North West Regional College in Big River on the extreme side of the Saskatchewan Rivers constituency. The institutional cooking class on the First Nation community of

Big River prepared and cooked a beautiful Christmas meal that our tour group enjoyed immensely. Then we stopped by to talk to the students and staff at the school of excellence, recently built and partly funded by our government. We were impressed by the dedication of the board and teachers at both sites, one in the First Nation community and the other in the town of Big River.

This budget provides over 20 million in direct support for First Nation and Métis post-secondary education and keeping Saskatchewan strong by investing in support for students and focusing on strong graduation retention rates and employment outcomes.

I also had the pleasure of visiting another vibrant community on the west side. The village of Debden welcomed me to visit with their seniors in the village complex which houses the village office and the seniors' activity room and bowling alley. Our budget funding continues for the Main Street Saskatchewan program and community rinks affordability grant to ensure that these communities stay vibrant and strong.

All these small towns and villages have wonderful restaurants and museums to discover and enjoy, and historic areas that need conserving. So our government's budget is helping keep Saskatchewan municipalities and communities strong by providing a record 265 million in municipal revenue sharing. That is up 108 per cent from the 2007 budget.

Urban revenue sharing for all towns, villages, and resort villages will total over 170 million in this year's budget. Overall direct provincial support in our government's budget to municipalities totals over 346 million, which will help rural roads throughout the constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers through the municipal roads strategy which is 16 million. And we also remain committed to supporting our second bridge in Prince Albert through the P3 funding.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those who are most vulnerable in the province need the support of our government: those with intellectual disabilities, those who need the dignity of a permanent home, and those who are in need of assured income. Our government's budget assures the people of this province that they will not be forgotten. Our government's budget makes investments for the disabled, Mr. Speaker. Our journey has been in the making for years now to find an income source and changing of the program to give dignity to those who in the past were forgotten numbers. And that is the meaning of success, Mr. Speaker.

I belong to a program called adopt an MLA, so I was matched to a family in need of support and encouragement. And these past few years have been an incredible experience for me and, I hope, a good one for this family as well. This wonderful little boy has grown into a fine young man. He has autism and a single parent to guide him into society. Brian and his mother have welcomed me into their home and treated me as one of their own. Past government policies could be as elusive as smoke, but working with this little family struggling on alone is very real, and I can put a face to those in need of programs. And our government will continue to improve and support youth with autism spectrum disorder.

Our government is also bridging the gap of inherited past ineffectiveness of possible programming. Our government's past and present budget demonstrates our commitment of effective support with functioning, credible, real programs and resources for those in need.

One of our government strategies that was born from consultation was the Saskatchewan assured income for disabilities. One recipient, a nice local lady, told me it brought her hope and dignity, as she wanted to work but couldn't because of her health, and now even feels better about her situation. That, Mr. Speaker, is about our budget's commitment to giving a better quality of life for the people of Saskatchewan.

Our government is increasing benefits to the Saskatchewan assured income for disability program for the fourth consecutive year, with an additional 5.7 million. This province is committed to making Saskatchewan the best place in Canada for persons with disabilities and is developing a provincial disability strategy.

In discussion on the budget, one woman said, "This is great . . . We were just hugging each other, and we're very happy about the programming becoming permanent." This is from Janine Shurmer, mom of a six-year-old, Judah, who graduated from the Little Tots autism intervention program in Saskatoon when she was discussing disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, I attended the Sakâw update sessions in my community and riding of Saskatchewan Rivers during the week of January 19th. The purpose of these sessions was to seek community comments on Sakâw's draft operating plans, as well to update the public on the 20-year forest management plan.

[21:45]

Saskatchewan has 10 large forest product facilities and more than 100 smaller businesses producing a variety of forest products. This budget continued infrastructure . . . addresses the needs of the logging industry.

The Sakâw sessions were open to everyone in the hopes of generating some good discussions. And what I came away with was a good understanding of how important this forest management plan is for the ecosystem, wildlife, and forest sustainability for future harvesting. This model will be revisited every 10 years in predicting future growth and mortality of the forest. The staff described in detail management practices, harvest windows, how to emulate natural forest patterns for human and wildlife habitation. So the whole ecosystem sustainability is considered and explored to sustain harvest levels.

Cabin owners, outfitters, Aboriginal shareholders are all consulted and considered in planning sustainability of our Saskatchewan forests. Forestry in northern Saskatchewan is the second-largest industry after mining, and our government values this growth in the province. It generates over 800 million in exports.

Mr. Speaker, caribou habitat sustainability is recognized as a key species in a certain northern area of harvesting timber. And it's also considered in this FA [forest agreement] model, as well

as fire suppression. Some of the timber goes to Big River which currently runs two shifts and employs many men and women in this area of Saskatchewan.

Managing the forest is very important to the Saskatchewan River constituents, as the industry is running efficiently as one can attest by the many logging trucks and forest equipment on the road again. Over 4,000 direct jobs are generated from the forestry industry, and First Nation and Métis people comprise the largest per cent of Aboriginal forestry employees in Canada, keeping Saskatchewan strong.

Mr. Speaker, this budget recognizes the importance of a diverse and busy economy. This year's budget also introduces two new tax incentives for job creation and capital investment, increasing Saskatchewan's ongoing competitiveness through tax competitiveness.

This government's budget has invested over 8 billion in infrastructure since 2008, 5.2 billion to address our province's highway network, enabling our truckers to ensure their products such as lumber get there effectively and safely.

Mr. Speaker, our province has wonderful, enterprising entrepreneurs who have great ideas for thriving businesses, and one of those is Curtis Braaten who owns Haskap Central Sales in Henribourg in Saskatchewan Rivers. If you ever had the opportunity to eat a variety of haskap berries from the 20,000 seedlings in the breeding orchard, it would be an experience you'll never forget. Haskap is truly a Saskatchewan story. The berry was bred with superior flavours and introduced into the rest of the world. With businesses like Mr. Braaten's, the Saskatchewan story will be told again and again. Mr. Braaten has told his exciting story around the world to different countries who have expressed an interest in this fruit venture.

Our budget encourages businesses to grow and thrive, investing in infrastructure, keeping taxes low, and investing in people. Saskatchewan is a good place to live and work.

Mr. Speaker, Prairie Women On Snowmobiles, supporting breast cancer research, stopped through the town of Smeaton in Saskatchewan Rivers. I had the pleasure and opportunity to have lunch and visit with these courageous cancer survivors and volunteers who brave the long ride throughout their journey to recovery. Our government's budget addresses health challenges such as cancer. 157 million for Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, up almost 100 per cent since 2008, is included in this year's budget. Total spending for health care is 5.5 billion, Mr. Speaker.

The Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure crews had a challenging year in extreme weather. However, our government continued to maintain and improve the province's 26 000 kilometres of highways to accommodate Saskatchewan's growth. I had the privilege of attending the grand opening at St. Louis bridge, which opened to traffic in October.

As crews were building, repaving, undertaking 38 bridge projects and 323 culvert projects, other crews were maintaining mother nature's flooding of washouts and closed highways. Since 2008 our government has invested a record 5.2 billion in transportation infrastructure. Our government will continue to

work to ensure that the best value for taxpayers' dollars, as we maintain and upgrade the provincial highway system, working with rural and municipal governments, is important as we face future challenges. Keeping the province strong, this budget provides 46.2 million to repair or replace bridges, culverts, and over 73 million for TMS [thin membrane surface] rural roads. Our region in Saskatchewan Rivers was hit hard with flooding but this budget will provide 15 million to continue repairs from last year's flooding.

Mr. Speaker, most important in this budget, besides the people of Saskatchewan, is the balancing of the budget. And this is a long-term legacy that this government can gift the Saskatchewan people. For eight years now this government has stood and delivered one of Canada's balanced budgets, I believe only two in Canada this year. That in itself speaks volumes of the commitment this government has to its people who have asked for good governance. We delivered fiscal responsibility in times of restraint, while keeping Saskatchewan strong.

Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage all members in this Assembly to vote for the budget. It makes sense, it's prudent, and it has vision for the future generations to come. Thus, Mr. Speaker, I want to put on record to indicate I will be voting in favour of the budget and against the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Makowsky: — Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to join in the debate this evening about the 2015 *Keeping Saskatchewan Strong* budget just released by the member from Canora-Pelly.

All the members, I think, have a custom to thank a few people, and people like myself, private members on the backbenches, don't always have a chance to publicly put on the record people important to us. So I'd like to thank a few people. First my wife Tami, my three sons, Nick, Ryan, and Blake of course mean so much to me, and they give me a lot of support in this job, being away from them on occasion. And they're okay with that.

My constituents of course, they're the people that put their faith in me, and I hope I haven't let them down. And it's great, and I appreciate them calling me or coming to visit and telling me what's on their mind. And I might not always agree, I might not always be able to help them, but certainly to have the opportunity to do that is what we're here for, all of us are here for. First and foremost is to serve, to serve our constituents, and that's the best part of the job.

Brittany is my constituency assistant. She's doing a great job in our office for the people of Regina Dewdney.

I mentioned the Finance minister before, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to thank him for his 20 years of service to the people of Saskatchewan. And the people certainly got their money's worth from that member. He is very diligent in all his work. And he is of course the Finance minister, obviously, and that's a very tough job, very difficult job, and he's done it very well. And again thanks for his 20 years of service to the people of Saskatchewan and all the work he's done on the budget.

Just real quickly, I can't remember the setting or the reason I was talking to somebody. They weren't too enamoured with politicians in general, but the person I was talking to, I believe it was a constituent, he specifically mentioned that . . . He didn't call him the MLA from Canora; he said his name, which I can't say in the House here. But it stood out to me that in a position that sometimes it's tough to get a pat on the back sometimes as an MLA, but that person told me what a great person and what a great MLA he is for the people of the province, and of course I agree.

Thursday during routine proceedings, I guess the name Jim Hopson was in the gallery, Mr. Speaker. I didn't get a chance to say anything or put it on record, but I'd like to join with what the other members said about Mr. Hopson. I had a chance to not work directly with him, but for a number of years in my previous position I noticed big changes, the culture change, the revenues that were raised by the Saskatchewan Roughriders and what a great job he did leading that franchise from where it was to where it is now. If you told me when I started out or even when Mr. Hopson started out, Jim started out, and if to where it is now, I probably wouldn't have believed you. It's such a dramatic turnaround that we've seen from the Roughriders, and now of course the flagship franchise of the CFL [Canadian Football League]. And I couldn't be prouder for it. So thanks to Mr. Hopson.

And I'd also like to wish his predecessor, the new CEO, the former CEO of the Roughriders, Craig Reynolds . . . I mention him not only for that, but he's also a constituent of mine so we'll have to keep close tabs on his progress. I'm sure we all will across this province. And we know how important the Roughriders are to the mood of the province and what that green and white means to everybody in Saskatchewan. So we obviously wish him well.

Craig grew up in Saskatchewan in the Foam Lake area. He went to Alberta, like so many of our compatriots went to Alberta, to work. He's an accountant. He worked out in the oil sector and was around in BC and Alberta. Mr. Hopson recruited him back to Saskatchewan, and he's done a great job on the stadium file, on the Grey Cups that have been held here and has brought in business practices and new ways of doing things. And he's definitely led to change and positive change, and so we'll watch what he does. And he has a great young family, so again we wish him well. And I mentioned he came back to Saskatchewan, and a lot of people are coming back to Saskatchewan. New people from around the world are moving to our great province. And Craig and his family is one of the 1,132,640 Saskatchewanians that are now in our province.

So that's great to see, of course, Mr. Speaker. And I think those type of families moving here . . . Years ago when you look down, break down those numbers, there was in Saskatchewan for a long time a lot of very young people and a lot of older people and not that many people in the middle. So the demographics have changed so much, and that's very important for now and in the future of our great province to have more taxpayers of taxpaying age to pay for all the programs that we want to run. So demographics is very important.

We have a very young population, and so the future just on that basis . . . And it's difficult to turn those things around. It really

is. We've had, you know, 70, 80 years of struggling in this province to attract people to our province, and you know, hopefully we've turned the corner for good, and that's a good thing. Again a new high. And it's been mentioned before that more people have come to our province than at any time under this Premier, except for our founding premier, Mr. Scott.

So again back to the budget here. It was a tough year on the revenue side of course, a 660 million drop from oil. So revenue is down. There's going to be some tough choices, some tough measures in the budget. But, Mr. Speaker, we have a balanced budget. I mean that's something. And I mentioned before, from the work the Finance minister did, and the treasury board, and that is certainly a great accomplishment to keep a balanced budget, the eighth consecutive one that this government's brought down, the fourth I've been able to be in the government.

And we were able to do that with no tax increases, no tax increases. We weren't downloading. That contrasts quite starkly to the members across the way when they were in government. Many of my colleagues have mentioned they raised taxes 17 times. That's worth noting, the contrast, the difference — 17 times.

Two of the worst I think or two of the most notable, the PST used to be 9 per cent in this province, 9 per cent. So you're basically saying to anybody that wants to buy sort of a major thing, you know, some electronics or something bigger, you may as well go to Alberta. You may as well go to Alberta or North Dakota to just avoid paying that tax. So the only one maybe worse, the only tax, the NDP tax that was worse than the 9 per cent PST — and they're all bad; they're all bad — but the 3 per cent capital tax.

[22:00]

Now you ask economists, what's a better tax? And of course no taxes are the best probably but, you know, a VAT [value-added tax] tax is one thing that . . . There might be argument about an income tax or capital gains and what those rates will be, but I think universally across the board, especially in a province like Saskatchewan, it's so dependent on capital accumulation for major projects.

We see the Esterhazy mine massive expansion, \$1.7 billion. Just to drill a well is, you know, I don't know what the numbers are, but they're large. And so to have a 3 per cent capital tax, especially in this province, again you're just asking . . . Investors don't go here; go to Alberta because 3 per cent right off the top is just punitive, Mr. Speaker. We saw the results of the NDP years, Mr. Speaker.

And again, no downloading to municipalities. We've kept that commitment, 265 million to municipalities, and that's stable funding. Of course in Regina here, \$41 million in this upcoming year to pave roads and fix sidewalks, etc., etc., that's very important.

A few items specifically in the budget, and I'll talk about my . . . not my constituency but Regina and area. And the biggest one of course is the bypass. If it's a speech in the legislature, I've talked about the bypass, and I'll certainly do it again. This

time there's a line item, \$211 million: 200 million or so from the feds, and the P3 evaluation's under way. I believe land purchases are under way.

And again the members opposite aren't into P3s, and that's fine. We can have that debate. But the ability to transfer risk to the private sector, whereas in big, huge infrastructure projects again this one's tally could be over \$1 billion, that protects the taxpayer from cost overruns, leads to innovation. When there's three proponents spending millions of dollars just to be the one to get chosen to run a big project, there's going to be lots of competition. There's going to be innovation and do everything you can to come in at the lowest bid with the best products. So that's part of the P3 evaluation that's under way.

And of course that'll be announced later this year, I understand, and construction will begin. It allows us again to have . . . They're estimating a three and a half to four-year window rather than in regular procurement we're looking at the, you know, 10-plus years. And that will drastically improve safety on our busy street.

No. 1 East in particular I know is very busy. Victoria Avenue East is very busy. There's seven traffic lights. So that investment and the ability to do it in three and a half to four years is a massive improvement from the traditional NDP method of taking 10, 12, 15 years to do each individual interchange, each area, and it just would take a lot of extra time. It will lead to safety: no traffic lights; no stops and starts for big semis; and to be able to go whatever the speed limit happens to be, 100 kilometres an hour without stopping, starts and stopping. So that's a positive for Regina and area.

Current traffic, not only people going along No. 1 through the city, particularly heavy truck traffic but also commuters within Regina will be able to use that because of its proximity. For people living in the southeast, that area of Regina is growing steadily, and there's a lot of new construction, new housing, new families in there. They're able to go east first to go west rather than going through the city, and it will help congestion along Arcola Avenue, Victoria Avenue, Assiniboine Avenue. So those are positive things all for Regina.

Some of the few things I noticed in the budget that didn't make a lot of headlines but they're smaller, targeted measures particularly in health is again an increase to Home First/Quick Response, \$3.5 million increase. In a tough budget, in a tough revenue year, I think we see that as a positive thing. 2.8 million for renos to a specialized unit for dementia care here in Regina and in Saskatoon, I could probably go on a lot longer about those particular areas, Mr. Speaker. \$700,000 for a new geriatric program which includes recruiting a geriatrician, and as the population ages in our province, baby boomers age, that could be an important thing for long-term care and people with health issues that seniors develop. So we'll look at that, and evaluate that program as it goes forward. But some of these smaller, targeted measures are exciting to see and a chance to see those go forward in this budget, so that's positive news.

In the education area, it's been mentioned before but again P3, three new joint-use schools and the announcement that 100 per cent of capital for new schools will be funded by the government, going forward. So those are 900 million in total to

renovate and build new schools in our province, Mr. Speaker. Contrast to the members across the way, closed 176 schools. So we're building them. We're renovating them. Again there was a big infrastructure deficit in 2007 when we took over. We're trying desperately to fill that and doing all we can. We know there's a lot of work to do, so we're happy to see that in the current budget year.

Certainly I can go on in the areas of housing. In my constituency there's not a lot of land left to build upon, but south of Victoria Square Mall there's five large apartment units, Mr. Speaker, will help the vacancy in Regina and area. Province wide, the vacancy was raised to 4.1 per cent I believe is the number. Before, earlier it was under 1 per cent, and so that's good news for renters to bring balance to the housing situation in our province and in Regina specifically. That's what we want.

I know the NDP, I'm not sure what they're asking for now, but they were really big on rent control before the last election. So we see that rather than doing that, which leads to deterioration of the rental stock, our incentive programs have increased the number of units, particularly in Regina, that I know of, and I know province wide as well. There's been a lot of work done in that area, and those incentives have been working.

Mr. Speaker, in just the last few minutes, I'd like to turn my attention and mention a few things about the members opposite. I'd like to talk a little bit more about some of the things I've seen from them. I don't get a chance to get on my feet too often, but I'd like to look at it through a lens of a bit of a TV show I watch . . . not a TV show, a segment on a TV show I watch, *Sunday NFL Countdown*. They have a show. One of the segments is called, "C'Mon Man," and what they do on that, Boomer and — who else is on there? — Tom Jackson, and Keyshawn, and Cris Carter, they all have a clip that they show of something bad happening or somebody failing, somebody doing something silly, something goofy, and they, and at the end they say, "c'mon man."

Now unfortunately, unfortunately, I was on a team that had a clip shown on that show a few years ago, but we won't get into that. We won't talk about that one. We won't talk about that one. But a good example would be somebody, it doesn't have to be in football, but somebody can go in for a game-winning slam dunk and get rejected and not win the game. That might be a come on, man.

So if there's a political version, I think the NDP, some of their thoughts, some of their ideas would definitely be part of that segment. And one of the ones I thought, a few of them I looked at, the member from Rosemont every day brings up a petition for Dewdney Avenue west truck traffic. And that's fine. That's good that he stands up for his constituents. But what he fails to do, and the NDP quite often do this is, where do you want that truck traffic to go? Where do you want it to go? Do you want it to go down Albert Street? Would that be better with 20 traffic lights? I mean come on, man. Give us an idea of what you'd do differently. The other part is for example not wanting all those goods to be moved, helping make us more prosperous. I mean that's a good thing. So I know he's playing politics, and he's standing up, but again give us something we can look at.

The other thing I find quite interesting and almost bizarre from the Leader of the Opposition is when he pretends that the Premier is here. He pretends the Premier is here when he's doing questions. And of course the Premier on occasion is away. He's meeting with the Prime Minister. He's on a trade mission, what have you. But the Leader of the Opposition asks, will the Premier commit to a meeting with somebody? Will the Premier answer these questions? And he's not here. So come on, man. You've got to stop that. You've got to stop that because that's quite bizarre.

Now a couple of our members mentioned, from the good old days, the greatest hits of the NDP: the dot-coms, the bingos, the pawn shops. Come on, man. That was ridiculous. I wonder what they were thinking. The member from Athabasca and the member from Lakeview, they were in cabinet. I figure they might have watched the movie *Wall Street* or they read a biography of Warren Buffett or something like that, and there's tons of money to be made out there. This is no problem. We just invest this money, the taxpayer money, and then we'll have gold in the street, gold sidewalks. Well that's ridiculous. So that's a definite come on, man. What were you thinking back then?

I just think, as I wrap it up, there's a few more things here. But there's, I think, just the general economic incoherence of the members opposite, we think recently of the Leader of the Opposition. When he was talking in a scrum, he mentioned the film employment tax credit. If we just brought that back, that would fill the near \$700 million gap we have in oil royalties coming into the province. Now that's pretty ridiculous.

The must-haves that he had, it would have cost roughly \$260 million annually. Where is that money going to come from? Over \$1 billion in capital spending on what is saved, you know, in the millions of dollars. I don't know the exact numbers because there's not a bunch of specificity from the members opposite. So come on, man, we need a little bit better.

And again these nonsense sort of quotes, these ideas of more eggs and more baskets, buy-local day. That's fine, I mean, but as for a comprehensive economic plan for the future of our province, I think we need a little bit better. So come on, man.

And just a general idea of what, before I wrap up here, what would those members do differently? How would they pay for it? Mr. Speaker, we've got this beautiful building. We've got a lot of staff. We've got, you know, a 100-year-old building, and the reason we're here is to debate ideas, different issues. We would love to hear from the members opposite. What would they do better? Let's have a debate. Let's have a debate on the floor. Let's talk about ideas. Let's generate thoughts about what would we do, and let's take that to the people. So let's debate. Come up with a plan so we can debate it. Come on, man.

So anyway, Mr. Speaker, I think I'll wrap up my comments for this evening. Thank you for all those who are listening, and I will be supporting the budget. Thank you.

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

Mr. Marchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Come on, man.

I've got to follow that?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to begin with well, well, well. No, I'm not missing my colleague friend from Prince Albert. It's a saying my mom used to say to my dad often when we were growing up. You know, we always didn't have a lot of money in the house, and mother would start a conversation around, we need to do something. And my father would always say, well, mother. And my mother would always say, well, well, well. That's a hole in the ground, father. I wish mine had oil in it.

And it just seems to be that that's a little bit appropriate for the situation we're in today; however, what happened back then is what's happening today. Mother and Father would get together, and they'd figure out a way to do things to make ends meet, to make it good for the kids in the family. And it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that that's what our government is doing today.

[22:15]

We are facing some challenges because of the world situation. What we've done is we've dug in and we've worked together as a team, and we've come up with a plan that we believe meets the needs of our province going forward. And I can't wait to take this out to the electorate.

Mr. Speaker, it's customary at this time when we rise to speak to acknowledge folks, and I'd like to do the same. Obviously, to my grandparents who came to this country, to my mom and dad for providing us with the opportunity to appreciate their values, and to my dad for serving in the second war and protecting what we have.

My older brother, Pat, and his wife, Sharon, couldn't have a better older brother, just wonderful support. My sister Lois and her husband Brian who worked tirelessly on my campaign. My four wonderful children: Chris, Cam, Michelle, and Mel; eight grandchildren, the newest being Scarlett Anne, seven months old and just the apple of grandpa's eye — really quite a neat experience to have those eight grandchildren.

To my dear wife Karen, my best friend and partner, who makes me laugh every day. Well we kind of laugh together. It's usually at my expense. And it seems, Mr. Speaker, that the older I get the harder the laughs become. But we do have a good time, and it's because of her companionship that those days and these days are as fulfilling as they are. So I thank Karen.

I do want to make a little special mention of Karen's family, the Hipperson family. I had the great fortune to speak about 100 years of construction history in the province of Saskatchewan. Hipperson Construction is 108 years old. And Hy-Grade Millwork up in Saskatoon is 87 years old. So there's been four generations of continuous construction contributions to the province of Saskatchewan.

And just recently Hy-Grade will be investing upwards of a half a million dollars in technical equipment that will make Hy-Grade Millwork probably one of the . . . Well it will make it the most technically advanced millwork company in Western Canada and probably one of the few technically advanced

millwork companies in all of Canada. They're bringing in a huge computer-driven woodwork technology that will allow Saskatchewan to compete on an international market in terms of millwork. It's really quite an amazing story so I wanted to recognize those folks up in Saskatoon.

And of course the people of Regina Douglas Park. You know, Douglas Park really is defined by its many, many cultures. Some of the first settlers to our province settled in Regina Douglas Park. So you'll see the Romanian Orthodox church, the Ukrainian Catholic and Orthodox churches, the Serbian churches. And of course with all of those different cultural groups, there are the clubs. And you've not had a hamburger until you've had Serb burger on a Friday at the Serbian Club or you've participated in the buffet at the Hungarian Club on a Friday. There's just nothing, nothing finer.

Leibel Field, the newly renovated Leibel Field, probably one of the finest, if not the finest minor football, soccer facility in all of Western Canada. The Douglas Park track and area. The University of Regina. You know, to go from two classroom buildings on the new campus to where it is today, and those towering residences, just a testament to the growth of some of the landmarks in Regina Douglas Park. The Royal Saskatchewan Museum on the corner of Albert and College Avenue, from the old Normal School to the new building; the old power house, now the Science Centre; and of course two of the most modern, up-to-date progressive schools in all of Saskatchewan at Arcola Community School and Douglas Park School.

And, Mr. Speaker, for the next election of course, Regina Douglas Park will encompass the areas of Eastview and Broders Annex. And I had the opportunity to teach in that community in the late '70s and had an absolutely wonderful experience and met a great many hard-working people. And I look forward to re-uniting with some of those.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, it's indeed a privilege to be able to represent the people of Douglas Park, and certainly I am proud to be from Saskatchewan. This past winter my wife and I had a chance to travel to California for a short stay, and during that stay we made our way to San Diego to watch the Farmers Open golf tournament. We went specifically to watch Graham DeLaet of course play, and at the last moment he withdrew for health reasons. So did Tiger Woods. After the 10th hole, he withdrew for health reasons. But anyway, that's not the story. The story really is that Karen and I wore our Saskatchewan Roughrider jerseys.

And here you are on the golf links of La Jolla in San Diego, and you're two people wearing green jerseys from Saskatchewan. It was incredible the number of people that came up to us and said, we knew we would see a Rider jersey at this golf tournament. And the pièce de résistance, if I may, was Chris Gilley, one of the pros, his caddy walking down the 11th fairway, came right past Karen and I and recognized the Saskatchewan Roughrider jersey. He says, the Saskatchewan Roughriders, my favourite Canadian football team. Ask me if I was pumped to be from Saskatchewan.

There's just, you know, all these people . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, it was just an amazing story, Mr. Speaker.

And I wanted to share that because indeed I am very proud to be from Saskatchewan, as are all my colleagues. And I think we certainly tell our story every chance we get.

It's also a privilege, of course, for us to be in this Chamber. It's a privilege to serve the people like so many before us have served and will continue to serve, given the world situation that we face. It's a grave situation; we all know what we're talking about here. And if it weren't for the men and women of our services and our other protective services, our medics and our police forces and our firemen . . . They just make our world a safer place to be in. And I'm very, very privileged to be able to serve in that regard.

You know, one of the things that this province did right a number of years ago was to institute the Protective Services Medal. I'm a firm believer in doing things right. You can do the right thing, but sometimes we do things right, and this was one of them. I'm very proud to be able to recognize and honour those people that serve our citizens in that protective way. So I'm very proud of that.

Of course this speech is about the budget, Mr. Speaker, and so I do want to talk a little bit about that. Saskatchewan is strong, and this budget is about keeping Saskatchewan strong. There are many, many examples of strength in our province, Mr. Speaker, and I'll begin with the population statistic, one of the main indicators of strength in this province: 1,132,640 strong.

I can't resist not using this quote from some time ago, and I quote, "... they propose to increase the population of Saskatchewan by 100,000, over . . . I forget what number of years, Mr. Speaker. Well it's so over the top, it is so farcical, Mr. Speaker, that it flies in the face of reality." Mr. Van Mulligen in 2003, Mr. Speaker. That's almost archivable, it's so farcical, that quote, that I just had to get that back in there, Mr. Speaker.

So what does all that population mean? Well this weekend, Mr. Speaker, I had the great opportunity to watch my grandson play some hockey out at White City, a small community just east of Regina. In this White City hockey tournament, there were six teams of 12 players a side, 13 players a side, all under the age of six, all under the age of six playing minor hockey, from one small community. That's population growth. And then of course all of the parents that go along with that, and the strength that they bring and vibrancy that they bring to that community, it was absolutely a joy to be in that rink over the weekend. I have to say that the grandson scored a hat trick — over two days, wasn't all at once — so we're pretty happy about that.

But anyway, Mr. Speaker, that's an example of Saskatchewan's strength. I'll never forget the day that my daughter took us out there to look at the property they bought. It was basically bald prairie. I was telling the minister from Kindersley at lunchtime that my son-in-law and I used to stand in the backyard, tee it up, and drive the golf ball across the highway to try to hit the barn across the road. Well today you'd break windows. There's so many houses out there. It's absolutely amazing, the growth.

What does it mean in terms of investment in Saskatchewan? Well we know that Mosaic's invested \$1.7 billion expansion. We've got the K+S in Moose Jaw. We've got a AAA credit

rating. We've got the North Battleford hospital, the children's hospital, the Regina bypass, and 20-plus new schools, Mr. Speaker. It means manufacturing. Our manufacturing has taken off, and as a result of that, our exports are at an all-time high. And as the Premier often says, Mr. Speaker, not bad for a province with no ports.

All of that provides a very strong fiscal foundation for the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, these are all indicators of the strength. But for me the biggest indicator of our strength lies in our people. One doesn't have to look much further than Telemiracle, another year of over \$4 million raised by the Kinsmen Foundation for Telemiracle helping literally dozens and dozens of families in our province with the issues that face them. My colleague from Regina Dewdney talked about Jim Hopson and the contributions that he's made to this province, and demonstrating the strength of his commitment to our growth and the growth of the Saskatchewan Roughriders and their recognizability. Is that a word?

An Hon. Member: — No.

Mr. Marchuk: — No? Well that's archivable then. All over this continent, the George Reed Foundation for Special Olympics, Don Narcisse's KidSport, Geroy Simon's Coats for Kids. And of course I already mentioned Graham DeLaet. Imagine a kid from Weyburn, Saskatchewan on the world stage, the Presidents Cup, representing this province, showing the durability, the will to be able to be successful in that highly competitive world just speaks to the strength of the people of this province. And so, Mr. Speaker, as I said, this budget is about keeping Saskatchewan strong.

I'm going to kind of move along here, Mr. Speaker. As we talk about those challenges and the benefits of growth, Mr. Speaker, we chose to build schools, not close 176. We chose to build roads, Mr. Speaker. I've travelled on Highway 10 to Fort Qu'Appelle. The passing lanes on it, it just made that road an absolutely wonderful highway to travel. The twinning from Saskatoon to P.A. is fantastic.

We chose to build hospitals, not close 52. We chose to add long-term care beds, Mr. Speaker, not close them. Eight hundred new child care spaces with the new joint schools that we're building, Mr. Speaker. You know, our working families need child care spaces, and we're going to provide 800 of them. That really speaks to facing the challenges that we have.

So, Mr. Speaker, we chose the benefits of growth over the costs of decline. And I can't help but quote the stat that from '96 to 2006, we lost 28,000 people from this province.

I want to close, Mr. Speaker, with where did we spend our money? Where did the money go? I can't wait to hit the doorstep answering that question. Over this past year I met a woman up in Sandy Bay, Saskatchewan, a woman who . . . a mother of seven children and admitted to us that she couldn't read or write. But because of one of our family resource centres, Cathy was able to move that along and become a contributing member. Got her out of the house, got her away from being embarrassed and lacking self-confidence, and as a result of our family resource centre and her connection to the community, Mr. Speaker, she's very much active and engaged in not only

the resource centre, but in the community of Sandy Bay. And that again is testament to the strength of Saskatchewan people. And, Mr. Speaker, that's how we spend our money.

I'm very proud to be able to participate in this debate and very proud to be able to support the budget going forward.

The Speaker: — It now being 10:30 p.m., this House stands adjourned to 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:30.]

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