



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

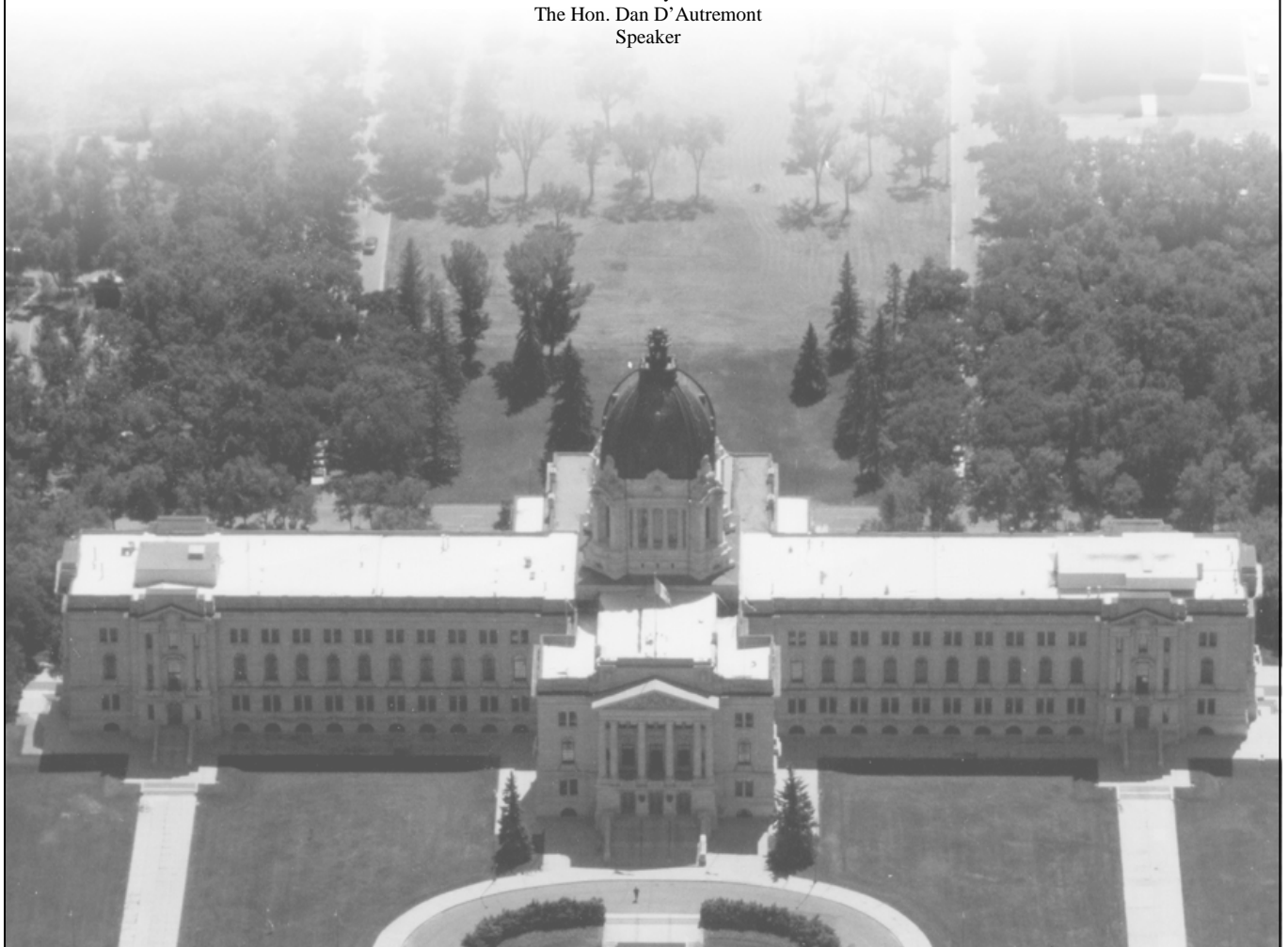
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

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



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. Dan D’Autremont
 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — Cam Broten

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
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Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Broten, Cam	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Campeau, Hon. Jennifer	SP	Saskatoon Fairview
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Draude, June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
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Makowsky, Gene	SP	Regina Dewdney
Marchuk, Russ	SP	Regina Douglas Park
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Moe, Hon. Scott	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
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Ottenbreit, Hon. Greg	SP	Yorkton
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Phillips, Kevin	SP	Melfort
Reiter, Hon. Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Ross, Laura	SP	Regina Qu’Appelle Valley
Sproule, Cathy	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
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Stewart, Hon. Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Tell, Hon. Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
Tochor, Corey	SP	Saskatoon Eastview
Toth, Don	SP	Moosomin
Vermette, Doyle	NDP	Cumberland
Wall, Hon. Brad	SP	Swift Current
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Hon. Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Wyant, Hon. Gordon	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Young, Colleen	SP	Lloydminster
Vacant		Prince Albert Carlton

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to request leave for an extended introduction.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice has requested leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce several visitors seated in your gallery this afternoon. They are articling students who have been working with the Ministry of Justice or the courts in the province since last spring.

I had a chance to review their bios this morning, Mr. Speaker, and to speak with them a little bit earlier on today as well, and I must say that the calibre of these young legal minds is truly encouraging. Tamara Denluck, Alysha Rozon, and Khurshed Chowdhury have been articling with the Ministry of Justice. Tamara is a graduate of the College of Law at the University of Saskatchewan, and before that she graduated with great distinction with a Bachelor of Arts in history. Alysha comes to us with a law degree from the University of Alberta and has also completed a Bachelor of Arts in psychology at the University of Calgary. Khurshed is a graduate of the College of Law at the University of Saskatchewan. His extensive education includes a Masters of Science in military studies from Bangladesh University of Professionals.

Mr. Speaker, Michelle Biddulph, Sarah-Jane Nussbaum, and William Lane have all been articling at the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal. Sarah-Jane graduated with great distinction from the College of Law at the University of Saskatchewan. She won the Law Society of Saskatchewan's Gold Medal and also received the prize given to the graduating student demonstrating the most promise as a legal scholar. Michelle also graduated with great distinction from the College of Law. She received the Law Society of Saskatchewan Silver Medal. This summer she will begin a one-year placement as a law clerk at the Supreme Court of Canada.

William also comes to us from the College of Law at the University of Saskatchewan. Prior to that he received a Bachelor of Arts in political science from the University of Saskatchewan, graduating with high honours. William is quite familiar with this building. He spent three summers working here as a ministerial assistant for both the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Corrections and Policing.

And finally to you, Mr. Speaker, Parveen Shergill has been articling at the Court of Queen's Bench. She graduated from the Faculty of Law at the University of British Columbia, and prior to that she graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce degree from that university's Sauder School of Business.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of this group of articling students. I know we will see great things from them in the years to come, and I'm looking forward to following their career. So, Mr. Speaker, please join me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to join with the Minister of Justice in welcoming the law students to the legislature, and I want to thank them for their service this past year. It's always interesting to get a very capable law student working with you as a lawyer or as a judge because they ask questions that sometimes you don't want to answer, but you have to because the students want to learn. And so thank you for providing that service over the last year, and I know that your experience here will enrich your legal careers wherever you end up. And we'll always be proud of you as Saskatchewan graduates, Saskatchewan law students who have been part of the Government of Saskatchewan. So thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I would request to do two introductions. First, Mr. Speaker, I request leave for an extended introduction.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Agriculture has requested leave to do an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize some of Saskatchewan's longest serving volunteer crop reporters. From seeding to harvest, the observations they record provide vital information about crop development, crop progress, precipitation through our province. The volunteer crop reporters here today have served 25, 30, and 35 years in the field voluntarily recording agricultural happenings in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize and thank each of our volunteer crop reporters here with us today, and I ask that the volunteer crop reporters to, with their spouses, to give us a wave as I announce their names.

The 25-year recipients are: Daniel Ruest and his spouse Gilberte, RM [rural municipality] of Wise Creek; Larry and Shannon Berreth, RM of Piapot; Clarence Finkas and his spouse Kerry Obelman, RM of Silverwood; Les Wyatt and his spouse Sharon, RM of Kingsley; David Measner and his spouse Sharon, RM of Sarnia; Garry Dennis and his spouse Ruby, RM of Perdue.

Mr. Speaker, the 30-year recipients are: Derald and Irene Ahner, RM of Big Stick; Allan Aitken and his spouse Sherry, RM of Eyebrow; Darcy Kentel and his spouse Laurie, RM of Churchbridge; and seated on the floor, Mr. Speaker, Lambert Wourms and his spouse Lillian, RM of Frenchman Butte.

Mr. Speaker, the 35-year recipients are: David Thompson and his spouse Carole, RM of Kellross. And I would also like to congratulate those who could not join us today, including George Gonos and his spouse Catherine, RM of Enniskillen, 25 years; Kay Berry and her spouse Ray, RM of Battle River, 25 years; Bryan Bittner and his spouse Carol, RM of Abernethy, 25 years; Chad Andrews and his spouse Britny, RM of Pittville, 25 years; Marion Kelly and her spouse Harvey, RM of Round Valley, 30 years; and Bernard Cey and his spouse Cheryl, RM of Reford, 35 years. I'd also like to mention John Hignett of the RM of Big Arm, who suddenly passed away last fall. He would have reached his 40th year of reporting this year.

I'd now ask that all members join me in thanking these volunteer crop reporters for their service and dedication to agriculture and to Saskatchewan, and welcome them to their legislature.

Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, to you and through you I would like to recognize some other guests seated in your gallery. Joining us today are members from the Saskatchewan Pulse Growers association: director and former chair Mr. Morgan Nunweiler; current Chair, Mr. Tim Wiens; and also joining them today is Tim's wife, Mrs. Lavonne Wiens.

Mr. Speaker, I, along with my colleague the Minister of Highways, will be sitting down and meeting with these folks later this afternoon. I look forward to the discussion we will have. They will also be holding a reception tonight for all MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly], and I look forward to seeing everyone there. I ask all of my colleagues to join me in welcoming these guests to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I too would like to extend on behalf of the official opposition a great big welcome to all the reporters, the crop reporters that are here today.

I certainly remember as an amateur crop reporter when I was a kid, Dad would always send us out and check how much rain was in the rain gauge, and that was a really exciting part after the rain. So we know how important all these statistics and all this information is to the agriculture and the producers in Saskatchewan. So I want to welcome you all and, in particular, a big hello to Irene Ahner who I have had many enjoyable conversations about the status of agriculture in Saskatchewan. So hello, Irene. And I would like to welcome all these folks to their Legislative Assembly.

While I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to extend a welcome to Morgan and Tim from the Pulse Growers. We had a very productive meeting this morning, and I appreciated the opportunity to chat with them and learn more about the pulse

industry here in Saskatchewan. Certainly there's a big future ahead for pulse crops, and with community leaders like these folks taking charge and showing leadership in the province, I know that we're in good hands. So on behalf of the official opposition, I too would like to welcome you to your Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Phillips: — Mr. Speaker, I will be making two introductions if I could, please. First of all I am so pleased to introduce my daughter, Kelli Smith, up in the west gallery. She's a great mother. She's a corrections manager with Corrections Canada and just a wonderful singer. And with her today is Justice Smith who is kind of the total package. He's my grandson and he's a tremendous athlete, has excelled in football, basketball, and baseball, was a member of the North American Indigenous Games Saskatchewan team. He's trying out for the Saskatchewan First basketball team. He's on in two weeks, I believe. And he just received his driver's licence so I would ask that all the people in Maple Creek maybe stay off the sidewalks. And with them is my granddaughter Tempestt who is a beautiful young lady and a real going concern. So I would ask that all members make Kelli and Justice and Tempestt welcome in their Legislative Assembly.

And, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, it gives me great pleasure to introduce a friend of mine, Corinne Harcourt, in the Speaker's gallery. Corinne is a teacher at the Englefeld School, a very, very dedicated teacher. And I'm so proud of a gift she gave me probably a month ago where she gave me a copy of the textbook for grade 8 social studies that she had written, that she had authored this book. So she is an exceptional young lady, and I'm so pleased to have her in the Assembly today. And I would like all members to make her welcome to her Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I won't request two introductions but I would like to make a request for an extended introduction.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group seated in the east gallery. I'm talking about the SaskTel mentorship group from Scott Collegiate. Can we get a big wave there? All right, looking good, looking good.

Mr. Speaker, the mentorship group has been in action since 2006, a partnership between Scott Collegiate and SaskTel as part of the Youth Network, and trying to engage young people as to the opportunities throughout the community and the labour force. We are joined today by teacher Carmen Danyluk. Very good. And SaskTel employees who are serving as mentors, congratulations to them. We've got Tara Tibeau, we've got

Melissa Ackerman, we've got Kevin Harris, we've got Jeremy Chasse, and Lyndsey Pankratz who's the coordinator with the Youth Network group.

And then for students, Mr. Speaker, we've got Nathaniel Cruz; we've got Patrick Bray, we've got Taneesha Thompson, we've got Amanda MacFarlane, and we've got Brennan Hoffman. And these are students that I know from their activities in the community council, but certainly very active leaders in the life of Scott Collegiate. But Brennan Hoffman, I should say, Mr. Speaker, is one heck of a fiddler. And if you want to hear "Maple Sugar" done right, just listen to Brennan unleash it on the fiddle some time. So if all members could join me in welcoming these important guests to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as Minister Responsible for SaskTel, I want to also join with my colleague across the floor and welcome these students from Scott Collegiate, as well as their teacher and the mentors from SaskTel.

Mr. Speaker, all of our Crown corporation employees across the entire province not only serve the citizens of this province with respect to their professional responsibilities but also engage in community activities throughout the entire province in volunteer capacity, Mr. Speaker, and we see that witnessed here again today. So hats off to the SaskTel employees providing that kind of mentorship, and I would join with my colleagues in asking all of us to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

[13:45]

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for greater support for education here in Saskatchewan. We know that education is one of the most vital services that government provides to its citizens; and we know that this government has failed to deliver a long-term plan and vision and the necessary resources to prioritize the delivery of educational excellence; and we know that this government has failed to deliver a real plan to close the Aboriginal education gap or to support English as an additional language students or to support community schools and their communities and students; and we know we must build the best education system for today and for Saskatchewan's future. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read the prayer:

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

strong educational infrastructure to serve students and communities long into the future.

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

Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition come from Marquis, Moose Jaw, and Saskatoon. Thank you so much.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise once again today to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents as it relates to the unsafe conditions created by that government on Dewdney Avenue and their failure to recognize this unsafe matter and to respond to it in a timely way. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition. Homelessness is a major problem in La Ronge and other parts of the North, and it is getting worse. Shelter is a basic need for everyone. But under this government it's getting harder and harder for people to find adequate housing, especially families, seniors, women, and children who face abusive situations. The problem is getting worse because of the rising level of poverty and the skyrocketing home ownership costs. The prayer reads:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause the Saskatchewan government to build a homeless shelter in the Lac la Ronge area to meet the needs of addressing homelessness in the Lac la Ronge area.

This petition is signed by many good people of northern Saskatchewan. I so present.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present a petition today in support of safe staffing levels in long-term care. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners point out that many aspects of long-term care are deteriorating under this

government. They point out that the Government of Saskatchewan needs to recognize the need for safe staffing levels to provide hands-on care to residents, and they talk about chronic understaffing in long-term care facilities resulting in unacceptable conditions, including unanswered calls for help, infrequent bathing, and a rise in physical violence amongst residents. I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to take the following action: to cause the government to commit to the creation of safe staffing levels for all valued members of the health care team and to reintroduce actual numbers of staff to match the level of care needs and the number of residents under their care in long-term care facilities.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by folks in Saskatoon, Regina, Martensville, Moose Jaw, Bushell Park, Caronport, Nokomis, and Strasbourg. I so submit.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, I'm rising today to present a petition in support of retaining Yarrow Youth Farm. And the people who have signed this petition wish the following: they understand that the government's planning to close Yarrow Youth Farm and create an open-custody wing in Kilburn Hall to accommodate Yarrow's residents. The provincial Advocate for Children and Youth declared he could not endorse such a rationalization, as low-risk teens could be influenced and pressured by close proximity to high-risk youth who may be involved in serious crimes or gangs; and that Kilburn Hall has a more institutional environment that could intimidate and alienate teens that have committed minor offences.

The prayer reads as follows. They respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action:

To cause the government to keep Yarrow Youth Farm open to ensure a caring home environment for youth who have committed minor offences and to provide support to help these people redirect their lives by setting more positive goals.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by citizens of Saskatoon. I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

International Women's Day

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 20th, I had the pleasure to attend and bring a message to the Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union

International Women's Day celebration. It was a fantastic event with a strong turnout and I was so pleased to be a part of this important event.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that women continue to face far too many barriers globally as well as across our country and here in Saskatchewan. Although we've come a long way to making our province a place where women can find success, there's still much more that needs to be done to ensure real equality and real dignity.

This message of unity and change for the better was brought home by the event's impressive keynote speaker, Ms. Zarqa Nawaz, the creator of *Little Mosque on the Prairie*. With her trademark wit and humour, she addressed the serious issues facing women in our province, country, and world, and noted that for many women who are newcomers the barriers facing all women are compounded by racism and discrimination.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Ms. Muna De Ciman, SGEU's [Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union] organizing committee, and all those who work tirelessly for progress and fairness against injustice and violence every day. It's only by working together that we can ensure equality and dignity for all women in Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Arm River-Watrous.

World Tuberculosis Day

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is World TB [Tuberculosis] Day. This day is meant to remind us that tuberculosis remains an epidemic in much of the world. Every year nine million people around the world get sick with TB. Three million don't get the care they need, and nearly 1.5 million of these people die.

This year World TB Day calls for reaching those who are not getting care, so they can get diagnosed, receive treatment, and be cured. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately TB continues to be a concern in our province as well. First Nations residents in northern Saskatchewan are particularly affected. More than half of the TB cases in our province occur in this group. Our government realizes that more needs to be done to prevent and control TB in our province.

Our government's TB strategy supports focused work in communities with high TB. We also support initiatives of TB Prevention and Control Saskatchewan. We've been collaborating with health regions, federal government, the Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority, and others to raise awareness of TB, reduce the stigma associated with it, and enhance prevention and control. Only by working together can we address the root cause of TB, develop a better understanding of the challenges we're facing, and make progress towards eliminating this disease.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Living in Harmony Awards Winners

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week on March 18th, I was very pleased to participate in the city of Saskatoon's Living in Harmony Awards ceremony, presented by the city of Saskatoon's cultural diversity and race relations advisory committee. This was held in conjunction with the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination that was marked this past Saturday, March 21st around the world. The annual Living in Harmony Awards recognizes local organizations or individuals for their efforts in promoting intercultural harmony in our community.

This year's winners include, in the film category: *Facing Residential School*, Brownell School; *I am not*, Oskayak School; *First Nations Racism*, Dylan Funk at St. Edward School.

Jenna Karmark of St. Edward School won the 2015 Living in Harmony poster for her poster, *Human*. Jasmine Thomas, also at St. Edward School, won for her work entitled *Connected*. In the literary category, Dominique Hoffert at John Lake School won for her work, "Living in Harmony," and Shelia Brown's grade 3 class at Father Robinson School also received special recognition.

Melody Wood and Glenda Abbott received this year's Community Recognition Award. Both women have been strong activists in our community fighting racism, most recently showing outstanding leadership in the issues around missing and murdered indigenous women.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating these Living in Harmony Award winners and thank them for dedicating their time and efforts for making Saskatoon a much more welcoming place for everyone. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Optimist Club All-Star Night

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 14th the Friendly City Optimist Club put on their second annual All-Star Night at the Heritage Inn. This just happened to be chaired by a good friend of mine, Gord Currie.

The crowd of about 250 people, including my friend from Moose Jaw North and myself, were treated to a night of former and current Canadian Football League stars. Hall of Fame players Damon Allen, Don Narcisse, and current star Ricky Foley were all in attendance. Raising money in support of the pediatric unit for the new Moose Jaw Hospital, the crowd listened to some behind-the-scenes locker room stories from the three Grey Cup champions. Those in the crowd also enjoyed the opportunity to ask questions of the CFL [Canadian Football League] greats.

Emceed by local radio star Craig Hemingway of 800 CHAB, guests were treated to entertainment from the CFLers, supper, and many silent auction items. Although the final tally of money raised yet hasn't been announced, organizers saw that the night went off without a hitch.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be part of a community that bands together to help our children in need and will go the extra mile to provide state-of-the-art equipment that will one day save lives. Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to join me with congratulating the Friendly City Optimist Club of Moose Jaw for starting such a great tradition and wishing them many more successful events in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Little Princess Ball Fundraiser

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, this past weekend Moose Jaw resembled something out of a children's storybook when the Heritage Inn hosted the Little Princess Ball as a fundraiser for the Moose Jaw's youngest hospital patients. It was a royal ball fit for any princess, featuring a royal feast, crafts, dancing, and entertainment, an event that was truly a magical experience for young princesses from ages 1 to 12. A committee of volunteers decorated the room with tree stumps and mushrooms and moss and leaves and magical lighting for a real woodland fairy tale feel that lit up every little face.

Mr. Speaker, this two-day event catered to 680 little princesses. It was also raising \$50,000 to help equip the new hospital in Moose Jaw. An event such as this could not take part without extreme enthusiastic and creative volunteers. I would like to thank them and especially thank the Co-Chairs, Jen Tribier and Sharon Church, for their dedicated service.

Mr. Speaker, the new hospital in Moose Jaw is vital in keeping our community strong and providing the best service for our citizens. The Little Princess Ball will raise awareness and much-appreciated funds for equipment in aid of some of the very young children that will be using the hospital.

I ask all members to join me in recognizing all the special little princesses and to congratulate the volunteers for making the Little Princess Ball a huge success. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Business Builders Awards Gala

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on March 19th I had the pleasure of attending the North Saskatoon Business Association's 18th annual Business Builders Awards Gala, along with the Minister of Education, Labour and Workplace Safety as well as the Government House Leader.

More than 600 businesses and community leaders gathered at Prairieland Park to honour the many outstanding award recipients. Thirteen awards were handed out to businesses and individuals. These awards were designed to celebrate the success, leadership, ingenuity, and persistence of Saskatoon's entrepreneurs.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize two of the deserving award recipients. Walter Klassen of Keystone Insurance was named Member of the Year in recognition of his exceptional commitment to the NSBA [North Saskatoon Business

Association] and his work as a successful and involved community leader. Wayne Wilson of Business Furnishings received the Shirley Ryan Lifetime Achievement Award in honour of his outstanding long-term contributions to business and to the community in Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, I wish I had time to recognize all the deserving award recipients. I would like to congratulate the NSBA and their members on another excellent awards gala and encourage them all to keep up the good work in their businesses as well as in their communities.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to ask all my colleagues to join me in applauding all the hard-working Saskatchewan entrepreneurs and, in particular, those winners of the NSBA Awards.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[14:00]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Provincial Budget Maintains Revenue Sharing

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, although the members opposite haven't taken time out of their days to understand the provincial budget that the Finance minister announced last Wednesday, that doesn't mean the citizens of Saskatchewan haven't noticed.

The 2015-16 provincial budget is helping to keep Saskatchewan municipalities strong by providing a record \$265.3 million in revenue sharing. That's up 8.3 million or 3.2 per cent from the 2014-15 budget, Mr. Speaker, and up 138 million or 108 per cent from '07-08 budget.

Mr. Speaker, Ian Hamilton, the mayor of North Battleford, was pleased and pleasantly surprised. He told reporters, and I quote, "My initial thoughts are very positive." He went on to say, "I am pleased to recognize that the provincial government has maintained the revenue sharing of the municipal operating grant at one per cent of provincial sales taxes."

Mr. Speaker, maintaining revenue sharing of the municipal operating grant allows communities like North Battleford to invest in their citizens to meet the demands of growth. Previous NDP [New Democratic Party] governments never offered this opportunity to our communities. By maintaining municipal revenue sharing, communities across the province can use the unconditional funding for services or infrastructure projects to meet the demands of a growing community.

Mr. Speaker, our government is responding to the needs of a strong and growing Saskatchewan, and leaders across the province, like Mayor Ian Hamilton, recognize this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Quality of Care and Staffing Levels in Long-Term Care Homes

Mr. Broten: — Lois Rein was in a seniors' care facility in Saskatoon. On March 12th, less than two weeks ago, her mechanical chair was left in the forward position after her breakfast tray and table were removed, and she fell. Lois fractured her femur just above her knee. She was on the floor for hours before she was found. She fell shortly after breakfast, but an ambulance was not called until 2:30 in the afternoon. Lois died on Friday, and her family is speaking out today.

My question is for the Premier. How many more families with heartbreaking stories will have to come forward before this government will take the seniors' care crisis seriously?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the absence of the Premier, I'll take this question on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, first and foremost I want to express my condolences and my deepest sympathies to the family of Mrs. Rein. Mr. Speaker, I've had an opportunity to read her memorial that was published in the newspaper, and I want to note the life that she had lived, nearly 100 years old, Mr. Speaker, and all the contributions that she had made to her family and the life that she had lived, Mr. Speaker. And I certainly express my condolences to the family.

Mr. Speaker, I am aware that Saskatoon Health Region has indicated that the facility director of care has requested a review of the resident file as it relates to this fall and this incident, as well as the regional patient safety specialist is actively investigating this case to determine whether or not it meets the criteria of a critical incident. Mr. Speaker, I will await that information.

We will work, and are working closely with the health region to understand what exactly took place in this case, Mr. Speaker, and what we can learn from it so that it doesn't happen to another resident.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, last Thursday the Health minister said that it was difficult to budget for seniors' care because the government was waiting for the report from the Ombudsman's review in order to know the real needs. This government just completely dismisses the 360 pages of the CEO [chief executive officer] report and the 250 pages of urgent requests from seniors' care facilities. That's how seriously this government takes the seniors' care crisis.

Here's what Lois's family has to say:

Some people have asked why we haven't spoken up sooner. We were warned by others not to say anything about our observations of negligence and poor attention to detail because there could be repercussions to the resident, our loved one, or to ourselves being barred from the institution. And so we took that very seriously.

Does the Premier agree that no family should ever have to be afraid of repercussions for advocating for their loved one? And what will the Premier do to ensure that family members know that it is okay to speak up?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Again, Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Premier, I'll take that question on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, certainly we encourage staff and family members to report incidences so that our processes can change, so that we can avoid the errors and the mistakes, and so that we can avoid harm that does happen in the health care system. Mr. Speaker, I have to say that this is a major focus of the continuous quality improvement work that's happening in the health care system, which I believe the Leader of the Opposition disagrees with the direction that the government is going.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly would say that we want that information reported. I think it's fair to say that when this government was elected in 2007, there was in the health care system a fear of reporting, a fear of transparency when these types of incidents took place. We are working hard to instill a culture of safety, a culture of transparency, Mr. Speaker.

As it relates to seniors' care though, prior to, Mr. Speaker, this government asking the CEOs to look at our health facilities and seniors' care, Mr. Speaker, we put in place a falls collaborative that has seen a reduction of 25 per cent in the number of falls in long-term care. We have added each and every year to the full-time complement of long-term care workers, Mr. Speaker, and we are replacing facilities all across this province. We take this issue very seriously.

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

Mr. Broten: — Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the response that we see from the government, even in the face of a CEO tour report of hundreds of pages of urgent needs coming from seniors' care facilities, Mr. Speaker, is simply not addressing the crisis that we hear coming forward from families day after day.

Lois's family has this to say:

We feel that the realities of nursing home life cannot be ignored any longer, and we know that more people are starting to speak up to advocate for their loved ones. We feel very strongly that we must now speak up too.

Lois's family is most concerned about the lack of staffing, the lack of proper communication, and the lack of accountability.

Now these are the exact same concerns that the independent Provincial Ombudsman identified when she gave an update on her investigation into the seniors' care crisis. Will the Premier at least admit that the lack of staffing, the lack of proper communication, the lack of proper accountability are contributing to the seniors' care crisis in our province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, in the absence of the Premier, I'll take that question on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I think the record clearly demonstrates that when this party, when this government was elected in 2007, right from our initial first budget, Mr. Speaker, we started to add resources back into long-term care after what had been cut from long-term care and seniors' care in this province, Mr. Speaker. Twelve hundred beds across this province were closed by the NDP at a time when the seniors population of this province was actually on the increase. Nineteen facilities across this province were closed under that government, Mr. Speaker, not to mention all of the positions that would have been cut because of those closures, Mr. Speaker, and we know that was in nurses and in doctors.

So we have begun the work, over the last number of years, of making renewed investments back into long-term care. In long-term care alone, with RNs [registered nurse] and LPNs [licensed practical nurse] and care aids, nearly 800 full-time equivalents have been added, Mr. Speaker, without a very large increase in the number of actual residents and actual beds in this province, Mr. Speaker. So we have begun the work to add back in. We have added \$10 million last year in mid-year, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to equipment and staffing. We've added an additional \$10 million in this year, Mr. Speaker. This is a priority for this government.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, I don't know how this government can just continually pat itself on the back when we have these stories coming forward day after day. Lois's family, Mr. Speaker, they're coming forward because they want to speak up because of what they have seen. They're watching the proceedings, Mr. Speaker, and they want to know why this government isn't taking the seniors' care crisis seriously.

Like other families that we've heard from, Lois's family had to hire private care aids to go into the care facility to ensure that the basics were taken care of for their mom. Her daughter says this:

You pay these caregivers over and above what you pay for your loved ones to live in that residence. But many families now feel that care could be better, and to meet their loved one's basic needs — maybe a little exercise, make sure they have enough to drink, make sure they eat as much as possible — you need to hire over and above what the nursing homes provide for them.

My question for the Premier: does he think the families should have to pay extra to have private care aids go into a care facility just to make sure that the basics are taken care of?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the absence of the Premier, I'll be taking that question on behalf of the government.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to all of our facilities across the

province, certainly this particular facility would have seen and has seen an increase in the full-time complement for not a change in the number of residents, Mr. Speaker. So in fact the ratio of staff to residents has increased in this facility. This particular facility in the last seven years under this government has seen an increase to their budget of over 30 per cent, Mr. Speaker, far and away exceeding the rate of inflation in this province.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to long-term care, we have added resources, as I've already mentioned, Mr. Speaker. We've also changed the way though that we are doing our processes so that we can ensure that harm does not happen to our residents, Mr. Speaker, and we're very focused on that.

Mr. Speaker, even prior to the CEO report, as I've mentioned, we had a falls collaborative in 2011 that related to long-term care, a long-term care falls prevention and reduction initiative in 2010-2011 that has seen a 25 per cent reduction in the number of falls, and a reduction in the total number of falls per 1,000 resident days, Mr. Speaker. We know that there is more work to do, but this is something that we take seriously and we are trying to address.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, there was no answer there about whether or not it should be expected that families have to hire private care aids to go into a facility to care for their loved ones. Lois's family . . . And I will listen to the families who are coming forward, Mr. Speaker. They say that they have seen the quality of care deteriorate over these last several years, and they are appalled that this government removed the minimum care standards from the regulations. They should have strengthened those minimum care standards, not eliminated them as they did.

Lois Rein's funeral is this Thursday. Her family is grieving her loss, and they are devastated that her final days were filled with unnecessary pain and suffering because of the awful fall that she experienced. And they don't want other families and other seniors to go through what they have experienced. Yet this government, Mr. Speaker, has just \$1 million for non-capital needs in seniors' care in this recent budget. You know, that's just one-third of what this Premier spent on an American lobbyist.

To the Premier: how many more families will need to come forward with concerns about seniors' care before this government will take this crisis seriously?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with respect to seniors' care in this province, this budget does provide provision for enhancements in long-term care, Mr. Speaker. It also provides for enhancements to seniors' care for those seniors that do not live in long-term care, may never live in long-term care, which we know is the vast majority of seniors in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the work that we're trying to do in continuous quality improvement, this is an area of focus for us, is patient safety, is resident safety. And that's why, and I think

it's because of some of our new processes, some of our new initiatives, and yes because we've added additional staff into the system, Mr. Speaker, significant additional resources when it comes to staffing.

But we've seen just in the last year, Mr. Speaker, a reduction in the number of falls by seniors in long-term care from about 13 per cent down to 9 per cent, Mr. Speaker. In fact that is roughly 4 per cent lower than the national average when it comes to falls. And this is something that we monitor, that we put strategies in place to try to reduce that, because we don't want to see a single resident in our care fall. We don't want to see any harm come to anybody that is in the health care system. That is what continuous improvement is all about, Mr. Speaker, and I would hope that the Leader of the Opposition would join us on that.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cumberland.

Funding for Long-term Care in the North

Mr. Vermette: — Six years ago the Croft report said our health region needed 48 long-term care beds. The need has grown since then. Right now we have just 14 beds. Last year's budget contained some planning dollars. This year's budget contained nothing for seniors' care in our health region. To the Health minister: why not?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for asking about long-term care in his constituency, something that had been neglected for a great number of years, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the member opposite has noted that there was \$500,000 in planning in last year's budget. Mr. Speaker, I think his constituents would be interested to know that he actually voted against last year's budget that had money for planning for long-term care expansion in his own constituency.

Mr. Speaker, the health region has some of that money, has carried that money over, Mr. Speaker, and so I'm pleased to say that planning will continue in '15-16 for replacement of long-term care, of additional long-term care beds in La Ronge.

[14:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Year after year this government has had record revenue. It has drained the rainy day fund and it has added lots of debt. This year alone it's adding 1.5 billion of new debt. With all that spending, people should be feeling the benefits. Our elders and seniors in northern Saskatchewan should be feeling the benefits, but they aren't, and that is shameful. To the Health minister: when will this government finally deliver senior health care beds we need in our health region?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr.

Speaker, again I will repeat myself to the member opposite, the member from Cumberland. Mr. Speaker, last year's budget did include \$500,000 for planning, long-needed planning dollars for La Ronge to add additional beds for the North, Mr. Speaker.

Now you have to actually plan and design what that's going to look like before you can start construction. I'm not sure how NDP construction works out, Mr. Speaker, but there is planning that is under way. Mr. Speaker, the region still has those funds available. They didn't expend all of those funds this year. We allowed them to continue to do the planning, Mr. Speaker. They will continue the planning in 15-16. Once that planning is complete, Mr. Speaker, I would hope that in a subsequent budget there will be dollars to actually begin the construction.

And I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that the member opposite would vote in favour of a budget that includes, Mr. Speaker, for planning dollars. He didn't last year, Mr. Speaker. I don't think he will this year either.

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

Funding for Post-Secondary Education

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, the editor-in-chief of the *Global Higher Education Strategy Monitor* says this government's approach to university funding is "... a truly awful piece of government policy."

This government forced the University of Saskatchewan to make deep cuts. The university achieved its targets and budgeted for a surplus. So the Sask Party targeted them and said that U of S [University of Saskatchewan] is supporting the 2015-16 expense growth capacity. Here's what Alex Usher says about that: "Next time someone mugs you and takes your money, just remember you're supporting the mugger's expense growth capacity."

To the Advanced Education minister: why should students have to pay more and get less because this government has challenges with its expense growth capacity?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Mr. Speaker, I'm always delighted to get up and speak about this government's track record in supporting post-secondary education in this province, Mr. Speaker.

By virtue of his own words, the Leader of the Opposition is having difficulty understanding how the budget is spent in this province, Mr. Speaker, how the money is allocated. Whether it's through his television ads or the speeches that he gives or questions that he asks in this House, Mr. Speaker, he doesn't quite understand how the money is allocated throughout the province and the various sectors of the budget, Mr. Speaker, so we're going to help him out with some of those speeches in the budget debate here, to help him understand where the money is spent.

Since this government came to office in 2007, \$6.5 billion has

been spent on post-secondary education, Mr. Speaker. To the post-secondary education institutions over the last eight years, \$5.3 billion has been spent, \$1.9 billion more than was spent in the last eight years of the NDP government, Mr. Speaker. That's up 56 per cent. I don't know how ... Maybe the NDP could pull out their big calculator from the 2011 election campaign, Mr. Speaker, and figure out how a 56 per cent increase in post-secondary education spending is a decrease.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, *Star Wars* fans would consider that the "these aren't the droids you're looking for" defence.

Saskatchewan's post-secondary students already pay the second-highest average tuition in Canada. The University of Regina president says this government's budget will leave students paying even more. Class sizes will be larger. Programs will be scaled back, and "students are going to find it harder to get their degree in four years because we are going to have to stagger our offerings." So students are paying more but getting less while at university, and that's unacceptable. But until this budget, students could at least count on the graduate retention program after they completed their degrees.

Well not anymore, Mr. Speaker. Can the Advanced Education minister tell us how much a single mom would have to earn in order to get the full benefit from the scaled-back version of the graduate retention program?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let's examine the record, the track record of this government with respect to supporting post-secondary education in this province. To the University of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, when this government took office, the base operating grant at the University of Saskatchewan was \$209.7 million. Eight years later, Mr. Speaker, the base operating grant is \$331 million, Mr. Speaker, an increase of 58 per cent or 7.25 per cent average increase over the last eight years, Mr. Speaker. At the same time, enrolment at that institution, Mr. Speaker, is up about 9.2 per cent or an average of 1.15 per cent per year. And the rate of inflation, the compounded consumer price index, Mr. Speaker, in this province is up about 14 per cent or 1.74 per cent a year.

Funding is up 7.25 per cent on average per year, Mr. Speaker. Enrolment's up a little over 1 per cent average per year. Consumer price index up a little over 1.75 per cent a year, Mr. Speaker. I'll stand by this government's track record to supporting post-secondary education over those folks over there any day, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, a single mom would have to earn almost \$55,000 a year right out of university in order to qualify for the full benefit under the scaled-back version of the graduate retention program. This is the very same program that the Premier was boasting about in television ads just a few short

months ago, yet now the Sask Party government has cut the program back by \$33.5 million, Mr. Speaker.

And lower income people will feel this cut the most. First they pay the second highest tuition in Canada while dealing with cuts at university. Then they lose out on something that the Premier told them they could count on. To that minister: how can you explain this broken promise to students?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — First of all, Mr. Speaker, to correct the record yet once again of the information that's brought into this House that's incorrect on the other side, students at the University of Saskatchewan, out of 59 English-speaking universities in Canada, pay the 16th lowest tuition in Canada, Mr. Speaker. Students at the University of Regina pay the 18th lowest level of tuition in all of Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Now with respect to the graduate retention program, Mr. Speaker, some 58,000 students have taken advantage of this program, resulting in some \$200 million being spent in . . . back into their pockets, Mr. Speaker, or reducing the amount of provincial income tax they pay — 58,000 students that would have left this province under the program of the NDP before, Mr. Speaker, who are now here working in this economy, contributing to the largest population in the history of this province, Mr. Speaker.

What I found interesting on budget day is when the member who just asked the question was asked by the reporters, what would you do differently? The deer-in-the-headlights look came on, Mr. Speaker, a complete blank, and said, well we wouldn't do that. So we ask again: what would the member opposite stand up and do today for the students of this province?

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

Establishment of Long-Term Savings Fund

Mr. Wotherspoon: — My question is for the Finance minister. Will this government just admit that it has completely abandoned . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — My question is to the Finance minister. Will this government just admit that it has completely abandoned the idea of establishing a futures fund, a long-term savings fund?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our government was pleased to receive the report from the past president of the University of Saskatchewan, Peter MacKinnon. Peter did a lot of great work in analyzing funds that exist outside of Canada and those that exist within Canada like the Alberta fund, and he made some recommendations regarding the amount that should be

contributed from non-renewable resource revenue when it reaches a certain percentage of the total non-renewable resource sector.

So, Mr. Speaker, we remain committed to building a fund. Mr. Speaker, the dollars, according to the criteria that was set out by Peter MacKinnon, have not been reached in this budget, and therefore, Mr. Speaker, we will not be setting aside any dollars in this year's budget into that fund.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, that government's story changes by the day on this matter. There was a time that the government talked about and pretended that it was going to establish a long-term savings fund, and he talks about the report that they actually commissioned. But despite raking in record revenues year after year, this government hasn't been able to save a single penny. In fact, even though it's governed during very sunny times for our province, this government has drained the \$1.4 billion rainy day fund.

So we don't have a futures fund, no long-term savings for the future, and we also don't have a rainy day fund anymore. No savings for the short-term, unanticipated needs. How does the Finance minister justify that?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Well again, Mr. Speaker, you have to be mindful of the words that come from that side of the House. And I won't get myself in trouble, Mr. Speaker, but it's interesting to note how the member opposite twists things to suit his needs, Mr. Speaker. He says that it has changed. My response today to Peter MacKinnon's report has suddenly changed. Mr. Speaker, that's the furthest from the truth.

We have remained committed to ensuring that there be a fund when indeed the criteria that Mr. MacKinnon talked about are met. Mr. Speaker, we're looking at making sure that it's at arm's length because, Mr. Speaker, in the NDP days, in the NDP days when they had something they called the Fiscal Stabilization Fund . . . You know, Mr. Speaker, I do remember, I do remember accountants who had to come forward and actually . . . Not only accountants in the private sector, but the Provincial Auditor had to say the definition of a fund is actually a fund that contains money, because they had no money in the fund.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I think we have to put in context that the bellowing Finance minister is the one, the only one in Canada's history to fail an audit by the Provincial Auditor that I'm speaking of. This government has raked in record revenues, but instead of saving a single penny, this government has spent all the money and more. Not only that, but this government has drained the rainy day fund despite governing during very sunny times for this province. And on top of that, this government is adding more and more debt. It's adding \$1.5 billion this year alone and has added over \$5 billion since just 2011, Mr. Speaker.

So the minister speaks of, you know, potential interest again in the fund. We'd hope so. We'd like to see a timeline. But I think what it's time for the minister to share with Saskatchewan people is that the reason this government isn't willing to establish a fund is that it just doesn't have figured out a plan or the ability to save a dime, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, something very, very positive has happened to the province of Saskatchewan under this party's government leadership. Mr. Speaker, in the past under the NDP there was never something called an AAA credit rating. Mr. Speaker, because of the kind of practices that we've put into place — prudent financial management, Mr. Speaker — Saskatchewan now is the envy of many, many provinces. In fact, Mr. Speaker, yesterday Moody's said Saskatchewan's sound fiscal practices, combined with potash royalties, support the province's balanced budget for 2015/16, and Saskatchewan and British Columbia stand out from all the other Canadian provinces that will have deficits.

So, Mr. Speaker, I take no lessons from the member opposite about whether or not our province is moving forward. We have an AAA credit rating, Mr. Speaker. We manage the finances of this province in a prudent way, and the people of Saskatchewan and the province's health remain strong.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the answers to questions 722 to 801.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has ordered responses to questions 722 through 801.

[14:30]

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.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to join in and, I guess, make some comments about the budget. And it's interesting, you know, like every member in this opportunity likes to do a thank you to certain individuals, and again I would like to take an opportunity to thank my CA [constituency assistant] who works in the constituency office back home in La

Ronge. And also we are fortunate to have a couple of staff who come in at casual, part-time, whenever they can, to come in and do a little bit of work. And it's really great work that they're doing and we appreciate the good work they do for the constituents back home. Our staff do a lot of casework because of the, I guess, again, the lack of response from this government, the lack of responding to the needs of many northern residents.

So but having said that, again I want to say to Devin Bernatchez, thank you very much for your support. Thank you for your commitment to the constituency, the Cumberland constituency, and to the good work that you're doing.

An Hon. Member: — A good hockey player too.

Mr. Vermette: — Oh, and he's a great hockey player. I give you that, yes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to also acknowledge, you know, individuals — I know I have an executive that works along with me in the riding — that do some great work. They do. And you know, they give me the support that I need, some of the guidance. And you know, we have our elders. We have our community members who share their hope for our province, for the constituency, for the North.

There are serious issues that many of us are facing in northern Saskatchewan. Sometimes they want a government to hear that and hear the concerns that are going on, and I'm going to get into that as we talk about some of the areas in the budget. The government wants to cheerlead itself, how great it is. And I will talk about some of the organizations and some of the CEOs, leaders, you know, some of their comments, and we'll get into that as we debate the bill.

But having said that, I remember and I'm thinking about this, that we were hearing the Premier, and he was talking about getting ready for a tough budget. You heard all these things, you know. And I don't know what you'd call it, but I started thinking about it. The only thing I could think of, and I have the story but I'm not going to go through it into the record, but I think . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well, I could do that yet. If there's enough time I will do that. But you know, it's interesting. *Chicken Little*, the story is the sky is falling down, you know. The story goes about they run around, and they go through a process. The sky is falling down, and they make it all sound how terrible it is. And at the end of the story, it's interesting. Foxy Loxy does what Foxy Loxy does, wants to get them into the den.

But having said that, I just want to say, it's that story growing up as a kid . . . It's an interesting story. I'm going to read it to my grandkids. You know, it's interesting because it is an interesting story. And you know, at the end of the day, people were prepared for this budget and everybody went around making it sound like it was going to be terrible. Then at the last minute, they come out like everybody is supposed to be, oh it's just great. The Premier and the government saved the day.

But we'll get into the details about that and who's going to pay for saving the day. It isn't going to be the government. It isn't going to be the Premier and his ministers. It's going to be the

good people of Saskatchewan and working families that will actually end up paying the price, our seniors. We'll talk about that and who will pay in the end. We'll get into that.

You know, I want to talk about some of the issues facing our seniors. In question period today we had a chance to talk about . . . We know that family after family have been coming to the Legislative Assembly to raise their concerns. And these are serious matters, serious matters. Families are losing loved ones. They are dealing with situations, situations that are pretty serious and terrible — loss of a loved one. But having said that, Mr. Speaker, having said that, they don't take it serious. This is exactly what's going on. They're not hearing the families that are coming one after another to this Legislative Assembly to raise their concerns.

And some of them were scared, and we heard that today. Our leader talked about that, the Leader of the Official Opposition calling on government, saying you can't . . . You're not going to scare families away. You can't push families away. They're concerned and they're going to start coming. And I think more and more were going to come and raise their concerns, and they're not going to go away.

This government has record revenues. They've had record revenues for years, you know, and they could have done so much for many. Our seniors, the most vulnerable, they could have done lots for. But they've chosen different priorities, and some of those priorities — we'll get into that list — but some of those priorities this government has chosen has . . . you know, lean, \$40 million. We look at the cost that this government has wasted on their pet projects.

I'm going to get into that in a little bit, but I want to go back to this area on roads. And you know, many northern roads need support and they need repairs. At the end of the day, at the end of the day, I've watched this government make press announcements. They make the announcements about the all-weather road to Wollaston Lake in 2008. And what do they do after? They turned their back on the community of Wollaston Lake. They turned their back on that community. Why? Why? Well they have to answer that because there have been some tough questions asked. We've had the leaders come here. That's not going to go away. That issue is not going to go away.

It's about safety. It's about making communities have access to services and goods that they need to make sure that their children, their elders, their community does all right and fares well in this province. Governments are supposed to take care of all constituents of this province. It is a beautiful province. It's a good province. But this government unfortunately is not governing all the province. It's picking and choosing where it wants to, and that's the sad reality. A fair government, a good government takes care of all the people and shares the resources, shares the supports with everyone, and this government's record is terrible when it comes to that.

But having said that, we look at, you know, Pelican Lake, Pelican Narrows-Sandy Bay highway, 135. There was some commitments to the road over there, paving and stuff, 7 kilometres. They need some work on their road's safety. And this is about safety, I remind the government, you know, as they're looking out and they're spending their record spending

and they talk about all the highways money that they're spending in northern Saskatchewan.

I'm going to get into some of the quotes from northern Saskatchewan from some of the CEOs and the leaders. And you know, at the end of the day, it's interesting to see this government's lack of commitment on many issues facing northern Saskatchewan. And it's not just northern Saskatchewan, and I've said this. It's seniors. It's families. It's housing. There's a lot of issues.

But I want to get into this. I think about a road. It's a provincial road, fire reserve road. It goes through the community of Lac La Ronge Indian Band's traditional territory. And they've been petitioning, and we've served that petition, so government's well aware of it for a number of years, knows that the road was a health issue with respiratory with the elders, with community members. And the amount of traffic going on that road creates a lot of dust and problems, and I think for some of the seniors, the respiratory.

But this government had an opportunity to address this road and fix it, pave it, do what it needs to do. It's had the resources to do that, and for some reason it hasn't done that. And they're going to have to answer to that. We know that people are not going to go away, and the concerned citizens will not go away, and they're going to speak up.

Now we also know we have trouble with other northern roads, whether they're new roads or roads that need complete upgrades, you know, attention of a government, commitment. And that's what I want to say: it is a commitment. We see, you know. And the list goes on. Highway 123, that was voted the worst highway, CAA [Canadian Automobile Association]. It won the award I think three years ago or two years ago. Having said that, we'll see what happens this year as the thawing happens and it goes through, and we'll keep an eye. I know a lot of people in the community were very concerned, and we'll continue to raise their issues. And as they need to, they'll move forward, and we'll support them in any way we can to make sure that government's well aware of the issues facing that community.

You know, yes, government spent some money on it and it was needed. I mean the road was unbelievable. It was unpassable at times. So having said that, that area we'll look at.

I think about another road, 165 west. That's the Hall Lake Road. It needs . . . And I know the good work of the maintenance staff in the highways. They do a great job for the staff that are there. We know that, and no one's going to say that. They work hard and they do what they can do. But sometimes more needs to be done, and there has to be a commitment of dollars by government.

And government does have a lot of money. I mean, it's unreal the money, you know, record spending, like I said, years and years of record revenue coming in. This government could have chosen to fix a lot of the situations facing northern Saskatchewan, the residents. But having said that, they chose not to in many areas. And we see that. Whether it's seniors' care, affordability for families, we see the cuts that this government has made. But having said that, I'm hoping that,

you know, the government will have a serious look at it.

Going through the list, then I think about 165 east as well, the cut-across road. It's just to make sure that this road is safe for people. It gets quite a bit of traffic. We have large trucks hauling on there, and sometimes they're harvesting wood out of the forest and they're taking it to market.

Economics sometimes is good, but again I go through the process of making sure individuals, our First Nations, our Métis, our northern leaders are consulted when harvesting . . . [inaudible] . . . Our traditional trappers are consulted. Yes, it's great to say you're harvesting wood and the economic spinoff. There's jobs. And I've heard some of the members say that and talk about that. But having said that, Mr. Speaker, you have to make sure that traditional users of the land — and some of them have their trapper's cabin and they trap furs in the area — that they're consulted and they're well aware before any harvesting goes on. There is that obligation and it's important, and I've said that.

But sometimes for some reason this government gets stubborn and they think it doesn't have to do that or it doesn't think it has to enforce that, and I think they'd better start doing that because people are getting tired. Especially many of the trappers are getting tired. Traditional land users are getting tired of having the forest harvested. They're not against working, but they want to be consulted. They want to have input, and they want the industry to talk to them. They want government to make sure they're well aware of what the plans are when it comes to harvesting. But having said that, you know we'll talk about that.

I did say I realized . . . We were hoping there was planning dollars for the long-term care health region in the last year's budget. It was planning dollars. And I want to be clear on that. It wasn't a facility. It was planning dollars. We were hoping that, you know, this budget would bring in the dollars to complete the project. You could have used the 40 million you spent, that you wasted on John Black, American consultant. You could have used those dollars to build our long-term care facility that our seniors need, deserve, do deserve.

You know, we talk about our seniors who are our veterans who have fought the good fight, who have done everything they can for this province, and we need to take better care. This government should be ashamed of themselves, the way they've treated the health region in the sense of long-term care with the need in northern Saskatchewan — pretty sad. But at the end of the day, they can say what they want and they can say, oh you voted against whatever. That's up to them. They can sit there and spin it the way they want it. At the end of the day, we want a long-term care facility for our seniors. We demand it. We're going to continue to fight.

And I want to thank the good people of the Cumberland constituency and the health region who have fought, who have signed hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of petitions, who have meetings year after year. We've been raising the concern from the leadership. Everybody's been raising it. The health region, they have done the good reports, the Croft report in 2009. The community has done their part. The seniors have done their part. Everyone else has done their part except for this government when it has record revenue. It hasn't done their

part, and it's time they do their part. It's time. I think northern people and our seniors deserve better.

But having said that, Mr. Speaker, having said that, you know, we talk about the resources and we talk about the different resources that are out there. And you know, government has an opportunity here and a role to play.

You know when I think about some of the other challenges and when I think about and we talk about health, the challenge of health, and we're talking about addictions . . . And I've talked about that, addictions. I talked about suicide. We've heard from this side. Many times we're talking about it. We've heard our leaders talk about it, that we can't wish it away. It's time that the resources are put into mental health to deal with suicide, to deal with addictions.

This government has the resources to fix it if there's a willingness. And I'm hoping that this government will truly open its ears and hear some of the challenges, the suffering that families are going through, not just in the North. I know that they struggle in the rural areas as well when it comes to mental health, addictions. There are many challenges facing many Saskatchewan residents. Yes, rural areas. Yes, as well the North, rural, and urban. It's all over. It's the province when we talk about that.

But having said that, we go back to the need. This government and members can heckle all they want. They think it's funny. I don't find this funny at all. When we're talking about suicides, when we're talking about challenges that are facing many families, you have members over there that want to heckle and say, that's okay. I'm hoping that some of the members will hear. I'm hoping some of the ministers and the Premier will take some of the suggestions that we are bringing forward. These are concerns that Saskatchewan residents, northern residents want to share, the members of the Cumberland constituency want to be addressed.

[14:45]

So I talked a little bit about the addictions area. The other area we want to talk about, when it comes to northern schools and communities, there are many challenges facing school divisions. And we're going hear them. I know the overcrowding in classrooms . . . TAs [teaching assistant], we need more TAs to work with individual students to make sure those that have challenges . . . And I talk about that. You know, Mr. Speaker, there are many students who have challenges when it comes to disabilities, when it comes to learning, individuals, we all do.

I myself am a person with a disability. Is it to hide and be heckled by people? That's all right. I'm a very proud person. My grandfather, as a Métis veteran, a very proud man, taught me many things: to be proud, do your best, try, do your best. And if you try your best, at the end of the day, that's all anyone can ask. And I try to represent the people of Cumberland and I am proud to represent them.

I hear the challenges and I feel sometimes for the challenges that many northern people . . . When I talk about our children, my grandchildren, our community members who are suffering with a government that has so much wealth, you know,

sometimes it's hard when you see the challenges.

You see the challenges that many northern families, many people are feeling, the challenges that are going on, but I don't want to lose sight of the schools because there are many great teachers, our great administrators, our boards of education that are working hard to do a great job. They're doing all they can to make sure that our kids get the best quality of education, but when you are limited with resources and you have such a . . . We have large schools, small schools in northern Saskatchewan. There are many challenges, even just covering off housing to house a teacher to bring them into a community.

It's a situation sitting on the board. It's huge, the costs to a board, you know, and you look at travel to get to anything, a function. Everything costs so much more in northern Saskatchewan. And I realize in rural areas they have a lot of the same costs and challenges. We know that, you know, urban has its challenges as well. We know that. There are many challenges.

But again I want to talk a little bit and give credit to the teachers, you know. They do such a great job. And sometimes I've been to meetings where teachers, Mr. Speaker, do not feel valued — by this government, they don't feel valued. They've said that to me. I've had members tell me, you know this government, we want to feel respected. We want to feel like we are part of decision making, and they feel like they're not. They're frustrated sometimes. They get told the way it's going to be instead of consulting, sharing, and talking with them.

And you can run around after the fact, say, oh well, we're going to fix it now. We'll make a mistake. We'll amend things. We'll do it now. It's after the fact. It's time to make sure that you ask, ask the people who are on the front line, our teachers, our administrators, those individuals, our support staff. There is many of them within the school divisions that help out. But let's try to work on that.

Now when I think about some of the other challenges that are facing . . . the Internet in northern Saskatchewan. Some of the other challenges that face our schools. You know, we have a mega . . . You know, the Internet, and we're going to talk about megawatts, 3 megawatts versus 100 megawatts provincial school. Some of the band schools, some of the northern schools don't have opportunity to that. The bandwidth isn't as strong, and technology . . . And I know there's been a commitment, you know, somewhat to hear, and I'm hearing that, that there might be plans. And that's good. And if it is happening, then that's good. You know, we want to improve the Internet so that our students in northern Saskatchewan and First Nations communities have access to the Internet. And we want, you know, the technology and you need sometimes the programs . . . You have to have the high-speed. You have to make sure it's working.

When we talk about housing as well, I want to talk a little bit about housing because there was such an opportunity for this government, like I've said, to fix housing in northern Saskatchewan. There has been lots of concern raised. And they talk about different programs, and then some of the municipalities that apply for those programs find out, well, they may not qualify for that program. So in one way you cheerlead

this program — it's a fix, it's going to fix it all — and then you find out later you've got to go through so many hurdles and challenges, Mr. Speaker, that you can't actually apply, you don't qualify. So if that's going on, what good is it going to do for a community if they don't qualify and they can't access some of the programs because they just don't meet the requirements or whatever hurdles government has put in place saying that.

So, talking a little bit about that, the other area I would like to talk about, and I think it's so important in northern Saskatchewan, and many . . . you know, we have our northern trapping association, many northern trappers. We just had an election. Adam O. Charles was elected as the new president. There's an executive, and they'll govern. And I know that this trapping industry is important to many northern families, and we know we have the southern trappers' association as well. There's one in the South, Saskatchewan Trappers Association, but then there's the northern trappers' association, and I want to talk about that.

They do some good work. Not only do they . . . is it about the culture, it's about the lifestyle. Adam O. Charles speaks highly about that. And he tries to work with his grandchildren, with community members, with leaders, and I think with all trappers, to encourage them to work with the youth of the community, to make sure that they're proud of their culture, that trapping was a way of life and is a way of life for many of them.

Okay, you know, when you look at the different ways, some say, well do many still do the trapping? You know, some of the trappers out there still live the traditional lifestyle. They live off the land, the food that they are provided, sustenance. You know, when you look at the income, it subsidizes their income from the fur and the food for their health. Eating right is so important, and some of them, the food that they're getting does that.

So I give them credit, and they're very proud. They're very proud of the culture. When you go to trappers' meetings and you meet up with the elders and you talk to them, and you go to feasts and you go to different community events, they always have wild meat and fish. They're very proud of that, and they'll always make sure you're welcome at their table. And whether it's ministers or anyone else, they come to the North, the hospitality of northern Saskatchewan, they will invite anyone to the table. They will greet you with respect. And the northern people know how to be a host, a great host, and that I give them credit on.

And you know, you look at some of the challenges that they're facing in the trapping industry, those that do the hunting and fishing. We see an opportunity where a government had the resources, the money to do some fixing. They could have, with all the money that they have spent on their priorities, their pet projects, if they would have just taken a little bit of the money, just a little bit — it wasn't much, Mr. Speaker, they could have taken — they could address the trapping, fishing, many of the northern issues you could have faced.

Now government will say, oh like there isn't enough to go around. There is more money being spent, record spending this year again, again. We talked about that.

An. Hon. Member: — And more debt.

Mr. Vermette: — And yes, and then more debt. But having said . . . You know, who's going to pay for the government's missed priorities, their pet projects that they have, the lean, the consultants? We look at how much money they've spent on consultants.

But I wanted just to let the families in northern Saskatchewan but also in the rest of the province . . . You know, we look at the middle class, and we look at some of our seniors. We look at some of the most vulnerable who are going to pay. Some of the students are going to pay a price. We see what's going on, you know, the graduation retention program, the claw back that this government's clawed back from those students that were expecting those dollars to help them survive. Now they're going to get a tax credit. You know, later, down, when you pay this, you might, you might, you might get some back, or you might not have to pay some tax. Really the government's wondering why, why people are angry, students are frustrated. They're wondering about that.

Well you talk about the seniors' drug plan. You know, you take a . . . It was interesting because I believe we have heard from a few seniors so far, one saying he's at about, I think, \$800 over the threshold that the government says if you're at 60,000 . . . He's at 60,000, let's just say, 800-and-some dollars. It's not very much he's over, but he will no longer have the drug plan for my seniors covering him. He's now paying somewhere around, I think it's 6 or 7,000 he'll have to pay out of his pocket for the drugs. He was covered. Now he's not. So when we're hearing stories like that, those are the challenges facing many families.

You talk about affordability. You know, we have a government who likes to spend. We heard our critic today, Finance critic today, our colleague on this side of the House explaining about, you know, you talk about not a penny, not a dime saved. This government has spent everything. Rainy day fund's gone. They have spent I guess the next generation. And then not only that, Mr. Speaker, but what they did: 700 million they've mortgaged for my grandkids and my kids to pay. And they don't think nothing of it. They just think they should keep spending. And then, you know, they want to go around and spin it. They want to spin it that it's a balanced budget.

And you'll see some of the people talking about that. You'll see people talking about that . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And allow that, allow that, and that's just right. Keep patting yourselves on the back, and you're going to get what, exactly? The arrogance; this is the way it is. Keep doing what you're doing. Keep ignoring many of the areas where you could have addressed with the amount of money that you guys have wasted as a government, as a government did administer, you know, when you look at the planning. And some of the backbenchers, they love to call out and yell out. Some of those members back there, that's all they do, but they don't fight for their constituency. And we've seen some that in Regina recently with Corrections. We see. But they're going to be pay a price for that at the end of the day. We'll see what's going to happen. People will speak up and they will talk. We know that.

Now having said that, I talked a little bit about, you know . . . And then our seniors, our most vulnerable. You know, the most

vulnerable citizens in our province — and I say that — who have done their part are paying a price . . . [inaudible] . . . and will pay a price. Families are going to pay a price.

When you take money from the Crown corporations the way you do — and I think it's another 250 million, if I'm correct — well you think, where is that money? Any money that you take from our Crowns on top of your existing money you're getting, where are you going to get that money from? Now if that is happening and, you know, at the end of the day somebody's going to pay for that. Somebody's going to have to pay for that because if that money was allocated for other projects, for upgrades and stuff, and then you take . . . Well we've seen government take special dividends before. And then all they do is, you know, they go, they go to the review panel, rate review panel, and they say, we need increases to get the money back. And they get it. And in the end, it is the working families, it is the families in the province that have to pay again, you know.

And the cuts. We talked about the cuts. There's cuts. You know, this government has made cuts in different areas, and here and there. This one's been cut. That one's been cut. But at the end of the day, they're asking Saskatchewan families to pay a little more, just a little more, they say. But you get a little less service. Isn't that amazing to watch how that works. Well you know what? You pay a little more but you get a little less service. I don't know how they figure that's so great and people are going to cheerlead that this is a great thing, Mr. Speaker. There are those challenges.

But having said that, you know, I talk about in this budget what was not in this budget. There was such opportunity. The government had such opportunity to address many of them. It isn't that they didn't have the money. It isn't that they didn't have the money, Mr. Speaker. It's that they've had, again and I'll say it again, for the record revenue, their pet priorities, and they've chose to spend it the way it is.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, that is the sad reality that Saskatchewan families are again going to have to pay for this government's waste. And I say waste because they have wasted such opportunities for our generation, you know, our grandchildren. They're going to pay for this . . . [inaudible]. It's 30 years. How much interest will be on? They can say what they want at the end of the day, and the members have a right to say.

But I want to talk a little bit still about highways. Well you know, they talk about record spending on highways. And I want to talk a little bit about that because I think this is important. This is important. We have an opportunity to correct some of the issues facing northern Saskatchewan when it comes to highways and infrastructure. And I know one of the CEO, we have the health region, you know, we have New North. We have different CEOs that work for organizations. And I'm thinking about the one member here, and this gentleman, Al Loke, he's the CEO of New North.

[15:00]

There's 35 municipalities that represent New North, the mayors and aldermen. And they do a great job. They lobby hard and they try to raise the issues of northern Saskatchewan so that,

Mr. Speaker, so that at the end of the day government is well aware of the issues facing many northern municipalities. It's not only First Nations, it's not only, you know, Métis that raise their concerns and lobby with government. New North has a CEO. And like I said, I'm going to get into some quotes from an article when he was interviewed, and he was asked his thoughts about the budget. So here, and I'm going to quote Al Loke the CEO:

We have been stressing to the government on the need for infrastructure for roads and other areas, but once again we have been left on the wayside and southern projects have been put above northern needs.

So there's some of the frustration that you're hearing from some of the organizations out there that are looking at this budget and looking at the dollars and how much dollars are coming into northern Saskatchewan for roads and other areas and other needs. And that's interesting, you know, that's interesting more than ever before . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well you know what? Here, yes, go ahead. Go ahead, pat yourselves on the back and do what you want. Again, that's what I've been talking about. There's the entitlement, the arrogance of a government that's not listening to the people. Keep doing that, Mr. Speaker. They have turned their back for whatever reason.

I talked about this earlier, about governing all of the province, all Saskatchewan residents. And this government picks and chooses what it wants to do. But that's okay, that's okay. They can say what they want.

Now I want to get into a little bit more, and in this area, here's what I want to talk about. Sometimes I'm getting all this cheerleading there, Mr. Speaker. It's hard to wonder what they want to hear, how bad they want to hear this stuff. I thought they would. But I'm going to make another quote from the CEO, Al Loke. Here's what else he had to say:

There is no other money for road infrastructure, just for the maintenance grant for the airports, says Loke. The budget is \$56 million, but it was stated that \$14 million would be for new construction. But that had already been announced earlier this year, so there is no new money coming in for road infrastructure.

I mean you don't have it much simpler than that, simpler than that. That's a quote. So you know, government can sit there and pat itself on the back and say it's record spending. At the end of the day, the leaders, leaders of northern Saskatchewan know, know. Residents of northern Saskatchewan know. First Nations, Métis leaders, Métis community members, First Nation members, many northern residents know. Our trappers, fishermen, many people know. This government is about smoke and mirrors. That's all they do. They like photo ops. They like to announce and reannounce and reannounce. And all the blame game, the blame game. But you know, Mr. Speaker, they're going to come one day soon, and people in northern Saskatchewan and the rest of the province will send this government a message.

Sometimes they mock at us. They mock at the nine of us on this side, Mr. Speaker. They laugh. They mock about the nine. But

I've had people tell me this. It's thank you for being in opposition, when they look at the size of that government. You can clap. Here's what they say. Yes, I'll say it again. They thank these members on this side of the House for holding that government to account, to hold that government to account. When you have 49 members on that side of the House, it is too large. It is unbalanced. It isn't right.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order.

Mr. Vermette: — What would they like? They would like to have a dictatorship where they could rule, get rid of everyone so they could do whatever they want and nobody question them. Well it ain't going to happen, and the people are going to send that to them. You'll see.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, you know, having said all the challenges that are facing many Saskatchewan families, our seniors, you know, this government doesn't want to hear anything. It ignores the challenges of many residents in this province. And I know they heckle all they want. They can heckle all they want. At the end, Mr. Speaker, it is about the people of this province sharing in the wealth, sharing, having a fair opportunity at a quality of life. This government does not feel that way. It doesn't listen to the many challenges, and I've quoted some of the challenges that are here. I've talked about the challenges that people are talking about back home. I'm talking about when you see somebody saying, I don't know how I'm going to pay my rent. I honestly don't know how I'm buying groceries for my kids, Doyle. I don't know how I'm going to pay this power bill. Utility bills are going up. The cost of living is crazy.

Yes, we hear the government brag about, oh our economy is doing . . . Everything is growing. And we want that to happen, and that's very important. We want business to do well. We want our province to do well. You know, I even say we want our province to do very well. We do. We want the resources.

But we want a government, and the people of this province want a government who takes care of that seriously, who seriously has a look at the wealth. And they look at the money — no savings.

But, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, I want to give a few reasons why, and I think I have given quite a bit of reasons why I will not be supporting that government's budget. I will not be supporting that government's budget and I will be supporting the amendment for the simple reason that this government again was supposed to govern for all of Saskatchewan and chose not to. So at this point, Mr. Speaker, I have no further comments, and I will be supporting the amendment and not the main motion.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege and my pleasure to take part in the budget debate this afternoon. I want to first of all thank the constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy that have given me this opportunity and this privilege, Mr. Speaker. I also want to thank

my family. I want to thank our son Jack, Mr. Speaker, who I understand might be watching the proceedings right now although I think he's having a snack. But, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to having the opportunity to introduce him in the House hopefully at some point this spring.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my wife, Amanda. Mr. Speaker, I think it's important for me to say that I wouldn't be here without her, Mr. Speaker, and just I can't thank her enough, Mr. Speaker, for all that she's done and all that she's sacrificed. She is the most wonderful mother to our son Jack and, Mr. Speaker, I am so grateful and so fortunate that our son has such a terrific mother. And we're just very, very blessed, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to . . . I'm not going to take a lot of time to speak on the budget, Mr. Speaker, but I do want to talk a little bit about how it both impacts my constituency, Mr. Speaker, as well as the Ministry of Health. And I want to take an opportunity to maybe talk a little bit about and follow up on the member from Cumberland who referenced, where's the money gone. That seems to be the refrain of the NDP, Mr. Speaker, is, where's the money gone?

Well, Mr. Speaker, as has been demonstrated by the Premier and other members of this House, the dollars in this province that we have been fortunate to preside over, Mr. Speaker, have gone directly back into the people. Whether it's through record debt reduction, Mr. Speaker, and lowering the interest rates that we and that my son will pay into the future, Mr. Speaker, and others, the young people of this province, that's where the money has gone. It's gone back into record levels of tax reductions, Mr. Speaker. That's where the dollars have gone, back into the pockets of the people of this province. It's gone to improving the services that we provide, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to where the money has been spent in the Ministry of Health, I can tell you that, when we formed government in November 2007, we inherited the longest wait-lists when it came to surgery in this entire country. The birthplace of medicare in Canada had the longest wait-lists for surgery in the entire dominion of Canada, in the entire country, Mr. Speaker. So where did the money go? Well we have spent over \$236 million over the last five years on top of what regions were already spending when it came to reducing wait times for surgeries, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I find it . . . It's interesting. A couple of years ago, I think a year ago or maybe two years ago in an estimates committee when the former Health minister on the other side took a little bit of credit for trying to reduce surgical wait times in this province, Mr. Speaker, and what came out in that committee meeting is that the rate that the NDP were going with their surgical initiative, it would have taken 30 years to reduce surgical wait times to where we have done it in five years, Mr. Speaker. So that's where the money has went.

The number of people waiting longer than 18 months for surgery is down 100 per cent. The number of people waiting longer than 12 months for surgery is down 98 per cent, almost zero people waiting longer than 12 months in this province. The people waiting longer than six months, which I think is a fairly reasonable wait for surgery, for elective surgery, is down 94 per

cent. And, Mr. Speaker, the number of people waiting three months for surgery is down 86 per cent under the surgical initiative. So that, in terms of surgery, is where the money has went, Mr. Speaker. We have, from the days where the government of the day did about 74,000 surgeries a year, Mr. Speaker, in '13-14 — and this number would've been increased in '14-15, and we're still calculating those numbers — but in '13-14 nearly 90,000 surgeries were done in the province of Saskatchewan, to the point where we have the lowest waits in Canada when it comes to surgery.

We are a model once again when it comes to surgical waits, when it comes to health care in this country. At the same time when our population has been increasing and the demand for surgery has been increasing and the volume, the requirements for surgery has been increasing, we've still seen those significant waits.

Where did the money go, Mr. Speaker, when it came to the capital of this province, when it came to health facilities, Mr. Speaker? And I know that the member from Cumberland will be interested in this because, Mr. Speaker, we have funded \$500,000 to begin adding new long-term care beds in the North, Mr. Speaker, which was an important issue to him for a couple of days, Mr. Speaker. But then what happened last year after the dollars were in the budget? He voted against the budget, Mr. Speaker. That's how important it was to him, Mr. Speaker.

We have invested over \$1 billion in health capital in less than eight years as government, Mr. Speaker: 250 million on long-term care replacements; 235 million dedicated towards the children's hospital; 100 million for the Moose Jaw replacement hospital; \$150 million when it comes to renovations, Mr. Speaker; not to mention what we've done on equipment, on life safety and emergency repairs, Mr. Speaker, across the province.

And I know that it was interesting about, I think it was two summers ago, the Leader of the Opposition was touring around to some facilities across the province and he was posting online pictures of things that he didn't like in long-term care facilities and some, you know, I think some of the general maintenance that needs to take place, Mr. Speaker. And that one facility that he was in was in Grenfell, which has been a very important project for the member for Moosomin, Mr. Speaker, to see a replacement to that project.

I'd like to tell the members opposite the record when it comes to that one facility, and I think that it demonstrates the record between this government and the previous government. This government has provided Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region with \$731,000, \$731,000 in maintenance for the Grenfell facility, Mr. Speaker. In that same time period under the NDP government, you know what they put into Grenfell for maintenance on that long-term care facility, Mr. Speaker? Forty-six thousand dollars. \$731,000 on this side of the House; \$46,000 on that side of the House. In fact in their last budget what they had for Grenfell facility, Mr. Speaker, for a long-term care facility, was \$5,629 for a facility at that time that was already 50 years old. That is the record of the NDP. That is where the money has gone under this government, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we also have seen in terms of the supports that people need when it comes to the front-line personnel . . . And I

think we've talked a lot about it in the House, Mr. Speaker, but I'll remind the members opposite. Today under this government, because of changes that we've made to how we recruit foreign-trained doctors so that we ensure that we actually have an assessment program that is Saskatchewan-made, so that we're not relying on the Government of Manitoba whenever they had seats available, Mr. Speaker — through that, through increasing the number of training seats that we have at our college here in Saskatchewan and residency positions, Mr. Speaker, 423 additional physicians are practising in this province, Mr. Speaker.

We have work to do. We know that there are communities that are still out there looking for physicians, Mr. Speaker, but a far cry from the days of the NDP where under the same time frame, where we have 423 more physicians in this province, Mr. Speaker, when they saw 173 physicians leave the province. They saw 455 fewer nurses of all designations, Mr. Speaker. At the same time, 2,600 additional licensed nurses of all designations, Mr. Speaker. And you can talk to the regulatory bodies. The SRNA [Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association], Mr. Speaker, the regulatory body for the registered nurses of this province, I think just in the last couple of months issued a report that they've never had more licensed nurses practising, more licensed RNs practising in the province's history as a regulatory body. And that's a regulatory body that has existed for a long time obviously, Mr. Speaker.

[15:15]

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to things like diagnostics, where has the money gone, Mr. Speaker? Well we know the record of the NDP, where people would wait not just months for elective diagnostics. I remember there was a report out back under the NDP — I think it was about 2004, 2005 — where the radiologists association, the national body, was saying that the waits that people were enduring in this province, up to 22 months in one case, Mr. Speaker, almost two years for an elective MRI [magnetic resonance imaging], and the national body, what did they say at the time? That it was almost criminal what Saskatchewan's health care system was doing to our patients, Mr. Speaker.

In 2007-2008, the last year under the NDP, they paid for 15,700 MRIs in the province. This year we will pay for nearly 35,000 MRI scans for the people in this province, Mr. Speaker, and an increase as well in the CT [computerized tomography] scans, Mr. Speaker, that are being provided for. And, Mr. Speaker, what we're also doing is we're not being bound by ideology, as the NDP were. On the surgical waits, Mr. Speaker, in part why we've been successful is we're doing things like pooled referrals. We're doing things like ensuring that we have a streamlined process, that we have patient pathways, that we are using the private sector when it is economical, when it is cost effective, Mr. Speaker. And we demonstrate that. We have to demonstrate that. We do demonstrate that, something that the members opposite would oppose, Mr. Speaker, if they were in the government. They never did it when they had the chance in government and I think if they ever got the chance — and I'm not sure that they will for a long time — but I don't think that they would continue on with things like private surgical clinics.

We've also gone to the market to purchase, to procure things

like CT and MRI scan in the city of Regina, Mr. Speaker, something that I don't think the members opposite are . . . They haven't said where they are on that, Mr. Speaker. But that's the way that we have achieved some of the gains that we've made, Mr. Speaker, and I think that that is a stark contrast between members on this side and members on that side.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to talk on seniors, Mr. Speaker, and some of the initiatives that we are doing. What we're trying to do in this province is a couple of things when it comes to seniors. It is to dig ourselves out of the legacy of the NDP when their answer to the seniors' issues in this province was to not increase the seniors' income plan for those seniors that were provided with some income support. I think they made a change back in 1992, Mr. Speaker, and they never touched it again for 16 years. They never touched it again for 16 years, Mr. Speaker.

They also made decisions that saw 1,200 long-term care beds being cut out of the system. And we'll have a debate and I think we'll have a debate on when it comes to standards in long-term care, Mr. Speaker. But when the members opposite ask about where the standards are for long-term care, well I can tell you, in 19 communities across this province, Mr. Speaker, they don't have to worry about that because they don't have a long-term care facility anymore in their community. Twelve hundred beds in this province were closed over those years, Mr. Speaker, at a time where the demographics of our province were showing that we were an aging population in Saskatchewan. We had gone through a generation after several generations before that of our young people not staying in the province, Mr. Speaker. And so how did the NDP prepare the seniors of this province for that? Well they cut the beds in this province. So we have a long ways to dig out of that, Mr. Speaker.

We've also added back staff into long-term care facilities. Over nearly 800 full-time equivalents are working in long-term care in our integrated facilities all across this province, Mr. Speaker. But we want to also make sure that we are providing support for seniors that aren't in long-term care, may never live in long-term care, but need support to live in their own homes. And that's where this budget comes into play, Mr. Speaker, \$700,000 for geriatric program for southern Saskatchewan to be based out of Regina.

We have one geriatrician in this province, Dr. Jenny Basran, and she does a great job in this province but she is one person. So we need to recruit a second for the southern part of this province, Mr. Speaker. We also need to ensure, especially in our two major cities, that we have special areas for those, Mr. Speaker, that are suffering from those complex cases of dementia and Alzheimer's, Mr. Speaker. So there's capital dollars in this budget to identify, most likely within existing facilities, to ensure that there are the supports in place for those very high, complex cases, Mr. Speaker.

We're also ensuring something that has been successfully tested in Regina Qu'Appelle, purposeful rounding, to ensure that our seniors know that on a regular basis that somebody's going to be checking in on them, and in specific areas around the Ps, Mr. Speaker: proximity to personal items like the call bell, like water; pain and how they are doing with their pain management; their position, Mr. Speaker. So this is something that's going to be rolled out to every single facility across this

province and that's beginning this year, Mr. Speaker.

We're also ensuring that we can continue with programs that have been piloted in Regina and Saskatoon and P.A. [Prince Albert] and now rolled out to Lloydminster, Mr. Speaker, the HomeFirst/Quick Response program that is helping to ensure that seniors are getting more timely access. They're getting into the home care system, Mr. Speaker, more quickly. We're able to not have seniors going into the emergency and in acute care if they don't actually need that, Mr. Speaker. So this will enhance that and it'll enhance the home care programs, so that when those seniors become home care clients, we can look after them.

It's also going to ensure, in our major health regions, that the individualized funding that we have for people that are on home care but that would like other options — could be a non-profit, could be the private sector, could be a private nursing company — that they have those options and so the money in this budget will eliminate the wait-list that we currently have on those programs, Mr. Speaker.

So those are some of the initiatives that we're working on. We're also working on through our emergency department waits initiative which has received an increase in this budget. We're also working on, Mr. Speaker, ensuring some testing, some other ideas, when it comes to seniors, like putting nurse practitioners into long-term care so that we can avoid some of those admissions into the emergency department that are based really on assessments and evaluations. Those could be done by somebody like a nurse practitioner that could avoid a trip to the emergency department. And there's been great work that's been done, Mr. Speaker, on our emergency department waits. And they have additional . . . I am pleased that they have additional money, Mr. Speaker, in that part of the budget.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's what we're doing when it comes to I think an issue that has been highlighted. When it comes to seniors' issues, that's a big part of the new dollars in our budget.

I really quickly, Mr. Speaker, want to move to more locally. Obviously the impact on the dropping price of oil has not only had an impact on the budget, but obviously as well it's had impact on areas that are producing oil, Mr. Speaker, and that's certainly my constituency. It would be one of those areas, Mr. Speaker.

And so we've seen, Mr. Speaker, businesses that have tried to adjust in terms of their spending programs, in terms of their employment. We certainly hope that this is not going to be a long-term issue, Mr. Speaker, but certainly in this budget there is good news when it comes to the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency. There is going to be highway construction, I'm pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, some important work that's going to be done on some maintenance on Highway 39 as well as I believe Highway 6 north of the Highway 13 junction, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very pleased about that.

I'm also pleased that the Highways minister has included continued planning for the twinning of Highways 6 and 39. We know that this is a longer term proposition, Mr. Speaker, but I think where this budget is a difference from previous NDP

budgets is that, first of all, it's a growing province with a growing number of population and employment, Mr. Speaker, something that the NDP didn't necessarily have to contend with, but when they had difficulties in their budgets, what did they do? They just stopped everything. They stopped planning, they stopped building, they stopped construction, Mr. Speaker. We've taken a different course and I'm pleased to see that that money is in place in the Highways budget to continue that work.

I'm also pleased to see that the Minister for Advanced Education has included over \$10 million to hopefully wrap up our Southeast Regional College building. This has been a tremendous construction project for the city of Weyburn, Mr. Speaker. And I think that it's going to serve the employees and the employers and the young people, and frankly people of all ages in the Weyburn area for many years to come. And it's really making what was our high school really a much broader, larger educational facility for not just the city, but the entire region so that there's a good continuity between the students in high school going into post-secondary, whether it be through a SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] program or whether it be some of the university classes, Mr. Speaker. I've said before that Southeast Regional College was, the southeast college was where I did my entire first year of university through the University of Regina. So it serves not just the trades, not just through SIAST programs and other institutions, but obviously there is a university component that our young people are able to take advantage of.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that the budget did include planning dollars to begin looking at the replacement of the Weyburn hospital, something that was built in 1952, Mr. Speaker. It has served for many years, Mr. Speaker, but I think anybody that has gone through it knows that it is time to start the conversation about what a replacement is going to look like.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank and I want to congratulate obviously all the members of the caucus and the treasury board and the cabinet for their deliberations. These are never easy decisions that have to be made. I think, you know, I think it was former Finance minister Rod Gantefoer that used to say that it would be easy if it was between good and bad decisions, Mr. Speaker, but they're all good ideas that come forward from the members.

And in closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Finance minister. It's an honour to know him. It is a privilege to sit next to him. Mr. Speaker, it's a reminder that sometimes I should maybe bring an earplug on my right side, Mr. Speaker, depending on what it gets like in question period. But I just want to put on the record my feelings for him and what he has meant for this party, for this caucus, for this province, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to work with him and it'll be an honour for me to look back on however short or long my time is to be able to count him among my colleagues and somebody that I consider a friend.

And so with that, Mr. Speaker, I will most definitely not be supporting the amendment put forward by the Finance critic opposite, and I will be very pleased and very proud to support the budget. Thank you.

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

Mr. Parent: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to be able to stand here to speak to the budget, but prior to me doing that I'd like to thank some people. In the back here we don't stand up very often so I'd like to be able to thank my Meewasin constituency executive: Brent Penner who's the president, Lynette Weiler who's the treasurer, Edward Hudson who's the director, Matt Donlevy who's the VP [vice-president] and also my CA, and the secretary is Tim Steuart. These people, Mr. Speaker, they're always there when I want to have some kind of an event or even door knocking or whatever. They're always there to help the party. They're always there to help me and our constituency, and to do what they can for the people of Meewasin.

I would also like thank the people of Meewasin constituency, Mr. Speaker. They've given me the honour to be able to stand here and be privileged enough to stand in this House and bring greetings or whichever to deal with some of the issues with Meewasin.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the caucus staff who, every time I have questions or need something, they're always there to bring the answers or in some cases tell me I can't speak about something. And you know, I understand that.

I would also like to thank all the ministry staff who, every time I get questions from constituency people about various things, whether it's in Health or whether it's in Highways or whatever, they're always there to find the answers. Whether it's the answer the person wants to hear or not, they get the answers for me, and I really appreciate that.

And mostly, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Minister of Finance and his staff for doing a wonderful job of providing us with this budget that is balanced and the foresight used in developing this balanced budget under the low oil prices. Because it's critical that we maintain some of the things that we're going to do with infrastructure. Infrastructure keeps the economy going, and I think it's critical that it continues. And I've been told that by many people, that they were extremely happy to see us investing in infrastructure.

[15:30]

Mr. Speaker, while I'm at it, I would like to thank some other people who have been instrumental and very important to the party and to us, that are all going to retire, and we're going to really miss them. Again of course, the MLA from Canora-Pelly who has been an inspiration, especially balancing the budget under these conditions and all the other budgets that he's balanced.

Also, this woman, Mr. Speaker, from Kelvington-Wadena is probably, in my opinion, the most influential woman who has ever been a member of the House. This MLA has had foresight to move this province forward, not just keep it going steady but have the foresight to build this province to what it is today — a place to be and not a place to be from. I'm proud of her.

Then there's the member from Melville-Saltcoats, who I'm

going to really miss his speeches. But mostly I'm going to be happy when he moves out of the office he stole from me with the only washroom in that area, as well as punting me out of the seat I was in before and moving me to the backbenchers. But we will miss him, and I will greatly miss him.

Also there's another fellow from Moosomin who was probably the best Speaker we've ever had . . . I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker — past Speaker, yes. And another MLA from Estevan, our caucus Chair, who I won't say much about because she walks around with that wooden mallet and I don't want to get hit. And last of all, of the ones that I can think of that are retiring, from Wood Mountain. I'm still waiting for that ride in that Hornet. I don't know if I'll ever get it, but it was a pleasure working with him, and we're going to miss him. He's a great guy.

You know, I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, about the importance of infrastructure work. And I attended a conference in Chicago several years ago, and the main topic to the conference was surviving an economic downturn, which the US [United States] 2008, 2009 went into quite a tailspin along with a lot of Canada, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Chicago though, they had the foresight to realize that in order to keep the economy going, the best thing to do was to borrow money and to work on their infrastructure and build their infrastructure that was over 100 years old. Like they starting redoing all their waterlines, underground waterlines that were ready to collapse and they would have had to have been done anyway. And then their sewer lines, they worked on all of those, replacing those sewer lines. And then they also worked on roadwork, which created lots of work and that maintained a strong economy for Chicago. It was one of the few cities that didn't go into a recession like most of the cities in the US.

Mr. Speaker, businesses won't move to a city or to a province or state that doesn't have the infrastructure, the workforce, and the facilities that it requires to operate. And Chicago realized that, and the foresight of our MLAs on this side, they knew that too. And that's what they've been doing; they've been creating an environment to get investment in here, bring business in,. And it shows with all the activity that's been happening in this province for the last seven, eight years.

Mr. Speaker, lastly I would like to thank the most important person in my life, my wife Sheila, and my daughter Shanaya who's about to make mom a grandma for the first time, which by the way . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, raises the population to this province, in my eyes, to 1,132,641, and he is truly the one. Since finding out that she was going to be a grandma, our house has been turned into a house of ready for growth with a baby room completely furnished with crib, baby swing, vibrating chair, change tables, strollers. When that baby comes over to visit grandma, it's going to be wearing a T-shirt that says, who needs Santa Claus, I've got Grandma. Just fantastic.

Mr. Speaker, when I used to come to Regina for the last few years, my wife didn't like it. She just, you know, would say, well can't you wait until tomorrow to go in the morning? And I'd say, well I kind of like to go Sunday so I can get things done. And now I kind of feel like the pet family dog. It's okay, see you, we're going shopping. And it's easy for me to leave,

and I'm waiting for my suitcase outside when I go back one of these times. But that's a great thing at home to have another kid coming.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is about keeping Saskatchewan strong. The Finance minister last week tabled the budget, balanced budget that will keep Saskatchewan strong by keeping taxes low, investing in infrastructure, controlling operating spending, and providing new incentives that will help create jobs. The 2015-16 budget is balanced with a surplus of 107 million. The overall revenue is 14.28 billion, up 1.2 per cent, and expenditures for the year is 14.17, also up just 1.2 per cent.

Investment in health, education, and social services continues to be priorities, accounting for nearly three-quarters of all the spending in the 2015-16 budget. The overall spending increase in those areas is just under 2 per cent. All other areas will be point six per cent.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, the active families benefit, graduate retention program, research and development tax, seniors' drug plan, and Saskatchewan employment are being changed to ensure their ongoing sustainability. The strength in the potash industry and a change in the potash production tax will help offset the 600-plus million decline in oil revenues from last year's budget due to the falling oil price. The total tax reduction potash producers receive from their capital spending will now be used over a longer period of time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a result of controlling operating spending, budget 2015 contains no tax increases, no reduction in revenue sharing with municipalities, which could have contributed to higher taxes at the municipal level. And I've already been with the mayor of Saskatoon at a board meeting, and he was ecstatic to hear that there was no change there. The budget 2015-16 provides 265.3 million in revenue sharing, the largest grant ever provided to Saskatchewan municipalities, an increase of 8.3 million compared to last year, an increase of 138 million or more than 108 per cent from the 2007-08 budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan population grows, so it's infrastructure and capital needs. The budget begins a four-year, 5.8 billion commitment, the Saskatchewan Builds capital plan, to construct and maintain needed infrastructure such as schools, health care facilities, municipal infrastructure, roads, bridges, and highways. And I know from my days, I'm not exactly that young. Most of the guys I went to school with, Saskatoon Southeast, I went to school with his younger brother, much younger. Most of the guys we went to high school with have left the province. Most of the guys that I went into engineering technology with, they're all gone. And when I went to university and took business admin, they're all gone, just about all of them. What's coming back though is their kids, their kids's kids. They're coming here because there's work here. So it's great to see.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as Saskatchewan's population continues to grow, you know, we'll continue to invest in infrastructure to make businesses more attracted to coming to Saskatchewan and growing the province and continue to grow that growth that we have had.

I mean, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the NDP government were

in power from 1996 to 2006, they cut infrastructure funding and they raised taxes. They cut jobs. And that's when the population dropped. That's where I saw, you know, my few friends that I did have even moved away. It's been sad to see the population drop by 28,000 people in that 10-year period.

With that said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the four-year plan provides more than 1.3 billion for core infrastructure, the largest infrastructure allocation in Saskatchewan history and an increase of almost 50 per cent from last year. This investment is in addition to 2 billion in capital investment forecast this year by the commercial Crown corporations, largely SaskPower, SaskTel, and SaskEnergy.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is about making choices, and they had some tough choices to make. And you know, I was proud of some of the choices they had made. I'm glad they've done what they've done to make a balanced budget because when the NDP were in power and they faced a tough, challenging budget, you know, what did they do? They'd raised taxes. The PST [provincial sales tax], they raised it three times, and it was as high as 9 per cent, almost double what it is today. They raised income tax twice. They raised business taxes four times. That doesn't even count all the education and property taxes, the hikes that they had just to make up for the failure in providing proper funding for education.

What, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what the NDP also did was they stopped investing in infrastructure and closed facilities. I mean, our rural guys, they can tell you what it was like to have their hospitals closed, you know. They had 52 rural hospitals closed, and even in Regina here, they closed the plainsman hospital, which was sad.

During that time period as well, 176 schools, mostly in rural Saskatchewan . . . Well you want to talk about kill a small town. It was crazy. They also closed 1,200 long-term care beds, you know. And they always say, well there's a shortage. Well who created that shortage? You know, who closed all the beds? You know, and they talk about shortages of doctors. Well when you closed all those hospitals, what happened? Well we lost 1,100-plus health workers — you know, 175 doctors, 455 nurses, the list goes on. And what was the result? A decade of decline under the NDP.

An Hon. Member: — And they don't care.

Mr. Parent: — And they don't care, exactly. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget creates two new growth tax incentives to encourage job creation and capital investment. I like these.

The new manufacturing and processing export tax incentive will provide tax credits to eligible exporting corporations that increase their number of full-time employees who do work typically considered to be head office functions. In addition, Mr. Speaker, the traditional manufacturing process sector incentive will also apply to corporations involved in the commercial development in new economic products, including interactive digital and media creative industry products.

The second new tax incentive is a rebate for primary steel production, supporting the growth plan commitment to encourage new capital investment. The rebate will provide a tax

incentive for eligible primary steel producers that make a minimum capital investment of 100 million in new expanding productivity.

[15:45]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, health, education, social assistance, social service assistance account for 73.2 per cent of our government's expenses. Spending in these areas is forecast at 10.4 billion in 2015-16, up 1.9 per cent from last year's budget, an increase of 67.7 per cent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, investments in social services and assistance will reach 1.2 billion in this budget, an increase of 3.2 per cent. A record infrastructure investment, more than \$3.3 billion through Saskatchewan Builds capital plan and provides Crown corporations . . . will keep Saskatchewan strong. Capital projects ranging from investments in power and transmission, telecommunications networks to highways, schools, hospitals are part of the largest single-year capital commitment in the province's history.

In the budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Saskatchewan Builds capital plan commits 1.3 billion to core capital projects, an increase of almost 50 per cent over the last year's capital budget. In addition Saskatchewan Crown corporations including SaskPower, SaskTel, SaskEnergy are projected to spend 2 billion on capital projects in 2015-16, matching the previous year's budget from the Crown infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, a number of twinning, interchange projects . . . I'd like to comment on some. The \$23 million for twinning of Highway 16 east of Saskatoon to Clavet, that one is one that I had been talked to several times by friends of mine that run the Prairie Steel plant just south of Clavet. It's a grain bin manufacturing company. They talk about how busy the intersection is just prior to Clavet, where they turn off the highway to go south, and at the same time, you have the highway that turns north to go to the Agrium, the canola solvent extraction plant that houses well over 100 people in that facility. Then you also have the large trucks that come there and turn in that same section.

Our Highways department knew that it was time to do something about it because the members opposite didn't do anything about it. And now they're going to twin the highway there, and it'll make it a lot safer for the people that are (a) the kids going by bus to Clavet school and for the workers going to the Prairie Steel and to Agrium.

Another one I'd like to talk about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the 11.4 million for twinning Highway 7 from Saskatoon to Delisle. And I know they're not in my constituency, but a lot of the people I know from Saskatoon travel to the two potash mines out there, and I've got lots of friends that live out in the Pike Lake area that come into town. It's very congested at certain times of the day, and it's going to be really nice to have that twinned to make it a lot of safer for all those people that travel that road.

And probably this next one, which probably hits other MLAs a little more than me but still means a lot to see them done because it's part of that whole road system that's going to

happen north of the city, that's the 7.5 million for the interchanges at Warman and Martensville. There's a lot of traffic that goes to the different facilities up in that Corman Park industrial area. And I've got quite a few friends up in that area that have different facilities, whether it's Q-Line Trucking which is a huge trucking company that has a lot of semis that travel that area, another one being the various other places up there. But the trucking company, it's going to be a godsend for them and for anybody else that's travelling into that area.

Lastly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the passing lanes, the \$1 million for passing lanes from Saskatoon to Humboldt. I travel that highway once in a while when I'm going back to my old roots, which is up the back way up to the Hoey-St. Louis area where I originated from.

But with that said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was going to go on and on and talk about, you know, where did the NDP invest. You can talk about the 26 million they lost on Big Sky Farms or the 90.8 million lost on Navigata or the 35 million they lost on SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company] or 15 million they lost on Channel Lake, etc., etc. I mean there's two pages of the craziness that they wasted money on.

With that said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm going to mention a few things on when they ask all the time — and I watch the commercial; my wife just can't stand it — where did the money go? In Saskatoon, in the city that I love: 25 million in renovations to Holy Cross, 20 million to Willowgrove elementary, roughly 20 million to Holy Family School, 6.1 million to E.D. Feehan, 13.5 million to Georges Vanier School.

The list just goes on and on of all the different, you know . . . Two hundred million for the brand new children's hospital which hopefully we never have to use in our family, but with a grandson on the way, it's good to see it happen; you know, 8 million on renovations to Parkridge Centre. It's just on and on. Seniors, 10 million investment in targeting funding to support seniors living in their own homes, and that's an important one especially for me. I might have to access that one some day in the very near future. Who knows?

And the highways, the Circle Drive South project, we get comments on that one all the time, how nice it is to get around Saskatoon with that south bridge. It has taken off so much pressure, and you know that's 98.5 million that we invested in that bridge.

With that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could go on and on about Saskatoon, all the different stuff that's happened there. I really thank all the different ministries that have invested in Saskatoon and helped us get some of this stuff that we do have. And with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with that said, I will be supporting the budget and not the NDP amendment. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to start off by thanking the citizens of Saskatoon Southeast for their support.

As most of the members here will know, Saskatoon Southeast was one of the largest, by population, constituencies in the province, if not the largest, and with redistribution has effectively been broken in half. The south portion of the constituency is now going to be known as Stonebridge-Dakota.

Last week they had a nominating meeting there and nominated Bronwyn Eyre as the Saskatchewan Party candidate for that area. A lot of people will know her as a newscaster or as a columnist or as somebody with a law degree that hasn't practised. But the reality of it, in very short order, most of the people will soon know her as the new MLA for Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota, and we look forward to having her sitting on this side of the House as part of the large mass of people that look over the very small group of people on that side. And I suspect it's something that is not going to change, except that that group may get smaller yet over time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank a few people as well. In my Saskatoon constituency office, I have Gord Rutten working for me. He has worked for me for a number of years. He's the former mayor of the city of Martensville and was in fact the mayor when Martensville became a city. Very competent, very professional, used to be a teacher and is very generous with giving his opinions and his thoughts on teachers, and it's opinions that are usually right and very much valued.

Mr. Speaker, in my office in this building, I'm blessed with some really superb staff members. My chief of staff is Drew Dwernychuk, also somebody from Saskatoon. Drew has worked for me for a number of years and is one of the brightest, most competent, hard-working people, one of the best researchers, and is actually a great blessing to have in there. A number of people have said to me that he ought to be the minister instead of me, and one of the people who have said that is in fact the Premier of the province. So perhaps after the next election, things may be different.

I have a chief admin person in my office, Jean Watts who has looked after my calendar scheduling and a lot of things and has been the only admin person as chief admin that I've had since we formed government. I want to thank her for what she does and encourage her to stick around because I'm only going to get worse as far as being more forgetful and more confused, and I'll need her more and more as time goes on.

We have a new junior admin, Bailey Salkeld, who is working in the office who is turning out to be a quick study, catching on very fast and fitting in with the office incredibly well.

I have some ministerial assistants. I have Julie Leggott who is from Lanigan, Saskatchewan. She has worked in education for quite a number of years, was originally brought in by the member from Humboldt, and knows everything there is to know about the Ministry of Education: how the funding formula works, how everything else works. Her background is from Lanigan, which is the next town from where my mother grew up, Esk, and I know the two families have had some back and forth between the two of them. So I'm not sure whether that makes Julie my stepmom or my half-sister, but nepotism aside, I'm only too glad to allow her to continue working because she's incredibly confident.

I also have Trent Blezy working there. Trent is the one that walks around this building and a lot of people think looks like Harry Potter. He is from Storthoaks, Saskatchewan and has a great career ahead of him.

I have as well Matthew Glover who has worked for me for a number of years, a bright, thoughtful person, married to a teacher. The teacher, Justine, that he is married to is very direct and also equally generous with her opinions about teaching and the education system. She regularly passes her opinions on to her husband, Matthew, who shares them with me in a most vigorous manner and probably in a very good way. So thanks to all of those people who have been very good to me and very good to work with for the last while.

I've also had some changes in the Education ministry. I want to use this opportunity to thank the former deputy minister, Dan Florizone, who is now the CEO at the Saskatoon Health Region, a very bright, hard-working person, thoughtful, sees the big picture, and is somebody that is a true team and consensus builder. So I would say to the people in Saskatoon Health Region, use this as an opportunity for learning and moving forward because I hope he stays there for a while because they will do very well under his guidance and direction.

The ADM [assistant deputy minister] is a person named Greg Miller who has been there for a number of years and has got a true, deep understanding, somebody that has started as a teacher and moved up within the system and has got a strong understanding of First Nations and of the issues that we deal with and is somebody that is sort of the backbone and is the corporate memory of the system.

We have a new deputy minister, Julie MacRae, who is somebody that thought she was going to be retiring from Regina Public School Division. We now have her as the new deputy minister, and I'm confident that she is going to do incredibly well. She seems to be showing a quick insight and likes to send me emails late at night with her commentary on this, that, the other, comments on how well I'm doing in the House or not doing in the House, as the case may be. Anyway, a good person and I'm sure will continue the direction that Dan Florizone had left.

Mr. Speaker, in my constituency, we have some changes that have taken place. We have new schools that are announced in both Rosewood and Stonebridge. These are going to be some of the new P3 [public-private partnership] schools, and that planning process is well under way. You'll hear from some of the other members who will talk more about that later on as we go through the process. We're looking forward to that process being completed. The schools are scheduled to open in fall of 2017, and construction should start later this year. These projects are under way. So I am pleased that that's taking place in both of these constituencies. I know they're going on elsewhere, but today is the time I want to talk a little bit about what's going on in my own constituency and the constituency I held before.

I also would like to point out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are going ahead with the twinning of the Highway 16 between Saskatoon and Clavet. This is an area, a high-traffic area, a lot of daily commuters, and a growing number of businesses that

are along that route, so I am pleased to see that that's taking place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to just, on a personal note, thank a little bit on my family. My mother lives at Luther Riverside Terrace, and I frequently mention her when I speak in the House. She's now 93 years old. The home that she lives in is one that's actually in the constituency of Saskatoon Nutana. My mother reports to me periodically that the member for Saskatoon Nutana comes over there, visits people, and does what MLAs are supposed to do. So when my mother reports to me what the member for Saskatoon Nutana does, I have to go over there and sometimes make two and three trips to undo the damage and the mischief that she's created over there. But I want to say to the member for Saskatoon Nutana, I'm going to keep on doing that and keep those folks over there because they're great people over there, but I will keep them in line.

[16:00]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to thank my wife, Sandy, who has been a really great partner and has been really good to me as an MLA and enjoys going door knocking. She's not to the point yet where she calls door knocking a date night, but we will continue to do that.

I would like to share with you briefly a little bit about the 2003 election. It was an election I didn't know who was going to win. Nobody knew ahead of time where it was going to go. The election, as it got closer and closer, got increasingly tight, so there was a lot of tension going on. I would come home, and I would have gone through the door knocking. And then after we were going through the process, it was getting closer, I would be caught up with the whole process. She worked at Robertson Stromberg, which by coincidence was where Frank Quennell worked. Frank Quennell, as you're aware, became the member for Saskatoon Meewasin after that election. And I knew that she had had enough of electioneering when she came home one day and she said, I can't stand this anymore. I listen to Frank all day at work coming in, and I listen to you all night, and I'm not listening to either of you anymore. In any event, we reached an understanding, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we didn't talk about politics over suppertime, although we could of course immediately afterwards when we were going out door knocking.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank her for her ongoing commitment to me and to being a strongly supportive spouse. So it's one of the things that we do, you can't do without good support from family.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the budget, why I'll be supporting the budget, why I won't be supporting the amendment, and why I think the members opposite ought to support the budget as well. This year's budget controls spending while maintaining important investments in our people and our infrastructure, which is very important for education as it means investments in our students and our schools.

As a government, even when faced with challenging fiscal circumstances, it is our responsibility to ensure that the education system is well supported and that students continue to

be a priority. Investment in our students not only prepares them for a successful future, but it also helps to build a strong future for our province. By continuing to put the student first, these investments will also help us reach the goals set in the Saskatchewan plan for growth through our priorities in the sector plan, as we work to improve graduation rates and the outcomes for our students.

That is why this year's budget continues to make students a priority by investing in pre-K to 12 [pre-kindergarten to grade 12] education, early years, libraries, literacy, and community-based organizations. The overall operating budget for school divisions is now \$1.87 billion — that's billion with a "b" — an increase of 2.9 per cent over last year. This includes a \$52.8 million increase in operating funding in 2015-16, and is an average of 4.5 per cent per school division.

Government continues to maintain the balance of operating grant to education property tax at 65/35. We may in the future seek to rebalance back to around 60/40, but for now there is no change. We will also begin consultations and reviewing requirements for the collection of the education property taxes centrally. I'm very pleased to say this year that no school division will see less dollars this year than they did last year.

There is also funding to cover the collective bargaining agreement increases. We are continuing to provide the \$4.6 million in supports for learning that was added mid-year last year. There is also \$6 million to continue to implement the recommendations of the joint task force. As well, we are continuing transition funding for the school divisions that would have experienced decreases through the new funding model. We know some divisions still have concerns with the funding model, and we are committed to working through those challenges.

This year's budget includes \$248.5 million in school capital funding, the largest budget day capital education ever, ever for education. While there are no new projects outside a small project in Hague, all previously announced capital projects are continuing. This is an increase, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of \$152.3 million, or more than 158 per cent over 2014-15.

Included in the school capital funding this year is 157.5 million, which includes both construction and technical costs, to begin work on the 18 new schools, nine joint-use facilities in Warman, Martensville, Saskatoon, and Regina. These are areas that have experienced extraordinary growth over the past number of years. This investment will help to meet the demands of that growth. Construction will begin this fall, and the schools are scheduled to open in fall 2017. These projects are well into the planning stage and on track to meet our target date.

The remaining capital of \$91 million will advance existing projects, including \$47.8 million, a \$3.6 million increase, to begin construction for Connaught elementary in Regina, Sacred Heart in Regina, and also in St. Brieux, as well as funding to complete eight other projects started in previous years: Langenburg, Gravelbourg, Hudson Bay, Martensville High School, Weyburn, Georges Vanier in Saskatoon, St. Matthew in Saskatoon, and Saskatoon Holy Cross High School; \$31.6 million, a 32 per cent or \$7.6 million increase, for school preventive and emergency maintenance; \$10.6 million, a \$3.7

million increase, for up to 31 new relocatable classrooms throughout the province.

Traditional school capital funding also includes \$12.9 million as a result of changes to the way we fund capital projects. Government will also assume 100 per cent funding for major capital investments. This change was made at the request of school divisions and will take effect as of April 1st, 2015. With this change, school divisions will no longer be required to borrow for their share of capital projects. This will mean less administrative work for school divisions and overall savings, at least \$25 million over 20 years, for the education sector on interest cost. This brings the Government of Saskatchewan's overall investment in school infrastructure since November 2007 to nearly \$1 billion, approximately \$948 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are also investing \$66 million in early years, which will provide a 1 per cent increase in CBO [community-based organization] funding including child care centres, to support recruitment and retention of early childhood educators. This includes \$2.14 million increase in operating funding for ongoing costs of recently developed child care spaces. This also brings the number of licensed child care spaces in our province to more than 14,200, an increase of 4,935 or 53 per cent since 2007.

In addition to these spaces, we've also committed that a 90-space child care centre will be part of each of the new nine joint-use schools. That's a commitment of 810 additional child care spaces for these communities when these schools open in fall of 2017.

In addition to this funding, we've also provided \$546,000 more to school divisions to support recently developed pre-K programs. Since 2007 we have more than doubled the number of pre-K programs in the province from 155 to 316.

While the drop in the price of oil this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has made this a more difficult budget year, thanks to a diverse and resilient economy and our ability to manage spending, our province is in a good position to weather these challenges. Without question this budget reinforces our government's commitment to education and to putting the student first.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this budget. I will be voting against the amendment. I want to encourage the members opposite to look carefully at the things that are in this budget. I want to point out to them some of the things that were in previous budgets that they chose not to support because we're going to be reminding the voters in their constituency.

To the member for Athabasca who is sitting over there, Mr. Speaker, he should note that what he did not support in a previous budget was the \$4 million that went to a brand new school in Turnor Lake. Mr. Speaker, to the member from Athabasca, I would say this: you go and apologize to the people of your constituency for not supporting it. We supported it here. They didn't support it over there.

Mr. Speaker, to the member from Cumberland I would say this. He didn't support a budget that contained a \$30 million renovation at Churchill High School in La Ronge, something he

opposed, something he didn't support on budget day, something we will remind the people of La Ronge what took place.

To the member for Saskatoon Nutana, \$14 million went to Nutana Collegiate for renovations, renovations that were needed back in the time when I was on the board. Those renovations are now complete. We will be reminding the people in that constituency that she did not support the budget that contained that.

The member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre, two replacement schools, Sacred Heart and Seven Stones. Mr. Speaker, I would say to him, because some of that money is coming out of this year's budget, I would say to the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre, vote for this, so at least he can tell the people that he supported this budget.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Regina Lakeview — not running again and I'm not surprised why — did not support Connaught Community School replacement. Mr. Speaker, we're going to remind the people that the people over there did not support, did not vote for those things.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Saskatoon Riversdale, \$16 million state-of-the-art facility at St. Mary's school. I've been in that school. It's a great facility serving the community as well. To her I would say this, I would say this. She ought to go to that school and say, I'm sorry I didn't support this. I will support this budget even though I didn't support it last year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member for Saskatoon Centre, \$6 million renovations to E.D. Feehan school. He did not support that, did not support it. What he needs to do is go over to E.D. Feehan school, ask to meet with the principal, ask to meet with the parents and say, I'm sorry I didn't support this. I realize now I was wrong. He ought to apologize to those people because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will be reminding those people and we will be reminding them carefully who voted which way. And we will bring it to a head and we will tell the people they have a chance to vote. He didn't vote for it. They won't be voting for him, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to point out the deputy leader, the member for Regina Rosemont, received new child care spaces. Do you know where they are? In the same building as his constituency office. They're under construction now. He ought to go down when they have an opening and say, I'm sorry I didn't support this. Please vote for me anyway. Well they're not going to. They're going to be voting against him.

And you know, another one, another one over there, the Leader of the Opposition, a brand new joint-use school in Hampton Village, not under construction yet. He still has a chance to support this budget and support the things that are going to be helping his constituents. If he doesn't, we're going to be reminding those people, he didn't vote for it; you ought not vote for him.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't have anything else that I want to say, other than we're going to be reminding people what their record is on voting, what their record was before 2007. We're moving the province forward. They're taking the province backward. We're not going to let them drive back. Thank you

very much, Mr. Speaker. I will not be supporting the amendment. I will be supporting the budget.

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

Mr. Phillips: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. “Dad, what is math? I don’t know, son. I’m a socialist.” I like that. It’s a quote off Facebook I read the other night.

I would like to start my speech in the traditional way by thanking my two CAs in Melfort, my constituency association’s Peggy Gordon and Debbie Perkins. These people are valuable to my office but more importantly they’re valuable to the constituency of Melfort. These people, when people come in with their problems, they care about them. They empathize with them and they work very, very hard to make solutions happen.

I see that our Minister of Education kind of stirred the pot on the last speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But I wanted to thank all the people in the Melfort constituency because wherever I go in the constituency from LeRoy to Quill Lake to Melfort, Star City, I feel so welcome. They have taken me in. And not all of them voted for me; the vast majority did but not all of them, and yet those people have also made me feel welcome in their community, so I thank them all for that.

[16:15]

When I talk what I’m going to talk about today, I’m going to talk about the budget. I’m going to talk about my wife. I’m going to talk about attitude, and I’m going to talk maybe a little bit about the member from Athabasca because it’s fun. I’m going to talk about the Riders, and I’m going to talk about my mother. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I’m afraid you may have to settle in for a while.

First and foremost I want to talk a little bit about, and I wanted to thank, the Minister of Finance. I have followed this person’s career for longer than I would like to remember. But through Kinsmen, through the SSTA [Saskatchewan School Trustees Association], and through the Legislative Assembly, he has been a leader in every part of those organizations all through his life, and I thank him very much for the last 20 years of service to the province of Saskatchewan.

And when we talk about the budget, we talk about \$14.2 billion. I’m sorry, but that’s a big number. That’s more than I can really get my head around. So what I want to talk about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is I want to talk about what we have done for the people of Saskatchewan, for the Saskatchewan families since we’ve been in power. And the first thing we’ve done is we’ve allowed them to keep more of their money, whether it be 2,000, 3,000, \$4,000 or more of their own money in their pocket with our tax reductions.

We’ve cut education tax which will be coming out, has been coming out, by 40 per cent. That’s even more money into the average family’s pocket. We have new schools for their children to attend, elementary schools. I notice a quote from the mayor of Saskatoon, who I respect very much, but he said, you know, it’s nice to see a government that will announce a school and then go and build it. And that’s something that, again

moving away from it’s something that wasn’t happening in the past.

We have enhanced maintenance for all the rest of the school divisions to look after the schools because we’re on a repair program too. We have to keep these schools going because we have a growing population. We have 16 years of neglect by the party opposite.

We have a new savings plan to encourage and reward the families in Saskatchewan that are saving for their children’s education, further education, whether it be a tech school or whether it be university: new grants of \$500 per year for up to four years for when their children leave high school and go into university or tech schools, a non-refundable tax credit of 3,000 to a maximum of \$20,000 for graduates from tech schools and universities who stay in the province of Saskatchewan. These are all new programs from the Saskatchewan Party government.

Then you drive by the University of Saskatchewan and you see the big new dorms going up, inviting dorms that’s going to help the people of rural Saskatchewan who move in to go to university. And it will help people who it’s just time to leave the house and get off on their own.

We have research programs that will ensure your children have a bright future right here in Saskatchewan. Our people in Saskatchewan, they work hard and they also play hard. They go to provincial parks, and we’ve spent over \$40 million improving those parks for Saskatchewan people, and they’re used in record amounts. And when they go there, what they do is they drive on improved roads. They drive on repaved roads, reconstructed roads, or on sometimes absolutely new roads. The people who are leaving Saskatoon to go up to Emma Lake and Candle Lake and La Ronge and up there, they’re driving on brand new, four-lane paved highway from Saskatoon to Regina.

We have safer highways. We have the four lanes. We have the passing lanes on 7 and on 10. We’ve got interchanges, new interchanges going up, the Regina bypass. These are things that people care about. These are things that happens and people use on a day-to-day base.

We put more money into health care and senior care resulting in 2,600, 2,600 new nurses and 400 new doctors, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That’s good for Saskatchewan. That’s good for Saskatchewan people. New hospitals that are actually being built. It’s not one of these ones I’m going to announce it this year, I’m going to announce it next year, and for the next 10 years, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I’m just going to keep announcing it because without an economy, there’s nothing you can do. And better programs for some of the disadvantaged and the people who have challenges in Saskatchewan like Transition House, people who are at their most vulnerable in Saskatchewan, and like the SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] program, people who face far more challenges than we do.

You know there’s a flood relief program that relieved most — and I repeat, most — of the challenges that people have faced from flooding in the last three or four or five years. Yes, we have some problems out there, and we’re working on them, but most of the challenges . . . And I could go on and on and on. In

fact I think I will.

But I'm going to leave the budget just for a couple minutes and, in the sake of time, I'll move along. But you can see how every man, woman, and child in this province has benefited from the policies of this government, including the 114,000 people who now pay zero income tax in the province.

Now many of the members may wonder why it has taken so long for me to talk about my wife. That is because she's one of the thousands in this province that not only showed leadership at a city council meeting, but she shows leadership on a day-to-day base. She has a great attitude that is reminiscent of so many thousands of Saskatchewan people.

And on November 5th last year, just last November, I was out with the Special Olympics soccer team. And I had tore my Achilles tendon that night. I had the operation to put it back together on Saturday, November 8th. But I remember Thursday, November 13th and I had kind of an NDP kind of day where I felt the whole world was against me. I was whining. I was snivelling. I was complaining. And April, bless her heart, she came over to me and she sat down beside me. She took my hand, and she says, Kevin, do you really think this is helping? I was maybe looking for a little more sympathy than that. But it's true. It wasn't helping at all. It was just beating me up more.

And I looked at it and I said, okay. I got hurt on Taylor Field. I was helped off Taylor Field by Luc Mullinder, a Rider or ex-Rider now. I have pictures of that. I looked at it as a challenge. I looked at it as an education and as an experience, and it made life a whole lot easier. It was still hard and it was painful on a day in, day out, but it's an attitude that I carried because of the simple words, Kevin, do you really think this helps? To April I would like to say, thank you for all you do, and I love you for all you are.

But attitude is a great attribute for any person or really any province. Let's move to the Saskatchewan Roughriders. Last week Rider President Jim Hopson retired and it was an end of a . . . And there were a lot of interviews that talked to Jim about it. And one of the interviews that stuck out was an early one, ten years ago, where Jim Hopson said the first thing he had to do was to change the culture of the team. Change it from an atmosphere of mediocrity, from a team that was satisfied with a nine and nine season to a team that was only satisfied by a Grey Cup. Changing the culture, that's leadership. That's what Jim Hopson did with the Saskatchewan Roughriders, and that's why all of us who bleed green say thank you to Jim Hopson.

But it's leadership like this that we see every day. We see it here in the chambers, and we see it all across the province from the Premier of Saskatchewan. The Premier recognizes that it's the people of Saskatchewan that made this economy what it is. He had to change the culture of Saskatchewan after the province had been brutalized by 16 years of continuous NDP government. You see, what had to be done was to create an atmosphere of growth, an atmosphere of prosperity, and an environment where business is welcome. The people of Saskatchewan have made this happen and through . . . It's happened because of the leadership of our Premier that changed the culture.

I want to read a quote. And this is something that doesn't happen a whole lot in the Chamber, but I want to read a quote by Murray Mandryk of the *Leader-Post* here. A couple weeks ago Murray was talking about how Premier Brad Wall, and this is a quote from the sheet, ". . . needs . . . to hire a few consultants who could teach him how to sell bad news." That was the quote. Now what he goes into, and the quote I'm going to read:

Ironically, two of the best in the province were likely his NDP predecessors — former premiers Lorne Calvert and, especially, Roy Romanow. Heck, even when times were tickety-boo, these two could make Saskatchewan people feel like they were on the eve of destruction.

Whether it was shutting down hospitals, stopping nurse training or demanding changes to equalization formula to exclude natural resource revenues so that Saskatchewan would be forever considered a have-not province, the NDP were clearly masters of accentuating the negative as a means of lowering voters' expectations.

Isn't that the kind of leadership that every person in this province wants? Somebody who will nail you everyday, knock you down, and you have to pick yourself up every morning. That's leadership that they have on the other side.

But let's go back to the Roughriders. And I have a little bit of my mother in me that really thinks about numbers and why things happen the way they do. Forty-seven years, forty-seven years of CCF-NDP [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation-New Democratic Party] government in the last 70 years in Saskatchewan. Forty-seven out of 70 years. How many Grey Cups were won by the Saskatchewan Roughriders during those 47 years?

An Hon. Member: — How many?

Mr. Phillips: — Zero. There wasn't one. Twenty-four years of non-NDP government, how many Grey Cups were won?

An Hon. Member: — How many?

Mr. Phillips: — Four. Four, and that's a fact. It's right from the archives. I had to look at the archives for both the legislature and the archives for the CFL and compare the two. And if you look closer at these archives, you will see that there has been 95 years of CCF-NDP government in provinces that have a CFL football team — 95 years.

The archives also show that only the 1998 Winnipeg Blue Bombers were able to beat the NDP jinx in Manitoba. And the same archives also show that — and I do know what happened — in spite of the fact that there are three CFL teams in Ontario, only the 1991 Toronto Argonauts were able to win the Grey Cup. BC [British Columbia] and Saskatchewan, how many? Zero, zip, nada. Now is it just a fluke, just two-thirds of an opportunity for 47 years? Can we say that that was just a fluke? The archives show it all, the percentages: the Grey Cup champions in 47 years; the percentage of NDP leadership, 0.00; non-NDP government, 16.6 per cent; and Saskatchewan Party government, 25 per cent. Is that a fluke?

Across Canada, in provinces with CFL teams, 95 years and two Grey Cups, 2.1 per cent average — 2.1 per cent. Why does this happen? Why would that be? You know, seriously it happens because of the attitude. That's how it happens because when you come from a winning province, you win. That's how it happens. And you can put that in the archives. So I would suggest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if you bleed green, you should vote Saskatchewan Party green.

[16:30]

Mr. Speaker, turning to a little more serious note, I have spent too much time in hospitals lately, whether it be for my leg or visiting. And there was one moment a couple of weeks ago that I found really fascinating. I went down to the cafeteria for a cup of coffee, and I was sitting there and I noticed five nurses were sitting at a table close to me having a coffee break. And these health care professionals were sitting there and they were laughing and they were joking and they were just having a really good break — what you would hope that people would do on their break. Then I noticed another nurse walk in looking a little bit, and I would probably . . . That might be an exaggeration that she was a little more than a little bit grouchy. And she joined these five nurses who were enjoying their break, and within one or maybe two minutes, the laughing was gone, the joyousness was gone, they weren't giving each other a bad time. But luckily within five minutes the other five people who she joined were also gone. And I watched them leave, and they gave a respectful 15 feet between the table and where they were leaving before they started to laugh and to joke and to enjoy themselves again. It's attitude, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It really is.

I think I have gone on far enough that maybe I'll leave the member from Athabasca out this time. I'll make sure I mention him next fall.

But I do want to talk just a little bit about the windfall revenue that the NDP Opposition Leader talks about, the windfall revenue for the people of Saskatchewan. Don't forget, it's the people of Saskatchewan's economy. It's not us. It's them that are working, them that are excited, and them that are building a province. But again that slights the people of Saskatchewan because what would make the revenue windfall? To me, if you have windfall, you're walking down the street and a whole bag of money lands on you, because windfall means you didn't deserve it. That's what windfall means. That's what the NDP are still talking about. They're still telling us that the people of Saskatchewan don't deserve the revenue that they have in the province. That's what they say about our people.

And I'm sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I don't know if they think that \$50 a barrel for a price of oil is right. I think if they do, they're the only ones. Potash isn't at huge dollars today. Wheat and grains, we've had a decent year but not a great year. What would make the NDP think that they're windfall revenues? He mentioned that on both March 12th and March 13th in this House, you know, and it's, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's attitude. And last week twice I heard the line, the government is asking Saskatchewan families to pay more for less. My answer is, how dare they? How dare they insult the intelligence of the people of Saskatchewan once again? How can you say pay more when you have raised taxes 17 times, including three PST times, two income tax times? They raised business taxes. They did

absolutely nothing about the education tax when they were paying 38 per cent of the budget. We're now, we're paying 62 per cent of the budget.

How could they say that they get less, when they closed 52 hospitals? They closed 176 schools. They closed 19 long-term facilities with 1,200 beds for our senior citizens. They drove out teachers, they drove out doctors, they drove out nurses. They drove out 28,000 Saskatchewan residents. Winston Churchill said, and I read this for the first time the other night, I contend . . . And the quote is, "I contend that for a nation to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle." That's what they believe. That's what they think. The masters of asking people for more money, more taxes for less services.

And while I'm on pet peeves, I want to say a couple of words about their talking point for two years now for the Opposition Leader, talking about 19 Japanese words in the lean vocabulary. Two years of talking about 19 words. Kaizen means to try to do one thing better, make one small improvement every day. That's what kaizen means. Is that hard to understand? How do these people opposite ask for sushi? How do they ask for poutine? Give me some of those potato things where there's, you know, some cheese curds and gravy. Like, just say poutine and forget where it comes from. There are thousands of words in our language that come from languages all across the world. Don't you think Saskatchewan people can figure out 19 Japanese words? You might not be able to, but trust me, they can. Have we made mistakes? Yes, we have probably made some mistakes. But you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have made those mistakes going forward, not standing still and certainly not going backwards.

I feel, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I got all that out of my system. And I know it's very disappointing, and the member from Athabasca wanted so much for me to talk about him, but I am going to say a few words about my mother. I have mentioned her before and how she was intelligent, determined, and possibly a little stubborn and a little headstrong. She passed away on Sunday. And I'd like to tell you a short story, a story that my dad used to tell.

When I was a kid, we spent some time up at Waskesiu. And we used to go down and we used to look at the bears. Remember when we used to do that? You know, you could go down to the garbage dump, and there would be the bears, and you could watch them. Mom and dad drove up, sitting in the car, and dad said, I'm going to go out and take a picture of them. There's quite a few of them today and I want to. Mom says, don't do that, Wes. You know, you can get out there and you can be taking a picture and a bear can come out from over there, and it's between you and the car. And he said, I'll go out. I'll take the picture, and I'll be right back. You know, there's nothing . . . So he goes out, takes a picture, turns around, and in the exact spot that mom had pointed out that a bear could come from, a bear came from. So there was a bear, and dad says, well I went back to the car. He started going back to the car. And I looked in the car and I saw mom. And I looked at the bear. And I looked at the car and saw mom. And I looked at the bear. And he said, you know, I thought I might have a better chance with the bear.

I would like to think that I showed a little bit of mom in my speech today. She was a loving mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and someone we will dearly miss.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the reasons that I've stated in my speech this afternoon and for many, many other reasons, I will be supporting the budget motion and I will definitely not be supporting the opposition amendment. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Greystone.

Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm delighted to be able to join in this debate and dialogue especially as it relates to our budget. Like others, I'd be remiss if I didn't begin by recognizing and offering my sincere appreciation to the people of Saskatoon Greystone. It has been a remarkable journey, a journey started well in advance of the November 2007 election, and a journey that has allowed me into many people's homes. It's allowed me the opportunity and afforded me the opportunity to hear many stories and to share a far greater understanding of the promise of so many families but also the struggles of so many families. We know how important that is, and it's today where I stand in what will be my last budget speech and I offer my sincere thanks for the trust that the people of Saskatoon Greystone have bestowed upon me.

This past Sunday, I had an opportunity to sit down with a constituent over on Potter Crescent, and to sit down and talk about some public policy, both past and future, to talk about reasonable expectations of government, and to talk about aspirations for families, especially as we think about our future, our shared future.

So in addition to offering my sincere thanks to all of the people of Saskatoon Greystone, I'd like to specifically mention Katie who runs the office just off 8th Street and who helps so many people in so many ways. In fact often they'll report to me that they appreciate working with Katie and she's far more effective and efficient at getting things done than probably the MLA is.

I'd also like to thank so many who have helped to make this journey a remarkable one. And I can think about all those who have worked in various ministerial offices with me as colleagues and various Crown corporations and a variety of other institutions and organizations right across the province that I've had the privilege of working to serve and working in collaboration, in partnership.

I've benefited specifically from some very, very talented and unique individuals, deputy ministers: Wynne Young and Clare Isman, and most recently from Louise over in Advanced Education.

I've benefited from terrific chiefs of staff: Mary Donlevy-Konkin and more recently Shelly. Some will say there's something of interest there, unique to this government — only female deputy ministers and only female chiefs of staff. And that would probably, many would say, help to account for what was able to be done. And when their mistakes were made, it was probably because I wasn't listening close enough. And so

I'm very, very honoured to have worked with such esteemed and talented and hard-working colleagues.

I'd like to thank as well so many who work in this building, often without recognition, whether it's in this very Chamber within the Assembly and right across the building, to help ensure that we're able to do our work and focus on the needs of our constituents in the interests of the province.

[16:45]

To get to where we are individually but also collaboratively, collectively, there are a number of volunteers that we all rely on. And I want to thank all of those individuals from Saskatoon Greystone, from our association, or now associations. Importantly Saskatoon Greystone like a few other ridings is actually being divided up, so about 70 per cent will become what is now Churchill-Wildwood and about 30 per cent will fit into the Saskatoon-University riding. And so as we see the evolution of the riding, it's an opportunity to offer my sincere thanks to all of those who have worked so hard to ensure that we remain connected to and attentive to the needs, the wishes, and the dreams of people of Saskatoon Greystone and now the new ridings.

To all the members of my family, I want to say a special and sincere thank you, and most especially to my daughter, to Jacqueline.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we offer our sincere thanks to friends and family and to others, we can cast back in time to the first premier in the earlier opening stages and phases of this province when the notion of Saskatchewan was a bold ideal. In fact a boldness reflected in a key conversation some would suggest may be apocryphal, but in fact the roots are legitimate. They are real. A conversation between the first premier, Walter Scott, and the first president of the University of Saskatchewan, Walter Murray . . . Walter Murray came from a well-established university on the East Coast, and he arrived and asked a simple question of the premier, and that is, why should I stay? Why should I stay? And the first premier, Walter Scott, offered, because this is a big land for big people with big ideas, or words similar and to that effect.

And when we think about this budget, we can think about the significance of it being a balanced budget that will keep Saskatchewan strong, the first premise being Saskatchewan today is strong and thriving, Saskatchewan today where we see a budget that keeps taxes low, where we see significant investments in infrastructure. At the same time there's a sense of prudence, controlling operating spending while at the same time focusing on opportunities that will help spur on additional growth, growth not for its own sake but because we understand a strong economy helps to ensure that investments can be made for families and communities, those investments that make a real difference in people's lives.

Investments in health care and education and social services continue to be key priorities for this government, in fact accounting for nearly three-quarters of all spending in this budget and an overall spending increase in these key areas of just under 2 per cent.

And in other areas of government, when we combine those initiatives and endeavours, we see a budget that actually offers point six per cent less this year. That reflects a sense of balance. It reflects some of the challenges, externally imposed challenges that our Minister of Finance, our government, and our Premier have had to grapple with.

And I'd like to take a moment just to say how much, like so many of us on this side, I have appreciated the opportunity to work with and learn from our Minister of Finance. He's a professional. He's a great friend. He's a mentor. And he's also brought a sense of cheer to the task of his work, and for that this province will forever benefit from those efforts and the efforts of all the treasury board.

I'd like to highlight just a couple of interesting initiatives that are in place to help foster and facilitate growth because they're worthy of mention. In addition to the investments, we can think of the manufacturing and processing exporter tax incentive, an incentive to help spur on, in this case provide tax credits to eligible exporting corporations that increase their number of full-time employees who do work typically considered to be head office functions. And in addition to the traditional manufacturing and processing sector, the incentive will also apply to corporations involved in commercial development of new economy products including interactive digital media and creative industry products. That is a response to listening to some of the ideas and initiatives in our innovation sector, and I applaud those that have stood up and put those forward.

I also want to highlight a second new tax incentive which is a rebate for primary steel production. Like so many, I've sat down with some of the steel manufacturers. I've sat down and listened, much like our Minister of Justice, the MLA from Meewasin, and others, and said, are there some steps that can be taken? And this budget offers a tangible example, obviously more to do and certainly more conversations to be had, but a tangible example of us attempting to work with that sector.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to talk a little bit about what we can do regarding infrastructure because we know that infrastructure is essential to help us continue on this path of growth. In this budget, the Saskatchewan Builds capital plan commits \$1.3 billion to core capital projects, an increase of almost 50 per cent over last year's capital budget. In addition to this, Saskatchewan's Crown corporations including SaskPower, SaskTel, and SaskEnergy are projected to spend \$2 billion on capital projects this year, matching the previous year's budget for Crown infrastructure. When we think about these combined, it's obvious that again that big land for big people with big ideas continues to inform the work that is under way. Saskatchewan: a land full of growing communities, a growing economy that requires increased investment within infrastructure.

There are a number of examples that we can continue to point to, but what's most important here is that when we think about Saskatchewan Builds capital plan, there's a commitment of more than \$580 million to transportation infrastructure projects. And there's a broad range of what those include. And thanks to our Minister of Justice who has responsibility for that portfolio, we're actually seeing in very real, tangible ways, continued progress and continued momentum in that area. So when we

think about infrastructure and we think about incentives, these are to help foster and help facilitate growth that's under way.

But along the way, we recognized the key resource in Saskatchewan. That is our people, especially our young people. And that's why it's so important for us to recognize investments that are going into the post-secondary sector.

Today during question period our Minister of Advanced Education highlighted that in fact it's well over \$6 billion that we've invested as a government in post-secondary education. In fact when we think about some key areas of investment in this budget, we can think about more than \$20 million in direct supports for First Nations and Métis post-secondary education, like \$428,000 in additional operating funding for the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, an increase of 24 per cent year over year and 121 per cent since 2007. This demonstrates a significant commitment, not simply to this vital institution, but to the students enrolled and engaged in that institution, that we're working to ensure that there are some additional resources to help close that education and employment gap.

When we think about an additional \$40,000 in operating funding for the Dumont Technical Institute, an increase of 2 per cent over the last year and 169 per cent since 2007, and the list goes on right across this crucial sector, I call it a community — our post-secondary community which continues to see increased enrolments for the most part right across the system because our population continues to grow and it's helping us to meet these vital needs.

In addition to convention or traditional post-secondary investments, we also see that the Ministry of Economy in this budget sees a \$600,000 increase to adult basic education for a record investment of \$25 million, an increase of 62 per cent since 2007 and 2008, an investment that will add 200 ABE [adult basic education] seats for an estimated program capacity of more than 8,700.

What we see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is increased investments, including to the provincial training allowance fund to ensure that more people have greater access to skills training, to education, personal and professional development, therefore allowing them to meet their full potential and allowing Saskatchewan to meet its full potential.

We also see an additional \$1 million increase to the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission. We know how vital these apprenticeship positions are, and we also know that the total number of seats is going to go from essentially the total number of seats to 7,000, up from just over 3,000 during 2007-2008. That is a significant increase, an 84 per cent increase in the number of seats providing more opportunities for our young people.

We also know that we're making progress, not simply in investing in Saskatchewan youth, inviting Saskatchewan expats back or their families back, their children or grandkids. We're also seeing real significant progress when it relates to immigration. That helps to account for the population that is more than now 1,132,000 — a record. And as Tony Blair says, there's a very real indicator, simple, straightforward indicator of

how a jurisdiction's doing and that is, are people moving in or are people moving out? And one of the things that we can answer is, people are moving into Saskatchewan. They're staying in Saskatchewan. They believe in Saskatchewan. They're investing in Saskatchewan. And that institution, that program is helping to ensure that new opportunities are available to people from around the world as they call Saskatchewan home.

[The Assembly recessed from 17:00 until 19:00.]

Importantly, we know that there is a lot more to do in some key sectors. For example in education, this 2015-16 budget includes \$3.7 billion for education spending, up 2.8 per cent over this last year's budget — which is very significant when it comes to offering more opportunities for our young people. Importantly, we know, and the Minister of Education has already spoken to some of the significant infrastructure investments that will be included, but we also see the inclusion of \$4.6 million for supports for learning, funding for school divisions to continue funding announced first in 2014, \$420,000 in funding for additional English as an additional language supports to deliver on commitments made in school divisions again during last year, continuing that progress. And that list goes on because we know how significant education is.

We also know how important it is for us to see that our communities are thriving. And that's why we see significant third party support for this budget, because the budget is helping to keep Saskatchewan municipalities strong by providing a record \$265.3 million in municipal revenue sharing — something that the mayor of Saskatoon certainly has come out in support of — and that is reflective of a community, a city that is among the fastest growing in all of the country.

We see Calgary growing at 3.6 per cent. We see Edmonton growing at 3.3 per cent, and we see Saskatoon growing at 3.2 per cent. It's this kind of initiative, the Saskatchewan municipalities in their revenue sharing, that they've demonstrated their support, their appreciation of this government keeping its word and moving forward.

But we're also making sure that we are doing more for those in need. That is, dedicating \$7.7 million to help at-risk children, youth, and families, including \$3 million for foster care and extended family care, \$2 million for medically fragile children with complex needs, \$1.3 million for assisted adoption, and the list goes on.

Importantly, we also see support for seniors — \$26.5 million, an increase of 1.8 per cent, to increase seniors' income plan monthly to benefit by \$10 a month, meaning that since 2007 the benefit has tripled from \$90 to \$270 per month.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I see that my time is soon to be running out, but I want to simply say this. What a privilege this has been to be able to engage in this debate on this budget. But it has also been a great privilege to be able to serve the people of Saskatoon Greystone. I'm delighted to support this budget and the endeavours of this government. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — It now being past 5 o'clock, this House stands recessed until 7 p.m.

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