



FIRST SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

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Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

(HANSARD)

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The Hon. Randy Weekes
Speaker



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
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Lieutenant Governor — His Honour the Honourable Russ Mirasty, S.O.M., M.S.M.

Speaker — Hon. Randy Weekes
Premier — Hon. Scott Moe
Leader of the Opposition — Ryan Meili

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Belanger, Buckley — Athabasca (NDP)
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Weekes, Hon. Randy — Biggar-Sask Valley (SP)
Wilson, Nadine — Saskatchewan Rivers (SP)
Wotherspoon, Trent — Regina Rosemont (NDP)
Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)
Young, Aleana — Regina University (NDP)
Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

The Speaker: — On Saturday, April 10, 2021, the Government House Leader raised a point of order asserting that the Opposition House Leader used an unparliamentary expression by accusing members of, and I quote, “making stuff up.” I indicated I would review the proceedings. On page 369 of *Hansard* the Opposition House Leader is cited as saying, “We’ve gotten used to the Health minister making things up on the fly . . .”

This type of expression has been ruled out of order numerous times when used by members on both sides of the Chamber. I find the point of order well taken and ask the member to rise and withdraw and apologize.

I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw and apologize.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned citizens as it relates to the Regina airport and urging protection of our Regina airport. They wish to bring to attention the following: that the citizens of Saskatchewan are concerned with the potential closure of the control tower at the Regina International Airport. The final decision rests with the federal Minister of Transport. The loss of this aircraft control tower will have a devastating economic impact on the capital city and raise serious safety concerns. The airport industry has been one of the hardest hit during the pandemic and once we’re through this, the Regina International Airport will play a large part in the economic recovery of our province.

The prayer reads as follows:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the provincial government to call on the federal government to advise Nav Canada to reconsider its position on closing the airport traffic control tower at the Regina International Airport and to halt any final decisions until the global pandemic has subsided.

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon University.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure to present a petition again today calling for pay equity legislation. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday the Finance minister seemed to be confused about the difference between equal pay for equal work and pay equity. So allow me to clarify the difference for her benefit. Whereas equal pay for equal work refers to paying women and men the same amount for performing the exact same job, pay equity legislation requires employers to pay female-dominated jobs the same as male-dominated jobs when those jobs are of comparable value.

I’ll now read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to introduce pay equity legislation.

I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nav Canada is currently reviewing the air traffic control at Regina airport. Although it is a private company, the federal government has three elected members on the board of directors and the Minister of Transport has oversight in the fate of this tower. The aviation industry has been one of the hardest hit during COVID-19 but will play a vital role in the economic recovery of Saskatchewan.

I’ll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the federal government to advise Nav Canada to reconsider its position on closing the air traffic control tower at Regina International Airport and to halt any final decisions until the global pandemic has subsided.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the citizens of Regina and Pilot Butte. I do so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Ms. Mowat: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Please state your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, the minister opposite was just presenting a petition on the same topic as the member from Regina Rosemont. According to my reading of rule 16(3)(d), no more than one petition on one subject may be presented during a given period. I would ask that you review, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. But I’ve got to tell you, that is some cheap politics over

there, Mr. Speaker. We have on this side of the House been introducing this petition for the past five sitting days. They stand up, copy our petition, get up first, and then claim that somehow we can't introduce our petition. That is cheap, the very definition of cheap, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to that, I would say it relates to the standing orders. The intention is that government would not be able to introduce the same petitions on one side. Opposition can introduce three petitions on one side, but opposition and government can each introduce a similar petition on the same subject.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask if you could review that and again point out that is a definition of cheap politics.

The Speaker: — Thank you. I will review that and get back. Any more petitions?

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford.

First Research Chair in Deaf Education Named

Mr. Domotor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Joanne Weber, daughter of Ed and Lois Weber of Wilkie, has been named as the first-ever Research Chair in Deaf Education. The focus of her work and research, Mr. Speaker, is the impact of the arts on language and literacy outcomes for deaf children and youth.

Ms. Weber is profoundly deaf and says she was mainstreamed in regular education classes for most of her schooling. Following high school graduation, Ms. Weber attended the University of Saskatchewan where she obtained an Honours Bachelor of Arts degree in English and philosophy, as well as a Bachelor of Education and Ph.D. [Doctor of Philosophy] from the University of Regina.

Ms. Weber also was awarded the Governor General's Academic Gold Medal for her work in arts-based language and literacy intervention with deaf students.

Ms. Weber has taught at R.J.D. Williams Provincial School for the Deaf in Saskatoon and was also the coordinator of literacy in university programs at the North West Regional College. Most recently, Ms. Weber has taught a deaf education resource program at Winston Knoll Collegiate until recently accepting the offer of the Canada research council Chair at the University of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members of this Assembly join me in congratulating Ms. Weber on her appointment as Canada's first-ever Research Chair in Deaf Education.

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

Businesses Keep Employees and Patrons Safe

Ms. Ritchie: — miigwech, Mr. Speaker. We are now more than a year into the pandemic and so many businesses and people are struggling. I have many businesses in my constituency and a

large portion of them are on or near Broadway Avenue. These businesses, many of them small, independent businesses, fall under the umbrella of the Broadway Business Improvement District.

The BID [business improvement district] has done an amazing job of encouraging local neighbourhood restaurants to shop local through social media campaigns. These campaigns have encouraged people throughout Saskatchewan to shop local, and people are heeding the call. On any Saturday afternoon walking down Broadway, you can see the success of this campaign as people are lined up to enter many of these businesses.

Many of these local businesses have gone beyond the government regulations to keep not only their employees safe and secure, but also to make their patrons feel safe shopping with them. And it has paid off. Some implemented mask use before it was mandatory. Some have gone to appointment-only shopping. Others have limited the number of people shopping in their store at one time, and some have implemented new ways to enter and exit to improve the flow through their shopping space. Kudos to all businesses who are struggling to survive. Let's continue to show our support by shopping local. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moosomin.

Burger Week in Moosomin Shows Community Spirit

Mr. Bonk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The community of Moosomin recently showed just what can happen when people get creative and come out in force to support local businesses. Because their usual way of marking Canadian Ag Day couldn't happen this year due to COVID, Sharpe's Soil Services decided to ask local restaurants in the Moosomin area to make a special all-Canadian burger for a local burger week in February to help bring awareness to Canadian agriculture. The result was a burger-buying frenzy that no one anticipated.

Sharpe's Moosomin branch manager, Hayley Senkowski, and the local staff came up with the idea and recruited restaurants to take part. And the local newspaper, the Moosomin *World-Spectator*, helped promote the event.

Mr. Speaker, seven area restaurants participated, and a grand total of 2,443 all-Canadian burgers were sold that week. The event was literally the talk of the town as everyone in Moosomin discussed which burgers they were going to try next and compared the unique burger creations. More burgers were sold each day that the promotion continued.

"I expected it to be a fun thing to do in town and to raise some awareness around where our food comes from," Hayley Senkowski told the *World Spectator*. "I hoped it would catch on and people would see it and want to take part, but I didn't expect it to be as big as it was," she said. Each customer who tried one of these burgers could enter to win 500 chamber of commerce Moosomin Bucks.

I'm proud of the constituents in the community of Moosomin. This event helped promote Canadian agriculture products, helped support local businesses, provided some excitement in the time of COVID, and showed real Saskatchewan community spirit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Nurse Creates Art to Support Mental Health

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the leadership of Shawn Toovey. Shawn is a registered nurse of 25 years who's been working in the St. Paul's Hospital ICU [intensive care unit] during the pandemic. He began experiencing burnout a few years ago, and to ease the burnout, he turned to medication, physical exercise, and eventually art.

Shawn saw an opportunity to repurpose materials to create pandemic-inspired works of art. With the help of his co-workers, they collected vaccine vial caps, unused pieces of ventilators, clean syringes, and plastics that would normally be tossed into the trash.

Shawn says that his art represents the struggle of health care professionals and their ability to help in a great time of need. It represents the battle of COVID-19 and how it has taken a toll on everyone's mental health. His latest piece is a red heart on a white background and speaks of courage and hope.

Shawn took action and used his art to raise over \$12,000 for the Saskatchewan division of the Canadian Mental Health Association. We know mental health challenges have been exacerbated by the pandemic, and that access to mental health care is very difficult to get at the best of times. Shawn's art represents our ongoing fight, but it also represents our future of strength, hope, and prosperity.

I ask all members to join me in acknowledging Shawn Toovey and all other front-line health care workers for their commitment to keeping us safe.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Kelvington-Wadena.

Constituents of Kelvington-Wadena Persevere Despite Pandemic

Mr. Nerlien: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A year after Saskatchewan confirmed its first case of COVID-19, the global health pandemic remains a top priority for our government, taking action to support businesses, workers, families, and communities. The pandemic has turned our lives upside down and created challenges we never could have imagined. However our residents continue to adapt, persevere, and support each other.

Mr. Speaker, I'm reminded by how the heart-warming hospitality of the Wadena Curling Club helped Saskatchewan's Team Dunstone prepare for the Brier by giving them exclusive use of the rink.

I'm reminded of the great work by volunteers, donors, and supportive community businesses creating Klinger's Trail at Marean Lake, in memory of Kleon Swan — truly a legacy project.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to congratulate Lieutenant General Wayne Eyre, a former Wadena resident who was recently

appointed as Canada's new acting chief of defence staff; Zach Schrader, owner-operator of Mid Prairie Truck & Trailer, a large repair shop which recently opened in Foam Lake; and 73-year-old Eric Olafson of Wynyard, who recently received his Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology from the University of Saskatchewan.

Whether pursuing a personal goal or passion, or pulling together to build stronger, more connected communities, Saskatchewan's greatest strength is, today and has always been, its people, and not even a global health pandemic can put a stop to that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Carlton.

[13:45]

Cigar Lake Mine Resumes Production

Mr. Hargrave: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week Cameco announced its plan to restart production in April at the Cigar Lake uranium mine located in Northern Saskatchewan.

Back in December, operations were temporarily suspended due to COVID-19. Since then, Cameco has been working alongside the Saskatchewan Health Authority to implement several enhanced safety protocols to bring its employees safely back to the mine. This includes increased distancing and sanitation in common areas and medical-grade masks for all workers. The vaccine rollout plan has also played a major role in having the mine reopen as it has given Cameco and its workers the confidence that they can continue to operate safely.

Mr. Speaker, 120 employees and contractors have been operating the mine since production was suspended back in December. Now the total workforce will increase to 640. This is significant, and I'm encouraged to see Saskatchewan people getting back to the job site in a safe and responsible way. As production resumes, Cameco will closely monitor their employees' health and safety as well as the successful vaccine rollout, as it helps us move past the pandemic and get more people back to work.

Mr. Speaker, I now ask all members to please join me in wishing Cameco well as they resume production at the Cigar Lake mine. Thank you.

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

COVID-19 Vaccination Numbers

Mr. Friesen: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan continues to lead the country in getting our residents vaccinated. It's the shot in our arm our province needs. Our dedicated health care workers have now put nearly 300,000 of those shots into the arms of Saskatchewan people — over 56,000 in just the last five days. That's not only the fastest rate in Canada, Mr. Speaker, it's one of the fastest rates of vaccination in the world over the past few days.

We have now passed the 50/50 threshold. More than 50 per cent of all Saskatchewan residents over 50 have received at least their

first shot. The Regina drive-through is now open to ages 50 to 54. Appointments are open to everyone in the far North at ages 50 and older, and to everyone 55 and older everywhere else.

We continue to prioritize health care workers, extremely clinically vulnerable individuals, long-term care, and group homes. I got my shot this past weekend at the Regina drive-through, and I want to thank everyone working there and at all the other clinics throughout the weekend to get as many people as possible vaccinated.

Mr. Speaker, vaccinations work. The road to the end of the pandemic runs through vaccination clinics, and we are working very hard to get everyone in Saskatchewan on that road very soon. Let's keep doing our part, follow the public health orders, and when it's your turn, roll up your sleeve and stick it to COVID.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Government Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well it's April, but it looks like January out there. And it's not just the weather; sadly it's our COVID numbers as well. January, when the Premier tried to tell everyone that things were going really well, and he's doing the same thing now. But let's look at the reality, Mr. Speaker. Let's look at Saskatoon. Since the beginning of March, Saskatoon's seven-day new case average has risen 165 per cent, their active cases are up 130 per cent, the test positivity rate has more than doubled, and over 50 per cent of the new cases are variants of concern, Mr. Speaker.

The fact is the Premier had a chance in November, when we were getting hit hard by the second wave, to take decisive action. But he refused to do so, and so we had a terrible second wave with hundreds dying that could have been avoided, Mr. Speaker. He had the chance in March, as the variants began to spread, to take decisive action, and he refused to do so. And the third wave is hitting us hard. Cases and deaths are climbing. Another 300 cases today, Mr. Speaker. How many times does this Premier have to fail Saskatchewan people before he learns the lesson and takes action before it's too late?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is no surprise the members opposite would be asking for a circuit breaker time and a time again. I think there are around 30 times over the course of the last number of months that they've asked for a circuit breaker, Mr. Speaker. This government has taken a different approach. We've taken a measured and balanced approach. We've seen other areas that have performed a circuit breaker, Mr. Speaker. In some cases they even have higher rates than Saskatchewan does here today.

We've also taken the approach, in addition to being measured and protecting lives and livelihoods balanced in our communities, Mr. Speaker, we've taken the approach of expediting our vaccine rollout and ensuring that we have one of the most robust vaccine rollouts here in the nation. And we do.

In fact we continue to lead the nation. We heard the member's statement earlier, where Saskatchewan does continue to lead the nation. I believe we're just under 300,000 vaccines have been delivered to Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker.

And the only thing holding up the capacity, the capacity that we have in our appointment-based system, our drive-through system . . . and very shortly if we can continue to receive vaccines, we will add to that the pharmaceutical capacity that we have across the province. Mr. Speaker, we can deliver many more vaccines than we even are today to Saskatchewan people. All we need is to receive them from the federal government.

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

Mr. Meili: — The Premier's right. We asked for action many times. If he'd acted seriously even once, far more people would be alive today, far fewer people would have gotten sick — even once, Mr. Speaker. But he never did.

And at last week's physician town hall, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan doctors were given stark evidence about exactly what's going on with the variants of concern due to this Premier's failure to protect Saskatchewan families. That presentation, which was delivered before the two 300-plus case days we saw on the weekend, the 300 new cases we saw today — delivered before that, Mr. Speaker — that's where doctors learned that Saskatchewan has continued to lead the country in new cases for weeks on end, that we are growing exponentially here in the province in rates of the virus.

The testing rates are too low in rural Saskatchewan. Variants of concern are rising and rising. Severity is increasing. Hospitalizations and ICU admissions are increasing, and the people who are getting admitted are sicker and younger, Mr. Speaker. No wonder doctors keep speaking up and calling for action. But the Premier doesn't listen.

And why the different stories, Mr. Speaker? Why does the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] tell doctors the truth while the Premier tries to spin a fairy tale about a very different story, Mr. Speaker? Will the Premier commit today to listening to front-line workers and finally getting this third wave under control?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, we're going to do better than that. We're going to vaccinate the front-line workers here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We released a news release here this morning where we are going to use our mobile capacity to ensure that we can provide those vaccines to our police, to our firefighters, as well as our public health inspectors. Upon receiving the vaccines in our pharmacies — those pharmacies that are associated with large grocery stores, Mr. Speaker, with many, many front-line workers — we're going to ask those pharmacies to vaccinate their front-line staff in those facilities.

And, Mr. Speaker, we did prioritize in phase 1 just over 40,000 health care workers here across the province. We had an uptake of just over 27,000. About 68 per cent of health care workers went and received their vaccine, which leaves about 13,000 unallocated good doses, which is about the amount of the remaining health care workers that were not in that phase 1. And

so we're going to prioritize them, Mr. Speaker. And so we're going to vaccinate front-line health care workers here without sacrificing, without sacrificing the nation-leading vaccination capacity that we already have in place, Mr. Speaker.

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

COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week over 300 doctors signed a letter calling for action on COVID-19. They called for action to change the vaccine rollout so that it actually follows the science and the national guidelines. And I'll say this, Mr. Speaker, at the beginning the Premier, the government, they got this right. They prioritized long-term care residents, those who were at highest risk of death. That was the right call, Mr. Speaker.

But then, then the Premier got it in his head that he knew better, and that he didn't have to listen to the national guidelines or the SHA expert panel. He decided he knew better and he was going to do it his own way, Mr. Speaker. And now here we are weeks into a third wave, hundreds of cases a day, far more people sick and dying, and only now do we see even a small amount of willingness to change the vaccine rollout and finally get it right, Mr. Speaker. We'll see whether he actually does.

But we have to understand, Mr. Speaker, as the health officers have said, as the doctors have said, vaccines are key but they are not the whole story. When will we see a true, robust response to the realities of the third wave that are filling up our hospitals?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I've said many times, in this province we have some of the most robust health measures that have been in place for some period of time, Mr. Speaker. We've combined that with the nation-leading vaccination strategy that we have in place.

In fact that strategy, that effort, Mr. Speaker, the effort of our front-line health care workers, has provided us with the opportunity now in Saskatchewan to have two-thirds of all of our residents over 60 have now received the vaccine as well as 50 per cent of those folks over the age of 50.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to that very large, nation-leading capacity of delivering vaccines to Saskatchewan people — and we can deliver more if we can receive them from the federal government — we are now prioritizing a number of front-line health care workers with our mobile capacity to ensure that we're preserving that nation-leading capacity, Mr. Speaker.

We are and will continue to lead the nation in delivering vaccines to Saskatchewan people. As a couple of members in this House have now said, all roads out of this pandemic, Mr. Speaker, all roads out of this pandemic lead through one of these vaccination clinics.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, the Health minister has been bending over backwards trying to sell his age-based vaccine plan. Meanwhile we've learned that some but not all police officers in Regina were vaccinated over the weekend. This is good news for these front-line essential workers who have been exposed to great risk. But we were also told that they were no longer eligible, that some correction workers got the shot, but also some RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] who travelled into town were turned away.

This is yet another example of this government's absolutely chaotic vaccine rollout plan, so can the minister clarify? How on earth did the minister decide that some but not all Regina police officers should get their shots? Will this be included in an updated vaccine rollout plan as we've been calling for, for days? Don't tell me we're back to drawing names from hats.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'm not sure what they're referring to as this chaotic plan where we're leading the country. How many times do we have to say that? I said it two or three times on the weekend when we were here, Mr. Speaker, on Saturday. We're leading the country. We did it age-based because that's where we saw the highest attack of COVID.

Would the opposition suggest that I stop vaccinating . . . I shouldn't have done the 70-year-olds and the 60-year-olds, Mr. Speaker? To go and start targeting groups and slow everything down? Is that what they're suggesting, that we should have done the seniors, the ones that built this province, Mr. Speaker, to take care of them first?

Mr. Speaker, as the Premier has outlined, as was outlined in the member's statement, we are hitting that magic mark of 50 per cent over the age of 50 are done in this province. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because we have a mass vaccination program with clinics. We've complemented that with drive-through. We've complemented that in the city of Regina with walk-in clinics, people that don't have access to a vehicle, Mr. Speaker. We're going to start complementing that very soon with our pharmacies to make sure that we continue to lead this country in vaccine rollout. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, the Health minister keeps bringing up, bragging about his vaccine plan, but he never mentions that we lead the nation in COVID cases. He's like a hockey coach bragging about his goalie's stats, but they're losing every game, Mr. Speaker. This minister has hung his hat on the vaccine rollout as the only way out of the pandemic.

On the other hand, the SHA is telling physicians, "Vaccination will not fix the problem in the short term." This is especially true if the government continues to mess this up and sticks to a plan that doesn't target those at the greatest risk of illness and death. There's no need for confusion and chaos. Will the minister commit to following the NACI [National Advisory Committee on Immunization] guidelines and start vaccinating high-risk essential workers before it's too late?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'd like to point the opposition to the internet to be able to find our news release where we just announced all this. The Premier just spoke about what we're doing to make sure that we're vaccinating people. When somebody comes into a grocery store, Mr. Speaker, and that grocery store has a pharmacy . . . When that pharmacy gets their vaccines, they're going to do their staff first.

Mr. Speaker, we did do police officers over the weekend. We had a very slow time in our drive-through. Instead of closing down that drive-through, Mr. Speaker, we thought we would maximize that, and we called on the Regina police to be able to send some members out that were front line, to be able to protect them. So we filled up our drive-through.

[14:00]

I'm not sure why the members opposite are complaining about us filling up our drive-through, complaining about us leading the country, complaining that our vaccine program is ad hoc, Mr. Speaker, when we continue to lead the country. Maybe they should get on board with the rest of Saskatchewan and understand that we are leading our country and we're doing a fabulous job. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, they're selectively following the NACI guidelines sometimes. And there is still a tremendous lack of clarity in what the plan is here. There's no doubt teachers across the province returning to crowded classrooms today are among those at greatest risk. Despite working in one of the only places hundreds of people still gather, where dozens of outbreaks have been reported, educators still have no idea when they will be protected.

A letter from over 300 physicians recommends revising the plan and to prioritize school staff. Will the minister listen to the expert? Will he commit to following the guidelines and revise the plan to include teachers and other front-line essential workers?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are following the national guidelines with the advice of Dr. Shahab, our leading doctor in this province, Mr. Speaker, who is continuously advising us that the most patients that we saw and the highest fatalities that we saw were in our seniors. We have been working with that, going down those age sequencing.

As far as the schools, Mr. Speaker, I think the educators have done an absolutely fabulous job in being able to get their students into a safe place, Mr. Speaker. We have provided kits for them to be able to . . . testing kits that they can test themselves and their students. But, Mr. Speaker, the educators out there are doing a great job in being able to do this.

And is the opposition saying that the government should step over the local school authorities to make sure that we're dictating everything that happens in the local? I'm not sure what they're

asking us to do, Mr. Speaker. Are they saying that the school boards can't make this decision on a local level and that the provincial government should make it? The schools have the ability to make the decisions locally that's going to best suit their interests. And we've seen a lot of schools that have been supporting our vaccine rollout. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina University.

Job Creation and Management of Provincial Economy

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another shambolic attempt at an answer from the man with the ever-changing plan.

Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Alberta, Nova Scotia, British Columbia, and the great state of Newfoundland and Labrador — these are provinces getting more people to work than Saskatchewan. And it's not even close, Mr. Speaker. This jobs minister has the worst jobs number in the country, twice as poor as our neighbours in Alberta and Manitoba — thousands out of work, thousands getting sick every week.

Mr. Speaker, will the worst jobs minister in Canada by the numbers, stay in his lane, stop pointing fingers, and get both hands on the wheel?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Oh my goodness. Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I'd just correct the record as we begin the answer with regard to the preamble — maybe not in the way that's expected, — but it's actually the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite also referenced Quebec, which was very interesting as to why she would reference Quebec first of all, Mr. Speaker.

But what we have seen over the course of the last week, with regard to the economy and their views on the economy, we have seen a pattern of reckless and extreme statements from the members opposite in their budget replies, Mr. Speaker. And I would point to a couple specifically. And there's many; there's a whole list of them. I'm going to point to a couple, though, in this response, and I hope to get to a few more afterwards.

The member for Nutana, a new member, got up, gave her speech supporting the Trudeau carbon tax, of course, which is standard fare for the members opposite but went even further, Mr. Speaker. She called for a retroactive carbon tax and reparations, which is even further, I think, than their friend Justin Trudeau went.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Regina University. There's a whole bunch of great stuff with the Regina University, the member that asked that question, who began by launching a reprehensible attack on our professional public servants, Mr. Speaker. She should apologize right now for that.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina University.

Ms. A. Young: — Another non-answer, Mr. Speaker, and that

economic denialism is at best out of touch, and at worst irresponsible and incompetent. And speaking of out of touch, on Thursday it was pretty shocking to see the member opposite celebrating the high construction costs borne by the people of Saskatchewan. This is a government with no plan for jobs, no plan for COVID, and it is no wonder Saskatchewan is in last place.

So again, Mr. Speaker, here are the facts: 300,000 new jobs added in the rest of Canada and not a single one, not one added here at home; and nearly 25,000 people out of work and absolutely no acknowledgment from this minister. So by the numbers, will this jobs minister, the worst in the country, offer the people of Saskatchewan something, anything?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'm happy to put my record of 10 years as economic minister in this government up against anything they had over a 10-year period of time. But once again the member opposite had an opportunity to apologize for her reprehensible attack on our public service, which is becoming a pattern, I may add, Mr. Speaker, with that member. She refused to do so.

And she doubled down just in that question again on her complete and utter lack of understanding of the Saskatchewan economy as it relates to the forestry sector. Complaining about the fact that our lumber companies, our forestry companies are doing very well right now, Mr. Speaker, an industry that employs 8,000 people across this province, that is as healthy as it has ever been, Mr. Speaker. She stands up and says no, they're doing too good; you need to do something about it; it's no good.

It shows once again those members opposite have zero credibility on the economy. Those members opposite have zero credibility with our business community. And, Mr. Speaker, it's why they have virtually zero seats opposite.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina University.

Ms. A. Young: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's great that the member opposite, who hasn't had a real job in nearly 20 years, is so comfortable. But meanwhile there are nearly 25,000 people who do not have a job. And under this minister's watch — he's quick to cite his record — this province has gone from being a have province to a have-not. So, Mr. Speaker, when I read what the minister had to say last week when pressed on these devastating job numbers, he just rambled about the past and blue-skied about the future.

But again, since just last month 1,500 fewer jobs in forestry, mining, and the energy sector; 1,300 fewer in food and hospitality; no jobs plan; and nothing for women. The worst of both worlds, Mr. Speaker, with many thanks again to, by the numbers, the worst jobs minister in Canada. So now that he's landed us in last place, when will we finally see a jobs plan from this government?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr.

Speaker. I for one believe that service to your constituents and to your community is an honourable calling, and it's something that I think Al Blakeney, for example, wrote an entire book on it. And I wonder what she has to say to her colleague from Athabasca who's served in this House for nearly 30 years, Mr. Speaker. I wonder what she has to say to him. But, Mr. Speaker, I do believe it is an honourable calling, and folks here are doing a real job in serving their constituents and their province.

But, Mr. Speaker, once again it shows and underlines the fact that the NDP [New Democratic Party] know nothing about the economy. Their only position, Mr. Speaker, has been a complete lockdown of the economy — the Leader of the Opposition again doubled down on that today — that would put 80,000 people out of work tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, we have taken an approach that has balanced lives and livelihoods. We have had one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country over the course of the last year. The fact of the matter is that we have the second-lowest female unemployment rate in Canada right now, Mr. Speaker, and the fourth-lowest unemployment rate in the country. That's something we're going to continue with. And if it were up to them, Mr. Speaker, we would have the highest unemployment rate in the country which was the case when they were government.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, we're talking about the worst jobs record in Canada. We're talking about the reality that many people are living. And we have a jobs minister who comes to his feet huffing and puffing like some sort of hallway monitor, Mr. Speaker. We need a jobs minister in this province. We need a jobs plan. People are sick and tired of that out-of-touch minister and the Sask Party letting them down. That minister failed to come up with a jobs plan in this budget, all while we have the worst record on jobs in this country.

There's so much more this government could be doing to kick-start our economy and to get people back to work. And that starts with undoing the damage of their reckless decision to impose the PST [provincial sales tax] onto construction labour, the epitome of a job-killing tax. Why won't the Sask Party finally admit that this was a disastrous mistake and remove the PST from construction labour to get people back to work and to start digging us out of last place when it comes to jobs creation?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. And according to the member for Regina University, that member hasn't had a real job in 14 years, huffing and puffing and ranting and raving from his seat in opposition. Now, I would add, Mr. Speaker, the longest-serving member of that party ever who has never served in government. So congratulations to the member for Rosemont.

Mr. Speaker, once again though, we see an opposition opposite that has no credibility on the economy. This was a party, when they were in government — and the member for Athabasca who's been here for 30 years without a job would be able to attest

to that — who had the worst job creation record in the entirety of Canada over a 16-year period of time.

Mr. Speaker, we have gone through a global pandemic. And despite going through a global pandemic, over the course of our time in government, have created nearly 60,000 jobs, Mr. Speaker. That is a record that we are proud of. We are going to continue to work hard to make sure that we get back the jobs that we lost. But I can tell you how you would guarantee that they never come back: that is if those members ever had the chance to sit over here, which we know they never will.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, we're talking about the livelihoods of Saskatchewan people. We're talking about our economy. We're talking about the worst jobs record in Canada, an incredible hardship for households all across Saskatchewan. And that government is ignoring all the signs and won't change course.

We have some of the worst COVID rates in the country, but they won't fix their failing plan. We have the worst jobs numbers in the country, but they won't admit their mistakes. Thousands are leaving our province, but this government keeps piling on taxes and shipping out jobs. They've become what they used to pretend to hate, Mr. Speaker.

Why won't the Sask Party finally admit it was a mistake to impose the PST on construction labour, reverse course, and help people and keep jobs here in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Mr. Speaker, this is what I mean by picking a lane. The member from Nutana gets up in her member's statement and talks about all the great jobs on Broadway, which is a wonderful thing, Mr. Speaker, none of which would exist if it were up to the Leader of the Opposition because he would shut them all down. Mr. Speaker, these members opposite who have no credibility on the economy.

We have put in place programs of support for businesses through this pandemic that have led the country, that have been copied nationally, Mr. Speaker. And because of that we have very strong support from the business community according to the CFIB [Canadian Federation of Independent Business], some of the strongest support in the entire country.

Mr. Speaker, those members opposite have had one policy on the economy — shut it down. That has not been the approach on this side of the House. It's been . . . Again, they're heckling from their seats, Mr. Speaker.

We saw on the weekend again, the Leader of the Opposition speaking at the NDP convention, supporting his really good buddy Jagmeet Singh, opposed to pipelines, wants to shut down the energy sector. That's why, again, Mr. Speaker, when the public of this province had a chance, they put them over there in a little corner and the rest of the Chamber is filled up by this government.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for SaskTel.

SaskTel Waives Data Overages

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to announce that in an effort to assist Saskatchewan residents with online learning or working remotely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, SaskTel will waive data overage charges starting today, April 12th, and running until June 30th.

Our government understands the importance of staying connected during these trying times. It has been a stressful year and waiving data overages will alleviate the worry of data usage for SaskTel customers until the end of the school year. With an increasing number of people working and studying from home, bandwidth and data use may be stretched thin. SaskTel customers can now use as much data as needed during this time with the peace of mind of having no additional fees or throttling of data. With customers not having to be concerned about how their data is being used, downloads, browsing, video conferencing, and streaming can be done to keep the whole family connected.

[14:15]

This is not the first time that SaskTel has supported the people of this province with such a program. In March of last year as the world reeled in the initial stages of the global pandemic, SaskTel waived data charges for more than two months in order to support the residents of Saskatchewan as they transitioned to learning, working, and socializing online.

COVID-19 has necessitated many long months of travel restrictions and social distancing. This has kept millions of Canadians from seeing their friends and family in person. Establishing non-physical connections and keeping family traditions alive even if they now must happen virtually — this is something that is important for everyone's happiness and well-being.

With this in mind, over the holiday season in December and January, SaskTel once again waived data charges. At a time when families would normally have been gathering in person, SaskTel went and did what they could do to assist Saskatchewan people in connecting with their loved ones remotely.

This announcement comes as Saskatchewan residents are already enjoying the lowest utility expenses in all of Canada during one of the most challenging times in history. When compared to other provinces, Saskatchewan's total utility expenses for 2021 are expected to rank the lowest in the country.

In addition to the waiver of data overage charges from SaskTel, customers of SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] will begin receiving rebate cheques in May. These cheques will provide a rebate of approximately \$285 per vehicle. Furthermore Saskatchewan customers are currently enjoying the Saskatchewan economic recovery rebate, which provides a 10 per cent bill reduction. This will equate to average savings of \$131 per customer this year.

Mr. Speaker, these programs will help Saskatchewan people and put them in a position to take advantage of future growth in Saskatchewan as we work together to move beyond this pandemic. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the minister as well for providing the statement in advance of the sitting here today. Certainly what we see here today is a demonstration of the incredible value of our Crown corporations within Saskatchewan. Certainly with respect to SaskTel, an incredible technology company and something we're all so proud of, this is a very important measure to the people of Saskatchewan. This is something that we've called for, that we've celebrated, and that we recognize is important to the people of the province, and I appreciate the statement on it here today.

Certainly learning during a time of a pandemic is an incredible challenge for so many families. It puts on full display the digital divide that is all too real for many across Saskatchewan. That digital divide extends to things like the actual access to a device or a laptop, Mr. Speaker. There's a real inequity on these fronts and real challenges when we're talking about things like online learning. It also highlights through this last year the importance of connectivity to Saskatchewan. And I know this is a very important measure to lift the data cap and to suspend data overages and the charges that accompany that, Mr. Speaker. But it's a reminder of why it's so important that we do all we can to support the efforts of SaskTel to connect all of Saskatchewan.

I think of the member from Cumberland, in through the North, and the limited access to the internet, Mr. Speaker. And I think of rural Saskatchewan, so many small towns and First Nations and farms, Mr. Speaker, that simply don't have access to the internet in the way that they need at this time in our province's history, and how important that is moving forward.

The difference between us and the government on this front is that we're calling for us to put our money where our mouth is, Mr. Speaker, that we recognize the incredible strength in SaskTel but we need to make sure the capital is there to invest to connect Saskatchewan. Which is why we're pushing for a reduction in the dividend from SaskTel to be able to be allocated directly to this purpose, to connect Saskatchewan, something that could be truly transformational for the people of our province.

With respect to the mention of the rebate from SGI, another exceptional Crown corporation, this is something of course, Mr. Speaker, that we've called for as the official opposition. We ran on this in the election, calling for a rebate and a reduction in rates, Mr. Speaker, and this is an important measure. I would note that the Auto Fund is still quite a bit in surplus, Mr. Speaker, with significant dollars there, Mr. Speaker. And government should continue to go further and work with the rate review panel to look to reduce rates and make insurance even more affordable for Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker.

And I guess I would just close in saying that, you know, our Crowns are so important to Saskatchewan people — SaskPower, SaskTel, SGI. We see that here today, Mr. Speaker, and I find it

just . . . It's mind-blowing to think that just a few years ago, Mr. Speaker, all that was being put at risk by a reckless Sask Party government that had broken their word with the people of Saskatchewan, at once promising that our Crowns would be safe, only to be re-elected with a big majority and then to be in negotiations looking to sell off things like SaskTel and SGI, our valued Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker.

Thank goodness the people of Saskatchewan rose up, fought back to protect our Crown corporations. And my assurance to the people of Saskatchewan is our Crowns are as relevant as ever, more important than ever to the future of Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan New Democrats are committed to those Crowns and using them for the benefit of Saskatchewan people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 26 — *The Police (Serious Incident Response Team) Amendment Act, 2021*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 26, *The Police (Serious Incident Response Team) Amendment Act, 2021* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 26 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time? Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

Bill No. 27 — *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2021*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 27, *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2021*, be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 27 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Next sitting.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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. Ms. Harpauer that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment to main motion moved by Mr. Wotherspoon.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon University.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I began my speech on Saturday, I had spoken about the deficit as well as the astronomical debt this government has amassed. I also spoke about what this government had to show for that debt or, rather, what it didn't have to show for it, and some of the broader areas that this budget fails to support.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to address in greater detail the impact of this budget on my critic portfolios. For the Status of Women, it is of course disappointing but not surprising to see that this budget did not allocate any additional funding to the Status of Women office. I also see that the Status of Women has now bizarrely been shuffled under the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport. I'm left to wonder, would women be considered a park, a culture, or a sport, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, we know that the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on women. This impact is sure to have long-term effects, not just for women's employment, education, and advancement, but for a thriving economy and society. So where is this government's plan for a recovery for women, Mr. Speaker? In fact, we're left searching for their supports for women at all.

Where is this government's plan to address violence against women? Mr. Speaker, a national report released last month concluded that Saskatchewan had the second-highest rate of killings of women and girls in 2020, second only to Nova Scotia which had a mass shooting. Nearly 10 per cent of women and girls killed in Canada in 2020 were from Saskatchewan, despite Saskatchewan women representing only 3 per cent of women in Canada.

Where is this government's concern for Indigenous women in our province, Mr. Speaker? What actions have been taken to address the 231 Calls for Justice by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls? Where are the commitments to address the fact that we have nearly double the national rate of sexual assaults in Saskatchewan? Women are tired of clenching fistfuls of keys when they're out past dark, Mr. Speaker.

Where's our school curriculum around consent? Where's the funding for women's shelters, which are forced to turn away thousands of desperate women and children fleeing violence each and every year for lack of beds? Where is the universal child care that women so desperately need? And where, Mr. Speaker, is our pay equity legislation?

It is often said that education is the great leveller in society, but with some of the highest tuition fees in the country, achieving a post-secondary education in Saskatchewan has become out of reach for far too many, Mr. Speaker. I spoke of the students who are holding down two to three jobs while trying to pay for their schooling, Mr. Speaker, just so they have enough food to eat. As we know, food bank usage by students is out of control. There has also been a complete lack of adequate student supports during the pandemic, Mr. Speaker, especially for international students.

I was happy to see stable, multi-year funding in this budget, which will allow post-secondary institutions to plan much more effectively, but still the increases we have seen in the budget for Advanced Education by no means undo the damage from the cuts to post-secondary education that we saw from this government in 2017. These increases will not cover the cost of inflation, nor will they cover increases in staffing costs. And sadly we all know who will bear the burden of these shortfalls, Mr. Speaker. It will be the students who will pay for the underfunding of post-secondary education through ever-rising tuition fees.

Mr. Speaker, there are of course many facets to innovation and it was good to see some increases here, but seeing as we're in the middle of a climate emergency which this government seems oblivious to, I will confine my remarks to innovation in climate policy.

Here in Saskatchewan it is imperative that we diversify our economy. No small part of the reason for the deficit and record debt we are facing is this government's naive projections around oil prices. Rather than being the champion of oil and gas workers that this government pretends to be, they are in reality failing these workers by refusing to acknowledge the writing on the wall, Mr. Speaker. The world is moving away from oil and gas. Every day this government spends refusing to acknowledge this inevitable reality will only make the shift for workers in oil and gas all the more painful.

If this government truly cared about the plight of oil and gas workers, they would make the necessary investments in innovation that would allow them to implement successful policies to create green jobs, retrain workers, and get to work reducing our emissions through ambitious investments into renewable energy. Sadly, this government would rather grandstand and posture like schoolyard bullies, picking unwinnable and costly fights with the federal government, and squandering precious time and public dollars.

Having all but put a stake through the heart of the solar industry in this province, now we see this government disincentivizing people from making the switch to electric vehicles with their new tax on EV [electric vehicle] owners. With only 400 electric vehicle owners in Saskatchewan, amounting to less than one per cent of provincial vehicle ownership, this government's new tax on EVs will bring in a grand total of \$60,000, Mr. Speaker. How much road can you even pave with \$60,000, Mr. Speaker? But it

wasn't really about the revenue, was it?

Where are the purchase incentives or just literally any progressive policy to help the people of this province make the shift to environmentally responsible transportation? This latest move is completely unsurprising, coming from a government that has no policy whatsoever to reduce transportation emissions. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this latest move is entirely consistent with a government that we have seen time and time again shirking their responsibility to lower our greenhouse gas emissions, which remain the highest per capita in all of Canada. This government is setting our province up for failure by refusing to diversify our economy in innovative ways.

[14:30]

Mr. Speaker, as associate critic for Labour, I will say that I was glad to see improvements being made in the budget to OH & S [occupational health and safety]. But there were so many things missing in this budget for workers. This budget put forward no jobs plan, following a year where 23,000 people have had their jobs wiped out in Saskatchewan. The labour force survey released just recently has showed that Saskatchewan has the worst jobs record of any province in Canada. This budget failed to provide the paid sick days that are so desperately needed for workers in this province, and it does nothing for so many workers who are stuck making the lowest minimum wage in all of Canada — a poverty wage.

This budget does not provide decent wage top-ups for front-line workers, who this government has referred to over and over as heroes. Well talk is cheap, Mr. Speaker. It's time for this government to show tangible recognition for the sacrifices our front-line workers continue to make.

For all of these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I am unable to support the budget motion. I will instead be supporting the amendment moved by the member for Regina Rosemont and seconded by the member for Regina Lakeview. With that I conclude my remarks, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. A. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to start by acknowledging that today we are on Treaty 4 territory and homeland of the Métis people. I am honoured and privileged to stand before you in this Assembly and enter into this budget debate as the representative for the citizens of Prince Albert Northcote.

Prince Albert Northcote is on Treaty 6 territory and lies at the north end of the city of Prince Albert, along the banks of the North Saskatchewan River. Our population is very diverse. Many new Canadians who saw opportunities in Saskatchewan have chosen to make Prince Albert their permanent residence. Métis and Indigenous people are founding members of our community, along with people of multiple ethnic backgrounds, the young and the aged, and people of all economic status reside in our constituency.

Mr. Speaker, although we may have many differing ideologies and perceptions in this House, the one thing that I have heard

from both sides here is the importance of our families. I believe that we can agree that we are all here today because of the supports of our families that allow us to follow our dreams and our sense of duty to our communities, to our families, and to our province.

Our families realize that commitment to public office comes with sacrifices of time, energy, and missing out on family events. I know I would like to thank my mom and dad and my three sons and their families for their support and understanding. I don't see them much these days, especially my sons and their families in Alberta, and COVID-19 has further complicated this. But never, the last time I saw my family in Alberta, did I think a year would pass without physically being able to get together.

But I can say, thank goodness for technology. My four-year-old grandson FaceTimes me all on his own. We have many virtual adventures, you know, and it's amazing where a four-year-old's imagination can take you with just an iPad and a blanket. But it doesn't replace that hug and seeing that smile in person.

Mr. Speaker, there are some people I would like to recognize. I would like to thank my two constituency assistants, Patt Ganton and Debra Taylor. We are all new to the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] world, but both these ladies are fast learners and have jumped right in. Patt is great on the phones. She is always kind and caring and follows up with the many constituents who have called, just to make sure they are managing okay. Debra, who recently joined our team, completes the balance for our office. She is very detail oriented and does a great job of keeping us organized. They complement each other very well and make a strong Northcote team.

Mr. Speaker, I echo the words of other new MLAs and send a huge thank you out to all the people in the departments who work in this building. They have been so polite, considerate, and are so knowledgeable. I am sure they get asked the same questions multiple times, but they always answer with patience and a smile.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank everyone in our caucus office and the ministers' offices for their patience and helpfulness and making us feel so welcomed. And thank you to the caucus Chair and our Whip for their knowledge, hard work, and keeping us on track.

Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member from Prince Albert Carlton and his assistant, Joy, and the member from Saskatchewan Rivers and her assistant, Marcus, for their help and support. We are fortunate to have these experienced veterans close at hand.

COVID-19 has created many challenges and hardships for many, Mr. Speaker. I offer my condolences to everyone who has lost loved ones due to COVID-19. This is especially difficult for these families. Thank you to all the front-line workers for your dedication and for going to work every day to care for the sick and vulnerable to keep the people of Saskatchewan safe to educate our children, and to provide us with the goods and services necessary to carry on with our lives.

I would also like to thank Dr. Shahab and his team, the Premier, our ministers of Health, and the SHA and their staff for their hard work and guidance throughout this pandemic. It's not been an

easy job.

To the people of Saskatchewan, I know we're tired. We're all tired of COVID-19. But thank you for your patience, for following health guidelines and getting your vaccine when it's your turn. The vaccine is the way out of this pandemic, so when your turn comes around, stick it to COVID.

There is one more group I would like to acknowledge, Mr. Speaker. There has been much discussion regarding the status of women during this session. And women have historically, and continue to be, a strength within the Saskatchewan Party caucus. I would like to acknowledge these strong and talented women. June Draude, former MLA for Kelvington, blazed the trail and was one of the original founding members of the Saskatchewan Party and the only female in the party initially. She was later joined by Doreen Eagles, Joceline Schriemer, Victoria Jurgens, Jennifer Campeau, Nancy Heppner, and Tina Beaudry-Mellor, all of whom have been very influential members of this government.

I was honoured and humbled to join this group of current women in the Saskatchewan Party caucus: MLA for Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood; the MLA for Lloydminster; the MLA for Sask Rivers and Madam Deputy Speaker; the MLA for Regina Rochdale and Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport and the Status of Women; the MLA for Regina Wascana Plains, Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety; the MLA for Estevan and Minister of Social Services; the MLA for Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota and the Minister of Energy and Resources; and, Mr. Speaker, the longest consecutively serving female MLA in Canada, the longest serving female Finance minister in Canada, the MLA for Humboldt-Watrous and our Deputy Speaker and Minister of Finance.

What an impressive group of accomplished, dignified women, and what amazing role models they are for the women of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance and her team have presented a budget that is designed to protect, build, and grow our province. This budget will support our fight against COVID-19 with record investments in health care, education, social services, and investments to protect people's properties. This is a budget that will build stronger Saskatchewan communities and will grow our economy through key investments and making life affordable for families. This budget also addresses 14 campaign promises made during the election and 14 campaign promises kept by our government.

Mr. Speaker, small businesses were hit hard by COVID-19. I know our constituency office in Prince Albert reached out to over a hundred businesses to make sure that they had heard about some of the programs, including the temporary changes to the small-business tax reduction program designed to help and support them and manage their way through this pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, this government is investing a record \$6.12 billion into health to protect the lives of people in Saskatchewan. This includes a \$90 million increase to support COVID-19 response and vaccine delivery. With more stability in vaccine supply, vaccine availability is hitting record highs in vaccines delivered in Saskatchewan. This support will also include purchasing more

PPE [personal protective equipment] and supporting contact tracing and expansion of sites. And overall the SHA will also receive an additional two-point-two-four-point-one million dollars this year which is an increase over the last year of 5.9 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital will be receiving funding for an additional respiratory therapist. This is good news as these positions are vital to the care of patients who have respiratory difficulties.

This budget also includes a \$5 million investment towards increased support for people with diabetes, including continuous and flash glucose monitoring for children and youth under 18 who are insulin dependent. The insulin pump program will be expanded to include all ages for anyone with type 1 diabetes who needs assistance. This was a concern that I heard multiple times when knocking on doors. A young lady, even here in Regina, who works at a local restaurant, told me the other night how pleased she and her husband were about this announcement as her husband has type 1 diabetes and qualifies for the assistance.

Mr. Speaker, this budget contains \$6 million for children from ages 6 to 11 with autism spectrum disorder. This is great news for parents and families like Wanda, who is struggling to raise her two children who have autism. This program will benefit another 1,000 children living in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Service] will receive \$1.4 million in funding to purchase a new helicopter in this year's budget. STARS provides emergency transportation for patients from accident sites and remote areas to the larger centres of the province. This is a very important service, and it will allow for a quicker response time to the rural and remote areas around the province.

Mr. Speaker, seniors have worked hard to build this province and our country. Pension plans like many of us have today were not available back when many of these people were working. This leaves many seniors basically living on their OAS [Old Age Security] assistance. Northcote is home to many seniors who will benefit from the changes to the seniors' income plan in this budget. The seniors' income plan has increased by \$35 a month for low-income seniors. Since coming into office, the Saskatchewan Party government has tripled its support for seniors and plans to quadruple that by 2024.

The government is further supporting the builders of our province through a \$6.7 million increase to reduce ambulance fees for seniors from \$275 to \$135 effective July 1st, 2021, fulfilling another campaign promise.

Mr. Speaker, mental health and addictions is important to Prince Albert Northcote, as mental health and addictions challenges continue to grow in our city. Our government is budgeting a record-high \$458 million towards these programs. This includes \$1 million to the Pillars for Life, the Saskatchewan suicide prevention program; \$2.6 million in enhancement to the harm reduction services that include support for high-risk mothers; expansion of the take-home naloxone program, which means more kits will be available at the pharmacies for the people who need them. One in three of the new mobile harm reduction buses will be based out of Prince Albert, giving providers the

opportunity to reach out to those needing support.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Education will continue to support pre-K [pre-kindergarten] to grade 12 students with \$2.66 billion in budget, which is an increase of 2.3 per cent. Included in this budget is funding to protect students and staff and provide equipment during the pandemic. Prince Albert has approximately 30 registered child care centres that will benefit from the \$1.6 million to allow for increased operating costs and salaries in licensed daycare centres within the province.

[14:45]

Mr. Speaker, our government is investing \$520.1 million to improve the safety and efficiency of key highway corridors in this province. The announcement of the twinning of Highway 3, approximately 8 kilometres west of Prince Albert, and passing lanes from there to Shellbrook, and passing lanes on Highway 2 North to Christopher Lake was very good news for Prince Albert and the surrounding areas.

These two highways have seen a number of fatalities in the past years. I drove that Highway 3 to Shellbrook every morning, every night, and almost every day for the past 12 years, and that drive, I must say, was one of the most stressful parts of my day. The drive was often dangerous because of road conditions; increased traffic including semis, farm equipment, holiday trailers; wildlife; and the hills and curves that are naturally along that highway. As I am writing this, I could recall eight people whom I knew personally who lost their lives on this stretch of highway.

Highway 2 North to the lakes has also seen its share of traffic accidents and lives lost with the increased volume of traffic it sees during the summer months. Thank you to the current member of Highways and the former minister of Highways for their insight and hard work on this project.

Mr. Speaker, Prince Albert will receive funding for continued planning for the Victoria Hospital renewal project as well as an increase of \$2 million for the neonatal ICU that is now under construction. This unit will provide relief to the Saskatoon neonatal unit and allow families from Prince Albert and the surrounding communities to be able to stay closer to home.

It is exceedingly difficult for families with their sick babies to be transferred to larger centres. I recall a young family who had a very sick baby, and that baby had to be transferred to Edmonton because the Saskatoon unit was full. Mom went with her baby to Edmonton, but dad had to take time off work and try and arrange care for the little ones at home. That was a lot of stress for an already stressful time for this family.

Mr. Speaker, the \$7.6 million for the La Ronge 80-bed long-term care home is welcomed not only by the people of the North but for the people of Prince Albert. This project will allow people who are requiring long-term care to stay in their home community or at least closer to their family and friends. Seniors and young people with life-altering injuries have been placed in centres far from home with limited opportunity to move closer to home.

I have worked with people who have tried to go back to their families and home communities just because they were lonely

and unhappy at being so far away. They leave their placement or choose not to accept placement, instead preferring to go home and often ending up in unsafe situations because their families were just not equipped to help manage them. This resulted in increased hospitalizations and further health complications and frustrations for these residents and for their caregivers.

Mr. Speaker, our government has also improved new ramps and doors for the Prince Albert Indian Metis Friendship Centre. I had the pleasure of meeting with the director of the friendship centre a couple of weeks ago. This centre offers a wide variety of cultural-based services and programs and activities to help the Métis and Indigenous people with their needs and improve their quality of life while residing in Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker, the budget presented offers investments, opportunities, and hope for all of Saskatchewan. It benefits families and offers them opportunities to create and build a better life for themselves and grow our province. This budget supports families by making life more affordable, for example, providing a 10 per cent rebate on SaskPower bills. This gives families a little extra money that can be spent in their communities. Automobile owners will receive up to \$285 in rebates. These rebates mean Saskatchewan residents will have the lowest utility bundle rates in the country. The Saskatchewan home renovation tax announced during the election will save taxpayers an estimated \$124 million over the next two years.

Mr. Speaker, I've only touched on a few of the announcements from this budget. And they will impact the people of my constituency, and many of them are concerns that have been brought forward to our constituency office. I am proud to say that I stand here today and that I will be supporting the budget that was presented by the Minister of Finance and seconded by the member from The Battlefords, and I will not be supporting the amendment.

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — I recognize the member from Arm River.

Mr. Skoropad: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees. I love history. I enjoy reading about it, learning about it, occasionally writing about it, and always talking about it. This building that we are blessed to spend our time in is rich in history: endless marble, paintings, magnificent carvings, which I might add includes our exquisitely crafted coat of arms.

The budget that I have the honour to comment on today, coupled with the COVID challenges we presently face, remind me of another jurisdiction's coat of arms, that being the Spanish royal family's coat of arms from more than 500 years ago. To the Spanish at the time, it was believed the world ended out there somewhere past Gibraltar. To the people of Spain, one of the real glories was that they were the last outpost of the world, and their country fronted the edge of nothingness. With this belief entrenched, the royal coat of arms firmly displayed the motto "ne plus ultra," meaning roughly, there is no more beyond here.

But then enter Christopher Columbus and his historic voyage. On his return, as we are all well aware, he discovered a whole new world out there. The ancient motto was suddenly made meaningless. In swift response, Queen Isabella decreed the first word, "ne," be dropped from the motto, leaving it to read "plus

ultra,” or there is plenty more beyond.

Since 2007 the belief of this government and sentiment of the people of this province is that there is plenty more beyond. The budget so eloquently tabled by the Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier several days ago is evidence to this government’s commitment to expand the boundaries and potential for the people of Saskatchewan. It is a budget that confronts the present COVID pandemic and one that focuses on our future.

Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees, the budget that was tabled last week is one of commitment. The record spending in health, of over six and a half billion dollars, shows commitment to expand and fortify the province’s health care system and protect the people of Saskatchewan. A record investment in education shows commitment to our young people, that is the future of this province. Further, record investments in social services show our government’s commitment to do more to protect the province’s most vulnerable.

3.1 billion in capital investment funding outlined in this budget charts a course to a stronger economy and more jobs. This budget shows commitment to a goal. In fact I would argue it shows commitment to 30 goals, 30 commitments laid out to be achieved by this government by the year 2030 — goals which echo the motto “plus ultra.”

I’ve heard it said in this Chamber that we, meaning this government, should have responded differently while Saskatchewan experiences economic boom. To those comments I would put forward that we have not yet had our boom, and the edge of the world does not end here. Rather, our greatest years yet lay ahead. The budget under consideration sets a course through the stormy seas of COVID and positions our province, Saskatchewan, in calmer, more prosperous waters. Yes, there is plenty more beyond.

Now taking a step back for a moment if I could before I get too deeply into my budget remarks, I would appreciate the opportunity to recognize the people with whom I spend my days, the people who help me spring out of bed rather than want to pull the covers up over my head. Firstly I would like to recognize my amazing constituency assistants, Lavonne Lyke and Donna Petit. These two ladies are all that I could ask for and certainly more than I deserve. Lavonne and Donna are the epitome of professionalism and bring their vast knowledge and positive spirit to the Davidson office every day. To borrow the well-known phrase, we don’t train people here to be nice; we hire nice people. I would say in my case I didn’t train Lavonne and Donna to be awesome; I just hired awesome people.

And I would put forward to the other MLAs in this Assembly — and no offence intended — that I am blessed to have the best CAs [constituency assistant] in the province. I hear some heckling, but you know, I know I am a little bit biased. But at any rate I am grateful for the work that these two do to serve constituents and make my office, our office, a wonderful place to be.

Speaking of wonderful places to be, my home is just that place because of my wife, Terrill, and our two boys, Noah and Sol. As a partner goes, I could not ask for a better one than the one which I’ve found in Terrill. For more than 20 years she has supported

everything I’ve done, not with the thin obligated words of support, but rather the type of support that can be felt from the heart and the soul.

The other day, the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford and I were talking about our respective wives, drawing some comparisons. Funny enough, both of these amazing ladies have been converted to become faithful followers of the legislature channel. Now that is the kind of devotion that I am talking about. In all seriousness, and as all members of the Assembly understand, the value of a partner such as Terrill is immeasurable. I will always be grateful for the blessing that she is to me.

As for my two biggest fans, Noah and Sol, well they breathe joy into every single day. Their questions keep me on my toes, and their talk of the future keeps me driven. They remind me that things are different now than when I was young, and they remind me that I’m getting older and they’re getting stronger. And they remind me, most importantly, they remind me that the work we are tasked with here is vitally important.

Mr. Speaker, Noah is 13 and soon to be 14, and he’s pretty excited about that because his brother is 12 and he likes that two-year spread. And as such, you can imagine we are really starting to have some adult conversations at home. Several of our conversations as of late have centred on the theme of money, saving, and choices. And I guess you could say that we’re having some budget-like talks at home. As of late, these two young budding entrepreneurs have even taken their love of wildlife and tried to turn shed hunting into a business venture. And I think it must be a generational thing because I try so desperately to stay off of YouTube while my boys look for creative ways to get on it. These two characters are truly the best gift that I have ever received.

Lastly but certainly not least of all are the constituents of Arm River. I am blessed to have gained their trust to represent them in this Assembly. Arm River is the home to a long list of heroes, from front-line workers and educators to producers who continue to grow the best food, and grocery clerks who continue to sell it. For these and our other community heroes, I am grateful for their service.

I’m also truly grateful for those who reach out to me to share some of their thoughts, others to share their concerns — honest Saskatchewan people who have offered their commendations and others who have provided recommendations. Regardless of the theme or the tone of the conversation, I am grateful for those who have taken time to share their voice with me. The honour and responsibility of my position shall never be something that I take for granted.

As has been referenced by other members in this Assembly, what is truly lacking here today are the souls in the galleries. I would love nothing more than to deliver this speech in front of constituents. As it is they’ll have to join my wife in watching this debate via television or the internet.

That being said, there is something symbolic, there’s something significant about these empty seats. It reminds me of the lesson learned by Lou Little, the legendary college football coach from the early to mid-1900s. As the story goes, while Mr. Little was in Georgetown University there was one of the younger players

on the squad who was really no standout when it comes to talent, but he was kept on because he had strong character and morale-boosting qualities. Lou was very fond of the young man and particularly admired the way he could be seen so proudly walking arm in arm with his father about campus from time to time.

One fateful day however, the boy's mother contacted Lou to inform him that the boy's father had passed away suddenly. Knowing Lou's relationship with the boy, she then asked him to deliver the news. Lou did the unpleasant task, and the boy went straight home. Three days later he returned and came straight to Lou saying, you know, I want to ask something of you that would mean an awful lot to me. I want to start the next game. I think that that's what my father would like the most. Lou hesitated and then agreed, with the understanding that he would only go in for a play or two.

True to his word Lou started the young man, but he never took him out. For 60 minutes the young man played inspired football, running, tackling, and blocking like an all-American. After the game, Lou put his arm around the boy and said, you were terrific today. You stayed in because you belong there. You never played that type of football before. What got into you? The boy replied, remember how my father and I used to go arm in arm? There's something about him very few people knew. Dad was blind, and I knew this was the first time he would ever see me play. That day Lou Little learned that being mindful of who was watching, who we're playing for, makes all the difference.

[15:00]

So, Mr. Speaker, as I look upon these vacant seats, I'm reminded we must remember who we play for. That is who we serve. With regard to the debate before us, I would put forward that as this government has worked to construct and to shape this budget, the presence of the entire province was felt. During the deliberations and the challenging conversations, their voices were heard.

As I listened to the budget speech by the minister, I couldn't help thinking of my constituents and how these decisions will affect their lives. In particular, a young boy from Outlook named Benny Grunerud came to mind. You see, Benny's two-and-a-half-year-old world changed dramatically with a diagnosis of leukemia. And I ask all members here that if they have room in their thoughts and their prayers for young Benny and his family, that they would give him some at this time.

Mr. Speaker, on hearing the news of Benny and his family's immense challenge, I reached out actually to Rob Grunerud, Benny's father, to offer my support and encouragement, maybe as MLA but certainly as a father. He was at the Jim Pattison Hospital in Saskatoon and, as his son had received some treatments — one of the many treatments he'll be receiving over the course of the next three years — among other things, Rob shared with me his gratitude for the care that his boy has and will continue to receive so close to home.

You know, sometimes, Mr. Speaker, we get caught up in the politics side of this building, but at the end of the day we know that it's all about people. This is precisely why we have used our collective prosperity to build the children's hospital in this province years ago, why we continue to make health care

spending a priority, why we increased funding to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency to a record level, why we increased supports for people living with diabetes, why we have committed further funding to the STARS program, an initiative important to my constituency of Arm River, a rural constituency. This is why we continue to build hospitals and care centres and why we plan to spend \$485 million for health care, for mental health and addictions — another record investment.

It is because our job is to protect and care for Saskatchewan lives, Mr. Speaker. Now does the spending go far enough in this budget, Mr. Speaker? I would hope the answer to that from all members is no; we still need to do more. The day we think we have done it all and can do no more, Mr. Speaker, is the day that we grow complacent and stop living by the motto that there is more beyond. That, Mr. Speaker, would be the day that we would do an injustice to the people of this province.

In three years, Mr. Speaker, the plan is for Benny to be trading his hospital stays for elementary school days. This year's budget does much to ensure it is ready for him to arrive. Mr. Speaker, the budget commits a record 3.75 billion for education that includes over 2.6 billion dedicated to pre-K, grade 12 education.

Now, Mr. Speaker, over the course of this week I have heard much talk of education, teaching, students, and challenges they face. Having worked in the education sector as a teacher and as an administrator in both the high school and elementary school levels, I am aware first-hand of some of the challenges that are faced and many of the opportunities that exist.

This budget supports the amazing work that the teachers and support staff in Eyebrow, Central Butte, Outlook, Raymore, Nokomis, and Loreburn are doing, to mention a few. The budget does protect classrooms, does build schools, and does grow capacity to educate and care for our children.

Speaking of children, Mr. Speaker, as a child growing up on the farm just south of Chamberlain, I learned much of what I know now from my dad. While some lessons were harder than others, all were valuable. One such lesson I learned early and learned well was to love and appreciate trees. As you can understand, living in an area where trees often struggle to make ends meet, when you discover one that does, I'll tell you, you become quite attached.

That's why, I guess, a couple years ago I found myself outside that morning in the middle of a July storm, complete with unrelenting rain and hammering winds, wrestling with a tangle of rope and sticks. You see, my most treasured tree was slowly and surely being destroyed, knocked over by the indiscriminating elements, and so the critical task of securing and stabilizing began. Mr. Speaker, I feverishly pounded the stakes deep and affixed ropes as best as I was able. All that mattered was that I preserve and protect that tree to make it through to the other side of the storm.

Sure enough, the wind subsided and the rain dried up and we were left with a tree that was a little bruised and a little stunned. Over the weeks that followed, we removed the supportive pegs only after we were confident it could stand strongly once more on its own. Over the months that followed, we did our best to care for and strengthen that tree, pruning, keeping those pesky

weeds under control. Mr. Speaker, we even added some fertilizer to encourage the roots to stretch out. And I'm glad to report, Mr. Speaker, our diligence, persistence, and caring have paid off, as that same tree now stands proudly in the yard.

And, Mr. Speaker, maybe like my colleague, the member from Melfort, I too draw comparisons to the budget from a living, growing thing. And being from the farm, I do appreciate his canola analogy, but for myself, a simple tree helps me to better understand. The budget presented by the Minister of Finance on April 6th intends to serve the tree that is Saskatchewan.

Like the tree in my yard, Saskatchewan has been storm-tossed by COVID. The rough, unpredictable winds of the pandemic have jeopardized its limbs, its leaves, and its trunk.

This budget protects Saskatchewan by driving stakes and affixing ropes to secure businesses, families, and communities. Our budget makes life more affordable for families, supporting anchors like the 10 per cent SaskPower rebate on electricity charges, and the SGI rebate on registered vehicles provides Saskatchewan people with the lowest utility rates bundle in the country.

Programs like the home renovation tax credit and the community rink affordability grant protect our homes and our communities. The announced \$15 million commitment to VIDO [Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization] leaves a critical peg in the ground to safeguard the people of Saskatchewan for years to come.

Building and strengthening the tree that is Saskatchewan are investments in agriculture, small business, and infrastructure. Trimming small business tax in this province to zero per cent creates conditions for this sector to flourish. The budgeted 830 million for operating, building, and improving Saskatchewan roads and highways is necessary. More than that, it is fundamental to our success as a province. In my own constituency of Arm River, roads and highways are the economic veins and arteries that allow us to do business and keep the heart of our communities beating.

Mr. Saskatchewan . . . or Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Saskatchewan, that's okay too, right? I could say worse things, right? Mr. Speaker, a tree, a tree, as we know, is only as good as its roots. In addition to protecting and building, the proposed budget lays out a plan to grow Saskatchewan, to stretch out its roots. The active families benefit feeds the roots of the family, while funding for ag research and innovation feed the roots for the farm.

The Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship and record funding for workforce developments sink more deeply the tap root of talent while the 9.3 million set aside to establish further international trade offices expand our Saskatchewan roots to all corners of the globe.

Mr. Speaker, history books are filled with the defining moments — actions taken by individuals compelled by vision, decisions driven by a burning desire to leave it better than you found it. Funding dedicated to the Diefenbaker Lake irrigation expansion project from this year's budget is a significant step towards this visionary project becoming a reality. Arm River and the entire

province of Saskatchewan stand to benefit from this project's roots. Yes, Mr. Speaker, as witnessed by the budget, our government is intent on growth because we believe there is plenty more beyond.

Mr. Speaker, my inaugural address several months ago, in that I spoke about our government's character, one that has earned the trust of the Saskatchewan people because we do what we say we will do. Mr. Speaker, trust is an envelope opened with words and sealed with actions. At election time, we made 14 promises in Saskatchewan here for the Saskatchewan people. With this budget, Mr. Speaker, all 14 promises have been sealed with actions.

This budget recognizes there is plenty more beyond. This budget will protect, build, and grow the province. And I would further argue that this budget, our budget, is the vaccination for the province of Saskatchewan.

It is for these reasons, Mr. Speaker, that I will not be supporting the amendment and I will indeed be supporting the budget tabled by the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance. Thank you.

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

Mr. McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always an honour to have the opportunity to rise in this House and address the Assembly, even the member from Rosemont. It's my privilege to do so today on behalf of all the constituents of Moose Jaw North, and as I do so I acknowledge that we are gathered on Treaty 4 territory in the traditional homeland of the Métis. We are all treaty people.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the comments of the member from Indian Head-Milestone a few days ago when he pointed out that this is a deficit budget, and that fact should always give us pause for concern. Perhaps it's because he and I are cut from the same tartan, or perhaps it's simply how I was raised, but the idea of spending more than I have causes me discomfort.

I believe only exceptional circumstances justify doing so: circumstances like protecting the people of our province from further harmful effects of COVID-19, circumstances like building and investing in our economy and infrastructure as we recover from a global shock unlike anything this country has seen since the Second World War, and circumstances that will ensure our province continues to grow and our communities remain strong and life in those communities remains affordable for our families. Yes, Mr. Speaker, this is a deficit budget, but it is a budget that will help protect, build, and grow this province into the future, and I support that.

Before I move into more specific comments about the budget, I would first like to take a moment to express my gratitude to a number of people. Like so many of my colleagues have already done, I want to recognize and thank all of the health care workers and the first responders who have endured a front-row seat for some of the worst scenes this pandemic has to offer.

I also want to thank our teachers, Mr. Speaker. I know as school resumes today in many communities across the province, there is some trepidation about the return of our children into classrooms.

My own children are among them. But I would say for the record that I have heard an even mix of comments from my constituents, some of whom are in favour of returning to in-school learning and some who are opposed. And I want to thank the school board trustees and administration of the school divisions who I am certain are hearing the same things.

Mr. Speaker, I was one of those trustees not too long ago and when I sat in that seat, my colleagues and I fought hard to ensure that the decisions respecting our schools were made at the local level. In my view, the locally elected trustees are well positioned to respond to the needs of the schools and families in the communities they represent. So I want to thank our Premier and the Minister of Education for continuing to allow those locally elected representatives to decide what level of response is most appropriate in their own schools, doing so in consultation with their local public health officers and with the guidance of Dr. Shahab.

Mr. Speaker, I have been extremely impressed with the protocols put in place in our schools and with the various adaptations our teachers and students have made to their daily routines. Those adjustments have kept our children safe from this virus while still receiving some of the best education in the world. Our heartfelt thanks and appreciation goes out to all of those individuals, the teachers especially, because the value of the work they do cannot be overstated.

[15:15]

On a personal note, I want to thank my constituency assistant, Jacqui, who has grown into her new role as I've been growing into mine. Even as we speak now, Jacqui is the first point of contact for the phone calls and emails coming in while I am unavailable, and I cannot think of a better person to bear that responsibility on my behalf. So I sincerely thank her for that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also quickly thank my wife, Tanielle, and my three children. When the legislature is in session, we MLAs normally spend our days here in Regina and our families are asked to navigate life without us until we return home, either in the evenings or on the weekends. But of course with the current restrictions keeping us all here for the duration of session, the ask of our families has been increased exponentially.

Mr. Speaker, I am blessed to have such a strong and capable partner in Tanielle. On any given day, her workload outweighs mine by a substantial margin already, but for the past week and the weeks ahead, she is willingly carrying 100 per cent of the load. In fact she's been doing it with such ease I'm starting to become concerned that she may find it necessary to rebalance our respective duties when I finally return. And I know, Mr. Speaker, all three of our children have stepped up in staying on top of their chores and helping out a little extra in my absence as well. So to Tanielle, Presley, Kingston, and Lauchlan, I express my sincere thanks for your love, your support, and for your additional efforts while I am away.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the people of Saskatchewan. This past year has been filled with challenges for everyone, yet the people of this great province have demonstrated once again that there is nothing, not even a global pandemic, that can get the better of them.

Last week, in his annual address on the state of the University of Saskatchewan, president Dr. Peter Stoicheff commented, "No other year in our university's history has asked so much of us individually and collectively." Mr. Speaker, what an eloquent and concise statement to summarize the challenges COVID-19 has presented. And I think that same statement applies to the province as a whole. President Stoicheff also noted, "Optimism is building that the world is emerging from this pandemic." And he went on to say, "It is our collective responsibility to build and shape the community and world we want every day." Let me read that again: "It is our collective responsibility to build and shape the community and the world we want every day." What a powerful statement. I wish I could get him to write my speeches.

But, Mr. Speaker, that's why the people of Saskatchewan cannot be kept down and we will not be defeated, not even by a novel virus that is shaking the world to its core, because we understand our collective responsibility and we have the strength of spirit and character that allows us to find optimism in even the most challenging times.

Mr. Speaker, I think that optimism is precisely what we need to focus on right now. Not negativity, not fear. What we focus on will shape our reality. Now I know we are all experiencing a degree of COVID fatigue, some of us more than others, which is why now more than ever, we need to maintain an optimistic focus. Now is the time to remain positive and to support one another. Mr. Speaker, now is the time we need to protect each other from further harm. We need to build up each other as we lean on one another for strength. And now is the time to grow as we collectively emerge from the dark cloud of COVID that has hung over us all for this past year.

Mr. Speaker, I support this motion and the budget presented by the Minister of Finance because I see so many positive pieces within it. I see investment in health care and public safety that will protect the people of Saskatchewan. I see capital investments that will continue to build upon our infrastructure and create jobs across this province. I see reductions to small-business tax rates and a home renovation tax credit that will help Saskatchewan families grow as we recover from the pandemic. These investments protect and build and grow this province.

Some other examples that hit a little closer to home for me, Mr. Speaker, include the \$1.4 million investment that will add a new STARS helicopter to deliver emergency care and ensure our communities remain protected. Now I know people often think STARS only serves rural and remote sites, but I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that a personal friend of mine from Moose Jaw would not be alive today had a STARS helicopter not been there to transport him during a medical emergency. His heart stopped twice, and the doctors told him if it were not for the STARS helicopter getting him on an operating table as quickly as it did, he would not be with us today. So I recognize that this investment protects us all, no matter what part of the province we're from.

This budget also builds upon the educational infrastructure in this province, providing \$65.4 million to complete the design phase and begin construction on 13 school projects, including the new joint-use school in my home community of Moose Jaw. I'm especially excited about this project, Mr. Speaker. Please allow me to share why.

On January 8th, 2018, the boards of education for Prairie South schools and Holy Trinity Catholic School Division held a joint meeting of the trustees, at which time their respective board Chairs signed a document that reads as follows:

In order to enhance the quality of education for all children and families, the boards of education of Prairie South schools 210 and Holy Trinity Catholic School Division are committed to working collaboratively to achieve a new joint-use facility on South Hill in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan by 2021.

Mr. Speaker, I was fortunate to have been the board Chair that signed that document on behalf of Prairie South, together with my friend, Joann Blazieko, on behalf of Holy Trinity. Now here we are three years later in 2021, and this government is working together with those two school divisions to design and build that joint-use school, which will see the consolidation of four aging elementary schools into one brand new facility for roughly 1,000 Moose Jaw students. Mr. Speaker, I can hardly wait for the day to see the ribbon cut and the doors opened on that much-needed new facility. And the funding commitment from this budget ensures that it will be built.

Yet another example that's close to home for me, Mr. Speaker, is the \$937 million investment in improvements to our province's electrical system, which includes the construction of a new 350-megawatt electrical plant in Moose Jaw. These projects will support growth of our province as it meets the ever-increasing power needs of our communities. And this project in particular will provide employment and economic growth to my home community.

These are just some of the positives I see when I look at this budget, Mr. Speaker. And as I mentioned, what we focus on will shape our reality. This government is focusing on protecting, building, and growing our province.

The Government of Saskatchewan sees the strength and resilience of the people of this great province. We don't see our communities as weak and incapable. Our government has faith in the people of Saskatchewan, and we know that with these investments we are making through this budget, our communities will recover from the pandemic faster than anywhere else. And we will be stronger than ever before.

Again, Mr. Speaker, there are just so many positive aspects to this budget. We've heard many of them discussed by my colleagues. I don't intend to repeat many more. But I do want to be clear. Although I see countless positives in this budget, I'm not suggesting it's perfect. In fact I don't think there's such a thing as a perfect budget. To be honest, I was looking forward to hearing some well-reasoned criticisms from the opposition because, Mr. Speaker, I enjoy a good debate.

As I mentioned in my first address to this Assembly last fall, one of my favourite things to do is have my views challenged respectfully by someone who may not share them. So when my perception of this budget and the current state of our province started to be challenged by the opposition, albeit less than respectful at times, I was intrigued. Perhaps there would be an opportunity for a debate. Sadly however, my intrigue turned to disappointment because you cannot argue with someone who

won't articulate what they are arguing for. Listening to the members of the opposition over the past week, it has become apparent that they don't support the budget, but they can't seem to figure out why.

You see, we've heard the opposition argue that this budget spends too much, while at the exact same time arguing that it doesn't spend enough. We've heard them complain about job losses in one breath and then quite literally insult our province's loyal public servants in the next. I was shocked to hear one of the opposition members claim that they support our oil and gas workers while his party continues to applaud federal policies that kill jobs in that very same industry. With respect, Mr. Speaker, they cannot have it both ways. Or as the minister of trade, export and development has put it, they need to pick a lane.

I realize I'm still fairly new here. But my understanding of the role of the official opposition is that they are required to more than blindly reject and throw insults at everything the government proposes. As the member from Melfort pointed out and the member from Cumberland House respectfully agreed, which I sincerely thank him for, we are all here to serve the people of this province, Mr. Speaker. We are expected to work together for the common good. So if the opposition sees how something might be done better, it is their responsibility to raise it, and in turn it is the government's responsibility to consider the point.

But that is not possible if the opposition doesn't offer any constructive criticism and only advances their complaints about the way things are. They don't like it, but they don't say why. They're not offering any realistic suggestions on how it could be done better. Instead this opposition seems to ignore all the positive aspects contained in the budget, many of which I have already cited. Their flip-flopping on where they actually stand makes it impossible for the government to consider their position. For example, they say they want more people working while at the exact same time they demand the government shut down the economy and lock people in their homes.

This opposition criticizes the government for its support of pipelines and the energy sector while simultaneously claiming we haven't done enough to protect workers in that industry. And then they advance resolutions at their national convention to "oppose all carbon-intensive energy projects," which would only further hurt the workers they seem to agree need protecting. Mr. Speaker, on that issue it's almost as if they chose a lane but they're driving in the wrong direction, impeding the progress of others.

And again, this opposition demands more spending while at the same time arguing that the government is spending too much. I've argued issues many times in my career, Mr. Speaker, but you cannot argue with someone who refuses to pick a side. I've listened intently to the opposition over the past week and I can find no constructive criticism to work with, only repeated complaints and fearmongering about how awful they think it is here and how nothing is going right. I suppose their focus has shaped their reality. Negativity and doom and gloom — that's all they choose to see, which is truly unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, because there is so much good stuff here.

And you don't have to look far to find the good stuff, like the fact

that as of March 31st of this year, Saskatchewan had the second-highest credit rating in Canada. Or how about the fact that we're projected to maintain one of the lowest net debt-to-GDP [gross domestic product] ratios in the nation, which by the way, Mr. Speaker, is widely accepted as the standard by which to measure the fiscal health of a province. And we are among the best.

The sky is not falling, Mr. Speaker. We are not the province in shambles the NDP keep trying to depict. To the contrary, there are so many good things happening here, frankly I'm excited. And I struggle to understand how the members of the opposition can't be even just a little excited too.

You know, Mr. Speaker, that got me thinking. I asked myself, why would the opposition members stand before this Assembly and the people of this province making contradictory assertions, flip-flopping back and forth about where they stand on various issues? And how is the opposition helping the people of this province by desperately trying to convince them that they live in the worst place imaginable? How does that help?

These questions honestly bothered me, Mr. Speaker. I actually spent a lot of time thinking about them until I was reminded of a scene from one of my favourite movies. Please allow me to explain. The movie is *Good Will Hunting*, starring Robin Williams as Dr. Sean Maguire, and Matt Damon who portrays a young man named Will Hunting.

In the scene I'm referring to, Sean is explaining an epiphany he had about a troubling comment Will made to him a few days earlier. Sean says to Will:

I thought about what you said to me the other day, about my painting. I stayed up half the night thinking about it. Then something occurred to me and I fell into a deep peaceful sleep. I haven't thought about you since. You know what occurred to me? You don't have the faintest idea what you're talking about.

Sean goes on to explain:

If I asked you about art you'd probably give me the skinny on every art book ever written. Michelangelo, you know a lot about him. But I'll bet you can't tell me what it smells like in the Sistine Chapel. And if I asked you about war, you'd probably throw Shakespeare at me, right? "Once more unto the breach, dear friends." But you've never been near one. I'd ask you about love, you'd probably quote me a sonnet.

Sean then summarizes his monologue by telling Will he is failing to see all the good stuff. And until he's prepared to examine who he is and what he stands for, he has no business tearing apart other people who are actually doing what they stand for.

Mr. Speaker, it was the underlying message from this scene that gave me peace, knowing that I need not be bothered by the confused rhetoric and alarmist hyperbole coming from the NDP members opposite. I genuinely wanted to hear something from them that was a reasonable and fair criticism, something we could actually consider maybe even debate. But I still haven't heard that. I will keep listening for it.

However until the opposition decide where they stand on issues and actually articulate a rational position instead of just impeding the progress of those of us who have picked a lane, I won't lose any sleep or be bothered by their negativity. Because the only thing that will be clear to me about what they're saying is that they don't have the faintest idea what they're talking about.

[15:30]

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak in favour of this motion put forward by the Minister of Finance and seconded by the member from The Battlefords. And I will not support the amendment. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to enter into this budget debate today. And I want to start off by making a few remarks about the folks around me who have been quite supportive over the last year in what have been quite difficult times for all of us.

So I want to start by thanking my constituency assistant. Now, we're in the process of ranking our constituency assistants of best in the province or not best in the province. I would say, if you met my constituency assistant, your CA would have a run for their money here. She's been with me since the outset, Twyla Harris Naciri. Sad to be losing her in a week to maternity leave, but of course very happy for her and her husband that they're bringing a bundle of joy into their lives here. So I want to thank her for her tireless commitment, holding down the fort and, you know, having many of those initial conversations with constituents, which really hasn't been easy over the past year in the office where we are.

As the critic for Health, we get a lot of those concerns come to our office. I know many folks have heard those issues as well. Many of them get directed to our office, so she's had to be up on the latest with all the vaccines and what happens, sort of up-to-the-minute facts, with government. So you know, she's had to go above and beyond this year, and I do want to thank her for that contribution and being an unwavering and steady force in that place.

I also want to take a moment to thank my partner, Grayson. He is a teacher, which I believe I've mentioned in the Assembly before, and so it's been a hard year on him as well, Mr. Speaker. At Saskatoon Public they've been in person throughout the entire year. Last year at the end of the year they did some virtual learning, which I think he was pretty well equipped for because he is quite tech-savvy. But I know that it was a tremendous challenge for many teachers and for the students as well who, you know, not everyone has access to their own devices at home. There might be one family laptop that kids are negotiating resources on for use of. And it's been a hard year from that perspective as far as the teaching and learning goes.

But I think this pandemic's just been hard on all of us and, you know, you're hearing more and more about pandemic stress and pandemic fatigue. We even heard something on the radio this morning. But I think it's hit each one of us differently. And you know, I'm constantly reminding my colleagues that we need to

be kind to each other during these times as well because, you know, it has been this additional stress, you know, families having to all be working in the same space. For those who do have the opportunity to work from home, there have still been stresses associated with that. Folks who are on the front lines, of course, putting themselves in harm's way.

I am very grateful that every parent figure in my life now has a vaccine or has been booked for a vaccine, but it's been a long road with a mother-in-law who's a grocery clerk and an immuno-compromised father. Like we've been concerned throughout this whole journey, so we know that vaccines offer some light. We just need to make sure that we're keeping people as safe as possible and reducing transmission in the meantime.

And of course we have such a supportive staff team here. And the support of the other members, the MLAs here, has been something that is, you know, I've been surprised to see. But I don't know why I'm surprised because we just have such good people around us and, you know, I have felt nothing but love from them and support and appreciation. And so I want to thank them for giving it their all. I know it hasn't been easy, especially when we talk about leaving our families and coming to this place. And it's already a concentrated environment. And when you add on the layers of pandemic stress and the fact that it sort of feels like that we're going to summer camp for six weeks here, you know, I think that I'd like to thank all of my colleagues for putting on a brave face and still having a smile on their face a week into this.

And of course my constituents who spend a lot of time talking to me, sharing their concerns. When we're bringing forward concerns from the people of the province, you know, a lot of those folks are my constituents, but it's also people who reach out from every corner of this province, including the ridings of members opposite. So our job is to make sure those concerns are heard and that there is transparency and accountability in this space.

And of course to you and all the folks in this space, Mr. Speaker: thank you for putting up with us. And to the Clerk and team and the LAS [Legislative Assembly Service] team: it's been quite the journey trying to figure out how to operate in COVID. And I've been privy to a lot of those conversations. I know how much work has went into them, and I think it's a pretty thankless job a lot of the time. I think many people across the province have no idea how much time we spent talking about these things, so thank you.

A budget is about more than numbers. These spending decisions reflect the values of the governing party. New Democrats believe that all people are of value and that we all do better when we remember that we're in this together. Guided by these values of equity and justice, we fight for what's best with the best policy choices that allow every person in Saskatchewan to succeed and thrive. Accordingly, we were looking to see some strong investments in people in this budget, including a comprehensive jobs plan, which you may have heard a little bit about so far, to help people get back to work. We were looking for Sask-first procurement to ensure our community benefits from economic stimulus projects, investment in renewable energy and green jobs to diversify our economy, and to acknowledge that it's 2021 and it's well past time that we do our part to address climate change.

We expected government to take the PST off construction labour and restaurant meals to make a significant impact on these industries. And we expected them to take responsibility for the second wave of COVID-19 and take real action to prevent the third wave of COVID by investing in some of our hardest hit areas, like long-term care. We know that Saskatchewan families were having a hard time before COVID-19 hit, and the Sask Party's failure to act to contain the pandemic when they had the chance means those families are even further behind.

Far too many people have lost loved ones because this Premier let them down. People are looking for hope and this budget doesn't provide it. The Sask Party's approach has given us the worst of both worlds. We have led the country in COVID-19 cases through 2021 with far too many lives lost, and we also have the worst job record in the country with 23,000 more workers out of a job than last year.

This budget and the Premier have the wrong priorities for today's Saskatchewan. They are stuck in the past when we need to be looking to the future. Specifically, this budget fails families by not including a jobs plan that works for people and gets people working, not removing the PST from construction labour and restaurant meals, doesn't take responsibility for the lack of action to prevent a severe second and now third wave of COVID-19 in Saskatchewan. It leaves us with the lowest minimum wage in Canada again, doesn't properly invest in hard-hit areas like long-term care and our classrooms, and it doesn't act to diversify our economy and take real advantage of opportunities in green technology to create sustainable jobs for the future.

And they haven't kept their promises. They think they can take the people of this province for granted. They said they would balance a budget by 2024 when they knew that wouldn't be possible. They said there would be no tax increases, but residential property tax rates are going up. And perhaps worse, they have broken their promise, their campaign commitment to hire 300 badly needed staff for long-term care facilities — an area that's just been hit so hard during this pandemic — that we were told was coming back in December, that we were told they're on their way and then suddenly there's a flip and, oh, we actually meant only 100. People can see through that, Mr. Speaker.

COVID-19 has exposed the real crises in education, health care, long-term care, mental health and addictions, but this government still won't invest in these services that families are counting on. As Health critic, I've paid particularly close attention to this government's COVID-19 response, and we've had the worst COVID rates in Canada for most of 2021. Regina's been the hottest of hot spots in the country, and this government has not taken action to reduce transmission. They haven't rapidly rolled out rapid tests.

They haven't taken action on long-term care. Short-staffing has been a challenge for years, Mr. Speaker. I think most of the folks in this Assembly know that. Anyone who has a family member in long-term care certainly knows that. While other provinces were being hit with COVID-19, it was instructive for the government of what was going to happen in our long-term care facilities, what was going on in the summer. That was their opportunity to staff up in long-term care, and instead it just became a campaign promise that we've waited now a year to find

out is not even going to be fulfilled. People are saying this isn't even enough, and they're not even giving a third of it. It's sad. It was preventable. They haven't ramped up testing and contact tracing capacity.

And the proof is coming out, Mr. Speaker. It's been a year now of the pandemic, and the studies are happening. The proof is rolling in. There's an article called, "Your money or your life? [and I'm quoting] Scott Moe's tragic miscalculation." This piece was written by a health policy consultant formerly based in Saskatchewan, an epidemiologist and professor at the University of Saskatchewan, and a public health and epidemiology professor at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan].

And here they talk about exactly what this proof is, discussing the fact that the Premier of Saskatchewan has rejected measures that keep infection rates and transmission low that we've seen work elsewhere in other jurisdictions; that to him it's "a trade-off: the more you lock down, the greater the economic damage;" but sadly, that we're not seeing the results that the Premier expected. After more than a year, the evidence is starting to settle, and I quote:

Places that delayed . . . [employing] restrictions saw case numbers climb, resulting in more deaths. Eventually, the alarming numbers forced these places to impose longer and more stringent lockdowns to get the pandemic under control. Over time they disrupted more economic activity than the countries that acted faster and more comprehensively at the beginning.

This is exactly what we've been talking about for the past number of weeks, Mr. Speaker.

By contrast, countries that waited too long, imposed as few restrictions as possible and steered clear of mandatory measures saw their case numbers rise, overwhelming their ability to keep up with testing and contact tracing.

Does this sound familiar, Mr. Speaker? "Tougher measures became inevitable and had to stay in place longer." And this is what we've been talking about, Mr. Speaker, that this government's policies have put us in a worst-of-both-worlds situation. And the article specifically talks about the fact that:

The premier . . . miscalculated the extent to which he could orchestrate economic activity. Just because people are allowed to travel or eat in a restaurant or go to a bar doesn't mean they will. Many will suspend or curtail normal economic activities they perceive to be unsafe.

So they've set us up in the worst of both worlds. The pandemic persists. Our ICUs are over capacity. Our case rates are skyrocketing. I think it's time to re-examine the plan, Mr. Speaker, and that's what we've been referring to. And when the members opposite talk about lockdowns, it's like they're listening with only one ear open. So I'd encourage them to listen with both ears and to respect the experts on this front.

And there's been the chaotic vaccine rollout. We've heard so many concerns about the vaccine rollout, I could probably spend my entire time speaking about that, Mr. Speaker — not following NACI guidelines, no openness to hearing from others. I requested

a meeting with the Minister of Health to discuss these concerns, but he's disregarded that request. They boast about their vaccine rollout. Meanwhile I've had 90-year-olds begging for information over the phone because it took them so long to set up a system that would allow independent seniors to get their vaccine. Telling people to call their doctors when their family doctors had no idea what the plan was because there wasn't a plan in place, it was completely irresponsible, Mr. Speaker.

Health care workers were on the list and then they were taken off the list. Then two-thirds were put back on the list for phase 1 again — again inventing their own guidelines, not following NACI guidelines. And now still a third of health care workers in phase 1 haven't been vaccinated. The rest are being told to wait. Now this is flip-flopping again. We're hearing, we'll absolutely never change it, Mr. Speaker, and then quietly changing it over the weekend to allow some essential workers. Forgive me, Mr. Speaker, but this is incredibly hard to follow.

[15:45]

Stage 2 of the NACI guidelines, until the past two days, they have just disregarded altogether. Essential workers have gotten a verbal thanks from this government for the past year, but they certainly weren't feeling the love when it came to helping to protect them in doing their jobs.

And where have those actions left us? Yesterday in Saskatchewan, or I guess the day before, there were 358 new cases, 206 people in hospital. Six more people died, with 43 in ICU. Experts have been pleading with this government to take action. There shouldn't have to be hundreds of groups of experts signing on to letters compelling the government to act before they reluctantly move in a particular direction, Mr. Speaker. This is their job. This is their responsibility. Our ICUs are over capacity, and as a society with COVID fatigue who wants this to be over, we've made so many sacrifices along the way but we still can't see an end in sight. And still no action on long-term care that has led to so many unnecessary deaths.

And this budget raises more questions than it answers when it comes to health care, Mr. Speaker. There's a commitment of \$90 million as an increase to this budget to support the COVID-19 response, but there's no breakdown in terms of what that means for supports for expanding testing and contact tracing, PPE, how much that's going to mean for long-term care. There's a significant lack of clarity here on whether that's going to be enough.

There are some investments in mental health and addictions programs. But, Mr. Speaker, there are still people waiting for care. There are still people waiting far too long, and there are still people paying for care in the birthplace of medicare, Mr. Speaker. So when we talk about primary care, access to being able to talk to someone when you're having a hard time, that's what people are going to need coming out of this pandemic, Mr. Speaker. So it's one thing to invest in the emergency services, but where's the investment front-up so that we don't get to that emergency in the first place?

The 100 continuing care aids, I've already talked about that broken promise, Mr. Speaker. No mention on surgical waits, not even a line in the budget document here on surgical wait times.

This is an issue we steadily hear about in our office, that folks are being left to wait and that waits have been climbing since 2015.

They're patting themselves on the back again for their announcements around autism and the insulin pump program. These people are waiting for these programs. This announcement came, I don't know, a year ago and it's, oh just wait; we'll keep announcing it. We'll keep announcing it and eventually it will get there. And we've been asking for clarity. Advocates have been asking for clarity on, give us a timeline here. I've written to the minister to ask for clarity on timelines here and gotten generic non-response letters back from him. And of course we know we need ambulance reform which is something that was promised a decade ago, over a decade ago, by this government.

There's 1.2 million increase to address wait times for diagnostic imaging services. Wait times for MRIs [magnetic resonance imaging] — we don't even know what the numbers are for wait times for MRIs because the government stopped tracking it. We haven't heard in over a year what the wait times look like, what the wait-lists look like for MRIs in this province.

Anecdotally my father got referred to a specialist recently, and it said on the bottom of the letter, like you know, you'll see the specialist after you have an MRI, and by the way it's going to be about a year for your MRI. And he was like, do you know about this? Sadly this is the norm. You know, people are being told to go pay for their MRI or wait in a ridiculously long lineup, and this government's not doing anything to fix it.

There are some infrastructure highlights around long-term care. I mean, talking about waiting way too long to make something happen, Mr. Speaker. Evaluations and design for Grenfell are finally coming forward. You know, 1 million in future planning that includes Regina, Watson, and Estevan long-term care facilities. What about Pioneer Village? Like we have facilities that are crumbling beneath us, Mr. Speaker, and years and years and years later, you know, people are having to look at private options.

There is a complete lack of . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No, the need is not being filled in long-term care. So the fact that it's being touted as some sort of accomplishment, I think, the folks who have loved ones in long-term care — or are now begging me, I never want to go into long-term care; that's what people are telling me now on the doorsteps — deserve more than that. The seniors who built this province that this government likes to raise up, yes, the seniors who built this province deserve better.

So, Mr. Speaker, they continue to turn their backs on a number of issues. And I see that I'm running short on time here, so I'll start to wrap up. There's been a lack of investment in health care. We talk about the health infrastructure deficit; again, drop in the bucket of what's needed here. Those crumbling facilities I was talking about, it's not just in long-term care; it's health facilities across this province.

They've highlighted a \$15 million commitment to eHealth. We rely on eHealth to manage all of our electronics health systems in this province, including our electronic health records where people could find out their COVID-19 test results, and also for the vaccine rollout. But their own briefing note from the fall shows that eHealth needs 10 times as much funding than they are

providing: \$150 million over the next three years to update aging infrastructure. The stark briefing note warns that, "A major equipment failure which may disrupt service and risk lives appears to be inevitable with the current funding model." This lack of investment is particularly surprising given the ransomware attacks of last year, and people still don't know if their personal health information was compromised.

So, Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on but my time is running short. I want to summarize by saying that you can trust the NDP opposition to fight for good health, for good jobs, and to protect the services that people count on. We're going to fight back against this budget. We are focused on holding this government accountable for their pandemic failures, getting Saskatchewan back to work, and on building a fair and more prosperous province for the future. And we need a budget that puts people first, invests to get this pandemic under control, creates good jobs, protects seniors in long-term care and the kids in our schools.

This budget does not get the job done. So I'm not going to be supporting the motion. I will be supporting the amendment put forward by my colleague, the member for Regina Rosemont. Thank you.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is truly an honour to stand in my place here and respond to the budget. It is an honour to serve in this House and to be able to do this job.

And usually when we do these responses, we talk about the people we get to work with. We'll talk about this great team: yourself, Mr. Speaker; the members opposite, give them full credit for their work as well; the staff here in the building; all the people who supported us to come here; our CAs; the caucus staff; the people of Saskatoon Meewasin who allowed me to represent them as their MLA.

And normally I'd go into some more detail and maybe give a bit of an update on, you know, Mahli and Abe and Gus and what they're up to. But today I'm just going to talk about one person, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to talk about my dad. Wally Meili is his name. My dad, my dad is the strongest. You know dads are strong, right? Not the strong that comes from lifting weights but from lifting kids and twisting wrenches.

When it comes to Wally, it's something else because when Wally was 15, he decided he was going to start doing these exercises every morning: push-ups, sit-ups, leg-overs, stretches. It was the push-ups that were the metric. That was what you counted it by. When he was 15, he started doing 15 push-ups every morning, and every year on his birthday, he'd add another one — 16, 17, into his 30s, 40s, 60s. When he hit 70 he said, you know, I'm thinking about this all wrong. I'm doing it the age I am. I should do it the age I want to live to. So he switched to 100 push-ups a day, you know, two sets of 50, but still this is a guy who in his 70s is in better shape than his middle-aged sons. You know, it was my birthday yesterday so I dropped and gave 46 just in Dad's honour.

Wally is the strongest. He's a pretty bright guy as well. He knows about the world, and there's a ton of well-read *National*

Geographics on the farm that testify to that, to his thirst for knowledge that later turned into a love of travel in Dubai, in Vietnam, Nicaragua, China — saw the world, and a pretty bright guy. You know, if you eke out a win in Scrabble or Trivial Pursuit or chess, you know you deserved it because he would never let you win.

And a pretty special guy and he knows how to fix anything. He did the voc ag [vocational agriculture] program at the U of S, though I think the extra-curriculars got a lot more of his attention than the classes because he learned to farm on the farm, how to handle cattle and horses, how to take a machine apart and put it back together again and do it again until you got it right. Or as so many Sask farmers do, if the machine doesn't exist, you invent it.

Wally also learned to fly an airplane. We had a Piper Cherokee Arrow on the farm growing up, and we'd cram in there on family trips, loving the thrill of flying over the checkerboard fields of the prairie around us, and also kind of hating the way your stomach felt every time Dad decided it was time to show off. He's a great pilot, although he did crash once. He was spraying. He was flying low. Walked away and was back at it a few weeks later because Wally's not afraid of anything.

He's not afraid of anything. He'll travel anywhere, talk to anyone. He learned to speak Spanish for his travels in Central America and South America, and learned more French than I thought he would, to be able to speak to my in-laws. Now don't get me wrong. It's pretty bad Spanish and it's pretty bad French, but he doesn't care. He just talks and he communicates and he gets it across to people what he wants to say. And in the process they don't mind. They're just happy to connect. Everywhere he goes, from Moose Jaw to Machu Picchu, he makes friends and he leaves an impression.

He's certainly not afraid of hard work. He was recently recognized as having been a member of the Saskatchewan Realtors Association for over 50 years. And along the way in those 50 years he ran our family ranch and farm for over 30 years. And along with raising crops and cattle alongside my mom, his wife, Lea, of 52 years, he raised three boys, Miles and Jim and myself. And he's always there to support us when we need him and to let us choose our own paths. He loves us and he absolutely adores his grandkids, Miles's little girls, Piper and Ivy, and my little guys, Abe and Gus.

Now he hasn't seen those grandkids for a few months because we've been careful to follow the protocols. We know that's what we need to do to keep each other safe. These are the sacrifices you make, that we're all making. But those sacrifices are feeling a lot bigger today. Because my dad is the strongest. At 74, he's as fit as a fiddle. He rides his bike everywhere, doesn't take any meds. He's the picture of health most days — but not today. Today he's very sick. It's not COVID-19 but it is very serious, and he is in the ICU at Regina General right now.

And while we have some hope because he is so strong and because he's getting such great care from the team in the surgical ICU, we have hope, but he's by no means out of the woods. And his life and our lives will never be the same. So I want to thank everyone who sent prayers and kind words. I know there are many people on both sides of the House that believe in those

prayers, that believe they make a difference, and I'm among them. So I thank you for those, and if you've got another one for Wally, please employ it. Saskatchewan people are so thoughtful and generous and we're lucky to be here, a place where if something like this happens, you get the kind of care and support that we're getting right now.

[16:00]

Each one of us is experiencing the challenges and sacrifices and deprivation of this pandemic in our own way. And as we're hoping for Wally to leave the ICU, we're also thinking of all the families who are in similar situations, waiting to see if their loved one will come out of the ICU, those who've lost loved ones without getting to say goodbye, those big losses. And also, you know, the smaller ones, being sick for weeks on end, the rolling quarantines of school-age kids, having to miss weeks of school and what that means for them. Just the hugs and handshakes and hellos that mean relationships we care about will need more work to rebuild after the pandemic.

We're all tired of this. We all want it to be done. We're all sick and tired of COVID-19. What we can't do, though, is act like it already is. As much as we want to, as much as we'd like to pretend that it's already over, we can't do that. That's the greatest danger before us right now, pretending that this pandemic is less serious than it is and reflecting that wishful thinking in our choices, in our public health policies, and our budget decisions.

Taking this seriously and setting an example is the way out of this, not downplaying and undermining the efforts of those who would protect us. And I'd be remiss if I didn't point out that we have seen that and seen that too many times from the government of the day. I'd be remiss if I didn't point out how foolish the decision by the Government House Leader to advocate against mask use in this Chamber, the decision of this government not to wear masks in the Chamber when speaking, and to scoff at a member who revealed his own immune-compromised status. This sends the exact wrong message, Mr. Speaker, and it's madness.

We were back here in the fall. We were wearing masks to speak because we know when you speak, that's when you put out more virus. And that was in the fall, before we had the variant that makes people so much sicker, that spreads so much more quickly. It makes zero sense when we know that science has developed this is an aerosolized virus — didn't make any sense. And I've got to say it was, you know, deeply disappointing to see that nod to the folks who are against masks, who are against public health measures in this choice made in the Chamber.

And I saw some of the folks . . . The member's not here right now but he likes to wave his phone around when we talk about this because he wants to criticize me for having put out a little video. And you'll have seen that little video. It was a video of while I was working in the hospital . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . We hear the member across. Maybe he'll listen to this story. It was a video to promote vaccines. And it was filmed on a night that I was working on the COVID ward.

And there's a few trolls — and we see some of them work here, some of them are just online — who decided that was a big thing to make a big deal about because, oh, you took your mask off.

And I saw that from the trolls but I thought, oh, we'll never see that in the House. People are more reasonable in here. They'd understand that we wouldn't do something unsafe. They'd know that when I filmed that video, I wasn't within 100 metres of another person. I was all by myself. And then I thought about that a little bit more. Why didn't they get that? I could make the assumption that, well it's just the Sask Party. They're not reasonable by definition. But I try not to do that when I don't have to. And the truth is they don't know because they weren't there, because they haven't been in those hospitals. They don't know what it's like to work on those hallways.

I was in the ICU today to see my dad, and I was sitting outside waiting to go in. One of the folks who worked in cardiac rehab came and sat down with me and she said, "Ryan, I just wish that some of those folks in government would actually come and see what we're dealing with in the ICUs today."

And I realize that's the case. They haven't had a chance to see this. They haven't been in the situation that I and my colleagues have been in, working through the night to try to keep somebody alive who's having a harder and harder time keeping their O₂ saturations up; calling someone's daughter at 6 in the morning to say, I'm sorry, I've just had to pronounce your father dead from COVID-19; what it's like to make those calls and to know that that father, two weeks earlier, had been living on his own, driving, living a good-quality life, and COVID-19 had taken his life.

And I think if more of us, all of us, and if I had more of those experiences myself, if more of us had that chance to see what it's really like, well I think the debate in here would look a lot different because we'd be doing everything we could to try to keep people safe and making sure that we were really making the right choices instead of trying to score points.

And you know, like I said, it's fair that you haven't seen all those things, and we can't expect everyone to have seen everything and been everywhere. But curiosity is a part of your job. Curiosity is what we need to have if we're going to do a good job. If our instinct is to say we need to tell people that things are good for political reasons, if our instinct is to spin and try to tell people things are going well, then we'll miss the opportunity to make them better. We'll miss the opportunity to understand. And this desperation to spin things as going great, it's a bad instinct at any time. But during a crisis of this magnitude it's a means of avoiding problems and sweeping them under the rug. But in a crisis of this magnitude, it's criminal. It kills people. It kills people.

We've heard in this House, and I want to recognize this because we've heard in this House calls that I agree with, calls for kindness and civility. I'll point out the member for Melfort often brings up this approach, and I really respect that. We heard from the member from Cumberland talking about working with his family, but his neighbours as well, and I really appreciate those calls. And those don't fall on deaf ears.

I want to work with all of the members in this House. I want to work with my neighbours because I want to achieve the best for this province. I want to do everything we can for Saskatchewan people. And I know there have been times when in the stress of this place and the heat of battle, my words and like even once my

gestures didn't keep up to exactly that level of decorum and respect that I want to show. And I apologize for those moments.

But I also want to point out some pretty sincere efforts on the part of this opposition. I remember the day that we had our first case of COVID-19 in the province. And I stood up in this House and I asked the Minister of Health — the Premier was away that day, so I asked the minister — can we form an all-party committee? Can we work together to address COVID-19? And the members opposite laughed. They accused us of fearmongering. They said we were raising something that wasn't to be worried about. And they wanted nothing to do with it.

Well we wrote I think three more times, wrote letters saying, let's do this work together. We all need to be on the side of addressing COVID-19 to have that common enemy of the virus. But every time it was laughed off. You know, there are cynical members who will say we weren't serious. But we were, and we are. We are. And that offer will always stand. When you want our help, when you want our thoughts, when you want our advice, when you want to involve us in decisions, we will come to work. We will deliver because we want to work together.

And again I'll address my remarks, not to the member from Melfort, but mention a little bit of what he had to say the other day. He called on us to support this budget as a symbol of working together. I think he's a kind and good man and I believe that he was sincere in what he had to say the other day. I do.

But it doesn't make sense. How can we be expected to be just writing a blank cheque for a process that had nothing to do with us and for decisions that we do disagree with, for priorities that would not be our priorities, a budget that doesn't come anywhere close to rising to the challenges of today? It's an ordinary, everyday, uninspiring budget.

And we need much more than that today. We are in a moment in this province, in this country, in this world, where we should be learning so much. And the biggest risk for us going out of this is that we decide that we just want everything to go back to the way it was as quickly as possible and we don't take the time to learn the lessons and make the changes we must.

People, when they saw this budget coming forward knowing the times we're in, they were looking for hope. They were looking for something that would offer them a sense that there was possibility. They were looking for integrity, for honesty, and a chance to see the changes we need. Instead, what we saw was a budget that revealed broken promise after broken promise and underlines the fact that you cannot trust this Premier when it comes to what matters most for Saskatchewan.

Broken promises. A promise of no new taxes or no increase in taxes while property taxes have been raised \$15 million, and the majority, the biggest impact is going to be on residents, people who are already having a hard time paying their bills. They're going to see those bills rise.

Promise of no cuts, and instead we see classrooms with \$4 million less than they had a year ago, at a time when they're going to be having to deal with much bigger challenges than ever. When so many kids are dealing with a gap of support and ability to learn, when kids are getting left behind, we need more

investments in our classroom, not less investments, which is what we've seen from this government.

Promise to address seniors' care — to address seniors' care. Instead, even after there were the tragedies that took over a hundred lives in our long-term care centres, even after years of clear evidence that those facilities are understaffed and overburdened, we saw a failure to meet even the weakest of promises, let alone take the time to make a generational investment that is so needed right now.

We saw the promise of a balanced budget, the Premier saying not even just in the election — although he clearly said it during the election. He promised a balanced budget by 2024. He said it as recently as January, even though he knew that his own choices, his own failures to get COVID-19 under control made that impossible. Even though he knew that it wasn't wise to try to rush to balance that quickly, even though he knew it wasn't possible, he still told people that because he wanted their votes.

And he made the promise of no more lockdowns, no more lockdowns. Just madness to say that when he saw the modelling. He knew what was happening in North Dakota, in Alberta, in Manitoba. He saw the modelling for what was going to happen here. He knew we were headed into a terrible second wave, but he didn't care. He ignored the signs because he wanted the votes. And as a result, he missed every opportunity to take real action to get the second wave under control.

He's doing it again now. Those half-measures have failed Saskatchewan people for months on end. They have killed Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker. The lives that you said you care about, too many of them are lost. The jobs that you said you'd protect, those jobs are gone. Those personal freedoms you go on about, well now we're six months in to slow-motion, interminable lockdowns.

And how do they respond? How do the members of this government respond when we point out this disastrous response? The one response when we show the ways that they've failed our health and our economy, failed to protect jobs, they say, it's okay because we won more seats. That's the answer. They say, it's okay, we've got a lot more seats. Well they do, sure. But they say that's the reason that it's okay to have promised one thing and done another. That it's okay, because they won the election, that they can do a bad job after. In the two months leading up to the election, one person died of COVID-19 — over 400 since.

Mr. Speaker, tens of thousands of cases, 23,000 people out of work. Yes, you got the job. You still have to do a good job. You may have aced the interview, but you stink at the performance of the duties. This Premier who constantly exercises poor judgement, behaving like his choices don't matter, when they have real world consequences, the perfect example of someone who wants the job but isn't willing to do the work.

So no, I won't shut the door there. Co-operation; we are here to work together. I'm always ready to work together if there's a sincere desire to do so, but we are not going to play nice in the sandbox just to play nice. We're not going to lay down and pretend that things are going just perfect. We're not going to praise the Minister of Health, as desperate as he is for anything that might excuse his roaring incompetence, just because

vaccines are being distributed quickly.

It's a wonderful thing that Saskatchewan people are coming out to get their vaccine. It's an incredible thing that every health care provider I know is spending their evenings and their weekends out vaccinating people. But doing the one thing that's universally popular, the one thing for which there will be no political backlash, doesn't let you off the hook from all of your other duties. All of the other failures to make the tough choices to prevent the second and third waves, doesn't excuse you ignoring the most vulnerable. It doesn't wash away the guilt of all the lives lost that are on your record.

[16:15]

So no we won't smile and pretend things are fine because they aren't. And to try to spread lipstick on this pig of a pandemic response, this boar of a budget, would be a disservice to the people of Saskatchewan who deserve so much more than they've received from this government that is so beholden to friends and donors and so afraid of their own Buffalo wing to do anything that smacks remotely of courage.

And yes, we are angry, Mr. Speaker, damn rights we're angry. This Premier has ignored all the expert advice over and over again, ignored all the signs. And the people of Saskatchewan are the ones who are paying the price. We're not going to take this lying down. People are waking up and speaking up more and more about this Premier's complete and abject failure, how desperate as he's been to try to downplay this, to try to sell us a story that somehow he beat COVID so we didn't have to try anymore. He has helped create the conditions that have led to so much avoidable death and disease.

Yes, we're angry. We're also sad because there is so much heartache, so much uncertainty for Saskatchewan people right now. So many people are struggling, tired, burnt out.

At the same time we are also hopeful. We know that Saskatchewan is a place of incredible strength. We have opportunities, if we seek them out, if we choose to do better. We can bring in a jobs plan that puts Saskatchewan workers first and that helps kick start key industries. We can take advantage of the incredible opportunities in renewable power and create lasting green jobs. We can raise wages so that people aren't living in poverty. We can invest in child care and our classrooms so that kids can get a good head start and families can get back to work. We can fix seniors' care by greatly expanding home care and staffing up in long-term care. And we can be serious and decisive in our efforts to control COVID-19 and to invest in our health system to address the growing wait times and the huge struggles ahead for those on the frontlines and the patients they serve. All of that is in our power. But none of it is in our budget.

So just like the member from Melfort reminded us, we can choose. Members on this side have a choice. So do the members opposite. Same is true for him and all of his colleagues. You too have a choice. You have a choice. You can tie yourself to this dead-end Premier who has led and continues to lead the province into a historic tragedy and this budget that represents all of those failures. You can vote today to continue to let down Saskatchewan, to continue to deliver the worst performance in response to the biggest challenge most of us will ever face in our

lifetimes. Or you can send a different message, a message that regardless of what banner you ran under, you demand better for the people you represent.

So for everyone who's hurting in Saskatchewan right now, for everyone who wishes that our Premier would have had the courage to lead instead of allowing COVID-19 to wreak havoc on our health and our economy, to cost so many lives and so many jobs, I will proudly support the amendment put forward by our Finance critic, the member for Regina Rosemont and proudly vote against this budget.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to everyone that's participating in this budget debate, participated in this debate over the course of the last week or so, Mr. Speaker. A very important budget. A budget that will provide us the opportunity to protect our families in this province, Mr. Speaker, offer us the opportunity to invest and build in our communities and ensure that we have every opportunity to grow Saskatchewan in the years ahead.

And I am very pleased to rise in this budget, Mr. Speaker, this budget debate and to speak to just a very few of the critical investments that we are making on behalf of the people of this province. And I will keep my remarks relatively short here in this year, in this condensed session and these fewer numbers in the House than what we normally have.

But I think it's also important for us to understand that as we present this budget here this year, not only is it protecting families, is it building our communities, is it growing our Saskatchewan economy, but it is really well positioning Saskatchewan to be able to participate in the global economic recovery that we know is coming in the months ahead. And it will provide us every opportunity to continue with the success, following the recipe of success that has worked so very well over the course of the last decade or just a little longer.

But prior to entering into my remarks, it's customary to thank, you know, many of those that are helping each of us as MLAs serve our constituents, serve at the provincial level, Mr. Speaker, and I'd be no different. And I would be remiss if I didn't first and foremost thank, in the Premier's office, Rhonda and Launa for what they do each and every day, Mr. Speaker. I walk in and their smile makes my day a good one. And it isn't always a good one on the way in, Mr. Speaker, but most certainly when I see both of them smile and say hello, my day is always off to a better start.

I want to take an opportunity to thank all of my colleagues on both sides of the House. A different session this time, different session even than it was last fall. We're down here, we have a travel recommendation on in and around Regina, so that . . . and we are all, to my knowledge, following that recommendation. That means that for many of us that don't live in and around the community of Regina, we are away from our spouses, our partners, our families, and our community, Mr. Speaker.

And so I want to say to members on both sides of this House that I have just a tremendous amount of respect for the commitment that each of you are making. And for you that are spending this time away from your families, I thank you for your commitment,

and I thank you for your commitment to your constituents to be here to serve them and to take that time away. I know it isn't easy for you, and I know it isn't easy for your families back home. None of us serve in this Assembly alone. We serve with the support of our families, and in no other year, I think, has it been as true as it is for us, at least in our generation, as this particular year here.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank the folks that I represent, the folks that put me in as a member in this Assembly, and that's the folks from Rosthern-Shellbrook, a large constituency not far from yours, Mr. Speaker, in fact, adjacent to yours. And as you know, we both have constituencies that are two and a half to three hours across, as many folks do here. We serve many, many municipal governments and a great diversity and variety of people across those constituencies. And I want to thank them for their support in '11 and '16, but most notably in '20, Mr. Speaker, when I didn't have the opportunity to spend as much time in the constituencies I normally would have. And they again returned myself as their representative in this Chamber, and for that I am forever thankful.

I spoke of family earlier. I have a wife. I have two adult children, Mr. Speaker. And as I said — and I won't go on on this — but nobody serves alone, and I sure don't either. And I'm very, very appreciative of the efforts that my family makes to allow me to serve here. Not only in picking up the slack when I'm not around, probably picking up the slack when I am around as well. But there's a lot that goes on in this world, Mr. Speaker. And my family puts up with times that . . . more than they should be asked to, and I just really and truly thank them for their commitment to me.

It's also just an opportunity maybe to think a little bit about what we're facing here and the challenge that we have. It most certainly is a challenge like no other. I was thinking of, you know, some of the challenges that my family has been through prior to me. Some of my father, for example, and my . . . Sorry, father-in-law. A very similar story where both of them were called to the farm early. Both of them had sick fathers themselves. Both of them lost their fathers at a very early age and were required to, you know, enter into a career that, yes, they both loved and wanted to go into, but required to enter into it without that fatherly guidance, that mentorship. That was just gone far too early, Mr. Speaker.

And I think it's fair to say that every generation does have a challenge. Maybe a number of them. We've framed and talked of this budget being the largest economic challenge since World War II. Most certainly, every generation does have a challenge. I think it's fair to say that we are facing ours right now. Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say in this province that we have faced that challenge. We have rose to that challenge as Saskatchewan people, most assuredly. And I'm very proud of what the people of this province, what they have done over the course of the past year to ensure that we are addressing COVID in a very, very effective manner.

Mr. Speaker, in the lead up to the budget . . . And I just very quickly, on the lead up to the budget that was introduced by the Minister of Finance, and I'll thank her a little more as we get into this, Mr. Speaker. But what we did in the lead up to this budget was we did provide a significant amount of funding, a significant

amount of funding in last year's budget to ensure that we were supporting folks in our communities, supporting the folks that we ultimately represent, supporting families in our communities, Mr. Speaker, either directly or indirectly.

And that was important, given the challenges that we were facing with COVID-19. For many cases that was prior to having vaccines available, so we were dealing with what level of public health measures we could have in place. And I've said often that we have likely been working our way through various degrees of the largest amount of public health measures that we've ever asked Saskatchewan people to follow, and they have done so, and they have done so admirably, Mr. Speaker.

But you know, I think back to the self-isolation support programs. Saskatchewan was one of the first provinces to put in place a self-isolation support program. I think back of our decision to increase our capital spend with a \$2 billion stimulus, \$2 billion booster shot, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that as we do exit this pandemic we are poised to build in our communities' infrastructure like schools and hospitals — things that ultimately will have many decades of payback for Saskatchewan people, and will ensure that there are some available jobs in those communities to kind of foster along that private investment that we know is coming. And I'll speak about that in a few minutes as well.

Mr. Speaker, we provided to our health care system, in year, \$165 million, really an unprecedented amount of funding to support contact tracing, to support the early stages of the vaccine program, to ensure that our health care system was there and ready to operate.

The education sector, \$155 million, 154.5 I think it was, a combination of provincial funding of about \$80 million, about \$75 million that came from the federal government, Mr. Speaker.

We supported our communities, as I said, directly and indirectly, with front loading our municipal revenue sharing first of all of course, then ultimately the \$150 million in the municipal and economic enhancement program — a program that has only been utilized once before in this province, Mr. Speaker.

And bringing together our safe restart program that we had negotiated at the Council of Federation table with the federal government. Saskatchewan received just over \$300 million; 70 million of that was flow-through money that we flowed through directly to the municipalities that would not have been available to them had we not provided that municipal economic enhancement, 150 million to begin with, Mr. Speaker.

And so our municipalities, our communities, have been supported and they have been supported throughout this process. Mr. Speaker, this budget goes on to continue to protect. It was pre-budget, now as we get into the budget it goes on to continue to protect the people of this province with the largest ever health budget that has ever been introduced in the province of Saskatchewan. Yes, again still supporting that testing, that testing capacity that we have, but also supporting the most robust and the most successful thus far — and I think it will continue to be the most successful — vaccination program in the nation.

Mr. Speaker, we are leading the nation when it comes to offering

vaccines to Saskatchewan residents. We're going to continue to lead the nation when it comes to offering these vaccines to Saskatchewan residents. And we're going to do that by focusing on our age-based criteria, focusing on the capacity that that can bring, focusing on our drive-through clinics, focusing on, Mr. Speaker, our appointment-based clinics, and very shortly we're going to include the pharmaceutical capacity in that. And I think we are going to be able to deliver virtually every vaccine that the federal government will provide us with, and we would ask them for more like we do each and every day.

One conversation and real very, very important initiative that was here pre-COVID, is here during COVID, and it most certainly is going to be relevant post-COVID in all our communities, and I would say even closer to that in all our families, Mr. Speaker, and that is, you know, what supports and how are we working with our communities and our families on supporting those with mental health and, all too often, addictions issues? And we know where that can lead, Mr. Speaker, intentionally or unintentionally with respect to the outcomes that can too often come from folks in our communities that are struggling with addictions issues.

Mr. Speaker, in this budget we are providing over \$450 million, again the largest investment in mental health and addictions. And I'm going to very much at a high level just explain where the focus is when it comes to mental health and addictions. Yes, there is a focus on harm reduction, Mr. Speaker. We've expanded our naloxone kits to the AED [automated external defibrillator] boxes around the province, Mr. Speaker, expanding our access to naloxone kits in our pharmacies, as well as investing in mobile harm buses in Saskatoon, Regina, but also in Prince Albert and North Battleford, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we have that education piece right on the ground in our communities.

[16:30]

Those mobile harm buses will also serve as an intake, a mode of intake for those folks that do need to find a practitioner, do need to get in front of a practitioner. As well as, the urgent care home investment that we announced in the last budget that will be moving forward throughout this year will also have a mental health intake component to it. Mr. Speaker, that is part of where we need to go with the conversation with mental health and more specifically addictions.

The second piece is to ensure that we are consistently investing in the capacity, the capacity of those folks that do need supports. The capacity, for example, of our detox beds in which we invested in last year and will be coming on stream in the months ahead — 28 of those invested in, Mr. Speaker.

The investment we made last year in the crystal meth rehabilitation beds in the community of Estevan and the addition to those beds and the expansion to ensure that we are also providing those supports for not only crystal meth but also some opioids, Mr. Speaker, expanding those beds by 12 here this year.

All the while continuing to invest in infrastructure, health care infrastructure in this province with hospitals in Weyburn, a hospital being built in Prince Albert, and expanding our long-term care build again, which has really been the hallmark of health care investment of this government over the course of the last now 13 years that we've had the honour to serve government,

with 15 long-term care facilities built. We're finishing one in Meadow Lake; we have one going in La Ronge, Mr. Speaker. We're going to add to that with other long-term care facilities in Grenfell as well as planning for the communities of Watson, Estevan as well, Mr. Speaker, as well as a significant investment in long-term care capacity, infrastructure capacity, right here in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, education — largest education budget in the history of the province. I think that's all I need to say there. Maybe, we're building 21 significant capital infrastructure projects. So I believe that's 16 new schools, Mr. Speaker, as well as five major renovations and a significant amount of maintenance dollars that are flowing out to our school divisions to ensure that . . . in addition to the \$2 billion that we're providing them to operate and ensure our schools are safe.

In addition to the \$20 million that has been brought forward from the Safe Restart fund that was provided by the federal and provincial governments, Mr. Speaker, we are also providing our preventative maintenance dollars as well as the new facilities in a number of different communities, too many to list here today.

With respect to our communities, Mr. Speaker, we are investing as I said, directly and indirectly with them in, ultimately, our families in those communities with the community rinks affordability grant as well as the active families benefit, Mr. Speaker. I mentioned the municipal economic enhancement program which has not been done, save once I think in 2008 or '09 by this government. \$150 million to ensure that our municipal governments can continue with their capital projects that they have had, continue with them throughout this COVID process and ultimately after.

And this brings us from protecting our Saskatchewan families to building our Saskatchewan communities, ultimately to growing our opportunity to come. Obviously we're investing in irrigation infrastructure that will not only change the face of farming and over double the irrigation acres that we have here in this province, but will provide water security for municipalities throughout the Southeast here, Mr. Speaker.

As well as it will provide that water security for industries, industries that are going to ultimately invest into Saskatoon down through Davidson into Regina, Moose Jaw, and ultimately the Southeast, Mr. Speaker. If you're going to attract investment, you need to have the resources available — the raw water resources, the power resources — to ensure that they can add the value to your product and ultimately provide jobs in our communities.

In order to ensure you have access to those markets, we're opening up four additional trade offices, Mr. Speaker, in addition to the trade offices that we have. And we're offering a number of investment incentives to attract people to invest in what I believe is the greatest province in this nation and one of the greatest places in the world to live and ultimately to raise a family and to invest in a business.

And that is paying off. Mr. Speaker, we're starting to see the fruits of that labour. We saw an announced, I believe, a couple-hundred-million dollar investment by Saskatchewan Mining and Minerals in a fertilizer expansion to the west of Regina. We saw a doubling of the capacity of the Richardson

plant in the community of Yorkton. We see now the Cigar Lake mine, the Cameco mine, is going to be reopening, Mr. Speaker.

These are all, yes, investments. Yes, when I speak of the economy, this is economic activity, but at the end of the day it's jobs for Saskatchewan people. And it's additional jobs for Saskatchewan people, not only in the building of these plants but ultimately in the folks that are going to work there and live next door to each of us in the years to come. And I would just say in the months to come, Mr. Speaker, we are going to talk about a lot more investments than what I have just mentioned, as there is continued interest in this great province.

Quick note on finances with respect to the deficit, and yes, this deficit is larger than, I think, anybody had expected as we set out. But, Mr. Speaker, we did need to support the people of this province and support ultimately the economic recovery. And I think it's also fair to note — and the Minister of Trade and Export has noted many times, among other ministers — that we did lose some jobs throughout the COVID response, Mr. Speaker. And we want those jobs back. We've regained a good number of them, but we want them all back. And we want to get back to growing our communities and growing our opportunities here. And we're going to support that through investments in this budget right here.

The deficit in Saskatchewan turns out to be about \$2,100 per Saskatchewan person. When you take that alongside the federal government's deficit to be announced here on April the 19th . . . We're not sure exactly what it is because they haven't introduced a budget for a couple of years now, Mr. Speaker. We've done three over the course of the time since the federal government has announced a budget. But the federal deficit, if it comes in between that 360, \$400 billion deficit, Saskatchewan people are looking at about a \$10,000 per head deficit that will come from the federal government's deficit. Yes, supports were obviously in the federal government's plan, but I think it provides some relative perspective of where we are in Saskatchewan with our deficit as far as per person goes versus where we are in Canada with the federal budget when it does come. And the Bay Street banks apparently like Saskatchewan's budget, Mr. Speaker, which I think the Minister of Finance will have more to say.

In conclusion, before I sit down and allow our Minister of Finance, our Deputy Premier, the member from Humboldt to speak to her budget, I just want to share a quick story. It's a story about a fellow that I've had some correspondence with. I'm going to change his name just a little bit here, Mr. Speaker, but I've got permission to share this. His name is Barry, Mr. Speaker. And Barry works in a good-sized hotel here in the province of Saskatchewan. So he works in the private sector. His partner, Mr. Speaker, also works in the private sector. And he's actually worked his way up to be the general manager at that hotel.

He has a number of employees that work there alongside him, and throughout the measures that we have introduced over the course of the last year, Mr. Speaker, many of his employees — whom he also considers friends, I might add, close friends — they haven't been able to return to work. And Barry finds that very concerning. He cares for his friends because they haven't had the opportunity to earn an income. He knows what they do with that income. They support their children. They support their family. It provides them the opportunity for their children to

ultimately have opportunities to play hockey and to play soccer and to go to the lake. And, Mr. Speaker, some of that just isn't there right now. And so Barry is very concerned about his friends and his colleagues that are not working right now. He's also very concerned that if there is continued increased measures, Mr. Speaker, that there may not be a job for his friends and colleagues to come back for. He also has concerns about his own job.

Mr. Speaker, there's consequences to the measures that are being introduced across Canada, and many of the measures that have been introduced in Saskatchewan. There is a reason for them, but there's consequences to those measures as well, Mr. Speaker, and we must all be aware of both. So as I said, Barry's not only worried about his colleagues' jobs. He is worried, if there's further measures, that his job may be in jeopardy, and all of the jobs at that particular place and business.

So Barry had expressed that he is quite satisfied right now. He's quite happy with respect to how his government, how Barry's government, the people of this province's government, have made every effort to provide that balance, that balance between keeping people safe with the measures that are in place, keeping people safe from COVID-19 but also providing them with the hope that they will have the continued opportunity to return to their place of work, Mr. Speaker, the hope that they will have the continued opportunity to get back to some degree of normal and to be able to continue to provide ultimately for their families.

So I'd have maybe a little bit of a message for Barry, and actually all the Barrys out there in Saskatchewan and I'll just say a few things. The member from Yorkton had said this first of all, but as we look ahead over the course of the next number of weeks, all roads out of this pandemic, they lead through one of our vaccination centres, Mr. Speaker. Barry lives in a province where the government has prioritized the vaccination rollout plan that we have to the point that we are leading the nation. And Saskatchewan people can be very confident that they are going to have access to a vaccine. In fact everyone over 18 is going to have access to a vaccine in about five or six weeks, Mr. Speaker.

And I would say this to all the Barrys across this province as well. Your government hears you. We hear you loud and clear and we are always going to be there to ensure that you're going to have every opportunity in the future as you have over the course of the last decade. We hear you, Barry, and we are here to serve you. Mr. Speaker, this budget is here to serve Barry and all of the Barrys in Saskatchewan. This budget is a budget that will build a strong, a growing, and confident Saskatchewan, a Saskatchewan that is always going to be better tomorrow than it was yesterday, than it is today, Mr. Speaker. And we all have something I think very special to look forward to in the days ahead.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member from Humboldt, our Deputy Premier, our Minister of Finance, for all of the effort her and her treasury board and the Ministry of Finance have put into this document, probably one of the most important investments in Saskatchewan people, in Saskatchewan communities, and in the future of this province that I have been witness to in my time here. Mr. Speaker, I thank her deeply for her commitment to her province, to put all of the effort and all of the years of her experience into this.

Mr. Speaker, that's why I will not be supporting the amendment

by the opposition and most certainly will be supporting the main motion put forward by this government.

The Speaker: — It is my duty pursuant to rule 31(7) to inform the Assembly that the Minister of Finance is about to exercise her right to close the debate and afterwards all members will be precluded from speaking to this question. I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I truly appreciate the opportunity to add a few more comments to the budget debate. And I will begin that with a few thank yous as well, starting with the constituents of Humboldt-Watrous. I truly appreciate the support that they have given me now for a number of years.

And I always have to say thank you to three amazing young women who have been there supporting me through my entire career, and that's my three daughters, Crystal, Shannon, and Lindsay. Those girls were very, very young when I was first elected. They were 10, 13, and 15, and they're certainly not that now.

I also have three young men in my life that may not be blood but they are there through the heart. And that is Rusty, Crystal's husband. He's an amazing man and right now he's in Nunavut, so he won't be watching. But Brian who is my middle daughter's partner, that I'm getting to know more and more, and then there's Matt, who perhaps I don't know as well but he is part of my family.

Tom, my partner, is at home. I've been down here now for three weeks, so all I can say is thanks for holding down the fort. Thanks for being so supportive, and hopefully someday soon we'll see each other again. It's been a bit of a stretch.

Susan in my office in the constituency is that person that honestly is always a ray of sunshine, always optimistic and positive, and you know, the constituents are very well served by her. My office staff, Ashley, Catherine, Sofiya, and Jennifer, I've got the best in the building. It is a team that keep me organized and keep me going, and so thank you, all of you.

The treasury board colleagues, we've spent a number of hours together and we've had some good laughs and we've had to make some tough decisions, so thank you. This is not something that you do alone, and I get to stand up and take credit for it, but honestly it's a team effort.

[16:45]

And speaking of that team, I also need to thank the Finance officials because I have an amazing team behind me. And they are there. It's been a little bit more difficult. We've had to do it with screens and all the squares on a screen as we try to work together because we can't necessarily be in a room together.

Mr. Speaker, as I said in my budget address, the COVID-19 pandemic is the largest shock to Saskatchewan, Canadian, and the world economies of any single event since the Second World War. And in response to that significant challenge, we've provided a significant spending plan which fulfills 14 specific campaign promises and provides a plan to get back to balance.

It's a plan and a vision that the people of Saskatchewan resoundingly supported in the provincial election just a few months ago.

And I know in a few moments the members opposite will vote against the budget. They want to re-fight the election because they sincerely believe the voters got it wrong. But on more than one occasion the NDP members have been asked what they would do differently, and they keep citing their election promises that they lost the election on.

And they've added a few more incentives as well. The NDP platform, Mr. Speaker, acknowledged that their promises would cost 2.7 billion, and then it was discovered that they failed to account for an additional 4 billion that was in their platform that they simply choose not to disclose that cost. And now they've added an additional 200 to 300 million of specific new initiatives.

And as well, they don't believe the largest Health budget in the history of the province that is in this budget is enough. The largest Education budget is not enough. The largest Social Services budget, not enough. And the list goes on. So that's over \$7 billion, Mr. Speaker, without the ambiguous increases that they're demanding but will not put a specific amount to.

So if in government, how are they going to make the taxpayers of this province pay for it? And that is where we see the NDP duck and dodge. Not one of them will answer the question and nor will the media press them and hold them to account for their demands. Now I'm probably going to get some tough scrums for saying that, but I really think the media need to press them more.

Mr. Speaker, to his credit, the Leader of the Opposition did at one point say that he would raise corporate income tax. Presently the corporate income tax is 12 per cent, and that is by no means the lowest in the country. When the NDP were government, up until the eve of the 2007 election that they lost, the corporate income tax was 17 per cent. Should they return it to that level and be able to retain the corporate activity that we have in the province, it would generate approximately \$3 billion. So they're still short over \$4 billion. It would attract no new investment, and I dare to say many of the investments and the corporations here would simply move. Those are jobs, Mr. Speaker, the jobs that they say is important. Those are the people, the families that are living in our province.

And then I think I've heard some comments about taxing the rich. I know the NDP love that concept. Mr. Speaker, 11 per cent of the tax filers in our province that make more than 100,000 per year, 11 per cent pay 55 per cent of the total income tax collected. I'm going to repeat that: 11 per cent of the tax filers in our province pay 55 per cent of the total tax collected. We do tax the rich. And if you keep raising that, they simply leave.

And we have lived that nightmare. We lived under an NDP government and we saw it happen. Many of them are the job creators within our province, so when they leave, so do those jobs. That's their job plan.

We only have a little over 16,000 people in our entire province that make over \$200,000 a year. So even if the NDP taxed every single dime those individuals made, they wouldn't have their \$7 billion. Wouldn't be there. In their election platform they said

that they're going to have a wealth tax where you tax assets, not the ability to pay. That's an idea shared, quite frankly, with their federal friends and one, I hope, that they keep for a very, very long time because it will guarantee that they will never win an election.

I could talk on. I could talk the clock quite frankly on everything about a wealth tax that they love. There is no tax that I can think of that would kill jobs, opportunity, and growth in our province more than a wealth tax. But that's the NDP job creation plan. And the people of this province said no thank you in a very big way.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to many of the speeches given to the budget and it's so tempting to correct the record on the things that the NDP say, but we don't have enough time for that, Mr. Speaker. I would like to, however, make comments on something that was made from the member from Regina University. And she did acknowledge that she was new, and she seemed somewhat surprised by the amount of the revenue that is federal government transfers. She pointed out that it was about 20 per cent of our revenue, and that's true. It is close to 20 per cent.

Every province receives a health transfer from the federal government, largely based on their population, and it is by far the largest transfer that we get from the federal government. Every province also receives a social transfer that is also based largely on population. There are additional transfers for things such as French language, programs for early learning. There's flow-through dollars for municipalities such as the gas tax, although the Government Relations minister told me yesterday it's now got a new name. And of course, there's our infrastructure agreements that we have with the federal government, including some of those agreements being tripartite agreements that are cost-shared both federal, provincial, and municipal for infrastructure. And the list goes on that all provinces get from the federal government in those transfers.

In this particular budget, there's one unique transfer that isn't necessarily for all provinces and that's in this budget. It's \$200 million for the accelerated site-closure program, which was a federal job stimulus program in response to the pandemic.

What surprised me about the NDP member's comments was that she felt somehow that this was a gift from Justin Trudeau and insinuated that we had not shown him enough gratitude. She said, and I quote:

I learned that for every \$5 the members opposite spend, for every \$5, one of those dollars is an allowance that comes directly from the Prime Minister. Twenty per cent of our budget comes directly from Ottawa, directly from Prime Minister Trudeau . . . They may be unhappy with the federal government, but it's hard to take their bluster as anything but while they keep one hand out, eager for a handout.

I think that statement fundamentally defines a huge difference between the members on government side of the House and the NDP members. Mr. Speaker, Justin Trudeau does not have a money tree. The dollars in the transfers to the province comes directly from the taxes that our residents work hard for and pay to the federal government. We will respect our provincial taxpayers. We will be cautious in how we spend their money provincially. And this Premier and this government will defend

the interests of our people — our men and women that are working hard in this province — with the federal government every single day.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP have no plan on how they'll pay for their endless promises and asks for higher spending. The NDP have no plan on how they would balance the budget. The NDP have no clue on how to build and grow an economy. Mr. Speaker, the budget that I had the honour of presenting to the Assembly on April 6th will protect, build, and grow our great province.

We know that with each and every budget and with each and every year, there's more work to do. This budget provides a balanced and measured approach that charts a clear course for our province through the remainder of the pandemic and into the strong recovery that will follow. I have faith in the people of our great province, and I have faith in our future together.

Mr. Speaker, I was proud to move the budget motion and have it seconded by the member from The Battlefords, and I will not be supporting the amendment moved by the opposition.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the proposed amendment moved by the member from Regina Rosemont and seconded by the member from Regina Lakeview:

That all the words after "Assembly" be deleted and replaced with the following:

does not approve the budgetary policy of the government because it does nothing to contain or get under control the damaging spike in COVID-19, fails to include a jobs plan, breaks key promises made by the government, and fails to invest in key services for people, and, further,

that the Assembly has lost confidence in the government.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the amendment?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — Those in favour of the amendment please say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — Those opposed to the amendment please say no.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — A recorded division has been requested. Pursuant to the sessional order, voting will occur in two tranches. Call in the first set of members.

[The division bells rang from 16:55 until 17:04.]

The Speaker: — All those in favour of the amendment please stand.

[Yeas — 5]

Meili
Beck

Wotherspoon
Conway

Bowes

The Speaker: — All those opposed to the amendment please stand.

[Nays — 20]

Moe
Tell
Kaeding
Cockrill
Jenson
Kirsch
McLeod

Reiter
Merriman
Makowsky
Wilson
Ross, A.
Goudy
Harrison, D.

Duncan
Docherty
Ross, L.
Ottenbreit
Dennis
Francis

The Speaker: — Call in the second set of members. All those in favour of the amendment please stand.

[Yeas — 4]

Mowat
Love

Vermette

Nippi-Albright

All those opposed to the amendment please stand.

[Nays — 24]

Stewart
Wyant
Hindley
Carr
Hargrave
Keisig
Young, C.
Domotor

Harpauer
Bradshaw
Cheveldayoff
McMorris
Bonk
Meyers
Steele
Friesen

Morgan
Harrison, J.
Marit
Fiaz
Skoropad
Buckingham
Nerlien
Grewal

The Speaker: — I will now call for the proxy votes. Those in favour of the amendment? I recognize the Opposition Whip.

[Yeas — 3]

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to report that the following members are in favour of the amendment, the members:

Ritchie

Sarauer

Young

The number of members in favour of the amendment are three.

The Speaker: — Those opposed to the amendment? I recognize the Government Whip.

[Nays — 3]

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to report the following members are opposed to the amendment:

Eyre

Lambert

Lawrence

The number of members opposed are three.

Clerk: — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the amendment, 13; those opposed, 47.

[Nays — 5]

The Speaker: — I declare the amendment lost. The question before the Assembly is the main motion moved by the Minister of Finance and seconded by the member from The Battlefords:

Mowat
Ritchie

Vermette
Love

Nippi-Albright

That the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker: — I will now call for the proxy votes. Those in favour of the motion? I recognize the Government Whip.

[Yeas — 3]

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to report that the following members are in favour of the motion:

Some Hon. Members: — Yes.

Eyre

Lambert

Lawrence

The Speaker: — Those in favour of the motion please say aye.

Numbering three.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — Those opposed to the motion? I recognize the Opposition Whip.

The Speaker: — Those opposed to the motion please say no.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

[Nays — 2]

The Speaker: — A recorded division has been requested. Call in the first set of members.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to report the following members are opposed to the motion:

[The division bells rang from 17:14 until 17:18.]

Sarauer

Young

The Speaker: — All those in favour of the motion please stand.

The number of members opposed are two.

[Yeas — 20]

Clerk: — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the motion, 47; those opposed, 12.

Moe	Reiter	Duncan
Tell	Merriman	Docherty
Kaeding	Makowsky	Ross, L.
Cockrill	Wilson	Ottenbreit
Jenson	Ross, A.	Dennis
Kirsch	Goudy	Francis
McLeod	Harrison, D.	

The Speaker: — I declare the motion carried. This Assembly stands recessed until 7 p.m.

[The Assembly recessed from 17:27 until 19:00.]

The Speaker: — All those opposed to the motion please stand.

[Nays — 5]

Meili	Wotherspoon	Beck
Bowes	Conway	

The Speaker: — Call in the second set of members.

All those in favour of the motion please stand.

[Yeas — 24]

Stewart	Harpauer	Morgan
Wyant	Bradshaw	Harrison, J.
Hindley	Cheveldayoff	Marit
Carr	McMorris	Fiaz
Hargrave	Bonk	Skoropad
Keisig	Meyers	Buckingham
Young, C.	Steele	Nerlien
Domotor	Friesen	Grewal

The Speaker: — All those opposed to the motion please stand.

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President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Fred Bradshaw
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Minister Responsible for
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