



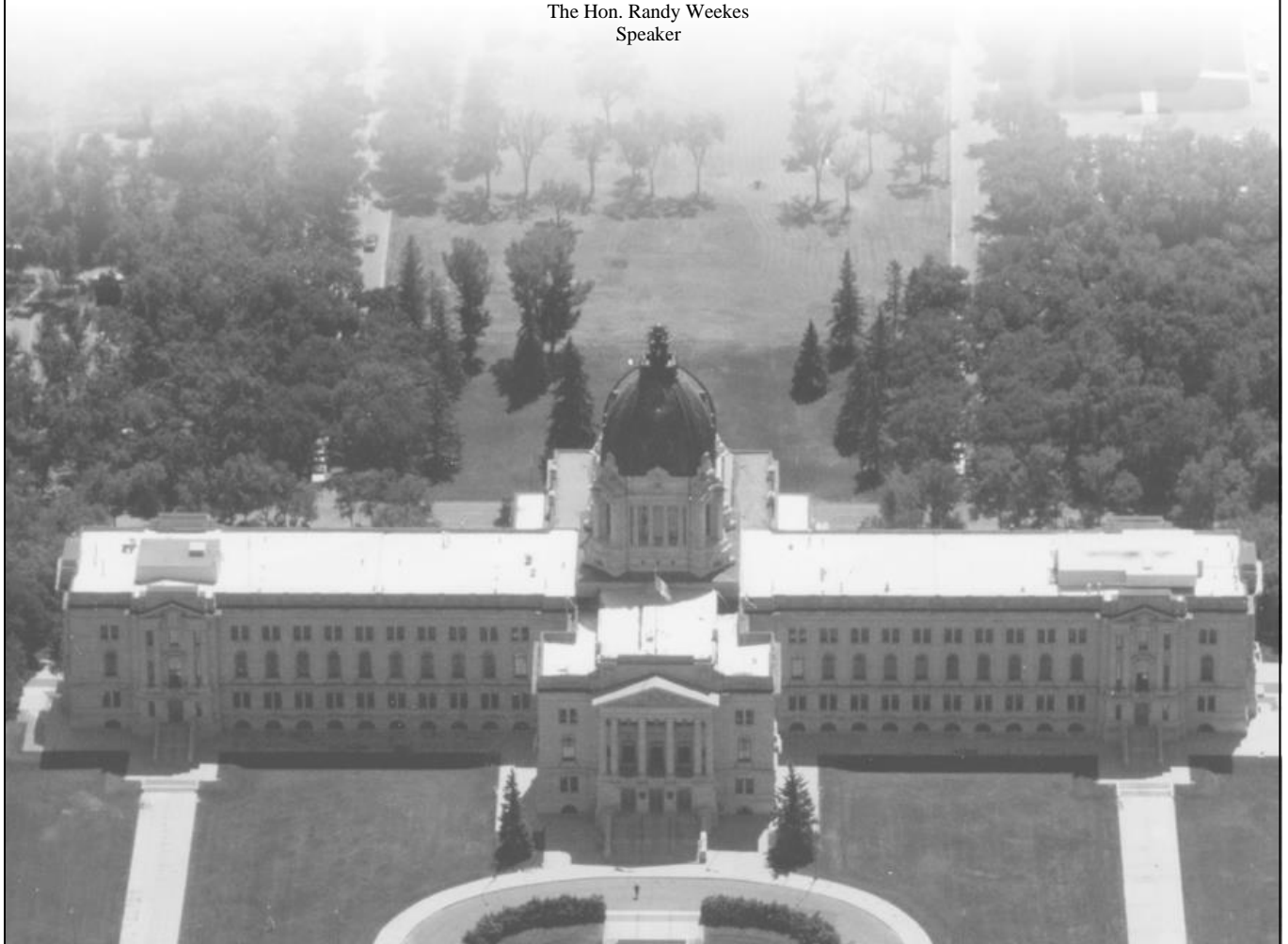
SECOND SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

(HANSARD)
Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Randy Weekes
Speaker



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
2nd Session — 29th Legislature

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

Beck, Carla — Regina Lakeview (NDP)	Love, Matt — Saskatoon Eastview (NDP)
Bonk, Steven — Moosomin (SP)	Makowsky, Hon. Gene — Regina Gardiner Park (SP)
Bowes, Jennifer — Saskatoon University (NDP)	Marit, Hon. David — Wood River (SP)
Bradshaw, Hon. Fred — Carrot River Valley (SP)	McLeod, Tim — Moose Jaw North (SP)
Buckingham, David — Saskatoon Westview (SP)	McMorris, Hon. Don — Indian Head-Milestone (SP)
Carr, Hon. Lori — Estevan (SP)	Meili, Ryan — Saskatoon Meewasin (NDP)
Cheveldayoff, Ken — Saskatoon Willowgrove (SP)	Merriman, Hon. Paul — Saskatoon Silverspring-Sutherland (SP)
Cockrill, Jeremy — The Battlefords (SP)	Meyers, Derek — Regina Walsh Acres (SP)
Conway, Meara — Regina Elphinstone-Centre (NDP)	Moe, Hon. Scott — Rosthern-Shellbrook (SP)
Dennis, Terry — Canora-Pelly (SP)	Morgan, Hon. Don — Saskatoon Southeast (SP)
Docherty, Mark — Regina Coronation Park (SP)	Mowat, Vicki — Saskatoon Fairview (NDP)
Domotor, Ryan — Cut Knife-Turtleford (SP)	Nerlien, Hugh — Kelvington-Wadena (SP)
Duncan, Hon. Dustin — Weyburn-Big Muddy (SP)	Nippi-Albright, Betty — Saskatoon Centre (NDP)
Eyre, Hon. Bronwyn — Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota (SP)	Ottenbreit, Greg — Yorkton (SP)
Fiaz, Muhammad — Regina Pasqua (SP)	Reiter, Hon. Jim — Rosetown-Elrose (SP)
Francis, Ken — Kindersley (SP)	Ritchie, Erika — Saskatoon Nutana (NDP)
Friesen, Marv — Saskatoon Riversdale (SP)	Ross, Alana — Prince Albert Northcote (SP)
Goudy, Todd — Melfort (SP)	Ross, Hon. Laura — Regina Rochdale (SP)
Grewal, Gary — Regina Northeast (SP)	Sarauer, Nicole — Regina Douglas Park (NDP)
Hargrave, Joe — Prince Albert Carlton (SP)	Skoropad, Dana — Arm River (SP)
Harpauer, Hon. Donna — Humboldt-Watrous (SP)	Steele, Doug — Cypress Hills (SP)
Harrison, Daryl — Cannington (SP)	Stewart, Hon. Lyle — Lumsden-Morse (SP)
Harrison, Hon. Jeremy — Meadow Lake (SP)	Tell, Hon. Christine — Regina Wascana Plains (SP)
Hindley, Hon. Everett — Swift Current (SP)	Vermette, Doyle — Cumberland (NDP)
Jenson, Terry — Martensville-Warman (SP)	Weekes, Hon. Randy — Biggar-Sask Valley (SP)
Kaeding, Hon. Warren — Melville-Saltcoats (SP)	Wilson, Nadine — Saskatchewan Rivers (Ind.)
Keisig, Travis — Last Mountain-Touchwood (SP)	Wotherspoon, Trent — Regina Rosemont (NDP)
Kirsch, Delbert — Batoche (SP)	Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)
Lambert, Lisa — Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood (SP)	Young, Aleana — Regina University (NDP)
Lawrence, Greg — Moose Jaw Wakamow (SP)	Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)
Lemaigre, Jim — Athabasca (SP)	

Party Standings: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 48; New Democratic Party (NDP) — 12; Independent (Ind.) — 1

Clerks-at-the-Table

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Law Clerk & Parliamentary Counsel — Kenneth S. Ring, Q.C.

Deputy Clerk — Iris Lang

Clerk Assistant — Kathy Burianyk

Sergeant-at-Arms — Sean Darling

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I would like to welcome all invited guests to your Legislative Chamber. Please silence your cell phones. No photos or videos are permitted. Guests are also reminded not to participate in proceedings. No comments or applause, please. Please remain in your place until the House adjourns.

I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to take this opportunity to say how great it is to have a full house in this Legislative Assembly. Mr. Speaker, it's been two long years since we've had the opportunity to fill this House, to fill this House on a budget day. And I want to take the opportunity to welcome each and every one of our guests that has enjoyed . . . that has joined us here today. Not enjoyed just yet. Will enjoy, I'm sure, the speech from the Minister of Finance, the Deputy Premier.

But with us today, Mr. Speaker, we have representatives from a broad cross-section of groups across this great province that we collectively on the floor of this Assembly have the honour to represent. Mr. Speaker, we have representatives here today from education, from health care. We have folks who do important work delivering services across the province, Mr. Speaker, delivering services to those in our communities that may be disabled, Mr. Speaker. They join us here today. We have leaders from the municipal world. We have leaders from our business community. And, Mr. Speaker, we are so very grateful for each and every one of you, your presence here today.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize also the contributions that you make to your community. We recognize in particular the contributions that you have each made to your community over the course of the past two very, very long years.

Mister budget . . . Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the budget that we will be unveiling on the floor of this Assembly today, it's a financial document. It reveals revenues and it reveals expenses, but it's so much more than that. In particular, it's so much more than that this year. It's so much more than just a simple accounting exercise.

The budget is really an example or a product of the strong partnership that is at work in this democracy and in this province. The budget is an expression of our collective desire to ensure that Saskatchewan, the province that we all live in and love, Mr. Speaker, continues to move forward, it continues to progress, and it continues to provide the quality of life that is expected by people in communities right across this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, we often don't agree on everything across the floor of this aisle. I'm sure we will today during question period, but it isn't always that way. That's the nature of a strong democracy, Mr. Speaker. That's the nature of how we live

together in our communities as well.

But today I think we will agree on at least this: everyone in this Assembly, whether you're elected or whether you're attending here today, you love this province. I know you love this province. Everyone in this Assembly wants to see Saskatchewan do well. Everyone in this Assembly is working to ensure that Saskatchewan is able to reach the enormous potential that we know we can. This is what unites us. This is what has always united us, Mr. Speaker, and this is what brings us together here in this Assembly today.

So, Mr. Speaker, through you, I would like to just welcome everyone to their Legislative Assembly here today.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I rise to join the Premier in welcoming everyone attending today. It truly is wonderful to see you here, see new faces, see familiar faces, see faces at all. It's a very exciting thing. And we're so happy to be able to join together at this time and to see representatives who are such leaders in our communities.

Representatives from law enforcement, the groups who keep us safe. From medicine, from nursing, from health in general — the folks who take care of us when we're dealing with sickness.

The people who are working with our children: child care, K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12], universities — those opportunities to learn and to grow that are so central to a positive future for this province.

To see leaders from municipalities. I see Métis and First Nations leaders here in the galleries, Mr. Speaker.

On a des leaders de la communauté francophone, évidemment très important dans notre province. [Translation: We have leaders from the francophone community, of course very important in our province.]

Leaders in business, in agriculture, in manufacturing, in mining — the people who are working so hard to make sure that our economy grows, that people have good jobs to go to.

At a time like this, the Premier talked a bit about what we look for in a budget. We look for a document that is . . . The Premier's right; it's more than a set of numbers. It's more than the revenues and the expenditures. It talks about values. And at a time when we have been put under such incredible stress, when the pandemic has revealed so much of what is challenging, what was challenging before and needs to be fixed going forward, when people are struggling to pay the bills and wondering about getting health care, the conversations we have today are extremely important.

And I want to echo the Premier in underlining the importance and the value and the beauty of the right that we have to engage in open, democratic debate as we . . . Sometimes it's a little messy — I think everyone who sits on this floor will understand and agree — but we are always working towards a better future for Saskatchewan.

I want to thank everyone for joining us today to be a part of that exact discussion. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask all the members to join me in welcoming those who have joined us today.

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 residents that are speaking out and calling for action with respect to the crushing cost-of-living increases that they're facing.

They identify in the petition that on the front of PST [provincial sales tax] alone, that after the changes and the hike of just a few years ago, that the average Saskatchewan family is now paying more than \$1,000 each and every year more than they were before those changes. Of course we know the terrible cost of fuel that families are facing, and food and everything else. And folks are looking, rightfully so, for some relief.

The prayer reads as follows:

That we urge the Sask Party government to immediately reinstate the PST exemption on prepared meals, restaurant dining, and children's clothes.

These petitions are signed by concerned residents of Regina and Qu'Appelle. I so submit.

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise once again today to present our petition calling for a permanent tuition freeze for international students in Saskatchewan.

The signatories wish to bring to our attention the following: that international students pay up to three times as much in tuition fees compared to domestic students, and international tuition fees, Mr. Speaker, have risen an astonishing 50 per cent over the last 10 years; that after five years of graduation, 53 per cent of international students in Saskatchewan leave the province; and that in order for Saskatchewan to lead the nation in innovation, progress, and economic success, Saskatchewan must focus on retaining international students.

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 freeze tuition for all international students.

Mr. Speaker, the petition today has been signed by students from Regina. I do so present.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Why thank you, Mr. Speaker. What an absolute privilege to be on my feet today to present a petition to

the Legislative Assembly calling for the funding of in vitro fertilization treatments here in Saskatchewan.

As we know, Mr. Speaker, infertility impacts one in six couples in Canada, meaning that there are many in this room today who have friends, family, loved ones, or perhaps themselves have struggled with this. And as will be familiar to members in this House, treatment is expensive, starting around \$10,000. And, Mr. Speaker, that is money that could go to saving. That is money that could go to the down payment of a house or, Mr. Speaker, that's money that could be spent in the local economy.

I will read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan immediately move to cover the financial burden of two rounds of IVF treatments for Saskatchewan people experiencing infertility.

Mr. Speaker, the signatories of this petition today are from Yorkton, Saskatchewan. I do so present.

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

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — miigwech, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise to present the following petition. We only have 10 per cent of Crown land left. This government has been auctioning off Crown land and leases to the highest bidder. They haven't meaningfully consulted with impacted communities. They are leaving the taxpayers of this province footing the bill for its mistakes and losses in courts. They are breaching the treaty relationship.

The first right of refusal needs to be offered to First Nations in the treaty land entitlement process when Crown lands are being sold. And the provincial government must stop, immediately, selling off Crown lands and leases and fix their broken duty-to-consult process.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately stop the sell-off of Crown land, and work with First Nation and Métis communities to develop a new duty-to-consult framework.

The folks who signed this petition reside in Chacachas Nation, Melfort, and Star City. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Unity Woman Fundraises to Support Local Cancer Warriors

Mr. Domotor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2019 Amy Briggs lost her mom Vicky Rissling to breast cancer. Two weeks before she passed, Amy's mom had mentioned how the majority of breast cancer funds that are raised are used to support research

and not those battling the disease. Amy wasn't sure what to do with that profound statement until recently.

Mr. Speaker, Amy decided to start a fundraiser that would directly support local cancer warriors. The initial goal was to secure five luxury self-care gift bags; however, through donations she ended up with 31 in just four short days. Mr. Speaker, a total of 60 incredible donation items along with another \$5,000 in cash was raised. The cash donations were then used to support local businesses in Unity and surrounding towns to purchase self-care items and services such as massages, pedicures, haircuts, and jewellery.

Nominees were as far as Lloydminster, Saskatoon, Macklin, Luseland, North Battleford, Wilkie, Unity, and all of the rural areas in between. Amy and her father Murry drove around to multiple cancer warriors' homes to celebrate their strength and their courage.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members of this Assembly join me in thanking Amy, Murry, surrounding businesses, and community members for supporting and lifting the spirits of those battling cancer in our communities.

Thank you.

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

Impact of 2017 Budget

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday was the five-year anniversary of the 2017 austerity budget — a budget so terrible that its impact still reverberates a half-decade later. Not even the swift departure of the Finance minister, then a premier, can plaster over the deep cracks left by that heartless budget.

Some of the lowlights: this government shuttered STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company], leaving many seniors, students, people with disabilities, rural and northern residents stranded and with lost independence. Devastating cuts to classrooms, leaving kids without needed supports, teachers overburdened, and school boards scrambling to make up the damage. Huge cuts to advanced education which has prompted tuition hikes every year since, burdening the very people looking to build their lives here.

An all-out attack on our provincial library system, only walked back after the largest mobilization of Saskatchewan people in a generation. A shameful cut to funeral services for low-income people, a measure to ensure dignity after death, axed to save a few dollars. All this plus the largest tax hike in Saskatchewan's history.

Hopefully, Mr. Speaker, the government will right these wrongs so that families, seniors, students, and all those struggling to pay their bills can see brighter days ahead and stop paying more to get less.

[13:45]

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

Moose Jaw Hockey Team Finalists for Chevrolet Good Deeds Cup

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Chevrolet Good Deeds Cup is rallying to make hockey more inclusive than ever, and youth hockey teams across Canada have been doing their part for charity. Mr. Speaker, 12 teams who completed their good deeds now have a chance to win \$100,000 for a charity of their choice. They also have a chance to have their team's name added to the Good Deeds Cup trophy.

Mr. Speaker, the Moose Jaw U15 A Warriors are the regional finalists for Saskatchewan. The Warriors made hockey more inclusive by opening their rank to newcomers to Canada. This opportunity to skate for the first time ever included one-on-one instruction. And, Mr. Speaker, participants were provided with donated skates, helmets, and other equipment.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Warriors need our support. For every vote cast, Chevrolet Canada will donate \$1 to the Hockey Canada Foundation Assist Fund. This money will subsidize hockey registration fees for Canadian youth who want to join in the sport of hockey. Anyone can vote once a day between now and April 2nd, and this Saturday individuals can vote up to 10 times for their team — our team, the Warriors — in celebration of the Chevy Good Deeds Cup Day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Crisis in Long-Term Care

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, this government has presided over a crisis in long-term care for more than a decade. All of the warning signs were there, right in this government's own reports — warnings about short-staffing, crumbling facilities, lack of infection control, and overcrowding that deprived seniors of dignity, even at the best of times. So when the pandemic hit, Saskatchewan people saw this broken system, and they were horrified by what they saw.

Well over 200 residents of long-term care have died in Saskatchewan so far, and this Assembly needs to be reminded that older adults in care continue to die from COVID. This year alone, 57 residents have passed away.

Let us remember their lives and the refusal of this government to implement basic measures to limit the spread of COVID in our province. Let us be mindful of all those who built this province but are unable to get the care that they need and deserve because of short-staffing.

Let us also honour those front-line workers who have journeyed with our seniors through times of grief, loss, isolation, and uncertainty. They have risen to the challenge, time and time again, with great courage and personal sacrifice.

I invite all members to join me in recognizing the ongoing impact of this pandemic on older adults. Let us commit to making Saskatchewan a place for positive aging and dignity at all stages of life.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert

Northcote.

Enhanced Staffing Levels in Home Care and Long-Term Care

Ms. A. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am pleased to provide an update on our government's work to enhance staffing levels in home care and long-term care. This past year, \$6 million was allocated to hire 108 full-time equivalent continuing care aide assistants — 90 for long-term care facilities and a further 18 to support home care.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that 94 per cent of those positions have been filled. And the best part, Mr. Speaker, is that this is only the beginning. This is year one of a three-year commitment to hire 300 new care aides across the health system.

As a former health care worker and continuing care aide instructor, I know first-hand the bonds created between the care aides and those they care for. Continuing care assistants play a crucial role in our health care system, and by following through on our promise to hire more of them, our government is strengthening long-term care and home care services in communities across the province.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to take steps to provide high-quality care that meets the needs of residents receiving home care and those living in our long-term care homes. And I hope we will all hear more about this very soon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Canoe Lake Broadcaster Provides First Cree Commentary on *Hockey Night In Canada*

Mr. Lemaigre: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to acknowledge a special individual from my home constituency of Athabasca: Clarence Tsiboy Iron of Canoe Lake Cree Nation.

Clarence is a broadcaster with CFNK FM out of Pinehouse Lake. Since March of 2019 Clarence has had an amazing opportunity of broadcasting the first *Hockey Night in Canada* games in Plains Cree. This was only made possible through a partnership made between Sportsnet and Aboriginal Peoples Television Network.

Mr. Speaker, hockey is a game that brings all of us together. Many of my home constituents and elders are many hockey fans and are very excited to once again hear Clarence giving a broadcast play-by-play in Cree. Clarence will be joined for the broadcast by Jason Chamakese and Earl Wood on March 26th, April 9th, and April 23rd.

Mr. Speaker, it has been amazing to see support for initiatives such as *Hockey Night in Canada* in Cree. People across not only Saskatchewan but Canada are very excited for these broadcasts.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my fellow members to try tuning in one of Clarence's upcoming broadcasts. And once more I would like to congratulate him on this milestone for Indigenous people and their languages. marsi chogh, Clarence Iron. marsi chogh, Mr. Speaker.

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

Joint Venture to Build Integrated Agriculture Complex in Regina

Mr. Grewal: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Spring is a time for celebration, and today I am pleased to celebrate a joint venture between FCL Ltd. [Federated Co-operatives Ltd.] and AGT Foods. Announced in January, an estimated \$2 billion integrated agriculture complex is to be built in northeast Regina near Co-op Refinery.

Mr. Speaker, this new renewable diesel fuel and canola crushing plant is part of Federated Co-operatives' plan to reduce greenhouse emissions. Under the Paris Agreement, Canada has committed to reducing its emissions by 40 to 45 per cent from 2005 levels by 2030.

The diesel plant is to have a production capacity of 15,000 barrels a day or about 1 billion litres annually. The canola facility is expected to produce 450 000 tonnes of oil. The diesel plant portion is expected to create more than 2,500 construction jobs and 150 permanent operating jobs. It is scheduled to be completed by 2027.

Mr. Speaker, canola fields can provide a source for production and renewable fuels. Our government estimates that this complex will have direct and indirect economic benefits for about four and a half billion for our province. I look forward to this and much more positive news for our economy and for our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Operations of Evraz Inc. and Support for Ukraine

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In his introductions, the Premier spoke of the moments when we do agree on the floor of this House, and I think back to a very recent one. I was proud to see unanimous agreement in this legislature condemning Vladimir Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine. The Ukrainian people, with whom Saskatchewan has such a deep and lasting connection, have displayed tremendous courage in the face of tyranny. I know Saskatchewan people have been generous with donations and will be generous as we welcome Ukrainian refugees to make a new life in this province.

I'm also deeply concerned that Roman Abramovich, one of the Russian oligarchs funding Putin's war, continues to have a major beneficial stake at the Evraz steel mill here in Regina. We cannot accept that profits from the labour of Saskatchewan workers would go to back the attack on Ukraine, nor can we take the risk that the fully justified sanctions against Abramovich could impact local jobs right here in Regina.

We're now four weeks into the war in Ukraine. It's been 14 days since those sanctions have been introduced. Can the Premier please outline what the plan is to address this very concerning issue?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As

we do approach close to a month of the conflict, the Russian invasion in Ukraine, Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say that all in Saskatchewan, we most certainly . . . our hearts pour out for the Ukrainian people. I believe it's close to 4 million Ukrainian people have left Ukraine in search of some safety in various parts of Europe.

We have moved forward in lockstep with the federal government on a number of sanctions for folks like Mr. Abramovich to ensure that those profits are not being used to fund this action, Mr. Speaker, most certainly, and continue to communicate with the federal government about any additional situations similar to that.

Mr. Speaker, I would say in addition to all of the efforts that the province has made thus far, we are looking to bring as many people to Saskatchewan as possible, whether that be for a temporary period of time, whether that be through the refugee channels, Mr. Speaker, or through the SINP [Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program] channels.

Mr. Speaker, as we know, next week I will be in London and I will be in Germany. We're going to be engaging with folks that have made it from Ukraine to Germany, and we're going to have some additional initiatives to really assist and open up some pathways for Ukrainian people to find their way to safety and to a safe place here in the province of Saskatchewan.

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

Government Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The situation with Evraz remains a deep concern, and we would certainly like to have some more detailed response on exactly what the plan is there.

As we both acknowledged, Mr. Speaker, the place is full of visitors today and that is great to see. So good to see new faces and old friends. But we have to acknowledge that there are nearly 1,200 Saskatchewan people who couldn't join us today, people who've lost their lives due to COVID-19. And so many more who've been affected, become sick, been unable to access necessary care.

Mr. Speaker, we had the worst fourth wave in Canada, our hospitals so overwhelmed that we had to send ICU [intensive care unit] patients out of the province. And today, while we have hope, we also have the highest current death rate in the entire country.

So to the Premier: does he regret his choice to repeatedly ignore the advice of Saskatchewan physicians, a choice that led to so much pain and suffering?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is right in respect to how challenging the last two years have been. And, Mr. Speaker, all of us in this House and across this province, across the nation, continent, around the world have really joined in an effort to have some semblance of control of the COVID-19 virus.

And I would say that we have worked in lockstep with our chief medical health officer, Dr. Shahab, in this province to put forward, at times, necessary public health measures but also at times to remove those public health measures, Mr. Speaker.

Today we know much more about COVID-19. The variants have changed. We have tools available today. Over 19 million rapid tests available on shelves across this province. We have early intervention treatments available that were not available one year ago. And we are most certainly moving forward in this province, Mr. Speaker.

We've removed the public health measures that were in place, Mr. Speaker. We are asking Saskatchewan residents to approach COVID at an individual level, assessing the risk, making the decisions that they need to for their personal self as well as their family as we find our way to a much more normal environment here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

We're seeing the same happen across this nation and around the world, Mr. Speaker, as we find our way through COVID to a more normal world, a world where we can get back to, in this province, providing the world with the resources that the world needs in a post-COVID economic recovery. This is when Saskatchewan shines is when we come together, Mr. Speaker, provide the world with what they need. And we have some great days ahead in this province.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The people of Saskatchewan stepped up in a remarkable way these last two years. They deserve a government who steps up for them. They deserve better than a premier who puts politics ahead of people's lives.

We know how badly things have gone on this Premier's watch, some of the worst outcomes in the entire country. We know that hundreds more families are grieving due to his choices. But we still don't know the full extent of that damage. We don't know how this government came to err repeatedly on the side of death and disease. We don't know how we can learn the lessons and prevent any such failure in the face of a future crisis.

[14:00]

The Premier has rejected outright the notion of an independent inquiry into Saskatchewan's COVID-19 response. Why is he so allergic to accountability? Why is he so committed to never doing better?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, first I would begin as I have many times in this Assembly and the radio room and other locations across the province, is just to offer on behalf of the government our most sincere condolences, not only for those that may have lost a loved one, a family member, a friend to COVID-19 but in any way over the course of the past number of years as we have changed how we conduct ourselves as individuals, in our careers, in our everyday life. And at times, most notably with some of our elderly, there's been times where they've been alone for periods of time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as we move forward, no, there will be no inquiry. The government has worked closely with public health officials, worked closely with our chief medical health officer, with the Saskatchewan Health Authority and officials throughout, Mr. Speaker, in making the decisions that we could make with the information that we had at that point in time, Mr. Speaker. That continues to today.

We know that the Ministry of Health, Mr. Speaker, is constantly looking at, you know, what they could do to improve their response should we ever face something like this again. The provincial emergency operations centre also looking at what they could do to improve their response should we be faced with something like this similar in the future.

But the fact of the matter is this, Mr. Speaker, is this government has been transparent throughout the past two years, communicating the decisions that we made alongside our chief medical health officer and other health officials day in, day out throughout the past two years, Mr. Speaker. There will be no inquiry.

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

Affordability and Cost of Living

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What an incredibly disappointing response. The people of Saskatchewan deserve answers. The people of Saskatchewan deserve the truth, and a government should be accountable to its people.

Mr. Speaker, today Saskatchewan people are having a hard time. The price of a litre of gas is \$1.70. People are paying upwards of 80 bucks to fill their tank and much, much more to fill a cart with groceries. Wages are low, prices are high, and families are struggling. Other provinces are stepping in with rebates to make sure that families can make ends meet. At a time of skyrocketing resource revenues, why is this Premier doing nothing to help people afford the basics? What concrete measures will he introduce to help families get a break?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier has answered this question a number of times over the course of the last number of days as to all of the affordability measures that have been in place year after year. They're annualized. I think one of the members asked when this was actually done. They were done years ago. And I'll go through many on the list. Not all, as I don't have time, Mr. Speaker. But these affordability measures were put in place years ago. And they're annualized, so they happen year after year after year after year.

They include reductions in personal income tax; the Saskatchewan low-income tax credits; the seniors' income plan has been increased six times; active families benefit; we have first-time homebuyers tax credit; home renovation tax credit; the graduate retention program. There's some members opposite, Mr. Speaker, actually disagree with, disagree with a program that's encouraging our graduates to stay in a community and find a career and raise their families right here in one of Saskatchewan's great communities, Mr. Speaker.

We have increased the coverage for ambulance coverage as well as various medical expenses, including drugs available on the drug formulary. We've reduced SaskPower rates, Mr. Speaker, to the point our utility bundle in this province is among the very lowest in the nation.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to hear more in the moments ahead about what this government is doing on behalf of Saskatchewan people on a number of fronts, one of those being affordability. And I can't speak to what is going to be in that budget, Mr. Speaker, but I can certainly speak to what isn't in that budget. What isn't in that budget is a 9 per cent PST in the province. What isn't in that budget is an initiative to improve our highways by asking Saskatchewan residents to go out and fix them yourselves.

We're going to hear more about what is in this budget in just a few moments, Mr. Speaker, and I think I'm going to sit down before the Deputy Premier pulls me down.

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

Population Numbers and Provincial Economy

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No change and no acknowledgement of the present. Inflation's at a record high and families are being squeezed — 5 bucks here, 10 bucks here, 20 bucks there. It adds up, Mr. Speaker, and clearly the Premier has no plan.

This year fuel and food will be thousands, thousands of dollars more for families, and over half of Saskatchewan people were already living paycheque to paycheque to paycheque. And this is before the cost of living skyrocketed. And this year, Saskatchewan has lost people to other provinces. And people don't just pack up and leave for fun, Mr. Speaker. And now the government isn't denying this to be true, but they have denied that they should be doing anything to help.

Mr. Speaker, it's about affordability and it's about opportunity right here in this province. Will the Sask Party finally help people make ends meet, stop squeezing families, and stop them from packing up and leaving for greener pastures?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Trade and Export Development.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I would say this question period and their members' statements in advance are a wonderful illustration as to why they're sitting on that side of the House with 12 members, and the positive folks on this side of the House are sitting over here with 48.

Mr. Speaker, all we hear from them: doom and gloom. All we hear from them: constant negativity. All we hear from them: talking down the economy, talking down our success. All we hear from them: attacking companies that are making investments in this province. All we hear from them: attacking those who are creating jobs, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is this. This province has the second-lowest

unemployment rate in the entire country. This province has created 30,000 jobs over the course of the last year, and this province has increased our exports by 35 per cent over the course of the last year, Mr. Speaker. And this budget coming up is going to make sure we continue in that direction.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What a remarkable display in front of all our guests here today. You know, the 30,000 jobs the minister's citing, it's great news for the province — it truly is — that he's managed, that this government has managed to recover the jobs that they lost in the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now, Mr. Speaker, again to the minister: we're talking about the here and the now. But if we want to talk about baggage, I'm happy to talk about baggage. Fewer 18- to 24-year-olds live in Saskatchewan today than they did last year and the year before that, the year before that, the year before that, and the year before that.

Now where are they going, Mr. Speaker? Well Saskatchewan is growing slower than every other province and territory. Newfoundland and Labrador is growing at twice the rate of Saskatchewan, Alberta three times, and New Brunswick, beautiful New Brunswick is growing at five times the rate of this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, speaking of baggage, can the minister offer any explanation for the U-Hauls packed with suitcases he's sending to the East and the West?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Trade and Export Development.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well there they go again, Mr. Speaker. Constant negativity, constant talking down of the economy, and constantly getting the facts wrong. Because the facts are, Mr. Speaker, over the course of the last 15 years, 170,000 new people have called Saskatchewan home. That is a rate of growth of new population in this province that we have not seen since the 1920s.

And I can tell you this as well, Mr. Speaker: that would have never happened under an NDP [New Democratic Party] government. And how do we know that, Mr. Speaker? Because under an NDP government, what happened? People left in droves. It was the traditional graduation gift for new graduated students in grade 12 to get a set of luggage because you had to leave Saskatchewan under the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, I think one of the proudest accomplishments that we have on this side of the House, that's no longer the case. Young people can have opportunity here in this province, and 30,000 new jobs last year speaks to that fact.

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

Provision of Health Care

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You want to talk

about negative, let's talk about the 1,600 unfilled health care jobs in the province right now. Let's talk about 82 fewer, fewer family doctors than last year. And as for the folks who rely on those health care professionals, well they're leaving too.

Mr. Speaker, I think of my friend Eden Janzen. If we want to talk about negative, Mr. Speaker, at 25 she's been on dialysis for five years. Twenty-five years of age and she needs a kidney transplant. Others in her position have moved to Alberta where they wait for months instead of years. Now you want to talk about negative, imagine being on dialysis for five years at 25.

Does this government recognize the consequences of their failures for young people, young people like Eden, people who are leaving this province not just for a chance at a better life but for a chance to stay alive?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And as I've corrected the record many times in this House, there are 118 more doctors practising in this province than were in 2018, Mr. Speaker, 1,000 more doctors than was under their government. Because what they did over there is they closed 52 hospitals. They closed 1,200 long-term care beds.

We have opened up long-term care beds on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. We have opened up hospitals and will continue to do that. And again I would ask the members opposite to just wait a few more minutes till the budget comes out, Mr. Speaker, because there's more exciting news in there.

In reference to the specific case of Eden Janzen, I've had the opportunity to meet with Eden a couple times. And if there's something that I need to follow up with that, I'll for sure and do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Government Support of Affordable Housing

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, just like yesterday, we're facing a housing crisis in this province. Poverty is getting worse. Children in this beautiful, bountiful province are going without. And we are all paying the price. This shouldn't be a partisan issue, Mr. Speaker, but sadly here we are.

Businesses like Avana that are actually looking for solutions to this crisis are denouncing this government for its lack of leadership. And they're taking their builds, their business, and the good jobs that they generate elsewhere, Mr. Speaker. This government is content to let everyone else do the heavy lifting: towns; cities; community-based organizations; companies like Avana who didn't get a single dime from this province for their historic investment in affordable housing, one that came with much-needed second-stage shelter units in a province that doesn't fund them, Mr. Speaker.

The feds are actually having to bypass this government and partner with private companies because this government refuses to address the housing crisis. Does this government recognize that their inaction on this file is driving housing investment

elsewhere?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for the question. Affordable housing is a priority of the Ministry of Social Services and this government. Since 2007 we've had several projects that we have partnered with on . . . with housing providers. We have 520 affordable rental units that have been constructed specifically for hard-to-house clients. We have 321 rental units that have been completed by for-profit companies. We have 2,363 attainable home owner units that have been completed by for-profit housing providers, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Avana on the project that they have, the partnership that they have with the federal government and with the city of Regina. We have so many projects, good projects. But it really is the difference of just picking one good project over another, and we cannot fund them all, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Ms. Conway: — Mr. Speaker, that minister knows what happens when people can't access safe and affordable housing. Since her photo op at Camp Hope, nine people died by overdose from that camp alone.

The minister is content to point to vacancies in public housing as an indicator that there is no crisis. Here in this Legislative Assembly she stood in her place and said, if someone truly doesn't have a place to go, I ask them to bring it to my attention; bring that to my office and I will ensure that person is taken care of.

This minister knows full well that people are turned away from shelters on a daily basis. Does the minister actually think that giving her a call is a fix? Is she aware of the number of men, women, and children that go to sleep in this province without a roof over their head?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And once again I do thank the member opposite for the question. Mr. Speaker, anyone who presents themselves to Social Services in need of a safe place to sleep gets one. No one is turned away.

[14:15]

We have community-based organizations, shelters that we work very closely with. If for some reason the shelter doesn't meet their needs or it's over capacity, we have hotel rooms that we can put people up in the time being, Mr. Speaker. And then we work with those clients on the next day.

Mr. Speaker, she referenced saying that if someone needs a place to stay to give me a call. They said they were aware of people that weren't being housed, and I asked them to please provide those names to me, Mr. Speaker. I was serious when I said that, and I extend that invitation today. If they know of someone, let

me know. Thank you.

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

Provision of Security at Legislative Building

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, for those who haven't heard just what this government is all up to, this government recently tabled a bill that intends to reduce our Sergeant-at-Arms to a purely ceremonial role and replace him with a police force with a director answerable to that Minister for Corrections. If this bill is passed, it will make Saskatchewan the only province with a legislative police force reporting directly to the minister.

We've asked the minister time and time again in this Chamber why this major change is needed and what her plans are. Nothing. I'll give her the opportunity to answer that question again. To the minister: what are the plans for Bill 70 and security in this good building?

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

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said before, our government is committed to ensuring the symbols of our democracy, such as the Legislative Building, the grounds, and the roadways are safe and secure. Bill 70 expands the current jurisdiction of security in this building and provides more resources while also removing it from a cumbersome process that it currently falls under.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety has significant experience in the area of safety and security, and they are well positioned and well suited to manage the issues that may arrive, Mr. Speaker.

I want to bring to the attention to the members opposite that this is an issue with all law enforcement agencies in the country. And I met with CSIS, or Canadian Security Intelligence Service, stating that COVID-19 pandemic has increased anti-authority, anti-government narratives, and violent extremists may exploit this for their own ends. Mr. Speaker . . .

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Well, no answer again, Mr. Speaker. And Bill 70 was introduced last fall. The minister has had ample time to finally answer this question. What's clear is that they've had a plan all along, but they simply just don't want to share it with us because apparently that's become too cumbersome as the minister just said. That cumbersome process, Mr. Speaker, is the non-partisan Board of Internal Economy that's worked effectively for over three decades.

Mr. Speaker, when we asked why we weren't using this process earlier, the minister's response was, "This is a government building. What can I say? We're the government." Well, Mr. Speaker, let me remind that minister that this isn't the government's building. It's the people's building.

Mr. Speaker, why should the people trust this government and

this minister in running the security of this building over our independent Sergeant-at-Arms?

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

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to finish my answer that I started with, with Canadian Security Intelligence Service stating that COVID-19 pandemic has increased anti-authority, anti-government narratives and that violent extremists may exploit this for their own ends, Mr. Speaker.

We live in a changing society, in a changing world, and it's incumbent upon government to ensure that all who use this building and the grounds are safe and secure.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

TABLING OF ESTIMATES AND SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to submit estimates and supplementary estimates accompanied by a message from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

The Speaker: — Would all members and guests please rise for the message from the Lieutenant Governor. The message is as follows:

The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for 12 months ending March 31st, 2023, and supplementary estimates no. 2 of certain sums required for the service of the province for 12 months ending March 31st, 2022, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

His Honour the Honourable Russell B. Mirasty, Lieutenant Governor, province of Saskatchewan.

Please be seated. I recognize the Minister of Finance.

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, colleagues, and guests, after two years of delivering this speech to a House without invited guests, without our family, friends, community leaders here, it is such a pleasure to welcome everyone back to your Legislative Assembly. Thank you for joining us today and welcome back.

As many of you know, we do not do this job alone. And so I'm very pleased to have the majority of my family joining me today. I have my daughter Crystal; her husband, Rusty Buckoski; two grandchildren, James and Lucas. I have my daughter Shannon and her partner, Brian Burgess, and my grandchildren Makenna and Emryk; and I have my partner, Tom Wildeman. And unfortunately my youngest daughter, Lindsay, could not join us today.

It has been a challenging and long, long two years for all us, but today things are getting back to normal. And in Saskatchewan that means a strong and growing economy, more jobs, and a commitment from your government to deliver high-quality government services that improve the quality of life for everyone in our great province. Saskatchewan is back on track and our economy is back on track. Thirty thousand new jobs have been created over the past year, and Saskatchewan has the second-highest rate of job growth in Canada so far in 2022.

Saskatchewan's finances are back on track. We have significantly reduced the deficit and are on track to balance the budget by 2026. And our ability to deliver the best possible government services to Saskatchewan people is back on track.

Mr. Speaker, this budget strengthens and protects Saskatchewan with record investment into health care, education, social services, and the protection of people and property. Funding in this budget will reduce the surgical wait-list, which has grown over the past two years as many of our health care providers and resources were focused on the pandemic.

An increase of 21.6 million in the budget will address the surgical wait-list and fund thousands of additional surgeries this year, which is the first year of a three-year plan to deliver on the largest volume of surgical procedures in the history of our province. This aggressive plan targets a return to pre-pandemic level for surgical wait times by the end of March, 2025.

Our government has a plan to recruit, retain, and expand the number of health care professionals in our province. First, we will be creating an agency dedicated to recruiting and retaining doctors, nurses, and other health care providers. This budget also includes 1.5 million to develop recruitment initiatives, including a settlement and relocation incentive program to recruit 150 health care workers to Saskatchewan from the Philippines. It is the first year of a two-year program aimed at recruiting 300 health care workers from the Philippines.

There is also 3.5 million in this budget for physician recruitment and retention initiatives, particularly targeting family physicians working in rural areas of the province. We are also expanding nursing training seats by 150 seats.

The total budget for health is 6.8 billion, up 4.4 per cent from last year's budget. This budget provides the Saskatchewan Health Authority with 4.2 billion this year, which is up more than 277 million or 7 per cent compared to last year.

A \$17 million increase in this budget supports our seniors to live safely and comfortably and includes a number of important initiatives. And among them is a \$4.8 million increase to home care services, 4.1 million to provide high-dose influenza vaccines to adults over 65, 1.6 million for operations at the Meadow Lake NorthWest Community Lodge, and 6.5 million in new funding for an additional 117 continuing care aide positions. The new continuing care aide positions will bring the two-year total to 225. The three-year commitment of 300 positions will be met next year.

This budget includes a \$4.9 million increase for medical imaging with CT [computerized tomography] scans and MRIs [magnetic resonance imaging] to reduce wait times that grew during the

pandemic. As a result of this new investment, thousands more patients will receive medical imaging services in '22-23 compared to last year.

Mr. Speaker, key commitments in this budget will strengthen and expand hospital and emergency care in urban and rural communities. There is 12.5 million in new funding for 11 additional intensive care beds across the province — the first year of a three-year strategy to add 31 ICU beds to bring the total to 110 by 2024-25, which is up from the current number of 79. An increase of 3 million will fund 10 new high-acuity beds at Regina General Hospital to care for patients with more complex medical needs than the traditional in-patient bed.

The budget has 2.2 million to fund more specialized care in the neonatal ICU at Prince Albert's Victoria Hospital. To enhance emergency medical services in rural and remote areas, a 10.8 million increase in this budget will fund new paramedic positions, including for ambulance services, community paramedicine, and medical first-responder programs.

In this budget our government invests an additional 8 million into targeted mental health and addictions services, including effective counselling and treatments and further proactive prevention measures. New targeted investments include 2.1 million to add addictions spaces in high-needs areas and treatment centres across the province. It brings the total mental health and addictions investment across government to 470 million in 2022-23. That is the largest investment. That is the largest investment ever in mental health and addictions services, representing more than 7 per cent of the total Health ministry budget.

This budget makes important investments in the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, which receives an additional 15.8 million increase in this budget, which is up 7.7 per cent, bringing its annual grant to 219.8 million, the highest ever. This funding will provide drugs and therapies, a new medical oncologist to manage the oncology residency program at the College of Medicine, expansion in the bone marrow transplant program, and investments in screening programs and other front-line services, including making treatments available closer to home.

This year's budget provides 95 million to sustain the ongoing pandemic response. This funding covers personal protection equipment, support for 58 temporary acute care beds in Regina and Saskatoon, and compensation and operating costs for pressures expected to continue into '22-23. This budget strengthens Saskatchewan's health care services and the vital services that our health care providers provide to all of Saskatchewan people.

This year's budget also strengthens education for our children and post-secondary students. Education spending across government is 3.8 billion in this budget, which is up more than 47.2 million. The Ministry of Education, through this budget, will support pre-K [pre-kindergarten] to grade 12 students, early learning, and school and child care staff with 2.9 billion, up nearly 220 million compared to last year.

Saskatchewan's 27 school divisions will receive nearly \$2 billion in operating funding for the '22-23 school year, a record level and an increase of 29.4 million over last year. This fully funds

the 2 per cent salary increase in the teachers' collective bargaining agreement, and it includes an additional 6 million in learning supports for students. Mr. Speaker, a new \$7 million fund in this budget will allow school divisions to hire up to an additional 200 full-time educational assistants to support students and manage increasingly diverse classrooms.

[14:30]

Affordable, accessible, high-quality child care is a major priority in this budget. This budget provides more child care opportunities for young families. Funding for child care and early learning is 309.6 million, including funding provided through the federal-provincial early years agreements. Of that funding, 4.3 million will create 6,100 new child care spaces, part of our government's goal to create 28,000 new regulated spaces over the next five years.

Mr. Speaker, starting in February 2022, child care fees were reduced by up to 50 per cent on average in regulated care. This year's funding will support further reducing parent fees by as early as September 2022, making life more affordable for Saskatchewan families. Also included for early learning and child care is 2.3 million for inclusion of children with disabilities, 8 million for preventative maintenance of child care facilities, 11.4 million for training initiatives and supports for early childhood workers, and an increase of 655,000 for the early childhood intervention program to address high demands related to young children experiencing developmental delays and disabilities.

This budget provides 740 million, an increase of 5.6 million, for post-secondary education. This includes 30 million for the second year of a two-year, 60 million funding plan focused on shared priorities, including pandemic recovery, revenue generation, sector collaboration, and achieving the growth plan priorities. Mr. Speaker, in this budget a 4.9 million increase will expand the nurse training seats by 150 seats. This budget provides 684 million for operating and capital grants to post-secondary institutions, including 38 million for student supports.

Our ability to invest in health, education, and other vital government services is driven by a strong and growing economy. Over the past year, Saskatchewan has attracted an incredible number of major investments from companies like BHP, Richardson International, Viterro, Ceres Global Ag, Cargill, Federated Co-operatives, AGT Foods, and Red Leaf Pulp. These companies and others are investing 13.6 billion into Saskatchewan with projects including a new potash mine, new and expanded canola crush facilities, a wheat-based pulp plant, a renewable diesel facility, a lumber mill, as well as other projects. These investments are expected to create nearly 9,000 jobs in the construction phase and 2,330 permanent jobs right here in Saskatchewan.

The rise in streaming services means the time is right to attract new investment from the film and television industry to Saskatchewan. This budget includes a significant increase of 8 million to the Creative Saskatchewan production grant program for film and television. This brings the total funds available through this program to 10 million. This investment and the expected \$50 million increase in film and television production will result in subsequent millions in annual economic

activity, including significant increased spending in the hospitality industry, which has been hard hit by the pandemic. It will also mean growth in our information technology and digital industries. And this investment will keep dollars in the province, as only Saskatchewan labour, goods, and services are eligible for support under this program.

The application window for the film and television grants opens this spring. This significant increase in support for film and television productions means we're going to see a lot of activity at the Regina sound stage. Mr. Speaker, we recently lost a strong advocate for economic growth in our capital city and in our province, and so today I am very pleased to honour his memory by renaming this important facility the John Hopkins Regina Sound Stage.

As Saskatchewan's economy recovers, our government will continue to focus on competitiveness, seeking new markets, increasing trade, and growing exports. Mr. Speaker, this budget includes 3.1 million to fully fund the international trade and investment strategy. The strategy advances the province's economic interests abroad, collaborating with stakeholders, including the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership.

This funding operates our international office network. In the past year, new Saskatchewan trade offices were opened in the United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, Mexico, and Vietnam, complementing our existing offices in Japan, India, Singapore, and China. Expanding our export markets abroad means new jobs and opportunities right here at home. We are focused on diversifying markets by connecting Saskatchewan businesses with investors and customers.

Our government has an ambitious growth plan goal of expanding agri-food exports to 20 billion by 2030. Even during a difficult year in 2021, Saskatchewan saw record agri-food exports of 17.5 billion, and we're on track to meet our goals. To increase our competitiveness, our government has enhanced the Saskatchewan value-added agriculture incentive to further attract investment. This incentive and others were key to our province's competitiveness, attracting private investment from global companies.

This budget includes 338.5 million to fund business risk management programs, including crop insurance, AgriStability, AgriInvest, and western livestock price insurance to provide the industry with the tools it needs to move through challenges like dry conditions, and position producers for long-term success.

This budget includes 2.5 million for various irrigation projects. Further developing irrigation and management of water resources is a goal in our growth plan. And developing irrigated acres is part of what attracts large investments to our province, like those we've seen in canola crush business.

Mr. Speaker, this budget will provide 6.7 million more in revenue from VLTs [video lottery terminal] to bar and restaurant owners. Effective April 4th, the VLT site commission rates will increase from 15 per cent to 18 per cent. Total commissions are forecast to rise from 33.3 million to nearly 40 million with this increase.

Mr. Speaker, a strong and growing economy, over 13 billion in

new projects, 30,000 new jobs in the past year, and the second-lowest unemployment rate in Canada show that Saskatchewan's economy is back on track, and so are our province's finances. This year's deficit is forecast to be 463 million, which is down more than 2.1 billion from last year. Over the next three years, we're forecasting successively smaller deficits, with a return to balance expected in 2026-27.

Revenue of 17.2 billion is forecast in the '22-23 budget, which is up 2.7 billion from last year's budget. Driving our stronger revenue forecast is revenue from taxes of 8.1 billion, which is up 850 million from last year's budget. Non-renewable resource revenue is 2.9 billion, up 1.6 billion, largely due to higher potash and oil price forecast which is the result of a stronger-than-expected global demand. While volatile world events have made commodity prices difficult to forecast, our revenue forecasts are based on cautious oil price projections. It's too soon to tell if oil prices will remain high for an extended period and what impact that could have on our revenues. We will continue to monitor the impact on both revenue and affordability and respond as required.

Because resource prices are so volatile, our government has set a goal of reducing our reliance on resource revenues. This budget includes a small number of revenue measures. To help with stability, the existing application of PST is broadened to match the federal GST [goods and services tax] base for admission and entertainment events. Effective October 1st, 2022, the PST will apply to sporting events, concerts, museums, fairs, movies, gym memberships, and green fees. There will be exemptions for children's activities and activities run by schools and non-profits. This will add approximately 10.5 million in PST this year, and 21 million annually. At the same time, we are exempting audio books from PST, as they are used widely for educational purposes and by the visually impaired. This will reduce revenue by about 100,000.

Mill rates for the education portion of property tax are being adjusted slightly, including a decrease to the differential between the highest and lowest EPT [education property tax] mill rates to improve overall fairness. Slight increases to the mill rates, combined with a forecasted base growth of 6 million, are expected to generate an additional total of about 20 million in the revenue in 2022-23.

Tobacco taxes are increasing by 2 cents per cigarette and 8 cents per gram of tobacco and 1.3 cents per stick of heat-not-burn products. Tobacco tax increases are effective midnight tonight and are expected to generate 12.1 million in additional annual revenue.

Expense of 17.1 billion is projected in the '22-23 budget, an increase of 531 million or 3.1 per cent over last year's budget. Responsible management of the province's finances has secured Saskatchewan the second-highest credit rating in the country when the ratings from the major agencies are combined. Also Saskatchewan's net debt-to-GDP [gross domestic product] ratio is the second lowest in Canada, another indicator of the province's strong fiscal foundation.

Mr. Speaker, our government continues to financially support those in our province who are the most vulnerable. This budget provides social services and assistance with 1.6 billion, up nearly

67.3 million or 4.3 per cent compared to last year. This budget includes 11.4 million to increase Saskatchewan income support basic benefits by \$30 per month and shelter benefits by up to \$25 per month.

Mr. Speaker, this budget includes 3 million to fulfill the second year of the government's three-year commitment to increase benefits to low-income seniors through the seniors' income plan. This is the seventh increase our government has made to the plan since 2008, after it had been frozen at just \$90 per month for the previous 16 years. With this year's \$30-a-month increase, the maximum payment will be \$330 a month, effective this July. By the end of this term, Mr. Speaker, our government will have quadrupled the maximum seniors' income plan benefit from \$90 to \$360 per month. Mr. Speaker, this budget provides up to 11.5 million for the Saskatchewan housing benefit under the national housing strategy to help people with low incomes better afford housing.

This budget includes 679 million government-wide funding for people with disabilities, an increase of 464.1 million, or 216 per cent since 2007-2008. This budget continues to make Saskatchewan the best place to live in Canada for people living with disabilities. It includes a 16.7 million utilization increase to the Saskatchewan assured income for disabilities program. There's 8 million more to support new and changing needs of clients with disabilities. And there is a \$273,000 increase to fulfill the third year of our commitment to enhance services provided by the CNIB [Canadian National Institute for the Blind] and the Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services.

In 2022-23 the Ministry of Social Services will provide over 400 million in funding to community-based organizations. This includes increased funding of 8.7 million in '22-23 for service providers working with service homes that care for people with intellectual disabilities and organizations supporting at-risk children, youth, and families. This increase recognizes the critical role that CBOs [community-based organization] play in protecting our province's most vulnerable. This year's budget includes a 2 per cent lift to all CBOs across all ministries in recognition of the important work they do in their communities and the vital services that they provide to Saskatchewan people.

[14:45]

The 2022-23 budget includes 936.2 million for the protection of persons and property, which is an increase of 91.1 million, or 10.8 per cent from last year. Policing in the province will continue to evolve to meet the needs of Saskatchewan people. This budget includes 50.7 million compared to last year, to create a provincial protection service branch to unite provincial peace officers into a single organizational structure. Mr. Speaker, this budget makes important new investments to protect citizens, including 1.6 million to establish a warrant enforcement and suppression team to target high-risk offenders with outstanding warrants. There is 6.4 million to establish the Saskatchewan trafficking response team and 3.2 million to expand the crime reduction team. As well there is 220,000 to further expand the internet child exploitation unit, or ICE, and allow them to further investigate and crack down on criminals who target children.

This budget includes 4.5 million for the gang violence reduction strategy, which provides intervention services to individuals who

want to leave gangs, as well as addictions programming in the provincial corrections facilities.

This budget includes 94.9 million for the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency, up 2.8 million from the previous year. The agency is investing in the modernization of the province's aerial walled fire suppression fleet.

Saskatchewan's parks and natural beauty attract visitors from right here in our province and from around the world. This budget includes 12.5 million for upgrades to improve visitor experiences at our provincial parks, with upgrades to water systems and visitor centres.

Municipal revenue sharing is 262.6 million in this budget, helping to keep the province's urban, rural, and northern communities strong. Revenue sharing has increased by about 106 per cent since 2007-2008 and provides stable predictable funding for Saskatchewan's municipalities based on a percentage of the province's PST revenues.

This budget includes 448.5 million of direct provincial support to municipalities through a number of grants and initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, this budget also includes 233 million in targeted investment to help meet the priorities of Indigenous communities, businesses, and organizations. That represents a significant increase of more than 20 per cent from last year. Saskatchewan has a growing number of Indigenous-owned companies employing thousands of people, generating millions in revenue each year. This budget provides 475,000 to create the Saskatchewan Indigenous investment financial corporation. The corporation will offer up to 75 million in loan guarantees for private-sector lending to Indigenous communities and organizations for investment into natural resource and value-added agriculture projects.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of growing a strong and robust economy is to build a better quality of life for all Saskatchewan people. Part of building that better quality of life is ensuring that life is affordable for Saskatchewan people. That is why we're continuing the active family benefit, which provides \$150 per child enrolled in sport, recreation, and cultural activities. That benefit provides an additional \$50 per child to families of children with a disability.

The Saskatchewan home renovation tax credit continues this year, providing a 10.5 per cent tax credit on up to 20,000 of eligible home renovations done between October 1st, 2020, and December 31st, 2022. The tax credit is forecast to cover 44.7 million in costs in '22-23, making life more affordable for Saskatchewan people while helping increase activity and create jobs for those working in the construction and the skilled trades.

Saskatchewan's on track to again have among the lowest personal taxes, income taxes, in the country. Since 2007 personal income tax exemptions have removed 112,000 people from the province's income tax roll. In addition, our provincial income tax is now indexed each year to respond to inflationary pressures.

Today a Saskatchewan family of four with \$100,000 in total income pays \$2,084 less in provincial income tax than they did when our government took office in 2007. That's \$2,000 in tax

savings; \$2,000 more back in their pockets, this year and every single year. In total, reductions in personal income tax over the past 15 years has provided over 720 million in annual income tax savings to Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, this budget also builds a better Saskatchewan. This budget includes 156.6 million for health care capital. Some of the projects include 15.2 million for urgent care centres in Regina and Saskatoon, 13.5 million to continue construction on the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital, 6 million to continue the replacement of the Weyburn General Hospital, 6.5 million to continue design and procurement activities for specialized and standard long-term care beds in Regina, 3 million for the Grenfell and 2 million for the La Ronge long-term care facilities.

Since 2008 nearly 2.1 billion in investment into health care facilities has built hospitals, including the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital, the Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford, and the Dr. F.H. Wigmore Hospital in Moose Jaw. As well, we have built 15 new long-term care facilities across the province.

This budget includes 846 million to operate, maintain, build, and improve over 1100 kilometres of the province's roads and highways through the Ministry of Highways. This budget invests 479.5 million into transportation capital and includes 452 million for improvements on provincial highways, on track to meet the growth plan commitments to upgrade and build 10 000 kilometres of the provincial highway network by 2030. Upgrades include Highway 3 twinning west of Prince Albert, Highway 5 corridor improvements east of Saskatoon, and planning and pre-construction for twinning projects on highways 6 and 39 near Regina and Weyburn.

This budget fully funds the five-year \$65 million enhanced intersection safety program. And there is 27 million for the rural integrated roads for growth program and urban highway connector program and the community airport partnership program. Mr. Speaker, with this year's budget, more than 11.5 billion has been invested into transportation infrastructure since 2008, improving more than 18 400 kilometres of provincial highways.

There is 168.6 million for school infrastructure in this budget. This includes 95.2 million to support the ongoing planning and construction of 15 new schools, and the major renovation of five existing schools in Regina, Lloydminster, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Carrot River, La Loche, Blaine Lake, Lanigan, Yorkton, North Battleford, and Wilcox. Since 2008 approximately 2.3 billion has been invested to build 57 new schools and to undertake 28 major renovation projects around our province.

Mr. Speaker, this budget includes almost 292 million in government services infrastructure. This includes projects such as dams, water supply channels, irrigation projects, courts and corrections capital, and the continued construction of the Saskatoon remand centre.

This budget includes 268.6 million for municipal infrastructure for projects that fall under the Canada Infrastructure Program, Canada Community-Building Fund, and the Building Canada Fund.

Advanced Education will invest 31 million this year, mainly into ongoing capital maintenance and planning on our post-secondary institutions.

In this budget Crown Corporations will invest 1.8 billion on major capital, mainly through SaskPower, SaskTel, and SaskEnergy. Our Crowns have invested more than 22 billion into capital since 2008.

Our capital plan in this budget creates jobs, ignites our economy, and ensures Saskatchewan has schools, hospitals, highways, and other critical infrastructure we need to support a strong and growing province.

Mr. Speaker, after two very challenging years, Saskatchewan's back on track. Our economy is back on track, attracting billions of dollars in new investment and creating thousands of jobs. Our provincial finances are back on track with a \$2 billion reduction in the provincial deficit and a plan to balance in four years. And our ability to deliver vital government services is back on track as we emerge from the pandemic and things return to normal.

Saskatchewan's back on track and our future is bright. The investments made in this budget will ensure our economy remains strong, important government services will continue to improve, and our best days are still ahead of us, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the member from Moose Jaw North:

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

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance, seconded by the member for Moose Jaw North:

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

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, our Assembly is filled with people and leaders from across Saskatchewan here today, and it's a wonderful thing — people and leaders that care deeply about their province, people of many cultures, of many faiths, of varying political persuasions, from diverse sectors, that believe in democracy and that believe in Saskatchewan. And when you think about where we've been and what we've been through these past couple of years through this pandemic, it's really good to be here together.

But we're here because of the sacrifices of many peoples, because of the extraordinary service of many peoples. True to our province's motto, as we face this historic challenge, our province has been offered its strength by many peoples. To all that have toiled, stepped up, cared for one another and done their part and more, on behalf of a grateful province, we all say thank you. And sadly we must also remember and mourn the many lives lost, the many family members, loved ones lost.

It's good to be here today together because we can't ignore what's happening around our world today, what the people in Ukraine are facing, what Ukrainian Canadians are facing as a

result of Putin's unforgiveable invasion of Ukraine. War crimes and human rights atrocities beyond description. Hospitals, schools, places of refuge being bombed. Children being killed. Families being torn apart.

We must stand united. There's no time for partisan politics or divisions on this front. It's as simple . . . It's about good versus evil, right versus wrong. We will continue to stand united. And we'll continue to propose actions, strengthen our response to end the invasion and to ensure the urgent and necessary supports for resettlement for those fleeing violence and the perils of war to find safety, security, and a future here in our province. We must punch well above our weight on this front.

Turning more directly to the provincial budget that was introduced today, the reality is Saskatchewan people are dealing with serious financial hardships: crushing cost-of-living increases, record-high fuel costs. A buck seventy is what folks and businesses are facing at the pumps today. Families are now facing \$1,000 more each and every year since the Sask Party hiked and expanded the PST a few years ago, the biggest tax hike in Saskatchewan's history.

[15:00]

In face of all of this, at a time people are facing extraordinary pressures and have stepped up and been through so much, this is a no-help budget. Not a stitch of relief for people and families facing the crushing cost-of-living increases; in fact it's the opposite. It's a piling on of new taxes and fee hikes. There are 32 new taxes and fee hikes in this budget — 32. On top of hiking property taxes on homes across Saskatchewan and power rates, new taxes have been imposed with the Sask Party now sticking events and entertainment with the PST. Everything from local concerts, live music, to rodeos, craft shows, curling, Agribition, sporting events, movies, hunting and fishing, even Rider games, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party is cranking up costs and nickelling and diming families at a time where they desperately need and deserve some relief, at a time we should be supporting events and encouraging us to come together as communities and as people after we've been apart for so long.

The Sask Party has clearly fallen out of touch with working families. And the fact is our government's in a financial position to help. Provincial resource revenues were steadily climbing through mid-year and through the fiscal fourth quarter of last year's budget, and they've been sent soaring as a result of that unforgiveable invasion in Ukraine. And of course the reality for people, for families, for producers is the price at the pumps, cost of food, and agricultural inputs that are all sky-high.

This is a budget soaring with high resource revenues but with very low support for people. A budget soaring with big revenues but with small vision in securing our future. It's a budget that's lost track of reality. A budget high in resource revenues but low on relief for people facing that crushing cost of living. We've called for urgent and needed fuel price relief, not unlike the break given in Alberta, by scrapping the fuel tax temporarily in face of the extraordinary costs and revenues.

Elimination of the PST on children's clothes and restaurant meals, and to end the Sask Party's overcharging by providing a rate reduction to the cost of drivers' auto insurance — none of

this was delivered. And instead the Sask Party hiked up the cost of living with new taxes and increases and hikes to fees.

This is a budget low on creating the conditions for job creation, investment, and to secure economic opportunity for people, for our future. The economic reality is one of hardship for far too many, precarious and low-wage jobs, and all too many have endured job losses. Sadly, Saskatchewan is dead last in population growth in Canada, losing people to out-migration to other provinces in a big way. GDP has been flat since 2014.

While we celebrate and are thankful for the important investment announcements by companies in resources and potash and canola crush, renewable diesel, wheat straw and pulp, forestry, helium, lithium, and more, we need that government to do its part. This is a time that we need to be taking an all-of-the-above approach to creating jobs and opportunity, whether it's the private, public, or co-operative sector, whether it's the resource sector and energy in rural Saskatchewan, to new creative and tech industries.

From fixing procurement and building Saskatchewan's infrastructure with Saskatchewan companies and with Saskatchewan workers maximizing economic value for our public money, to needed initiatives for renewables and rooftop solar and energy efficiency retrofits that will make bills more affordable, fire up the creation of thousands of jobs and big investment, all while reducing emissions in a common-sense and cost-effective way.

We need to be building the Saskatchewan labour force for today and tomorrow. Instead this budget cuts workforce development by 41 per cent in this budget — a \$16 million cut that defies common sense and our economic best interests.

This is a budget low on the critical home care supports seniors deserve and that fails to fix seniors' care. This after the pandemic exposed the cruel indignity and crisis and the failure to support our seniors.

This is a budget low on the needed life-saving investments in mental health and addictions services, including harm reduction. This crisis is costing many their families and loved ones, and costing us more public dollars by failing to adequately act and invest.

This is a budget low in support for kids and shorts their classrooms once again, classrooms that had been cut and damaged before the pandemic, and now forcing more cuts after kids have faced so many hardships and challenges to their learning. This is a budget that's low on acts of reconciliation, fixing its broken duty-to-consult, and failing to step up and address racism despite a sickening 60 per cent increase in hate crimes this past year in our province.

This is a budget that's low on supports when it comes to the most vulnerable, that fails to address poverty, and that offers no admission of the failure of their SIS [Saskatchewan income support] program and the devastation and homelessness that it's caused. This failure is not only heartless and costing lives, but it costs us far more public money to respond in this callous way. There's also no funding for second-stage shelters for those fleeing interpersonal violence, as we've been calling for. We're

the only province not to fund these shelters, while thousands of women and children facing interpersonal violence are turned away annually at the doors of shelters.

This budget is low on measures to support producers and ranchers still dealing with the impacts of last year's historic drought and now facing input costs that are through the roof, including working with producers to fix business risk management programs, building standard protections and transparency into grain contracts, and providing a carbon rebate as compensation for the valuable role producers play as environmental stewards through sequestration, through their practices, their management of grasslands and wetlands.

This is a budget that's low on making internet and cellular connectivity happen in rural and northern Saskatchewan, from a government that fails to recognize that in 2022, internet and cellular connectivity is not a luxury but an essential service, that the digital divide is real, that it's about quality of life and security, and presents enormous economic opportunities for rural communities, First Nations, and the North.

We've called for connectivity to be made a priority and for the Sask Party to stop taking the \$100 million dividend from SaskTel, so that it can be invested directly and leveraged to make connectivity happen all across Saskatchewan. Instead, the Sask Party raided SaskTel of that dividend once again.

With soaring resource revenues, we need to invest in today and our future, not squander another opportunity through waste and mismanagement as the Sask Party did the last time they were presented with record revenues in boom times. We can't let that happen again.

For good reason, that government has no trust and no credibility when it comes to our public finances. This budget should be about investing in people and securing our future, but this budget fails to deliver, fails to respond to the magnitude of the challenges faced. It's a budget that's lost track of reality from a government that's lost touch with the working people of this province.

People deserve so much better. They deserve a government and a budget that offers them a needed break and that extends opportunity, that steps up to the challenges and seizes the opportunities, that works to ensure that every last person can live up to their potential so the province we all love can live up to its own to ensure that a better tomorrow awaits, and that builds together toward a future where we fully and equally benefit from the true strength of Saskatchewan's many peoples. That must be our goal.

Mr. Speaker, I'll have more to say on the budget tomorrow. I won't be supporting the budget. And at this time, I'll move that the debate be now adjourned.

The Speaker: — The member for Regina Rosemont has moved to adjourn debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Motion for Resumption of Budget Debate

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move:

That debate on the motion "That the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government" be resumed on Thursday, March 24th, 2022.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

That debate on the motion "That the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government" be resumed on Thursday, March 24th, 2022.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that this House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — Before I place the question on adjournment, I want to first of all say thank you to all the guests who have joined us today and for your co-operation observing the rules of the Assembly. And I would like to extend an invitation to all our guests to join the members for tea in the Legislative Library to your right as you leave the Assembly, and in room 218 to the left.

At this time I will place the question. The Government House Leader has moved that this House do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. This House now stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 15:14.]

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

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President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Fred Bradshaw
Minister of Highways
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Water Security Agency

Hon. Lori Carr
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Hon. Donna Harpauer
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Hon. Everett Hindley
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Seniors and Rural and Remote Health

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Hon. Paul Merriman
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Hon. Jim Reiter
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and Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for The Global
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Hon. Laura Ross
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Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

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Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety

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Minister of Justice and Attorney General