



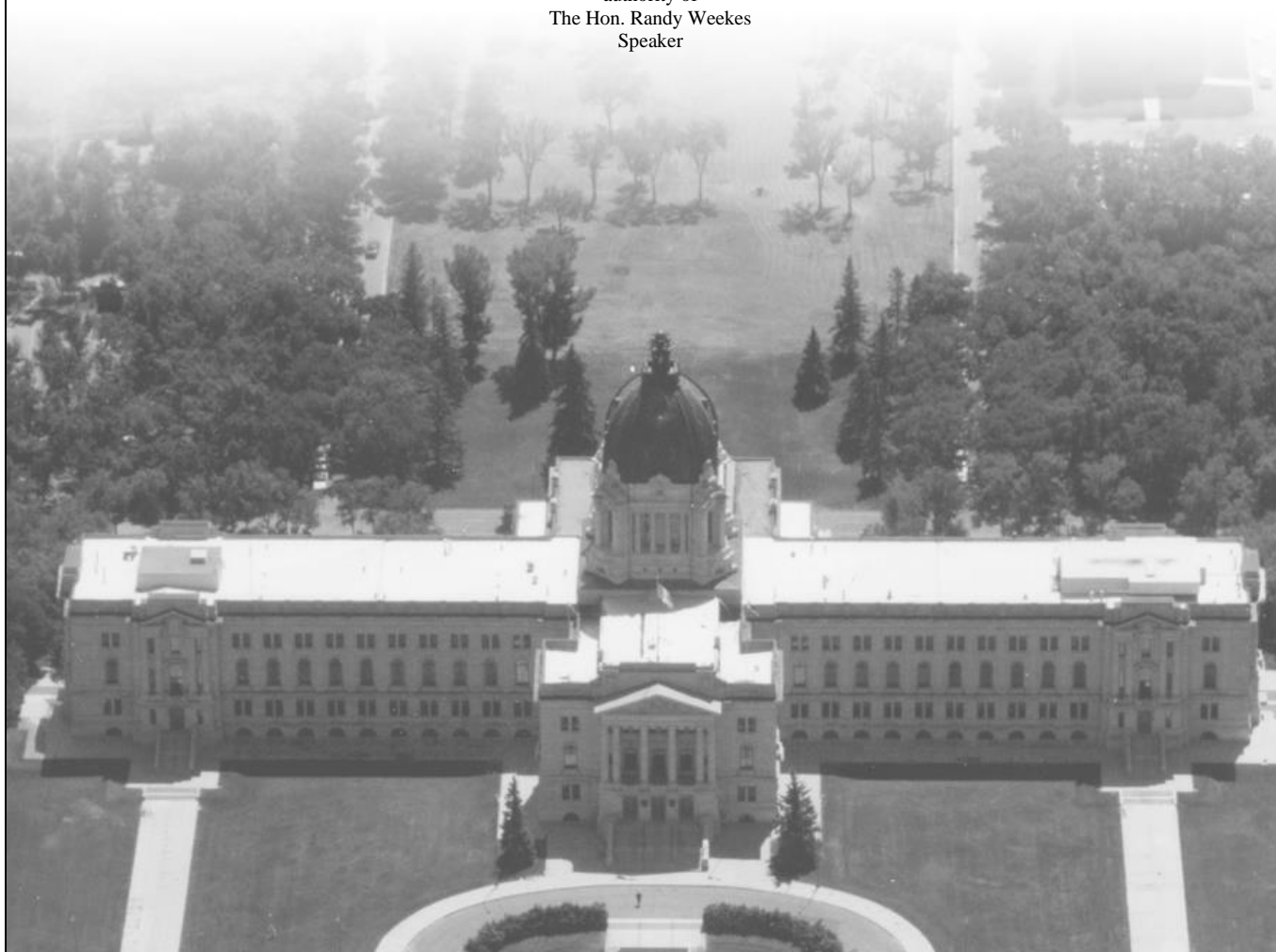
SECOND SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

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)
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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

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Deputy Clerk — Iris Lang

Clerk Assistant — Kathy Burianyk

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[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd take a moment this morning to introduce, through you and to you to all members of this House, two people from the Shellbrook area that work in the MLA's [Member of the Legislative Assembly] office in Shellbrook. That's my constituency assistants. We have with us today Sally Jacobson and Cindy Painchaud.

They're down for the budget yesterday, Mr. Speaker, and had the opportunity after a couple of years . . . Cindy joined our office just in the past year. Sally's been there since I was elected in 2011, Mr. Speaker. And they've come down to see the budget yesterday, but then also to meet some of the people, in particular for Cindy, meet some of the people that she's been corresponding with over the course of her time in our office, Mr. Speaker.

And it's nice after two very long years — with much correspondence in to all of our offices across this province, including ministers and the Premier's office, but as well our MLA offices — to put some faces to the names that you see at the bottom of so many emails and so many pieces of correspondence that occur and have likely increased, in fairness, over the course of the past two years, at least in many of the offices that I touch.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of this Assembly to join me in welcoming Sally and Cindy to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I would also like to make an introduction. In the Speaker's gallery, I'd like to introduce Eric and Darlene Pearce, who are from Borden, and they came down to watch the budget presentation yesterday. And I also ask everyone to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

I recognize the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Mr. Domotor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, and to all members of the Legislative Assembly, it is my pleasure to introduce my constituency assistant, Jackie Gallon, presently seated in your gallery.

Mr. Speaker, she and I both started this new vocation at the same time, approximately a year and a half ago. In this short time, she has proven herself over and over again. She's not only a great asset to the constituency office but to myself as well. This is a CA [constituency assistant] who always takes the time to listen to our constituents, try and relate to their specific needs or issue, and try to assist them to the best of her ability. Quite often this will involve her taking the initiative to provide a follow-up phone call to ensure that constituents' concerns have been addressed.

Mr. Speaker, her assistance is instrumental in the success of our

office, and I would now like to introduce her and welcome her to her Legislative Assembly.

While I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce my wife, Noella, presently seated in the Speaker's gallery. Mr. Speaker, she has been my best supporter, both in my professional life as well as my personal one. She has seen me through both good times and bad and has been encouraging and understanding on days that have been sometimes very challenging.

There isn't enough time today to be able to properly acknowledge her for all the support she has provided for me in my new role as the MLA for Cut Knife-Turtleford. But with that, I would just like to end with a simple thank you, Noella, and welcome to your Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all members of the Assembly today, I would like to welcome two residents of The Battlefords to their Legislative Assembly, Gail Feser and Claudette McGuire, my two constituency assistants.

Both these women have served our community in previous capacities for many years. Claudette ran the hospital foundation for a number of years in The Battlefords and did an excellent job of raising money for our local hospital. Gail, she supported the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] detachment in an administrative position for many years in keeping our RCMP members in line.

And you know, like my colleague from Cut Knife-Turtleford said, our constituency assistants are so key in terms of serving our constituents. And it was great to have them down for budget, and just thank the staff in the building for being so welcoming.

And I know there's a debate in the House as to who has the best constituency assistants, and I'm not going to wade into that debate, Mr. Speaker. But I'm certainly glad that they're my constituency assistants in The Battlefords, and I'd ask all members to welcome them to their Assembly. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melfort.

Mr. Goudy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce, to you and through you to all of the members of the Assembly here, somebody from the LeRoy area who is now living in Saskatoon, Ann Paton. And Ann is — she told me not to say it, but I'll say it anyways — she's the face of BHP for us in our area.

And she's not the face, she says, but . . . Ann, the first time I met her, I just thought, you know, I like this company because they choose the right kinds of people. She is happy all the time, and BHP was wise. They stole her out of the RM [rural municipality] and town office for LeRoy there.

Something about Ann that really got me is she always is smiling. She's always kind. And something that you wouldn't know about Ann by her happy demeanour is that a year ago, she got the phone call as a parent that no one would ever want to get. Her son fell in a workplace accident and was a quadriplegic.

And her son Dawson — one of the six kids that she and her husband, Lloyd, have together; four grandchildren — he's a positive young man who was raised well. And their family has been strong through this whole trial. And as you see this smiley, happy woman, we appreciate the strength of her and her family and what BHP has done in our province, their investment. We appreciate that.

And then you also have Dan D'Autremont.

An Hon. Member: — Now for something completely different.

Mr. Goudy: — Something . . . [inaudible] . . . And we all know Dan. And Dan helped me and others when we came into this building. I asked Dan for some advice. He gave me some dry books to read which I don't know if I ever got through. But Dan, we appreciate you being here and welcome to your legislature. Thank you so much.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to join with the member opposite specifically in welcoming Ann to the legislature in your role with BHP. It is such a critical project. And I know myself and colleagues really appreciated the program put on with the Humboldt Chamber a few weeks back and just getting such a clear indication of the support that BHP has for local workers and contractors and companies in the province going forward and the role that you play as such a critical employer, but such a good one as well, in the province.

And while I don't purport to know you obviously well at all, but with the member noting your sunny disposition, I did reflect on the fact that you managed to smile through his entire introduction despite him disobeying your order. So to Ann, welcome, welcome to your legislature and thank you. And thank you to BHP for the critical investment in our province.

And while I'm on my feet as well, Mr. Speaker, I will add my fearful welcome as well to former Speaker Dan, seated in your gallery, who I never had the opportunity to serve with but whose presence still looms . . .

An Hon. Member: — You wouldn't have liked him.

Ms. A. Young: — Okay. Well whose presence still looms large in this building. And despite the comments from the member opposite, I don't know, we might have been able to rub on on a couple issues, you know. Maybe that horseshoe on the right and the left gets closer depending on which end you're on. So welcome to your legislature.

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

Mr. Buckingham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to welcome some guests that are in your gallery, Kim and Val Groff — if you just want to give a wave up there — good friends of mine for the last seven or eight years. And Kim has been the president of my association and a big help to me being here today, Mr. Speaker. And so I want to especially

thank him for all the hard work he's done over the years. Good people and good constituents in my constituency.

Also like to welcome Eric and Darlene Pearce, good people from the village of Borden, farmers, and own their own business out there. Travelling partners, too. Probably about 10 or 11 years in a row, we've always travelled to hot, sunny beaches together. And Eric and I also had the privilege of representing Saskatchewan firefighters at the national curling championship, I guess that'd be about 10 years ago. And it was a lot of fun and a real honour to wear the Saskatchewan flag.

And also, last but definitely not least, is my wife, Karen, of 39 years. And so I would say that you know she's a strong woman because she's been married to me for 39 years. But we are, you know, we're at a part in our life where we have four grandchildren, and I know that her life revolves around those grandchildren because they mean so much to her. But I just want to welcome all of you to this Assembly. I ask all members to help me welcome you to your Assembly. Thank you.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to be on my feet to again present a petition calling for reforms to the SIS [Saskatchewan income support] program. It's a privilege to be on my feet but I take no pleasure in it, Mr. Speaker, because the SIS program continues to cause suffering in communities across this province. And it's been astonishing seeing the government introduce a series of inadequate tweaks to the SIS program. We saw another example yesterday in the budget announcement. And it's unfortunate because throwing dimes at this issue is not going to solve problems.

There are real solutions to this problem, Mr. Speaker. And I remain open and willing to meet with the minister to discuss the report I did, the comprehensive report I did after consultations across the province on the failures of this program.

So with that, I will 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 restore direct payment of rent and utilities for income support clients.

The concerned citizens of this province that signed this petition reside in Regina. I do so present.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this morning to present a petition calling on the Sask Party government to fund our classrooms. Mr. Speaker, we've been presenting petitions similar to this for years. And I thought with this budget there might be a chance that this government would finally listen, sitting on a windfall from potash revenue, and actually invest in our kids' classrooms. Instead we saw a budget that will result in more cuts to our kids' classrooms.

Mr. Speaker, it is as inexplicable as it is disappointing, but I will read some of the points that the petitioners would have us know: that the 2021 provincial budget's failure to fully fund the teachers' contract has amounted to a cut; that after years of underfunding school divisions, there's nowhere left to cut that will not continue to have an impact on student learning; and that the Sask Party government's failure to invest in our classrooms is having serious consequences today and will continue to have those consequences into the future.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call upon the Sask Party government to immediately fix the crisis in our classrooms by providing stable and adequate funding for public education in our province.

Mr. Speaker, those who have signed the petition today reside in Midale. I do so present.

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again today to present our petition calling for paid sick leave for all Saskatchewan workers. The signatories would wish to bring to our attention the following points, Mr. Speaker: that a healthy workforce is good for the economy; that no one should have to make the choice between going to work sick or risking the roof over their head by staying home; that workers, doctors, and public health officials have all called for paid sick leave in Saskatchewan, yet we have not seen it to date.

[10:15]

The official opposition has twice introduced paid sick leave legislation since the onset of the pandemic, calling for a minimum of 10 paid sick days each year and 14 days during a public health crisis.

I'll 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 and pass paid sick leave legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the petition today has been signed by folks from Moose Jaw, Swift Current, and Regina. One of those, I'll just note, is a former colleague of mine, Tara Hessie from SEIU-West [Service Employees International Union-West], and happy to see her support. She's a strong proponent of workers' rights in our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

World Tuberculosis Day

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to recognize

World Tuberculosis Day on the 140th anniversary of Dr. Robert Koch's discovery of the mycobacterium that causes this devastating disease. Tuberculosis claims the lives of approximately 1.5 million people around the world every year. It's one of the top 10 causes of death worldwide.

Now usually when we think of tuberculosis, we think of long-ago history, of sanatoriums or far-off countries. I think of my time treating TB [tuberculosis] on the wards in rural Africa. We don't think of people dying of TB today in a province as wealthy as Saskatchewan.

But the reality is that right now, in 2022, we have three major outbreaks in the province, and over 50 per cent of those infected are children. We're seeing TB meningitis, congenital TB. We've had multiple people die from TB and many more who will be living with lifelong effects. According to University of Saskatchewan researcher Dr. Neeraj Dhar, rates in northern Saskatchewan are almost 10 times the provincial rate, 20 times the national rate.

Mr. Speaker, as we recognize World Tuberculosis Day, I call on all members of this legislature to stand with the affected communities and the hard-working TB team that's fighting these outbreaks, to call on both the provincial and federal governments to work together and find solutions in the fight against TB.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood.

Caregivers Week

Ms. Lambert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize March 20th to 26th as Caregivers Week in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, every day there are many people across the province who provide care for individuals in need of assistance. Mother Teresa once said, "It is not how much you do, but how much love you put in the doing that counts."

Caregivers Week is a time to recognize and honour those in our communities who offer love, care, and support to a friend, a loved one, a child, or a community member. Carson McCullers, an American novelist, playwright, and poet, once said, "The closest thing to being cared for is to care for someone else."

Mr. Speaker, approximately 8 million Canadians do exactly that. They volunteer their time to provide care for others, and they deserve our recognition and our gratitude. With great patience, compassion, and dedication, caregivers truly make a difference in the lives of those they assist to help them maintain independence and quality of life.

I now ask all members to join me in honouring and thanking caregivers for their selfless service. Thank you.

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

Responses to Provincial Budget

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday was budget day, typically a good day for government, and hopefully always a good day for people in the province. But, Mr. Speaker,

let's check in with what people in the province are saying.

The SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association] president says, "This falls short of anything we would consider an investment in education." Kayla at Prairie Harm Reduction was disappointed: "Absolutely we were hoping for something different." REAL [Regina Exhibition Association Ltd.] President Reid noted that news of the expansion of the PST [provincial sales tax] to include entertainment charges was a surprise. And Mayor Clark, too, surprised: "... to put PST on those same industries that have been most affected by the pandemic."

And, Mr. Speaker, the Roughriders are disappointed, saying the decision will impact many looking forward to coming together for game day and the 2022 Grey Cup. A Grey Cup tax — wow. The president of the trappers association called this budget a "... kick in the teeth to any hunter, angler, and trapper." Restaurants Canada thinks the budget doesn't help a struggling industry. And as for the taxpayers federation, Mr. Speaker, I don't know where to start. They say the Sask Party is sticking it to taxpayers, call the PST an irritant, and that the budget is an unnecessary kick in the pants.

At a time when people are feeling the squeeze, there seems to be a consensus, Mr. Speaker. We're paying more and getting less.

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

Remembering Andrew Murie

Mr. Hargrave: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to pay tribute to a friend of mine, Andrew Murie. Andy passed away last week after a brief battle with cancer.

Mr. Speaker, people should know about Andy. At the time of his passing, he was in his 25th year as the CEO [chief executive officer] of MADD [Mothers Against Drunk Driving] Canada. I had the pleasure to first meet Andy in this very building back in 2016.

Mr. Speaker, he was tireless in the fight against impaired driving, and it was a pleasure to meet with him and learn about his passion. With his suggestions and encouragement, our government made significant changes to legislation that has resulted in a significant reduction in fatalities and injuries from impaired driving. Andy believed, as I do, that one death from impaired driving is one death too many.

Mr. Speaker, we also worked together on other measures like ride sharing as well as the MADD SmartWheels bus. Mr. Speaker, there are people alive today because of the work of Andy Murie.

Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, you meet people under difficult circumstances. You work together to make changes and out of that comes a strong friendship. I have lost a friend, but we've all lost a man who made a great difference in this country. I want to send my sincere condolences to his wife, Joan, and his two children and his extended family. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Radiothon Raises Funds for Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

Mr. Meyers: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mark Twain said, "a baby is an inestimable blessing." I think many of us can attest to that in here. Childbirth is truly one of the great moments in a parent's life; however it can quickly become one of the most stressful.

For the 35th year, the Z99 radiothon returned last week. Cassity and Wheels were on the air for 12 hours. I was joined by colleagues from Regina Coronation Park, the Health minister down there, lending our support as they raised money for the Hospitals of Regina Foundation in support of our neonatal intensive care unit, the NICU, at the Rawlco centre for mother baby care at the Regina General Hospital.

Thanks to the generous support of people in our community, over \$400,000 was raised. Since the first radiothon in 1987, Z99 has raised over \$10 million and provided our NICU with life-saving technology that enhances the medical teams' ability to care for fragile newborns. This year, the NicView, they're putting cameras in so when the parents are in their room they can watch their babies as they recover.

The NICU admits approximately 500 newborns per year. Some babies stay in for only a couple of hours, and some babies are there for a couple of months. It's been described as a place you don't want to be, but if you have to be there, it's probably one of the best and that it's worth every penny.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask all members in congratulating and thanking Z99 and their radiothon for supporting our babies.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Arm River.

Recognizing Success at Spring Creek Garden

Mr. Skoropad: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been said that opportunity is often missed because it's dressed in overalls and looks a lot like work. Dan and Chelsea Erlandson from near Outlook have embraced the overalls of opportunity to create a success story in my constituency of Arm River.

In what can be termed as nothing other than a labour of love, Dan and Chelsea have grown their Spring Creek Garden operation into a significant player in the vegetable industry. On Spring Creek Garden's 340 acres, you will find from carrots, kale, kohlrabi, and cucumbers to celery, spinach, Brussels sprouts, and broccoli. Mr. Speaker, I don't know if you know what 800,000 pounds of broccoli look like, but if you head out to Spring Creek Garden this summer, you can see for yourself. And as for cabbage, Mr. Speaker, if you've eaten the famous KFC coleslaw anywhere from here to the West Coast, you've probably eaten Spring Creek Garden's salad-ready product.

In addition to growing vegetables, Mr. Speaker, these two energetic entrepreneurs have helped grow livelihoods. That is they've helped to grow the local and provincial economy by employing upwards of 70 people during peak season.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to help me to congratulate Dan and Chelsea Erlandson for growing Spring Creek Garden into a true Saskatchewan success story. And I

encourage all members to eat their vegetables. Thank you.

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

Responses to Provincial Budget

Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday was budget day in Saskatchewan. It was a time to highlight that our economy is on track, our finances are on track, and investments in government services are on track. Now if you asked the member opposite about the budget, you'd think things were pretty bleak, Mr. Speaker. But things are going well here in Saskatchewan, and yesterday's budget builds on that.

You don't have to take my word for it. Let's hear what a few others have to say about the budget. BMO [Bank of Montreal] describes this as "a solid budget." Regina mayor Sandra Masters pointed to several highlights such as municipal investment, urgent care centres, and long-term care, as well as mental health and addictions spending. She added that the digital media grant increase will be fantastic for tourism and local businesses.

And here's what the Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce had to say, Mr. Speaker, and I quote:

We are on board with the province's plan to tackle the deficit, reduce operational debt, and make strategic investments in key areas that promote job creation, improve our competitiveness, and expand the availability of skilled labour to grow our industries.

And those are just some of the positive things people are saying about this budget, Mr. Speaker. On this side of the House, we are positive this province's best days are ahead of us, and this budget sets the stage for a bright future. Thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Provision of Health Care

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday while the Premier was patting himself on the back, the children's hospital was on code black. What does that mean? It means that in an ICU [intensive care unit] with 12 beds, they had 14 patients. The ward was full. The emergency room, full. Pediatric units in hospitals across the province — full — with pediatric care completely overwhelmed.

Where does the Premier expect parents to send a sick kid today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, as we've said in this House, the Minister of Health has said on numerous occasions, with the amalgamation of all of the health regions into one provincial Health Authority, as we find our way through COVID — or quite frankly, as we find our way through any day in the health care system — we have every intent of utilizing our entire provincial capacity. That provincial capacity today remains at about 91 per cent across the health care system, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday we saw a budget that continued to invest not only in infrastructure and health, Mr. Speaker — and I'll have more about that in a moment — but invested heavily, heavily in the training, in the recruitment, and the retention of all health care professionals, not just physicians but all health care professionals in all areas of the province, Mr. Speaker. A focus on rural professionals as well to provide that provincial service across the province, Mr. Speaker.

As that service sits today, we're at about 91 per cent capacity. That's notwithstanding there are some challenges in certain areas like the children's hospital, Mr. Speaker.

And I think in closing, I'd say the people of the province can be very thankful that under this government we have a children's hospital. It never would have happened under the members opposite.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, it's not only pediatrics where people can't get care. Today there are no obstetrical services in Swift Current. The same thing happened in Yorkton last month. Expectant mothers are being told to seek care elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, why are we seeing so many disruptions in essential urgent care? And what does the Premier have to say to women in the Southwest? What should they do when it's time to deliver?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, we have had a few interruptions in services in various areas of the province, throughout the last couple of years most notably, Mr. Speaker. And I think when you listen to the budget, that puts this province back on track on so many fronts, Mr. Speaker. Health care, investment, and the investment in the health care professionals that are providing that service in Saskatchewan most certainly is back on track.

And so what I would say to all health care professionals, that help is most certainly on the way. We are focusing on training, adding nurse training seats, having our continuing care assistants come through that training as per a commitment during the last election, Mr. Speaker. Those continuing care assistants are coming through their training and arriving in health care facilities across the province, Mr. Speaker.

[10:30]

In the immediate effort, we are looking at bringing people in, and most notably from the Philippines, Mr. Speaker. We have done this before, bringing in health care professionals to work in our communities, our health care centres across the province, Mr. Speaker. We're very focused. We've put the effort behind this, Mr. Speaker. The financial effort was released yesterday. And in the days ahead we're going to continue to do everything we can to recruit, retain, and train our health care professionals so that they can offer the services to the people of this province.

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

Mr. Meili: — Help is on the way, he says, but those people are sick and struggling today, Mr. Speaker. We're leading the

country, leading the country in TB, in HIV [human immunodeficiency virus], in syphilis, the worst COVID death rate in the country, tens of thousands waiting for surgery, hospitals closed in Lanigan, in Broadview, in Unity — the list goes on — pediatric hospitals overwhelmed, expectant mothers with nowhere to go.

How does the Premier see these problems? How does this Premier see those problems and then turn around and give Saskatchewan people a budget that fails to acknowledge the mess he's created in health care, let alone even scratch the surface of solving the problem?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, with the significant investment, almost \$7 billion, in our health care services in this province in the budget yesterday, Mr. Speaker, only able to make those investments due to the economy strengthening here in the province of Saskatchewan. But close to \$7 billion invested in health care across this province continues really the effort, the focus, and the priority that a Saskatchewan Party government has placed on health care — not just facilities but health care staff, health care professionals across this province, Mr. Speaker.

You take a walk back through time to 2007 and look where our College of Medicine was in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, how that's been expanded; how our nurse training seats have been expanded over the course of the last decade and a half; further expansion in yesterday's budget, another 150 nurse training seats of all designations happening in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. As we move forward, increased immigration efforts, Mr. Speaker, to bring not only health care professionals in but bring in all of the other folks that are going to help us build on \$13.8 billion of private investment coming into the province, Mr. Speaker.

Most certainly what we saw yesterday was a budget that brings this province back on track, and nowhere is that more notable than in health care service across the province.

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

Sales Tax on Live Events

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, a Premier who oversees some of the worst health outcomes in the entire country and gives us a budget that's nowhere near proportional to the challenge shows you how much this government has lost track of what truly matters to Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, I want to read a statement into the record today. It's the Saskatchewan Roughriders' statement on today's provincial budget, now yesterday. I quote:

The Saskatchewan Roughriders were surprised to learn of the addition of PST to sports and entertainment tickets in today's provincial budget. Sports, art, and culture were some of the hardest-hit industries by the pandemic over the past two years. As a not-for-profit sports team, and despite rising inflation costs, we worked tirelessly to minimize the financial impact on our fans. Unfortunately we know today's decision will impact many in our community who are looking forward to coming together on Rider game day

and for the 2022 Grey Cup.

Mr. Speaker, Rider games, rodeos, rock shows — why, when families are struggling to make ends meet, is this Premier making life more expensive? Why, when sports and culture organizations are finally able to get going again, is he imposing a barrier to their success?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, in every budget there are difficult choices that must be made. This budget was no different, coming out of two years of supporting Saskatchewan residents through a global pandemic, Mr. Speaker.

And there were difficult decisions ultimately that were made to provide stability to this very budget, Mr. Speaker, as we look to transitioning away from our reliance on resource royalties here in the province, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we as a province are never reliant on a \$100 price of oil in order to employ the nurses in our facilities across the province, never reliant on what the potash prices are to ensure that we're able to offer proper education funding across the province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have been very transparent with respect to our transitioning away from that reliance on natural resource prices to provide stability to the budget, to provide stability to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And with respect to the PST increases, they are directly proportional to the surgical wait time initiative that we added to yesterday. Twenty million dollars invested in the surgical wait time initiative two years ago, Mr. Speaker. Another \$21 million invested in this budget. More than \$40 million going to ensure that we are going to reduce our surgical wait times here in the province. We did it once before with the wait time we inherited from the members opposite, Mr. Speaker. We're going to do it again post-COVID.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — These new taxes don't make any sense. This is a time we should be supporting folks to come together, to celebrate, to hold events after a time that we've been forced apart for so long. These are all industries that were hit the hardest during the pandemic and are all in desperate need of support.

That Sask Party government would know that if they consulted and listened to the organizations and the local businesses out there. In what's become a hallmark of that Sask Party government, rather than consult and listen to folks, they just decide that they know best. Why on earth would this government be targeting industries hit the hardest through the pandemic with new taxes in this budget?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, what I would like to say to the member opposite is, (a) he needs to pick a lane. Because he always tells us that we cannot borrow money, we shouldn't bring up the debt, but we need to spend more money and not take in revenue. So he needs to pick a lane at some point.

But, Mr. Speaker, do you know what those industries want to see? Those industries want to see the investment that's coming to this province. Because what does that mean, Mr. Speaker? That means workers coming to this province. More and more jobs, more people having a decent income with disposable money whether they're going to go to those Roughrider games, they're going to go to those concerts, they're going to go to all of those events, they're going to go golfing, they're going to go to the gym. Those workers is what those industries want to see. They want to see the economic development, and quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, this budget will support that economic growth.

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

Affordability and Cost of Living

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Well it's as clear as day there, Mr. Speaker. This is a budget that's lost track of reality from a government that's lost touch with the working people of this province, at a time that people are facing crushing cost-of-living increases, record high prices at the pumps, all while this government has soaring resource revenues due to an extraordinary situation.

Why wouldn't this government provide urgent fuel cost relief, make life a bit more affordable, give folks a break, instead of hiking taxes and introducing a slew of new taxes on hard-hit industries?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, as I've done in the past to answer this very same question — it's a recycled question that the member keeps bringing up — is there is so many fronts that we do address affordability, and we've done it year over year over year.

We have the second-lowest utility bundle in the province with the past budget and now this future budget. We're going to be reducing child care fees for families to help them out. We had a significant reduction in the personal income tax, which means that people can keep more money in their pocket to make their decisions instead of what the NDP [New Democratic Party] when they were in government. They taxed them. They took the money, and then they decided where you might get your money back, which is not the philosophy of this government, Mr. Speaker.

We have a number of tax credits to address a number of affordability issues for families, as well as there's direct payments to help with affordability such as the seniors' income plan, increased in this budget, Mr. Speaker, and the low-income tax credit.

Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of measures and if you add them up, it's over \$2 billion annually in affordability initiatives within this budget.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — That out-of-touch government has

soaring resource revenues while folks are facing a buck seventy at the pumps today, Mr. Speaker. Other provinces like Alberta are doing something to offer a little bit of a break on this front, to help with the fuel costs. Not our government though. They're going to nickel and dime folks and they're going to pile on with new taxes and new hikes. That's on top of the property tax hikes and the power rate hikes in this budget.

Will this government finally do the right thing today — maybe after they've listened to folks and realized how out of touch their budget is with the realities Saskatchewan people are facing — and introduce urgent relief on fuel costs here today and scrap the slew of new taxes that they've imposed on Saskatchewan people and industries?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting when he talks about the increase to the property tax. One of the positive things is 6 million of that is because of growth. Growth is very positive for our province. And the increase beyond that is, on average, about \$13 per household per year, Mr. Speaker, so it is a very, very small increase.

Mr. Speaker, it is also interesting when he talks about the affordability and how that we are not thinking of the most needy. We have the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre who sends out a letter for a fundraiser — and let's talk about affordability — and oh, by the way, to do so we would like you to donate \$250. Where are they going to get that, Mr. Speaker?

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

Funding for Education

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, throughout the pandemic this government has talked up the need of Saskatchewan kids to justify their politically driven choices. But with this year's budget, we see that all that talk was just lip service.

At a time when kids need to get back on track, this government has refused to step up to the plate with adequate funding for education. A 1.5 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker. With over \$23 million of that going directly to the teachers' contract that this government already committed to — as they should — fully 80 per cent of this increase is already spoken for.

Does the minister recognize that on average leaving \$200,000 per school division is actually a cut?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the Finance minister noted yesterday in the delivery of the budget, this is the largest education budget in the history of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker: \$1.99 billion in operating funding for school divisions.

It does, as the member opposite says, fully funds the 2 per cent CBA [collective bargaining agreement] increase for teachers. It adds \$6 million in supports for learning, to add those supports right into the classroom, Mr. Speaker. It creates a new

\$4.5 million minor capital program, Mr. Speaker, that I know school boards had been calling for, Mr. Speaker. And it creates a \$7 million fund to add EAs [educational assistant] to the classroom. Two hundred more EAs are going to be in the classroom in the upcoming school year because of this budget, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is a budget that builds on the work that this government has done over the last number of years to provide that support to school divisions, Mr. Speaker. And I look forward to working with school divisions as they finalize their budgets in the coming months. Thank you.

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

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, that minister knows, he knows what a 1.5 per cent increase means, because last year's education budget was eerily similar, and it led to cuts and he knows it. He knows it. Okay, that's why we have 352 fewer teachers working in our province this year compared to the year before, teachers that our kids depend on and need.

Mr. Speaker, this government has no idea what's happening in our classrooms. It has no idea of the tough decisions being made around board tables. So from the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation] president, he called yesterday "a sad day for students." From the SSBA president: "Once again, we see a budget for K to 12 education that falls short of anything we would consider an investment in education."

Again, why after everything our kids have been through, why would this government introduce a budget that will lead to cuts in education?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I note the member opposite quoted his union president, Mr. Maze, who I had an opportunity to talk to yesterday, Mr. Speaker. And it's interesting that the president of the STF last year, in last year's budget with a 1 per cent increase in operating funding, said it's a good news budget for education. This year's a 1.5 per cent increase for school divisions in operating, Mr. Speaker. I think, like most parents across the province, I too don't understand new math, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this provides for a 2 per cent fully funding of the CBA. It adds those supports in the classroom, Mr. Speaker. It adds for more EAs in the classroom, Mr. Speaker. In fact under this Premier before this budget, Mr. Speaker, EAs are up 449 positions, a 13 per cent increase. We're going to add 200 more to that, Mr. Speaker.

[10:45]

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working with the school divisions in the coming months as they finalize their budgets. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Saskatchewan Income Support Program

Ms. Conway: — What a disappointing answer, Mr. Speaker, from a minister that should be fighting for investments in his file but is instead overseeing cuts to the classroom, Mr. Speaker.

Families are being squeezed from all sides. Food costs up 7 per cent. Fuel costs up over 40 per cent from last year, Mr. Speaker. And now, now families will be paying more at community events, more for utilities. And to top things off, Mr. Speaker, for the thousands of families on SIS, they can expect a whopping 30 extra dollars per month for basic benefits, Mr. Speaker. Not even half a tank of gas. Not even enough to buy a bag of groceries. Not even enough to keep lockstep with inflation on the Bank of Canada's own numbers. And not even enough to reach half the official poverty line.

To the minister: how is a buck a day going to alleviate the financial pressures that SIS clients were already facing before the rising cost of living?

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

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Social Services has programs to assist individuals overcome their challenges, earn more income, become more self-sufficient, start a career, or participate in their communities to gain independence to the best of their abilities.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan income assistance rates are similar, if not better, than rates in other provinces, and that's before the increase to SIS that we announced in this budget. Mr. Speaker, they did receive \$30 a month basic increased benefit, but they also received \$25 a month towards their shelter benefit, Mr. Speaker. So she's not actually telling the full story.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the rates, we also look at it from a whole-income approach. So clients have the benefits that they receive from Social Services, but they also may have other streams of income, Mr. Speaker. They may be receiving child tax benefit, other types of credit. They may have a part-time job that they receive money from. And we have exemptions for those. Mr. Speaker, thank you.

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

Ms. Conway: — Mr. Speaker, these pitiful tweaks just aren't solutions. As desperate as that minister is for a good news story, this isn't that. This will go no distance to providing relief for the struggling people coming out of a pandemic, Mr. Speaker. A buck a day, that's what this is — an extra buck a day for SIS clients. You can't even buy a tea bag at the cafeteria for that. You can't even get a coffee at Timmy's, Mr. Speaker. This is truly a slap in the face to the thousands of families struggling to get by on SIS.

When the Finance minister was asked about clients struggling to pay their utilities on the radio this morning, she said that struggling SIS clients who "can't manage their budgets on their own" should be on trusteeship programs. Does the minister really believe that folks struggling to get by on pennies just aren't managing their budgets? Please, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I do thank the member for that question. She talks about trustee services, Mr. Speaker. In this budget we injected more money for trustee services to double those supports from 300 individuals to 600 individuals. And yes, those trustee services are to help those clients understand what they're spending money on and figure out how to do a budget, Mr. Speaker. As well they're working with those individuals to try and help them find employment, Mr. Speaker, to move them on to a better path, Mr. Speaker.

In this budget our ministry is taking over the education and training incentive, Mr. Speaker. We'll be able to work directly with those clients who are on our programs to try and give them the education they need to help better themselves. And that's exactly what they want, Mr. Speaker, is they want to move forward and they want to be successful. And we're here to help them, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Digital Identification

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the last few weeks, there's a topic that I'm being asked about. That is, what is the Saskatchewan individual digital identity roadmap? And I know some other members of this House are also being asked about digital ID [identification] because I'm cc'd on those emails. And I also noticed that the tender closed on January 4th.

Mr. Speaker, people want to know, who is the government working with to implement an actual mass digital ID system that will link all of our personal information to one source? And why are they only hearing about it now? There's going to be business programming, qualifying for programs, and monitoring small businesses. I wonder how many members of this House are aware of this and if everyone in the House is in favour of it.

According to the DIACC [Digital Identification and Authentication Council of Canada] framework, basic access to services such as health, works, student loans, qualifying for disabilities, managing land use, shift in social attitudes towards health and lifestyle will be digitalization. So my question is, will the Saskatchewan government ensure the privacy of the information as per the privacy policies? Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of SaskBuilds and Procurement.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Sask service connect is some very preliminary work that's being done by officials in SaskBuilds in the IT [information technology] department, Mr. Speaker, in an effort to improve quality of life and access to government programs for all citizens of the province, Mr. Speaker.

To the member's question, we take privacy of our citizens very, very serious, Mr. Speaker. That's why the Privacy Commissioner, their office has been and will continue to be engaged every step of the way on this, Mr. Speaker.

To other parts of the member's question, the intent here is, for example, we frequently get . . . all governments get concerns about timelines, waiting on hold on the phone, lineups at an office. This would be an attempt to rectify those sorts of things, Mr. Speaker.

But as of right now, the RFP [request for proposal] is closed. There's been no contracts issued, Mr. Speaker. There's been no final decisions made, Mr. Speaker. If we do decide to proceed with this, we'll be extremely cautious to make sure that citizens' privacy is protected. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 78 — *The Opioid Damages and Health Care Cost Recovery Amendment Act, 2022*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Rural and Remote Health.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 78, *The Opioid Damages and Health Care Cost Recovery Amendment Act, 2022* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Rural and Remote Health that Bill 78 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.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Rural and Remote Health.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Next sitting of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

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.]

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter back into the Assembly here today, albeit a bit more brief today, with respect to the budget. I had the opportunity to enter into the budget yesterday, Mr. Speaker. But you know, you take a day to look at that budget — and you take the calls, and you see what people are saying about it, and you digest what this government is doing — and it didn't get any better overnight, Mr.

Speaker.

This is, you know, sort of an extraordinary situation where you have record high revenues for a government — due to a situation outside of their control, international conflict, horrible conflict — but crushing cost of living that Saskatchewan people are facing. A buck seventy at the pumps today, Mr. Speaker, and a government that is truly failing to step up and offer any relief and of course instead is, you know, actually piling on with a slew of new tax hikes, new taxes, and fee hikes as well, Mr. Speaker. It's a very clear example of a government that's fallen out of touch with working people and the realities that they face.

My comments today I want to, you know . . . Everything I said yesterday stands, Mr. Speaker. And you know, I want to just emphasize that it's an honour to represent the good folks of Regina Rosemont in this Assembly. And it's the folks I represent that offer their input on these matters and that you think of their interests. And the hard-working, good folks that do all they can for their families, for our community, for our province, that work so hard, that toiled so hard through this pandemic. So many that helped out one another, so many that were out there on the front lines in grocery stores and in trucking and transport, so many working in health care and home care and seniors' care, Mr. Speaker. And working so hard as well to, you know, of course serve our people and serve our province but also to make ends meet, Mr. Speaker.

The cost of living is a serious hardship that people are facing, and this government is just so offside with the approach that they have taken. You know, this is a government that has failed to offer any relief when you look at the sky-high price of fuel. No fuel relief for folks at all in this budget, something we had clearly called for at a time again where they certainly have the revenues at their disposal to make that happen, Mr. Speaker.

And instead we see this government that's actually hiking property taxes and hiking power rates and then introducing all these new taxes and fee hikes, Mr. Speaker, on industries that have been hit so very hard. You know, taxing everything from gym memberships . . . which frankly we should be encouraging folks to take up a membership or at the very least to be active in taking care of their health, Mr. Speaker. But then taxing entertainment and rodeos and curling and live music and museums, all the way to Rider tickets, as we've talked about, Mr. Speaker. Taxing The Globe Theatre and Agribition and Folk Fest and Rush games, town fairs across the province, craft shows, if you can imagine, Mr. Speaker.

It just baffles me that this Finance minister and this Premier would think that somehow they'd want to go tax curling and craft shows and all these sorts of events that I'm talking about at a time where they have the ability to provide some relief. And at a time frankly, Mr. Speaker, that we actually, we want to come together, where people deserve some fun. We should be supporting that. It's important for morale. It's important for one another. It's important for our mental health, to come together and celebrate. And instead we have a government that's going to shut many people out from accessing some of those events after a time where we've been forced to stay apart, Mr. Speaker.

When I think of, you know, the good folks I represent, Mr. Speaker, this budget does nothing with respect to the rebuild —

needed rebuild, critical rebuild — of Pioneer Village, Mr. Speaker. It goes no distance to making that happen nor fixing the inadequate, horribly, woefully inadequate supports in seniors' care and does nothing to bolster in the kind of way we need to, in a generational way, the kind of home care supports that seniors should deserve.

We know that this style of supports and approach to supports is something that extends dignity and quality of life and health. We also know it's more affordable, certainly for seniors across Saskatchewan, families across Saskatchewan, but for the province as well, Mr. Speaker. And when you look at what seniors have endured and the cruel indignity they've faced with the inadequate support through this pandemic, Mr. Speaker, it's just such a betrayal not to step up and provide the supports that they need and deserve right now.

You know, I think of the good folks that I represent. You know, this budget goes no distance at all in providing the resources that our classrooms so desperately need, classrooms that have been damaged and devastated by the cuts of the Sask Party long before the pandemic, from a government that has disrespected the importance of education and of educators and the needs of students for far too long, Mr. Speaker.

[11:00]

And when you think of what our kids have endured through this pandemic and the kind of learning gaps and challenges that they've faced, Mr. Speaker, it just speaks volumes that this government is cutting education at this time where we should be, again, providing that generational support to make sure that we have a kids-first recovery and that we get their learning back on track and that we recognize how important education is as a foundation to our future as a society, as an economy, to our social well-being but our economic well-being as well, Mr. Speaker.

And it's a clear example of why this government has struggled all the way through with balancing the budget and, you know, managing to make sure that we have a stronger and more diversified economy because they clearly don't understand the foundation of that, Mr. Speaker. They clearly don't understand the foundation of that.

And this budget, of course, because it's forcing cuts into classrooms, complex and challenging classrooms, they're pulling away the supports and one-on-one time and care that students deserve, Mr. Speaker. They're putting more pressure on those teachers and educational assistants in those classrooms and they're preventing parents from having the confidence that their kids are getting the kind of care and attention that they deserve.

We have one chance to get it right with education, Mr. Speaker. We have one chance to get it right. And you know, I believe that education is about extending opportunity and it's about allowing each and every young person in this province to live up to their full potential so that our province then can live up to its own.

Because we have nothing but cuts in this budget on this front, there's no dollars with respect to education, no dollars for the needed rebuild of Rosemont School, an exceptional school with exceptional students and exceptional educators but that is in need of a rebuild, Mr. Speaker.

Because we have cuts in this budget that are being handed down to school boards again to do the dirty work of this government, sadly we won't likely be able to see — and I hope it's not the case because I know how impressive our Regina Public School Board is — but we likely aren't going to be able to see Dieppe School opening in the way, or reopening in the way that it needs to, Mr. Speaker. A school that was closed during the underfunding of this government; a school that is so important to the community; a school that will also serve the growing community of Westerra; a school that will with its reopening be able to pull the pressure off of McLurg, as an example; a school within our constituency as well, that's well beyond capacity; a very good school as well. But these are the kinds of things we need to be supporting, Mr. Speaker.

And we certainly don't see anything to address the mental health and addictions realities and pressures and crises that all too many are facing, Mr. Speaker, and the tragic reality of the failure to provide the supports and services that folks need and deserve in a timely way. And that's when they need it, Mr. Speaker, not long delays. And sadly it leaves people continuing to suffer those very tragic losses that we learn about and are a part of all too often — loved ones and family members that are stolen from each other in the grips and ravages of mental health and addictions without the kind of support and care that they need and deserve.

Without doubt, Mr. Speaker, this is a budget that's off track and out of line with the interests of Saskatchewan people. It's clear that this Sask Party government's grown awfully comfy in those government benches with their big majorities, and that they're sort of drinking their own bathwater these days but failing to listen to Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker. That are more interested in their own partisan political self-interest and games, Mr. Speaker, than serving the best interests and public interests of . . . speakers.

And I guess I was talking about drinking the bathwater over there, Mr. Speaker. And I'm told that I've evoked too many images. But you know, it's clear, Mr. Speaker, that this is a government that's more interested in sort of the back-patting and self-congratulatory stuff and the partisan games than serving Saskatchewan people.

You know, I talked yesterday about the pieces within the budget that weren't there, including on the economy. And of course we have a time right now where we need to make sure that we're building and creating the kinds of jobs that Saskatchewan people can count on, Mr. Speaker.

And we need to, you know . . . And I hear a member heckling from the very far corner of the Assembly over there. I can't quite see who it is, Mr. Speaker, because he's so far back there. But my good friend from Walsh Acres should care about that because I suspect his constituents aren't going to be real impressed with how he and his government are sticking them with but more taxes at a time where they need some relief, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm pretty sure the good folks of Regina Walsh Acres aren't going to be real pleased about the fact that they see a slashing to the budget for labour force development in this budget at a time where we should be doing all we can to skill up this province, to extend education and opportunity to build that labour force for tomorrow.

And again I hear a voice from the back, Mr. Speaker, but I got to pull out my telescope to see who it is. He's all the way back there. I've spotted him, and it's the member for Walsh Acres heckling me once again. I suspect, Mr. Speaker, as the good folks of Walsh Acres, you know, see what's in this budget, they're going to be asking him some pretty hard questions as they're thinking about booking tickets this summer to Folk Fest, when they're getting their Rider tickets ready, and when they're at the pumps today, Mr. Speaker. When they're showing up at the pumps today with the highest cost of fuel that they've ever faced, buck seventy, buck eighty a litre, but all they get from their member is a bunch of heckling and laughter and nonsense from the far, you know, backbenchers of the Sask Party, a long ways from the front row, Mr. Speaker.

I suspect it's a frustrating, frustrating experience for the member for Walsh Acres, Mr. Speaker. You know, it probably feels like a bit of an exercise in futility for him back there. He's so far back there, I can't see who he is on a good day, Mr. Speaker. He's so far back there, I can't even hear his heckles, but you know, he's making all sorts of noise. I wish he'd make some noise with his cabinet. I wish he'd be clear with his caucus. I wish he'd represent the best interests of Saskatchewan people.

But yes, Mr. Speaker, back to the economy. It makes no sense to be cutting labour force development at a time where we need to be building a labour force for today and for tomorrow, to be able to build those projects that we're all so excited about, all those capital projects that we're talking about that are coming in from the private sector, Mr. Speaker, across our province. We need to make sure that that's a boom and an opportunity for Saskatchewan people.

We also need to make sure we have the labour force in education and in health care, Mr. Speaker. And we need to make sure that as we build infrastructure from a public perspective that we're doing so with Saskatchewan people.

You know, and we get the member from Canora making noise and heckling here in the Assembly, but he makes no noise, I don't think, with his cabinet over there on the heavy and serious issues we face, Mr. Speaker.

And you know, I didn't hear a boo in this budget about addressing things like supply chains across our province, working with industry to address the weaknesses in supply chains. I didn't hear anything about fixing our broken transportation system, including our underperforming rail system, Mr. Speaker, not a boo from this government. Something so important to our economy today, to producers, to exporters, and to our future, Mr. Speaker.

And you know, this is a horribly disappointing budget for folks, Mr. Speaker. I think I've covered things, you know, on this front. This is a time though, it's a serious time in our world, and it's a time of pressure for Saskatchewan people. Extraordinary cost-of-living pressures they're facing, a government that's experiencing a windfall of revenues. Saskatchewan people are the owners of those resources. They deserve a break. They deserve some relief, Mr. Speaker, and they deserve some of the investments that rise to the magnitude of the challenge that we face in this province, Mr. Speaker, in our classrooms, in home care, and with respect to seniors' care, with respect to mental health and addictions

services, and to fix the damage that we see in the agenda of this government with respect to poverty and supporting the most vulnerable, Mr. Speaker.

So with all that being said, Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to serve in this Assembly. It's a duty I don't take lightly. I want the good folks I represent to know that we'll continue to be bringing forward constructive solutions and proposing better ways forward and that we'll fight like heck, Mr. Speaker, against the government who's clearly out of line with the best interests of Saskatchewan people, clearly out of touch with the realities that they're facing. And that's making life harder at a time, Mr. Speaker, where folks are in a desperate situation.

The Leader of the Opposition said yesterday that folks were looking for a lifeline; instead that Sask Party tossed them an anchor. And you know, it's a fair characterization of the approach of this tired government, Mr. Speaker.

So I won't be supporting the budget and I will at this point move an amendment:

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

does not approve the budgetary policy of the government because it does nothing to alleviate the incredible cost-of-living pressures faced by Saskatchewan people or to provide any relief on fuel costs; it adds a suite of new provincial sales taxes; and it fails to invest in classrooms, seniors, and others in desperate need of support; and further,

That the Assembly has lost confidence in the government.

I so move.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The amendment reads:

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

does not approve the budgetary policy of the government because it does nothing to alleviate the incredible cost-of-living pressures faced by Saskatchewan people or to provide any relief on fuel costs; it adds a suite of new provincial sales taxes; and it fails to invest in classrooms, seniors, and others in desperate need of support; and further,

That the Assembly has lost confidence in the government.

It was moved by the member from Regina Rosemont and second by the member from Regina Douglas Park. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Regina Douglas Park.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today and enter into the debate on this budget. And I'm honoured to, at the end of my remarks, second the motion — I'll do that at the end of my remarks — second the motion moved by the

member for Regina Rosemont.

Before I get started on this budget, I do want to take an opportunity to acknowledge and thank a few people in my life, because I didn't have the opportunity, I don't believe, to enter into the budget debate last year, which would have been our first budget debate since the 2020 election. And I wasn't able to participate . . . unfortunately I wasn't able to participate, but fortunately, because I had given birth a few days before to our son Ronan. Most days I'm quite happy that that happened. You know, it depends on the day but, Mr. Speaker, he will be turning one on April the 2nd. I was due on budget day. I'm glad that he decided to come a few days early, because I was pretty sick of being pregnant at that point, Mr. Speaker.

He is a very active little guy, not walking yet but crawling and climbing, and he has the bumps and the scrapes to prove it, Mr. Speaker. He's starting to learn how to fight back with his sister, who is now just over two and a half, Mr. Speaker. She likes to steal his toys despite them being a little young for her age. And he's starting to learn how to steal them right back, which is a bit concerning for me, Mr. Speaker, because he's almost already her size. He's a pretty tall guy, so I think I have a pretty stressful next few years in my future, Mr. Speaker. But all that to say there he's an absolute joy and a blessing to our family, and he's truly made our family complete. Him, along with our daughter, Olivia — both who have not been strangers to this Assembly, Mr. Speaker — keep us very, very busy. They're very active kids, full of love and energy and wonder. And it's been exhausting but very much the blessing of our lives to have them complete our family, Mr. Speaker.

[11:15]

Since this is the first time I'm doing a budget address since the 2020 election, I do want to thank everybody who was involved in the 2020 campaign. It's an absolute honour to have been chosen by the people of Regina Douglas Park to represent them yet again. I do not take that role lightly, and I do not take it for granted, Mr. Speaker. I want to take the chance to thank all of those who were involved in the campaign, either as a staff member or as a volunteer, for all of their hard work and dedication, especially during what was a very strange election, Mr. Speaker. Having an election during a pandemic created its own unique challenges.

I also want to thank my campaign office roommate, the member for Regina University, for bringing her team into our office and creating some true energy and excitement through the many, many folks who came through our doors to work for her campaign. It was fun. We joked about how we were the most pregnant office in probably Saskatchewan's history, well definitely in Saskatchewan's history of campaigns. And we had a lot of fun throughout that process. And I'm so honoured and happy that we and our team in Regina Douglas Park were able to do a little part in helping to elect the member for Regina University, who worked tirelessly despite being very, very pregnant at that time, Mr. Speaker, to be chosen by the people of Regina University.

I also want to take the chance to thank my constituency assistant. I have a new constituency assistant. My previous one, Kelsey Morrison, has joined our caucus team and now works for our

caucus office, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — Poached is the word you're looking for.

Ms. Sarauer: — Yeah, the caucus office continually poaches my staff in my constituency office, which I take as a big compliment, Mr. Speaker. I've had some incredible staff come through the constituency office and I'm so happy and honoured that they are continuing to work for all of us, the team at large in a bigger capacity at the caucus office. Both my two former CAs share an office space in our caucus office and work as research staff, and it's great to have them.

My new constituency assistant, Robbie Desjarlais, joined my office a few months ago. It feels like he's been around for a while because he's hit the ground running in such a great way. I had the opportunity to meet him through his work at the Regina Catholic School Division as an Indigenous student advocate back in 2012 when I was elected as a trustee. And I noticed right away his passion for the work that he does, his passion for the students, and his passion for the province, Mr. Speaker, and have been honoured to get to know him over the years and am excited that we have the opportunity to work together again once there was the vacancy at my office. Mr. Speaker, he is truly a force of nature. You can tell he cares about every single person that approaches our office. And I'm so grateful to have him as a part of the team, Mr. Speaker, and I do hope that Robbie sticks around for a while. And if he chooses to leave my office, I hope he moves over to caucus office so I can continue working for him, as my CAs seem to enjoy doing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, turning now to the budget, truly this was a budget that, as my colleague the member from Regina Rosemont so eloquently put forward both yesterday and today, this is a budget that doesn't take into account the reality of Saskatchewan families today.

I've already heard from several constituents who reached out to my office overnight to express their frustration and concern that at a time when folks are just trying to recover from the pandemic and when they're really feeling the squeeze on their pocketbooks, especially at the gas pumps and at the grocery stores, that this government saw their rise in revenues and decided to punish Saskatchewan families and small businesses. Really when you look at all these PST expansions, it's truly a disappointment, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is a budget that adds 32 either new taxes, tax expansions, or fee hikes. I'm not sure if the members opposite truly understand what they've put forward in terms of a budget. You'd think that, you know, as a bunch of conservatives they would be a little bit more averse to 32 fee and tax increases, Mr. Speaker. But you know, it makes you really wonder who they're listening to.

I'm going to read through every single one of them so that the members opposite truly understand what they're actually doing when they vote in favour of this budget motion. Mr. Speaker, every single one of these is either an increase or an expansion that this Sask Party government decided was a great way to hammer Saskatchewan families at this particular time in our history.

Mr. Speaker, those include the agricultural property tax, the residential property tax, the commercial and industrial property tax, the resource property tax, the tobacco tax — and I did appreciate the Finance minister's comment that she is personally going to be taking a hit for the team on that one. I know there's a few members on our side that will be taking a hit for the team on that one as well. But it's an impact on Saskatchewan families, on people, and it's included in all of these other tax increases. The vape products tax.

And then this is what I like to call the PST Sask Party tax on fun: PST on sporting events, PST on concerts, PST on shows, PST on movie theatres, PST on museums, PST on zoos, Mr. Speaker — all the fun things basically — PST on historical sites, PST on fairs, PST on rodeos, PST on trade shows, PST on arts-and-craft shows, really hitting the, you know, the Etsy folks and the winter crafts, the small-town crafts.

An Hon. Member: — Knitters, grandmas.

Ms. Sarauer: — Knitters, grandmas, all of the above. PST on conferences, PST on seminars, PST on professional theatre tickets, PST on gym memberships, PST on golf memberships. Boy, it was the first group of people they wanted to talk about when it came to COVID reopenings, but when time to dip into their pocketbook, they sure went pretty fast on them.

PST on curling fees — curling fees. What kind of Saskatchewan residents are you, this government, that they're going to come and dip into the pocketbooks of those who love Saskatchewan's sport, curling? Absolutely disgusting, Mr. Speaker. PST on hunting guides, PST on fishing guides, increase to hunting licence fees, increase to fishing licence fees.

And I've got several quotes. I know the member from Moose Jaw North this morning — you know, smart guy, new to this Chamber; I think he's relatively smart — I keep trying to teach him that just because the Sask Party hands him a document, he doesn't have to read everything that they give him, Mr. Speaker. He was able to find two, I think it was two people, two quotes that were positive toward the budget.

I've got many, many more, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure if I don't have the opportunity to read them all, my colleagues will make sure that the member from Moose Jaw North and the rest of the Sask Party caucus get to hear the rest of these quotes.

But I wanted to specifically read a quote from the Saskatchewan Trappers Association, Mr. Speaker:

Wrangler Hamm, the president of the Saskatchewan Trappers Association . . . said it's one of the hardest hits hunters, trappers and fishers have received over the last two years — and feels like a “kick in the teeth to any hunter, angler, and trapper out there.”

I'm not done the list, Mr. Speaker. There's several more fees and tax increases and expansions that this Sask Party government thought appropriate to put on Saskatchewan families right now, Mr. Speaker, so I'm going to finish that list. There's an increase to SaskPower rates, increase to Crown land rental rates for outfitters, ecotourism operators, and access roads. Mr. Speaker, there's an increase to gravel permit fees, increase to cottage land

lease fees, and finally an increase to cannabis store fees, Mr. Speaker. You just wonder what won't this Sask Party government tax at this point.

And where is this money going? And they always attack us and they're saying, well you don't want to tax and you don't want to . . . but you want us to spend more and you want us to tax less. And the Minister for Finance always loves to say, well pick a lane. Every year we do this song and dance, Mr. Speaker, and they don't seem to understand that the problem is the priorities.

This is a government that continuously runs deficit after deficit after deficit. How many surplus budgets have they even . . . Three, in . . . Wow, two and a half, maybe, surplus budgets in their entire time in government, Mr. Speaker. And the problem is, is that this government has a real issue with their priorities and the way they spend their money.

Time and time again we find wasted money on failed projects, Sask Party scandal, Mr. Speaker, instead of investing in the things that matter for Saskatchewan people, like education for example, Mr. Speaker. This government likes to say this is the biggest education budget in Saskatchewan's history. Well then I wonder why all of these education leaders aren't singing the praises of the Sask Party government today.

SSBA president Shawn Davidson said, "Once again, we see a budget for K to 12 education that falls short of anything we would consider an investment in education." This is the SSBA president, Mr. Speaker. Another one from him: ". . . for several years in a row now, boards are going to have to sit around their board table and make some really difficult decisions, because the funds are not there to support the operations that they're doing."

Mr. Speaker, any narrative that the Sask Party says about education funding being good in this budget is an absolute falsehood, Mr. Speaker.

You know where this money also isn't going? It's not going to interpersonal violence, Mr. Speaker. We still remain one of the only provinces in this country that doesn't provide operational funding for second-stage shelters, despite a pandemic that truly showed how desperate families are and how many women and children are trying to flee domestic violence in their homes, Mr. Speaker.

This budget is also not providing any funding for safe consumption sites yet again, third year in a row. It's clear at this point now that this is an ideological decision from this Sask Party government that seems to decide that they'll never fund safe consumption sites. And I'd urge this government to rethink that at a time when the addictions crisis in our province is growing exponentially. And you only have to look to the budget and the numbers in our coroner's office to see that that money is being spent right now by government to deal with the bodies rather than dealing with the preventative side of this issue, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we're also seeing nothing in terms of really solving the crisis that SIS has brought on Saskatchewan's most vulnerable people. The \$55-a-month addition for our most vulnerable residents, Mr. Speaker, is not even a dent in what we're hearing in our offices people need, and I'm sure, I'm sure that the folks on the other side and the constituency assistants,

the good constituency assistants that work for every single one of us, are hearing from their residents, Mr. Speaker. This is a government that we have seen squander a boom before. We're very worried about what they're going to do this time, Mr. Speaker.

[11:30]

I've had a couple members opposite ask me, well you don't like anything in this budget? How can you not like anything in this budget? Well I will point out two positives, just for some of the members opposite. Two positives: the first one being the increase to Creative Sask, the second being the increase for the Aboriginal court worker program. Both very important for this province.

But I will not be giving any praise to the Sask Party government for reinstating money that they had cut. These are programs that they had cut years ago. And now that they're finally providing some more money from it, I sure as heck won't be giving them any praise for solving the problem that this Sask Party government created, Mr. Speaker.

I have many more quotes, pages of quotes from people who have expressed their concern about this budget, who are disappointed in this budget. I can assure the Sask Party that there will be more coming in, flooding in as the days go on. And I have many colleagues who will be entering into this debate, who will be putting some more of these quotes on the record. Just in case those Sask Party MLAs aren't listening to the people of Saskatchewan, we will make sure that they will hear the concerns that we're hearing.

Mr. Speaker, I think I've made my position on this budget fairly clear. I am absolutely honoured to second the motion put forward by my colleague, the member for Regina Rosemont, our critic for Finance, and I will not be supporting the government motion.

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

Mr. McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm once again honoured to have the opportunity to rise in this House and address the Assembly. I'm further honoured to have this opportunity to second the motion put forward by our Minister of Finance in support of the 2022-2023 Saskatchewan budget, without amendment.

Before I begin, I want to acknowledge that we are gathered on Treaty 4 territory, and the traditional homeland of the Métis. We are all treaty people, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to take a moment to once again thank the good people of Moose Jaw North, who have entrusted me with responsibility to represent them in this Assembly and speak on their behalf. And of course I want to specifically thank our esteemed Minister of Finance, together with her deputy minister, staff, and officials. They have prepared a budget that we can all be proud of and excited about, Mr. Speaker, and I am.

I am not only honoured to be seconding this motion and supporting this budget, but I am excited to do so. The theme of this year's budget is "back on track." And if you'll pardon the pun, that got my wheels turning.

You see, Mr. Speaker, I'm a bit of a movie buff. So as I was preparing to give these remarks, my friend, the member from Arm River, challenged me to include a movie reference. The member from Martensville-Warman overheard that challenge, and he suggested I refer to the film *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* starring John Candy and Steve Martin. What better film could I possibly find to fit the theme "back on track"? The problem with the suggestion, Mr. Speaker, is that I really did not enjoy that movie. I know it's a classic blockbuster film starring a Canadian comedy legend, but I really just didn't like it.

For those who may not have seen it, the premise of the film is that the main character, played by Steve Martin, is trying to get home to his family for Thanksgiving. He ends up meeting John Candy's character, and together the two of them face a series of unexpected challenges that impede their ability to reach their desired destinations. Upon reflection, Mr. Speaker, I think that's why I dislike the movie: it provokes feelings of frustration and anxiety. Repeated stumbling blocks beyond one's control have a tendency to do that. By the end of the film, the main character ultimately reaches his desired destination and the stress and the anxiety and the frustration is relieved.

As we look back on the past two years, Mr. Speaker, doesn't that sound familiar? The past two years have been filled with unexpected stumbling blocks that have posed significant challenges for our province, perhaps more significant than any of us have ever experienced in our lifetimes. Repeatedly we faced circumstances that restricted our ability to make the progress we desired, progress that we knew we were otherwise capable of. Naturally, that's been incredibly frustrating.

But we are back on track now, Mr. Speaker. Those feelings of frustration and anxiety are lifting, and the locomotive that is the province of Saskatchewan continues moving forward with unstoppable force. And we're picking up speed. We are driven by an economic engine that has generated over \$12 billion of new investments in the past two years despite the headwinds we were facing in that time. The people of this great province are the wheels of that train, turning in unison, continually moving Saskatchewan forward.

And we have the cargo on board, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan is loaded with the goods and services that the entire world needs. As our Premier often says, we have the food, the fuel, and the fertilizer. We have great products, Mr. Speaker, and we have even greater people. On this side of the House, we all know that to be true. I believe the vast majority of the people of this province know it too. So why am I repeating it? Why is it important, Mr. Speaker? Because, as the Premier pointed out in his address to SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] last week, it matters where countries choose to do business and where they source their food and energy from. It matters because here in Saskatchewan we can provide those things to the rest of the world and we can do so in ethical and environmentally responsible ways.

And that matters, Mr. Speaker, because when we market what we have here in Saskatchewan, we grow our economy, which in turn creates jobs and benefits for our citizens. This budget gets us on track to support and facilitate this process, Mr. Speaker. It gets our economy back on track, which puts our finances back on track, which allows us to get our government services back on

track.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most important roles of government is to create an environment that facilitates the realization of great ideas, and one where the people and businesses in our communities have the opportunity to flourish. This budget does that, Mr. Speaker.

In this budget, we see investments in highways, health, and justice that will offer more infrastructure and build safer, stronger, healthier communities. Investments in social services, education, and our Indigenous community will support Saskatchewan families, making life more affordable and creating more jobs. This budget offers new services and provides for new and expanding programs.

Mr. Speaker, all of these things build on each other, generating even more goods and services to market around the globe, which then gives us the ability to invest in more programs and services. On and on, we continue to support our people, build our province, and grow our economy. Working in unison, like the parts of a train, our province steadily moves forward together. This budget demonstrates our government's commitment to this process, Mr. Speaker.

So let's take a closer look at some of the examples to confirm and highlight this point. I'll start in the area of mental health and addictions, Mr. Speaker. We all recognize that the mental health of citizens around the world is a very real concern coming out of the past couple of years. And that's why our government is making the largest investment ever in this area totalling \$470 million to provide essential programs and services, including counselling, treatment, and preventative measures specifically targeting mental health and addictions.

We have already seen the addition of 38 more pre- and post-addiction treatment beds operating in multiple communities across the province. We promised 50 new treatment spaces each year for the next three years, and we've already delivered 38 of those in just the first few months since the Throne Speech. We have new addiction treatment beds in Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Lloydminster, and Regina. And I'm pleased to say that treatment beds for my home community of Moose Jaw are being finalized as we speak and will be announced soon.

With regard to our seniors and those living in care homes, Mr. Speaker, our government remains on track with our commitment to hire additional continuing care aides in long-term care and home care facilities. This budget provides funding for another 117 CCAs [continuing care aide]. That's over and above the 110 promised last fall, 94 per cent of which have already been hired. This budget allows us to continue taking steps to provide high-quality care that meets the needs of residents receiving home care and those living in long-term care homes across Saskatchewan.

In the Ministry of Justice, Mr. Speaker, our government is fulfilling a Throne Speech that promised to create the provincial protective services branch. This initiative will unite provincial peace officers under a single organizational structure. It is a \$50 million investment to ensure safer communities by providing more efficient and coordinated delivery of our protective services.

Another 6.4 million will be invested to establish the Saskatchewan trafficking response team to specifically target drug and human trafficking crimes. We are also expanding crime reduction teams across the province with an investment of \$3.2 million. And another \$220,000 will be provided to the internet child exploitation, or ICE, unit to protect our children from online predators. These initiatives will promote innovative police practices, and they demonstrate our government's commitment to building safer communities.

In education, Mr. Speaker, our government is making a record investment of more than \$2.8 billion. We are continuing to advance the construction of 15 new schools and the renovation of five existing schools with an investment of \$95.2 million in this budget. In this budget we also see \$4.5 million for the creation of a minor capital renewal plan that will allow school divisions to address structural repairs and renovations that will help prolong the life of their schools. This new funding is of particular interest to myself and my colleague from Moose Jaw Wakamow because it will assist the renovations at École St. Margaret School in Moose Jaw.

Our government also remains committed to the completion of our ambitious capital plan in education which will see new schools in Saskatoon, Regina, La Loche, Blaine Lake, Carrot River, Lanigan, and perhaps most importantly, in Moose Jaw.

Still focusing on improving education in our province, this budget also provides new funding for the 2022-23 school year that will establish a fund to hire up to another 200 educational assistants across the province. We are also providing nearly \$2 billion to Saskatchewan's school division operations, which includes fully funding the increase to teachers' salary contracts. And it also includes an additional \$6 million for learning supports for students.

Mr. Speaker, our highways will continue receiving upgrades under this budget — another 1100 kilometres in fact — which means this government has invested more than \$11.5 billion in transportation infrastructure since 2008. That also keeps us on track for our growth plan goal of 10 000 kilometres of highway upgrades by 2030.

Here's a fun fact, Mr. Speaker: 10 000 kilometres of highways is difficult for many of us to wrap our heads around, so I took a moment to search up what well-known cities are 10 000 kilometres apart, just to get an appreciation for precisely how significant that distance is. I learned that if you could travel in a straight line, 10 000 kilometres of highway would get you from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil to Berlin, Germany, or from London, England to Cape Town, South Africa. It would get you from Paris to Tokyo, Mr. Speaker, or from Regina, Saskatchewan to Guatemala twice. I hope that puts into perspective just how significant our goal of 10 000 kilometres of highway upgrades by 2030 truly is. And we are on track to achieve that target, Mr. Speaker.

This budget includes an increase of more than 20 per cent funding for Indigenous-led initiatives. That increase will make available \$75 million for the Saskatchewan Indigenous finance corporation. Those funds will provide loan guarantees for private-sector lending to Indigenous communities and organizations. Our government is also investing in several other

Indigenous-led initiatives that promote economic development within our Indigenous communities and advance reconciliation efforts across the province.

[11:45]

Mr. Speaker, another piece of this budget that I am very excited about is the funding increase to Creative Saskatchewan grant program. That program currently receives \$2 million in funding, but under this budget the funding will increase to \$10 million. The Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport has worked in collaboration with industry to expand this initiative, which aims at attracting investment and supports the growth of the film and television industry here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, that industry has changed significantly in recent years with the widespread availability and popularity of streaming services. I'm excited to see what economic spinoffs and benefits can be realized in our local communities when this recently transformed industry is thriving once again.

Perhaps the most obvious example of our government's commitment to keeping this province back on track can be found in health, Mr. Speaker. Once again our government is making a record investment in health care in this province with a budget of \$6.8 billion this year. These funds will address surgical wait times, mental health and addictions, and many other priorities, Mr. Speaker. One of those priorities included in this budget is the \$156 million in infrastructure spending, 54 million of which will go towards the new hospitals in Prince Albert and Weyburn and in new urgent care centres in Regina and Saskatoon.

But perhaps more prominent in people's minds right now will be the \$21.6 million that our government is specifically dedicating to reduce surgical wait times in this province. To achieve this, we will be funding thousands of additional surgeries each year for the next three years. That's thousands more surgeries on top of the normal volume of surgical procedures already being conducted so that our surgical backlog can be eliminated within the next three years.

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Finance pointed out, this will be the largest volume of surgical procedures ever performed in the history of Saskatchewan. It is an aggressive plan to return surgical wait times to pre-pandemic levels, but these surgeries are critically important to our communities and to our government and we are committed to achieving this goal.

This point really hit home for me in the last few weeks, Mr. Speaker, when I learned about a young boy in Moose Jaw named Beau Beddow. I spoke about Beau and his family in a members' statement last week. Beau attends school with my children, and he is only a year or two younger than my son Lauchlan.

In February Beau and his younger sister both became ill with what the family believed was the flu, except Beau didn't seem to be getting better. In the first week of March, doctors discovered that Beau had a large tumour growing at the base of his brain. On March 15th, Beau underwent a long and complicated surgery at the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital in Saskatoon, where doctors were able to successfully remove 99 per cent of that tumour.

I spoke with Beau's grandfather, Terry Wolfe, earlier this week

and I asked him how Beau was doing. Terry told me that his grandson still has a long and difficult road to recovery ahead of him, Mr. Speaker. But he also added this: “Our family fully understands that in many other jurisdictions around the world, if doctors saw a child in Beau’s condition, they would have sent him home and told the family to enjoy what little time he had left.” But here in Saskatchewan, within two weeks of his diagnosis, Beau was receiving life-saving surgery from one of the best neurosurgeons in North America at a state-of-the-art facility in Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, he went on to say, “We don’t know yet how this will all turn out for little Beau, but our health care system here in Saskatchewan has given this young man a fighting chance, and that’s all we could have asked for.”

Surgical wait-lists matter, Mr. Speaker. And our government recognizes that fact and we are committed to addressing this situation in a massive way. I’ll say it again: with the funding from this budget, thousands of additional procedures, amounting to the largest surgical volumes in our province’s history, will be performed and we will eliminate the surgical backlog over the next three years.

Mr. Speaker, to further demonstrate how seriously our government is committed to health care in this province, I would also point to the fact that we are recruiting 300 more nurses from the Philippines. And we are also adding another 150 nurse training seats at our post-secondary institutions, on top of the current complement of nurses that we already train. This will significantly increase the number of nurses working in Saskatchewan, which will offer more jobs locally and will be critical to meeting future demands in the health care system.

Finally on this subject, Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to add more intensive care beds as we work to increase the total number of ICU beds available in our province from 79 to 110. Health care matters to this government, Mr. Speaker, and our actions and the commitments we are making through this budget demonstrate that.

Finally this budget also recognizes and supports the important work that our community-based organizations are doing every day for people living with disabilities. Our government is providing more than \$400 million to these CBOs [community-based organization], which is an increase of almost \$50 million since 2018.

We are also assisting low-income families to better afford housing costs by providing up to \$11.5 million through the Sask housing benefit program. And despite all of these things, Mr. Speaker, this budget still manages to significantly reduce the provincial deficit and puts us back on track to achieving a balanced budget by 2026.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I support this motion and the budget presented by the Minister of Finance because it is helping this province get back on track. We are fully loaded with the goods and services that the rest of the world needs. Working together, we are poised to fully participate in the global economic recovery.

We are moving forward, Mr. Speaker, and we are picking up

speed. We most certainly will not allow the proposed amendment by the opposition to derail this province and stop us from reaching our desired destination. Mr. Speaker, perhaps the NDP members opposite should consider getting on board with this budget, because this train is back on track and it is moving ahead. And if they miss it, Mr. Speaker, they’re going to be left standing alone on nothing more than their shaky old platform.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to support this budget, and I second the motion put forward by the Minister of Finance with no amendments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Lemaigre: — [The hon. member spoke for a time in Denesuline.]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On February 15th, not only did Athabasca constituency elect their first Saskatchewan Party MLA but they also elected a Denesuline from Clearwater River Dene Nation. My family is well known in northern Saskatchewan and that is credit to my parents. The foundation of respect was planted by my family long before I even dreamt of standing before you.

Mr. Speaker, I launched my political career on that same foundation of respect. It was important to me that the respect my family has established was honoured, recognized, and not taken lightly. This historic outcome was because of the incredible team and the support that guided me.

Mr. Speaker, my journey would not be possible without the unconditional support and love from my wife, children and grandchildren and family. Chief Elmer Campbell of Buffalo River Dene Nation informed me that they were looking for a candidate in the upcoming by-election and expressed to me that I should be the voice. Credit should be given where it’s due and it’s with humility and much gratitude I recognize my good friend, Chief Elmer Campbell. marsi chogh, Chief Campbell.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I didn’t thank the many people that worked tirelessly throughout the nomination process and the campaign. I understood early on that this by-election was about the great people of Athabasca constituency. And when my character was attacked, it was this support, Mr. Speaker, that reminded me of why I agreed to this. We had a lot to learn so it was much appreciated to know that we could pick up the phone at any time and seek advice, clarification, or direction. marsi chogh, thank you to each person who gave their support, and that includes the entire Saskatchewan Party office, the caucus office, and the support staff. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, this next point is very difficult to raise, but I feel it in my heart that it has to be addressed. We chose early on to run our campaign on the foundation of respect and pride for the people of Athabasca constituency. I have a difficult time understanding that those that spew racism . . . And while I was on the campaign trail, as I engaged with leaders in the North, I was told again and again that the Leader of the Opposition in his travels to the North insinuated that these leaders, that the provincial government . . . He said to the leaders that he sat at the table with that their provincial government is racist.

Those northern leaders asked me to share my opinion on the matter. However, Mr. Speaker, I choose to instead share my experience. Since my arrival, I have yet to hear any racist remarks or witness any racist behaviour from this side of the House. From the moment my family and I accepted the challenge to run in the by-election, we were welcomed, accepted, and shown nothing but respect.

What I have to say is this: racism is deplorable behaviour and the Saskatchewan Party government denounces it. I would like to thank the Premier and the colleagues seated here today for not only condemning racism, but showing me a different narrative, opposite of the ones being told. Racism is far too serious a matter to ever be connected to partisan politics, and those that connect the two, what they are doing is harming the people and our province.

[12:00]

The Premier's dedication to all people of Saskatchewan includes northern Saskatchewan. As seen in so many ways, leadership is more than winning. It is hard work, dedication, and leading with dignity and compassion. It is demonstrating and modelling leadership, and it is in development of all elected members of the Saskatchewan Party to rise and serve with respect for all. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to serve with my colleagues on this side of the House and in representing the constituents of northwest Saskatchewan as their MLA in the Saskatchewan Party.

Mr. Speaker, throughout my career, I've been blessed with the opportunity to live and work in many of the communities in northwest Saskatchewan. From Black Lake in the far North to Buffalo Narrows in the west side and many places in between, each community has its unique strengths and challenges. And by being a member of these communities, I was able to see first-hand the immense pride our northern people have for their home community, their elders, their families, and their children. It is with this immense sense of pride that I stand before you, Mr. Speaker.

One of the unique responsibilities I've had is to work in partnership and collaboration with numerous federal and provincial government departments and community agencies. Mr. Speaker, by working in partnership, we are honouring and respecting communities. This unique collaborative effort is also visible in this House, and with the various ministries have asked for my input into government services and programs. When we work together in a respectful and understanding way, we can achieve great things, Mr. Speaker.

My previous work as a program manager for the Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing also provided me with the opportunity to work alongside community and First Nation leaders to address community safety. Safety in our communities is a priority for every community in Saskatchewan.

I understand that very little was shared with this House by the previous MLA of Athabasca constituency, so today, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to share with you some of the highlights regarding Athabasca constituency. It is home to nearly 15,000 people, of which nearly 80 per cent are First Nations and Métis people. Traditional languages of Dene, Cree, and Michif are proudly spoken. Most communities continue to hunt, fish, and

trap and are passing down those traditions to their youth. Children and youth across the region are learning from elders to protect their traditional practices.

Social media is a great way for everyone to see what is happening in the communities like Birch Narrows First Nations and Buffalo River First Nations who take their students to the traditional cabins so they can learn how to hunt, fish, and trap. The immense joy seen on the faces of these children and their families is something that must be seen by all. Community celebrations bringing people from across Saskatchewan with both Buffalo River Dene Nation and Clearwater River Dene Nation enjoying this nice weather last weekend with celebrations, far North communities having their annual carnivals — a week-long celebration of culture and community.

Most students within the Athabasca constituency enjoy high school education at home and a college- or university-level education at or near the larger communities in the North. Provincial investments include Northlands College, Gabriel Dumont Institute have provided so many educational opportunities and continue to provide degree-level programs in our community. Clearwater River Dene Nation is proud to be able to say that they offer Dene-immersion programs for their students from pre-kindergarten to the master's-level education.

My sister Gabrielle was one of the 21 students to successfully complete the DTEP program — the Dene teacher education program. Gabrielle and her family call Bear Creek home, a settlement located between La Loche and Buffalo Narrows. By graduating from DTEP program, Northern Lights School Division now has a local principal teacher for their settlement school in Bear Creek, a local person that not only speaks Dene fluently but lives in the settlement and has provided stability to the delivery of education services in northwest Saskatchewan.

The DTEP program was only made possible because of the provincial and federal investments into this program. Clearwater River Dene Nation also offers a master's program in education. By working in partnership and collaboration, great things are possible, Mr. Speaker.

I speak of education today and great strides northern communities and First Nations have made because of the terrible history we as Indigenous people have had with education.

My family was impacted by a residential school but in a different way. My father as a First Nations person was taken from his home and sent to the federal residential school, but my mother, on the other hand, was not treaty. Both Dene, but her father said no when they came for the children to go to school, so my mother never attended school. So we have this discussion at home now about the impacts of residential school and what didn't happen, and that allowed us as a family to heal. And that foundation that my parents laid for me is why it was made possible for me to be here.

I have seen first-hand the effects of removing children from their homes, regardless of what department or church responsible for the removal. There was and still is an impact to the survivors of residential school and their families.

Mr. Speaker, in the short time I've been an MLA, just over 35

days, I have been witness to the incredible opportunities we have as Saskatchewan people and as residents of Athabasca constituency. This budget has made many broad and specific initiatives that are going to benefit the people of Athabasca constituency.

There are important investments in both short-term recruitment and long-term training of health care professionals. The work the Minister of Seniors and Mental Health is doing, both our elders and our youth, going to lead to a better quality of life for our people. And the opportunities we have for economic development, for jobs, and investment in northern Saskatchewan is only going to grow with the focus and the support to our key industries.

I am privileged to rise in this House and work alongside my colleagues that are dedicated to the people of Saskatchewan.

[The hon. member spoke for a time in Denesuline.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Before I begin, I would like to thank both the member from Moose Jaw North for moving the motion in his well-delivered speech, and I would like to thank and commend our newest member on this side of the House, the member from Athabasca. He proudly spoke in his native language and he told us all about his journey here and how proud he is to be here. And he spoke about how respect is the foundation of good governance. And we are really . . . I think each and every one of us were spellbound when he shared his journey here and his message here. So thank you to the two of them for inspiring each and every one of us.

I too would also like to acknowledge that I stand here on Treaty 4 territory and the traditional home of the Métis.

I would like to thank my family, my husband, Terry, who's my biggest champion, who has made sure that I'm strong and able to do my job here and for the people of Saskatchewan. I'd also like to thank my constituency assistant, Kelly Zazula. Kelly has been just a strength and backbone for Regina Rochdale, and she's been with me since 2008. And I really appreciate her knowledge and her ability to meet the needs of the constituents of Regina.

And here in the Legislative Building, I have a fabulous group of staff. I have Sherry Rosenberg, Jaxen Dufour, Molly Waldman, Christian Kainz. I would also like to thank the ministry officials for helping to ensure that when we put our budget proposal forward, we were able to meet the needs of the ministry.

And most of all I'd like to also thank the constituents of Regina Rochdale for supporting me and electing me and making sure that I have the ability to have a strong voice here in this Legislative Assembly.

[12:15]

I'm proud to stand and be in support of this year's budget. The theme of this year's budget is *Back on Track*, which is exactly what it is, putting Saskatchewan back on track. It's important to mention, which I know the opposition kind of glossed over, that

there is a \$2 billion deficit reduction in this year's budget and a \$450 million reduction in operating debt. Now, Mr. Speaker, that is what we call being back on track because people in Saskatchewan want to know that we are minding the public purse.

Now this year, in this year's budget, we had some absolutely incredible news because we are providing more than 8 million increase to Creative Saskatchewan, and so this will now be a \$10 million grant for the film and television industry. And with this increase, we have an estimate of about 50 million of new investment in film and television production, this economic spinoff in our province.

Creative Saskatchewan has been so gracious in meeting with me and explaining exactly the importance of the initiative of Creative Saskatchewan. I'd like to share with everyone that when Creative Saskatchewan was brought together, I along with members of this side of the House had the opportunity to travel across the whole province meeting with, interviewing, and discussing with all members of the creative industry. Whether it be film, whether it was artists, whether it was musicians, we had the opportunity to meet with them and talk about how we could, as a government, support them with the creation of Creative Saskatchewan. So I must say I'm very proud of the work that Creative Saskatchewan is doing.

Increasing of film activity could mean spinoffs and spending in other Saskatchewan sectors including, like I said, arts and cultures for services like costumes, set design, and the list goes on and on. Film and television production can occur across the province. So, Mr. Speaker, what that means is . . . Like a lot of people just automatically assume that it'll be focused in around, say, Regina and Saskatoon, but in fact that is not the case. This industry will be producing material across the whole province, so the whole province is going to have the ability to be positively affected.

Now people ask, well what made the change here? Why did you make this choice? And the choice was made because of the change in the industry. Ten years ago we did not have streaming like we do today. In Canada there's over 20 platforms of streaming. And so what do those platforms need? They need content. And what do we now have the ability to do here in Saskatchewan? We have the ability to provide that content, and we have very talented and capable people here that are ready to raise to the challenge.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to read some of the quotes following yesterday's announcement. I'm going to read these into the record. This is a quote:

I've got to tell you that digital media grants increase will be huge to utilize the sound stage here in the city for tourism and hotel and restaurants, and ready to get back the industry in town will be fantastic. I realize it is for the whole province. To utilize the asset will be fantastic. I think it shouldn't have been better timed.

And that was from our mayor, Sandra Masters. I also have another quote that I think it's really important to read into the record:

We want to say thank you to the Saskatchewan government for expanding Creative Saskatchewan's funds to cover more screen-based productions. This incremental release of provincial funds will be a catalyst providing greater opportunities for our producers to attract new private and federal investment dollars.

And this is from the president of SMPA [Saskatchewan Media Production Industry Association] board of directors. So, Mr. Speaker, this was very well received.

And before I discuss other budget highlights, I would like to take the opportunity to thank our partners at Creative Saskatchewan for their collaboration on this initiative. Their CEO, Erin Dean, and Jason Zhao, their Chair, have been fabulous partners to work with, and so I have to say thank you to them.

I would also like to thank Ken Alecxe, executive director of Sask Media Production, known here in the city and the province as SMPA. They have been absolutely fabulous. When I had meetings with them, stakeholder meetings with them, they were very encouraged with the information they brought forward to ensure that we could make this decision. So, Mr. Speaker, I know this was a highlight for us. Ten million dollars is going to be big for the industry in this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, last year our parks here in Saskatchewan — we have got the best parks in Saskatchewan — had record-breaking visitations. So this year we're investing \$12.5 million for capital improvements and upgrades throughout our park system to improve our visitors' experience. I'm going to name some of these, because these are really important and they go across the whole province.

So we have new campground service centres at Duck Mountain and Saskatchewan Landing provincial parks; water system upgrades at Candle Lake, Saskatchewan Landing, Meadow Lake Provincial Park; waste water system upgrade at Meadow Lake and Echo Lake provincial parks; landscape and accessibility improvements at Regina Beach recreational site and Buffalo Pound Provincial Park; boat launch upgrades at Douglas Provincial Park; and major road upgrades at Battlefords Provincial Park. So, Mr. Speaker, as you can see, we are ensuring that our parks across this whole province are going to be well served.

Mr. Speaker, the clientele that come to our parks expect top-quality service, and that's what we provide. So I'm looking forward to having the opportunity this summer to go out and tour some of our parks and have an opportunity to meet with our very capable and competent employees in our parks. And I know many residents are looking forward to booking their campsites, and that is going to be happening pretty soon, Mr. Speaker. On April 18th our campsite reservation site goes live.

And the ministry has been working diligently to improve residents' experience. Some exciting new additions to this booking site this year are campsite comparisons, so you have the opportunity to compare up to three sites online to assist in deciding the site you want. Doesn't get any better than that, Mr. Speaker. Also campsite favourites: campers can create a list of favourite sites that will be saved on their online account and wait-list, so campers can choose to be added to a wait-list for

campsites. And if their turn comes up, they'll have 24 hours to reserve that site. So, Mr. Speaker, we have been tweaking and working hard to ensure that, when our reservation site goes live again this spring, that people's needs are being met.

And, Mr. Speaker, we know that sports are such an important aspect of our province. And the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport also continues to invest in programs and activities that directly contribute to the quality of life and well-being of people in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, we are investing 4 million for the active families benefit, which is a tax credit that helps approximately 34,000 children take part in sports, arts, and cultural activities.

We're investing 1.7 million to the community rinks affordability grant, which provides operating and minor capital grants for community-owned indoor skating and curling rinks. Last year, grants were provided to over 580 ice surfaces across the province.

Mr. Speaker, 1.5 million for the veteran service club program, which supports infrastructure upgrades, programs, events, and activities to assist Saskatchewan's veterans.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not share some exciting news that was undertaken through the Status of Women because, Mr. Speaker, as you know, I'm excited to advance the great work of the Status of Women office. They work with ministries across our government to advance issues that relate to women and girls.

I would also like to take this opportunity to highlight a great initiative. They partnered with the Science Centre earlier this year. Mr. Speaker, in February we partnered with the Science Centre to host Girls in STEAM [science, technology, engineering, art, and math] Conference. Now this conference was attended virtually by over 1,600 girls from grade 6 to grade 9 and from over 30 communities across Saskatchewan. So, Mr. Speaker, this is the good work that we do within the Status of Women. And I joined the conference, and I have to tell you, everyone was excited. Mr. Speaker, it was an absolute treat and joy to be able to connect with these young women across our province. Doesn't get any better than that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if the members opposite, especially the member from Rosemont, had the opportunity to share with his constituents and with the people of Saskatchewan the work that's being undertaken with the money set aside within Health for long-term care here in Regina. Mr. Speaker, we're moving forward on that project, and I must say, congratulations to each and every one who is just rolling up their sleeves and getting the work done for a much-needed long-term care facility here in Regina.

Another interesting fact is that the members never mentioned the money that's being set for planning dollars for a parkade at the General Hospital here in Regina. How did they miss that? I don't know because, guess what, that's pretty important. You ask the people in the member from Douglas Park, in her area there, how is this affecting all the people who live in that area? And they're saying, this is much needed. What about the safety of the people who work at that hospital? They need to be able to have safe, secure parking, so we're so pleased that within this budget,

money has been set aside to start that planning, getting the work done.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on and on about all the fabulous things that we're doing. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? It's the people of Saskatchewan who should be congratulated because they're the ones who had the confidence, knowing that by voting in a Saskatchewan Party government, they ensured that they had a government that was paying attention to the public purse.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting our budget. I could never support the motion put forward by the opposition. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And just before I get into my comments, Mr. Speaker, we all had the opportunity to make our first speech, our maiden speech, in this House upon our entry. And just may I say to any of those from the constituency of Athabasca that may have questions with respect to whether or not they are being heard in this Legislative Assembly, being heard by the people or the government in the province, I would just point you back to the maiden speech that we heard from the new member from the Athabasca constituency, one of the most impactful speeches, in particular maiden speeches, that I have heard in this House in my 10 years of being elected, Mr. Speaker.

And thank you to the people of Athabasca for sending a member down within the government side of the House, but a member down with the level of integrity . . . and really I think the opportunities that will arise, Mr. Speaker, will . . . Most certainly the folks are going to be heard within the government with this.

[12:30]

Mr. Speaker, the budget that was introduced on this, the floor of this Assembly yesterday most certainly is a budget that gets this province back on track in so many ways. That's the theme of the budget, and I think it's very much an appropriate theme. I think the themes have been appropriate for about a decade and a half now, Mr. Speaker. I'm biased.

But I think this year's theme most certainly is appropriate for where we've been the last couple of years, what we're going through today, and what is, you know, providing Saskatchewan and the world with uncertainty yet today in a global pandemic but also as we see areas of conflict, most notably in Ukraine today, Mr. Speaker.

This is an important budget. It transitions us really from one period of time to another, Mr. Speaker, thus getting us back on track. And when you look at what is happening in this province with respect to the economy, I think we can agree that it most certainly is back on track.

When you look at the budget that was delivered yesterday relative to the two previous budgets that were put together deliberately to support Saskatchewan communities, Saskatchewan businesses, Saskatchewan jobs, Saskatchewan industries and, most importantly, Saskatchewan people, Mr.

Speaker, when you look at where this budget is with respect to bringing the finances back in a deliberate effort, a deliberate march back to balance, most certainly we can all agree that this is a budget that gets our province's finances back on track.

When you look at the investment in government services, most notably in health care, addressing some of the challenges that have been highlighted over the course of facing this global pandemic, Mr. Speaker, again this is a budget that most certainly, from a service investment perspective, from a providing-those-services-to-Saskatchewan-people perspective, does get our province back on track.

And when you look at the capital infrastructure which has always been a priority for this government, Mr. Speaker, this budget again, with over \$3 billion in capital infrastructure across the continuum, gets our province back on track to growing, to building, and ultimately to becoming the province that we all collectively aspire to be and to achieve.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the provincial finances, just a couple of quick notes with respect to the deficit in this last year's budget and how that has changed over the course of the past two years. And balancing the budget in Saskatchewan is a priority of this government continues to be a priority of this government. We had a couple of years where we had significant deficits here in Saskatchewan due to, yes, uncertainty on the revenue side of the ledger and increased investments in supporting the people and the services in our province.

But when you look at this particular budget, Mr. Speaker, and the \$463 million deficit, a marked improvement, most certainly putting forward a plan to balance. You look at the \$450 million that was taken out of Q3 [third quarter], Mr. Speaker, and actually applied to the operating deficit of the provincial finances, which has grown through our time with COVID in addition to some that was inherited, graciously left by the previous government, Mr. Speaker.

We most certainly are back on track with respect to the provincial finances and how we are situated to find our way to a balanced budget in the years ahead most certainly, Mr. Speaker, and continue to invest and balance that with investment in the priorities of the people that we, collectively across the aisle, represent.

Mr. Speaker, in health care specifically . . . And I want to point to a couple of priorities in this area of investment because of the importance — and because of the discussion — but because of the importance I think to many Saskatchewan families. And I count myself among those, Mr. Speaker.

Prior to being elected, I had done some work in our community on health care recruitment. At that time it was often physician recruitment that we were working on. And in the early days of this government, I had the opportunity to talk with the then minister — the current Government Relations minister was the Health minister — and discuss with him some of the initiatives that were coming forward. For example, it was PRAS, or Physician Recruitment Agency of Saskatchewan, in the early days of that initiative, morphed into Saskdocs, went from the Ministry of Health into the Saskatchewan Health Authority, Mr. Speaker.

In this budget, some of which isn't highlighted in the major financial lines is actually moving that agency back into the ministry and then expansion of that agency into recruiting for all health care professionals, whether that be nurses of all designations working in our facilities across the province. And I see the challenges that we have in that area, Mr. Speaker, whether it be lab technicians that are required in certain rural and remote locations, the increasing impact of nurse practitioners in our rural communities. And that I think is something that, you know, may not get the headline on all of the large investments that come on budget day, but it most certainly is notable.

We had focused very carefully on physician recruitment back in those early days of government, Mr. Speaker. And we focused on investment, yes, in the Academic Health Sciences Building in the College of Medicine, in expanding those seats. Focused on changing what used to be the CAPE [clinicians' assessment and professional enhancement] exam, bringing in the SIPPA [Saskatchewan international physician practice assessment] process so that we could recruit physicians, bring them here from beyond the seven Commonwealth nations. And we do bring physicians here from all over the world. And we do have more physicians — now with 100 seats at the College of Medicine rather than 60 — coming out of that that are staying right here in this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, we were very focused in those early days and focused with results that came from that. We increased the physician complement in this province by over 1,000 physicians, despite the awkward numbers that come from the members of the opposition, Mr. Speaker, that quite frankly are just simply not correct. A thousand more physicians working in this province because of the focus, because of the effort, and because of the priority that this government had put on training, recruiting, and retaining that medical health professional discipline into communities in this province.

We did the same with nurses. Forty-three hundred more nurses are working in Saskatchewan because this government was focused and we prioritized not only the wages that nurses receive in this province but how we are training those nurses, increasing those training seats, further 150 training seats in this year's budget, Mr. Speaker.

We're up to I think 700-and-some training seats for nurses of all designations in the province. We started with 300 in 2007, over 100 per cent increase in our nurse training seats here in the province, Mr. Speaker, and that comes about by focus and prioritizing. And that is where we are seeing some of the maybe not so headline worthy — I would say they're headline worthy — but not some of the large financial investments in this budget. But some of the . . . where the priorities are coming through the leadership of our two Health ministers, Mr. Speaker, and all of the folks over at the ministry as well as the Saskatchewan Health Authority.

We can't take our eye off the ball on other commitments that we have made and continue to march towards achieving, Mr. Speaker, because this is a government that continues to do what we say we're going to do as we march towards fulfilling our commitment of 300 continuing care assistants across this province to ensure that our family members that may be in one of our care homes across this province, Mr. Speaker, do have the

adequate care. That was a commitment that was made in the last election and this budget continues to provide funding to ensure that we are going to achieve that commitment, and we're going to do so in the very near future.

Mr. Speaker, there was additional budgets that were talked about . . . priorities again of the ministers and of Saskatchewan people, quite frankly, acted on by the ministers and the ministry and the Saskatchewan Health Authority. And that is increasing our ICU capacity. I was just on a call this morning with federal ministers with respect to what priority Saskatchewan has, you know, with our health system as we move forward and find our way through this global pandemic. And you know, over a 30 per cent increase to our ICU capacity is paramount, Mr. Speaker. It's going to be required. It's going to be required to house some of the additional surgeries that we are going to do.

Surgical wait times have crept up, not just in Saskatchewan but across the nation, Mr. Speaker. And we have a plan, a plan that was funded yesterday with the introduction of the budget — further funded, I might add — a plan that began a couple of years ago but now is being expanded and accelerated and is having more dollars, another \$20 million provided to it in yesterday's budget in addition to the \$20 million from two years ago, Mr. Speaker, to reduce that surgical wait time initiative.

We have a track record on this topic, Mr. Speaker. We inherited a surgical wait time from the members opposite when the Saskatchewan Party formed government in 2007. Mr. Speaker, you were part of that government. It's through focus and it was through prioritizing and it was through investment that we were able to reduce that NDP surgical wait time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, now with the two years of a global pandemic and the impacts of that on our health care system, Mr. Speaker, we're required to do it again. All provinces across the nation are required to look at this, Mr. Speaker. And we most certainly are going to double down our efforts from what was successful about a decade ago, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to reduce that surgical wait time. We're going to do so because we know it is of paramount importance to the people that we represent.

Mr. Speaker, that leads me to maybe what I will discuss a little bit more than even the budget. That is the plan for growth that we had put forward a couple of years ago now, Mr. Speaker, our second plan for growth. We had put the first one forward out to 2020, second one now out to the year 2030.

And I would note that our 30 goals to 2030, I would encourage anyone, my colleagues in particular, to go back to the plan for growth as we find our way through this budget debate in the next number of days, and in particular look at the 20 actions for the 2020s and the 30 goals that we are to aspire to achieve by the year 2030. Mr. Speaker, those are still on. In light of two years of a pandemic, those goals, those 30 goals are still what we are aspiring to achieve here in this province.

And so the budget I had spoken yesterday in an introduction, Mr. Speaker, it's more than a financial exercise. It's more than an accounting exercise. It most certainly is, and I've said this many times in this House, it's really a rung in the ladder to achieve the goals and the targets that this government has over the long term. And if anyone's wondering what those goals and what those

targets are, go back to the growth plan. That is the direction of where this government is going.

And one of the 30 goals by 2030 is to reduce our surgical wait times to a three-month target. That was a laudable goal when we put this growth plan together. It is absolutely a necessity for this government to double down our efforts, given the last two years of facing a global pandemic of which we had no knowledge of when this target was put in place and when this growth plan was put together, Mr. Speaker.

And so that is going to require focus. It is going to require investment, and it is going to require us repeating, even to a larger degree, some of the successes that we had in correcting some of the wrongs of the previous government, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we go through, I'm going to touch on a number of the 30 goals that we had put in place by 2030, because this budget does address virtually all of them, Mr. Speaker, and in some cases actually puts us in a strong position to achieve some of them and achieve some of them very early.

But before I do that, I want to make a couple of comments with respect to some of the information that comes into this House, Mr. Speaker, and we have to fact-check it. At the very least we have to fact-check much of the information, including today, Mr. Speaker, with respect to a code black at one of our hospitals. A code black, I believe if I'm not mistaken, is actually a bomb threat. Mr. Speaker, there's no bomb threat at a hospital.

Mr. Speaker, day in, day out, Mr. Speaker, we need to fact-check the information that comes into this House. For example there's many comments that come in around physician numbers. I put the facts on the record this morning, up 1,000 physicians since we formed government, Mr. Speaker, and more to come in the months and years ahead.

But I hear some population numbers coming into this House, Mr. Speaker, day in, day out. And here's a fact: last year, population of Saskatchewan, it's up 4,300. Last year, one of the most challenging years, in the middle of a pandemic, a global pandemic, the population in the province of Saskatchewan increased 4,300. One of the years, I would say, where this government, all of us, Mr. Speaker, had to make some of the most difficult decisions around enacting public health measures, putting some of the most restrictive public health measures that have ever been enacted in this province's history, Mr. Speaker, one by far.

And I think everyone would agree, up and down the street in any community in the province, that this past year has been one of the most challenging years that our province has faced. And as I say, I'm very proud of the way that the Saskatchewan people have faced it. But during that time this province grew by 4,300 people, Mr. Speaker. That's families living in . . . [inaudible].

And so now comes the comparison, Mr. Speaker. In 16 years of government — to the NDP, yes it was some time ago. We are fully intent on making that an even longer time ago as we move forward, Mr. Speaker — when you compare, Mr. Speaker, when was the banner year for the NDP in population growth in this province? How is the NDP's record when it comes to growing the population of our villages, our towns, our RMs, and our cities in this province?

Well they had one year, Mr. Speaker. They had one year. One year. The banner year of the NDP in population growth in 16 years was just over 4,000 people. Banner year, Mr. Speaker. It was about the same as the most challenging year in this province's history under the Saskatchewan Party.

[12:45]

Mr. Speaker, in fact in the last 10 years, in the last 10 years of the NDP reign in Saskatchewan, eight of those years the population actually went the other way. Eight out of the last 10 years, people were leaving this province as opposed to moving in here, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's most certainly, most certainly, most certainly a record that we do not look to emulate, Mr. Speaker. And when it comes to job growth, population growth, opportunities, Mr. Speaker, we very seldom, very seldom if ever, are going to take advice from a record like the NDP.

Rather than calling population growth "farcical," which is the NDP's precise words, Mr. Speaker, in this plan for growth we have put forward a target. A target, Mr. Speaker, it's one of our 30 goals for 2030 to grow the population to 1.4 million, Mr. Speaker. Still stands true today, despite two years, very challenging years of coming through a pandemic.

And so you might ask, Mr. Speaker, how do we intend to do that? Well people will move here if they have a career, so we're going to make . . . We have a target of creating, Mr. Speaker, having the private sector create largely 100,000 jobs here in the province. That most certainly, Mr. Speaker, is going to allow us to look ahead, to look ahead at what this province can aspire to be.

And I think that's one of the differences that I see, Mr. Speaker, as I come into this Assembly day in, day out. And I think it was on full display yesterday for 5 or 6 or 700 people that were here, as well as obviously the thousands that tune in every day to the QP [question period] legislature channel, Mr. Speaker, was the difference in attitude. You know, a governing party that continues to look ahead and to aspire to grow and to prosper and for the people in our province to do well versus a party that continually looks backwards, Mr. Speaker, looks backwards. And actually, if you think about it, where you're looking is ultimately where you're going to end up.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to tell a short story. Just over a year ago in the fall of 2020, I guess it would be, Mr. Speaker, we were still in the early year of the first year of a global pandemic. And you know, I had some discussions with previous leaders of this nation and this province and other folks, and we were talking about, you know, what happens should this world, this province, this nation, this world come out of COVID. And you know, we'd come to the conclusion that there was going to be some early-mover gains, Mr. Speaker, in the way of attracting investment, creating jobs. And there was going to be some, for those jurisdictions in the world that were out and about early, there was going to be some investment dollars available.

So we'd had a discussion, Mr. Speaker, with a number of ministers that have economic portfolios, Mr. Speaker. And that might be broader than many think, but obviously Trade and Export, Energy and Resources, Agriculture, Mr. Speaker. But also, you know, many of the ministries that have regulations, Mr.

Speaker, also are part of this conversation — Government Relations, Environment, Mr. Speaker, our single procurement offices, the Minister of SaskBuilds. They all have a role to play in supporting, attracting that investment. That investment that yes, does come from all around the world, but yes, does benefit the communities and the people that we ultimately represent.

We weren't able to land . . . We weren't able to fly somewhere and put Saskatchewan's story in front of our prospective investors and markets and countries, but video calling was becoming much more acceptable, Mr. Speaker. And so I had asked all ministers to go through their Rolodex. If anybody had ever mentioned that they might be interested in Saskatchewan, give them a call. Give them a call and get in front of them, albeit on a video screen, and let's start selling Saskatchewan long before this pandemic is over.

We're seeing the results of that effort, Mr. Speaker. We're seeing the results of just people that happen to be elected, Mr. Speaker, getting in front of other people that are looking to invest in the industries — markedly the natural resource industries, but there's others — but looking to invest in a stable, a politically stable place with regulatory stability, a place that is advancing on the environmental sustainability front in how we produce our goods, Mr. Speaker, but also just a province where people are reaching out and saying, why don't you have a look at us, Mr. Speaker. And we're seeing the results of that with really unprecedented investment here in Saskatchewan over the course of the past year. At the risk of repeating myself, that was a target in our plan for growth, to increase our investment, private investment to \$16 billion a year, thereby increasing the value of our exports, Mr. Speaker, by 50 per cent. Both a target.

I think we're well on our way to achieving both of those targets in the years ahead with the five canola crush investments that we have in the province, the largest potash mine in the world being constructed as we speak in the province, Mr. Speaker. We see investments in the forestry industry. We see significant investments in the technology industry which impacts all of those other industries, Mr. Speaker. Most certainly we are on our way to achieving yet again another one of the targets that we had put forward in the growth plan.

And what we saw in this budget yesterday was, you know, an expansion of the ag value-added credit, for example, Mr. Speaker, allowing us to further attract additional investment. Five canola crush plants is not the end of the road, Mr. Speaker. There's all sorts of opportunities in the other crops that we grow, the other crops that will be grown here, Mr. Speaker, with an expansion of our irrigation district, again in yesterday's budget. And you can see how that budget ultimately is a rung on the ladder in us achieving the broader, more strategic aspirational goals that we have, Mr. Speaker. And I think in fairness that the vast majority, if not all, Saskatchewan people share in those goals as we look ahead — not back — as we look ahead as just people that are elected to the provincial government in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we saw a number of new growth tax incentives again enhanced and introduced in yesterday's budget, but it's also important for us and also a goal that everybody shares in the investment opportunities, the career opportunities that are coming to this province, Mr. Speaker. We have a goal to grow Indigenous participation in our natural resource industries, and

we have a strong track record in particular in some resource industries here, Mr. Speaker. And it is a track record of this government in the last decade and a half.

And it's in the forestry industry. Thirty per cent of those that work in the forestry industry are Indigenous, Mr. Speaker. Thirty per cent of the allocations of the forest management areas are to Indigenous communities or organizations, Mr. Speaker. The forestry industry is really an example of what we can do in the broader economy and the broader, yes, natural resource-based economy, but all of the facets of our economy, in ensuring that everyone is participating in the opportunities ultimately that we see ahead, Mr. Speaker, and are coming in the very near future.

And it is now incumbent on us to continue to make decisions and to continue to engage so that that opportunity remains for not just next year or not just the next three years but 5, 10, 15, 20 years down the way, Mr. Speaker. And we are seeing that investment arrive and we most certainly are quite bullish, quite frankly, on what this province is going to be able to achieve in the way of growth of that investment — but ultimately growth in opportunities, careers, population, Mr. Speaker, and all of the things that we have talked about so many times in this Assembly.

I spoke of agriculture, Mr. Speaker, and the increase in value-added agricultural production, priority of this government. Energy: we are one of the few jurisdictions in Canada for sure that, in our growth plan, had actually said we're going to increase our energy production in the province, because it's some of the cleanest energy that you can procure anywhere in the world.

This is dead against all of the regulatory, all of the initiatives that are coming out of the Minister of Environment's office federally, Mr. Speaker, and quite frankly the federal government. But we still set that goal, Mr. Speaker, because we believe it is what is best not only for Saskatchewan residents but what is best for the world. And we're seeing that on full display today.

The federal government has put out a note saying that Canada is actually going to increase our oil production by 300,000 barrels to support the European Union so that the European Union can move away from buying their energy products from a country like Russia. Mr. Speaker, the same holds true for potash, uranium, the food, the fuel, the fertilizer, agri-food products, Mr. Speaker.

And Saskatchewan most certainly is here. We're here to increase not only our energy production, but to bring mines back on, uranium mines like we see in McArthur River and ultimately in the Key Lake processing facility, again impacting northern Saskatchewan residents to a large degree, Mr. Speaker. We will increase our oil production. We need a few pipelines in order to get it on a boat to get it over there. And we expect the federal government would most certainly advocate for that in the days ahead, Mr. Speaker.

But it opens up a broader conversation. And I see the federal government now, and I'm hopeful that they are getting there with their announcement of increasing production by 300,000 barrels. We need to have a conversation, Mr. Speaker, and look at Europe for the example about our energy security. Not just energy security in Saskatchewan, but our energy security across this nation and our energy security across this continent.

Mr. Speaker, people in other areas of the world will not have the best interests of North America or Canada or Saskatchewan in their moves, in their decisions. We need to. We need to and it can start in this province. It needs to be a discussion across this nation. It needs to be a discussion.

We need to have that discussion around continental energy security and the KXL [Keystone XL] pipeline and the Energy East pipeline, Mr. Speaker, so that we can get some of the most sustainable energy product to other Canadians, to other people in North America, but also provide it to areas of the world like the European Union where we can take away that very unstable product that they are buying from, quite frankly, an unstable nation, the nation of Russia.

The same goes for food security, Mr. Speaker. It needs to be part of that discussion. And if you're going to have those two discussions, ultimately that is going to ensure that we will have continental economic sovereignty, Mr. Speaker. And that should be priority one for each and every one of us that lives in the continent of North America, Mr. Speaker. This is a priority for this government as we move forward. And I hope it's a priority for our federal government. We'll be raising it in Washington, DC [District of Columbia] when we go a little bit later this spring, Mr. Speaker, to represent Saskatchewan industry and Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, just in closing, I'll come back to really the targets around the plan for growth that we ultimately have and how we're going to get there. And I might come back to some of the discussion that we hear and some of the facts that we hear that we have to have a look at that come into this House, Mr. Speaker.

Year over year in this province — and this gets into attracting people to come here — when you look at the over \$13 billion of investment that have been announced coming into Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we're already seeing the early results of that investment — 30,000 jobs. We're up 30,000 jobs year over year in the province, Mr. Speaker. Just in the year 2022, which we're not very far into yet, we're up 14,000 jobs just in this year. Mr. Speaker, the growth trajectory of what is happening in this province due to that investment, due to yes, the global economic engine starting to rev a little bit, Mr. Speaker, is certainly going to put us on a trajectory in the months and years ahead to actually achieve some of the targets that we have of increasing jobs by 100,000, increasing our population by 200,000.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would close very much where I started. If you're wondering in this province, if you're wondering in Athabasca whether you're being represented, go listen to his maiden speech, Mr. Speaker, the member's maiden speech. But if you're wondering where, you know, this bunch of people that happen to be elected, Mr. Speaker, and serving their constituents and serving collectively the people of this province, if you're wondering where we're going and you're wondering what we're doing as your government, look at yesterday's budget, Mr. Speaker. Look at how that budget ties into the goals that we have in the plan for growth that we had released a couple of years ago. And they are still, those are still our goals today, Mr. Speaker.

If you're wondering where this government is headed, Mr. Speaker, please look at how this works, how that budget is really

a rung in the ladder in ensuring that we're going to be able to achieve those goals, Mr. Speaker. And that is going to ensure that we continue to be, in this province, the very best place to live, to raise a family, to start a business, Mr. Speaker, and most certainly the very best place in the world to start your career.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the amendment that the opposition has put forward. I will be supporting the main motion, the budget put forward by the Minister of Finance. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — This House now, near the hour of adjournment, now stands adjourned till Monday afternoon at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.]

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

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Hon. Scott Moe
Premier
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
Minister of Social Services

Hon. Dustin Duncan
Minister of Education

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Hon. Donna Harpauer
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Minister of Finance

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
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Minister of Immigration and Career Training
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Minister of Mental Health and Addictions,
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Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
Minister Responsible for
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and Gaming Authority
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