



SECOND SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

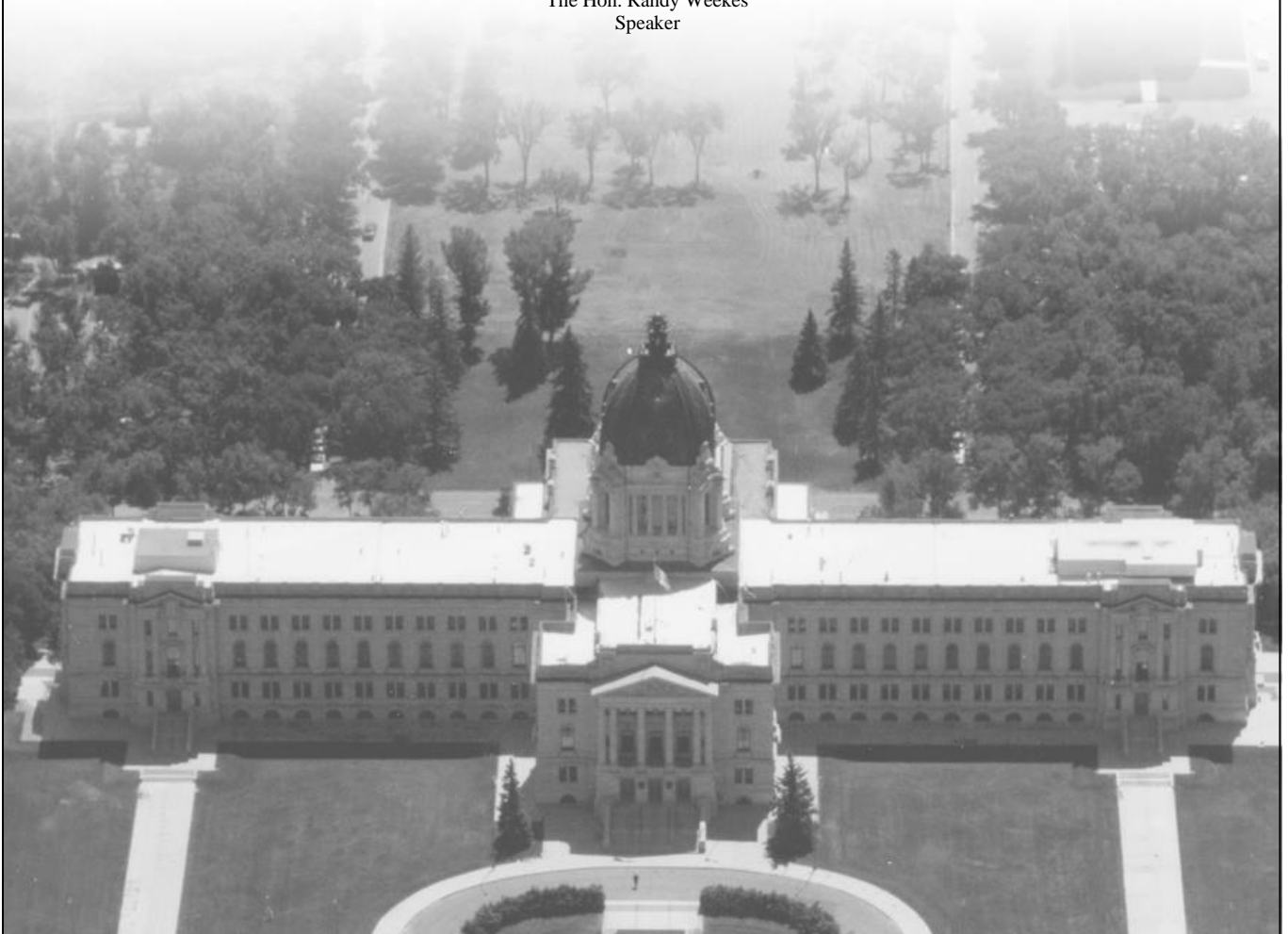
of the

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

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Bonk, Steven — Moosomin (SP)
Bowes, Jennifer — Saskatoon University (NDP)
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Love, Matt — Saskatoon Eastview (NDP)
Makowsky, Hon. Gene — Regina Gardiner Park (SP)
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Morgan, Hon. Don — Saskatoon Southeast (SP)
Mowat, Vicki — Saskatoon Fairview (NDP)
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Nippi-Albright, Betty — Saskatoon Centre (NDP)
Ottenbreit, Greg — Yorkton (SP)
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Ritchie, Erika — Saskatoon Nutana (NDP)
Ross, Alana — Prince Albert Northcote (SP)
Ross, Hon. Laura — Regina Rochdale (SP)
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Tell, Hon. Christine — Regina Wascana Plains (SP)
Vermette, Doyle — Cumberland (NDP)
Weekes, Hon. Randy — Biggar-Sask Valley (SP)
Wilson, Nadine — Saskatchewan Rivers (Ind.)
Wotherspoon, Trent — Regina Rosemont (NDP)
Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)
Young, Aleana — Regina University (NDP)
Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (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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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan].

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask leave for an extended introduction.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning I had the privilege of hosting an event to launch the strategic plan for the deployment of small modular reactors. We have taken an interprovincial approach to what could be a major development and potential emissions solution, not only for Saskatchewan but for our partner provinces as well. Our partners from Ontario, New Brunswick, and Alberta also participated in the strategy launch.

We are pleased that these dignitaries and their officials are able to join us in Saskatchewan's Legislative Assembly today. I'm sure most of them are very familiar with the workings of the Assembly, but we will work through some introductions and it's my privilege to actually go ahead with that introduction.

In your gallery, Mr. Speaker, from the Government of Ontario, we are honoured to welcome the Hon. Todd Smith, Minister of Energy, along with chief of staff David Donovan, and director of communications Palmer Lockridge.

From the Government of Alberta, we are honoured to welcome the Hon. Sonya Savage, Minister of Energy and Deputy House Leader. And accompanying Minister Savage is chief of staff Jerry Bellikka, and press secretary Alex Puddifant.

Mr. Speaker, this morning we were also able to be joined virtually by the Hon. Mike Holland, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development from the Government of New Brunswick. Regrettably they could not be there in person, but we were able to take advantage of the technology that we have all grown more comfortable with over the last two years so that they were able to participate in the process.

Also in the gallery today is John Gorman, not to be confused with John Gormley, president of the Canadian Nuclear Association. And next to him is George Christidis, vice-president of the Canadian Nuclear Association.

Now when I met these people, I asked them whether they'd been in Regina before, and George Christidis told me that he was from Regina originally and that his family own The Cottage

Restaurant on south Albert Street. So I welcomed him back home, and then my immediate thought was, what about the mechanics of the trip out here? So I said, so what you really said is that the Government of Ontario had to pay for you to come home and visit your mom and dad. He was very quick to reply, saying that he gave the taxpayers of Ontario a great break by not charging for the hotel room that he didn't use. So I'm expecting that we will all be able to go to The Cottage Restaurant and get a deep discount sometime in the near future.

It's our privilege to have these people with us here today for this announcement, but even more so to have them work alongside us for the next number of years as we chart a strategy forward in the development of emissions-free small nuclear reactor power generation. Please welcome them to the legislature today, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all members, I'd like to join the minister and welcome the many officials, experts seated in your gallery. I believe I got all the names. Ministers Smith and Savage, welcome. To your teams too, I believe it was your chiefs of staff, David and Jerry, as well as your press and comms folks, Palmer and Alex. As well as a remote welcome to Minister Holland.

Thank you so much for being here today for what is truly an exciting announcement for our province as the strategic plan is ... a next step is outlined in the MOU [memorandum of understanding] signed by our provinces.

In addition, President Gorman and Vice-President Christidis, welcome. And to the vice-president, welcome home. We do appreciate you joining us here today. And for all the time that you will spend in our beautiful province, we do hope you enjoy. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Leave for an extended introduction.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the Minister of SaskPower and welcome the Hon. Todd Smith, Energy minister of Ontario, and Alberta Minister of Energy, Sonya Savage, partners and colleagues, Mr. Speaker, in all things energy and certainly friends of our province and the Canadian energy sector.

Minister Savage and I saw each other just on Friday. We were bringing our pro-energy message to the Canadian Association of Energy Contractors. Before that it was Houston in December,

talking to investors about everything that our provinces have to offer at the World Petroleum Congress. And we're a good team. We're pretty sure that we're going to take our fireside chat series on the road.

Minister Savage mentioned on Friday that she was on Fox News the other day — and I think she was introduced as Canada's Finance minister, so even better — with her message to American legislators and investors to look north, Mr. Speaker, if they're serious about energy security and greater affordability.

Certainly our paths as three provinces have crossed over the last few years and recrossed, starting with addressing the Canadian Senate against Bill C-69, weathering 2020, the Keystone XL decision, and most recently addressing the irony federally of putting a hard cap on production on the one hand and then seeking to ramp up production on the other. Minister Savage, Minister Smith were my guests, guests of the province, back at the Energy ministers' conference in September. It's lovely to have them here again.

And of course the conversation continues now around SMRs [small modular reactor] and all that our provinces, with New Brunswick, can achieve together. And as Minister Smith said this morning, the world is watching what we are doing in this space. So I would like to join with my colleagues and please welcome them to this Legislative Assembly.

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

Hon. Mr. Makowsky: — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to introduce several guests in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon. They were here for the launch of the province's student ambassador program. It's a key deliverable under the international education strategy. We'll hear more about it in a member's statement soon.

But several students and staff from our institutions are here. And they are Meghna Ramaswamy and Shirley Zhou from the international relations and partnerships from USask [University of Saskatchewan]; and Kami DePape, vice-president of academics at Parkland College. And thanks for that group for working very hard on this.

From the University of Regina, Winnia Zhang, program coordinator of global training initiatives, and students Janelle Lynn Mayo, Jacques Charrier, Bryan Wilson, and Laura Burrasch. These are students that are part of the student mobility program, and they are going to be future ambassadors for our province.

From Parkland College, Lisa Cadieux de Larios, program head for ABE [adult basic education], students Kimberly Stone, Tasha Brass, and Randi Jones. Randi did an outstanding job speaking passionately about the regional college system and what it has meant to her in her studies.

This will be the first cohort of Saskatchewan student ambassadors embarking on a study program and we wish them all very well on their academic and professional journeys, and thanks for participating in the program.

And also from the ministry, Livia Castellanos and Rae Van Heukelom worked very hard on this project as well. So I'd like all members to help me welcome this group here at the legislature this afternoon.

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the minister opposite in recognizing and welcoming guests from our post-secondary sector — as the critic for Advanced Education — as well as student leaders. It's a pleasure to have you, and welcome to your legislature. Thank you for coming.

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

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request for an extended introduction, please.

The Speaker: — Request has been asked for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce a grade 6 student at St. Kateri Catholic School in Regina. Chidera Igwe is a hard-working young girl and I'm very much proud having her family as my constituents, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last year while she was in grade 5, Chidera became one of Saskatchewan's youngest authors when she published her first book, *The Carnival Boy*. She made her family, her school, Regina, and the African Canadian community very proud of her accomplishment as a young Saskatchewan writer.

In July last year I had the chance to visit and chat with Chidera about the book when it first came out. She signed a copy for me, Mr. Speaker. *The Carnival Boy* is an interesting story about the adventures of a teenage girl who loves carnivals. Chidera loves reading and writing and wants to be a great author in the future. Her father told me that she is working on another book right now.

Chidera said that she wrote *The Carnival Boy* as a way to share her inspiring stories with her friends and the world. We are proud to have young people like her in our province. I'm glad to spend some time after question period, and we'll have some conversation.

Mr. Speaker, with Chidera is her father, Dr. Chidi Igwe, a community leader and the president of the Igbo Cultural Association of Saskatchewan. He served at the University of Regina as an assistant professor, and now he is in Saskatchewan public service where he is serving now.

I ask the members to join me and welcome Saskatchewan's youngest author in her legislature with her father. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I would also like to introduce someone that doesn't need an introduction to this Assembly. Former Speaker Dan D'Autremont is sitting behind the bar.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again today to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents in the northeast of Saskatchewan with respect to the horrible condition that Highway 9 is in, specifically between Preeceville and Hudson Bay, Mr. Speaker.

I know they've been writing and reaching out to the Highways minister, but seemingly to no avail, Mr. Speaker. But what they note is that this artery, this highway is so important to that beautiful and important part of this province to connect farms and businesses and communities and tourists, Mr. Speaker. They identify that this Highway 9 was rated the third-worst road by CAA [Canadian Automobile Association] in 2021.

The prayer reads as follows:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately address the inadequate condition of Highway 9 by working and listening to the concerns of municipalities, residents, and industry.

These petitions are signed by concerned residents of Hudson Bay. I so submit.

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise today to once again present our petition calling for improved access to midwifery services in Saskatchewan.

The signatories would like to bring to our attention the following points: that midwifery provides a model of care that is individualized, community centred, and cost effective; wait-lists for midwifery care in Saskatchewan are extensive, and many people who wish to access midwifery services are simply unable to do so; midwife-facilitated births amounted to only 2.9 per cent of babies born in 2019, with demand far exceeding the limited supply of midwives in our province; that according to the Canadian Association of Midwives, 53 per cent of people seeking midwifery care in Saskatoon alone are turned away due to lengthy wait-lists; that midwifery provides a model of care that is individualized, community centred and cost effective; that expanding midwifery services makes sense for pregnant people and families, and it makes sense for our province's fiscal well-being.

[13:45]

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 a post-secondary midwifery training program in our province.

The signatories today, Mr. Speaker, reside in Regina and

Qu'Appelle. I do so present.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise again today and present a petition to this Assembly calling for the funding of in vitro fertilization treatments here in Saskatchewan.

As all members in this House will be well versed on now, IVF [in vitro fertilization] treatments are prohibitively expensive for people in this province. A typical course of drugs is upwards of \$5,000, with the preceding treatments, AI [artificial insemination] and IUI [intrauterine insemination] before that, costing at least \$1,000 a pop.

And now, Mr. Speaker, there are other jurisdictions in Canada that do cover fertility funding for people. I think of our friends in New Brunswick, which will cover up to 50 per cent of eligible expenses, or those families in Ontario, which can have up to one full cycle covered in addition to a number of other procedures associated. Mr. Speaker, we all believe in growing this province, but people's ability to conceive and grow their family here in Saskatchewan should not depend on their socio-economic status.

I will read the prayer:

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

Mr. Speaker, the many signatories of this petition today come from Wynyard. I do so present.

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

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — miigwech, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present this petition calling on the government to designate the west lawn as the Chief Piapot Cultural Learning Grounds.

Chief Piapot, as you all know, was an influential leader for First Nations on Treaty 4 land who brought his fight for treaty rights to a camp at Pile o' Bones located at what is now the legislative grounds. The west lawn has become a de facto site for Indigenous expression due to its proximity to the Legislative Assembly, and officially designating the site would facilitate the ongoing process of reconciliation.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly call upon the government to recognize the west lawn of the Legislative Assembly grounds as the Chief Piapot Cultural Learning Grounds, a designated site for cultural celebration, education, Indigenous ceremony, and peaceful demonstration.

The signatures of this petition reside in Montmartre and Craven. I do so present.

The Speaker: — Statements by members.

An Hon. Member: — Mr. Speaker, before . . . I request leave for an introduction.

The Speaker: — Leave has been requested for an introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Lemaigre: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you I would like to introduce the following guests: Hatchet Lake Chief Bart Tsannie; band councillor, Peter — now he warned me not to butcher his last name, but unfortunately I'm going to have to — Peter Gazandlare; and from their economic development, Anne Robillard; and from Prince Albert Grand Council — he likes us so much this is his second visit in two weeks — Brian Hardlotte and Vice-Chief Joseph Tsannie; Lyle Bouvier from Points Athabasca Contracting; and Jeff Horan from Associate Engineering.

Welcome to your Legislative Assembly, and I look forward to meeting with you later on this afternoon.

The Speaker: — Why is the member on her feet?

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — Request to join the introduction.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — Mr. Speaker, it's always so hard to see who's behind. But anyway I just want to welcome the guests from the North. Thank you so much for coming out here, and I welcome you to your Legislative Assembly.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Crime Reduction Initiatives Helping Keep Saskatchewan Safe

Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on March 18th RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] conducted multiple search warrants in Meota, Landis, and North Battleford as part of a drug-trafficking investigation called Project F-Python. This resulted in the arrest of five individuals and the seizure of approximately 839 grams of cocaine, 82 pounds of cannabis, \$28,000 in cash, and seven firearms. Two provincial government-funded initiatives, the crime reduction team and the warrant enforcement and suppression team, played a critical role in this investigation.

North Battleford was the first city in the province to receive

funding for what would become the crime reduction team model, and since then government has provided funding to the RCMP and municipal police forces to develop eight additional teams across Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, these teams respond to surges in crime caused by street gangs and prolific offenders. Just last fall we announced an additional \$3.2 million investment that expanded the crime reduction teams to La Ronge and Meadow Lake.

The warrant enforcement and suppression team further supports these efforts through a \$1.6 million annual investment from this government. This focuses on high-profile offenders who have outstanding warrants or who are in violation of court conditions. Crime reduction and warrant enforcement suppression teams are just two examples of how our government is partnering with police to keep Saskatchewan communities safe. Thank you.

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

Saskatchewan Dancer Receives Order of Canada

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize Regina's own contemporary dance artist, teacher, and performer, Robin Poitras. Robin is the co-founder, manager, and artistic director of New Dance Horizons, a non-profit organization that produces brilliant performances and teachings of contemporary dance locally and internationally. Robin and New Dance Horizons continue to play an integral role in the development of the dance community in Saskatchewan and abroad.

Robin was recently one of the five Saskatchewan people appointed to the Order of Canada by the Governor General. As many know, the Order of Canada is one of the highest honours awarded to Canadian citizens in recognition of their extraordinary contributions to Canada. Robin was awarded the Order of Canada for extensive contributions to the world of contemporary dance in Canada and in recognition of her decades-long career as an artist, choreographer, and performer. For those that have had the privilege of experiencing Robin's work, it comes as no surprise that she has been appointed this honour.

I ask that everyone in the legislature join me in celebrating Robin Poitras and her recent appointment to the Order of Canada and in recognizing her lifetime achievements and the contributions she has made to contemporary dance in Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Kindersley.

Agriculture Mentorship Program

Mr. Francis: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Canadian Western Agribition has welcomed eight new mentees and mentors into the Next Gen agriculture mentorship program. The program, which started in 2019, matches young agriculture leaders with experienced professionals working in the industry. Over the course of an 18-month mentorship, mentees will have the opportunity to develop the essential skills and tools they need to advance their careers and ultimately advance the industry.

The future of Saskatchewan agriculture depends on the younger generation, Mr. Speaker. It is encouraging to see young producers actively participate and step into these leadership

roles. We also appreciate the experienced mentors who are willing to share their knowledge and help others build their networks.

The Next Gen agriculture mentorship program is offered through the federal-provincial Canadian Agricultural Partnership. Our government is pleased to partner with the Canadian Western Agribition to deliver the program. Mentorship is an important way to help grow the agriculture sector, and the Government of Saskatchewan is proud to support the program.

I'd like to take this time to congratulate the mentees and say a big thank you to the mentors for offering your guidance and support. Thank you.

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

Recognizing Canadian Soccer Teams' International Success

Mr. Love: — Canada celebrated the sport of soccer yesterday as the Canadian men's team beat the Jamaicans to qualify for this year's World Cup in Qatar. And they did it in style, hammering a shutout with four goals on a frigid day at BMO Field to end a 36-year drought from the ultimate men's soccer showcase. Back in 1985, Mr. Speaker, the Canadians won in St. John's to qualify for the '86 Cup in Mexico — the first and only other time that they've done that.

And this of course comes on the heels of the Canadian women's Olympic victory last summer, an even more momentous victory. And we didn't have the chance to appropriately celebrate the gold medals in the Assembly at the time. But, Mr. Speaker, I'd be remiss not to put on the record how proud we all are of the women's team. Maybe, maybe the men's team is finally catching up.

Canada is becoming a soccer powerhouse and these achievements on the world stage are surely a boon to the soccer clubs across Saskatchewan. I know soccer fans in Saskatoon are excited about the work of Living Sky Sports to bring a professional team to our city. Young soccer players in Saskatchewan will be able to soon see pro soccer as they continue to watch World Cup qualifying teams and Olympic victories. And they've got good reason for following their dreams right here at home.

I ask all members to join me in celebrating with all football fans in Saskatchewan and recognize the blossoming success of both Canadian national teams on the international stage.

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

Remember Harold Johnson

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask my fellow members on both sides of the Legislative Assembly to join me in remembering a celebrated Saskatchewan writer and former prosecutor, Harold Johnson, who passed away early February of 2022.

Harold was a celebrated Cree writer and lawyer who was born

and raised in northern Saskatchewan. Harold served many different roles in his life. He'd enlisted in the Royal Canadian Navy and worked as a logger, a trapper, and miner before going to university. After graduating from Harvard Law School and managing his own private practice, Harold served as a Crown prosecutor within the Ministry of Justice.

Mr. Speaker, saying that Harold had a wide variety of experience would be an understatement. Harold's voice added to the discussion of justice in the province on both sides, first as a Crown prosecutor and again when he wrote *Peace and Good Order*, an analysis of our justice system in Canada and Saskatchewan.

He also wrote a passionate book entitled *Firewater: How Alcohol Is Killing My People (and Yours)*. The book examined the history, the myths, and the devastating impact alcohol has had on the Indigenous people. And it was this passion that led Harold to help with the northern alcohol strategy. That strategy empowers and inspires communities to have important conversations about the unhealthy use of alcohol.

Mr. Speaker, let us go forward today in our work here in the Assembly, and remember Harold's ability to advocate for his community for the betterment of all those in Saskatchewan. Thank you.

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

Moose Jaw Basketball Teams Excel at Hoopla

Mr. McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No matter which team you supported, the Hoopla 4A boys high school basketball final was a huge win for the city of Moose Jaw this past weekend. For the third time in Saskatchewan High Schools Athletic Association history, two teams from the Friendly City faced off in the gold medal game with the Central Cyclones taking on the Peacock Toilers.

Under the leadership of coach Shaun Muchowski, the first-seeded Cyclones defeated the Toilers in a hard-fought contest on Saturday afternoon, becoming back-to-back provincial champions after their last Hoopla victory in 2019. The match started in Peacock's favour with an impressive offensive effort resulting in a 10-to-2 lead in the first five minutes of play. But this would soon change when two dominant players from Central got their hands on the ball.

Central junior Tommy Vincent scored three quick three-pointers, giving the Cyclones a 16-to-14 lead over the Toilers, and they wouldn't trail for the rest of the match, holding a 40-to-27 lead by halftime. Central senior Mo Jabateh led all scorers with 26 points in his final high school basketball game, closing out the game with an 84-to-76 victory for the Cyclones.

Mr. Speaker, this year's Hoopla tournament was a great success, and I ask all members to join me in congratulating all of the teams on their excellent performances.

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

Saskatchewan Student Ambassador Program

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning the Minister of Advanced Education, on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, launched the Saskatchewan student ambassador program, a key part of our international education strategy. Students who enrol and study abroad have opportunities to receive extensive cross-cultural education from their institutions and the student ambassador program builds upon this. This will provide students studying abroad, as well as international students studying in Saskatchewan, with specialized training to become global citizens and ambassadors for the province.

The program will also support the promotion of the province's post-secondary education institutions, help them to build partnerships with institutions around the world, and enhance opportunities in areas such as research and student exchange. Saskatchewan student ambassadors will promote the province as a destination of choice to study, live, work, do business, and raise a family.

[14:00]

This program will provide students with specialized training to develop the skills and knowledge they require to become global citizens and help them succeed in their future careers. The experience these students receive will support the innovation and growth of Saskatchewan's economy, further supporting the commitments outlined in Saskatchewan's Growth Plan.

Please join me, Mr. Speaker, in celebrating the launch of this exciting program which will benefit our students, our post-secondary institutions, and our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Funding for Education

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If anyone needs help to get back on track right now, it's kids in our schools. Kids have been through so much these last two years. Instead this government has shown how much they've lost track of what matters most by delivering a budget that will lead directly to cuts in our classrooms.

Saskatchewan School Boards Association president Dr. Shawn Davidson said this government is "not responsive and not willing to invest in education." Not willing. He goes on to say, "they are falling far short of the inflationary pressures school divisions are facing." What kind of a government introduces a budget that hurts kids, a budget that directly and deliberately undermines our future?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to stand in the Assembly and talk about the record of this government since 2007. Mr. Speaker, we have increased operating funding to school divisions in that time by

41 per cent. That's \$576 million since that time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note that that is higher than the 30 per cent increase in the combined costs of both the teachers' CBA [collective bargaining agreement] as well as enrolment since 2007. That's at a time when enrolment was up 10 per cent, Mr. Speaker, unlike when the members opposite were the government, when enrolment dropped across this province and 176 schools closed across this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have put \$2 billion into school infrastructure since that time, Mr. Speaker. And Mr. Speaker, this budget does invest in our schools, in our classrooms, Mr. Speaker, and provides for 200 additional EAs [educational assistant] through a new \$7 million fund, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're happy to be able to provide that support to school divisions and look forward to working with them over the coming months as they develop their budgets. Thank you.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The ministers across the way have a sort of a tell. Every time they mention 2007, you know it's because they're embarrassed about what's happening right now.

And what is happening right now? More kids and fewer teachers. Last year, divisions were forced to cut 352 in-classroom educator positions, Mr. Speaker, even though there are 1,600 more kids in our classrooms. Per-student funding, down \$250 across the province from 2015; even lower drops, bigger drops in larger centres.

School boards are telling us that cuts are inevitable and that the minister knows that's the truth, Mr. Speaker. What does the minister have to say to board trustees who are going to have to make cuts in classrooms this year? What does he have to say to parents whose kids are going to get less help at a time when they need more?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I for one am not embarrassed by the fact that this government has put a record investment in education — \$1.99 billion in this budget, Mr. Speaker. I am not ashamed of the fact that this government has put in \$1.72 billion increase, a 148 per cent increase since the members opposite were the government, Mr. Speaker. I am not embarrassed by the fact that this government has invested \$2.25 billion in capital since we took office in 2007.

We've invested nearly 169 million for K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] schools, a 14 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker. In this budget alone, a new minor capital program of four and a half million dollars. Eighty-five major school infrastructure projects since 2007. That's 57 brand new schools, 28 major renovations, nearly \$100 million to support 20 ongoing projects, Mr. Speaker. I am not embarrassed of that record on this side of the House.

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

Mr. Meili: — Well, Mr. Speaker, if he's not embarrassed it's because he's not talking to teachers, he's not talking to parents,

he's not talking to kids. If he's not embarrassed, he sure as heck should be, Mr. Speaker. He can spin all he wants, but the numbers don't lie.

This government just increased education property tax by 2.6 per cent. But they only increased education funding by 1.5 per cent, nowhere near enough to keep up with rising costs. Nearly double the increase in taxes, and cuts, cuts in classrooms that will hurt kids. Will this government finally listen to the folks on the front lines of education and commit today to investing the dollars needed to meet the challenges of today's classrooms?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can't believe for how long the Leader of the Opposition has been a member in this House doesn't realize how this operates, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the EPT [education property tax]. We made a readjustment to the EPT to ensure that we're at that 60/40 split between the provincial government and property tax payers, Mr. Speaker. Unlike when the members opposite were the government and it was 60/40 the wrong way, Mr. Speaker, when there were tax revolts all across this province at a time when 176 schools across this province were closing, one per month under the NDP [New Democratic Party], Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that readjustment in EPT has seen a \$20 million increase in terms of what property taxpayers are paying for education, Mr. Speaker. That's less than the \$29 million in operating fund that increased this year in this budget and the \$7 million for EAs, Mr. Speaker. If we took the member opposite's advice and only increased education funding by the EPT change, Mr. Speaker, it would mean \$16 million less than what we've increased in education, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll paraphrase something the minister likes to say. According to him, the school boards are wrong. The teachers are wrong. The parents are wrong. That's the message he's sending today, that he doesn't need to listen to the real experience of Saskatchewan classrooms, Mr. Speaker.

This government continuously demonstrates that they care more about a narrow set of economic considerations than they do about the quality of life of Saskatchewan people. But even with those skewed priorities, Mr. Speaker, surely the minister must understand what economists and business leaders tell us over and over again, that we can't grow tomorrow if kids don't learn today.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, I didn't really hear a question in that from the Leader of the Opposition, but I'm happy to stand in my place and talk again about the record investment by this government, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House. \$1.99 billion in operating funding. Record school operating investment in this budget, Mr. Speaker. We've created a new capital fund to address minor capital, created a new pool, \$7 million, to provide 200 additional EAs in our classrooms, Mr. Speaker.

We're working on 21 new schools and five major renovations, unlike, as I said before, under the members opposite — closed 176 schools, lost 400 teachers between 2001 and 2007. Enrolment declined 16 per cent in that time. And zero for maintenance and preventative maintenance, Mr. Speaker, on that side of the House.

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

Sales Tax and Provincial Economy

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, I can't even begin to tell you how frustrating it is for teachers to hear that minister defend losing 352 teachers in a single year. But you know, this government has lots of problems.

And you know you've got a really big problem on your hands when the Postmedia sports section is decrying the most recent provincial budget. Now we're all big fans, and in Rob Vanstone's words, "adding the PST to the cost of gym memberships is ill-conceived and terribly timed."

And on this side, we couldn't agree more. Will the Minister for Parks, Culture and Sport put a stop to the fitness tax?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, as I have said to numerous questions before, each and every year our government is concerned about affordability in our province. Right now we're experiencing inflation for sure, Mr. Speaker, which is why we addressed an increase to the seniors' income plan, as well as there will be a decrease to child care costs within our province within this budget.

But I would suggest the member just turn to page 70 and 71 within the budget document and he will see, when you compare utility rates and taxes within our province, we're either the lowest or the second lowest when compared to all of the other provinces. That's year over year over year. It's each and every year, Mr. Speaker. It's not just a one-time savings. This is savings that they accumulate each and every year by reducing taxes and letting people have more money in their pockets.

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

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, a tax on keeping fit and having fun. It's not just bad for health. It's not just bad for recovery. This is bad for business, okay?

Now the CFIB [Canadian Federation of Independent Business] hit the nail on the head, and they said after two years of gyms struggling and next to nothing in support from this government, the Sask Party has decided to make it harder for this sector to recover. So either gyms have to eat the cost and reduce revenues or add the cost to fees and risk losing business. This tax is not working out. Why slap a tax on one of the hardest-hit industries at this crucial time?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And what the CFIB and every other business owner knows in this province is that, should the members opposite ever be government, they would still be locked down. They would still be closed. They would have entirely no business, Mr. Speaker. They would have been devastated, Mr. Speaker, economically.

And what every business in this province wants is a growing economy. They want to see jobs created. They want to see people working in this province. They want to see more people coming to this province because the best thing for those businesses, Mr. Speaker, is a growing economy. And that is what this government is focused on, and that is what's going to happen in this province.

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

Mr. Love: — What a shame to see our Finance minister on her feet blaming the people for standing up for Saskatchewan jobs.

So let's go to another quote. Here we go. "We're a bit baffled by the whole thing. We should be part of the solution here." That's Blake MacDonald, Mr. Speaker, president of Orangetheory Fitness, whose business is only at 60 per cent of pre-COVID levels. And he called this move a slap in the face. GoodLife, the Fitness Industry Council, small local gyms — all of them are outraged by this decision.

But the Sask Party is no friend of physical fitness. During the pandemic, Mr. Speaker, Active Saskatchewan had to close its doors as this government turned their backs on them. Without Saskatchewan In Motion — again I'm now talking about Saskatchewan In Motion — there's no provincial strategy for increasing physical fitness for children and youth.

Why is the Sask Party so committed to doing the wrong thing and putting up barriers to health and well-being?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — You know, Mr. Speaker, what the business owners in this province know is what the NDP stand for when it comes to business. They have a leadership hopeful who, even in the last couple of weeks, had tweeted something about corporate gouging, Mr. Speaker. They know that any time that they want to pay for anything, it's business owners and corporations that have to pay, the very job creators that have to have increases in order to pay for their spending.

Mr. Speaker, time and time again, the NDP have not been supporters of business. And they certainly would've through the pandemic, Mr. Speaker, because they would've shut them down. Mr. Speaker, this side of the House, we're going to support our business, and we're going to support a growing economy.

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

Government's Fiscal Management

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I opened up the budget book that the minister referenced, page 71. And what it shows very clearly, in the line right here — PST [provincial sales tax], page

71 — is that Saskatchewan families are paying more than \$1,000 each and every year after that government hiked taxes with the biggest tax hike in Saskatchewan's history just a few years ago.

No, it wasn't just the fitness industry that was blindsided by this Sask Party's latest tax grab. Tim Reid, president of REAL [Regina Exhibition Association Ltd.], says this:

The last two years have been the darkest time the industry has ever faced. News of the expansion of the PST to include admission and entertainment charges was a surprise to our organization.

A surprise, Mr. Speaker. No consultation offers, no respect. To the minister: why was there zero consultation with the local businesses and organizations in these vital industries that have been hit so hard by the pandemic, and now being hit by this government's needless and damaging tax grab?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

[14:15]

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — It's very good that the member opposite does open the budget document and take a look at it, and obviously he should read it because he would notice that a single person at \$40,000 total income, Mr. Speaker, with utilities and taxes in total, is the lowest, pays the lowest in our entire nation. If you have a family at \$75,000 of total income, Mr. Speaker, second lowest in combined utilities and taxes in the nation. If you have a family at 100,000 total income, Mr. Speaker, it is the second lowest in the entire nation for utilities and taxes.

So, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite talk all the time that you need to spend more here, spend more there, spend more in education, spend more in health care, spend elsewhere. But they never, ever say where they're going to get that money, Mr. Speaker. And you know where they got it in the past? And I have no doubt they would if they ever should form government — they'd go straight to taxes, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — No consultation with those impacted. No help for families who are on the brink. No affordability relief anywhere in this budget to help those that are crushed by the costs of gas, inflation, and food prices. Nothing like what they're doing in Alberta to provide a bit of a break on fuel prices.

And now a long, long list of things the government has slapped their 6 per cent PST on. Kids' clothes, insurance, restaurant meals, construction labour, Rider games, museums, and gyms. No end to the tax grabs under this government. We still haven't gotten a straight answer. How does it make any sense to slap an extra 6 per cent on these vital industries, local businesses and organizations that bring people together, support health, and that are struggling to get back on their feet?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — It's a concept that the NDP just simply can't understand. And so, Mr. Speaker, I will say it yet again.

The best thing for all of these venues, the most positive thing for all of these venues is, first off, we didn't shut them down any longer than we needed to. And second, Mr. Speaker, we need to recover and grow our economy.

The investment that's coming to this province is unprecedented, Mr. Speaker. There is going to be economic activity this summer. It's going to be excited. People will have jobs. They're going to have disposable income. And guess what they're going to do, Mr. Speaker? They're going to go see a movie. They're going to get a membership for a gym. They're going to go to a Rider game. And they're going to go to a concert, Mr. Speaker. There'll be more people that have the ability to take in those events than they've ever seen. And that's what's going to help keep this province growing.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, no one, and I mean no one but that minister and that front bench think that this budget hit the mark. The Riders, REAL, the Fitness Industry Council, the arts community, the music industry have all been clear. The decision to add this tax to their industry sends the wrong signal to consumers who need to be encouraged to get out and support events.

These industries, these local businesses and organizations, deserve so much better as they work to get back on their feet. There's no harm in admitting that you made a mistake. I'm sure these folks have heard from Saskatchewan people loud and clear in the last couple days. To the minister: will she be committing, will she commit today to scrapping the new taxes on these important Saskatchewan industries, local businesses, and organizations today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, governments have three significant streams of revenue. They have resource revenue, they have taxation, and they have transfers from the federal government. So the resource revenue is what it is. The federal government decides on the transfers, Mr. Speaker, and the province decides on the tax revenue.

And you know what? Those same citizens also want to see the recruitment and training and retention for our health care workers. They are going to support that, Mr. Speaker. Those same citizens will support reducing the surgical wait time, Mr. Speaker. Those same citizens are going to support an increase for mental health and addictions. Mr. Speaker, those same citizens are going to support the increase for our low-income seniors, Mr. Speaker.

Those same citizens understand that these services do cost money, and what they want to see is stability within the provincial government. They don't want to see things cut because resource revenues have fallen. And, Mr. Speaker, we are moving away from our reliance on resource revenue. We are stabilizing the province's budget.

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

Support for Second-Stage Housing and Survivors of Violence

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, we know violence against women and girls in the time of COVID-19 has been described as a shadow pandemic, but these challenges are not new to Saskatchewan. Interpersonal violence plagued our province long before COVID. This budget confirms what we already knew: the safety and well-being of survivors of violence is not a priority for this government.

Why, given the absolutely devastating reality of our nation-leading interpersonal violence rates, would this government choose — choose, Mr. Speaker — not to fund the operations of second-stage shelters that we all know save lives?

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

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for the question. Mr. Speaker, gender-based violence of any kind has no place in our province. This is an issue our government takes seriously, and we are committed to providing assistance and support to victims of violence through many programs and services, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we partner with several community-based organizations that provide services to people who are fleeing domestic violence, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, within the Ministry of Social Services, we have our social housing program in which, if someone presents as a domestic violence person, Mr. Speaker, that they are put to the top of the list so that they have the opportunity to get that place first, Mr. Speaker. We waive fees for them on the front end so that they can get into those immediately, Mr. Speaker, and we also have special benefits that we can help them out with if they have no income of their own. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, shockingly the Minister for Social Services does not seem to understand what operational funding for second-stage shelters even is. So let's let SOFIA House, who decried the non-funding of their programs in this budget, explain it to the minister:

Second-stage housing provides an opportunity for safe, long-term stability and support for families. Support for affordable, secure housing coupled with support services is a gap in this province that needs to be filled.

Again, can this minister please explain how, in a province whose interpersonal violence rates are twice the national average, did they choose not to fund shelters for women and children fleeing violence? Will the minister finally commit to that funding today?

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

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've spoke to the programs that we have in place: income assistance, special benefits that are available. And that is one way that we help women who are fleeing domestic violence, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, under the national housing strategy, our government works to ensure that there is safe and affordable housing and that it is available to our most vulnerable citizens. This includes victims of interpersonal violence. This includes repair and emergency shelter spaces and the development of second-stage housing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we partner with third-party organizations to help out with this housing, and that is a form of funding second-stage housing, even though we're not running it personally, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Provision of Security at Legislative Building

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister for Corrections claimed she was committed to ensuring the symbols of our democracy are secure. But I guess that the institution of the Sergeant-at-Arms doesn't count. Will the minister stand by her words, show her commitment to democracy, and finally scrap Bill 70?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government is committed, Mr. Speaker, to ensuring the symbols of our democracy are protected, including this Legislative Building, to make sure that they're safe and they're secure, Mr. Speaker. Bill 70 expands the current jurisdiction and provides more resources for security officers, also while removing the cumbersome process that it currently falls under.

Mr. Speaker, that member stood up in this House and talked about the people's House. This government makes no apologies for putting processes and procedures in place, Mr. Speaker, to protect the very people who come to this building, who work in this building, Mr. Speaker. That's the commitment of this government and we'll continue to do that.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, different minister but same bad talking points. Every week we seem to get a new slate of bad talking points on this issue, but not a single half-decent answer on why Bill 70 is needed in the first place. If the minister can't say why this is needed, can someone at least tell us who? Who does this government trust more than the Sergeant-at-Arms? Who will be doing this work?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, we've stated on this side of the House that we live in a changing time and changing environment, Mr. Speaker. This is about enhancing security in this building, Mr. Speaker, for those that work in this building and for those that attend this building, Mr. Speaker.

We've seen some significant social unrest that's threatened some democratic institutions in this country, and threats to public institutions, Mr. Speaker. And even CSIS [Canadian Security

Intelligence Service] has commented on it, Mr. Speaker, that there's a national security concern, Mr. Speaker.

We want to be proactive rather than reactive, Mr. Speaker, and that's what Bill 70 is about. Again, Mr. Speaker, we make no apologies for providing the security that the people in this building need, Mr. Speaker, that the people of this province demand of this government.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation.

Strategic Plan to Advance Small Modular Reactors

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in the Assembly today to inform members about the interprovincial strategic plan for the deployment of nuclear power from small modular reactors. This strategic plan, which was released this morning, was developed in partnership with the governments of Ontario, New Brunswick, and Alberta. It identifies key priority areas for the development and deployment of small modular reactor technologies and the next steps in advancing SMRs across Saskatchewan.

SMRs provide an opportunity to generate safe, dependable, emissions-free baseload power. SMRs are nuclear reactors that operate at a significantly smaller size than conventional reactors.

While SMRs are a source of clean energy, they also have several other advantages. Their scalability and modular design provide several opportunities that traditional large-scale nuclear plants cannot offer, such as lower construction costs and the ability to supply power to smaller electricity grids in remote locations.

The advancement of SMR technology throughout the world is also an opportunity for the expansion of the Saskatchewan uranium industry, and allows our province to take advantage of new economic opportunities, as well as increased Indigenous participation. This in turn supports the Saskatchewan growth plan by increasing jobs associated with mining, construction, facility operations, nuclear and non-nuclear supply chains, and research development, all while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving resilience to the effects of climate change.

SaskPower is currently in a multi-year planning phase to develop SMRs in the province. A final decision to build an SMR won't be made for several years, but it's important for SaskPower to begin the planning and engagement right now with stakeholders and the public to inform that decision.

We also recognize and take very seriously our duty to consult with Indigenous rights holders. Consultation work began last fall and will continue to expand and grow for the next number of years.

The future of power is something that affects every person in this province. We are committed to listening to and including all Saskatchewan people as this issue moves forward. Saskatchewan is on track to reduce GHGs [greenhouse gas] by at least 50 per cent from the 2005 levels by 2030. Achieving the target of net

zero greenhouse gas emissions from electricity by 2050 will require SaskPower to consider all available options for clean electricity generation. Nuclear power from SMRs is one of the options that is being considered as we make the transition from fossil fuels to support the decarbonization of Saskatchewan's economy and avoid increasing federal carbon penalties.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is committed to exploring this innovative technology and is calling for a financially invested federal government to unlock the full potential of SMRs for our province, the country, and the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And my thanks extend to the minister for providing a copy of his remarks in advance. And my congratulations and appreciation to the officials and experts who work so hard to make today's announcement.

[14:30]

Now the tone and the even-handedness of the remarks shared is encouraging. And I hope it will and believe it will be maintained through what is a critically important opportunity and conversation for Saskatchewan and the world.

In approaching the environment, in approaching energy security, and in approaching the economic future of our province, this conversation and decision-making process must be above reproach. We must think regionally, nationally, and globally. And we must be serious in our approach to climate change and the economy. This is no time for partisan games, Mr. Speaker. The political interests and timelines of those outside of Saskatchewan can have no place in dictating our energy security and our economic future.

When the minister made his last statements on SMRs I referenced the well-known position of a former premier who was strong in his support for the North and the incredible uranium industry here in Saskatchewan. Even in the 1970s and '80s, Premier Blakeney knew and was clear that as climate change concerns or realities grew, the opportunity for nuclear generation as well as hydrogen manufacturing and distribution were immense. They illustrate that in areas of development, Saskatchewan has substantial advantages. And while he was clear, there are many in this province who will demand and merit an honest conversation and true engagement. This cannot simply be an exercise in inevitability.

The path shared by the minister has made many decisions to be made this coming year, from technology and vendor selection, site selection, engagement, business case development — all incredibly important milestones. And in these decisions the interests of Saskatchewan people and institutions must be paramount. With the opportunities for manufacturing, strengthening supply chains, and Saskatchewan-led research and development in our post-secondary and innovation sectors, there must be recognition of and investment in these sectors. Labour market challenges are not going away and investing in people, communities, and the excellence that we have here in Saskatchewan only makes sense and must accompany any

decisions made.

Mr. Speaker, there are many unknowns: cost, application, regulation, storage security, staffing, supply chain, governance, load control design, licensing, scale, distribution. This year appears prime to see the government make many, many important decisions. And while this report builds on the work outlined by the MOU announced last year, this cannot be a foregone conclusion.

Saskatchewan power generation needs an all-of-the-above approach. The cost to the province remains unknown, as does the cost to ratepayers. Establishing and modelling transparency and a grounded business case is not optional. The cost for power is going up for utilities across the country and it's going up for ratepayers.

Looking across the pond we see the United Kingdom is investing 210 million pounds or \$300 million Canadian by 2030. The United States investing just over \$3.2 billion.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we're a province blessed with impeccable geology and critical resources, but with 1 million people we cannot ask the people of this province to shoulder the cost of international innovation alone. Whether taxpayers in Saskatchewan should invest more dollars than the entire United Kingdom is a decision and a case for this government to undertake.

We have an affordability crisis right now, and federal support, as well as clear answers into the economic feasibility, opportunity, and long-term management of any power generation will be non-negotiable.

Many questions will remain, and I hope and believe that the work undertaken will be in earnest and it's not simply *fait accompli*. Whether it's genuine engagement necessary with the public, with First Nations beyond the single point of contact utilized thus far, industry, research institutions, students, and customers, this decision must take into account the people of this province and the children of this province who depend on us for their future.

As we look to the power demands, by 2035 this province will need more than a single SMR to meet that challenge. We need an all-of-the-above approach. Ensuring the development and security of our energy generation, distribution, and the future is the infrastructure challenge of the next decade.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon

Eastview.

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to be on my feet and to enter into debate on the budget. And as expected — no surprises — I won't be supporting the budget motion put forward by the government, and I will be supporting the amendment put forward by my colleague from Regina Rosemont.

And before I get into the details on that, I'll take a few minutes as we often do just to say some thank yous while I'm on my feet. We only get a chance to do this a couple of times a year. So I believe that my family is watching from home, and they do like tuning in. Many of our families do. And I know that it goes without saying, that none of us serve here alone. We've got supportive spouses, life partners, children and grandchildren, families, and communities that support us in this work.

And mine is exceptionally supportive of the work I do, even though it does pull me away from home. And I want to take a minute to thank my wife, Emma, and our three children who, you know, have sacrificed a lot I think over the last couple of years. No doubt our young people in this province have really been through a lot. It's been a tough couple of years, and I'm proud of my kids for the way that they hang tight in there. They continue to be safe when in public and when in crowds. And they've really been through a lot in the last couple of years, but I'm proud of them. And like all Saskatchewan kids, they're resilient and they keep pushing.

I also want to thank the folks who work in my office. I've got a couple casual and part-times, Judy and Jason, who fill in and just do an excellent job. I know Judy's there today. It's just an incredible resource, especially when it comes to issues affecting older adults. She's in my office every Monday and just a wonderful presence there.

As well as my full-time CA [constituency assistant], Katie, who's expecting a baby. And really expected . . . for Katie as she and her partner, Chris, start a family. And I know that she'll be taking some time away from work as she should, as she's able to. We'll miss her greatly. But she has just been an awesome partner in this work in our office. And I just especially want to commend her for the work that she's done in our office in Market Mall, serving seniors in the community.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, we get a lot of folks coming in. Whether they walk in or they call and come in, a lot of older adults come into our office for support. And I want to put this on the record that they're not just Eastview residents. We're getting seniors and older adults walking into our office, and I think it's because Katie's built a reputation as being somebody who's here to serve. And we get folks from all sorts of constituencies represented by Sask Party members, who are coming to us for help because they've been unable to access that help in other offices. And I credit Katie for that. She's just an incredible presence in the office that has been serving our community and others really, really well. And I'm proud of the work that she does.

I also want to take a minute just to commend and thank the people of Saskatoon Eastview. You know, we're like a lot of communities; I don't think that we're all that different. We've

got a lot of front-line health care workers, and I get a lot of emails from these workers, and phone calls. And they've had a tough go. And they continue to fight this virus. They continue to stand up for the people in their care and to serve them well.

And it just makes me really proud to be in this position to be able to represent these front-line health care workers. With everything that they've been through and everything that they've done in the last two years, I would be remiss if I didn't thank them while I'm on my feet.

We also have 10 schools in Eastview, and again I look at what the teachers and support staff and especially the students have been through. And I just want to acknowledge, you know, all of the hard work that it's taken, and sacrifice, to do everything that they can to stay one step ahead of this virus, often without the supports needed from the provincial government. And the frustration that that's led to is just immense. And I hope that that's not news to the members opposite because I know that they get those phone calls too.

And finally, you know, in Eastview we've got a lot of older adults, a lot of services for seniors, facilities. We've got older adults living in their homes in our community and in different communal settings around the riding. And I just really want to thank them for sharing their stories with myself, with Katie, coming into our office, visiting with us.

I had the honour of having someone . . . actually wasn't an Eastview resident. He was from a neighbouring community, couldn't get the help he needed. And he came in and he shared his hockey report card from when he was a young man. I took a picture of it. And it was signed by his Sunday school teacher. It was Tommy Douglas who was his Sunday school . . . He had to sign his hockey report card, so he would be allowed to play. That was pretty cool. He came in and shared that with me.

I'll move on to the budget here, Mr. Speaker, and put a few comments on the record. You know, we've heard a lot of talk that budgets are about choices and budgets are about values, and I think we agree on that.

And I think that there's a lot of ways that we can measure an economy. You know, we talk about economics. We can measure it in macro ways, but I think for me it comes down to looking at what the economy does to improve the lives of the people. That's what economics should be, helping us to meet our needs and live quality lives full of health, happiness, and well-being.

And I think in that way budgets are about people. And I don't think that this budget, to me, it doesn't represent meeting the needs of the people and actually having an impact in a positive way on the lives of the people. This budget shows us again that the Sask Party has taken on the name of being a bit of a tax party and willing to leave Saskatchewan families behind. At a time when Saskatchewan people need a lifeboat and this government is giving them an anchor. At a time when Saskatchewan families are struggling to make ends meet, and this government, instead of making that easier, has made that more difficult.

You know, I know I've listened to some of my colleagues and they've taken time to read some of these increases into the record, and I'll do that too. I'm not going to read all 32 but, Mr. Speaker,

there's some really crippling added costs that are going to hit people hard. And it's not that any one of them is the anchor; it's all of them together — 32 increases to fees and taxes. Property tax increases. Increases on concerts, shows, movie theatres, museums and zoos, historical sites. These are things that, you know, we want to get back out and enjoy our amazing province.

And a lot of these things, it's not just something to do. It's not that Saskatchewan people enjoy getting out and going to a movie due to boredom or they want to go visit a museum because they've got nothing better. These are things that enrich our lives, that provide that sense of well-being, connection to our shared histories, connection to each other, connection to our past. And to see that this government is making that harder I think is really disappointing.

And then we get into all the stuff that's related to our well-being and fitness, and you know, I entered into that during question period today, Mr. Speaker. Thinking about memberships to gyms, curling fees, golf courses, living an active lifestyle in Saskatchewan is going to get 6 per cent harder.

And at this time, you know, we've been through two years when it's been tough. There have been challenges to being active. And I've experienced that. My family has been . . . I'm not looking for anecdotal, you know, evidence to prove this. I think that we can all look back and reflect on the last two years and think, what do we need to emerge out of this pandemic as a healthier province?

And we need incentives to be active, to be around one another, to be growing in community, growing in our own personal well-being for us as individuals, as families, and communities. And instead of giving an incentive to help with that, this government gave us an anchor. They made it harder.

Now let's be honest here, Mr. Speaker. There's a lot in this budget that is needed spending due to this government's mishandling of COVID. You know, I think I started off saying that budgets are about people. But you know, the decisions made by this government over the last two years I think show a disregard at times for the people of Saskatchewan. The handling of COVID by this government has led us to having some of the worst metrics in the country, currently the worst COVID death rate in the country.

The incredible cost that this province had to incur to send patients halfway across the country to get the care that they needed in ICU [intensive care unit] beds. The incredible cost that this government had to come back last fall in supplementary estimates to add to our health care spending. These are all choices that were incurred due to mishandling of COVID. And here we have several measures in this budget, and what this government is doing in essence is they're asking the taxpayer to step forward and foot the bill for their incredible mistakes.

[14:45]

To come through the last two years and claim that mistakes have not been made, I think is an unbelievable and unethical statement. And the fact that this government doesn't support a public inquiry into COVID isn't just a slap in the face to those people who have gotten sick and died or lost loved ones. It's also a slap

in the face to the taxpayer, as this government has spent tens of millions, hundreds of millions of dollars with the worst COVID response in the country. And now they're coming back and asking the taxpayer to foot the bill to correct some of those mistakes in terms of things like surgical wait-lists and health care recruitment and all these other problems that have been created. And I think that quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that's an insult to Saskatchewan people and one of the reasons that I won't be supporting this budget.

I want to take a few minutes to talk about some of the areas which I serve as critic in the official opposition. And I'll start with seniors, Mr. Speaker. So I serve as critic for Seniors, and I'll start with and hope that this is enjoyable for the opposite here . . . I'll start with something that I think is okay, a little bit of a positive direction, and then we see just a little bit, a little sliver of more funding for home care. Okay, that's a good start. I don't think it's enough. I don't think it'll meet the needs of older adults living in their own homes — and I'll get into that — but it's just a little bit, it's a half-step in the right direction.

I think that an investment in home care is something that was a big part of our 2020 campaign. We talked about it because that's what we were hearing. And I know that members opposite will hear this too, because older adults, they want to age in place in their own homes, in their own communities, surrounded by their loved ones, where they can engage as volunteers in local clubs and organizations where they can be involved. And a big part of the well-being of an older adult is staying in their home, you know, where they can be connected to all those things that make their lives enriching just like all of us enjoy those things. Older adults are no different.

And so this investment in home care I think is a positive sign, but it comes nowhere close to meeting the needs of seniors in Saskatchewan. And I'll tell you what I would have liked to have seen. And members opposite may have picked this up when I read a petition in here on numerous occasions, that we need to see a provincially subsidized home supports program for older adults. Home care needs to move beyond, our vision of home care must move beyond simply looking at meeting the health or medical needs of older adults. We need to look at what supports older adults are asking for so they can stay in their homes longer, receive the support that they need to take care of those homes and their yards and their property, to make sure those homes have maybe some small changes needed to make the space more livable for longer periods of time.

We know that this type of program will go beyond just the traditional health care needs of home care and include other needs, and I would have liked to have seen that kind of investment in this budget, simply adding, you know, what amounts to a small increase in home care supports. Again, it's a step in the right direction but falls well short of what Saskatchewan seniors need and deserve.

I also wanted to take a minute to talk about the increase of 300 continuing care aides, which was a promise in the 2020 campaign. There was no mention when the Sask Party was asking for people's votes and asking, who do you trust? There was no mention that this would be spread out over a series of years. In fact days before last year's budget was announced, just days before, at the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural

Municipalities] virtual conference, the Premier himself said that those 300 care aides would be provided in the next budget year. Just days before the budget. But of course that budget comes out and we find out that that promise of 300, which is desperately needed, was chopped down.

So again this year we come back to the same old tired talking point of investing in long-term care. Well, Mr. Speaker, it couldn't be further from the truth. There are hundreds of current vacancies in that workforce right now. So for this government to pat themselves on the back and claim that they have filled all these new positions is what one leader in the sector described as just moving the deck chairs around. Right? How can they say that they've hired hundreds of new people when there are also hundreds of vacancies at the same time? It just doesn't make sense. The numbers do not add up.

And it's the kind of really empty political talk that really turns people off. It makes people think that, well how can I trust if one side says this and that? It's a disingenuous way to account for the new hires, and I reject that kind of talk in politics, Mr. Speaker.

I will also get into another critic area here, and I also serve as critic for Parks, Culture and Sport. But I'll start with the good. I'll start with the good again from the members opposite. Something that I am hopeful for, I'm hopeful that this investment in Creative Saskatchewan will lead to increased film and television production in our province. I am. I think that we're all hoping for the best.

We're certainly not against this initiative. I do see it as a very clear indication that this government was absolutely wrong to cut the film tax credit in 2012. And this program is not the same; it's a far cry from that program. But this government has clearly come to understand that that film tax credit led to incredible economic development in our province. It was a money-maker. It generated incomes for hundreds, maybe even thousands of people.

And one of the questions that I have, why I'm just stuck with hope on this policy, and I hope the members opposite can hear this part, okay? We cannot judge the success of this investment, this new \$8 million, in the next year. We can't. Many of the people who left Saskatchewan over the last 10 years to find work in film and television in other provinces, many of the individuals and production companies, they will be slow to come back. They'll be slow to come back. It's not going to happen right away. I mean hopefully it does. If it does, that's great. But what I'm hearing is that it took 20, 25 years to build up this industry in the province and expecting that it will come back like that is not a good way to look at this investment.

So to the members opposite, please don't judge the success of this program in the first year. If it's underutilized or if it doesn't lead to the economic development that we all hope to see, my suggestion would be adding to that investment, not taking it away, because these companies want to make sure that our province is serious about helping this sector regain some ground in our province so that people can get back to work.

You know, on the negative side of Parks, Culture and Sport, I am very disappointed to see the imposition of 6 per cent PST put in, and I think that this is something that's, it's bad for patrons of the

arts. It's really bad for folks who want to get out to see some theatre, to visit maybe a paid gallery or museum.

But it's also going to be really hard on businesses that are working on razor-thin margins. I'm thinking especially these smaller theatre companies or arts companies or festivals. And for them, they've worked for years to make sure that their services are accessible. And overnight a 6 per cent increase is going to make it very hard for them to continue to operate. And there's a lot of concern and confusion out there right now in the province on why this was introduced at a time when this sector in arts and culture is working so hard to get visitors back and get back on their feet. Of all the confusion here, the hardest part is understanding the timing, why this is happening right now.

Well I guess I better get to education, Mr. Speaker. And I have no idea how long I've been talking for, but I won't be too much longer. I need to talk about what this budget means for educators. And I got to be honest. While we see a bit of a show in here during question period, you know, quoting lines from 15 years ago, and numbers aren't making sense, we have not heard, we have not heard a single positive response from a stakeholder in education to this year's budget. No positive responses. This has got to be a massive red flag for members opposite, as it is for us who are standing up for public education that has funding that's adequate, stable, and predictable in our province.

When it comes to education, I'd like to read just a couple quotes here, Mr. Speaker. And I'm going to have to find the right page here first. I'm going to go to a quote from Patrick Maze, president of the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation], who described budget day as a sad day for students because the 1.5 per cent increase falls well below the margin and doesn't include targeted investments to address class size and complexity.

Now I'll tell the members opposite, when it comes to class size and complexity, these are two things that are really hindering our education system in the province today. This is not something that we can talk about, what was happening decades past and generations past. This is a problem today.

Our teachers in this province are amazing professionals. And they're doing everything that they can to serve their students year in and year out. And you know, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I think teachers do is they tend to cover up the lack of support that they're getting from this provincial government. Out of care for their students, love of teaching, love for their jobs, they go the extra mile. But how far can that go? Teachers are struggling, Mr. Speaker. Teachers working through two years of pandemic learning, that's hard stuff. And to get another budget that offers nothing to deal with classroom size and complexity is a slap in the face to those teachers and their students.

I'll read another quote here from Saskatchewan School Boards Association president, Shawn Davidson, who said, "Once again, we see a budget for K to 12 education that falls short of anything we would consider an investment in education." To see this government pat themselves on the back as if this is a record investment, is going to actually lead to positive things for students, is disingenuous, and I think it's insulting to teachers and students.

I would like to read another quote. I've got to go to my phone for

this one, to Chinook School Division. Chinook School Division had a look at the budget and they said, the division's recognized grant of 77 million is approximately 563,000 more than the previous year. No one's denying that. It's a little bit more money than the previous year. But here's the important part, resulting in a "... 0.7 per cent increase in total budget for Chinook. This will not come close to offsetting the anticipated increase in inflationary costs for 2022-2023 and will result in an ever-increasing funding shortfall for the division."

Later on they say, in planning for the next school year, Chinook is starting from a \$4.2 million deficit. That's one school division that, due to decisions of this government, needs to make some really difficult decisions to account for \$4.2 million in deficit. \$4.2 million in the hole from just one school division. How can this minister stand in his place and pat himself on the back and pretend like he's done everything he can to stand up for students and for learning in this province? It's disappointing, but we see it every single day in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'm hearing a lot of tired talking points coming from this government with no recognition for the real challenges facing teachers and students in their classrooms. To see the quotes from this minister in the rotunda on budget day, saying that schools don't actually have to deal with inflationary costs, is absolutely gaslighting. Of course schools deal with inflationary costs, in particular rural school divisions who have to account for a 25 to 30 per cent increase in fuel for their transportation. To pretend like they don't deal with inflation is absolutely wild.

[15:00]

But what do we get from this government? Just continued tired talking points that could have been picked from any year in the last 10 years. No recognition of what's happening in our schools today.

Mr. Speaker, with that I'm going to start wrapping up my comments. And I mean, it'll come as no surprise that I won't be supporting this budget, my colleagues will not. I will be supporting the amendment brought forward by the member from Regina Rosemont. I don't think that this budget gives people of Saskatchewan the lifeboat that they need at this crucial time.

And I want to just wrap up with one quote that I thought summed it up really well. And it's from the mayor of Saskatoon, Mayor Charlie Clark, when he looked at the added cost being brought in here. And he said:

I was quite surprised that this is the year that was chosen to put PST on to those same industries that have been the most affected by the pandemic that have been basically shut down for two years ... They play a critical role in the vitality of our community and the culture of our community, the ability to have people come together and gather.

Mr. Speaker, instead of a lifeboat, this government's thrown us an anchor. They have not made life easier on Saskatchewan people at a difficult time. They've offered us really nothing to emerge from this pandemic as a healthier province, and so I will not be supporting the budget. I will be supporting the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meyers: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to stand in the House and speak to this budget, which at the end of my comments I will be supporting. I would just like to just get that out of the way.

But I would like to take a moment just to recognize a few people in my life. As has been said by many in this Assembly on both sides of the House, we do serve but we don't serve alone. And I'd like to take a moment to thank my family for everything that they do when it comes to serving: my partner, Laurie, and my kids Dayn, Sebastian, and Easley. You know, we have some late nights here. We have some long days. And especially our kids, they end up sacrificing. Dad's not at soccer practice or at every basketball game, so I would like to take a minute to just recognize them.

I'd also like to take a moment to recognize my work partner, my CA Danielle Rodgers, who's sitting in the gallery up there today. Dani joined me right after being elected in October of 2020 and previously worked in the building here and has been an extreme asset to the people of Walsh Acres and to the people of Regina themselves. She knows how to navigate casework, unlike many, and she really does serve right alongside me. I wouldn't get to every meeting on time or nearly have the success that we're able to have for the people of Walsh Acres in Regina if it wasn't for Dani. So thank you so much, Dani.

And finally I'd like to thank our Minister of Finance, her officials, treasury board, and everybody involved in the making of this budget. It's been a difficult couple of years, things have certainly been off the rails a little bit in many shapes of life. But I do believe that this budget does have us back on track, and that is the theme.

And being an old sports guy, of course when I hear the word "track," I automatically think of racing and my mind goes to that. And certainly at budget, the budget cycle I think has a lot of similarities to a NASCAR [National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing] racetrack. It's an oval you go around. There's a starting line. There's a finish line. You could pick different lanes. You could try and pass by some cars, but you generally know what's going on.

Now a couple of years ago the Finance minister was preparing to deliver a balanced budget when the pandemic hit, and it set everybody in this province, this country, and around the world off track. Last two years putting the budget together I can only imagine is more like a rally course out in the Southwest in the sand dunes out there. No real track. You're up and over. You don't know what's coming at you. You're just holding on to the wheel, white-knuckling it, trying to keep all four tires on the ground and trying to get to that finish line.

Well now that we see that we are, you know, heading out of the pandemic, we're back on track. But it's a little bit of a different track. It's not smooth sailing; it's Formula One. And I say that for a couple of reasons: (1) Formula One is really fast, and (2) it's not a straight-line course. There's some hairpins, you've got to manage the odd chicane. But, Mr. Speaker, we're getting close to that back stretch. We're getting ready to put our foot on the

pedal, and we're ready for our economy to start to grow, for a stronger economy, stronger communities, stronger families, and a stronger Saskatchewan.

There's a phrase here that says, leave it better than you found it. That is the goal of Saskatchewan's Growth Plan as we head toward that. We see achieving some of those plans already when it comes to canola crushing. We see it in record investment in this province. And this budget is seeing records as well: record investment in health care, record investment in social services, record investment in capital projects.

After leaving the budget the other day, walking around the rotunda and in the halls, the smiles have returned to people's faces in this province. The positivity that has returned to the people in this province was everywhere. This budget, it's more than dollars and cents. This budget is about people. It's about investing in today and tomorrow for the people of Saskatchewan.

Know what I think of our future? I do think of a track. And I think we're back on it. I think we are headed straight to being leaders in the world. So I'm going to take us through a few of the parts of this budget that I want to highlight. I want to take it through from the family side of things, from the youngest of the young to the oldest of the old in our province.

So I'll start with the child care. And I have a one-year-old who's in child care. Every kid deserves a good start, and that's why our government has committed to \$300 million for reducing the cost of child care through the federal-provincial early years agreement. This is making a huge impact on people right now. I know a family that has three kids to go to child care. That's \$1,000 a month reduction for them already, \$12,000 a year for that family. So when the members opposite say we're doing nothing for affordability in this province, I think we need to start with the child care agreement.

Or how about the investment into the young ones going to school? Sebastian is in kindergarten. Seven million dollar investment for 200 new educational assistants in this budget alone, providing the resources, the support to the classrooms, to the teachers.

I had the good fortune of going to some parent-teacher interviews in person last week. It was super-exciting, that chance to meet some of the teachers, Ms. Davies and Mme. Stephanie. It was a different experience. Usually when my parents went to those parent-teacher interviews, boy, that was a rough day in my house because they were going to find out everything that I'd actually been up to. The marks were one thing; it was maybe some of the attitude and the over-talking.

But we had such a great time talking about our kids and the quality of education that they are getting. And I want to tip my cap to not only our teachers, but all the teachers and all the educational assistants. You know what? They do a great job all the time. And in the last two years, like everybody else, there's been some excess stresses, and I think they have done an incredible job.

So as I go through the budget I looked at my 13-year-old, Dayn. He wants to be an actor, and he is a bit of a comic, maybe even the class clown from time to time, but he loves it. And he's

partaken in Globe Theatre School.

And I look to that sector and the \$8 million in extra investment going to Creative Saskatchewan. It is an industry that is ready to come back. In fact Megan Jane of Creative Saskatchewan says, "This is not only good news for the industry right now but for the future." More people being hired, and the spinoff: restaurants, hotels, clothing stores, craft breweries — my words. SMPIA [Saskatchewan Media Production Industry Association] says, there's shovel-ready projects ready to move into production now.

Had a chance to talk to some of our restaurants and some of our hospitality people, people that have been hit especially hard through this pandemic. Leasa Gibbons from the warehouse says, "We are thrilled to see funding for the film and television industry. We believe this will have a timely impact on the overall economy as well as spinoff for our recovering hospitality sector, a great investment that's going to pay huge dividends right here in Regina."

Moving along to the adults, some of us younger, some of us older. Health care, a major investment, record investment in health care in this budget. And I started thinking about the health care workers and the great job they've done. Their job is to show up every day and look after us. And over the last two years they have absolutely done it to, more than I think any of us could imagine, their abilities.

And speaking of those health care workers, a major investment right here in Regina in them. They deserve a safe environment to go to work in. They deserve the convenience. This budget announces \$750,000 to support planning, procurement, and design of a new parkade at the Regina General Hospital. This is something I've talked to people when I was actually running for nomination. After spending a few weeks in the hospital back in 2018, it became a passion of mine. And I'm so proud of our government for investing in it and starting this project along the way. And I had a chance to talk to a couple of nurses. They said, "This is going to go over very well at work. Wow, that is exciting news." Investing in those who invest their lives in us.

We're expanding ICU bed capacity in this province, moving over the course of the next few years to 110 ICU beds. Three million dollars being spent right here in Regina to fund 10 high-acuity beds at the Regina General Hospital to support capacity expansion, these beds being used for reducing demands on the ICU and to improve patient flow.

As we grow older, we know we need the odd surgery, some of us more than others, yeah. As our kids grow older, they're also going to need the odd surgery: broken bones from hockey games and things like that. We're investing \$21 million to focus on these surgical wait times. We know they're there. We know it's an issue. This government has done it before and we're going to do it again and reduce that backlog on surgery times.

Then investing in those who have paved the way for us in this province, our seniors. Right here in Regina, \$6.5 million in this budget for the design and procurement activities for specialized and standard long-term care beds in our capacity. Continuing to hire more CCAs [continuing care aide]. We promised 300 and we're going to get up to 225 this year, with the next 75 coming next year, investing in those who laid the foundation for this

province.

This budget has something for everybody, Mr. Speaker. From the youngest of our young to the oldest of our old, everybody in this province can benefit from this great budget.

And our businesses, our hospitality sector as I mentioned, extremely hard hit. That's why this budget is increasing the commission rates on VLTs [video lottery terminal] from 15 to 18 per cent. I had the chance to bump into some of those restaurant owners here at the budget. George from the 4Seasons says:

The 25 per cent emergency VLT commission was the greatest support program during the restrictions for many rural and urban establishments. The program allowed us to survive, and now the increase from 15 to 18 will be a tremendous benefit as we move forward.

We're investing in those who need a handout — hand up, sorry — \$11.4 million increasing the SIS [Saskatchewan income support] benefits. This is an increase of 30 to the basic benefit and \$25 to the shelter clients living in Regina and Saskatoon to help people meet the basic needs as they become more self-sufficient and independent to the best of their abilities, Mr. Speaker, helping with that hand up. It's a \$660-a-year increase, and it's the 11th shelter increase in the last 15 years.

We're investing in the future, in innovation. As we move to the next decade, our government knows that it's going to play a key role and we're seeing it already, right here in Regina with the Agtech Accelerator, the incubators in Saskatoon, with the technology companies. In fact, I just saw how a Saskatchewan drone company is contributing to the Ukraine fight, to the Ukrainians' fight against Russia. We have the synchrotron. Our government has invested in VIDO-InterVac [Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization-international vaccine centre], the Petroleum Technology Research Centre. In fact the new CEO [chief executive officer] there, Ranjith Narayanasamy, says this budget, "It supports strong innovation and research in the province. PTRC funding through Innovation Sask shows government prioritizes the innovation, research, and supports CCUS as carbon-reduction mechanisms to support the energy industry."

We're investing in reconciliation, Mr. Speaker. It's been a very difficult year for Indigenous members in this province, in this country, and we are investing in them. Saskatchewan has a growing number of Indigenous-owned companies, employing thousands of people. This budget includes \$475,000 to create the Saskatchewan Indigenous Investment Finance Corporation. The SIIFC will offer \$75 million in loan guarantees for private sector lending to Indigenous communities and organizations for investments in natural resource and value-added projects. Our government recognizes the importance of our motto, "from many peoples, strength." We must all move forward together, shoulder to shoulder, hand to hand.

And I do want to thank the member from Regina Rosemont for acknowledging the back row the other day in his response to the speech. So I went to *Hansard* and got this:

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.

Well, wish come true, member from Regina Rosemont.

[15:15]

I do appreciate the opportunity to stand up here and let the members opposite know just what a member way back here can accomplish.

Early on after getting the privilege of being elected, we heard the calls of the people from Regina Walsh Acres. They wanted better internet service. We were able to go to the minister to have that discussion. Now they have infiNet. Deanne says:

The past year was very challenging and really highlighted the need for upgraded internet services in Walsh Acres. I'm happy to report that SaskTel is now working on installing fibre optics in our area. I thank Derek for all his hard work and appreciate his willingness to listen to my concerns and do his best to address them.

As a member way back here, I had the chance to sit on the committee for the Frost Regina festival as a government member. I think members on both sides of the House were out enjoying bringing winter to life in our capital city. I think it was a great experience. I was also very proud that our government was able to support some of that and invest in that through Tourism Saskatchewan.

I look at this budget, Mr. Speaker, what us MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] from way back here on the government side can do. Anyone who knows me knows that I've been advocating for that parkade. The Minister of Health and the Minister of SaskBuilds are tired of letting me into their office because that's all I want to talk about. Well thanks to my Regina colleagues and those ministers involved, that project is now moving ahead, Mr. Speaker.

Long-term care centre project moving ahead, Mr. Speaker. Working with the businesses across the city, businesses downtown in the constituencies of many of the members opposite, helping them through the pandemic with the support systems that our government was providing. So I want to thank the member from Regina Rosemont for the chance to highlight what just one of the twelve new members in this back row can do — the same amount of members that they have on the entirety of that side, Mr. Speaker.

Now the members opposite do have some questions about affordability. And no question, affordability is an issue for people these days. We do see the price of things going up. But that's why our government is committed to keeping low utility rates, low insurance rates, income tax breaks. I believe the small-business owners on the other side of the House should maybe highlight that for the past year they've been paying zero per cent in corporate income tax. We have the highest corporate income

tax threshold, at \$600,000, in the entire country. And I could go on and on, but I do think the Finance minister does a good job pointing that out every day on how our government is making life more affordable for people in this province.

But I do have an idea how the members opposite could help out with affordability. They could reach out to their new leader, Justin Trudeau, and get him to pause the senseless rise in the carbon tax coming this Friday.

What about the Canada Health Transfer? Maybe they could reach out to their new leader, Justin Trudeau, and get the federal government to live up to their commitment to fully funding their portion, like every premier in this country is asking for. Equalization payments, pipelines, carbon capture, Bill C-69, Bill C-48. Please feel free to pick up the phone, talk to your new leader if you really want to make life more affordable for people in this province.

Failing all of that, because my expectations are pretty low, I don't have a seatmate. I'm the only person in government that doesn't have a seatmate. I would like to invite the member from Regina Rosemont to fulfill his actual wish and his actual dream. Walk across the floor. I'd be happy to have him as my seatmate, and he could see what an MLA way in the back is capable of because it's way more than sitting in the front row on that side.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, this budget is back on track. And on a quote, a great song from back in the '80s. Timbuk 3 sang it, and it says:

I'm doing all right, getting good grades
The future's so bright, I gotta wear shades.

The future is very bright for the people of this province, Mr. Speaker, and I will be supporting this motion.

As our kids get older, as they graduate, this is the best time to be a person in our province. Whatever they can dream, they can do it right here. If they want to be a teacher, a doctor, a plumber, a farmer, if they want to work in tech, they want to open a business, they want to become a nurse — if they can dream it, they can do it right here in the best province in Canada. Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this budget. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for Regina Walsh Acres for that moving reply to the budget.

Before I begin I'll just like to recognize a few people. First of all I'd like to thank my wife, Meagan, and my whole family for their support. And we all know how important that is.

I'd also like to thank my two constituency assistants Gail and Claudette. They were down here last week for budget. That was great to have them here, and they do some pretty incredible work at home in The Battlefords every single day.

You know, another person I'd like to recognize is actually the member for Athabasca, our newest MLA here in this House. And you know, I've said it to a few people back home over the

weekend, but if you missed his maiden speech last week, I think that's about as close as this House gets to must-see TV, the maiden speech for the member from Athabasca. So if anybody hasn't had the chance to see that . . . I've gone back and watched it a second and a third time now, might even get a fourth viewing in here this week, so we'll see.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just quickly start my comments today by briefly talking about the situation in Ukraine. And you know, I don't bring up this conflict to just offer thoughts and prayers. And I often ask my wife to remind me not just to be a thoughts-and-prayers politician because, well let's be honest, there's much more intellectual people than me to offer wise thoughts on geopolitics, and there's people much more devout than I am to offer words of holy petition about the situation.

But here's what I do know — and I do know this — is that this conflict has real implications for people in my community and in our communities here in Saskatchewan. And over the last number of weeks I've spoken with several families who are dealing with the very difficult reality of having family and friends and loved ones in a theatre of war. And whether they're in Ukraine still or they've fled to another country, whether that be Moldova, Slovakia, Poland, this is a very real situation. And they're trying to figure out how to get out of there, and some of them even how to get to Canada.

And you know, I'd just quickly like to recognize the team at the Battlefords Immigration Resource Centre who are working very hard to try and help these families. And you know, let me just say I really appreciate the work that Annette and Chizuru and the whole team at BIRC [Battlefords Immigration Resource Centre] are doing on a daily basis, such a vital service in our community and certainly in our province.

And you know, while I do appreciate that the federal government has opened up a new pathway for special temporary residents, I guess I'd continue to urge our Prime Minister and the federal government to continue to do more to help as many people as we can who've fled their homes and they're looking for a new home, whether that be on a temporary basis or a permanent basis, Mr. Speaker. And you know, provincially, you know, we have a resettlement agreement signed with Ukrainian Canadian Congress, and we are prioritizing any SINP [Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program] applications from Ukraine applicants.

And we're going to continue to support Ukraine as best we can throughout this. I know our Premier, he's going to be visiting with some of these refugees later this week. And we're absolutely going to work with those people who are looking to come to this province, whether it's temporarily or permanently, as I said, Mr. Speaker.

Now moving to the 2022-2023 budget that was presented in this House last week, I'd like to quickly commend my colleague, the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Finance, for her leadership in putting this budget together. And I'd also like to thank the team at the Ministry of Finance for their work on this budget. It was kind of neat last week to look up and see the team of treasury board analysts sitting up in the Speaker's gallery last week. I know that they've spent hours preparing information for us and helping us make decisions, and so it was kind of neat to see them

here, seeing the fruits of their labour, I guess you could say, Mr. Speaker.

You know, and I'll quickly recognize one individual who's actually no longer with us and that's an assistant deputy minister, Arun Srinivas. And you know, Arun is somebody who sadly left us early this year, and somebody who, you know, if you read his obituary, he started in the mailroom, Mr. Speaker, and he rose up to be an assistant deputy minister of Finance. And I mean if that's not a great Saskatchewan story, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what is. You know, I worked with Arun for a short period of time compared to some of my colleagues, but I was always impressed at the level of detail he brought to the table. And I think Saskatchewan lost a very good public servant earlier this year. So you know, I'd like to remember Arun that way and also recognize again the team at the Ministry of Finance for, right in the heat of putting the budget together, for stepping up and working together to get the job done.

Now, Mr. Speaker, just before I get to the '22-23 budget I will also quickly just draw the House's attention to the third quarter update, also released last week. And you know, given the strength of our natural resource prices, specifically oil and potash, our revenue in this current fiscal year has obviously been stronger than anticipated. I mean our '21-22 expenses have also been higher than anticipated, but what this growth in resource revenue has allowed us to do is to pay down some of the operating debt in this province. And I think that's very important. This is a government . . . On this side of the House we believe in fiscal strength and having the province in a good fiscal position, and I believe that sets us up well in years to come.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you know, what that does, paying down that operational debt, getting our province continuing back on a good fiscal track, is it gets us back towards achieving the goals outlined in the growth plan.

And speaking of the growth plan, I'd like to just quickly talk about Saskatchewan's Growth Plan for a moment. And if the members opposite have not read it yet, I would sure encourage them to do so because, you know, it really doesn't take very long into the document to get a sense of its purpose, Mr. Speaker. And the whole purpose of the growth plan is to build a better quality of life for the people of Saskatchewan.

And we talk about that every single day in this House, Mr. Speaker, that the growth plan outlines how we are going to do that. And it's very simple, very simple, Mr. Speaker. And our government, this side of the House, this Saskatchewan Party caucus believes that growing the province will create a better quality of life for the people of Saskatchewan. So let's get into some detail on how the 2023 budget corresponds with that and supports Saskatchewan's Growth Plan as we head to 2030.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as has been outlined in this House numerous times and was again discussed in last week's budget, our province has seen a record amount of private sector investment in the last year: \$13.6 billion private sector investment. Mr. Speaker, that's a lot of investment into this province: BHP, Cargill, Viterro, Richardson, Federated Co-ops, and AGT, just to name a few. The list is so long it's actually hard to memorize, Mr. Speaker. But these investments will create 9,000 construction jobs and over 2,300 permanent jobs. Mr. Speaker,

that is something to be very excited about. Those are jobs in Regina. Those are jobs in Saskatoon. Those are jobs in communities all across our great province.

Now I've talked in this House previously about the importance of encouraging the private sector in this province, the private sector that just invested \$13.6 billion, Mr. Speaker. And this year's budget has further supports to incentivize investment in our province.

I think about the augmentation of the Saskatchewan value-added incentive, which has already brought in some of those major investments that I just talked about. And we're going to continue to push for investments in this province that take our many agricultural products and add value to them before they are exported or consumed.

Mr. Speaker, I also think of the further increase to the Saskatchewan technology start-up initiative, which I spoke of at some length last year, so I'll be more brief in my comments today. But you know, this is a very important sector in our province — great jobs, Regina, Saskatoon — and this government is going to continue to support our province's growing technology sector.

[15:30]

Now, Mr. Speaker, an exciting new announcement in this year's budget is the formation of the Saskatchewan Indigenous Investment Finance Corporation. And that will establish a fund of \$75 million of loan guarantees for Indigenous communities and organizations that are investing into value-added agricultural and resource projects. And, Mr. Speaker, I think we talk about how this province is growing. We talk about the investment coming into this province. And, Mr. Speaker, I think the formation of this corporation really speaks to how this government believes that everybody in our province needs to be a part of that and experience that growth and see the benefits of that growth, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as our economy gets back on track and our government finances get back on track, we also have the ability to invest in government services to get those back on track as well. Now, Mr. Speaker, our government knows that gang- and drug-related crime is a challenge in many communities in our province. And this is why in last year's Throne Speech, we announced the formation of four new crime reduction teams, as well as the warrant enforcement and suppression team, the Saskatchewan trafficking response team. And with those commitments renewed and fully funded in this budget, Mr. Speaker, those investments are already starting to pay off and are helping to make our communities safer places to live.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to talk about this in my member's statement today. And just last week in northwest Saskatchewan — Meota, Landis, North Battleford — multiple crime reduction teams partnered with the warrant enforcement and suppression team, as well as the North Battleford gang task force, to execute search warrants at six different properties. Firearms, drugs, those were seized from these properties. And also occurring last week, you know, our Battlefords RCMP detachment made five arrests in connection to numerous reports of stolen property.

And, Mr. Speaker, this government knows that a safer Saskatchewan is a stronger Saskatchewan. And this year's budget has a total of \$936.2 million for the protection of persons and property, an increase of over 10 per cent from last year's budget.

Mr. Speaker, I think about our health care sector, and you know, the health care sector that has served the people of this province over a challenging couple of years, Mr. Speaker. And I look at the investments that we're making into the health care sector in this budget. Mr. Speaker, we're investing in new capital. We're talking about hospitals in Prince Albert, in Weyburn, new long-term care facilities as well as upgrades in many others.

I think about some of the services that we're augmenting in this budget. I think specifically about the \$11 million of additional funding that is going to help stabilize EMS [emergency medical services] services in 27 different rural communities in this province. Mr. Speaker, that's going to have a real impact on people in rural Saskatchewan.

And perhaps most importantly — it's been talked about numerous times in the last couple of years, Mr. Speaker — we can have the capital, we can have the services, but we need the staff. We need the staff to staff those facilities. We need the staff to deliver those services.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think that's perhaps the most exciting part of what's in this year's budget when it comes to health — three and a half million dollars of new funding to improve our physician recruitments, specifically in rural Saskatchewan. I think about 150 new nursing seats in this province. Going to be able to train more nurses who want to stay in this province and work in those new hospitals in Prince Albert and Weyburn. Mr. Speaker, that is an example of how this government is investing in the health care system in this province and increasing its capacity for years to come.

You know, when it comes to what is in this budget for The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker, I see a renewed commitment to the major renovation project we had at John Paul II Collegiate, the oldest high school we have in The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker. That's a significant project for high school students in our community, and we're really excited to see that moving forward this year.

We have resurfacing projects happening on Highway 4, north of North Battleford. That is a very busy stretch of highway as people come through our community to go up to the lake. We have a lot of commercial activity on that stretch. That's going to be great to see that stretch being resurfaced this summer. And then Highway 378, and I was actually surprised that the member for Regina Rosemont hasn't had a petition about Highway 378. It's a bit of a bumpy road, but we're going to be resurfacing that this summer, Mr. Speaker, so he doesn't even need to worry about the petition.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I also think about this year's budget and the further commitment we've made to community-based organizations all across this province, another 2 per cent increase in provincial funding to community-based organizations. And I think of Battlefords Residential Services. I think about Battlefords Trade and Education Centre, which I had the

opportunity to visit on Friday. And we know, Mr. Speaker, these organizations do incredible work in our community. And our government is ensuring that work can continue to be done so that everybody in our province can experience what a growing province looks like, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, before I close, I want us to think about our history a little bit as we look to the future. I've talked a lot about the future but, Mr. Speaker, I want to go and talk about some history as well. And if members in the House will indulge, I'd like to talk about what was and what will be, Mr. Speaker. And I'd like to talk about those things, how they relate to the people of Saskatchewan, the province of Saskatchewan. Because, Mr. Speaker, when I think about what will be for Saskatchewan, there's so much to be excited and hopeful about.

You know, I happened to check the mail at the place where I stay here in Regina during session, and I actually got a newsletter from the NDP MLA for that constituency. And I'll just say — interesting line here — they are so full of hope for what the future holds. I couldn't agree more, Mr. Speaker. It's great to hear that. We don't hear that from the members opposite in the House, so it's great to hear that they're telling their constituents that out on the street.

So let's get back to what was and what will be. And, Mr. Speaker, this was a province where people were asked by the NDP government, and I quote, to "fix your own highways." But, Mr. Speaker, this is now a province where we will improve 1100 kilometres of highway in this upcoming year. And we will be improving 10 000 kilometres of highway by the year 2030.

Mr. Speaker, this was a province that gutted health care in rural communities all across this province, closing hospitals, removing services from communities, leaving health care professionals with little choice but to pack up and find another place to care for people. And it left rural residents of this province wondering if they could realistically stay in their hometowns.

But, Mr. Speaker, things have changed since those days. This is a government that has made investments into and restored health care services in communities across Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, this government will continue to make those investments. We've increased funding to the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] overall by another 7 per cent. We're budgeting a record over \$470 million for mental health and addictions support, so badly needed after the last couple of years, Mr. Speaker. And we are renewing our commitment and adding further resources to recruit health care professionals to rural Saskatchewan and to retain them there in those communities.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite try to remind us that they weren't here in the legislature in the darker days of this province, in the '90s and early 2000s. And I suppose that's true. Faces have changed on both sides of the House, Mr. Speaker. But what members opposite cannot deny, Mr. Speaker, is they are singing from the same big-government, socialist songbook that guided the NDP of yesteryear. They still represent an ideology that believes that government is best positioned to spend more of your money, raise your family, and make decisions for your life.

But, Mr. Speaker, our government is one that is focused on being a smaller, less intrusive, and more efficient government, a

government that allows and incentivizes the private sector to be Saskatchewan's economic engine, and a government that believes in individual freedom and the equality of opportunity for all citizens. Mr. Speaker, that's this government.

Mr. Speaker, this province was at one time a place where the NDP government told people that growth is bad, that we would never grow to be a significant population. It was a province that was known for giving youth a set of luggage. But, Mr. Speaker, this is a province that has grown to nearly 1.2 million people, and a province that will continue to see people come, make their home in this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to those future Saskatchewan residents, whether they be from Vancouver or Toronto and looking for a lower cost of living, or whether they're from India or the Philippines and looking to bring their professional skills and entrepreneurial spirit, or whether they are fleeing conflict in Ukraine or Afghanistan, we want you here.

This province will be a great home for you and your family. There are and there will continue to be incredible opportunities in the resource sector, in the tech sector, in the health care sector, the education sector, the construction sector, or in the manufacturing sector. There is a job waiting for you. There is a community, large or small, waiting for you. And there is a provincial government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that will do everything in its power to help you make Saskatchewan your home. Come join us.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, these last two years, it was a challenging time. It was hard on families. It was difficult for health care and front-line workers as well as first responders in every community in our province. It was a stressful period for business owners who weren't sure if they were going to make payroll. I remember, Mr. Speaker, right at the beginning of the pandemic, that was the role I played, worried that I wasn't going to make payroll for our staff.

But, Mr. Speaker, what gets me up in the morning and what makes me tell everyone I know about how great Saskatchewan is and what gets me so excited is what will be for our province. And what will be for our province is Saskatchewan becoming an economic powerhouse. And what will be is Saskatchewan using that economic strength to keep our government small and efficient. And what will be is Saskatchewan leveraging that small, efficient government and economic strength to become one of the best places in the western world when it comes to educating our children, providing health care in our communities, and being able to help those who need a leg up.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this '22-23 budget, I do believe it gets us back on track to achieving those goals.

This budget supports a rapidly growing economy. The budget shows that government finances are getting back on track and are already some of the best in the country, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And this budget supports government services across the province by getting them back on track after a difficult couple of years.

And with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will close my remarks saying that I will not be supporting the opposition's amendment. I will be supporting the budget motion brought forward by the

Minister of Finance and seconded by the member from Moose Jaw North. Thank you.

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

Mr. Nerlien: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it's a great privilege to rise after a couple of great speeches where I watched the members opposite in awe and wishing they were on this side.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll just start out by saying of course that I will be supporting the budget put forward by the Minister of Finance, and I want to thank the Minister of Finance and all his Finance officials and members of treasury board. And something that often gets forgotten is the work that is done by the cabinet ministers and the staff in the various cabinet offices in the whole process of bringing a budget together, and I think we should recognize and thank them for all the work they do as well.

I want to take a second just to thank my constituents of Kelvington-Wadena. They've been very, very supportive. And they've certainly brought forward lots of their thoughts and ideas over the last couple of years, and I've always appreciated the conversations that I've had. I want to thank my family of course for their support and really appreciate the opportunity to share with them from time to time.

And I do want to thank my colleagues because the last couple of years have been particularly challenging and interesting, and we've been able to work together collectively. I want to particularly in that group thank the class of '16 who I think was an outstanding class. It goes without saying. But I will also add that the class of '20 is pretty good. Right? But the class of '22 is a class unto himself.

[15:45]

Let me be clear at this time, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to just say that our hearts, our communities, our businesses, our citizens, and all of our services are behind the people of Ukraine, and we will do all we can to help the Ukrainian people in their time of need. And my constituency has many, many people, many families from the Ukraine, many families with connections in the Ukraine, and we share their concern. We share their wish to be helpful, and we're all very much concerned with what is happening not that far away.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm going to talk a little bit about context, from how this budget was put together during a particularly challenging time. And just go back, if you remember, two years of global pandemic response to an unknown, COVID-19. If we go back two years ago, nobody knew what we were getting into. Nobody had any idea what this was going to look like.

Of course the early stages was, and continues to be, job market manipulation by governments through support programs that are . . . kind of been helpful but have also created some uncertainty in markets. We saw a global decline in tourism that I think has been a significant impact on all of us and a lot of businesses around not only Saskatchewan, Canada, and the world. Obviously a volatility in the markets, both the commodity and staff markets. We've seen the emergence of some really very,

very significant and concerning supply chain issues in every segment of the economy, and I think we're going to be struggling with that for some time.

And if you remember two years ago, about now, there was a hoarding of things like toilet paper and water, and people were stocking up their pantries with dry and canned goods. And essentially not too far from this date, two years ago, the world essentially shut down for a period of time. And if we go back, it was a very, very difficult and unsettling period for all of us.

And so now I want to just, for some of us who remember Paul Harvey, and now the rest of the story. So today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, obviously we're dealing with the Russian illegal invasion of the Ukraine. We have international sanctions on the Russian economy and the leadership, the Russian oligarchs, and in particular, President Putin.

The economy of Russia and surrounding countries is being severely shaken by the war that is occurring, and I think we're going to see a residual impact for that for quite some time. And more and more we're seeing the humanitarian crisis that we should all be very concerned about.

And I would argue, and I think it's starting to come out a little bit in media in certain circles, that Russia might in fact be considered a discount warehouse teetering on bankruptcy with a captured market in parts of Europe for energy and some food products. And other countries are taking advantage of the desperate spot and picking away at the bones. And China . . . China may be buying up the shelving and the furniture.

The reason I say that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is China is . . . And I would encourage my colleagues to read a paper called the belt and road initiative, that was put forward by the Center on Economic and Financial Power in 2020 that talks about China's economic impact in the world and the things that we should be aware of and concerned with. And in fact the amount of debt that is owed to China, and the fact that 120 countries have signed belt and road initiatives with China largely on critical infrastructure projects. We should be concerned about China's repeated incursions in the strait of Taiwan and the build-out in the South China Sea.

And the reason that I raise this is that I think that there is a connection, there's a relationship to what's going on in Russia. And I think China obviously is watching this situation unfold very carefully for potential opportunity.

Sort of the bigger picture there as well, the global infrastructure outlook of the G20 [Group of 20] initiative identifies \$94 trillion in global infrastructure demand by 2040. Fifteen trillion will be unmet by current investment trends. So what we're talking about there in the big picture is that there is incredible opportunity for growth across the world.

I think we also have to recognize some of the debt issues that are in place across the world. The global debt-to-GDP [gross domestic product] in Japan, 257 per cent; USA [United States of America] is 133 per cent; France is 116 per cent; Canada, 110 per cent; China, 69 per cent; Ukraine, 60 per cent. The interesting one is Russia's debt-to-GDP ratio is 14.6 per cent — 14.6 per cent. That speaks about some of the relationship that Russia

doesn't have with the world.

More specific to Canada, the federal-provincial net debt per person in Saskatchewan is \$44,501 — a lot of money. But the reality is that it's the second lowest in Canada, second only to British Columbia who is at \$43,635, so a close second. And the highest is Newfoundland and Labrador at \$64,000 per person. And Ontario interestingly is at 58,000 per person.

The household debt-to-GDP is double what it was 30 years ago. The 30-year . . . There's an interesting little aside here that I want to bring to your attention because I think it's . . . We're talking about the affordability index and cost of living and so on. Here's a really interesting point: the 30-year mortgage interest rate average in Canada from 1990 to 2022 was 5.8 per cent. Today's short-term rate is 2 to 3 per cent.

The Globe and Mail reported that major urban house prices increased 52 per cent in the last two years alone. A real estate agent was quoted in the same article, in the same article as saying, "I'm starting to see offers with financing conditions." Imagine. Historically financing conditions were part of every offer. How could you go into a market that is doubling, or at 52 per cent increase in market value, and not be doing any work on the credit worthiness of the buyers? It makes no sense at all. None.

I suggest that the problem that we have and the problem that we'd better face is that currently there is no institutional memories of what normal looks like. We have an entire generation of first-time home buyers that have never experienced a normal cost of mortgage payments. As I said, the 30-year rate from 1990 to 2022 was 5.8 per cent. Look around the room. There's probably, I'm guessing, six of us that paid 17 per cent on a mortgage — 17 per cent.

In the late '80s and early '90s there was easy borrowing. I'll give you an example. I was sent down to Toronto. I was a banker at the time. I was sent down to Toronto to look at why the Toronto market was so heated, and people were investing in real estate, in commercial real estate, strip malls left, right, and centre. And I looked at it and I said . . . I went down, I reviewed files. Every single file was lending a minimum of \$100,000 on a credit bureau, period. There was no information in the files, no credit information. I dare say we're back at that again, and that should be very, very concerning and we need to pay attention to that as legislators.

There's a number of other things that happened over the last number of years. A lot of us remember Y2K, which we thought the world was going to come to an end, right — 1999, 2000; the sub-prime mortgage crisis between 2007 and 2010.

You know, in all of that I think we should be concerned a little bit about the unholy merger of the federal parties, the NDP and the Liberal Party. You know, it's leading us down a socialist path. I think the NDP were lost when the Liberals moved to the left of the NDP in 2015. And it was shocking to them, and I don't think they've been able to find themselves ever since. And I think . . .

You know, I'm just going to read a couple of headlines from last week that I think are particularly interesting. Chris Selley from the *National Post* called it a very " . . . cheap and gullible date." John Robson said it's " . . . little more than congealed fog with a

slimy aftertaste.” And the *Toronto Sun* front page called it an “axis of weasels.” And frankly, colleagues, I for the life of me can’t understand why the NDP sold their soul, what brought them to that point where they literally sold their soul. For what? For what? There is no gain in it; none.

And just finally on the federal level, the PBO [parliamentary budget officer] study just I think released last week, it’s called *A Distributional Analysis of Federal Carbon Pricing under A Healthy Environment and A Healthy Economy*. Under the government’s plan, most households in Saskatchewan will see a net loss from carbon pricing. Sixty per cent of Saskatchewan households will be worse off. Again, for the life of me, why are the NDP supporting a carbon tax? Why are they supporting the federal Liberal Party? I don’t understand for a second.

In any event, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to touch on a number of things from the budget. You know, why does all of this background matter if you live in Sheho or Rose Valley or Kelvington or any of the communities in my constituency? I think it’s important to note that we are as a government, with this budget, back on track. We are obviously advocating a stable investment climate, and there’s a number of examples that we’ve been talking about over the last few weeks in the House.

The Federated Co-op initiative with AGT Foods for a diesel fuel canola crush plant, I think, is very significant. To me in particular, the Jansen mine project, BHP’s project, \$12 billion invested. Put that in perspective. Our budget this year is \$17 billion roughly. Twelve billion dollars is being invested by a single company, their largest investment in history and their largest investment in potash mining. Obviously, I think that’s very significant. And 3,500 jobs will be created in construction, and I think that’s going to have a significant impact on all of our constituencies in northeast Saskatchewan and east central Saskatchewan. Richardson International is doubling its processing capacity in Yorkton.

This is an interesting one. Red Leaf Pulp’s wheat straw pulping technology, eventual establishment of Canada’s first wheat straw pulp facility in Regina. I think that’s a unique and different way of considering value-add in agriculture in Saskatchewan.

In the North, obviously Paper Excellence, \$550 million pulp mill in Prince Albert; One Sky’s mill, \$250 million in Prince Albert; 100 million in the expansion of Dunkley Lumber’s saw mill in Carrot River; and on and on and on.

And a couple of other things that I think we should pay a lot of attention to and we do as a government. When we look at agricultural research, we certainly look at companies that are leading in technology advancements like Clean Seed Capital in Saskatoon. And I’m particularly interested in what’s happening in the protein market, and we have a company called C-Merak that’s doing some work in that in the Tisdale area. And I think we’re going to see a lot more come out of those kinds of things.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I look at Saskatchewan as being a rose amongst thorns. We’re back on track with a significantly improved financial picture.

I just want to say that we are a very mobile province. From the transportation of raw materials, value-added production and

distribution, to our day-to-day travel, we use the infrastructure that we care so much about. Our investment in passing lanes, our investment in the 1100 kilometres of upgrades of highways this year is pretty significant.

[16:00]

The \$6.8 billion investment in health care funding with 117 new CCA positions, again this year added to the number that we had last year. I think of particular interest — and I have a couple of nieces that are just finishing the nursing programs — the 150 new nurse training seats is of particular significance and importance, and I think will be very much welcomed by the health care community. I think the 11 new ICU beds as well is particularly timely. We made a commitment to grow our ICU capacity significantly over the next three years, and I think that’s going to make a big difference to our population, in particular our middle-to senior-aged population, who tend to be very reliant on those facilities.

I think of significant importance is the addition of three and a half million dollars in the physician recruitment initiative, the P.A. [Prince Albert] Victoria Hospital, the Weyburn hospital, and more long-term care beds. I also want to mention the new agency to recruit and retain health care workers with the two-year objective of 300 new nurses from the Philippines, and a three-and-a-half-million-dollar commitment to physician recruitment for new physicians in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could go on and on and on about all the great things in the budget, but I do want to highlight a couple more things. The continued \$65 million enhanced intersection safety program for highways, \$27 million to rural integrated roads for growth, and I’m particularly interested in No. 3 west of Prince Albert, No. 5 east of Saskatoon, passing lanes, widenings, and safety enhancements along those corridors. The passing lanes between Clavet and Dafoe will be greatly appreciated by people in my constituency who have to travel to Saskatoon from time to time.

And to all of us who come to Regina, the preconstruction planning on Highway No. 6, I think twinning of that piece north of Regina will be particularly critical. In my constituency, I do want to say that I want to thank the Minister of Highways for the work done on Highway 38 last year. We’re getting Highway 23 done under this budget this year and some work on Highway 349 that has been long awaited, which connects . . .

An Hon. Member: — The budget’s all for you.

Mr. Nerlien: — The budget’s all for us, us . . . 349, which connects Archerwill over to Naicam, which I think is timely and critical as well. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said, I could go on and on and on. I have much to say about seniors’ programs, the significant improvement in investment in various seniors’ programs. I think of particular note is the home care increase for home care services and the high-dose influenza vaccines for those 65 years and older. And as I said earlier, the 117 new CCAs on top of 108 last year will make a significant difference to our long-term care facilities.

So again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to say I will be supporting this budget. I think it’s an incredible step forward for

our province. As always this government has always paid attention to the needs of the citizens of Saskatchewan, and I want to say thank you again to the minister for all the work that they've done. And in particular thanks for the work being done that is going to help the citizens of Kelvington-Wadena to be participants in incredible opportunities in front of us across Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Mr. Friesen: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it would seem like my colleague the member from Kelvington-Wadena is getting a lot of highways, but truly we've talked about this in the House before. Melfort has got a whole bunch of things going on. There's things going on throughout our province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it's very easy to talk about, like the member from Kelvington-Wadena said, how many good things there are in this budget.

It's my honour and privilege to rise today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and join in debate on the budget. I will start by saying I will be supporting the budget put forth by the Minister of Finance and seconded by the member from Moose Jaw North, and I will not be supporting the amendment.

My sister recently retired and seems to have a lot of time on her hands. And last week, late last week, she had sent me a video. And it was a video of my father and my nephew just before my dad passed away a little over 20 years ago. And the reason I bring this up is the member from Athabasca was talking about the influence that his parents had and the reputation that his parents had in his community, in his area. And you know, I really echo the comments from the member from The Battlefords on what a great speech that was, and if you haven't got a chance to hear it, that you should go back and check that speech out. Not going to give you another standing ovation for that speech, but it was a great speech.

Anyways, the member from Athabasca spoke of his parents, Mr. Speaker, and what a positive effect they had in the community. And I echo that, Mr. Speaker. My father and mother were . . . I was very fortunate to grow up in the home that I did. And one of the funny things my father told me when I was young is, he said — because I must have screwed a lot of things up back then — he said, if there's one thing you better not screw up, that's your last name. And you know, that's really a thing about the way my parents were. My dad, one of the other things he had said is when he dies he wanted what he had done or what he was doing in the community to be . . . that's how he wanted to be remembered. And I'm just forever grateful for what my parents had taught me.

It has been almost a year and a half since I got the honour of serving as the representative for Saskatoon Riversdale. And I really look forward to getting back to the doors this spring and summer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and getting a little more of a pulse than I've already been getting talking to constituents.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we do as representatives of our constituencies is an absolute honour. And to do a good job takes hard work from many levels. Our staff in this legislature have been incredibly helpful — whether it's a speech we're doing in the House, something in our constituency, helping us with a

concern for someone in our riding — the staff in the building and in the ministers' offices always have our backs, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they deserve recognition. So to all of the staff in this building, thank you so much.

Another group of volunteers that needs to be mentioned, Mr. Speaker, is our constituency association board members. In my case, this was a group who for many years had the goal of having Saskatchewan Party representation in Riversdale. And in 2020, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we did it. And here I am. So to all the volunteers spending countless hours, setting up meetings, offering up space at their home for meetings, coming up with new innovative ideas and helping implement them in the riding. Currently they are planning multiple fundraisers in different parts in my constituency for the spring and summer. So to all that serve and have served, my sincere thank yous.

I also want to acknowledge Robyn, who is always by my side in this venture, my kids, my friends around me, first of all to put up with me, but seriously, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for their understanding, their care and support in this great career of representing the people of Riversdale.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, now that we meet in groups again, it has been my pleasure to be at and speak at many events and meet so many great people, being part of community association meetings and speaking with many passionate residents of Riversdale and surrounding communities. Mr. Deputy Speaker, over this last year and a half I've had the great pleasure of working with what I would say is the greatest group of colleagues in government, and I feel blessed. And more importantly, I've been lucky enough to get to know a lot of them personally. One common denominator is the care and compassion for the people of this province.

Many of my colleagues share my passion for community service and giving people a hand up wherever and whenever it's needed. Mr. Deputy Speaker, being a politician, one of the hardest things for me to do — and I know some of my colleagues would agree — is to tell people what we do in the communities, to help understand why we are best suited for the job and should have their vote.

In politics it is well known to get a picture whenever we are at events, feeding the homeless, providing Christmas for a family that would not otherwise have such an opportunity, or whatever way we choose to help. And yet, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I see this over and over again with my colleagues. We don't get that picture. We rarely post on social media. We do these things because they are the right thing to do. And we do not want recognition for our efforts, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we want our communities to all grow together and succeed.

So to you and through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to the province of Saskatchewan, these are my colleagues. These are the ones you elected. And from my perspective, you should be very proud of your choices.

I want to speak a little bit to the budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and how we're back on track. As I speak with constituents, one of the things I've been hearing a lot is about surgeries. And we have certainly had some challenges in this area, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but we have a plan. I know this has been said in this House

before; however it bears repeating. When the Saskatchewan Party had the privilege of forming government in 2007, we were left with the longest surgical wait times in the country. This was a major priority for the Saskatchewan Party government and we did it. And we became one of the provinces with the lowest surgical wait times in the country, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And it doesn't seem to matter where I am — with friends, family, at a restaurant, filling up my truck with fuel — I love to talk to people and find out how they are feeling about how the government is doing. And this is what a surgeon in Saskatoon said to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He said that Saskatchewan Party government did a great job in 2007 when they formed the government, and he said he had the confidence in us to do this again.

And as I said before, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we recognize there's challenges, but we have a plan. And what is our plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Well I'm glad you asked. The plan is to kick-start it with a \$21.6 million investment into government-paid private surgeries with the goal to alleviate the backlog and get back to a three-month wait time by 2025.

We have \$1.5 million to develop recruitment, including relocation programs from the Philippines. This is first of a two-year program with plans of bringing 300 health care workers to Saskatchewan. We have three and a half million dollars for physician recruitment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, twelve and a half million for 11 new intensive care beds, just the beginning of our strategy to add 31 ICU beds by 2025.

We have expanded our nurse training seats by 150, making it easier to train our kids and our grandchildren in this province and providing jobs for them, again here in this province. This is part of our growth plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by growing our population to 1.4 million by 2030 and adding 100,000 jobs.

I will speak about this a little later in my speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but on this side of the House we work hard to keep our youth in this province and growing our province, not sending them off to a different province like the previous NDP government.

[16:15]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP opposition say over and over again we don't have a plan and yet here it is with our growth plan out to 2030. When did the NDP ever have a plan? Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP campaign platform was not even costed properly. On that side of the House they use, I don't know, NDP math, I guess. They missed 4 billion in their campaign platform, which explains why their numbers don't add up. Maybe they're under the same understanding as their new leader, Justin, that budgets just balance themselves.

Our health budget this year is up, is 6.8 billion, an increase of 4.4 per cent. I'm a numbers guy, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is an increase of over 277 million. This increases supports for our seniors, the ones that built this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with a \$17 million increase, supporting our seniors. An increase in home care services. We've got new care homes being built, Mr. Deputy Speaker, amazing things on that front. Quadrupling the seniors' income plan from \$90 to eventually \$360, which was

under the former NDP government not increased in 16 years, Mr. Deputy Speaker — 16 years without an increase. We have committed to hiring an additional 300 continuing care aides or CCAs. The last total, we are now at 225 new CCAs and the final 75 will be funded next year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, something very exciting in my community's coming soon — and actually in the member from Walsh Acres — are the urgent care centres, one in Saskatoon and one in Regina, part of a healthier Saskatchewan, while taking some of the pressure off our emergency departments. Mr. Deputy Speaker, they will also have access to mental health and addictions services at these centres, and these urgent care centres will be open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They will provide urgent care with a wide range of services that are not life threatening. And I for one am very excited about these initiatives, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I've worked with youth for many years in many different capacities, over 30 years actually — I quit saying how many years because it determines my age — but the mental health of our youth is critical. And first I have to say to all the educators, the school counsellors, the counsellors, the people in our education system, and of course our Education minister, thank you for keeping our children in schools for most of the last two years, keeping them safe. Because the physical interaction, Mr. Speaker, is critical for our children and our youth's mental health and well-being.

This record budget for mental health this year is \$470 million, an increase of more than 7 per cent over last year's record investments. This includes \$8 million for targeted mental health and addictions services. This includes counselling and treatments and \$2.1 million for addictions spaces in the province, which we absolutely need. We have 225 locations and 76 communities across this province. This includes 71 pharmacies as well as fixed and mobile harm-reduction sites providing take-home naloxone kits. Several of these sites are in my riding in the west side of Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. And this is since the program . . . Or since the program was started in 2015 over 29,000 take-home kits have been distributed with more than 6,800 confirmed to have been used to temporarily reverse the effects of an overdose. We have expanded the take-home drug checking strips to 30 locations to help curb the number of potential overdoses.

Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago we introduced Michael's Place, which I did a member's statement on, which is a new program that will provide high-risk youth with a supportive, non-judgmental, semi-independent, home-like environment with supports to address mental health and addictions issues while preparing them for their transition to independence.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are great programs, and I'm so excited that our government is taking initiatives like this. In this program, Mr. Speaker, they will have 24-hour access to services to ensure their physical, emotional, spiritual, cultural, and developmental needs are met. We also have health buses coming soon, Mr. Speaker. There is just so many things coming on this list I will run out of time, so I will keep going.

Mr. Speaker, our education budget is \$3.8 billion this year, up over 47.2 million. Mr. Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Eastview stated last week that our education system was facing

cuts, and yet we have increased spending by \$47.2 million. Mr. Speaker, this is just more NDP math where the numbers just don't add up.

Since 2007, Mr. Speaker, we have built and are building 57 new schools, one of which is in Riversdale, Mr. Speaker, which will be a welcome upgrade for the school board and the kids of Riversdale. \$309.6 million of funding for early learning, including federal-provincial early years agreements that, of that money, \$4.3 million will create 6,100 new child care spaces, 28,000 spaces over the next five years, Mr. Speaker.

One thing I've heard several times is need for more educational assistants or EAs, and this budget has \$7 million for an additional 200 educational assistants, which is very welcome news for our province. So I'm not sure what they're referring to when the NDP say "cuts." Surely it's not the ribbon cutting that they're opposed to, because on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we love cutting ribbons, cutting ribbons to all these new schools. How about 28 major renovations to schools? And now with the recently added minor capital funds projects, there's maintenance and preventative maintenance that don't fit in the normal capital project model, Mr. Speaker. Now we're going to be doing those projects as well.

We are back on track with jobs, Mr. Speaker. In our growth plan to 2030, we had the goal of creating 100,000 new jobs. And we had 30,000 jobs last year, Mr. Speaker, and a great start again this year.

Our finances are back on track as well, lowering the debt by over 2 billion this year — over 2 billion, Mr. Speaker — with a positive outlook on getting back to balanced budget by '26-27.

Mr. Speaker, going to highways for a minute, our highways were terrible, and I've heard this before from other members today. But we were to fix our own potholes back in those days, Mr. Speaker, and that's just not acceptable. Since 2007 we had a plan to make our highways right, and that's also in our growth plan, Mr. Speaker. Since 2007 we've improved more than 18 000 kilometres. And I think the member from Moose Jaw North explained that very well in the distances of what 18 000 kilometres actually looks like. There's a plan to grow . . . In our growth plan, Mr. Speaker, there's another 10 000 kilometres of highways getting fixed by 2030, over 450 million this year in over 1000 kilometres of highways. There's just so many good things in this budget, Mr. Speaker, and I'm just very happy to be supporting this budget.

I'm going to close by saying to the residents of Riversdale, thank you for allowing me to be your voice in the legislature. I will continue to advocate for you and to make sure that your voice is heard. And I agree with my colleague from Walsh Acres who said the future is so bright under this government we have to wear shades. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and enter into this important budget debate. As you know, the government's annual budget is not just a document that outlines revenues and expenses. It's supposed to lay out a vision,

a plan for the coming year and beyond. It's supposed to tell people of this province how the government will be delivering for them today and into the future. Simply put, Mr. Speaker, as already been said here today, budgets are about choices. And given the state of the world, the strange and the challenging times that we faced over the last couple of years and the hard realities that Saskatchewan people are facing, this budget is arguably more important for Saskatchewan people than has been the case for some time.

People were looking to that government to get this budget right and to provide some much-needed hope and much-needed relief. Instead, Mr. Speaker, once again the Sask Party government is making Saskatchewan people pay for the Saskatchewan Party government's failures. From cover to cover in this year's budget, there's no sign, no sign of the help and the relief that Saskatchewan people were looking for. No plan, no real plan to deal with the mental health concerns plaguing communities right across this province. No help for those most in need. No help for those on the front lines, Mr. Speaker. And it's a budget that just does the bare minimum, passing those federal dollars through for health care, child care, and funding for First Nations.

Mr. Speaker, what the Sask Party government is serving up instead are higher fees, higher fees for hunting and fishing and a whole lot more; higher taxes on a whole list of things, including concerts, movies, even Rider games. And some of those, some of those areas were hardest hit by the pandemic. And some of those activities are the very things that Saskatchewan people were so looking forward to this summer, Mr. Speaker. They've put a tax on it.

This has become a troubling pattern from this tired Sask Party government, a government that seems to have given up on listening to the people who put them here, the people that they are meant to represent. And they seem to be either unwilling or unable to get the help to Saskatchewan workers and Saskatchewan families that they've been asking for.

Mr. Speaker, I hear the members opposite shouting and complaining. They're a little more upset than usual about hearing the truth, so allow me to go into a little more detail. Over the past while, I've been travelling all over the province. In the past few weeks alone, I've met with people in Emerald Park, of course here in Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Melfort, Moose Jaw, and that's not counting virtual meetings with people right across the province.

In fact this whole opposition team, Mr. Speaker, has been doing what they're meant to do. They've been out talking to people ahead of the budget, checking in, checking in with their priorities. And it's something that I would suggest the members opposite might have wanted to do as well.

No matter where you are in this province, Mr. Speaker, people are telling us that it's been a tough two years. You can see it in people's faces. And honestly, you can see it on the streets of every city that I've visited, Mr. Speaker. It's been difficult and life is getting harder. Of course the pandemic has been hard for everyone, but with recent events, with the invasion of Ukraine, it's been devastating for everyone. And some people of course have been hit harder than others by that disturbing act.

It's disturbing to all of us mentally, Mr. Speaker, and watching the price of gas and groceries go up . . . I heard today on the news, Mr. Speaker, the cost of a loaf of bread has gone up 35 per cent in the last year alone. That's making things even harder for people in this province. People were looking to this government for help, for them to step up, even just a little bit. And with the big windfall from record potash, Mr. Speaker, this government had a chance to do that, to provide some actual relief to the people in this province.

[16:30]

Instead, what did they do while people are struggling to make ends meet, while the price of gasoline and diesel are going through the roof, while inflation is making things harder and harder for people to pay their bills? As my colleague said, my colleague from Regina University, we have a crisis of affordability in this province, Mr. Speaker, and that's not overstating it.

But you wouldn't know it if you were to hear from the members opposite. They do not seem interested in even acknowledging the difficulty that people are facing, let alone interested in actually doing something to address it. In fact, Mr. Speaker, what did we see? Well they dug back into their 2017 playbook and they decided to make life even more expensive for people in this province, if you can imagine.

Again that Sask Party MLA doesn't like to hear this, but let me remind them of the facts. Those members, all of those members on that side, are defending a budget that increases the agricultural property tax, increases residential property tax, increases commercial and industrial property tax, increases resource property tax, increases tobacco and vape product tax, increases hunting licence fees, increases fishing licence fees, increases SaskPower rates. It goes on, Mr. Speaker: increases Crown land rental rate for outfitters, ecotourism operators, and access roads; increases gravel pit permit fees, Mr. Speaker — this is a very long list — increases cottage land lease fees.

And they've also, Mr. Speaker . . . That's not all again. They've hiked the mill rate, which has led to an increase in education property tax which could and should, Mr. Speaker, lead to a very important investment that I know school boards and children and parents right around this province were looking for, except that, no. While they took in an additional \$20 million in education property tax, they left \$6 million — a \$6 million increase alone, Mr. Speaker, to help school divisions, to help teachers deal with the impact of the last three disrupted school years. Mr. Speaker, that is as disappointing . . . It's actually shameful, Mr. Speaker. But I at this point should not be surprised at that government's inability to do what is needed in our kids' classrooms.

Mr. Speaker, on top of all of that, there's still more. The Sask Party also added provincial sales tax. Now this is an old playbook. We've seen them add it to children's clothing. They've added PST to construction labour. But this time they've added it to concerts, shows, movie theatres, museums, zoos, historical sites, fairs, rodeo, trade shows, arts and craft shows, conferences, seminars, gym memberships, golf memberships, curling fees, hunting guides, fishing guides and, Mr. Speaker, sporting events, including the Riders. It seems like a tax on the summer, a tax on fun.

And they actually, Mr. Speaker, seem to be proud of themselves over there. We've heard them crowing all day, just so excited about what they've done. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd suggest that they get out of their talking points and go out into the community, because people are already talking about this budget and the 32 fee and tax hikes that this government has imposed on the people of this province. This is not the budget the people wanted, and it's certainly not the budget the people needed.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is not a partisan issue. We've heard the reaction come in from all sectors. We've been connecting with people all over the province, NDP members for sure, but people who have not voted for the NDP for a long time, maybe even ever. They are upset with this government and this budget. And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, there's a growing number of people right across Saskatchewan who are worried about the direction that this government is heading in — the divisiveness, the short-sightedness and, Mr. Speaker, on full display here today, the arrogance. They see a government simply that has lost its way.

It's not just about the Sask Party hiking taxes while wasting tax dollars either, Mr. Speaker. People are tired of the Sask Party attacking public health care and public health care workers, even during a pandemic. They're tired of a government that arrogantly cuts funding for schools and services for children, seniors, and the most vulnerable. They're tired of a premier and a cabinet and a caucus that do nothing for people who are worried about where they will find their next paycheque or how they will make ends meet. And they are tired of a tired premier who, instead of looking for solutions, goes around stoking division at every turn.

Mr. Speaker, that is not who we are as Saskatchewan people, and people are tired of that behaviour from that government. People right across this province want to go all in on working together for a brighter future for this province. Still, Mr. Speaker, in this budget and in their speeches in and out of the legislature, it's clear that that government wants it all to be about conflict — environment versus jobs, urban versus rural, social justice versus security.

But the truth is, Mr. Speaker, we can't have any of those without the others. While the Premier spends another year talking about his secret and magical climate change plan that he will announce who knows when, he has forced Saskatchewan people to live with the worst of both worlds. Emissions are going up and so are prices, and that is on the Premier. He should know that any plan that ignores working people is doomed to fail, and any government strategy that ignores the reality of climate change is bad for all of us. Mr. Speaker, both of those statements are true.

The people of this province want a government with a vision, one ready to make the hard decision and to do the hard work to actually move the dial. They're looking for an inspiring government centred on the conviction that we are not divided, Mr. Speaker, that we are stronger together. In short, Mr. Speaker, people of this province are looking for change.

And I know some . . . Maybe members opposite forgot a very long time ago who they're working for, and you can sure hear it in here today, Mr. Speaker. They're quite pleased with themselves and have no idea what the realities are that people in this province are facing. They answer, Mr. Speaker. They're happy to read their talking points and answer to the Premier's

office. And I'm afraid that they don't think about what Saskatchewan people are facing.

Even though the tired Sask Party has given up on them, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people have not given up on a brighter future for this province or in the belief that by working together, by looking out for each other, we can build a future that benefits all of us, not just a few, a future that includes good jobs, clean air, and water, Mr. Speaker, strong communities, and more opportunity and equity and justice for everyone in this province — everyone.

In Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we are known for punching above our weight. We're known for looking out for our neighbours and finding solutions to the challenges we face with co-operation, with pragmatism and good old hard work, Mr. Speaker, not the division that that government tries to pitch to us.

Mr. Speaker, Tommy Douglas didn't just say, dream no little dreams. Oh, yes. He didn't just say, Mr. Speaker, dream no little dreams. He and New Democrat governments after him, they made those dreams a reality. Saskatchewan people and New Democrats built public hospitals, medicare, Crowns, supported industries, created jobs.

And, Mr. Speaker, members opposite won't want to be reminded of this, but it was New Democrats who cleaned up after years of conservative corruption, Mr. Speaker.

We brought dental care directly to our kids' schools. We made pre-kindergarten a reality. We brought in the SINP. Mr. Speaker, now there's a list to be proud of, not the list that they've got, Mr. Speaker. It was New Democrats in this province who literally paved the roads and turned on the lights right across this province, Mr. Speaker.

And you know how we did this? Not by dividing people. Not by turning people against each other and neighbour against neighbour. We did it by building, by bringing people together and building for the future, Mr. Speaker. And we need to do it again. That's what Saskatchewan people are calling for, no matter where they live, no matter how long they or their family have called this province or these lands home. And yes, Mr. Speaker, no matter who they voted for in the last election.

Mr. Speaker, in a short couple of years, when the next election comes around, the Saskatchewan NDP will be ready to deliver just that. But frankly, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan shouldn't have to wait that long. The members opposite, they've been shaking their heads. They've been self-congratulating. They've been clapping for themselves as is often the case.

But here they have an opportunity today. I'm going to present the opportunity. If they want to show that they also think that people deserve better than a budget that hikes taxes and makes life more expensive for everyone, that people deserve a better budget than a plan for no plan for affordability, and better than a government that takes a victory lap as if they were the ones who had anything to do with the increased resource royalties and makes no plan for when they drop again, Mr. Speaker, they don't even have to wait. I encourage them to speak up, actually speak up for your constituents and support the amendment put forth by my colleague, the member for Regina Rosemont, when the time

comes.

Mr. Speaker, that's what I will be doing, and I will not be voting in favour of this tired budget from that tired government. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melfort.

Mr. Goudy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great thing to be able to get up and speak to a budget, I got to say. Four years ago we got the member from Kindersley, the member from Swift Current, and myself. We all came in four years ago. And I was looking at the three amigos. Looking back I was asking somebody who's been on treasury board a long time, how much was the budget when I came into government? And so \$14.6 billion was our budget back then, and, you know, to think 17.2 billion today. And I was thinking, wow, \$17.2 billion to serve the people of Saskatchewan. That's a pretty exciting thing. Lots of money there for a lot of things.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I'm probably not the greatest person to be on treasury board, but they didn't know me before I came here, so they allowed me a stint to be on treasury board. And I got to learn a lot of things about how Saskatchewan functions. And when I was on there, you begin to see the amount of work that is done by not only our Minister of Finance but her whole team.

And I learned an awful lot from our Minister of Finance, and I just want to speak for her that, you know, we say "back on track" and would sort of insinuate that at one point we were on track. And I like to joke with the member from Kindersley here. Once they realized I wasn't the greatest treasury board member, they took me off and they put him on. But you know, when we handed it off, we worked very hard. And actually that year the Minister of Finance and her team put together a balanced budget.

And we were all so excited. There it is. It's balanced. It's ready to go. And then something happened and COVID entered the scene, and it was all blown to smithereens, Mr. Speaker. I don't even think we presented. It was a tough . . . But looking at how we've come through this last two years has been pretty exciting to see. So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say to the member from Humboldt, I admire her strength and her capacity to lead the province in a great way, and I think all of us in this province should be appreciative to what they've done for us.

Mr. Speaker, one person I want to thank today is my wife, along with my family. As I said, I'm maybe not the greatest budget person but, Mr. Speaker, I just . . . Some people wondered, how in the world would Todd ever get bound to be the representative from Melfort? But I'll just read to you a little bit of why.

Mr. Speaker, this is the lady that supports me. Yesterday I went to leave from my house, and you know, I'm not always the greatest father or husband. And for some reason, yesterday I wasn't having a very . . . So for some reason, I figured I'd give a pre-budget, Goudy family budget speech before I left the house. So I gathered my kids all around, and my wife was there. And they kind of got not the greatest tone or timing. Here Dad's leaving for four days; why not just, you know, read him the riot act when it comes to spending money? And so I wasn't very kind and thoughtful. And I just want to read to you what my wife sent

me this morning. This is the lady that has made . . . if I ever accomplish anything in life, this is the one behind it. She says this:

[16:45]

Praying for you this morning, sweetie. Hope you're feeling encouraged and that God would give you the words for your speech today. Good thing you had a practice run giving your family a 20-minute budget speech last night.

And then, Mr. Speaker, she gave me a smoochy face, two prayer hands, and a heart. Such an idiot and yet I've got a wife that would encourage me and kids that would forgive me. Mr. Speaker, you know, I just want to say thank you for my wife.

Another person that's a huge support is a girl that I grew up with, you know. She is now the CA in the Melfort constituency, and I still believe the most important thing we ever do as MLAs is pick the right constituency . . . And so she, Peggy Gordon, I wouldn't let her quit. She was there for Rod Gantefer and Kevin Phillips, and then she stuck on to help me learn the ropes. But she did finally resign, and I'm very thankful for JoAnne Jago to be filling in that position. So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say how much I appreciate all the support that we have by our CAs.

You know, I look at getting back on track, and you know, I mentioned Rod Gantefer and Kevin Phillips. We also have had some pretty good representatives of our constituency in the past. There is another fellow, Grant Hodgins, he was the MLA for the Conservatives. And then there was a really good lady, too, before Grant. Carol Carson, actually, she was the NDP . . . but I don't know if she'd vote for you guys. I think she might have voted for us this last round, Mr. Speaker.

But anyways we've had some pretty good MLAs over the years. And I asked Grant Hodgins, you know, Grant, if you were to give me some advice heading down to become an MLA. And so he was then, he worked at an auto dealership in Melfort. And so I went and saw him, and so he said, I'll give you five lessons. And so I said, well okay, when do you want me to? So I showed up for five lessons from Grant Hodgins.

And I'm so glad I did, Mr. Speaker, because it wasn't that long ago — two and a half years ago Grant Hodgins had a stroke. Now I went in to see Grant Hodgins in the City Hospital in Saskatoon and he was sitting on the bed, as excited as you could ever see a man to be. And I walked through the door, and he was so happy. And I thought, wow, I thought he'd had a stroke. And I said, "Grant, how are you doing? I heard . . ." And he came off that bed, and he said, "Ya, ya, ya, ya." And he kept saying the same words over and over again. And I started to realize, oh boy. Like he . . . If you looked at his eyes, he was trying to communicate, but his mouth wouldn't say what was going on on the inside.

And I just, honestly, my heart broke to look at this great guy. But I phoned him last night, Mr. Speaker. He has been a part of a group that they started two years ago in Melfort called EA, and it's Emotions Anonymous, to help people get their mental health and addictions back on line. And I was at that a few times, and I saw Grant. Do you know what Grant says at the end of every meeting? Everybody else goes around, and when I was there that night, I said, "Hi there, my name's Todd. And, you know, I don't

have any power over my own emotions." And when you get to get to Grant at the end of EA, he'll say, "We're getting a little bit better. We're getting a little bit better." And every day, Mr. Speaker, Grant Hodgins gets a little bit better. He's getting back on track.

That guy, I just want to share a little bit about what he said to me, though. He said, "Todd," he said, "the bureaucrat is your friend," because he kind of . . . I might have had a bad attitude towards bureaucracy. I don't know if I might have, and he might have had a sense for that, and he said, "So Todd, I just want you to realize that the bureaucrats are your friends."

So Mr. Speaker, we had a balanced budget and it all got blown to smithereens. Now we're back on track. And the beautiful thing is, Mr. Speaker, we don't spend that \$17.2 billion. We set that aside, and it's to be used appropriately across the province to serve the people. And we have these bureaucrats that work with that money to apply it to the best benefit of the people in this province.

Just one of our bureaucrats I wanted to highlight. I don't know if everybody . . . Greg Miller. Does everybody know Greg? Like honestly, there's a guy you want for a brother-in-law, like the member from . . . He's the kind of guy that is such a genuine lover of people. And so Greg Miller . . . I needed to have a meeting.

BHP — I don't know if you heard, but they're spending \$12 billion in our constituency. I might have said that a few times, but you know, unbelievable what they're doing. And, Mr. Speaker, so BHP, they're deciding where they're going to spend their next investment. And it was between Saskatchewan . . . There was a few other places around the world where they could have chosen to spend their money, but thank God they chose Saskatchewan to put that money.

You know, \$1.8 billion will be added to the GDP of that area, and they've chosen 80 kilometres radius around the mine there to work with those towns. And so some of the BHP executives had said, you know, Todd, is there somebody in the government that we can work together with? Because we want to be able to work with the towns and the RMs [rural municipality] of this 80 . . . Those people have a heart. They don't want to cause any troubles. You know, you're spending 8 billion, or you know, it's not like you're causing troubles. But they wanted to say, we want to make sure that everything goes well for the communities around the mine. So I was like, wow.

So you know what you get to do? You go to talk to the Minister of Government Relations, hey? But he sits beside me. He might have a couple snow-boarding kids. I don't know if we're allowed to say their last names, but we're not allowed to say that. But I sit beside him in caucus, and you know, he's kind of helped me through life since I've been a politician here and guided me along the way. He knows where the minefields are and he's helped me avoid a few of them.

But I went to him and said, you know, can I approach your deputy minister and can we ask? So that deputy minister has put together a regional community development plan. So we've got the RM councillors and reeves and the town mayors and councils, and they're going to sit down with some of our bureaucrats and figure

out, how can we make sure that this whole development . . . We're going to have 600 new jobs in the area. There's going to be \$1.8 billion of GDP added to the area. There's a lot of changes and growth pains that are going to go on in that Jansen mine over the next number of years.

And we have bureaucrats, Mr. Speaker, to work through that. We have front-line people who are at, you know, the point of the spear for the government's \$17.2 billion. And you know, to kind of highlight how much we can trust the bureaucrats and the people that we pass on our vision to, to make it happen . . . Because you give out \$17.2 billion, and as Grant Hodgins would say, those bureaucrats are your friends. Do we trust them? And I'd say, yes, we can trust these guys and girls. They take that money and they apply it to the best of their abilities.

Mr. Speaker, when it was back on track, I remembered an evening of my life. It actually changed my life, and I think of this fellow so often. I was driving back from . . . Our member from Prince Albert Northcote, she and I got to knock a lot of doors. I think she was getting tired of me. "Todd, are you sure you're counting?" Oh boy. But anyways, we'd go and knock on doors together and it was so much fun, for me anyways. And we get to meet a lot of people in Prince Albert.

And one night I was going back, and I hadn't been home for a while. And I'd gone from . . . I don't know where I was, maybe Regina or something. I went straight to P.A. And my wife puts up with me a lot but I was thinking, okay, I'm going to get home. So I got in the car. It was getting dark. And I'm driving back to Melfort, and here's somebody hitchhiking along the highway. And so I pulled over, and he was the most polite hitchhiker I've ever seen in my life. Like I pulled over, and you know, he kind of ran up to the car and he looks through the window, and I looked at him and he looked at me. And I was just like, what? Are you going to get in or what are you doing? So he was just so polite. I said, hop in, hop in. So he opens the door and he says hello. You know, I've never probably met such a sweet person.

He got into that car, and so we're driving down the highway. And I said, so where are you headed? He says, well I'm going to Birch Hills. Oh, going to Birch Hills. Well yeah, I'm from Melfort. We used to play basketball against Birch Hills. Maybe he knows the Rasks, or who knows who. Hey, so who do you know in Birch Hills? Nobody. Well why are you going to Birch Hills? Well I'm not going to Birch Hills. Well where are you going? I'm going to Saskatoon. Hmm. Well I think you're on the wrong road.

So we're driving along and I'm thinking I haven't been home to see my wife in a long time. So we turned the car around and I said, you know what? We were driving back to P.A. together and I was talking to him. And so what are you going to Saskatoon for? Well you know, I can't live at home anymore. The guy must've been 30. He was in his 30s. He can't live at home anymore. He explains his story. Yeah, and tells me, so I got to move out. And he figured, I'd probably be better off in Saskatoon. So I said, well who do you know in Saskatoon? Well nobody.

So I started crying because I'm listening to this guy talk. And I'm looking the other way out the driver's window and I'm thinking, who in the world is this guy? He is so kind and he's not mad at the world, not mad at anything. He's going to Saskatoon and it's

raining now. We're back in P.A. and it's raining. And I'm thinking, oh my goodness.

So we get to P.A. and I say, you know what, Ryan? Would you like a hamburger or would you like something to eat before . . . Oh sure, I'd love a . . . So he reaches into his sock and he pulled out \$15, and he reached out while I'm driving. So what are you doing? No. He says, what's that? He said, you were going to buy me a hamburger. And I said, you know what? So we went and got a . . . Then we went and grabbed a blanket and a rain jacket and a backpack. And you know, when he got that blanket, it was just like it was the greatest thing. He grabbed that blanket. We hopped in the car and I thought, oh my goodness, you know what? It's raining. Let's just start driving to Saskatoon together.

So we started driving to Saskatoon together and we're talking, and at some point the rain quit and you look up and you can finally see the stars. And I said, Ryan, you know what? I haven't been home. I got to get home. And so I stopped the car and I pulled out and I looked out and I thought, you know what? I'm going to hitchhike with you a little bit here and we'll pull somebody over and we'll get you a ride to Saskatoon. Would you think anybody'd pull over? Like my goodness, the two of us, I'm trying to get somebody to stop. Yeah, nobody would stop.

So finally he said, you know, Todd, I'll be okay. So on Highway 11 there, we gave each other a big hug and we prayed together, and that's the last . . . I gave him my cell number and he says, you know what? I'll phone you one day if I get a phone. He didn't even have a phone. I was just like, Ryan . . . So I turned around in my car and I started and there was Ryan going down the highway, who knows what time of the night. And I just had to pull over and I just started wailing. I was just crying. Honestly it changed my life. And my son phones me from . . . He's working up, actually in the North there, in a good friend's riding. And you know, he said, Dad, what's the matter? And I shared, you know what? I just met the sweetest guy in the world and I should have taken him home, but I sent him to Saskatoon.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I've thought about that guy so many times. And you know what? There's some bureaucrat somewhere that's looking after guys who can't stay in the house with their mom anymore and had to go to Saskatoon. And in the middle of the night, he'll show up.

And I asked the Minister of Social Services, you know, what would have happened to Ryan? You know, that \$17.2 billion allows guys like Ryan to make it through in this world, Mr. Speaker. Those bureaucrats, those front-line people, all those CBOs [community-based organization], all the things that this province does, the 30,000 jobs. You know what, Mr. Speaker? The first thing I thought of was, maybe Ryan's going to get one of those jobs — 30,000 jobs. You know, maybe he's going to . . . There's going to definitely be people in his life who are going to care for him.

So, Mr. Speaker, you know what? The bureaucrats are your friends. You know, the opposition are your friends. The government's your friends. We're all working together, you know, to be able to serve the Ryans of this world. So I hope as we move forward, because we've got \$17.2 billion, you know, I think there are some positive things that we can look at. And you know, there's some confidence that when you leave a guy

hitchhiking and he's on his way to Saskatoon or Regina or Melfort, Saskatchewan, you know, there's things that are there to help support them.

So you know, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad we're going to spend this much money and I'm glad we have the Finance minister that we do. And I'm going to vote along with her and support the budget, Mr. Speaker. And I hope that the people across the way will find some encouragement in that, you know, the amount of money that we're putting forward so that we can serve the people of this great province. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The time has expired. This House now stands recessed till 7 p.m.

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

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

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

Hon. Bronwyn Eyre
Minister of Energy and Resources

Hon. Donna Harpauer
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Minister of Finance

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
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Minister of Immigration and Career Training
Minister Responsible for Innovation
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Hon. Everett Hindley
Minister of Mental Health and Addictions,
Seniors and Rural and Remote Health

Hon. Warren Kaeding
Minister of Environment

Hon. Gene Makowsky
Minister of Advanced Education

Hon. David Marit
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Hon. Paul Merriman
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Minister of Crown Investments Corporation
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
Minister Responsible for
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Saskatchewan Government Insurance
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Minister Responsible for
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Hon. Jim Reiter
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