



SECOND SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
AND
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)
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authority of
The Hon. Randy Weekes
Speaker



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
2nd Session — 29th Legislature

Lieutenant Governor — His Honour the Honourable Russ Mirasty, S.O.M., M.S.M.

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

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

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

Clerks-at-the-Table

Clerk — Gregory A. Putz

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

Deputy Clerk — Iris Lang

Clerk Assistant — Kathy Burianyk

Sergeant-at-Arms — Sean Darling

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Legislative Assembly are available
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The Speaker: — Pursuant to section 14(3) and in accordance with section 28 of *The Advocate for Children and Youth Act*, I table a special report from the Advocate for Children and Youth entitled *Desperately Waiting*.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request 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. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In your gallery today I would like to introduce a number of representatives from the office of the Advocate for Children and Youth who are seated in the Speaker's gallery. And I will introduce each of them individually and I apologize, Mr. Speaker, if I mess up on any of the names.

Lisa Broda, who is the Advocate for Children and Youth, is seated in the front row there, Mr. Speaker. Joining Lisa are a number of other individuals: Marci Macomber, Connie Braun, Karen Topolinski, Adedoyin Ajayi, Courtney Carlberg, Cheylene Turenne, Jonathan Keens-Douglas, Vanessa Neale, Jordan Raymond, Chris Litke. As well as two representatives from the Youth Advisory Council who are, I understand, are here as well today: Evan Davidson and Alexis Epp.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to extend my gratitude, my thanks to the advocate and her team and her office, as well as the members of the Youth Advisory Council, the front-line workers and, most importantly, all of those who participated as part of the report that has been tabled in the Assembly today and who lent their voices to the report.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I would ask all members of this Assembly to welcome these guests to their Assembly today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming Lisa Broda and all of her officials and staff who have joined with her today. And I'd like to join with the minister in thanking them for all of the work that they do

speaking on behalf of Saskatchewan's most important citizens, our children and our youth, many of whom don't have the ability or the opportunity to speak on their own behalf.

So thank you for doing that incredibly important work for the future of our province. I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming Lisa and her team to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Mr. Bradshaw: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to 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. Bradshaw: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand here today to introduce a group of individuals representing the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies-Saskatchewan, or ACEC-SK. They are here today as part of an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] day. ACEC-SK comprises more than 60 companies with approximately 1,650 employees throughout Saskatchewan.

In the gallery today are Beverly MacLeod, Jeff Horan, Eleah Gallagher, Marc Bourassa, Katelyn Sebastian, Michael Walker, Leon Botham, Nick Wright, Brett LaRoche, and Dwayne — excuse me if I don't get this last name right — Gelowitz.

As consulting engineers, ACEC's members' firms are responsible for designing and building much of our public infrastructure. The work they do influences virtually every aspect of economic, social, and environmental spheres in our province. Our government looks to deliver on projects from this year's budget and on the aspirations of our growth plan. This group of people and the companies they represent will be contributing and planning and building the infrastructure that will see Saskatchewan continue to grow.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join with me in recognizing ACEC-SK for their contribution to our province, and I wish them well on their MLA day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Ritchie: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to take this opportunity to join with the Minister for Highways in welcoming to the west gallery the members from ACEC that are representing here today their sector. As a fellow engineer, certainly I value greatly and appreciate all the work that they do ensuring that the infrastructure being built in our province is done in a thoughtful way and relying on the resources and the expertise of the people here in the province. And so I welcome you to your gallery. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all members of the gallery, I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce some of Saskatchewan's most dedicated volunteers, the Ministry of Agriculture's crop reporters. They are seated in your gallery to watch today's proceedings.

Crop reporters are an integral part of Saskatchewan agriculture. They are the eyes and ears of what is happening in the Saskatchewan farming community. From seeding through harvest, these individuals take time out of their very busy schedules to provide valuable information on the status of rainfall and moisture conditions; seeding, hay, and harvesting progress; pest pressures; crop and hay yields; and livestock feed supplies and pasture conditions.

The information provided by crop reporters is used to create the Ministry of Agriculture's weekly *Crop Report*. And the *Crop Report* is one of the most important publications in government. Many people, organizations and institutions both locally and internationally, rely on this information to make business decisions. As we know, Mr. Speaker, 2021 was a challenging year for many producers in the province, making the *Crop Report* more important than ever. I'd like to thank these individuals once again for providing valuable information on a consistent basis even when times are tough.

Each year we celebrate those volunteers who have offered their time for 25, 30, 35, 40, and 45 years to the *Crop Report*, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize each of the volunteer crop reporters here today. As I announce their names, I ask that each crop reporter and their spouse stand to be recognized by the legislature.

For 25 years of service: Gary and Shirley Becker from the RM [rural municipality] of Glenside, Larry Hawrysh from the RM of Redberry, and Bernadette Poppleton from the RM of Hillsdale.

For 30 years of service: Warren Volke from the RM of Happy Valley, Grant Hale from the RM of Brock, Tim Clifford from the RM of Victory, and Wes Black from the RM of Porcupine.

For 35 years of service, Bette and Dennis Reese from the RM of Francis, Walter Sullivan from the RM of Milton, Dale Meier from the RM of Progress, and Valerie Muller from the RM of Frenchman Butte.

For 40 years of service, Mr. Speaker, Ed Datchko from the RM of Ituna Bon Accord; Jim Hornford from the RM of Elfros; and Allan Hardy, in memoriam, from the RM of Wolseley. And his family's here.

For 45 years of service, Mr. Speaker, Darwin and Thressa

Whitfield from the RM of Oakdale.

These individuals are a great example of the dedication and volunteerism that make Saskatchewan such a great place to live. I ask that all MLAs join me in expressing our sincere gratitude for their contributions and dedication to agriculture. Please welcome them to their legislature here today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Requesting 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.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to join with the Agriculture minister and to welcome these extraordinary citizens, these volunteers that give back in so many ways to such a proud, valuable industry in this province and to producers in our province, the crop reporters that have joined us here today.

It's a remarkable thing when you talk about service that extends 30 and 35 and 40 and 45 years. Just thank you so very much. Certainly the work that you provide, the reporting that you offer, the *Crop Report* itself is invaluable for producers and for the province and for organizations. Certainly this last year was an incredibly challenging one in agriculture, and your crop reports captured that as well. And certainly I relied on that information.

As we introduce you here today, it's timely. You know, producers are getting into the fields here very soon for another growing season. We just simply want to say to you, on behalf of a grateful province and grateful opposition, thank you so very much.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And while I'm on my feet, seated in the east gallery I want to introduce two incredibly strong and courageous people within our province, Chris and Wanda Ball from Indian Head, Saskatchewan. Wanda works at the YW [Young Women's Christian Association]. She used to work at the YM [Young Men's Christian Association]. I can attest she made the best chili in town. Chris works in distribution.

They're here today, Mr. Speaker, to be here to support the Children's Advocate report, to make sure that it's not a faceless report. They've been involved in that report and that process as they've endured a loss that no parent should ever endure, Mr. Speaker, and that being the suicide of their son Kye five years ago, Mr. Speaker. They know loss and hurt, Mr. Speaker, loss and hurt that I know many in this province and families in this province can relate to as so many struggle with the mental health and addictions crisis in our province and the broken system, Mr. Speaker, in stepping up to extending the care that's needed.

These two have been courageous and inspirational in the last five

years as they've worked to make sure that Kye's legacy has been one of fixing that broken system, of addressing the stigma, extending care and love to those that are suffering and going through loss, Mr. Speaker. I've seen them, over the last five years in an active way, rallying community and walking in memory of Kye and in support of so many others here in front of the legislature, and always with such, such strong support of those from their community of Indian Head.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say to Wanda and to Chris, thank you for being here today. I know it's hard. Thank you for ensuring that the report today wasn't faceless. Thank you for ensuring that Kye's legacy is one that will make a difference in the lives of so many and that will save lives. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Kindersley.

Mr. Francis: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek 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.

Mr. Francis: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems like introductions are a lot like rain: we've either got way too much or not enough. But today we have plenty, and I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming all of the recipients of this year's awards, but especially some of my constituents.

From the RM of Milton we have Walter and Linda Sullivan. And from the RM of Oakdale, as we've heard, we have Thessa Whitfield, her son Darwin and his wife, Michele. Darwin still currently sits, serves as reeve for the RM of Oakdale. Darwin and I have a bit of a history dating back, oh, several decades to the '80s when we played senior hockey, both against one another and with the same team. And he also ran against me in the nomination in 2017, finishing a very close second. And some days I wish you worked a little harder, Darwin, sold a few more memberships. But I want everyone to join me in welcoming these folks to their Legislative Assembly.

[13:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Keisig: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I would like to extend an invitation to all the spouses and partners. There's no way that these crop reporters can serve for 25, 35, 40 years without a family group supporting them. And I want to thank all their wives and families for helping them.

And there's one very special lady I would like to mention. Marilyn Hale, my mother-in-law, is present today. So please join me in welcoming her to her Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Domotor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I would also like to welcome these reporters of definitely different times. And the years that they've put in and the service they've given to their communities is absolutely amazing.

Specifically I'd like to welcome Bernadette Poppleton from the RM of Hillsdale, which is in my constituency, as well as Valerie Muller, who I know is sitting up there and is actually from my home area. Valerie and her husband, Gaylord, have just recently retired off the farm to the village of Mervin, and from what I understand, enjoying a retirement being with family and friends. And I would like to welcome you both to your Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take the opportunity to join my colleague, welcoming Chris and Wanda to the Legislative Assembly, to their Assembly. I had a chance to talk with them today, share some heartfelt losses that we all, so many in our province, have felt the loss. And they touched my heart today with the loss of their son.

And I just want them to know, please feel safe in this Legislative Assembly. It is your Assembly, and I hope we can do justice for the loss of your son Kye. I just want to welcome you here. And just know in my heart, you will be in my prayers tonight that you can try to find peace and continue the advocacy for your son's and your family's loss.

I just want to welcome you. I ask all members to join me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Honoured to be on my feet again to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly calling for home supports for older adults in Saskatchewan. The petitioners want to bring to our attention, I think maybe first and foremost, that this petition is about better outcomes for older adults. This is about better health outcomes, better social outcomes, better quality of life. And the way to get there is to improve the supports that are available to older adults to live in their own homes surrounded by community, surrounded by loved ones and family, and they need help to do that.

Currently the help being offered mostly falls under meeting limited health care needs to stay in the home. And the petitioners want us to be aware that they're also looking for support with other needs, lifestyle and practical needs, that often have to do with upkeep of a home, a residence, a yard; and that these are often the factors that drive an older adult out of their home and sometimes far away from their homes and communities to live in more communal settings of various different types.

This is what older adults are asking for. They want to stay in their homes. They know it will lead to better outcomes. And I think it's important for us to listen to their petition.

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 work with older adults, stakeholders, and municipalities to design a home supports program that will allow seniors to age with dignity and autonomy in their homes and communities.

This petition is signed by residents of Osler and Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to be on my feet again today presenting a petition to the Government of Saskatchewan to protect Saskatchewan's water supply. The residents of Saskatchewan who've signed this petition wish to bring to your attention the following: that water is essential for human health, recreation, health of our ecosystems, and our economy; that research from the University of Regina shows the water quality of Saskatchewan's lakes is getting worse.

And just on that point, I did want to also mention that there is a program under way in its second year under the direction of Dr. Kerri Finlay at the University of Regina. It's a community-based water monitoring program for Water Rangers. And anybody in Saskatchewan can apply to this program to be a Water Ranger and help to collect data so that we can improve upon the database for the quality of water in our province within our lakes and rivers and streams, and ensure that we get better policy outcomes as a result of that. So encourage everyone to have a look at that.

I'll just also quickly mention that the prayer has been signed by the residents of Avonlea. I do so present.

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present our petition calling for legislation ensuring for paid sick leave for all Saskatchewan workers. The signatories would like to make this government aware that a healthy workforce is good for the economy; that workers, doctors, and public health officials have all called for paid sick leave in Saskatchewan; that the official opposition has twice introduced paid sick leave legislation since the onset of the pandemic, calling for a minimum of 10 paid sick days each year and 14 days during a public health crisis. Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan deserve dignified working conditions, which very much includes the ability to stay home and rest when they're sick.

I'll now read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to introduce and pass paid sick leave legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the signatories today reside in Moose Jaw, all strong worker advocates in our province — Stacey Lolacher, Shane Stewart, and Neil Colmin — all of SEIU-West [Service Employees International Union-West], my former place of work.

And I thank them for their strong organizing around this issue.

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

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — miigwech, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise to present the following petition. The folks who signed this petition wish to bring to your attention the following: we only have 10 per cent of Crown land left; this government has been auctioning off Crown land and leases to the highest bidder. They haven't meaningfully consulted with impacted communities. They are leaving the taxpayers of this province footing the bill for its mistakes and losses in court. They are breaching the treaty relationship and restricting access to traditional hunting, fishing, trapping, and medicine picking.

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

I'll read the prayer:

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

The folks who signed this petition reside in Broadview, Montreal Lake, and Kamsack. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Reeve Recognized for Outstanding Service

Ms. Beck: — I'm on my feet to recognize exemplary leadership in rural Saskatchewan. Today I recognize Alan Arthur from the rural municipality of Reciprocity in the southeast corner.

Alan began his elected service with RM No. 32 as a councillor in 1986, a time when many of my colleagues in this House were still in diapers. He served as councillor for 15 years before beginning his two-decade-and-counting stint as reeve.

And like so many community pillars in hometowns right across this province, Alan has worn many hats. He served on the watershed committee, the Co-op board, Redvers veterinary services board, and the Redvers & District Health Foundation. In 2012 Alan Arthur received a Diamond Jubilee Medal for community leadership. And just this past month at the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention he received the Lieutenant Governor's award for Outstanding Service to Rural Saskatchewan.

A former colleague notes three things about Alan: no one is going to outwork him, no one is more prepared and more visionary, and no one better has the interests of rural Saskatchewan at heart. Alan's dedication to his community and the land he lives on

should inspire all of us in this Assembly.

I ask all members to join me in recognizing Reeve Alan Arthur for his outstanding contributions to making Reciprocity and rural Saskatchewan a better place. Thank you.

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

Pharmacy Appreciation Month

Ms. A. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, March is Pharmacy Appreciation Month. This is an opportunity for us to recognize the work done by pharmacies across our province, particularly over the challenging last two years.

Pharmacists have been at the front line of our COVID vaccination program, stepping up to provide vaccine appointments and reliable information for Saskatchewan residents. More than 380 pharmacies offered flu shots to Saskatchewan residents aged five and over. Mr. Speaker, pharmacists have administered more than 616,000 COVID-19 vaccinations during the pandemic and more than 181,000 flu shots this flu season.

They are among the most accessible health care professionals across the province. We know that Saskatchewan residents appreciate the communication and access to their local pharmacies. I am sure many of us have gone into a pharmacy looking for something to help a child with a fever or perhaps an elderly relative who has multiple medications. Mr. Speaker, we look to the pharmacist for their expertise and advice to ensure that medications are safe for our loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the Assembly to join me in thanking pharmacies for everything they do to help residents feel healthy and safe. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Saskatoon Association of Filipino Entrepreneurs Supports Community and Local Businesses

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to share news of an exciting new organization in Saskatoon. I would like to recognize the Saskatoon Association of Filipino Entrepreneurs, or SAFE. This association was formed to share Filipino culture, to educate and assist aspiring business owners, to help bridge the cultural gaps in our community, and to build the network of entrepreneurs.

I had the pleasure of attending their induction supper along with the member for Melfort at the Saskatoon Inn on December 6th. This was their first public event as the Saskatoon Association of Filipino Entrepreneurs. We enjoyed dinner provided by many local restaurants who were inducted that evening.

Local businesses are at the heart of our communities and are key to our economy. Running a business is more than simply contributing to the economy. It is building and nurturing community. I want to thank the Saskatoon Association of Filipino Entrepreneurs for their work in building and supporting

our community and local businesses.

While I can't mention everyone, I'd like to note the hard work of Chris Rod, founding president and director of SAFE; Toni Chin, current president and owner of Flor's Authentic Filipino Cuisine; and Tetet Buenaventura, vice-president and owner of Mamu's Corner resto.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all in this Chamber to join me in congratulating the members of this association on their induction in December and to wish them continued success into the future.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melfort.

L'eau vive Celebrates a Publication Milestone

Mr. Goudy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan has a rich history that is retold and passed on in many different languages. For the past 50 years, one of the most important witnesses and chroniclers has been the publication, *L'eau vive*. Mr. Speaker, the Fransaskois community came to rely on *L'eau vive* for their news information and advertising in French. Its accolades include winning the 2020 paper of the year award from the association of francophone papers outside of Quebec. Over the past half century *L'eau vive* has had its ups and downs, its threats and its successes, just like many other small town publications.

[14:00]

Mr. Speaker, there is something special about this paper and its bond with the French-speaking community, helping it through tough times to reinvent itself and to continue to serve. Over the past decade the Fransaskois community has changed much as immigration from countries of la francophonie has brought new energy and vibrancy to our towns and cities.

Mr. Speaker, *L'eau vive* is reinventing itself yet again as a multi-platform communication organization. To the journalists, writers, editors, and many others who have worked for the publication over the years and to the current publishers, congratulation on this milestone, and thank you for helping make Saskatchewan stronger. We look forward to your continued success. *Vive L'eau vive*, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Round Prairie Elders' Lodge Wins Home of the Year Award

Mr. Friesen: — Mr. Speaker, on December 2nd I had the honour of bringing greetings on behalf of the province to internationally recognized Round Prairie Elders' Lodge. It was designed to help elders live independently, comfortably, with all the amenities they need to feel safe and supported.

Mr. Speaker, this project was designed by Métis architect David T. Fortin and was built by Big Block Construction. Elders were engaged in developing concepts for the building, which include a spiritual room, gathering spaces, and universally accessible units. Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, Central Urban Métis Federation, Indigenous Services Canada, and the city of

Saskatoon, as well as Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, worked together to create this incredible project.

Mr. Speaker, Round Prairie Elders' Lodge was awarded the 2021 Global Innovation Award for Home of the Year on behalf of the National Association of Home Builders. This is the first time a project from Saskatchewan has won a National Association of Home Builders award, and we are so proud of the housing development that supports the culture, health, and wellness of Métis elders.

I ask all members to join me in thanking everyone who was involved in bringing this project to life and congratulate them on winning this prestigious and much-deserved award. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Yorkton.

Saskatchewan Cancer Agency Awarded Exemplary Status

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, recently Accreditation Canada awarded exemplary standing to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency. This is the highest achievement a health care organization can receive. Mr. Speaker, this is an exceptional accomplishment for the Cancer Agency.

Accreditation is an approach used by health care organizations to improve health and safety based on nationally accepted standards. The Cancer Agency provides critical services for the people of Saskatchewan with leadership in health promotion, early detection, treatment, and cancer research.

Mr. Speaker, the assessors highlighted how the Cancer Agency quickly adjusted to meet the demands of the pandemic. They also affirmed a common message from the patients during the assessment was, "I have a voice," as client- and family-centred care has helped to guide all aspects of the planning, delivery, and evaluation of services in the Cancer Agency.

Mr. Speaker, our government congratulates the Cancer Agency for their hard work and dedication to providing Saskatchewan residents with high-quality, compassionate care. Our government is pleased to continue funding the Cancer Agency to ensure that life-saving cancer care services are available to all people in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, as a supporter, client, and a cancer survivor, on behalf of all patients and families touched by the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, thank you. And once again congratulations on this well-deserved recognition. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Community Rinks Affordability Grant Benefits Communities

Mr. Nerlien: — Mr. Speaker, we're exiting a long, cold winter. And once again community rinks across the province provided an opportunity for safe gatherings and physical activities. They are the hub of many villages, towns, cities, and First Nations. That's why I'm pleased to report the tremendous success of the 2021-22 community rinks affordability grant program.

Mr. Speaker, 379 facility owners were approved, with 594 ice surfaces benefiting from this grant. 377 of these facilities were skating rinks and 217 were curling rinks. Mr. Speaker, this is because of the \$1.7 million allocated to the grant program in the budget.

These facilities are largely run and operated by volunteers who selflessly sacrifice their time during the long winter days so residents can continue living an active and healthy lifestyle. Here's what the community of Saltcoats said about the grant: "This grant has a significant benefit to the community to help promote physical fitness. It provides for additional hours of operation and has aided in keeping the facility viable."

I thank the Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association for administering this worthwhile program and being an important contributor towards recreation in our province. Thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Support for Youth Mental Health

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, a damning report from the child and youth advocate was tabled moments ago in this Assembly. The report affirms what we already know: that kids are falling through the cracks and it's costing their lives; that our system is reactionary, not preventative; that there are no services available between counselling and an emergency room in our province. In a health worker's words:

If you're not suicidal, psychotic, or incredibly struggling, you get a list of places in the community you could go. You could have just googled that.

Mr. Speaker, does this government think that simply getting a list someone could have googled is doing a good enough job for our kids?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the advocate and her office for their work on this report. And I am thankful as well to those who participated in the report, front-line workers, families that have been affected by mental health and addictions when it comes to youth and by loss of life, and as well the members of the youth advisory committee.

Mr. Speaker, we take this issue very seriously. And any loss of life is one too many when it comes to anyone in this province, but particularly the youth and children in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the report recommendations which have just been tabled here this afternoon includes a number of recommendations within that report. Mr. Speaker, we'll be taking some time here to make sure that we're working with a number of ministries that are involved in making the necessary changes to address any of the gaps that may have been identified.

But, Mr. Speaker, know that this is a priority for us as government, and we will be moving as quickly as possible to

address these concerns to make improvements in the system going forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, there are only 25 active mental health beds dedicated to children and youth in the province. It's completely unacceptable. This isn't good enough. These beds are almost always full. This is the same for detox treatment in this province. We need more in-patient and out-patient care, in particular rural areas and the North, where kids have to travel far from their families for the treatment that they so desperately need.

Mr. Speaker, what is the minister's actual plan, and timeline for implementing that plan, to ensure that all kids, regardless of where they live, can access Mental Health and Addictions in their communities closer to home?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have implemented a number of initiatives in recent years across this province. For example, the opening of youth treatment spaces at Dorie's House in Swift Current in southwest Saskatchewan as an example, Mr. Speaker; the implementation of community recovery teams around this province; Family Service Saskatchewan's expansion of mental health walk-in clinics. These are just a few of the areas that we have provided some supports, Mr. Speaker.

And we know that there is more work to do, which was why there are additional dollars in this year's budget. There are continued record investments into mental health and addictions. But, Mr. Speaker, we know that this is a significant priority for families, not just the government, but for families in communities across this province, regardless of where individuals live. We want to make sure that we are providing as seamless a system as possible for people that are reaching out for help, regardless of their age or where they live. And we want to make sure that we ensure that those services and supports are provided across Saskatchewan in our major centres and our regional centres, and rural communities and remote and northern and First Nations communities as well, Mr. Speaker. And we are committed to that.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, it has been eight years since the mental health and addictions plan was released, which urged the government to fix wait times for mental health and addictions treatment. This government has had eight years, Mr. Speaker, to implement this recommendation. Yet in Saskatoon alone there are nearly 800 children and youth — 800 children and youth — on the wait-list for psychiatric care at any given time. Eight hundred kids, Mr. Speaker, in desperate need of help.

Will the minister commit to finally fixing these wait times and to fully implement, with a timeline, all 14 of the advocate's recommendations outlined in her report?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said previously, we appreciate the work done by the office of the Advocate for Children and Youth, Mr. Speaker, and the report that was tabled today.

Mr. Speaker, the report and the recommendations impact a number of ministries here in the provincial government. Mr. Speaker, I can say that I fully expect that the recommendations that are included in this report will be accepted in whole or in part by this government, but there's some work to do to look at what we need to do to achieve some of these or address some of these issues, Mr. Speaker.

I can point to several of the recommendations in the report today. Some of these are being addressed by some recent initiatives and new initiatives. As an example, Mr. Speaker, one of the recommendations from the report, no. 3, identifies expanding of the mental health capacity building in schools initiative. And, Mr. Speaker, that program is going to be expanded in this year's budget with an increase of \$800,000 to bring it to \$2 million annually, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue to invest in these sorts of programs.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, over the last 11 years, 244 Saskatchewan families have lost a child to suicide or overdose. One of those families has joined us here today.

Chris and Wanda Ball are sitting in the gallery, Mr. Speaker. It is their son Kye whose heartbreaking story is told in the child and youth advocate's report. They are here because they don't want their son to be just another faceless statistic. And they don't want this report to be shelved and forgotten about. They want real, concrete action from this government.

Can the minister commit to Kye's parents that this report will not be shelved and that the government will act on its findings so no other families have to go through what this family has?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank Wanda and Chris for not only being here today, but for being public about their own family's struggle, Mr. Speaker, and the loss of their son. As a parent and a grandfather, I can't imagine how difficult this must be and has been for the Ball family, Mr. Speaker, and I would be willing to meet with Wanda and Chris later today or at their convenience, whatever works best for them, to discuss further, Mr. Speaker.

Again this is a priority for this government. It's a priority for people across this province. And we are going to do everything we can, as the Government of Saskatchewan, to make sure that we can address some of the gaps that have been identified to make sure that we have a system that is there to respond to the needs of children and youth across this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — This report confirms what we've known for years. Kids are falling through the cracks and unable to access basic mental health and addictions help. What is the minister's plan to ensure we don't lose any other kids like Kye?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned in one of my earlier answers, there are some of these recommendations that are included within the advocate's report today, are being addressed, and will be addressed as a result of some new and expanded budget initiatives.

One of those, Mr. Speaker, includes \$1.4 million in new funding to work towards the continuation of the implementation of the integrated youth services model, Mr. Speaker, which brings together a number of services into one location — a one-stop shop, if you will, for youth — such as mental health and addictions, education, employment, and social services. This would align, Mr. Speaker, with recommendation no. 13 in the advocate's report that has been tabled today.

Mr. Speaker, that is one of a number of initiatives that we will be implementing in this year's upcoming budget, Mr. Speaker, knowing of course that there's more work for us to do. And we're going to continue to engage with our community partners, those at a variety of government levels — provincial, municipal, federal — as well as those on the front lines and families across this province so that we are addressing all of these challenges, Mr. Speaker.

[14:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — This government likes to pat themselves on the back when it comes to mental health. But we know that the portion of the health budget for mental health has actually gone down. Only 7.3 per cent of the health budget is designated for mental health and addictions, down from last year.

How can the minister continue to underfund mental health and addictions, knowing that kids aren't getting the care they need and that families deserve?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We continue to make record investments into mental health and addictions. We've done it over the past number of years. We've now invested over \$92 million into targeted mental health and addictions initiatives since 2018, Mr. Speaker.

In the upcoming budget of '22-23, Mr. Speaker, we are investing a targeted \$8 million towards a number of mental health initiatives. Mr. Speaker, there is funding towards the expansion of mental health capacity building in schools, as I said, Mr. Speaker, to the amount of \$800,000. The expansion of the virtual rural police and crisis teams — which have been working well,

Mr. Speaker, and started as a pilot project — and we're expanding across the province. The expansion of Family Service Saskatchewan's rapid access counselling program to eight additional communities in this year's budget, as well as the integrated youth services model.

Mr. Speaker, since 2015 more than 50 actions have been implemented from the mental health and addictions plan, and it includes more beds in this province, Mr. Speaker. But we know we have, we have more work to do. There's more pressures on the system, and we're committed to addressing those.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — This is serious, Mr. Speaker. Families are losing their children to this crisis. Chris and Wanda are in the gallery. They want this government to understand the barriers their family faced. Can the minister reassure this family right now that no other families will suffer like they have?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And as I said previously, I would be willing to meet with Chris and Wanda today to further the discussion with regards to this very, very serious issue.

Mr. Speaker, this is a priority for this government. And we know that over the past number of years, and particularly the past couple of years through the pandemic, that there have been increasing pressures on all of us. That includes our youth and our children, Mr. Speaker, and we know that. And that is why we are committed to enhancing the services and supports that we have provided in this province and making sure that we address some of the gaps that have been identified in the advocate's report to make sure that we have a better system that is able to better serve the people of this province, and that includes the children and youth in Saskatchewan regardless of where they live, Mr. Speaker. And I can commit to this Assembly that this will continue to be a significant priority for this government going forward.

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

Provision of Health Care

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, I had my own experience with hallway medicine last week, here in an ER [emergency room] — four hours to see a doctor, another five for a test. The doctors and nurses were run off their feet. Whenever I had an interaction with them, I could feel their warmth and concern. They genuinely treated me like a human being. As one doctor said, "I'm sorry you had to wait so long. Our health care system is a mess." Is the minister aware of the mess he's in charge of?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And first off, I hope the member is feeling better and that she got the treatment that she needed at our health care facility.

Mr. Speaker, I did look into it. We were experiencing a surge at that moment of time when the member opposite was in our health care facility, Mr. Speaker. But this is exactly what we're trying to address in our budget with our urgent care centres in Regina and Saskatoon. This is going to take pressure off of our emergency rooms, Mr. Speaker. We also have investment of \$3 million for 10 high acuity beds. This again will take pressure off of our emergency room system.

I understand that there were some challenges that day, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that the member is feeling better. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This was not a momentary surge. Our health care system is in crisis. This morning there were 44 patients who had been admitted in Saskatoon emergency rooms with no beds available to them — 44 patients. Forty-four people lining hallways, sitting in chairs, stuffed in closets when they should be in a bed on the ward. No call bells, no dignity, no privacy. Does the minister think this is what Saskatchewan people should expect when they need emergency care?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And as I said in my first answer, there are periods of time where we do see surges, but that's exactly what we are addressing in the budget, Mr. Speaker, that we're looking at engaging our urgent care centres in Regina. Stay tuned — there will be something happening on that later on this week, Mr. Speaker. But also the high acuity beds that we're doing in Regina plus the ICU [intensive care unit] beds, the 11 ICU beds. These are significant dollar investments within our health care system, Mr. Speaker, to be able to take the pressure off.

We're working with other urgent care centres in Saskatoon like Lakeview to be able to make sure that they have the needs that they require to be able to treat the patients in there, Mr. Speaker.

I understand but we are — and I will remind the members opposite — we are still, our health care system is still recovering from COVID-19. We have a lot of people that are absent, Mr. Speaker. We're working on getting them back to work to make sure that they can get back to their positions to be able to treat the patients they need. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Mowat: — When I shared my story online, countless Saskatchewan people shared similar stories with me about hallway medicine. "My late husband was there three days in a hallway bed, no room for me without touching the other patient." Another quote: "This is exactly my experience last week. Doctors and nurses are so amazing. Our health care system is broken." And another: "My mother-in-law had much the same experience. Our health system is stretched to the limit." I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker.

Ten beds won't cut it. Why is there no mention of reducing ER wait times in the budget? Why has this government shelved all plans to get hallway medicine under control?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is exactly why this government put in a quality of care coordinator, Mr. Speaker, to be able to make sure that if there are incidents within our health care system, that they are addressed. I would encourage the member opposite and anybody else that experienced some challenges within our health care system to go through the quality of care coordinator, file an incident, Mr. Speaker, and it will be addressed. This is how we improve the process, Mr. Speaker.

But on top of that, in this budget, Mr. Speaker, we are also looking at recruitment and retaining and training individuals. We're training. The Minister of Advanced Education is training 150 additional nurses. We're recruiting around the world, Mr. Speaker. We want to make sure that that recruitment is taken extremely serious, and we're getting that done as soon as possible, Mr. Speaker.

And I certainly would hope, with all of the investments that I just outlined here, those members opposite would support this budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, I didn't raise my personal experience in this Assembly to deal with gaslighting from the Minister of Health. We know that the quality of care coordinator exists. Of course we direct patients there, but this is a system-wide problem. These are not one-off experiences, Mr. Speaker. And although the pandemic has exacerbated things, these issues are not new to the pandemic.

What is the Minister of Health doing to get this situation under control so that patients can have dignity when they receive emergency care?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I will outline some of the highlights, what we are doing, what we just presented last week, Mr. Speaker, which we're going to be voting on this week. And again, I can hope the members opposite can support this, Mr. Speaker. We have a record investment in the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority], a 7 per cent increase, of \$4.24 billion; \$95 million that is allocated for COVID-19 response if we need it; \$21.6 million for surgical backlog; \$11 million for EMS [emergency medical services] stabilization in 27 communities; recruitment and retention, \$3.5 million, Mr. Speaker; as well as what I've already identified, which is our ICU beds, our high acuity beds, and our urgent care centres that we're moving on extremely quick.

We understand that there are some concerns within our health care system, and that's why this budget is critical to be able to address those needs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Government's Fiscal Management

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister's spin on that government's new PST [provincial sales tax] tax grab came crashing down with the news that the feds are providing \$62 million to address the province's surgical backlog.

All we've heard from that minister and this government was that their \$20 million PST grab was for the \$20 million surgical initiative in the budget. Suddenly yesterday in scrums, the minister called it a misinterpretation. Mr. Speaker, that's one heck of a way to tell Saskatchewan people that if you fell for our spin, that's on you.

Mr. Speaker, the minister claimed that the PST hike was to pay for the surgical initiative, but now we know the feds have footed that bill. Will the minister do the right thing and drop this PST tax grab at a time when working families and local businesses are desperately in need of some relief?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, quite honestly to say this is the revenue and here's an expense that would equal that revenue, but there are a number of expenses that equal that revenue. If you go through the health care budget, I could bundle up 20 million in a number of cases. It's just to demonstrate that to have the initiatives within health care — the member opposite just asked for some of those initiatives, quite frankly — that to have those services that the people of Saskatchewan would like to have and deserve, that it does cost money and we have to be mindful of where the revenue is going to come from.

Mr. Speaker, it's unlike the members opposite, who want all the increases. They want all the additional services, but they have yet to explain where the money's going to come from.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, that minister was busted with their bogus spin on the budget. The feds are backstopping those dollars and more. It was members opposite who claimed they needed to nickel and dime Saskatchewan people on everything from Rider games to gym memberships, shows, and more to pay for surgeries.

On the PST expansion, in her own words, I quote:

It will generate annually a little over \$20 million, and it's interesting that our surgical wait-list initiative is also a little over \$20 million. And if I said to a Saskatchewan resident, you know, would you be willing to pay for this for maybe a concert or for a Rider ticket in order for us to address the very critical surgical wait-list, I think Saskatchewan people would support that.

The federal government surgical funding triples the commitment from that minister in this budget and adds further fiscal space to scrap this short-sighted tax grab. Will the minister commit to that

today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, to try to relate that the different services that we're increasing in this budget — because there's so many services that we're increasing with the budget — and how that there needs to be revenue in order to pay for those, giving but one example is but one example of what relates to those costs. I don't think anyone believes that for every cent that we bring in on the new tax initiative goes directly to surgical wait times. I think the people of the province understand that there is a revenue pool and then there is expenses that you need that come out of that revenue pool. I'm not sure why the member opposite does not understand that.

I could have used any example, Mr. Speaker, of the various expansions. It might have been the EMS services. In rural Saskatchewan there is some pressure with paramedics and EMS services. Those communities are willing, quite frankly, for their taxpayer dollars to see that that is addressed, Mr. Speaker. That is what I was trying to get across. Only the members opposite do not understand that.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — If the minister's words aren't enough, we'll offer up the Premier's here. "And with respect to the PST increases, they are directly proportional to the surgical wait-time initiative that we added to the budget, added to yesterday." And this minister wants to blame Saskatchewan people, saying they misinterpreted what this government was saying.

The people of Saskatchewan heard them loud and clear. This government was caught spinning a yarn, just telling a story, Mr. Speaker. It's no different from how they claim to be for affordability, only then to introduce 32 new taxes and fee hikes when Saskatchewan people just need a break.

Will this government admit that their spin was bogus and cancel these latest tax grabs?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

[14:30]

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, it's obvious that the member opposite got the filler questions at the end of question period today. It's quite astounding that he's trying to make an issue out of this because what doesn't he want in the budget, Mr. Speaker? Does he not want more recruitment of family doctors? Because I think those members opposite asked for that. Does he not want an expansion of ICU beds? Because I think the members opposite asked for that. Does he not want the increase in nurses in this province? I think the members opposite asked for that. Does he not want more care aides into our long-term nursing homes? I think the members opposite asked for that.

How do they plan on paying for it? They never, ever mention it. They never, ever tell us their plan. They just criticize. That's all they do and nothing more.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask for leave to make a motion regarding committee membership.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has asked leave to make a motion. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

MOTIONS

Committee Membership

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

That the name of Jim Lemaigre be substituted for the name of Terry Jenson on the Standing Committee on the Economy.

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

That the name of Jim Lemaigre be substituted for the name of Terry Jenson on the Standing Committee on the Economy.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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 approve 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 Arm River.

Mr. Skoropad: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The great Arthur Fonzarelli, a.k.a. [also known as] Henry Winkler, once said, "I live by two words: tenacity and gratitude." Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more with these sentiments. And in keeping with the virtue of gratitude, I'd like to begin my reply to this year's budget with some words of thankfulness.

First I'd like to thank the people of Arm River for their sacrifices, their perseverance, their grit over the course of these past two challenging years of a pandemic. Because of the collective efforts of the people of Saskatchewan, from health care workers to

restaurateurs to farmers to pharmacists, we are in a vastly different place in this province right now. And I want to say thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I would also like to thank my families: my family first here in the legislature — that is, my government caucus colleagues on this side — and my family back home near Chamberlain, my wife, Terrill, and boys, Noah and Sol. Thank you for putting up with me, for respecting me, respecting me with the kind of respect referenced by the member from Athabasca here last week. And thank you for supporting me always. Walking on a high wire is much easier when you have a trustworthy net below, so thank you to my families.

Mr. Speaker, all of us in this Chamber know quite well the critical role that our constituency assistants play in serving the people that we represent. That said, I am so blessed to work alongside two amazing people. Lavonne Lyke, well she's a wealth of knowledge, a walking local Rolodex, and carries an immense heart of gold. Lavonne's partner, Katie Vollmer, is new to our office and has quickly become one of the family. She is eager to learn and keen to dive into whatever task is put before her. Katie has truly been an extraordinary addition to our constituency office. Mr. Speaker, I am truly grateful for Lavonne and for Katie, grateful for the people that they are and the passion they bring to serving the constituents of Arm River.

And, Mr. Speaker, while on this theme of gratitude, I want to proclaim how thankful that I am that we made it through another winter. And what a winter that it was. I cannot recall another one with so many impossible-to-poor-driving days with horrific visibility brought on by punishing winds. And given the fact that I spend an inordinate amount of time driving the roads of Arm River, I want to say thank you, spring, and please don't take so long next year.

Before I move on to the more formal parts of my comments in regards to this year's budget, I'd like to share one short story from this past winter that has some relevance for today, Mr. Speaker. A couple of months ago, our entire family — that is, Terrill, my boys, my mom, my stepdad Bob, and I — were unfortunate to be caught on the roads in what's commonly now known as the Saskatchewan screamer. It came from seemingly nowhere, but it immediately made its presence felt. And while we only had a few miles to go to home, it was a treacherous trek through wind and white and waves of snow.

I was at the wheel and did my best to navigate the road cautiously, doing my best to keep us on the narrow grid road. As we approached the bluff of trees in Klockow coulee, the road slightly cleared and we were able to once more gather our bearings so close to home. Passed through the ravine though and once more in the thick of the storm, I focused on keeping the vehicle out of the ditch and avoided oversteering to the left or to the right.

As you can imagine, Mr. Speaker, I received all the varied advice you'd expect from a family in a similar situation from go faster, go slower, pull over, even though there was nowhere to do so — and that was my wife's; that was her advice — go close to the edge of the road, don't go so close, and so on.

Ultimately my focus and attention rested on getting us safely

home. And Mr. Speaker, when we finally reached the start of our treed, sheltered lane, and I could better see our home and the road leading to it, we all had the emotion . . . an amalgamation of emotions, actually: relief and joy and exhaustion and hope. And Mr. Speaker, with new conditions in front of us, I was able to drive a little faster and probably a little straighter too, as we adjusted to the improving conditions and we were able to confidently move once more towards the intended destination. Mr. Speaker, that storm still persisted, but we were now in a vastly different position than we had been only a few hundred metres earlier.

Mr. Speaker, I am so grateful, so thankful to the Minister of Finance, our Deputy Premier, and all those who worked diligently to construct this year's budget, a budget that, like my homeward-bound vehicle, travelling through the storm of COVID gets the province back on track.

As outlined by the Minister of Finance, Saskatchewan's economy is growing past pre-pandemic levels. We have seen strong job numbers over the course of this past year, with 30,000 livelihoods created right here in this province. In fact, Mr. Speaker, since the start of 2022, Saskatchewan has the second-highest job growth rate in the country, and our real GDP [gross domestic product] is expected to grow by 3.7 per cent. This is great news as over the course of these past two years, people of the province have faced not only a punishing pandemic but a severe widespread drought.

With this past year's economic growth, improving finances, and clear path to balance, we're able to address our driving to suit the conditions. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we are indeed back on track.

A couple of nights ago, while reflecting on the '22-23 budget and on our provincial growth plan, our 30 goals for the year 2030, I had one of those obvious but shocking revelations. Mr. Speaker, when we hit the year 2030, Noah will be 23, and Sol, well he'll be 22. And I will still be 49. As I referenced in a prior speech in this Chamber, my Grandpa Skoropad, he was 23 years old, that same age that Noah will be in 2030, when he first stepped foot on Canadian soil from Ukraine with aspirations of carving out a better quality of life here in Saskatchewan. Our growth plan speaks to the creation of a better quality of life for Saskatchewan people, and the budget presented last week aligns with and supports this aggressive plan.

Mr. Speaker, if you're looking for a quick read, a motivational read, I would highly recommend some of Jon Gordon's works. Actually in particular, I direct your attention to a book titled *The No Complaining Rule*. In it, Gordon draws the importance of feeding the roots and not fixating on the fruit. For by nurturing, caring, and supporting roots, by focusing on structure and process, you will grow the strongest fruit.

Mr. Speaker, I would argue that our budget endeavours to feed the roots of our growth plan to produce the fruit or quality of life desired by all people of Saskatchewan. As I've said before, economic growth for the sake of economic growth, well it's not a goal but a boast. It's how people's lives are improved through this growth that makes it meaningful.

So what does the *Back on Track* budget look . . . from a budgetary perspective? A Saskatchewan budget that is back on

track is one with record funding in health, education, social services and assistance, and is committed to protecting people and property. It is one that provides record capital investments, investments to the tune of \$3.2 billion in schools, in hospitals, in highways, in critical Crown infrastructure. It is one that strives to create investment environment conducive to private investment, investments similar to what we saw into the province this past year in excess of thirteen and a half billion dollars.

A Saskatchewan budget back on track is one that can clearly see the landscape surrounding the road and is able to seize new opportunities. New opportunities like the Creative Saskatchewan production program for film and television that will see additional funding to capitalize on a burgeoning streaming market. A budget back on track is one that allows us to better educate our children, allows parents to better provide for their families, and allows us to better care for our seniors.

Mr. Speaker, I've already been asked a number of times, how will this budget serve the people I represent, that is the people of Arm River? Mr. Speaker, this year we have committed \$6.8 billion for health, the highest this province has ever seen. But this number is only the introduction to the story that is health in the budget.

When I consider the chapter focused on strengthening our complement of health care workers, I see dollars directed to development of a recruitment initiative to bring 150 health care workers from the Philippines. I see the expansion of post-secondary nurse training seats by 150, and physician recruitment and retention initiatives focused on family physicians working right here in rural Saskatchewan. I see increased funding for home care services and new funding for additional continuing care aide positions. That is 117 new continuing care aide staff as a part of this government's three-year commitment to provide more than 300 continuing care aides in the province.

Mr. Speaker, the health story in this budget, it is a positive one. Reflecting on the chapter about expanding our capacity to care for the people of Saskatchewan, I find an increase for medical imaging to address wait times for CT [computerized tomography] scans and MRIs [magnetic resonance imaging] caused by the pandemic. In this important chapter, I also find new funding for the first of a three-year strategy to grow our intensive care capacity across the province from 79 to 110. It certainly doesn't end there, Mr. Speaker. Arm River stands to benefit from the \$10.8 million increase to enhance emergency medical services in rural Saskatchewan.

Turn the page, Mr. Speaker, and you will see a chapter on mental health and addictions, a chapter built upon the work that was begun in last year's budget. In fact, Mr. Speaker, more than 7 per cent of our total health spending is directed in this vital area. Here I see additional funding for counselling, treatment, and proactive preventive measures. I also see the creation of additional addiction spaces in high-need areas of the province.

Mr. Speaker, when I think of the 7.7 increase to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, I see the faces of Deb and Dennis, and my hero, that little boy named Benny.

When I turn to the chapter on surgical initiatives, I'm drawn to the story of Ron Klassen from Outlook. Ron is . . . Well he's 75,

going on 25. He's one of those optimistic and well, unassumingly inspirational people you're blessed to encounter from time to time in your life. Over the course of the past several months, I've had the honour to come to know Mr. Klassen a little bit.

You see, Ron is awaiting knee and hip surgery. Ron stresses that we have a good system and understands that the pandemic has created a backlog of surgeries in this province. That said, he is eager to receive his needed procedure, a procedure that will allow him to continue his passion. That is his work with Panther Industries from Davidson in the area of safety programming. His words of encouragement and appreciation for the government's commitment to aggressively address the present surgical wait-list puts a reality to the budget's \$21.6 million allocation to this initiative.

[14:45]

Speaking of reality, Mr. Speaker, life up and dumped a 5-gallon pail of icy cold reality on me this past Friday. You see, when Noah got home from school, he said he had big news to share with me. He signed up for driver training. Yeah, reality set in. It feels like only yesterday that I was strapping him into a car seat, and soon he will be driving on our highways.

I'm not sure if all parents go through this range of emotions that I experienced that Friday afternoon, but it certainly got me thinking, thinking about how quickly time passes and the gravity of the decisions we make today on future generations.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, our growth plan's goals to build, upgrade, and make safer 10 000 kilometres of highways is spot on. This past summer Arm River saw improvements to Highways 19, 219, 44, 215, and more. This year's budget investment of \$846 million to operate, maintain, and build the provincial roads and highways includes a commitment to improve over 1100 kilometres of highways — critical infrastructure to rural Saskatchewan. Attention to these veins and arteries of our province now will support the economic growth and quality of life for our children and grandchildren.

These same children and grandchildren stand to benefit from record investments made in education in this year's budget. Within the allocated \$3.8 billion include funding for 200 additional full-time educational assistants, training initiatives and supports for early childhood educators, and funding for inclusion of children with disabilities.

Increased funding for post-secondary education and continued commitment to the existing Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship and the graduate retention program feed the roots of our growth plan by training and retaining youth — homegrown talent that are the future of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I vividly remember first explaining our Saskatchewan retention program a number of years ago to grade 12 students and parents as a career development consultant working with the schools in Craik, Eyebrow, and Central Butte. Since that time, which seems like only yesterday, more than 75,000 of our young people have claimed these credits. But more importantly, they've begun their careers right here at home in the greatest jurisdiction in the world.

Mr. Speaker, this past June I had the pleasure of standing on Main Street in Central Butte with Rachel and Deandra Peterson and stare at a vacant building. These two tenacious members of the Central Butte child care initiative enthusiastically shared their vision for a much-needed child care centre to serve their growing community. Mr. Speaker, I'm thrilled to report that this dream is soon to become a reality thanks to this *Back On Track* budget's commitment to create new child care spaces in the province.

Mr. Speaker, there is a well-known saying in farming. It goes kind of like this: a farmer doesn't grow crops. A farmer creates an environment where crops can grow. Last year's widespread drought put to the test our ag sector's resilience, resourcefulness, and ability to create the necessary environment for growth.

This year's budget makes investments in agriculture to create an environment where farmers and ranchers can more securely do what they do best, and that is feed the world. An investment of over \$338 million to fund business risk management programs — programs such as crop insurance, AgriStability, AgriInvest, and livestock price insurance — will do much to provide producers with a stable environment to continue building an industry that is a foundational pillar for Saskatchewan. Cultivating an environment that attracts private investment in our agri-foods sector, through target incentives, waters the roots of our growth plan. New markets, new technologies, new value-added capacity drive Saskatchewan jobs, Saskatchewan exports, and a strong Saskatchewan economy.

When my dad was still sweating and scratching and carving out a living for my mom, my sister Shelly, and I on the family farm, agriculture was in a vastly different place than the place of strength that it is in right now. And, Mr. Speaker, we are just getting going.

To that end, this year's budget fully funds the international trade and investment strategy of bringing Saskatchewan to the world in offices in Japan, Singapore, Mexico, China, India, Vietnam, UK [United Kingdom], and UAE [United Arab Emirates]. These international offices feed the roots of our goal to expand the number of international markets to which Saskatchewan's exports are a billion dollars. These are the economic seeds we are planting, and these are the roots of opportunity we are watering for Saskatchewan people today and for generations to come.

Speaking of water, Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not comment on its importance to this place that we call home. It's a resource not to be taken for granted, and it's critical to life, livelihoods, industry, and agriculture in Saskatchewan. That said, this year's budget commits in excess of \$70 million to advance dams, water supply channels, and irrigation projects aligned with our growth plan goal to increase irrigation and water management in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, negativity are nails that build a prison of failure. In contrast, optimism and perseverance, well they're the timbers that build a home. It is with this optimism that Saskatchewan's '22-23 budget invests in its communities, its businesses, its people. It invests in opportunities. Opportunities like the Saskatchewan Indigenous Investment Finance Corporation, a corporation, Mr. Speaker, that will offer \$75 million in loan guarantees to support Indigenous communities and organizations involved in natural resource and value-added projects.

The budget invests in affordability. Initiatives like the active families benefit, caregiver tax credit, Saskatchewan low-income tax credit, first-time homebuyers tax credit, home renovation tax credit, and second-lowest utility bundle in the country make life more affordable to the people who call Saskatchewan home.

The budget invests in communities. A predictable municipal revenue-sharing formula and further funding for Investing in Canada Infrastructure projects make our communities — east, west, north, and south — stronger. This budget, our budget, invests in the future of Saskatchewan and the quality of life for all who call this place home.

Character, Mr. Speaker, can be defined as how one acts in isolation and how they react to the greater moments in life. Over the course of these past two years, our collective character as a province has been put to the test, and collectively our character has become stronger because of what we have endured together.

And yes, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is back on track. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I will most certainly not be supporting the amendment and will indeed be supporting the budget tabled by the Finance minister, Deputy Premier. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — I recognize the Minister of Government Relations, First Nations, and Métis.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to stand in my place again and address the budget. I've been here for twenty-two and a half years. I haven't spoke to all the budgets in twenty-two and a half years, but I've spoke to many of them. And you would think that you would kind of get over the butterflies before you'd stand up after 22 years, but I don't. So for all you new members that are nervous, maybe on your second speech, it doesn't help that you've done 21 of them. You're still going to be a little bit nervous before you stand up.

I want to talk a little bit about . . . I want to do a number of thank yous to begin with. Then I'll get into the budget and a bit of an analogy I want to talk about, get into Government Relations and what we're doing. And then at the end, I just want to talk a little bit about the make up of the House and kind of what I've observed over the last number of years, and perhaps why the numbers are the way they are on this side, and perhaps the way they are on that side. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, if I get a little short of time, I'm going to skip all the first stuff and just talk about the last stuff.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to quickly thank the people in the Government Relations office. You know, it's been a year and a half that I've been fortunate enough to be the minister. And you know, in previous roles that I had, we used to spend a lot of time in briefings and you'd get to know the individuals. You'd get to know the different people that were working in the ministry, and that just hasn't happened.

But for the first time, in the past couple months, you know, we had the opportunity to do SARM. And at the dialogue session it was so gratifying. I'd worked fairly closely with my deputy minister and the odd individual, kind of one-offs. But to sit at the dialogue, and the front row was filled with all the officials from Government Relations, and did I ever feel confident answering the questions with such excellent support around me.

And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank all those . . . As the member from Melfort mentioned about Grant Hodgins about the bureaucrats and how important they are, I have been blessed in the opportunities that I've had to serve with many, many bureaucrats across many ministries. And I'll say that the people in Government Relations are as good as any I've got to work with in the years that I've been a minister. So thank you.

I want to quickly acknowledge the people within my ministry's office. We had one that just left. Julia just left, but I've got Max and Melissa and Andrea, and what a great crew that is. You know, it's not always easy in politics and it's great to be able to come back to your office and have a laugh over something that has gone on. And so I just want to thank those three in my office. They've done a great job.

Different people have talked about their constituency assistants, and I've been blessed over twenty-two and a half years — I think I've mentioned that already — to have two constituency assistants. My first one was with me for eight years in opposition. She moved on into government and has since retired.

And Nicole has been with me for the past 15 years and does an absolutely great job. If I need a sounding board, she is excellent. She's got a couple young kids that are . . . well one's graduating this year, and the other is just getting their learner's licence, Mr. Speaker. And so if I need a sounding board on what's going on in the community, in the schools, she is a great sounding board. So I just want to thank Nicole for what she does each and every day.

I want to thank Cindy and our boys. You know, I probably don't even know what to say about that actually. They have been . . . The boys have been pretty busy of course, and everybody kind of gets to see what they're doing. But what I do want to say is thank you to my colleagues, a couple members on the other side for recognizing and giving us congratulations. They've got a pretty high profile, which for the most part is real nice until they're your boys and then you don't wish they had quite such a high profile.

I can tell you that February was a stressful month. I think this is nerve-racking, but watching the Olympics from Beijing was much tougher, and the support that we got as a family was amazing. So I'll leave it at that before I spend my 20 minutes talking about them.

I want to talk a little bit about my seatmate. I have had the opportunity to be here for twenty-two and a half years, and my current seatmate was elected the same year, as was yourself, Mr. Speaker, and the Deputy Premier. And you know, I've sat in a lot of different positions, and so has the member from Lumsden-Morse, but I cannot talk to him as the Lumsden-Morse MLA because he is so Thunder Creek. He has been Thunder Creek forever, and if there's ever a name that epitomizes an MLA, it's Thunder Creek, Mr. Speaker.

We have 45 years of experience, and I said to my staff, how much experience does the opposition have combined? A little bit more than us; I think 60. But in this three-by-six-square-foot area, 45 years of experience.

And for the last three weeks it has been the most enjoyable,

because we'd be sitting here and go, oh my God, do you remember when that happened? And do you remember when we were sitting over there and we did this? Oh, I think there was one time where they were going to I think eliminate the yellow pages and the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy — not the current one — had a phone book and ripped it up. And anyway, it's been a really good past three or four weeks sitting with the member from Thunder Creek reminiscing about all the great times that we had on opposition side for eight years, but more importantly for the people of Saskatchewan and the betterment of Saskatchewan, being able to sit on this side for the last 15 years.

So I want to go real quickly and then I'll get into the rest of it. But I've gone from one of the members that has sat here the longest, such as yourself and myself and the Deputy Premier, to the one that's sat here the least amount of time. And you know, I'm amazed that in a year and a half, so many of the new elected members, what amazing speeches they've given. I know the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy talked about those speeches and so have many others. And I'm just amazed at how well they do, including for a maiden speech, and what a good job our member from Athabasca did.

I remember when we first started, when I first ran, and you know, I think others would hear this from the party, that the party will say that in an election what is most important is the party. You can think you're all that and a bag of potato chips as a great candidate, but you're not nearly as important as the party. In fact the general rule of thought is that the party attracts 85 per cent of the vote and the candidate, a really good candidate, might attract 15 per cent of the vote — maybe. I would say the one exception is in Athabasca where the candidate attracted 85 per cent of the vote and the party tagged along at 15.

[Applause]

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Yeah, okay. And we have to get this budget debate over and get back into regular business because I'm not sure how that member from Athabasca is going to stand any more of these accolades. He's going to have to kind of get back to real life and what really happens around this place. Because since you've been here, it has maybe not been traditional, the grind of budget and everything else.

[15:00]

I have listened to the speeches on this side and, you know, the budget, it talks about back on track, the economy on track, the finances on track, and the government services on track. And, Mr. Speaker, listening to the speeches on this side, you can hear it. You can hear the optimism, the positiveness, Mr. Speaker, the momentum that this province has, the economy has. We're back on track. And I've heard so many different members talk about on track, and of course you start thinking, train track. And it's a train, the economy is the train. And it's got momentum. It's got optimism. It's got everything going for it.

And then you listen to the opposition and it's the exact opposite. It's a juxtaposition, Mr. Speaker. Everything is doom and gloom. And I've listened to their speeches and it's really interesting because we'll finish a speech and one of our . . . you know, we'll go up and, "Great speech. Really positive, good examples." We listen to their speech and one of them gives a speech and it's

doom and gloom, and like the sky is falling. And then the next one gives one and it's even worse. And they go up and go, "Good one. That was even more depressing than my speech. That was absolutely awful." Because that's what the province is in their eyes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, and I know a couple members have used the example of the future's so bright, I have to wear sunglasses. And it's maybe not quite that wording, but they've used it. And I thought, that is not a bad theme song for us on this side. And I thought, what would be a good theme song for the opposition on the doom and gloom and the railway and everything else?

And all I could think of, and for those that like country and western, Mr. Speaker, all I could think of is, "I can hear the train a-coming. It's rolling around the bend." That's our economy. It's a-coming, and it's rolling around the bend. And why it's such a good theme song for the opposition is because the next line is, "And I ain't seen the sunshine and I don't know when." That is the opposition's viewpoint.

You know, it goes on a little bit more. And I thought of it last night, and I wasn't going to talk about it, but I am going to talk about it. And it's pointed at the member from Regina Rosemont. And he has been here, it will be four terms in opposition. That is a long time. We spent eight years in opposition, and that was seven too many. He will have spent 16 years in opposition. That's a long time. That's a drag, Mr. Speaker. Because the next line in the song is, "I'm stuck here at Sask legislature and time keeps draggin' on." Because I'm sure after 16 years in opposition, the time has to be draggin' on.

And the final lyric that I just kind of want to talk about is it talks about, "But that train keeps a rollin'." But not down to San Antone, up to Athabasca. That's where this economic train is going.

And for the first time, for the first time, I think, in — I don't know; I would think in the province's history — a political party is representing border to border to border to border. That's where we're at.

Now to the fun stuff, the budget, the numbers. I do want to touch on, you know, last Wednesday the Minister of Finance read the budget. And so much attention is paid to the budget. But also what happened, and a few members have mentioned this on this side — definitely nobody on that side, and unfortunately not even the media — but the third quarter report, \$450 million paid directly to debt. Unbelievable. You don't get the media covering that, and you sure don't have the opposition covering it. So I'm going to try and emphasize, that's almost a half a billion dollars to provincial debt over the last few months, paid off by this Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker. Unbelievable.

Mr. Speaker, the budget is back on track, but the economy is back on track. And you know, I believe the people of Saskatchewan are back on track. I had the opportunity, as all of our members did, to attend SARM, the convention of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, in Regina a couple of weeks ago. And when you walked into that hall there was an energy. There was an optimism, enthusiasm for what was going to be taking place in this province, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, there was 1,000 delegates there, and you know, we went through

the bear pit and we went through dialogue sessions. And I know the members on this side were there, and a lot of the members from the opposition.

And I've always found it just amazing. I'm glad they've kind of changed their ways. But how they would be able to wear a mask, how they would be able to be in a room of 1,000 people and not wear a mask, and come into a room where they can social distance like they can on that side, and then put masks back on. It just did not make sense to me, Mr. Speaker.

Oh, there is a member that's been around for four terms. Did you realize that Johnny Cash wrote a song about you? Mr. Speaker, as I said, you know, just I need to touch on what is going on in Government Relations and the investment that we have put into infrastructure and continuing to put into infrastructure.

I do want to talk a little bit about municipal revenue sharing because there is a reduction in municipal revenue sharing. Last year the amount was \$275 million. This year it's down to about 262, about a four and a half per cent decrease, far less than what we thought the impact would be after COVID, Mr. Speaker. So last year was the highest, the year before was the second highest, even after COVID. At 262, it's the third-highest amount going into municipal revenue sharing in the history of the program.

And you know, there are a couple of municipalities that have been complaining, and I can understand. Nobody wants to see a cut. But I haven't cleared it with the Minister of Finance yet, but I'm going to ask you right now if this is okay. If I went to talk to some of the municipalities and said, "We can go to the highest that you've ever got, \$275 million, and we're going to freeze it there for 10 years," do you think they'd take that?

Because the whole point of municipal revenue sharing is when the revenues go up, we all benefit. And when they drop, we all pay the . . . yeah, pay the price. And this is because of COVID, it has dropped. And I don't think there would be a municipal leader that would take me up because every municipal leader in this province knows what this province is on the verge of: \$13 billion worth of investment, and think of the PST that is going to be distributed around this province in the coming years, Mr. Speaker.

The other initiatives that I want to talk a little bit about is the ICIP [Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program] program, and what a program that has been for rural Saskatchewan. You know, our provincial government, since the implementation of ICIP, has put over \$300 million of funding into more than 250 projects. Projects like, I know my friend here, the member from Wood River, the rink in Assiniboia, what a project that is, Mr. Speaker. And you know, the Buffalo Pound water plant renewal, more than \$74 million provincial fund that will feed, you know, the southern part — Regina, Moose Jaw — for decades and decades to come. 19.9 million in provincial funding towards the city of Prince Albert's aquatic centre and arenas. Great programs spread around the province, Mr. Speaker. This budget does more of that.

We have just finished an intake. There'll be more announcements coming up to all the municipalities that I know are watching right now. I would say that there's another intake that will be closing on May 10th, so please get your applications in.

The other area that I want to touch on briefly is the Indigenous, First Nations and Métis Relations and the investment that we're putting into that area. I heard different members speak that there is no investment whatsoever. If \$233 million is no investment, then accuse us, accuse us of not investing.

But, Mr. Speaker, the last couple years were tough on that sector because the casinos were closed down and there was no revenue to hand out. And finally they're up and running, much to the chagrin of the opposition who would still rather see them closed down. But, Mr. Speaker, \$230 million is going into a number of programs that will help benefit First Nations and Métis Relations, Mr. Speaker. Not to mention the program that was mentioned by the Minister for Trade and Export, the Indigenous Investment Finance Corporation, and what a program that will be moving forward, Mr. Speaker. Strong investment into that area. More work to do. We're doing some work on the duty-to-consult.

But, Mr. Speaker, I am proud of that investment. I'm going to vote for that investment, and I'd ask the members opposite to look at that investment and rethink the tradition of always voting something down. And how about they stand up and vote for something, Mr. Speaker?

Just not last but not least, is that I just do want to talk a little bit about what I have seen over the number of years, especially sitting on this side. And for those of you that were elected in 2007 when we got the privilege to form the government, what a thrill that was. And at that time, for those that maybe weren't paying as close attention to politics because you probably had bigger things going on in your life than that, they went from government down to — they, meaning the opposition, the NDP [New Democratic Party] — went down to 20 seats. So you know, still a fair, strong representation, and a number of cabinet ministers still were here.

And I remember I was sitting down the way there where the Minister of Education sits now. And right across from me, I don't know whether they intended this, but there was Pat Atkinson and Judy Junor, two former Health ministers. And I was the Health minister at the time, and you know, they just never accepted that they lost. In fact that party has never accepted that it's lost. And it's not like a purple haze, it's an orange haze that goes over them that makes them feel like they are the natural governing party, that they are smarter than anybody on this side of the House. That's just a given.

But even more important and more frustrating is they hold a moral high ground over everybody. And it was never so evident . . . It started back then in 2007 where, you know, those two members that were former Health ministers, I know they thought, my God, this is just a dumb farmer from Lewvan. And I took exception to that. I said I can take the dumb, but farmer from Lewvan, what's wrong with that?

Mr. Speaker, you know, and it just continued on. They changed leaders and they got a person by the name of Dwain Lingenfelter, you know. And there was a person that thought his was a little bit higher and his moral standing was a little bit higher.

And I remember when he was in the House here one day and he was going after Brad. And Brad — our former premier, Brad Wall — could hold his own against anybody. And he finally got

Lingenfelter so frustrated, Lingenfelter called him the little cheap cheat from Swift Current. Little thief from Swift Current. You know, and that's kind of the attitude that they have had, that our side is not capable of governing. Even though they've got to look at the numbers sooner or later. But they don't, you know.

And so they went on from there to Cam Broten. And you know, I think he was probably a really nice guy until he got that orange cloud, in that orange cloud, and then his personality changed. And maybe it's because he becomes the leader of the opposition, and we know how successful the leaders of the opposition have been in this province for the last number of years, Mr. Speaker. They tend not to show up after elections. This lame-duck leader that is on his way out, through mail-in ballots, which is perfectly fine, got to come back the next day, but the previous two leaders simply didn't.

And you know, I think it reflects. And I think the people of Saskatchewan feel what that NDP, that orange haze has over the people: a little bit smarter than anybody else, look down, moral ground a little bit higher than anybody else.

And you know, I'll never forget when the former leader, Cam Broten, was going after our then associate minister for Rural and Remote Health. And you know, the politics wasn't working for him and the policy wasn't working for him, the leader of the opposition, so what does he do? They get personal. And he went straight . . . And I thought, of all the people. I mean, yeah, attack me, but all the people on this side, to go after the member from Yorkton on his beliefs and everything else, it just got so personal. And I tell you, I had a hard time holding back the joy when I saw him get defeated that night and the member from Yorkton still sitting here, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to wrap it up here real quickly. And I would say that, you know, things haven't changed there very much. You know, the acceptance of loss just is not in their vocabulary. They still don't agree that they should have lost in '07, they should have lost in '11, they should have lost in 2016, and they keep dropping in numbers, Mr. Speaker.

[15:15]

Well the member from Cumberland is spouting off and that's perfectly fine, Mr. Speaker, because he doesn't often get onto his feet and stand up. So I guess this is where he can do his best speaking is when he's on his seat, Mr. Speaker.

But you know, I thought it was never more evident than on February 15th when we were fortunate enough to win Athabasca. And I listened to the Leader of the Opposition and what he had to say. And he congratulated the member opposite. Good for him. And then straight to, well he better start holding that government accountable. And you know, that is the craziest congratulations I've ever heard.

You know, what was even more shocking was when the former member, the former member that sat in this House for far too long, Buckley Belanger — for two different parties, that's right — Buckley Belanger. And this was his quote. And I can't believe that the members opposite haven't condoned him, haven't exiled him. Because this is his quote: "What happened last night was the Saskatchewan Party may have won, but democracy lost."

Do you know what's going on in this world right now? When you've got a dictator like Putin invading a democratic country, and a member would have the nerve to say that in Saskatchewan under a just election, because they didn't win, democracy lost.

You know who won? The people of Athabasca, Mr. Speaker, that's who won. And I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, every election the people are right and, Mr. Speaker, they've been right 47 times on this side and 12 times on that side, as hard as it is for me to say. But they were right for 12 seats on that side, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the motion. I will be supporting . . .

An Hon. Member: — The amendment.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — I will not be supporting . . . This is why I'm practising this. I will not be supporting the amendment. I will be supporting the motion. Because I've been told, and they've been coaching me, the Premier's not here on Thursday and the member beside me is not here, so the first person that has to vote — that could overthrow this whole government — is me. So I will not be supporting the amendment, but I will be supporting the motion. And somebody remind me that on Thursday when I'm supposed to stand up. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Hargrave: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's sure nice to have a warm-up band that can perform like that before the main act shows up. And boy I tell you, what an act to follow there. I mean, did anybody want to switch with me? I'd be more than willing because this is not going to be as much fun.

But anyway, Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to get up and speak today about the budget. A little bit about the budget, a little bit about . . . I mean we've had some great members speaking already. As the member from Indian Head had stated, they've gone through the numbers; they've told you all about what the budget is. I mean even though it's not admitted on the other side, they've read it and they also know. When you can only pick on maybe one thing, that's pretty sad.

I mean, you know, the budget has been good. The Finance minister and her team have worked tirelessly to put this budget together in . . . to very good times. Yeah, and the train is a-comin'. And I don't have another song that I brought to quote along, and I mean because it doesn't get any better than a good old Johnny Cash tune, right? Waylon Jennings had a couple of good ones, but nothing like that one.

But I'll try to keep my comments fairly short, Mr. Speaker — like I say, because there's been a lot of good speeches, you know — and talk a little bit about the back on track. Because we are. And I'll do a little bit of that. But I'll start with my thank yous because I strongly believe that we have to thank the people that are responsible that help us get here and help us stay here. And that's so important.

As I said, I'd like to thank the Finance minister and her team for all their hard work in putting this together. It is a daunting task without a doubt. I mean after the last couple of years that we've

been . . . To put this together, it's incredible.

I'd like to thank all my caucus colleagues. I mean, you know, we're in here but we're only in here part of the day, and we spend the rest of the day with each other in committees or on boards or on coffee row a little bit, sometimes in various . . . But we're talking to each other and seeing what's happening in other parts of the province, not just in my own constituency. Because it's important to me to know what's going on in the whole province, not just in Prince Albert. Prince Albert's awesome and things are going great and it's great.

So I'd like to thank my colleagues and all the caucus staff and all the staff that are in the ministers' offices. That I know from being a minister, those people, they work so hard to make sure that we do our best and that we're doing the good work that we're elected here to do.

I want to thank the constituents of my riding in Prince Albert — actually the whole city of Prince Albert — they're tremendous. And I know the minister from Prince Albert Northcote and myself work as though it's one. Because it is. We're there, and we work for the people of Prince Albert. And we work very well together in helping each other with different files. And so it's been very good.

And I got a great CA [constituency assistant] up there, Joy Schewaga, who has been with me since I've been elected and is incredible. In fact, you know, I know that people would find this hard to believe, but sometimes when I answer the phone there and I say, "Yeah, well I am the MLA," and they go, "Well no, could we speak to Joy please?" And so I've got to actually give her the call, and she can actually deal with it. So it's good.

And my family, well you know, will always support me. I'll just mention some of them quickly just from oldest to youngest: my son Trent and his wife, Lisa, and their son, Elias; my daughter Angela, her husband, Joe, and their kids, Noah and Layla; my son Colby, his wife, Becky, and their kids, Hannah and Myles; my daughter Jill, her husband, Greg, and their two kids, Madilyn and little Lucas. Little Lucas is just . . . well he's about under two and he's one of those guys. He goes 100 miles an hour, and he is a typical little boy. I mean if it's up, it's got to be on the floor. So he's just a treat to be around, and it's so much fun to be around the two of them.

But, Mr. Speaker, most importantly, you know . . . I know I've got to speak louder so I can speak over my own member. But that's okay. If he wants to heckle me, heckle me. You know, I can take it. I can take it. I can keep him out of my office in the future. But most importantly, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about my partner, my best friend, the love of my life, my wife, friend. What an incredible woman she is. I don't know how she does it all, everything that she does.

Her and I, we worked side by side together since we first bought the dealerships. We worked six days a week, you know, numerous hours every day. The first 10 years we had the dealerships, we never took a holiday. On occasion we would take a couple of days if we had to go away to a meeting. We'd take a couple of days just to have a breather. We thought it was a big deal when we went to our cabin at the lake. We would leave Saturday after about 7 o'clock in the evening. We'd get out there.

We'd light a fire and — because it's a two-hour drive, so about 10 in the evening — we'd sit out till 2 in the morning talking about life. And then we'd drive home Sunday. And we thought, well that was a great mental health break. And it was, because I think everybody needs those mental health breaks. They got to get away. So that's what we'd do.

She still actually oversees our remaining dealership, the one in Melfort. She's there every week. She doesn't go every day, but she's there frequently. And she oversees the dealership and on occasion will ask for my opinion. And actually we work so well together even on that. But she oversees that. She's out there all the time.

Plus in her spare time — I don't know how she has any spare time because she goes, goes, goes — she's been doing Meals on Wheels for I think about 10 years. And through COVID of course they said that anybody over 65 couldn't deliver Meals on Wheels. So they were short of people, and I think she must have got phoned every day to do Meals on Wheels. She was delivering Meals on Wheels all the time.

And she had her people there on her route that she just cared about. She would take them little gifts at Christmas. She would do all kinds of things like that, and it was just incredible. And when one would pass away, I mean as they do, she would be very emotional, very upset that her friend had passed away. And it was just somebody that she'd delivered Meals on Wheels to, but that's how dedicated she was to doing that.

She also does Habitat for Humanity. She's done that for about eight or nine years, Habitat for Humanity in Prince Albert. She was on that board. She was instrumental in helping develop the board for the amalgamation of all the Habitat for Humanities in Saskatchewan into one Habitat for Humanity, which is great. And she continues to serve on that board, and she's found that to be very, very rewarding as well. There's some great people on the board, you know. But most importantly there's some great people that they help. And their motto is, don't give a hand out; give a hand up.

And so they help numerous people. I don't know how many ceremonies I've been to in Prince Albert where they turn over the key to a family, and it's so wonderful to see the smile on their face. And they own that house. They put their time in and they own that house. So we help them out. We support them by going to the ReStore, and we'll buy things from the ReStore just to help out. And that's quite incredible. But she's there.

And you know what? And she does all that. She's busy and she does all the volunteer work. She does the dealership, deals with everything. And then one of the kids will call and say, "The kids are sick. I've got to go to work. Can you help out?" And she'll drop everything and that's where she goes. So she's a great grandmother

And I say in here, and you know, she had a . . . You know, one of the hardest things that I have to do is on Sundays is leave home. And it's always, every Sunday it's the same thing. I mean we've been married for 26 years. We've been together for over 30 years, and it's still the hardest thing for me to do is to leave there and especially in the spring session. And it's even worse then because Monday was her birthday. And I have to leave there

Sunday and I got to miss her birthday. And I probably, in the last number of years since I've been elected, have missed almost all her birthdays. And that's just, that's terrible and I feel so bad every time about doing that. It's just not the same doing a FaceTime call. It's not the same, and I regret that so much, Mr. Speaker. And I hope that one day she can forgive me for that.

And she does because I know she loves me a lot, and she knows what I try to do here. I'm down here for a reason. I want to make Prince Albert better. I want to make Saskatchewan better. I want to do that. And so she knows that, and she encourages me to be here. Yeah. And on occasion, we might even take a little trip together because we do love to travel. But yeah, so that's very tough.

And you know, it's been a tough couple of . . . these last couple of years, of course. And who would have thought that we'd have such a thing as this pandemic that would come and would just stifle the whole economy, would stifle the people, would keep us locked in our homes for such a long period of time, would keep us away from family, would keep us away from friends? I tell you, I would have never thought it.

I mean, we lost friends through this period — not through COVID, not to COVID — but we lost friends that we couldn't even go see. I mean, we couldn't go see them in their final days.

We lost one friend, her name is Valerie Makela. And Valerie was our neighbour when we lived in Saskatoon. She stood up for us when we got married, and she was the maid of honour. She got sick with cancer, and within a few weeks, she was gone. And we could not come to her home because of COVID. We sure, we didn't know that she only had a few weeks to live. But it's sort of like, they were taking it as cautious as could be, and so we never got a chance to say goodbye to Valerie.

And we regret that. She was more . . . We called her the warden because she was always the organizer. When we told her we were getting married, she says, "I'll organize it all." And that's what she was. And she was an incredible lady. Her and her husband, Greg, are . . . And Greg is still a good, good friend of ours. But we miss them lots.

But there was lots of other people in the community that we would like to have paid respects to. John Holash. John Holash was well known in Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, a super well-known gentleman, was a dear, dear man. We've seen him every time . . . He made a huge effort. Even though he was feeble in his last while, he would make an effort to come and say, "hi" and "thank you for doing what you're doing." His son Mitch is an incredible man who helps out. He's a lawyer and does so much for the city of Prince Albert and does so much for the government and the province of Saskatchewan.

But John was an amazing man, you know, and like I say, well known. And at his funeral they could have a maximum of 10 people including the priest, and that's pretty sad. And I know I talked to Mitch, and Mitch said we will, one of these days, hold an appropriate service, and I look forward to that.

[15:30]

So it's just been tough, and I hope that some of the damage being

done between family and friends because of COVID — on the one side or the other side, there's people that were down the middle, but lots on either side — and the damage between neighbours and friends and family, that those fences get mended very quickly here because it's so important that we get back to normal.

And that's what this budget's about. This budget is about getting back to normal, getting back to where we were, getting back on track. You know, keep building that strong economy that we had, you know, supporting the people of Saskatchewan. And how do you support people? With a strong economy that can generate revenue that can actually pay for all the social services, not just by raising taxes on corporations and raising taxes on people. That's not how you do it. It's by creating a strong economy, a growing economy.

And a growing economy is what we got. You know, I just go; I look around my city of Prince Albert. I mean, we got so much happening there. We got the forestry industry. We got One Sky that is building an OSB [oriented strand board] plant there. It's going to employ about 700 people. They're going to start construction, hopefully fairly soon. That's going to help our forestry industry. That's going to help there.

We got Paper Excellence. They're going to invest in about a billion dollars back into the pulp mill, and that's going to employ 1,000 people, plus all the other people that work out in the bush and cut trees, and all the truckers. And that's going to help there. It's incredible to see that.

We've got private investment with Pivot manufacturing. Now if you're looking for furniture, I recommend highly that you go to the internet and google Pivot out of Prince Albert. Now these are the guys who invented SkipTheDishes. Now they sold SkipTheDishes for, I don't know, \$50 or maybe a couple more dollars than that.

An Hon. Member: — The price of a car dealership.

Mr. Hargrave: — No, no. Not that much. But they sold that and now he's got an 80,000-square-foot building. He's building furniture out, and it's the first of 10 buildings that he's going to build. And so that's going to employ 1,500 people when it's all done. But they're already there and we got the wood, and that's more to go.

So I encourage everybody, support Saskatchewan. Support local entrepreneurs like that. Go search their furniture. It's incredible stuff. It's well-made. It's very stylish. So go online; you see it all there. It's been very nice, so I encourage everybody to do that.

You know, we started with . . . Well this is all about budgets, right? And as a business owner I know quite a bit about budgets. I was with the Bank of Montreal for 20 years, and most of that time all I did was analyze financial statements. You know, it's pretty good for a guy that doesn't have grade 12 math, and I don't have a university degree. But I actually was pretty good at analyzing financial statements, and I still am actually. And it's just something that I like to be able to do.

So anyway, we're talking about budgets. But my wife and I, especially over this last two years, budgets, budgets. I mean

we're looking at a budget for our business. So what do you do? I mean it's pretty crucial that you do it right. You know, you got to make some really, really difficult decisions over the last two years. And we made some very, very difficult decisions over the last couple of years.

And you know, we checked on all the revenues. We checked on expenses. And we said, how can we improve a little bit of revenue, and how can we cut some expenses? Because what was important to us is not only our business but the people that work in our business. And we were willing to do everything we could do to make sure that they were okay as well as us. And so, you know, quite honestly I'm pretty happy that today they're all still employed.

And yeah, I know I've got to speak over that member again, but you know, I will pay him back. I'll be in the chair here one of these days, but that's okay. But anyway, it's very, very . . . Those budgets are something that we did, and those people are employed. So I know what it takes.

I know the hard work that the minister had to do to go through this budget, and how the Premier and the cabinet has to sit down and make some of these very difficult decisions. I know everybody says, well, just give me money for this; just give me money for that. And no problem here. And other people go, well just cut this, cut this, cut this. Well you can't. But you got to look at it both ways and see.

You know, if only we were like the federal Liberal-NDP government, and we would have this bottomless pit of money that we just didn't care about. We didn't worry about that. We got lots of money. There's still cheques in the chequebook, he goes. I'm sure that's what Trudeau said. There's cheques in the chequebook. Just keep writing those cheques until the chequebook is empty because, I mean, bar no expense, you know.

And you know, I turned 66 years old here a couple weeks ago. And I know I don't look 66. I know I look much younger. Thank you. Thank you. I do look much younger. I know that the debt that is out there that the Liberal-NDP government is creating is going to take a long time . . . I mean I wish ours was only . . . When it's over a trillion dollars, that's a few shekels. And you know what? I'm 66. I'm probably not going to be around to pay down the whole thing, but I know some people that are. And I have four kids, seven grandkids, and I just wonder what the heck it's going to be like for them. And I know members opposite, I mean, some of them are younger and they got young families as well. It's those young kids that end up going to pay that debt, and that is what bothers me the most. I'll be okay.

I think it's pathetic what they have done, but there was some need. There definitely was. We experienced that here in this province as well. We had to spend some money to help businesses, to help people keep going. And so did the federal government, but there comes an end. And now what they're doing in this coalition thing, it's just terrible.

You know, I was talking about our business — and I'll just sort of finish off here — how tough it really was. Everybody thinks, oh, car dealers, they make lots of money, whatever. But you don't. You know, it's not realistic. For months and months we were operating with under 10 new vehicles on our car lot. We

couldn't get parts in to fix people's cars. And it's not because of us. It's because of the supply chain was there. Finally it started to come around and we're getting that back on track. And so that's nice, and we're able to continue to donate to various causes in our community and do certain things like that, so we're pretty optimistic where that's going. That business, our business, is back on track. The economy is back on track.

I'd like to tell you about some more positive thing that's happening in our community. What's near and dear to my heart is the hospice is well under construction now. They've raised . . . Even through the pandemic, they continued to raise and got the \$4 million required to build that hospice because they know how important it is to people that are in the final stages of life. I mean, I know far too many people that, you know, they don't want to pass away in a hospital. They want to pass away at home but they can't. But this hospice, it's going to be so wonderful because they're there. And those staff know how to deal with people in their final stages, and so I'm so happy about that.

But as well there's a whole area there. They call it The Yard District and I'm pretty excited about it as well. This is where the new arena's going, the new aquatic centre. There's three arenas and an aquatic centre going up there and that the city's putting up. It's incredible. It's an area that is all new to development. I know there's a bunch of . . . there's a hotel going up there. There's several restaurants. I know the owners of the development, and they tell me that there's a number of other commercial businesses going in there, so we're pretty excited about that.

There's this thing, the new hospital that's coming to Prince Albert as well, and there was another 13 million in the budget here. And that's close to starting construction; it's not that far off. And I just look at the construction jobs that are going to happen over the next few years in Prince Albert. Between the OSB plant and the mill and the construction of the arenas, the construction of the hospice, the construction of the hospital, Prince Albert is going to boom. And it's going to get really incredibly busy in Prince Albert, so we're pretty excited about that in our city. And I think it's good for the whole province. I mean, we've got a billion and a half dollars, or something like that, is in Prince Albert of the \$13 billion that this province is bringing in, in investments. So this is going to be an incredible thing.

You know what else is happening in Prince Albert that's really good that the government has done here? Last summer they built passing lanes going north to the lakes. I mean, I know that's improved highway traffic safety there. I know there's lives going to be saved because we have those passing lanes. And there's passing lanes going on the highway west of Prince Albert. And there's going to be even more good news this summer because that is a highly used . . . And I know the member from Prince Albert Northcote used to travel that highway every day to work. But now this summer, they're going to be dividing about 8 kilometres out of the city just to help with that traffic flow there. And that's going to help out, you know.

And I've got to talk about a couple other things. Impaired driving, I mean those numbers are . . . You know, it's always a passion of mine and the fight against impaired driving. And I did a member's statement the other day here about Andy Murie who . . . Andy was the CEO [chief executive officer] for MADD

Canada [Mothers Against Drunk Driving]. I got to meet him about 16 years ago in this building at a meeting with him, and it's quite incredible the work that has been done by this government since then. We've been awarded — I personally got one — for a Citizen of Distinction. And they give one of those awards away per year. And I got it for 2018, and SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] got it for 2019. And so it tells you the good work that SGI is doing on impaired driving.

Now we used to be the worst, by far the worst, in this province. It was sort of common knowledge. You'd just grab a 12-pack of beer and you'd go out and drive around, and that was sort of fully accepted. But you know, today from all the good work that has been done and the hard work of MADD Canada and the MADD Canada associate members in Saskatoon and Regina and Prince Albert, the hard work that they're doing, those numbers are decreasing.

We've had a 60 per cent decline in the amount of deaths, you know, and that's so huge. And we don't know if it's you or me or my son or my friends or other members here in the House whose lives have been saved because of that. But we know we have 60 per cent less, so we know there's lives saved today and there's people alive today because of that good work that SGI has been doing. So I think that's pretty incredible.

I just want to mention a couple more quick, little things. I don't have the good song, still hasn't come into my head. So I guess you're not going to get . . . hear me singing. But health care, I mean, I know the member was talking about health care this morning and about her situation when she went to the hospital. Well last year I had three episodes that required emergency. And two of them were here in Regina and I know, thank God, my wife was here. We were in session. My wife was here. And the pain I was in was just incredible. She got me. She drove me to the hospital. I said, I can do it; you don't have to call anybody else. We did get into the emergency area, the reception area, and I no sooner had a little bracelet on my wrist and I was taken into emergency. I was given a bed, you know, within five minutes.

There was a doctor there and he seen me and got me in for, you know, some medical, some exams, ultrasound, and whatever else I needed, and started a treatment for me. And yeah, it was fairly busy in there. But you know, I had a great chat with the doctor and I had a great chat with the nurse, and that was their back-and-forth with me. And yeah, they're busy, but you know what? They know the great work that they were doing. There was not a complaint from them as to the conditions that they're working under. They're busy and that's part of their job and they know that's part of their job. I mean their job isn't to sit there and hope nobody . . . You know, they hope that there's no emergencies but their job is to go there and serve the people.

[15:45]

So I had one in a small town. We're out at our cabin at our lake, and I woke up and I knew I was going to have problems, have trouble. And I said, quick, let's head home so I can go to the hospital in P.A. [Prince Albert]. And by the time we got to the vehicle I said, no, just take me to the closest hospital. And they did.

There was a hospital in Porcupine Plain. And again, I mean

incredible staff that were there. They helped out. There was no complaining. There was no "What are you doing taking up too much of our time; we're too busy with anything else." They just helped out. They got me into a positive position and treatment that I was fine by the end of the day. But it's still one of those situations that's pretty bad.

And the third episode was here again in Regina, where I woke up in the morning and I couldn't see out of one eye. And I got in to a specialist here. I phoned and they said, come in, see the specialist; he's at the Pasqua Hospital, and get here right away. So of course I did get there right away. And he said, well we got to fix your eye; you have five tears in the back of your eye and that's just not good so we have to fix that. And they do a laser surgery on it and they go back in and they stitch your eye. So you know, and all . . . like that.

So I don't know. I haven't had a bad experience in the hospital where I've had to sit in the hallway. If you have an emergency, they will take care of you. And you know, I've had three different emergencies and always been well taken care of.

As well, you know, I hear members opposite talking about the education system. And they said, you should try talking to people. And I do, and I have . . . I told you, I've got four kids and seven grandkids. And my CA's got a daughter in grade 12. And I got kids scattered throughout the system. Grandkids, not kids scattered throughout the system. Grandkids scattered throughout the system, and they're very appreciative.

They had some concerns when there was virtual schooling. I mean a couple of my grandkids, they were lucky to get maybe two hours of education a week. And another grandkid, he got one hour a day. And so I wasn't too pleased about that when we're talking about, well oh, they need more money, they need more money. And my grandkids, the most they could get was a couple hours a week.

I know Patrick Maze. I mean I'm surprised he still hasn't announced his name to run here, but he could sure badmouth us in the media all the time. But maybe he should just sort of step up and try to take a seat across. He doesn't have to even be leader. He could actually sit across on one of the opposition seats. I'm sure that next election they'll probably go down a little bit, but he could probably take out one of those and try that, because we've got record funding on both operational; we've got record funding on capital in our educational system.

And I know a lot of teachers. I have a lot of friends that are teachers as well. And believe me . . . And I meet with the school boards in Prince Albert that cover the Prince Albert area regularly. Hey, they'd like more money. We all would. We all would.

We've just come through a pandemic where funds are tight. Everything is tight. But we should be spending like the NDP-Liberal government in Ottawa, just with a bottomless pit of money. Just don't worry about it. Just keep writing cheques.

It's not cash that does it. It's actually people that make the difference. It's not the amount of cash that make the difference. So if they want to do it right, they can do it right, and they can do it with the amount of cash that they got. And they're proving that

they can, and they prove it every year. So you know, I just think that the numbers that we've come up with, the Finance minister have come up with, the Minister of Education, it's pretty good. So I give them both credit.

But anyway, I've probably gone over my 20 minutes, haven't I? I told you to tell me to stop, but no, no. I said I'm only going to take 10 minutes. But in closing, I'd like to say that I'll be supporting the motion of the budget of the Minister of Finance and seconded by the member from Moose Jaw North, and I'll not be supporting the amendment put forward by the opposition. Thank you very much.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Always a privilege to enter into debate here in this House, and always particularly meaningful to enter into budget debates when we think about what these represent for the province, when we look back on the history of the province and the great projects and decisions that have been made in this space, Mr. Speaker. I do my best to think about that time every time I rise in this Assembly, and it's always particularly salient on budget discussions.

But Mr. Speaker, perhaps before I get to the budget proper, I'll start by thanking, start with my CA, Marshall Burns, a wonderful, wonderful CA. So lucky to have him. I know there is discussion amongst, competition amongst members opposite on whose CA is the best CA. And while I'm confident we all have wonderful, hard-working CAs, my CA is pretty cool, Mr. Speaker. He's a Juno-nominated musician, excellent guitarist — country-western, honky-tonk.

For any members who are looking to spend Tuesday nights getting up to no good, I'd encourage them to stop in at The Fat Badger on Scarth Street and check out The Alley Dawgs. If you like country and western, you will love what they play. And I don't believe there's that 6 per cent PST being charged just yet, because I believe their shows . . . Only on the food. The shows are free. But Marshall, wonderful, wonderful CA.

Proud to represent the constituency of Regina University. Prouder every day, especially thanks to the strong advocacy and engagement that we've seen from constituents. I'm sure all members feel this way, but I'm particularly grateful to be able to represent such a great community and people from all walks of life who care deeply about this province.

Also like to thank my family. My very proud dad, who may be tuned in right now, tunes in every day and always gives me my Coles Notes on how we did, how members opposite did, and who I love very much and am very lucky to have in my life. Also my wonderful husband, Taylor, who will never ever tune in. It gives him way too much anxiety. He basically paces the house and I think occasionally will read tweets, summaries of question period, but will never, never watch.

And I suspect at least for those of you on the opposite side will never meet him because this building stresses him out far too much except for, I should be reminded, the member from Canora-Pelly, who has met my husband and I believe even bought us a

couple beers in another Pil zone last summer.

To my husband, to my family, to my little brother Brodie, to my sister Ceira, my mom, Marni, and of course my daughter who is just such a joy and harder and harder and harder to leave every day. The older she gets it's . . . I don't know. I've never had a toddler before. They're insane. They're chaotic. And they're just so much fun.

And I'm so thankful to have her in my life, have her help me get dressed every day by sitting in the sink and turning on all of the taps and crying and pounding the door when I leave in the morning, but more importantly running up to me every night when I get home and saying, mama. It's the highlight of my day and, yeah, just a really beautiful, beautiful part of my life.

And I know we say all the time that you never serve alone in this House. And I really appreciate the sacrifices that my family make and I know so many of your families make to allow us to be here.

Now on that classy note, I will move on to the budget itself. Budget 2022, where do I begin? Let's begin with a quote, mister deputy deputy speaker, Chair of all committees. Begin with a quote: "Taxation revenue is driving growth." Minister of Finance, 2022.

And what a sad but truly remarkable line to lead off a government's budget messaging. Growth is just being driven by taxation. And I looked at that. I believe it's actually the eighth line in the government's opening comments on their own budget. And I thought, wow, like wow, you've truly lost your way.

And this budget was such an opportunity. When you look at the period of time in which it came, this budget was such an opportunity. And while you say it's back on track, it's truly more of a swing and a miss. You know, I was going to say it's a swing and a miss from an angry, entitled, 'roided up old slugger whose best days are behind him, but the member from Regina Rosemont told me not to say that, so I won't. But it's a swing and a miss, Mr. Speaker, and it really drives home how far this government has fallen.

You know, and I'll admit I was sitting here in opposition. I was worried about this budget. This is a really pivotal time for the province, and this is a really interesting political moment too. And I was curious. No leaks, no murmurs. I was curious to see what is this government going to do.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, we spent a lot of the past year talking about how the Sask Party has truly been giving people the worst of both worlds. Worst jobs numbers, worst COVID numbers, just piling on to all those other worsts that they seem so disinterested in fixing: second-stage shelters, the abysmal SIS [Saskatchewan income support] rates, child poverty, infant mortality, mortgage foreclosures, consumer debt, population growth.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it's truly amazing to see some members in this House, you know, stand up and play to the cheap seats in the front row. But what makes it truly amazing is that when you know that one in four children in this province, Mr. Speaker, one in four children, small children who should be joyful, who should be happy, who should be fed, who should be well looked after

and nourished in the most holistic sense, one in four kids in this province lives in poverty, goes to sleep in abject poverty. And you know, to see members opposite stand up and cheer and backslap and leave feeling pretty good is truly the worst of all worlds.

Now in this budget the members opposite have doubled down on that, giving people truly the worst of both worlds. And they're leaving people absolutely flummoxed. You know, Mr. Speaker, I said I was surprised by this budget and I was. From gyms to schools, smokers to yogis, sports to the opera, Roughriders to young parents, hunters and quilters, you've managed to just peeve off everybody.

Your revenues in this budget are purposefully understated, and the improvement in your finances that you're all so proud of is the result of international events, and are in essence windfall revenues. And you . . . Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, they're choosing to turn around and add 32 new taxes to people during a time when we have an affordability crisis. This budget isn't back on track, Mr. Speaker. It's back on tax.

And again, Mr. Speaker, genuinely what a surprise. Honestly I sincerely thought it would be better. I thought I'd be struggling for, you know, something punchy to say here today. But it's truly remarkable. They've had some windfalls. They've declared COVID to be over. And the feds are continuing to give them 30 cents for every dollar they spend.

I was really worried what you'd do in this budget. I was worried you might invest in jobs, in immigration, labour force development, in training and education and innovation, community services, and truly invest in our health care system, ensure that 36,000 people in this province aren't waiting in pain, waiting — some of them literally dying — due to you deciding COVID was over last summer.

[16:00]

Because let's not forget, Mr. Speaker, just last week the Premier said the quiet part out loud. We know it wasn't public health advice leading decision making. And I'll quote. I'll quote from the Premier's budget response:

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

Like, wow, Mr. Speaker. The cost in dollars and cents and the cost in lives is going to be something that'll be accounted for at some point, whether in this building or in the history books. And I hope, I truly hope, Mr. Speaker, that it was public health advice

guiding this government's decisions because they certainly failed on the economic front.

And I hope for members opposite that they spoke up when they needed to — they questioned; they thought for themselves. They didn't just read what was handed to them, you know, happy to stick it to the NDP because of course everybody who questions this government or everybody who has a real crisis or an issue surely must be a New Democrat. Because, Mr. Speaker, that's the way it works for members opposite, right?

You know, well it's not right, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and neither is this budget. And again I'm surprised and I'm honestly disappointed. And you know, I've heard a lot of this in some budget responses. And I remember having what I believe to be a sincere conversation with the member from Kelvington-Wadena who said something along the lines of, isn't it exhausting to be mad all the time?

You know, and yeah, brother, it doesn't feel good. It doesn't feel good. And between all of this very poorly coded language that members opposite like to use — you know, whining, shrieking, complaining, piping up, piping down, being shrill — I mean it's pretty transparent. And everybody in this House and, more importantly, everybody outside of this House knows exactly what you're trying to do.

But to the member from Kelvington-Wadena: it doesn't feel good. We want our province to be doing well. And we believe here that government should be our strongest servant. You know, the member from The Battlefords, he talked a lot about a small "c" conservative government. Less intrusive, which is wild given his front bench is pushing a private police force and he's sitting there with the biggest government in Saskatchewan's history, taking more tax dollars from its citizens than at any point in history.

And, Mr. Speaker, government, big or small, should work for people — big or small. So yes, to the member opposite. It's tiring and it's defeating, not . . . being part of a 12-person opposition that certainly has its ups and downs. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm quite confident, and we've seen this any time anyone gets put on the spot, every single member of my team can dance circles around those members opposite.

But what is exhausting, Mr. Speaker, is the choices that this government continually makes and the inability of this government to have some integrity and some values, and not on values that we disagree on but common-sense issues. And it's those issues, when there is no action, no response, no acknowledgement, not even a letter back from a minister to a person in need — that's what gets exhausting.

And frankly, Mr. Speaker, the choices this government is making just simply don't add up. And we get it. You don't care about hungry kids, crumbling schools. You don't care about beaten women. You don't care about seniors living in abject poverty, unable to bathe themselves or have the basic dignity and access to care and human rights. We get it. Fine. Fine. Disagree on that. You care about your own bottom line, all right? Taxation is driving growth.

But here's the thing. You've lost touch and you're losing the

people. The jobs that you're touting, Mr. Speaker, those jobs are jobs that were lost during COVID. In your own numbers, in your own economic terms, of the last seven years, four of those years — four of those years by your own numbers — have had negative economic growth. This is not the record of a government that has grown the economy.

You're celebrating commodities, and yeah, sure, that's great. But honestly, Mr. Speaker, doesn't it feel a little bit uncomfortable to celebrate international events, the invasion of Ukraine, and sell it as good news? Especially when the fears amongst industry are that while input costs will continue to be high, the profits for producers will not be. And you know this. The revenues in the budget are significantly understated by anybody's math. You're forecasting below-market commodity prices to lower expectations. And sure, Mr. Speaker, budgets are political, but you're doing this at more than a political cost.

So let's get into it. Let's talk a little bit about jobs and labour market and immigration, Mr. Speaker. The current tight labour market we know is being compounded by long-existing demographic trends, aging population and declining birth rates. There are 5 million Canadians set to retire by the end of the decade. And of our labour market growth, immigration accounts for almost 100 per cent. We see this here in Saskatchewan. We've seen it in the past years when there's been zilch. Population growth from January 2021 to 2022 was 0.36 per cent, the lowest amongst provinces. In fact, in fact, population growth since 2018 has been the lowest amongst provinces. From October 2021 to December 2021, immigration was 2,600. Out-migration was just over 4,000, resulting in net out-migration of nearly 1,400 people.

You know, Mr. Speaker, if not for immigration, Saskatchewan's population would be shrinking, and you have to ask why. I'm sure that concerns about health, education, and the economy play some small part in people's family planning.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I think the best attempt came from the member from Walsh Acres, who tried nobly to pitch this budget as family friendly, touting the investment in child care, which is a sad day, Mr. Speaker, when the Sask Party backbench pitches federal dollars as a halo on a rather tarnished fiscal plan.

But, Mr. Speaker, you know this and I know this. So why in a budget that should be focused on delivering growth on investment, labour force planning, population growth, on an industrial strategy, why oh why oh why has this government allocated a grand total of zero new dollars to their own ministry in ICT [Immigration and Career Training]?

There's a zero-dollar increase to settlement services for newcomers. I know there are federal programs. We talk about wanting to take in as many people as we can from the Ukraine. We hear nothing in this House about the many hundreds and hundreds of Afghan-Canadians who live in our province, who are desperate, desperate to get some response from the government to help get their family out from under Taliban rule. And we allocate zero dollars, zero additional dollars for settlements in this budget. That just doesn't add up, Mr. Speaker. In fact they've cut \$40 million in labour market programs.

The only area they're up in is a federal transfer. Like, wow, wow,

wow, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And for those of you who are actually going to go away and do some checking, fact-check your own budget — it must be fun — you'll be told that actually that \$40 million has been moved over to Social Services; it's been moved over to the SIS program.

So actually your government's good news on how you're investing in the SIS program is actually just moving money from labour market development into the SIS line item. And that provincial training allowance, that provincial training allowance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that used to be used by people, notably women in shelters, people who could use that program for education, Mr. Speaker, to lift themselves out.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Social Services claiming that this . . . she's heckling from her seat, Mr. Speaker, and she's claiming that this program still will be able to lift people out of poverty. But let's be clear, Mr. Speaker. People we should be working to empower, to help access education and move off this pittance of a social allowance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they'll now get a grand total of 50 bucks a month. Fifty bucks a month if they're single, 100 if you're a couple with a kid, and I think — Minister, you can correct me — it's \$200 a month if you're two people with two kids, and that's where it caps out.

But let's be clear, Mr. Speaker. That money doesn't cover adult basic education and literacy tuition in this city right now. If you wanted to go to Sask Polytechnic, Mr. Speaker, the application fee is \$75; \$100 if you don't have access to a computer and you want to do it on paper. Well poof, there's two months gone. There's a flat fee for adult basic ed and literacy of \$150. Like wow, Mr. Speaker, another three months gone. You've spent five months of the pittance that will be available to people through what should be the provincial training allowance. Five months gone just to apply. This doesn't cover tuition. This doesn't cover helping you access basic education services.

But this isn't only about the poorest of the poor, Mr. Speaker, and the Minister of Social Services knows this well. The Coal Transition Centre in Estevan — celebrated by this government — basically helps folks fill out a resume and sends them on their way. People looking to move from their highly skilled positions to new industries are told that there is no funding available and no help available to find funding to take any program.

You know, this government has celebrated a \$10 million investment, but like wow, what a drop in the bucket for a government that wasted over \$400 million in cost overruns. Boundary dam 3 wasted \$400 million of public money, and they didn't even bother to equip Shand properly to ensure it's not going to be a stranded asset.

No investment in a workforce, the lowest minimum wage coming up again in the country, Mr. Speaker. And I think all members in this House should be able to agree that no person in this province should work 40 hours a week, work full-time, and live below the poverty line, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It should be an honest day's wage for an honest day's work.

Oh, and the taxes in this budget, Mr. Speaker. The underfunding of education. This is a smack, a smack in the face to young families and a signal to them of a government that has truly lost its way and isn't listening to what matters to them.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, this is a government that likes to talk about business, pretend that everything is all rosy there, but things aren't rosy in the world of small business. Three-quarters of businesses still haven't recovered. Ninety-nine per cent of businesses in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are small businesses, and the industries that are still struggling are, well, they're still struggling. And from the CFIB [Canadian Federation of Independent Business], Mr. Speaker, happy to have another quote from them read into this Assembly: "Sales remain low, debt remains high, and many are considering permanent closure." That's just this month, Mr. Speaker.

And you know, for a government that slapped PST on restaurant meals during a pandemic, you'd think they'd have learned or listened. But instead, here they are making a buck off the fitness, entertainment, arts, sports, recreation, and cultural industries. You know, Mr. Speaker, small businesses, they rely on many things. And you know, the member's heckling about my own small business, and I know this well. We rely on people, and we rely on our ability to get our goods, and get our goods to our customers and to the market.

And it is shocking to see that this government cut student assistance. They're holding funding for universities and post-secondary at zero per cent when they should be investing not just for students but truly for our workforce. You want to talk SMRs [small modular reactor]? We need skilled folks to work, research, and innovate in those fields. And even by your own best attempt at spin, you are holding the line. We know that it's a cut with inflationary pressures, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We don't have the workforce necessary for the coming years. And I don't mean 10 years, 20 years from now. I mean this coming year. We don't have the workforce, and you're cutting immigration and training, and you're cutting post-secondary.

But beyond people, small businesses, industry relies on supply chains. And boy, I don't see a lot in this budget to reassure businesses that we're building up our resilience and our redundancy on that point. And businesses, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are feeling insecure. We see this in the chamber's most recent report: 71 per cent of respondents say that supply chain issues have gotten worse over the past year, the cost of business has increased, and the ongoing global supply chain issues further complicate coordination and timelines.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of ground to cover here, so I'm going to move on to SGI. SGI, no relief in this budget, and the government is claiming that it's because we need to keep the MCT [minimum capital test] at a solvent number.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, they're heckling again. They love to do it when any woman in this House stands up and talks about numbers. They laugh when we say, let's talk about math and numbers.

[16:15]

So let's talk about numbers, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because let's talk about that MCT and the threshold which used to be 100 and they moved to 140. But let's play in their sandbox. Because in fact between 2007 and 2018 the MCT was well under 140 per cent. In fact under this government, it was under the 100 per cent threshold in 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, '13, '14, '15, and 2016. At

its lowest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was kissing 60 per cent. So this nonsense about maintaining an extra 80 per cent above the 100 per cent MCT ratio, well quite frankly, it's nonsense. These members don't want to see those dollars go out of the Auto Fund because it's going to show up as a loss on their books.

So there's no relief for drivers at the pump, no relief through the Auto Fund, and in fact this government through the Auto Fund is proposing an increase of \$76 — \$76 on a 2018 F-150. And for anybody in the House who drives a Chevy Silverado, your rates are going to be increasing \$196 this year. So yeah, they're dinging families on insurance. They're dinging families through the Auto Fund. And let's not forget they added PST to the insurance back in 2017. You know, taxing you on the road, making a buck at the pumps, and taxing your home. Mr. Speaker, where will it end?

It doesn't stop there, though. This year they're taking \$48 million out of SaskPower — \$48 million dividend — money that goes into the GRF [General Revenue Fund] out of Power. Meanwhile SaskPower's proposing an 8 per cent increase, an 8 per cent rate increase in the next 12 months. Last budget, last budget they gave you 10 per cent off, and now they're turning around and asking you for that 8 per cent back in perpetuity. You know, Mr. Speaker, that was a stupid, rude piece of policy. And the members opposite are heckling about their utility rates. With this increase they will now be the highest in Canada. So I look forward to you updating your talking points.

You know, they took that 10 per cent. Now they're turning around and asking customers for another 8 per cent back regardless of what customer class, you know. And minister after minister likes to explain why these dividends are essential, essential for their own bottom line. This government loves to hand you some money and take it right back not three short months later.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, SaskPower is an area where we should be investing. And this government has done nothing of the sort, but they are spending money like drunken sailors with no plan. And to take \$50 million from a Crown where they just handed \$5 billion to Manitoba and they're throwing around another \$5 billion for SMRs, a few billion here for infrastructure, a few billion there for wire.

Like my God, Mr. Speaker, this is a government that's truly lost its way and lost touch with its own principles. Thirty-two new taxes, and when these were first raised, I believe it was the member from Kindersley who bellowed from his seat "where do you think money comes from?" And wow, Mr. Speaker, conservatism runs something strange in Kindersley, I tell you what. He's doubling down, Mr. Speaker.

And the Minister of Finance claimed that adding PST to these 32 things made sense because it would put the province in line with federal taxes. To hear this government say we're going to match those Trudeau taxes, boy, I don't know about that logic. I would love to hear the Finance minister stand again and talk about how all their taxes will mirror federal taxes.

Mr. Speaker, that's a reach, a desperate grab from a government with a perplexing and chaotic budget. It's not a principled stand, Mr. Speaker. They're making money hand over fist on

construction labour, kids' clothes, skyrocketing used vehicle prices, appliances — the list goes on.

You know, they talk about that home reno tax, Mr. Speaker, but they're still making a buck off the contractors who are doing the work, who are pinched by prices and can't afford to raise rates because then people won't be able to afford the jobs. This is a budget, Mr. Speaker, that shows this government has totally lost its way. Thirty-two taxes, Mr. Speaker, underestimated revenues, cuts to places we should be investing, taxing small business — small business, Mr. Speaker, that the Finance minister today called filler.

And \$6 million for education — 6 million. I hear it's going into supports for learning, which is great to hear that the government understands that supports for learning exist. But if you divvy up that \$6 million by the number of students in our classrooms, it's \$32 per year additional that each kid gets. Now I've been out of school division land for a hot minute, but I believe it's still 197 school days per calendar year, which gives each kiddo a whopping 16 cents a day more funding.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I tend to buy my candy in bulk, so I don't even know if you can still buy 5-cent candies. Maybe in this economy they're 10 cents. I don't know, but 16 cents a day, surely our kids are worth more than that. And sure, 16 cents more a day than last year, that's a record investment, but if you folks want to pat yourself on the back for that, wow.

And by the government's own numbers, inflation's at least 2.6 per cent, right? You've given the ed sector basically half of that. So you know, by the government's own numbers, they're shortchanging the sector by 50 per cent of inflationary costs, costs they know that exist. Not to mention that \$6 million doesn't include non-teaching contracts, which the minister well knows.

And they're going to talk about their PMR [preventative maintenance and renewal] funding, Mr. Speaker. That PMR funding is a drop in a sad old bucket, maybe a drop from a leaky roof. And now, Mr. Speaker, I'll talk about some PMR, because they have put \$7 million into PMR, \$7 million, which is a great start.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, Campbell Collegiate, a school in my constituency, Campbell Collegiate alone has \$7 million, according to this government, in deferred maintenance costs. That's one school. Grant Road School, 1.7; LeBoldus, \$10 million. I mean I've got other schools here, Mr. Speaker. Canora Composite, \$2.3 million in deferred maintenance in that one school alone.

Let's go alphabetically. Churchbridge is 2.3. Oh what else do we have here, Mr. Speaker? Oh okay, Hague, the school in Hague, \$4 million in deferred maintenance funding there. Oh, Warman. What have we got? Warman Elementary School, two and a half million dollars in deferred maintenance in one building — one building. And I know there are infrastructure challenges in this province, but to say that seven and a half million dollars is a good start when you have billions of dollars in deferred maintenance costs, like come on. And let's not forget this is a government that raised ed taxes and then tossed that money into the GRF.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I should have known because I've

said a few times now that I was surprised by this budget. And the first inkling that I had that it was going to be out of touch was when they rolled out that weird soft launch of a \$1.8 million investment in education to backfill sub costs. Mr. Speaker, it was \$1,200 a school division. That's like three days of sub costs for a single teacher. And right now we have schools that are functioning at nearly 50 per cent capacity because so many teachers are out with COVID. We have schools where 15 kids in a class are home right now. That was my first sign, Mr. Speaker.

But you know, even here today, the past week, listening to these budget speeches . . . And I enjoy some of them. Honestly I do. I do. It's nice to hear from members you don't often hear from. It's nice to see some folks who really know what they're doing in this legislature, on the floor of this Assembly, get up and have an opportunity to talk. It's an enjoyable time to watch your colleagues in action.

But I listen to these budget speeches, and I listen to them in particular from members on the opposite side of the House. And I reflect back on years past and budgets past. And there's a real lack of good news. Like, there's not a lot of talking points that you folks are celebrating. You're reading song lyrics into *Hansard*. Like, you're having a great time, but compared to years past, there are some real gaps, some real gaps, Mr. Speaker, you know.

And listening to these budget speeches, it's amazing to learn that things weren't good last year. It's amazing to have the members finally admit that somehow we're back on track, when I thought last year everything was hunky-dory.

But, Mr. Speaker, budgets matter. We need people in this province. We need healthy, happy people, people with a chance at prosperity. Society doesn't exist, Mr. Speaker, just to lift up the most privileged. We should use the tools of government to establish the right and the ability of the talented people in our society to raise to great heights, the ambitious to succeed regardless of the start that they may have gotten in life. Mr. Speaker, we cannot build and do great things, great work, build great businesses, build a great society, a great province, without support for people and a chance at equity of opportunity.

You know, small government, big government, I don't know; medium common-sense government seems pretty fine to me. Government should be the servant of the people in the province, our mightiest and our most earnest, not simply a taxman sent out to shake people down for 32-odd taxes, a government to raise utility rates, cut job and skills training, ignore and dismiss innovation, research, young families, cut education.

This is a budget that could have done so much for this province but also for the political fortunes of that government. And this matters, Mr. Speaker. People love this province. People want a province they can be proud of, a province that invests, and a province that believes we can be better. Global supply chains, climate change, workforce development, energy security, inflation, trade relationships — this is a critical time with huge challenges and huge opportunities for this province, Mr. Speaker, and this sad, surprising budget falls short.

So, Mr. Speaker, suffice it to say I will not be supporting the back-on-tax budget and I will be supporting the amendment

moved by the member from Regina Rosemont.

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

Mr. Bonk: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. We just heard some pretty interesting economic theory coming from the other side. And just before anyone who's watching at home or any of my colleagues get too worried about what they just heard, just remember this is coming from the member who berated us for having such a low minimum wage and saying that her own employees could barely live on that wage. I wonder who sets the wage at her business. That's up to her. So I just . . . I don't know. The amount of hypocrisy sometimes is overwhelming in this place.

But I'd like to start my remarks today by thanking the constituents of Moosomin. They've shown tremendous resiliency through this last few years of COVID, and they're just amazing people to work for, and I appreciate every minute that they give me in this chair.

I'd like to also thank my wife Candace and my daughter Emma. Emma's going off to university next fall, so this was the last budget I think that she got to see. And I just want to thank them for all the support that they give me.

Another person I'd like to mention is my CA Tim — Tim Hovdestad. Tim Hovdestad is one of the most calm, patient, steady people you will ever meet. And when someone calls into our office, it's probably the best call that they've had all day or all year. And when they come in to visit, it's even better.

And unfortunately, Tim has decided to move on and will be enjoying retirement soon. And I just want to say, I wish him all the best. And I know that the constituents of Moosomin really appreciate all the good work he did and the honest and ethical way that he handled everything. And I just want to wish him and his wife Rondi all the best in the future.

[16:30]

But, Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly support the motion without reservation and will not support the amendment. I support the motion because I'm a fiscal conservative, pure and simple. I am proud to wear that designation as a badge that says I'm a believer and practitioner of the principles of fiscal conservatism, not as a profession of faith or as an adherent to some obscure dogma, but as a means of ensuring that in our world, order can prevail over chaos, generosity can overcome malice, and stability will always eclipse uncertainty.

The principles of fiscal conservative run deep in the province of Saskatchewan. The foundation of these principles is based on our understanding that individuals are free beings and must always find ways to live and thrive in a community. They can only do this by being free from the oppression of governments and institutions. Therefore, the free person will join with others to build an orderly society that respects the rights of individuals and a society that will have rules, and those rules will be enforced equally as possible for all.

The principles of conservatism were instilled in me from an early

age, Mr. Speaker, on a Saskatchewan farm where chores were a daily routine, where tasks were difficult but achievable, and where problem solving was your responsibility and no one else's.

If the cows broke through the fence, you didn't look on the calendar to see who was on stray cattle duty that day. You didn't leave it for the next shift of workers to deal with. And you definitely didn't phone the government for help. You confronted the problem immediately and dealt with it and didn't rest until the solution was achieved and the task was completed.

Duty, responsibility, integrity, perseverance, and common sense were natural by-products of that way of life. These are the values that are earned with hard work and dedication. There are no shortcuts to achieving these values, Mr. Speaker.

On the farm was also where I learned another of the significant foundational ideas of conservative thought, and that was the relationship between permanence and change. What I learned, Mr. Speaker, was that everything new wasn't necessarily superior to everything old. It became clear that the lessons and convictions of the past gave us stability; and while change is inevitable, it must occur in a regular and thoughtful manner.

And I think that this budget is a perfect example of this. This budget, Mr. Speaker, is the realization of five years of hard work by our government and by the people of Saskatchewan who bought into the idea that it was necessary to make the tough decisions that would get us back on track after confronting and dealing with setbacks and obstacles that would have hobbled lesser bodies.

And back on track we are. If you look at employment, Mr. Speaker, we see that Saskatchewan is back on track. We have the highest employment growth in Western Canada. Compare that with the second-lowest unemployment rate in Canada and we know that Saskatchewan is back on track. In fact, last year Saskatchewan's seasonally adjusted employment exceeded its pre-COVID level. We're back on track.

With job gains in the wholesale and retail sector, job gains in areas of education, culture, and recreation; and significant increases in private-sector employment, we know that Saskatchewan is back on track. Aboriginal employment, female employment, youth employment — all on the rise. We are back on track.

You are likely aware, Mr. Speaker, that exports make up nearly half of Saskatchewan's GDP, which means that one in six jobs in our province is dependent on the success of those exports. And with record agricultural and merchandise exports, Saskatchewan is back on track. With the strongest year-over-year growth in manufacturing sales and wholesale trade in the nation, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is back on track.

I've hardly scratched the surface of all the good news that the Minister of Finance has detailed in this year's budget and our growth plan for the future. We can see example after example of how the principles of fiscal conservatism have taken the province from success to success under the tenure of the Saskatchewan Party. And how did we get there? The Saskatchewan Party brought us here by practising a couple of cornerstones of fiscally conservative thought — the concepts of first, prudence, and

secondly, meaningful change and not change for the sake of change.

In the darkest days of the resource revenue recession, the Saskatchewan Party chose prudence over expedience, and we saw the need for a change in the approach to our economic challenges. I wonder if you've ever seen the movie *Moneyball*, Mr. Speaker. It's a movie about a Major League Baseball team and is one of the most well-regarded Hollywood sports films in the recent past.

Now I'm not the greatest fan of baseball, but I probably should be. It's the perfect game for a fiscal conservative. It moves along at a slow, steady pace. There are basic rules about how to conduct the game, and people who make the rules change them only with great prudence and forethought. Baseball demonstrates another of the core principles of fiscal conservatism, Mr. Speaker, that being the principle of variety. The teams take the field with players with a great diversity of skills and abilities. There are no participation ribbons. There's a winner and a loser. But there are a lot of games, so the winners aren't always winners, and the losers aren't always losers.

Sometimes the teams with the most money aren't the most successful, but sometimes, as in the movie *Moneyball*, a team with innovative ideas and a commitment to hard work can also succeed. In the great scheme of things, baseball could be a microcosm for Saskatchewan as we know it.

So we have the movie *Moneyball*. It follows the exploits of a professional Major League Baseball team that has been moderately successful but is about to fall on hard times. The team owes its success to the talents and skills of its star players, the athletes that have been helping them move towards their ultimate goal of getting to the World Series and winning it. But as with all good things in professional sports, and in life of course, things are about to change. You see, these star players are being lured away from the team by other organizations that offer more money.

The part of the team's general manager is played by Brad Pitt, and he can't persuade the people who own the team to pony up more money so he can either keep his star players or hire others to take their place. He and his team are in a revenue shortfall that can't be remedied, something like Saskatchewan in 2017.

Mr. Pitt sees that his team has a critical problem because without its star players, it could be on the way to dwelling in the league basement for the foreseeable future. In other words, his team is about to become a have-not team. You might see the comparison here, Mr. Speaker. I guess you could say that Mr. Pitt fears that his baseball team is about to become like the province of Saskatchewan in the years before 2007, a have-not province run by a party that had no new ideas, a party that was willing to exist in the economic basement and never improve.

So what does he do? He knows he just can't adopt a business-as-usual approach. Standing still would be admitting that they will never contend for a championship. But he also knows that staying with the old baseball mindset will land him on the unemployment line in short order. He looks around him and realizes that he will get no help from within his organization, as he is surrounded by the usual cast of old-school, tobacco-chewing, pebble-picking

baseball scouts who will gladly lead him down the garden path of old-time baseball. He knows he needs a new strategy.

Now lest we get lost in the baseball metaphor, Mr. Speaker, the point I'm making is that the province of Saskatchewan in 2007, when our party took over the reins of government, and more recently in 2017, when oil revenues were in the tank with no hope that the situation would change in the near future, this province needed a re-evaluation. This province needed a new appraisal of the province's assets, liabilities, and possibilities.

After 2007, a new economic strategy was instituted by the Saskatchewan Party, that after years of wandering in the economic wilderness, would catapult the province into the heady realms of the special status that would have Saskatchewan being called a have province. And in the darkest hours of the resource revenue recession, it was the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker, who, while governments around them were wringing their hands, gnashing their teeth, and doing things the old way, it was the Saskatchewan Party that came up with a new approach.

The industrious Brad Pitt found his new approach in the person of a character played by Jonah Hill, a Yale-educated, wet-behind-the-ears mathematical savant. Hill's character had thick glasses and a thicker waistline, and he looked like the last person who would be associated with the resurgence of an athletic endeavour. But what Brad Pitt found interesting about Hill's character, Mr. Speaker, was that Hill looked at baseball not as a game of athletic ability, but as a game of statistics, a game in which you didn't evaluate a player by how he looked on the field of play but how he produced the numbers that would win baseball games.

If you start wondering where I'm going with this, I'll get right to the point. What does the movie *Moneyball* have to do with the present situation in the province of Saskatchewan? What does Mr. Pitt's fascination with baseball statistics have to do with our province being back on track?

At a point early in the movie, Hill's character makes a statement upon which the plot of the movie turns. He says there is an epidemic failure within the game to understand what is really happening. He claims that this failure causes people who run the game to, I quote, "misjudge their players and mismanage their teams."

Well just go back to the months before our party presented its new budget in March of 2017 in the face of a massive shortfall in the provincial coffers because of falling resource revenues. We had seen that the income which we had begun to rely on for over a decade, we had seen it fall from one-third to one-tenth of our budget.

Of course these falling resources affected governments from coast to coast. And while jurisdictions around us were misjudging their resources and mismanaging their economies, it was the Saskatchewan Party that drew itself away from the tobacco-chewing, pebble-picking practitioners of the old-school systems of approaching the economic problems of the day. It was the Saskatchewan Party that looked for a better policy to bring our province out of the dark and into the future.

You see, those governments around us must have heard the expression, we prefer the devil that we know to the devil that we

don't know. And I guess the devil they knew was debt. The solution is simple. We've done this before; we'll do it again. Debt will be our saviour. Just run up some debt. Postpone the agony till another day, and our problems will be remedied.

But the Saskatchewan Party took a different view. They knew that the devil, no matter if you know him or not, is still the devil, that the black hole, the underworld of debt, even though it's tempting, would not be Saskatchewan's remedy.

Mr. Speaker, think about this. Wisdom moves slowly. The devil always hurries. Our world is complex, so the remedies for our problems can't be simple if they are going to be successful. There is never an easy way out of our challenges. So by rejecting the devil as we know, that is massive debt, the Saskatchewan Party knew that we would have to find a new approach, an approach that didn't involve inflicting unwieldy deficits on our citizens for generations to come, an approach that would not leave a black hole of debt for our children, and in that fact, for their children.

This is what we call leadership, Mr. Speaker. Rather than succumbing to the old ways and hoping this debt would be paid off by Saskatchewan citizens in the future, our government knew that the people of the province would join us in taking steps to remedy our economic challenges right now, not years from now.

Mr. Speaker, there is a Chinese proverb that states, when the winds of change blow, some build walls, some build windmills. What our government did was shift away from a tax system based heavily on resource revenue to a system based on consumption, thus moving us from a very unstable source of revenue to a more predictable and reliable source of revenue.

Mr. Speaker, our government met the challenge responsibly, refusing to take the easy path. Our day of reckoning has been faced and not left for future generations to deal with. We asked the people of Saskatchewan to share in the hard work of getting us back on track, and they responded like only prairie people can. They rolled up their sleeves and met the challenge. And because of our solid foundation of base funding, we met the challenge without abandoning programs, services, and infrastructure that all of us will value.

Brad Pitt also got his team back, Mr. Speaker, by hiring a number of undervalued players whose only talent was that they could produce runs or, in the case of pitchers, prevent them. The team went on to set a record for consecutive wins that season and win their division title. The game of baseball was changed forever.

So what does the province of Saskatchewan do now, Mr. Speaker? Do we pack up our gloves and bats and take off a few months before getting back to business? The answer to that question is a resounding no. I think you'll see that this budget takes Saskatchewan's strong and growing economy and puts our government right back to work with a growth plan that will see our vastly improved financial circumstances continue to support the citizens and build for the future, a future that will see us come out of a time of unpredictable health and weather events and move us towards a balanced budget within the next few years.

And we'll do this, Mr. Speaker, at the same time as our growth plan continues to build the programs and services that Saskatchewan people have come to expect from our government.

A good example of this is seen in our commitment to education, where our budget number has increased this year, making for an overall record, a total record for Saskatchewan. More money for teachers, for hiring new support staff, for building new schools and renovating older ones, for public library funding, for supporting and expanding literacy programs. Mr. Speaker, for children with greater needs, such as Indigenous students, vulnerable students, and children of refugees, students to whom English is a second language, more money will go into programs to ensure bigger, better, safer, and more inclusive learning atmospheres. Youth, elderly, disabled learners will be supported with funding opportunities to bring them into the mainstream.

The University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina will, along with their affiliated colleges, receive increased operating and capital funding to keep them viable and relevant in a world of rapidly changing knowledge. New additional seats will be added to our nurse training programs to augment the increasing needs of Saskatchewan's health system. Our government has increased support for a new Mitacs Indigenous Pathways initiative to provide those students with research and development skills to allow them access to employment in all areas of Saskatchewan business. More assistance to students will be offered by the way of additional loans, grants, and scholarships, including the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship, providing eligible grade 12 students with opportunities for upgrading their basic education needs.

[16:45]

Our growth plan will provide another record investment in health care, an area in which Saskatchewan has always led the way, not only in Canada but beyond our borders. Our record investment will address the province's surgical wait times. We have already seen some success in this area as Saskatchewan Health Authority reported on March 2nd that employees moved to COVID-19 efforts were slowly being shifted back to their regular roles, and the system was performing at close-to-normal levels for surgeries.

Mr. Speaker, Moosomin constituency is not what you might call a remote area, yet health care, especially among our senior citizens and health-compromised rural residents, is a constant worry when medical personnel and facilities are not immediately available. Our government's growth plan will include budget increases to stabilize and improve emergency medical services, especially in rural areas.

And we will continue our already successful recruitment initiatives by establishing an independent Saskatchewan health care recruitment agency to hire essential medical personnel from across North America and around the world and retain them where our citizens need them the most.

Care programs for seniors. Assistance for cancer patients. And those struggling with mental health or addiction challenges will not be left behind in this budget or our growth plan, Mr. Speaker. Funding in these areas will increase substantially in the coming years.

Mr. Speaker, one of my friends in the Moosomin constituency broke out of what he called his pandemic exile by visiting his brother's family in Ontario at Christmas, for the first time in two

years. As the COVID-19 booster shot had not yet been available for his age group before he left, he decided to inquire in Ontario to see the possibility of having a booster shot there. After numerous phone calls and endless red tape, he was given a date in mid-January, a month in the future.

So my friend returned to Saskatchewan at substantial expense and inconvenience. He isolated for five days then drove to Grenfell, 15 minutes away, on January 6th. Being a finicky character — and those are his words, not mine — he decided to put the system on the clock. And, Mr. Speaker, from the time he entered the health clinic to the time the booster needle was in his arms, 12 minutes had elapsed. When he left the clinic he had 20 COVID tests, rapid COVID tests, to take home, something either unavailable or prohibitively expensive in Ontario.

Not only have we met the challenges we faced for two years during the pandemic, but our growth plan has provided funding so we can continue protecting Saskatchewan people as we live with COVID-19 in the foreseeable future.

One of the strengths of our province, Mr. Speaker, is the diversity that ensures that we have many areas of our economy that contribute to Saskatchewan's prosperity. And of course, agriculture has always been front and centre in that mix. Our farmers, ranchers, and agribusiness entrepreneurs are among the most vital movers and shakers. They also demonstrate one of the most vital precepts in the fiscal conservative tradition, the close link between freedom and prosperity. The Saskatchewan Party believes that being able to retain the fruits of one's labours is at the centre of a thriving agricultural community. And our growth plan shows our trust in this principle.

Our continuing support for business risk management programs, including crop insurance, AgriStability, AgriInvest, and livestock price insurance confirms our faith in Saskatchewan's agriculture sector.

We are maintaining and enhancing our support for the federal-provincial Canadian Agricultural Partnership, focusing on areas such as research and innovation, environmental sustainability, and risk management. Our product-to-market program supports new product development and promotion activities for agriculture businesses and helps them expand their domestic and international markets through promotion and marketing endeavours. Our growth plan will include irrigation incentives, animal welfare enforcement support, and agricultural research funding, confirming our government's faith in the economic power of our agricultural sector.

As I mentioned early, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan products continue to find markets around the world at a growing rate each year, and our growth plan will ensure that this trend continues. Our eight international trade offices will receive increased funding to ensure year-round activity in developing important markets. This means that China, India, Mexico, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom and Vietnam, Saskatchewan goods will continue to be promoted and sold. And if the trend continues, those goods will be promoted and sold at an increasing level year after year.

One of the cornerstones of our Saskatchewan Party economic policy, Mr. Speaker, has been our belief that while our province

generates some of the highest quality essential raw products in the world, these products don't have to be sent elsewhere for processing. Our government has always encouraged the value-added sector, ensuring that more of our raw agricultural products can be converted to consumer goods. Increases to the Saskatchewan value-added agriculture incentive will be another shot in the arm to the expansion of our manufacturing and trade sectors.

Our growth plan also ensures that Saskatchewan families benefit from the active family benefit that will see over 20,000 families claiming the tax credit for children's sports, arts, and cultural activities.

A record investment in Saskatchewan families and people is also seen in the budget of the Ministry of Social Services. Significant commitments of funding will ensure that children will be protected in their own homes, that families can afford adequate living arrangements, that the homeless can access secure housing, and that the disabled and intellectually challenged can receive the proper support and opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I've only touched briefly on some of the highlights of this budget and I have endeavoured not to bore you with numbers but to give you the human side of our growth plan. This is a plan that has been made possible by five years of hard work by our government with a commitment to the people of Saskatchewan. It put us back on track to accomplishing a better future for our province.

A pandemic, resource revenue shortfalls, weather anomalies, and the unpredictable circumstances we met head-on, not side-stepped and left for another day or another generation to deal with. Our government, our plan, our people, and the strengths that have been built into our economy were vital components to this solution.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be a fiscal conservative, and I'm proud to be part of the Saskatchewan Party. We will always give a nod to the lessons of the past, but our feet are firmly set on the path to a bright future for Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I fully support the motion before the Assembly and I do not support the amendment.

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

Mr. Domotor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour and a privilege for me to stand in the House today and represent the people of Cut Knife-Turtleford and provide my reply to the '22-23 budget.

Mr. Speaker, I would first like to congratulate the Deputy Premier and Finance minister for preparing a budget in support of the people of Saskatchewan. I would also like to take this moment to thank the entire team on the treasury board, all of the treasury board members, and the officials within the Ministry of Finance. I don't think everyone realizes the amount of time, commitment, and dedication it takes in preparing a provincial budget. And I believe all of these individuals should be recognized for their service to their province.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank a few people in my life who have been very supportive of me in this role. First of all I would like to thank my wife, Noella. Her love, support, and encouragement has been inspiring and very much valued. Without all of the daily matters she takes care of back home, with not only our household but also our family, it would make it more difficult for me to fulfill my duties as the representative for the constituency.

I would also like to thank my two sons, Logan and Lyndon. They've been very supportive of me in this role and have always been willing to help their mother or myself whenever I've been away, if needed, which is very appreciated and means a lot to both of us.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank and recognize my constituency assistant, Jackie Gallon. She is a tremendous asset to my office in Maidstone. She works hard for the constituents of Cut Knife-Turtleford and is always willing to listen and assist you if she can. She is your first point of contact when you call our office and always starts the conversation off with a friendly and welcoming tone to ensure that you feel comfortable when you proceed with sharing your concerns or your issue.

I had the privilege of introducing her last week when she attended the Legislative Assembly and toured her around this amazing building. This was her first time in the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and she was in awe of the workmanship of the actual building, including all of the marble throughout. The one comment I recall that she made that resonates with me is, seeing a picture of the Legislative Building and grounds does not give it proper justice after touring it in person.

Mr. Speaker, I am so thankful that we are able to come to work each day in this building, with all of its history and integrity. It is a blessing to work with my colleagues in this Assembly, knowing that we have peace and serenity within our province, unlike what is presently happening with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which is causing millions of Ukrainians to abandon their homes and leave their country to seek safety and shelter in other countries.

Mr. Speaker, the people of this province are so welcoming and just want to help. My office has taken several phone calls from individuals who just want to assist, whether that be providing shelter in a vacant house that they presently own, donating funds to help provide them some relief, or buying airfare to aid them in being able to get to our province safely. These acts of kindness truly show the world what Saskatchewan offers and the kind-hearted citizens we have within our province, with their humanitarian and compassionate actions.

Mr. Speaker, next I would also like to offer my thanks to the constituents of Cut Knife-Turtleford for having the confidence in me to be elected as their provincial representative. I'm very honoured and privileged to be their representative, and I will try to represent their interests in this legislature.

And last but not least, Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer my sincere thank you and appreciation to the Clerks, the LAS [Legislative Assembly Service] staff, and the Sergeant-at-Arms for their dedication and willingness to assist any time they were asked. I would be remiss if I did not also thank our caucus staff

for all their hard work and dedication that they provide our caucus, as well as the office staff of the ministers, who've always been ready and able to assist when we've had questions or constituents' concerns.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this moment to talk a little bit about the budget. The 2022-23 budget is a budget that I believe has the suitable theme of back on track. This year's improvement in our budgeted deficit forecast, which is 2.1 billion less than last year, with an additional 30,000 jobs created over the past year, show that this government is serious in ensuring the province moves forward to meet our plan for growth and realize our target of 30 goals by 2030.

When you review what this budget and government represent, it is quite easy to associate it being a transition from supports provided during the pandemic to an economic recovery and getting the province back on track. When you look at the investments made in Saskatchewan for not only some of our priority items such as health care and education, as well as the significant investments made in our infrastructure to our highways, hospitals, and schools, you can see that we are progressing towards a recovery.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is providing for a total budget spending in health care of \$6.8 billion. This is an increase of 4.4 per cent over last year's budget. This will go to enhancing services and supports provided to Saskatchewan people. I believe one of the most notable benefits will be the increase to address the surgical wait-list over the next three years with our aggressive plan targets to return to pre-COVID surgical wait-time levels by the end of 2025. I personally consider this to be a very important investment in the people within our province, who have been challenged with needed surgeries that were delayed due to the worldwide pandemic of COVID-19.

I believe this will be beneficial to many people that we all probably know who have had family members or friends that have been waiting for that delayed eye cataract, hip replacement, knee replacement, or other surgeries that will impact their life in terms of making it a little more enjoyable and just a little less painful. This along with our investment for new medical imaging CT scans and MRIs will go a long way in reducing wait times for Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, this along with our continued support to invest an additional six and a half million for another 117 continuing care aide positions will get us close to reaching our commitment to expand continuing care aide positions to 300. These new continuing care aide positions that work in long-term care and existing and expanded home care services, including rural and remote areas, are over and above the 108 we've already fulfilled in our last budget.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that we have a shortage of health care workers in this province. And that is why this budget, we have provided an increase of 4.9 million to expand our nurse training by 150 seats, which will help meet the needs of our health care services. This budget, Mr. Speaker, will also establish a new and independent agency dedicated to recruiting and retaining health care workers. This will include recruitment initiatives for the development of a settlement and relocation incentive program to recruit health care workers to Saskatchewan from the

Philippines, which will assist in filling critical and hard-to-fill positions.

Mr. Speaker, I know that before this government implemented the Saskdocs program for physician recruitment that in my previous work experience as a CAO [chief administrative officer] in an RM, we used to recruit the doctors from other countries to our community. I found that it was crucial to offer various incentives as well as social connections to make them feel welcome when relocating to Saskatchewan from another country. That is why we would provide housing, a vehicle allowance, as well as various other incentives in addition to having a welcoming committee that introduced them to members of the community and tried to make them feel comfortable in their new home.

Mr. Speaker, our goal is to recruit 300 health care sector employees over the next two years, with phase 1 in '22-23 recruiting 150. There will be three and a half million dollars for physician recruitment and retention initiatives, particularly targeting family physicians working in rural areas of the province. These are key commitments that this government has made to strengthen and expand hospital and emergency care in both urban and rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, this government . . .

The Speaker: — The time has elapsed. This House stands recessed until 7 p.m.

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

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

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Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

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