



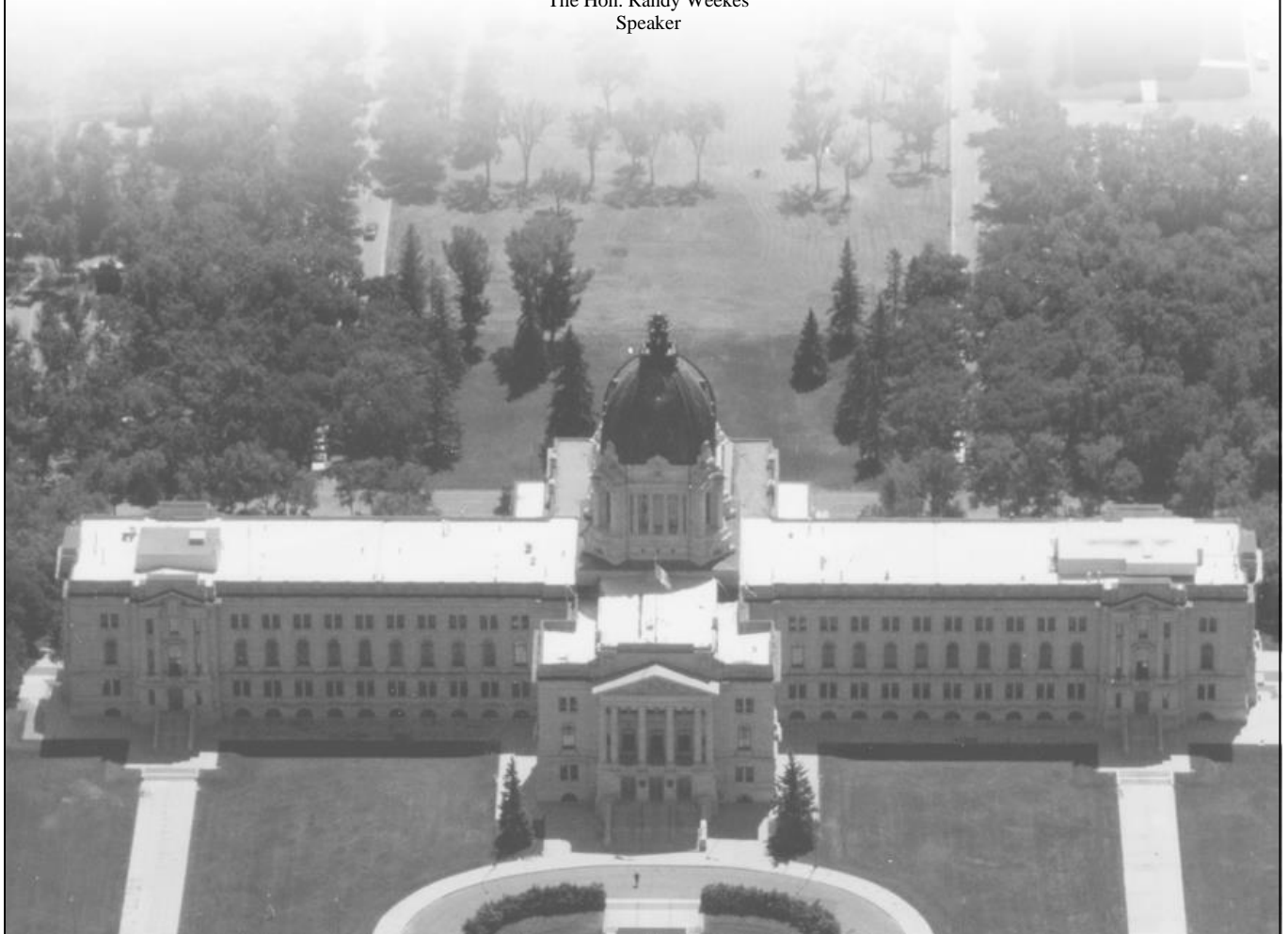
SECOND SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
AND
PROCEEDINGS**

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



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
2nd Session — 29th Legislature

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

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

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

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

Clerks-at-the-Table

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

Deputy Clerk — Iris Lang

Clerk Assistant — Kathy Burianyk

Sergeant-at-Arms — Sean Darling

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[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

Clerk: — I wish to inform the Assembly Mr. Speaker is not present to open today's sitting.

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the west gallery I'd like to welcome some government relations folks from Paper Excellence: Chris Stoicheff and Dale Richardson, the manager of public affairs. Unfortunately Carlo Dal Monte, vice-president of energy and strategic development, couldn't be here in person today, but I look forward to our virtual meeting later this morning.

So much to talk about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as Paper Excellence moves to reopen its pulp mill, \$550 million investment, the largest single investment in Saskatchewan's forestry sector ever, a project that will create some 1,400 direct and indirect jobs.

Last year Saskatchewan's forestry sector shattered previous sale records — total sales of more than 1.8 billion — and is projected to invest 1 billion over the next few years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government is on track to meet our growth plan goal to double the size of our forestry sector by 2030, and I'd like to thank Paper Excellence for the important work it does in our province's North. Please join me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in welcoming these guests to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the member opposite in welcoming the delegation from Paper Excellence to their gallery.

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

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On this glorious Saskatchewan morning, I'd like to welcome in the west gallery 24 grade 4 students from Wascana Plains School — give a wave — accompanied by their teacher Shyola Burkholder and parent chaperone Cindy Raab. I'd like to have all members please welcome all of these students and the people attending with them and welcome them to their Assembly. Thank you.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I request leave for a brief extended introduction.

The Deputy Speaker: — Leave has been requested for an

extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To begin I'd like to join with my colleague and the minister in welcoming the good folks from Paper Excellence here to their legislature today. And really exciting investments happening in the province in the forestry sector. And we appreciate your commitment to Saskatchewan, as well as your presence here today.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, sitting in the opposite gallery, I would like to take the opportunity and really enjoy the privilege of being able to once more introduce my dad, Don Young, who's here today watching proceedings. He's driven in from Alberta. I believe I've mentioned before in this Assembly that unfortunately he is a Stampeders fan.

But he's been here for the past week on grandparent duty, looking after Hara while I've been here and my husband has been back at work. Enjoying the great outdoors, the many — but decreasing with the weather — mud puddles all over the great and slightly uneven streets of Regina. And is a long-time political watcher both in Alberta and here in Saskatchewan, a regular commentator via text message on proceedings in this House, a truly wonderful father, an incredibly affectionate grandfather. Hara is so lucky and I am so lucky to have him. So supportive in my life and also here today.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker — this is a not-so-brief an extended introduction — but while I'm on my feet, I'd also like to take the opportunity to welcome Jordan sitting next to him, who I do know was introduced in this Assembly yesterday, but is a good friend, a remarkable public servant in northern Saskatchewan. And I know he will continue to use his cunning, his uniqueness, and his nerve and his talent to advocate for the people of the North and to build a stronger Saskatchewan.

I would ask, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that all members join with me in welcoming them to their Assembly. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, just very briefly I would also just reiterate again that, you know, all members of this Legislative Assembly, we don't serve here alone. We serve here, one, at the bequest of our constituents; but two, with the love and support of each of our families, Mr. Speaker. So I would like to just take the opportunity to join with the member from Regina University in welcoming her father, Don Young, to the Legislative Assembly here in Saskatchewan.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm hoping the Premier will be keen to get up on his feet again because I'd like to introduce three individuals seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, two of whom aren't a stranger to this Assembly. They haven't been around for a couple of years. You know, there's been a bit of a pandemic lately and grandparenting duties. And they spend

more time now in the member from Melfort's neck of the woods than they have been here lately. But my parents are in your gallery, Donna and Owen Sarauer. It's great to have them.

But joined with them today is a new face in this gallery. He's my cousin Bryan Sarauer. He's here today. He's from Saskatoon, but he's in town here because he's now the new program head for the new agriculture and food production program at Sask Poly in Moose Jaw. Very excited to see him taking on this role.

But in addition to that, he's also an avid, enthusiastic outdoorist, a huge promoter of getting out there and visiting the great province that we have in Saskatchewan, and is a paddling instructor. So if anyone's interested in learning how to kayak, I urge them to check out Coldspring Paddling. Mr. Speaker, he's a busy guy. He's a parent to two amazing daughters with his partner, Karrie. It's an honour to have all three of them here today, but especially Bryan. And I ask all members to join me in welcoming them to their Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I was so anxious and jumped to my feet maybe just a little bit early. But yet again, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of, you know, the government and I think all members of this Assembly, we always want to take the opportunity to highlight and to welcome our families to this Legislative Assembly where this debate occurs, Mr. Speaker.

And we do have differences, yes, across the floor. I think we're thankful that those differences are much less here in Saskatchewan and in Canada than they are in other areas of the world, and we see that on full display here today. So I just want to join with the member opposite in welcoming Owen and Donna and cousin Bryan to the Assembly, to your Assembly here today. Welcome.

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

Mr. Love: — No, my mother is not here. But it's nice to see they're having fun here on a Thursday morning.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, to you and through you, I'd like to extend a warm welcome and introduction to some students seated up behind me here. And these students are not here with a school group. They're here to advocate for adequate funding for education in the province of Saskatchewan. These students are visiting here from Fillmore, Saskatchewan, as well as from Regina and maybe some other communities. And I'll have a chance to chat with the students after proceedings. I just want to thank them for their advocacy, for coming here. I know that they've been in touch with members on both sides about their concerns.

And they've delivered a petition.

They've been hard at work advocating for adequate funding for their schools as an active and engaged citizenship. On the petition they've got 123 signatures from seven different school communities, and I know that that number will continue to grow. I thank them for their advocacy. I thank them for coming here today.

We know that democracy happens in schools. It happens on the steps. It happens in here. I thank them for coming to engage in democracy as soon-to-be voters and as folks who have very real concerns about their own education. Welcome here. I invite all members to join me in welcoming the students to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to join with the member opposite in welcoming the students to their Legislative Assembly, those from Fillmore and beyond. And, Mr. Speaker, if they are available and don't have to head back to school here in a hurry, I'd be delighted to meet with them after question period. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in my place to present a petition to protect Saskatchewan's water supply. The undersigned residents wish to bring to your attention the following: that water is essential for human health, recreation, health of our ecosystems, and our economy; research from the University of Regina shows that the water quality of Saskatchewan's lakes is getting worse; and the Provincial Auditor has pointed out that Saskatchewan's lack of a wetland policy negatively impacts water quality and that significant work remains to better regulate drainage.

And I had the opportunity, I asked the minister a number of questions on that topic last night in estimates.

I will read the prayer:

The undersigned respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan actively protect Saskatchewan waters from current and future threats to our valuable water supply.

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

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise this morning to present a petition calling on the Sask Party government to fix the crisis in our classrooms. Those who have signed the petition today wish to draw our attention to a number of points. That the Sask Party's government cuts mean falling per-student funding and fewer supports for students as they recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. And, Mr. Speaker, make no mistake, underfunding does result in cuts, and we've already heard that from Chinook and both the public and Catholic divisions in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, and that will continue to grow as boards finalize their budgets for next year.

They also want us to know that after years of underfunding, school divisions have nowhere left to cut that will not impact student learning, and we heard that again today; and that the Sask

Party government's failure to invest in our classrooms is having serious consequences today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and will continue to into the future unless this is resolved.

I'll read the prayer:

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

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

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise again to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly calling for the funding of in vitro fertilization treatments here in Saskatchewan. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the signatories of this petition wish to bring to our attention the following: that one in six couples in Canada will experience infertility; and that the cost of infertility treatments, infertility of course being a health condition, can be prohibitively expensive — tens of thousands of dollars, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that could be spent elsewhere, could be saved, and certainly should not be paid out of pocket by individuals in this province simply trying to start a family.

[10:15]

Despite public health care being a right in Canada, there is no government financial support for individuals requiring in vitro fertilization; and, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people's ability to conceive should not depend on their socio-economic status; and we should be doing everything we can to help people and individuals determined to grow their families here in Saskatchewan achieve that goal.

I will read the prayer:

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

The signatories of this petition today come from Lumsden and Regina. I do so present.

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

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — miigwech, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to present the following petition. We, the undersigned residents of the province, wish to bring to your attention: Chief Piapot was an influential leader who brought his fight to treaty rights to the camp of Pile o' Bones. In 2018 the Justice for Our Stolen Children camp stood for 197 days on the west lawn, bringing national and international attention to systemic discrimination of Indigenous people. And in 2020 the group Walking with Our Angels walked 630 kilometres to the west lawn. Tristen Durocher carried out a grieving ceremony and

fast in response to government inaction on suicide prevention.

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

The signatories to this petition reside in Sturgeon Lake and Leask, Saskatchewan. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Green Shirt Day Supports Organ Donation

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, on April 7th, 2018, following the catastrophic accident now familiar to all of us, Humboldt Broncos defenceman Logan Boulet succumbed to his injuries. Yet his effect on his community was far from finished, for his parents Bernadine and Toby donated Logan's organs so that six other lives could be saved. They knew that Logan would have wanted to be an organ donor. He was inspired by the legacy of his coach who passed away in 2017 and who was determined, even in death, to leave a positive and lasting mark.

The Boulet family's courageous and generous act touched many and encouraged over 100,000 people to register as organ donors — myself included — what many now call the Logan Boulet Effect. Green Shirt Day is a time to honour and remember those who lost their lives in the crash and a time to honour Logan's legacy by encouraging people to register as organ donors. Mr. Speaker, over 1,600 Canadians join an organ transplant wait-list each year, yet it only takes one donor to save eight lives.

On Green Shirt Day I ask that all members join me in recognizing Logan Boulet and his family and thank them for providing an example of selflessness to which we should all strive. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Ms. C. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise today to acknowledge National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Month and Green Shirt Day. I am proud and honoured to join my colleagues in supporting Green Shirt Day and the legacy of Logan Boulet. Logan made his wishes known regarding the importance of organ and tissue donation. Before his passing, he signed up to be an organ donor, which helped save several lives.

This inspired thousands of people across Canada to become organ donors. Mr. Speaker, nearly 18,000 residents have visited givelifesask.ca to register to be an organ and tissue donor. Today the T.C. Douglas Building here in Regina is joining others across the country as part of the Light It Green initiative. This is to honour those who have died awaiting a transplant, and a way to show our gratitude to those who have donated in the past.

I encourage all those seated in legislature here today, and those hearing this message, to visit givelifesask.ca and join the registry

today. I would like to thank everyone who has already joined the registry, and we hope to see that number significantly rise this month and throughout the year. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

World Health Day

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize World Health Day, which takes place annually on April 7th to mark the anniversary of the founding of the WHO [World Health Organization] in 1948. The theme of World Health Day this year is Our Planet, Our Health, highlighting the health impacts of an increasingly polluted planet.

The WHO estimates that more than 13 million deaths worldwide are related to avoidable environmental causes. This can include unsafe drinking water, food shortages due to famines exacerbated by changing climate, and illnesses caused by air pollution.

When it comes to health, our province must rise to the challenge of combatting local and global health crises. In the midst of a pandemic, attention on global health is more important than ever. And here in Saskatchewan, public health is a generational crisis. COVID-19 continues to be a focus of health concern in our province, but we must not ignore the other crises. We face rates of HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] that are unseen in other parts of North America. We face unprecedented rates of TB [tuberculosis] in the North, a disease that otherwise has been suppressed in the developed world. And we face crises of mental health, addictions, and overdose in every corner of our province.

I ask all members to join me in recognizing World Health Day, and reflect on how we can better our health by both taking care of each other and taking care of our planet. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Remembering the Battle of Vimy Ridge

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On April 9th, Canada will mark the 105th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Mr. Speaker, the sacrifices made by the thousands of young Canadians who participated in the Battle of Vimy Ridge cannot be understated. It is said that our Confederation paid for its status as a nation with the amount of blood spilled in that battle. 3,598 young Canadians were killed and 7,004 were wounded after three days of intense fighting — 10,602 Canadians who should have been tending their families, working, celebrating, and living peacefully.

These young people enlisted from across our country. Their regiments were tapestries of different people, just like the Confederation they represented — First Nations, Métis, Inuit, francophone, anglophone, and more. Just like our province, their strength came from many people.

Four battalions that fought were from Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker — the 1st Canadian Mounted Rifles, the 5th Battalion, the 28th Battalion, the 46th Battalion. Since then the 1st

Canadian Mounted Rifles and the 5th Battalion have evolved into the North Saskatchewan Regiment. The 28th and 46th Battalions are now the Saskatchewan Dragoons.

Thank you on behalf of all Saskatchewan people to those who have and continue to serve. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Weyburn Veteran Awarded Prestigious Honour

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to rise in the Assembly to inform members that this past weekend, one of Weyburn's World War II veterans, Mr. Howard Schmidt, received the highest award that can be given by the Government of France. Howard, who is 99 years old and one of the last surviving members of the South Saskatchewan Regiment, was bestowed with the rank of Knight of the French Order of the Legion of Honour.

Mr. Speaker, after the war in Europe ended, the Canadian and French governments came to an agreement in deciding that all World War II veterans who played a part in the liberation of France would be given a medal on behalf of the French government. Howard's fellow Legion member from the Estevan branch, Ken Turner, filled out the application that went to the French government. Those who receive this honour are approved directly by the president of France.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, many of these courageous souls are no longer with us. To award this medal to Howard for his valour and courage during the Second World War, is a way of not only recognizing his service but also preserving the legacy of those souls.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank Howard for his service to Canada and for his part in preserving freedom in our world. I'd also like to thank Ken Turner for the work that he put in to help Howard receive this most prestigious of honours. And finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Royal Canadian Legion for continuing to support our veterans and their families. Congratulations, Howard.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Carrot River Valley.

Recognizing Nipawin's CJNE, The Storm

Hon. Mr. Bradshaw: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if there's one thing people in northeast Saskatchewan have counted on in the last many years, it's the humour and great music from CJNE, The Storm. Norm Rudock and Treana Bathgate-Rudock have operated the Nipawin-based radio station for the last 20 years and have recently announced their plans to sell both their radio stations, which more recently included the addition of a country station, Core Country, last year.

In these last two decades, Norm and Treana have covered many important stories, from tragedy to celebration, and have undoubtedly heard it all. Listeners will miss Norm's Stormshopper reports and the focus on the community stories that their radio stations prided themselves on. Mr. Speaker, we

look forward to what the future will hold for Norm and Treana, as well as for the fulfilling business they have built together.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the residents of Carrot River Valley and the listeners of The Storm, I would ask members to join me in celebrating Norm and Treana and the 20 years of laughter and local, informative news stories. I wish to thank them for their dedication and wish them all the best in their future endeavours. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

Government Investment in Emergency Medical Services

Mr. D. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this year's provincial budget makes significant investments in emergency care throughout Saskatchewan, with a nearly \$11 million funding increase on several initiatives. Our government is committed to stabilizing and enhancing emergency medical services for our residents by addressing critical areas of need with a dedicated focus on rural, remote, and northern communities.

A majority of this funding increase, \$7.3 million, will add paramedics and put more ambulances on the roads in 27 communities across the province, particularly in rural, remote, and northern areas. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this funding will add nearly 71 full-time equivalent positions and increase capacity to provide a stable level of service and respond to emergencies in a timely manner.

The communities receiving this funding include Beauval, Beechy, Big River, Blaine Lake, Buffalo Narrows, Cut Knife, Frontier, Humboldt, Imperial, Indian Head, Kipling, Kyle, La Ronge, Lloydminster, Macklin, Maple Creek, Meadow Lake, Melfort, Melville, Moosomin, Naicam, North Battleford, Oxbow, Redvers, Rosetown, St. Walburg, Yorkton.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this investment will help meet the needs of our residents and communities by supporting the provisions of timely, stable emergency services across the province. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Provision of Health Care

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pediatrics at the children's hospital in Saskatoon is at code black level again, Mr. Speaker. Now the minister will tell you that code black is a bomb threat, and he's not wrong. That's one of the uses of that term. It's also used at RUH [Royal University Hospital] and at JPCH [Jim Pattison Children's Hospital] as a description of the level of occupancy.

As we've seen far too often in the last two years, those levels going from green to yellow to red to black, suggesting a level of occupancy that significantly disrupts the services offered in our hospitals. Mr. Speaker, it's no explosion but it's bursting at the

seams. It's bursting at the seams. A dangerous situation of excess demand. The minister doesn't like it. Talk to the folks in the hospital who are right now overwhelmed with that level of care.

Mr. Speaker, does the Premier recognize, as they're now scrambling trying to figure out what to do with these kids . . . Are they sending them to Regina? Are they cancelling surgeries? Does he recognize it wasn't a good idea to build a children's hospital that was no bigger than the one they had to begin with?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I think all of us across the province can be very thankful for the investment that was made into the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, the addition of services that were provided, most notably for our children in this province, Mr. Speaker.

As we've said for a number of months now, we are going to continue to utilize our entire provincial health care capacity under the provincial entity, the Saskatchewan Health Authority. That capacity today sits at about 93 per cent across the province. Yes, there are some localized pressures, in particular, yes, in our urban centres. Mr. Speaker, our ICU [intensive care unit] capacity across the province is about 74 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

[10:30]

But we are thankful that, one, we do have the investment in infrastructure such as the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital. We're thankful for the initiatives over a dozen years resulting in about 1,000 doctors that are offering services here in Saskatchewan — 1,000 additional doctors, about 4,300 additional nurses, Mr. Speaker.

And we had put forward in this most recent budget a four-point plan that we are going to continue to work with communities, with our Health Authority, Mr. Speaker, to support additional recruitment and retention of not only physicians and nurses but 300 additional continuing care assistants, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we can offer the services across this province, Mr. Speaker, and enhance the services in many cases, in places just like the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Lots of words, but no answer to a situation where pediatrics right now — right now — is swamped. On Tuesday the in-patient ward was at 106 per cent capacity. Three kids were sitting in emerg who should have been admitted to the ward. On Wednesday they were at 108 per cent capacity; there were four kids stuck in emerg, Mr. Speaker. Imagine a child, who should be in a bed up on the ward, stuck in emergency for days on end.

PICU [pediatric intensive care unit] has been at 125 per cent capacity all week. That's 15 very sick kids in a 12-bed unit. The units are all completely strained, not enough staff, no way to deal with this added level of care, Mr. Speaker. What is the immediate plan to make sure that every Saskatchewan kid who needs a bed has a place to go?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the little challenge that we may be having at the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital with capacity, Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, our provincial capacity is at 93 per cent. We would expect and understand that those that are making the decisions with respect to allocating the folks that need those services, to the resources and where those resources are available, are doing so. We aren't going to make those decisions on the floor of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

What we are going to do is put in place the supports so that we can ensure that we, one, retain the health care professionals that we have and recruit more health care and train more health care professionals here in the province, Mr. Speaker.

I remember back years ago asking a number of folks involved with the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital on their location as to where it is, Mr. Speaker. Part of that was to be near the College of Medicine to attract some of the country's and the world's finest researchers, trainers, as well as surgeons, Mr. Speaker, to work on our family members and to offer services to our family members.

Part of that was to be near the RUH, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's capacity for various patients in the RUH. We have St. Paul's Hospital as well in Saskatoon, and various hospitals in the immediate region, Mr. Speaker. As I say, the provincial capacity of our health care system, of which we are looking to utilize in these — by what has been unprecedented times for a couple of years now, Mr. Speaker — will be utilized. And those that are tasked with making those decisions to utilize it, we expect them to do so.

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

Mr. Meili: — Little challenge, Mr. Speaker, a little challenge. Tell that to the parents. Tell that to the parents of the kid who's been in emerg for three days. Tell that to the pediatricians and the nurses who are run off their feet, who are scared of what's going to happen to those sick kids because they aren't able to take care of them. Mr. Speaker, tell me you know nothing about health care without saying you know nothing about health care. That's what we hear from this Premier. That's what we hear from this minister.

Last night the minister said, last night the minister said — and the Premier repeated it today — well if there's too many kids in the children's hospital, we can just send them over to the adult beds in RUH. No problem at all.

Well that's not possible. It's not happening. It makes no sense at all, Mr. Speaker. Instead those pediatricians, those nurses are having to scramble. They're having to send Saskatoon kids to Regina hospitals if they can find an ambulance. They're talking about cancelling surgeries that have already been delayed for far too, far too long. Oh, the minister wants to speak now. The minister has something to say. At SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] he had something to say. He told the officials, get out of your towers; go see what's really happening on the front lines.

Well here's the message. To the Premier: you wouldn't do it last year when the ICUs were overwhelmed. Right now, this weekend, will you and the minister go up to the children's hospital? Will you see what's really happening? Will you get out of your towers?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, we can only imagine how today's challenges would be without a Jim Pattison Children's Hospital. Can you imagine the challenge for Saskatchewan families that require health care services with 1,000 less physicians practising in the province, Mr. Speaker? Can you imagine the challenges for Saskatchewan families with 4,200 less nurses providing services across the province of Saskatchewan?

Mr. Speaker, the record of this government is one of investment in health care infrastructure. The record of this government is one of investment in health care human resources, in the very people that are providing those services, whether it be in Saskatoon or any community across the province, Mr. Speaker.

In this budget we put forward a four-point plan to ensure that we are going to continue the . . . Well the leader, the temporary Leader of the Opposition laughs, Mr. Speaker. He laughs at, Mr. Speaker, the four-point plan that has been put forward to continue to train our health care resources, now just under 1,000 nurse training seats in the province, almost triple under the members opposite when they had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the health recruitment agency is going to be revamped for the entire health care sector. We are going to bring nurses in and health care professionals in from around the world, and we're going to target incentives to ensure that we get those people to where they're required in the province.

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

Mr. Meili: — Right now, a pediatric hospital that's overwhelmed. Right now, kids stuck in emerg for days because there's no beds. Right now, families who are scared of what's going to happen to their little kids. And the Premier wants to talk about 2007, wants to talk about years ago. Right now, will the minister, will the Premier do what the minister said they should do? Will he go up and visit the children's hospital this weekend, see what's really happening there, not just listen to the spin from this minister?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government and the people of Saskatchewan couldn't be prouder of the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital, Mr. Speaker, that this government committed to and built, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, he talks about scaring people. He stands up here and talks about bomb threats, Mr. Speaker. He talks about bomb threats in our children's hospital. Mr. Speaker, this is not something to be joking . . . And then he sits over there and he laughs.

Mr. Speaker, we went through this last night in committee. His

research is Twitter. This is what he does, Mr. Speaker. He continues to researching on Twitter. He starts to actually believe that what happens on Twitter is real.

Mr. Speaker, what I can say that our government is committed to the children's hospital in Saskatoon, the provincial children's hospital, Mr. Speaker. We're to continue to be committed to that, Mr. Speaker. We've built the facilities. We've brought the people in, Mr. Speaker. We have the equipment to able to make sure that the people and the children are safe. There are children being transported around the province. We do have overflow capacity. We have 12 PICU units within the children's hospital. We also have the capacity to expand to six more. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Funding for Education

Mr. Love: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is just downright offensive when this government resorts to empty and offensive talking points when our children, our kids are being left behind. Mr. Speaker, budget chaos is unfolding in our education system, and when divisions do the math, they're all saying the same thing.

Yesterday the Saskatoon Public School Board Chair sent a letter to parents. That letter states, and I quote, "Provincial funding falls well short of what our division needs just to maintain the status quo." They go on to state that they're facing considerable inflationary increases to operational costs, and that to balance the budget they too, again for another year, are looking at cuts.

Does the Minister of Education honestly believe that inflationary pressures have little to no effect on our school division? Can he point to a single school division that supports that ridiculous claim?

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

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, certainly we are starting to hear from school divisions in terms of what their budgets potentially will look like over the next number of months as they actually sit down and do the work of building their budgets, Mr. Speaker. I would note that the director of education of Prairie South, for example, in Moose Jaw, indicated that he felt pretty good about the numbers that they were going to be receiving. So, Mr. Speaker, we know that that is certainly the case in that school division.

Mr. Speaker, we've delivered \$1.99 billion in operational funding, Mr. Speaker. We delivered funding to provide for the 2 per cent increase in the CBA [collective bargaining agreement], Mr. Speaker, knowing that that is in most cases at least 50 per cent of a school division's budget. Mr. Speaker, as well as there is additional supports for in-class for supports for learning, \$6 million as well as a new \$7 million fund to provide for 200 more full-time EAs [educational assistant] across the board, Mr. Speaker. And that isn't . . . To say nothing about the capital work that we're doing, Mr. Speaker, \$2.33 billion in capital since 2007 to build and renovate nearly 100 schools across this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from

Saskatoon Eastview.

Mr. Love: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, school divisions tell me that the increased fuel costs alone will cost tens of thousands of dollars every month. You know, tens of thousand dollars every month. So the minister either doesn't know or he's choosing not to know the facts.

Here's another quote: "The butter can only be spread so thin." That's how Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools describe the spot that they're in. They highlight how dramatic inflationary increases on utilities, fuel, and insurance will eat up a combined \$811,000. That's \$800,000 in inflationary costs for just one division.

Now both Saskatoon divisions agree that this budget is bad for education. This budget does not come close to covering additional costs in the sector, and it will lead to cuts. Can the minister explain why he's right on this issue and everyone else is wrong?

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

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in terms of budgets for school divisions, transportation ranges from a low of 2.8 per cent of a school division's budget to, in some cases, a high of 13 per cent of a school division's budget, obviously based on how many miles, largely, that they're going to have to spend, Mr. Speaker. Of that, fuel costs make up 13 per cent of those transportation budgets. So in some cases we're talking about 13 per cent of 2.6 per cent or 13 per cent of, in some cases, 13 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, with that increase in mind, using a 3.8 per cent inflation for potential fuel costs, Mr. Speaker, divided by the 27 school divisions, we're expecting an average of \$26,000 in additional fuel costs, Mr. Speaker. That's in the context of a \$2 billion operating fund for school divisions this year.

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

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, I'll tell this Assembly what I believe. I believe that education is an investment. It's an investment in the future and it's an investment on the current needs of our students. And our kids right now, they have needs. They've been through two very challenging years of pandemic learning. They have needs in learning in the classroom. They have mental health needs. We have students with intensive support needs that school divisions are struggling to meet. We have more students in already crowded and complex classrooms.

Some of those students are here today, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They're calling for more support. They're calling for better funding for their schools, for their peers. And I'm calling on this minister to listen to the voices of our students who are here today. Support those deserving and those providing quality education. Will the minister finally show some humility, admit that a budget that leads to cuts is wrong, and commit to funding an increase that helps our students thrive?

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

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, if that member believes that education is an investment, what in the world is he doing sitting with that party? When those members were the government, when that party was the government, Mr. Speaker, 176 schools were closed in this province. Four hundred teachers, Mr. Speaker, were fired. His colleagues in the union were fired, Mr. Speaker. Zero was given for preventative maintenance for budgets, Mr. Speaker. We have provided record levels of funding for schools in this province . . .

[Interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, we've provided record capital, record operational dollars, Mr. Speaker, and at all that same time, we've actually seen more students in this province, Mr. Speaker. Because we have a growing province, unlike when the NDP [New Democratic Party] were in the government, Mr. Speaker, and people were leaving this province in droves.

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

SaskPower Rates

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Desperate grasping from a minister desperate to salvage what he knows is an untenable education budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan is stretched thin. Inflation, gas, food prices are all through the roof. Two-thirds of small businesses, Mr. Deputy Speaker, still have not recovered — two-thirds. And across the board they're trying to do more with less.

[10:45]

And this is a government that will not provide relief at the pumps and instead have added 32 taxes and fees to people and industries trying to get back on their feet. But it doesn't stop there, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Saskatchewan people, Saskatchewan businesses are being asked to pay more for their power bills, 8 per cent between now and April of 2023. Squeezing when there's little left to squeeze.

So, Mr. Speaker, he's heard from people. He's heard from industry. Will the minister scrap this proposed 8 per cent hike today?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're going to work forward and work with the Crown utilities and make sure the people in our province continue to have some of the lowest utility costs in the province. Mr. Speaker, we want to make sure that we maintain the financial viability of our Crown corporations and, Mr. Speaker, we wanted to make sure that we did that following the last election when we reduced power bills by 10 per cent across the board for an entire year for all businesses, for all school divisions, for all residences, for everybody in this province who had a power meter had a 10 per cent reduction for one year.

Not paid for out of the utility; paid for by the General Revenue Fund. Paid for the people of this province to make sure that we were (a) maintaining the viability of the Crown corporation, and making sure that we were maintaining affordability for everyone that's in this province.

We will continue to do that. We will work with the utility review panel. We will continue to make sure that we do everything that we can to make sure that we maintain safe, reliable power, that we're able to reduce emissions, and we're able to do everything we can to maintain the stability in our province.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And just a reminder to the members opposite, since 2016 they've hiked power rates nearly 17 per cent. This will be their fourth increase since 2016. Despite the spin, this could leave us with not the lowest, the highest power rates in the country, Mr. Deputy Speaker — the highest in the country. And this government knows, this government knows that more revenue to Crowns and potentially higher revenue to the government bottom line will help them pay down their historic debts and deficit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, SaskPower is a precious Crown at a critical moment. The minister knows this. Enhancing the grid, ensuring reliability, adding SMRs [small modular reactor] to build for the future — affordable, secure power.

People in industry cannot and will not abide this 8 per cent hike for the government to then gobble it into the GRF [General Revenue Fund] instead of leaving it, instead of leaving for needed investment in SaskPower. So new question, Mr. Deputy Speaker: will the minister commit to a moratorium on dividends and stop this 8 per cent hike?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, SaskPower doesn't pay dividends. The members opposite know that. They should know that if they look at the financial statements for the province. Mr. Speaker, it's difficult for the members opposite to understand some things that are basic common sense.

SaskPower submitted a multi-year application to Saskatchewan rate review panel requesting an average increase of 4 per cent effective September '22 and the same thing in 2023. Mr. Speaker, it has been four years since SaskPower last raised its power rate. Four years of zero increases and one of those years there was a 10 per cent reduction.

Mr. Speaker, how much more do they want to load on the people of Saskatchewan? We have costs that will be incurred at SaskPower. The members that work in that place are entitled to compensation increases of roughly 2 per cent based on the collective bargaining agreement. We are going to honour those increases. We're going to maintain the utility grid. We're going to expand where necessary to ensure that we will have safe, reliable power throughout this province, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina

Elphinstone.

Support for Housing

Ms. Conway: — Mr. Speaker, there's not a corner of the province that's not touched by the housing crisis. And at SUMA yesterday, the minister was asked if she thinks it's the responsibility of the province to house the homeless. The question came from a councillor in La Ronge who had a blunt message: the people of La Ronge feel neglected by this government in their fight to support the most vulnerable.

A former mayor was quite clear: people are dying without access to shelter services. Will the minister acknowledge that it's the province's job to support our most vulnerable? Will she acknowledge that she'll work directly with the community of La Ronge and finally fund their shelter?

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

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for the question. And welcome to the councillor here again today.

Mr. Speaker, we did have this topic in our dialogue yesterday, and I think what I told the room, both in the breakout session as well as the bear pit, was that we, as the province of Saskatchewan, are here to work with communities, communities right across the province, to help with homelessness. As I've been working with different communities, whether it's the city of Saskatoon or city of Regina, Prince Albert — your community, Mr. Speaker — we're trying to work on this between the province of Saskatchewan, the municipalities.

And I'm really pleased to say that we've engaged Saskatoon Tribal Council, RT/SIS [Regina Treaty/Status Indian Services Inc.]. We're all working to try and find a solution when it comes to homelessness, Mr. Speaker, and we're absolutely willing to engage with the community of La Ronge on that also. Thank you.

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

Support for Seniors

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This year's budget included new funding for continuing care aides to support Saskatchewan seniors in long-term care homes, and this will help address the expanding needs of this demographic. However seniors who do not need that level of care but can no longer live in their own homes look to the 247 private care homes in our province to live with a level of semi-independence.

Many of them rely on the personal care home benefit to supplement their income. The PCHB [personal care home benefit] brings their income level up to a maximum \$2,000, a level that has not been increased for 10 years. Mr. Deputy Speaker, will the government explain how it expects seniors to try to access care homes with an income level that is 10 years old? Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Rural and

Remote Health.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In this year's budget, 2022-23, we're investing significant dollars into a number of different programs and initiatives that support seniors across this province, Mr. Speaker. We are investing \$17 million more to support seniors across Saskatchewan. That includes the additional hiring of 117 more continuing care assistants in this year's budget, Mr. Speaker.

As part of our commitment to hire 300 continuing care aides as per the election commitment, Mr. Speaker, we have increased funding for improved access to individualized home care funding and also support of home care services through an investment of \$4.75 million, Mr. Speaker, in this year's budget. There's more funding for organizations and facilities such as the new Meadow Lake long-term care facility. It'll be opening a little bit later this spring. We provide over \$100,000 to the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism, Mr. Speaker.

We're also investing some funding in this year's budget to address some of the questions and concerns that come from seniors and representative organizations across Saskatchewan about aging in place. And we're going to be having a look and continue to have conversations with those seniors' representative organizations to talk about how we can further advance some of those initiatives to allow seniors to remain living at home as long as possible. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Affordability and Cost of Living

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are witnessing increasing displays of callous indifference to the struggles and hardships of Saskatchewan people from this government. Affordability is one of those struggles. With the Sask Party government's refusal to implement meaningful affordability measures, we are confronted with one more example of how this government continues to take the needs of Saskatchewan people for granted.

That's what we have seen as an overarching theme of this most recent budget, a government that has completely lost touch with the needs of everyday people. We can see this out-of-touch mentality clearly reflected in the 32 new taxes and fees being applied in the budget to products and services in order to fund this government's chronic and continued mismanagement of our province's finances. I listed a number of those taxes in my budget reply, Mr. Speaker, and I will note again that these new taxes represent a particularly regressive form of taxation, the provincial sales tax.

Sales taxes are regressive, Mr. Speaker, as they have a vastly disproportionate impact on those who make the least amount of money. But in essence that's par for the course with this government, Mr. Speaker, making life harder and harder for those who can least afford it. But that's A-okay with this

government, Mr. Speaker, because this government doesn't really care about working-class or poor people or those who are otherwise marginalized in our society.

We see this reflected in the completely inadequate benefits for those on social assistance under SIS [Saskatchewan income support], as well as with the undignified level of benefits for those living with disabilities on SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability]. We see that reflected in our minimum wage, Mr. Speaker, which just last week slid right back down, once again, into dead last place. We have the lowest minimum wages in all of Canada — poverty wages, Mr. Speaker. This is actually what the Sask Party government believes over 16,000 hard-working people of this province are worth: a poverty wage. That's how many Saskatchewan people are stuck barely eking out an existence on a shameful minimum wage of 11.81 an hour.

The vast majority of these workers working for minimum wage, Mr. Speaker, are women. No surprises there, since this government also refuses to legislate pay equity for women in our province. We have one of the highest gender-wage gaps in Canada, nearly \$5 an hour. I've said this so many times before that I'm sick of saying it, but I'll keep saying it until they start listening. Still this government refuses to bring in pay equity legislation because that wouldn't be good for business in their mind, Mr. Speaker. We all know that's why they refuse to consider it, except the advancement of women's economic health is good for business. It's not just good for women; it's good for everyone, Mr. Speaker.

Sadly the members opposite have not a clue what it's like to try and live off this pittance of a minimum wage, and they simply don't seem to care for that matter. Everyone knows it. They'd rather cozy up to their corporate cronies than conjure up even one care in the world for average working people in Saskatchewan who they were elected to represent, I'll remind them.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we often hear absurd and ill-informed fearmongering from conservatives about how minimum wages and raising minimum wages will kill jobs — a completely baseless claim, Mr. Speaker. As I've noted before, when British Columbia's minimum wage was raised, the participation rate in that province's economy, as well as youth employment, remained comparable. Enough with this government's lazy regurgitation of long-ago-debunked myths. This sort of fearmongering, as I've said before, is designed to intimidate workers and to scare them off from demanding fair wages for their labour, which is a typical conservative ploy. They use it over and over.

The members opposite would seem to believe that Saskatchewan people deserve to toil under low wages, that they should simply accept their lot in life; buck up; just put up and shut up; keep their heads down; be good, silent, obedient workers. No need for simple pleasures in life, Mr. Speaker, for Saskatchewan people.

And speaking of access to simple pleasures in life, Mr. Speaker, just have a gander at some of the things this government has expanded the PST [provincial sales tax] to in this budget. PST will now be applied to sporting events. PST on concerts, on shows, on movie theatres. PST on museums, on zoos, on historical sights. PST on fairs and rodeos, Mr. Speaker. PST on arts and crafts shows, on professional theatre tickets. PST on gym

and golf memberships, on curling fees. PST even on hunting and fishing, Mr. Speaker, one of the simplest pleasures that so many people in this province enjoy, myself included. I like fishing, going out every summer with my brothers, casting a line or two.

And so many people . . . These very simple pleasures in life, one of the few remaining pleasures that people can afford, making it even more unaffordable. Lots of rural folks too. We know this. Lots of rural folks who rely on hunting to have food, to be able to afford to feed their families. This isn't just a leisure activity. For many people this is actually how they feed their families.

[11:00]

As I said, Mr. Speaker, all new taxes that will only make life harder and harder for average Saskatchewan people. Many of these new taxes are simply fun taxes. This government seems to be of the view that the hard-working people of Saskatchewan simply aren't deserving of opportunities for leisure. Those things are clearly viewed by this government as an unnecessary luxury for the poor and the working class, Mr. Speaker, rather than things that should be accessible to everyday people, rather than things that contribute to the cultural fabric of our province, Mr. Speaker, rather than things that promote happiness, improve mental and physical health, and connection with our fellow community members.

The reality is, what average Saskatchewan people have been saddled with in this budget is being shaken down time and again for what remains of their limited disposable income. Shaking out every last nickel, every last dime, and being forced to pay the price for this government's continuing mismanagement of our province's finances. This government simply doesn't care about the impacts of the skyrocketing cost of living on ordinary people.

Just have a look at the state of our finances, Mr. Speaker. And I know I've said this in my budget reply; I'll say it again for the folks who weren't there that night for good measure. Public debt up 2.9 billion from last year, now towering over the people of this province at \$30 billion, Mr. Speaker, and forecast to keep rising higher and higher. From public debt of 7.8 billion in 2009 to \$30 billion with this year's budget, it's just incredible.

And let's not forget . . . I'll keep saying it again, just like they like to tell us how, you know, when we were on the brink of bankruptcy we had to make extremely tough decisions and decisions that did impact people. But let's not forget this government tripled the debt long before COVID had even been born, Mr. Speaker. That's a fact. They tripled that debt after having an unparalleled resource boom in this province which they absolutely squandered.

The fact is this government has failed to balance the overwhelming majority of budgets they have brought forward in the 15 years that they have held control over the purse strings in this province. This government has only managed to balance four measly budgets, Mr. Speaker, over the past 15 years. They like to act like they're masters, they're kings of the economy. Four budgets. That's a fact. And all the while this government has continued to squander our wealth like drunken sailors on an unrestrained, frivolous spree.

And where did all that money go, Mr. Speaker? We don't know.

We don't know where all that money went. It's very suspicious and we don't have any answers. And I mean there will come a day when the books will be turned over and we'll have to see where all that money ended up. And we'll have to clean up their mess once again. But we'll be here for that, Mr. Speaker. That's what NDP governments do. And that's what a future NDP government will come back in and do again is clean up the same old conservative mess.

Mr. Speaker, all that money from the resource boom was gifted to this government. It fell into their lap like a big, fat golden egg. And a resource boom, again as I said, that was unparalleled in Saskatchewan history. And we see again resource revenues soaring. We see it happening again.

And what will happen this time, Mr. Speaker? Do you think that they will have learned their lesson this time? It's highly doubtful. Do you think that they will learn their lesson and take those soaring resource revenues and put them to good use improving the lives of average people or, God forbid, the marginalized, Mr. Speaker? No, they won't.

We've seen this story before, Mr. Speaker, time and again with this government. They'll take our money; they'll squander it, just straight out squander it, Mr. Speaker. They'll blow through our wealth so quickly and there will be nothing to show for it. Certainly nothing for working-class people or the poor. They'll funnel our wealth right over to their corporate buddies just like they always do. They hardly even bother to hide it anymore, Mr. Speaker. They've become so brazen. More and more money being snatched out of the pockets of Saskatchewan residents, all while people continue to struggle, more and more, under crushing, never-ending rises in costs. From housing to food to fuel, Mr. Speaker, people are scrambling just to get by.

As I noted in my budget reply, Mr. Speaker, in the far North of our province . . . This is an example. I hope people are listening up here. You elected someone from Athabasca and he's here. He has a seat now with your government. And I hope he's bringing this forward to you. Because the cost of a jug of milk in the far North of our province, \$13. You have to work over an hour at minimum wage in the far North of our province just to get a jug of milk. That's not right. And what's this government doing about it? Sweet nothing. They're doing nothing about it again for the people of the North in this province, who are so often neglected and forgotten by this government. We just see no need for . . . any meaningful help from this government for average people, Mr. Speaker. That's their mentality. Especially for people, as I said, in the North of this province.

And sadly, Mr. Speaker, it's not only workers in our province who are subjected to the minimum, bottom-of-the-barrel, lowest wages in the country. They're also told, beyond having the lowest wages in the country, that they do not deserve the dignity of paid sick leave to make sure they can stay home when they're sick, recover, not go into work and infect their co-workers, infect customers in the public that they serve. They're not even worth that to this government, Mr. Speaker.

In the words of the Labour minister, paid sick leave would be an "unnecessary imposition" on businesses. Well the evidence shows that's simply not factual, totally not factual. I'd encourage the minister to have a look at that report I've referenced in this

House before, to have a look and take 10 minutes out of his day to read this report from the Centre for Future Work that shows, it clearly demonstrates, that implementing 10 days of employer-paid sick leave would have a negligible impact on the bottom lines of businesses. But he won't take the time to look at it, Mr. Speaker. And he's honestly failing to do his job by not looking at the facts.

And what does the minister have to say about this report, about the facts showing that paid sick leave, 10 days of employer-paid sick leave, would not have a significant or meaningful impact on the bottom lines of businesses? He's had not a peep to say about it so far. He continues to get up there and he continues to regurgitate his talking points over and over that are handed to him.

This minister has been in that seat how many years, Mr. Speaker? He is not new to his role. He has been the Labour minister for a good number of years. But he knows, he must know that these talking points are not an accurate reflection on people's needs. I know that he understands that, and I wish he would have the courage to use his seniority over there and start getting to work for working-class people.

And you really have to wonder, Mr. Speaker, what is the real reason that this government refuses to pass our bill calling for paid sick leave? Do they simply have so much disdain for working-class people that they just can't be bothered to look at the facts? I want to think better of the Minister for Labour than that. I think he's a better man than that. And I'm asking him, and I'm calling him to look at the facts and to take those facts to his government and get to work improving life for working-class people.

Mr. Speaker, you know I've twice introduced our bill calling for paid sick leave. This government has the opportunity. They've had the opportunity, and they continue to have that opportunity to pass this any time they want. And so far they've refused to do it. And I'm calling on them to get to work passing this bill. Quit dragging your heels.

We're in the middle of a pandemic, you know, no matter what half of them would like to think, or maybe more. We're still in a pandemic here. We've got spread of COVID happening all over the place. I spoke to, in my role as Advanced Ed critic, I spoke to a professor at the U of R [University of Regina] just yesterday who said, all of my students are out sick. All of them are gone, out sick. I mean we've seen, you know, not to . . . And I don't mean to be inappropriate here, but we've seen numerous members of this caucus out sick in the last week or two. And we all know that this is continuing to spread, continuing to spread rampantly.

Yet they won't even bring in paid sick leave so that people who are less privileged than we are . . . Yeah, we get essentially unlimited paid sick days in this job. You know, we get sick here, we get COVID, we get to go work from home. We still get full pay. You know what minimum-wage workers with no benefits get? They get nothing. They get bills that they can't pay.

I'm running out of time here, so I have to move my motion. And so I will proceed to move my motion, Mr. Speaker. The motion reads as follows:

That the Assembly condemns the government for the lack of action to address affordability and the 32 new tax and fee hikes imposed on Saskatchewan people, who are struggling with the increased cost of living.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — It has been moved by the member of Saskatoon University:

That the Assembly condemns the government for the lack of action to address affordability and the 32 new tax and fee hikes imposed on Saskatchewan people, who are struggling with increasing cost of living.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

I recognize the member from Saskatoon Riversdale.

Mr. Friesen: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is indeed my honour and privilege to rise in this House to speak about affordability.

The Deputy Speaker: — I want to remind members that the health and welfare of other members in the chambers is not within the scope of questions heard. Health of individual members is a private matter and the comments in relation to that are prohibited. So I would ask the member to sort of apologize for her remark, please.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Apologies. I am a bit new still. I did not realize that was out of order, and I do apologize. Thank you.

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

Mr. Friesen: — Thank you again, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it is indeed my honour and privilege to rise in this House to speak about affordability in this great province. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I consider it an honour to walk up the front steps of this beautiful, sacred building every day. I think it's one of the most important things that we have to do, is to listen to the people of our constituencies and of the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I'd like to start with a short story, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about a program I've had the opportunity to be a part of in the city of Saskatoon for over 15 years now. It all started when I received a call from our radio station, our rock radio station's DJ [disc jockey], Mark Loshack. And in a panic he asked if my automotive skills translated into bikes, and if I was able to help fix some bikes. Mr. Deputy Speaker, these bikes would then be donated to kids that did not have the opportunity otherwise to have one. My first experience of this end was nothing short of amazing and absolutely grabbed my heartstrings, which if anyone knows me, they're on my sleeve, so they're pretty easy to grab.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a young boy, maybe seven or eight years old, came and asked if he could ride one of these bikes. Mark quickly said, "Absolutely," and found a bike his size, and he took it for a ride around the park. This young boy came back and the words out of his mouth were, "It sure would be nice to have a

bike like this one day." Mr. Deputy Speaker, what happened next, I will never forget. Mark quickly said to this young boy "The bike is yours." And a tear came out of this boy's eyes. I was hooked, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I have been doing this ever since. In fact, I have about 170 bikes in my backyard right now getting ready for this spring.

See, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have seen and been told this many, many times over the last 30-plus years, and being involved with Christmas dinners, providing Christmases for families, or whatever it is in Saskatoon's west side. And it is the hand up that people need and want.

This is what our budgets address. A sustained affordability, not temporary measures. And this government is committed to stable, sustainable affordability measures; for example, billions of dollars every year in affordability measures, not short term. This is year after year.

[11:15]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is hard to follow the Minister of Finance in speaking of the budget. However, with a budget like this, it is very easy to talk about, with great things like 112,000 low-income citizens are off the provincial income tax roll. That's 112,000 citizens, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is over 10 per cent of our population. Under the NDP government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a family of four started paying taxes at \$26,000. Now it's 53,000, Mr. Deputy Speaker, before they start paying provincial income tax. This is obviously not a temporary measure. This is a great start and part of many ways that this government addresses these issues.

Since 2007, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the Saskatchewan Party had the honour of forming government, Saskatchewan Housing Corporation has invested over \$800 million in the repair and development of almost 18,000 units, 18,000 units, 4,000 of which, actually over 4,000 are affordable housing units, which is very important in my neighbourhood and throughout the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I had the honour of bringing greetings in December to the grand opening of the round table elders' lodge. This was a co-operative build, through some communities and CUMFI [Central Urban Métis Federation Inc.] in Saskatoon in my neighbourhood, to build affordable housing for Indigenous elders. The same day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was part of another great announcement, the rapid housing initiative 2.0, building another 32 affordable units, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We have also signed an agreement with the federal government to lower cost of daycare to as low as \$10 by adding 61 child . . . and also adding 6,100 new child care spaces, with a plan to get to 28,000 in the next five years. People are offered and encouraged, daycares are offered and encouraged, even in smaller ones, to get registered and qualify for this funding. And that's what we are here for, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If people are interested in becoming a daycare that is funded like this, reach out to your MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly]. We will help you with this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members opposite recently, for some reason, like talking about the Alberta government's temporary

gas relief. However they don't want to mention what parents pay to license their kids' vehicles in Alberta. Very often a vehicle that is \$1,000 here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to license for a year, is over \$3,000 in Alberta. This is not even touching on the housing costs in Alberta and many other rising costs in Alberta, which they seem to keep talking about, so I figured I might as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also have had SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] rebates for the second time in a calendar year, totalling \$385 per vehicle, just another way of providing temporary relief. Mr. Deputy Speaker, these low rates are part of the second-lowest utility bundle in the country and we're proud of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, seeing as members opposite like to post on Twitter, I'd like to read one of the interim opposite Leader of the Opposition's Twitter account in 2019: "Important reflections from Nicolas Falvo's article, 'Low taxes are nothing to brag about,' on the role taxes play in sustaining a healthy society."

This from the people that are talking about lower taxes. They're the ones that raised our taxes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the outgoing Leader of the Opposition will post this and yet go on and on about the small, stable increases. I will take a 6 per cent PST any day over the 9 per cent under the previous NDP government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're raising the seniors' income plan from 90 to \$330 and a commitment to raise it to \$360 per month. This program, Mr. Deputy Speaker, under the previous NDP government was \$90 for 16 years. They want to talk about caring for our seniors? They never raised it for 16 years. We've dropped the ambulance fees from 275 to 135 per trip. This government covers 97 per cent of the cost of home care.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, here's a long list of things: cystic fibrosis drug plans; autism services; glucose monitors; insulin pump program; seniors' drug plan; active families benefit; graduate retention program; first-time homebuyers tax credit; volunteer first responder, firefighter tax credit; home renovation tax credit. All, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were not offered under the NDP government. Not one of those services, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Part of being a responsible government is stability, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and this government has a desire to remain constant. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will not be supporting the motion put forward by the member from Saskatoon University. And I'm surprised that they'd put this forward when the member from Regina Elphinstone spread a petition to support Justin Trudeau's tax increases on small businesses, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Nutana opposed the SGI rebate, the SaskPower rebate, and even the home renovation tax rebate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you for the honour of being here today and speaking to this debate.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's . . . Well it's not a pleasure to weigh in here today on the topic that we are, because what we're talking about is a whole lot of economic pain and hurt and cost of living that Saskatchewan

people are facing.

But I find it extraordinary in this place. This place never ceases to amaze me. Here we are talking about a government that's so off track and hiking the cost of living, and the member from Saskatoon Riversdale is put up to defend the hikes and the costs and the failures of this government. It just baffles me.

Because I'll say this, you know what? I like this member. He's new around here. I like visiting with him about cars, and you know, a few other things, and he's a decent guy. But I'll tell you this: for the member from Saskatoon Riversdale to defend the kind of nonsense that the Sask Party is imposing on Saskatchewan people, and the crushing cost of living that they're facing, it's a betrayal of the folks that he represents.

And I remember not that long ago, I remember a member from Saskatoon Riversdale, Saskatoon Riversdale, by the name of Danielle Chartier. And I remember Danielle. She would be fierce in defence of her constituents on this front. She would be fierce in defending folks against the kind of cost-of-living increases that people are facing. She was a fierce advocate for folks with mental health and addictions challenges in this province and working to fight against . . . to push for the supports in face of the crisis. But she would not tolerate the kind of nonsense being brought about by that member opposite, the current member for Saskatoon Riversdale, and this government, Mr. Speaker.

You know, this is a government that's fallen out of touch with working people, Saskatchewan people that are facing a crushing cost of living, a government that has not been able to balance budgets or priorities, Mr. Speaker, and it's stuck Saskatchewan people with the costs.

A Sask Party government, of course, that after all their failures and mismanagement and incompetence and even corruption, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the GTH [Global Transportation Hub] deals, Mr. Speaker, that are now sticking Saskatchewan people with the cost. They stuck Saskatchewan people with the biggest tax hike in Saskatchewan's history as a direct consequence of their failure to manage, as a direct consequence of their years of mismanagement and incompetence from a budgetary perspective, Mr. Speaker.

You know, we saw this. You know, we hear members opposite with their revisionist history. I heard the member from The Battlefords, another good guy, but you know, just has no understanding of the history of this province and no understanding of the history of his party's record, Mr. Speaker.

You know, I hear members opposite talking about, you know, balanced budgets and these sort of things. This has been a foreign concept for the Sask Party. It's been a foreign concept to the Sask Party conservatives of the Devine era, Mr. Speaker, who put this province on the brink of bankruptcy, Mr. Speaker. We had to have that mess cleaned by New Democrats along with Saskatchewan people and Roy Romanow and Lorne Calvert and, most importantly, the hard work and sacrifice of Saskatchewan people who paid a terrible price for the incompetence, budgetary incompetence of that government, the Devine Conservatives, the Sask Party to follow, Mr. Speaker.

But the folks opposite that occupy those seats over there, Mr.

Speaker, it seems they don't know history in Saskatchewan. Seems they have a failure to understand their own fiscal record, Mr. Speaker, and it's one of fiscal incompetence, Mr. Speaker, that has failed Saskatchewan people time and time again.

Let's just think of this current group over there, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party. They governed during a period of an unprecedented commodity super-cycle, a boom, Mr. Speaker, and they couldn't get the job done during those years. They couldn't save a dime. They couldn't balance the budget, Mr. Speaker. They piled on the debt, tripled the debt long before the pandemic, Mr. Speaker, saved nothing for the long term.

You know, we had pushed, through that period of time, about savings for the long term, a sovereign wealth fund or a heritage fund, Mr. Speaker. Well these guys, you know, didn't put a penny away for the future, Mr. Speaker. Blew through those dollars, and they're sticking Saskatchewan people with the costs, Mr. Speaker. These guys have spent wildly on their mismanagement, wildly on the projects that went off the rails, Mr. Speaker. And now they sit around here, and you know, the backbench members back there don't even understand the record of the government that they represent. And now here they come, Mr. Speaker, going deep into the pockets of Saskatchewan people once again at an extraordinary time.

Saskatchewan people are facing an extraordinary situation, as is the province. And we have an extraordinary situation in our world that's causing some of this. When we look at the revenues in the province, we saw, actually, resource revenues on a steady climb through the last fiscal year. Steady revenue growth improving the financial position for the government. And then we saw the unforgivable invasion of Ukraine that we all stand united against, Mr. Speaker, and we saw those revenues, of course, go through the roof.

Saskatchewan people are the owners of those resources, Mr. Speaker. They're facing, not a boom in their revenues, not a boom in their incomes, but they're facing crushing cost of living. A buck seventy a litre for gasoline, Mr. Speaker, costs at the grocery store that are putting many people under, Mr. Speaker, not allowing people to keep up with the expenses, you know, on the day-to-day basis; forcing folks, forcing seniors to have to bypass the meat aisle, Mr. Speaker, because they can't be tempted when they walk down it.

Now we're getting heckled by the member for Rochdale as we're talking about seniors who right now, who are sharing with us that they have to avoid walking down the meat aisle because they just don't want to be tempted. They just don't want to be tempted, and they can't afford that basic nutrition, Mr. Speaker. Times are tough for Saskatchewan people and we have an arrogant, out-of-touch bunch as a government, Mr. Speaker. And any chance Saskatchewan people get to see this, you know, including the heckling from the member from Rochdale here today, they're exposed for what they are, Mr. Speaker.

So instead what we see here in this budget, Mr. Speaker, isn't relief for Saskatchewan people. Of course we've seen this government vote against providing some relief against the skyrocketing price at the pumps, Mr. Speaker. The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow wants to heckle and make a bunch of noise but won't make any bloody noise at his caucus table to fight

for the people of his constituency, sticking them instead, Mr. Speaker, with no help at the pumps, sticking them with 32 new taxes and fee hikes, Mr. Speaker, sticking them with a power rate increase as well, Mr. Speaker. What a spineless bunch over there, Mr. Speaker. What an out-of-touch bunch when you look at the pressure and the challenges that Saskatchewan people are facing.

But instead, Mr. Speaker, it's tax hikes and a piling on to the biggest tax hike in Saskatchewan's history, Mr. Speaker, and a tax on hard-hit sectors like the arts, like sports, like rodeos, Folk Fest, Rider games, the Globe Theatre. Mr. Speaker, the list goes on. These are sectors that have been hard hit. It doesn't make any sense to hurt these local businesses, these local organizations, and at a time where people should be coming together, Mr. Speaker.

[11:30]

The member for Canora, you know, heckles away and makes a whole bunch of noise, Mr. Speaker, while the people in his riding are facing a serious, serious cost-of-living increase, Mr. Speaker. You know, and this is a time where Saskatchewan people should be encouraged to come together, a time where we've been forced to stay apart, Mr. Speaker. It's a time we should be encouraging folks to come together and instead, you know, the member for Canora and the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow and the member for Saskatoon Riversdale are taxing these very industries.

Taxing gyms, Mr. Speaker. These local businesses have suffered terrible losses, worked so hard to keep their doors open through this pandemic, Mr. Speaker. We should be supporting these local businesses that are so important, Mr. Speaker. We should be supporting Saskatchewan people who, you know, that we should be supporting them and making decisions that promote good health and their wellness, Mr. Speaker. Instead they're getting stuck with another tax hike by the Sask Party government.

The folks opposite, obviously, people in the province know that they can't manage the finances. Now they're being stuck with the costs, Mr. Speaker, and this budget and this government is so out of touch with the priorities Saskatchewan people are facing.

I'm very proud to support the motion brought by the member from Saskatoon University in the exceptional speech she brought forward here today, and we'll continue to fight for Saskatchewan people and to make sure that they have the quality of life that they deserve.

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

Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I've spoken in this House previously about how philosophically the NDP are just out of touch with the people of this province. The NDP, they're a big-government party, Mr. Speaker. And if you think that government is already big, I would suggest that you would not like the consequences of those members opposite ever forming government, Mr. Speaker. See, Mr. Speaker, and the problem with big-government parties is this, is they believe that they are best to make decisions for their life. And I mean, the member from Regina University, she's just going to talk through for the next 10 minutes, but I'm going to speaking to the Chair,

Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that really illustrates the contrast between our government and the NDP when it comes to the economy in general, also when it comes specifically to affordability measures, Mr. Speaker. The NDP, they want government to take more of your money and create sweeping, one-size-fits-all government programs. But, Mr. Speaker, the approach of this government is to leave more money in the pockets of Saskatchewan families to allow them to make the best decisions for their families, for their organizations, and for their businesses.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to affordability, I take the NDP's opinions with a grain of salt, and probably more than a grain of salt. But let me begin, Mr. Speaker. If we're going to debate the PST today, because that's what's being talked about, I think it's important to add some historical context to this debate. Now let's not forget that the NDP, they're the party of the 9 per cent PST in this province, Mr. Speaker. But that's history, right? I'm just told that's history.

But wait, Mr. Speaker. Remember the NDP's last election platform? I recall that the NDP platform had \$4 billion of unaccounted spending that they hadn't even bothered to match with new revenue. How do you make a budget and add expense and not add new revenue, Mr. Speaker? Saskatchewan people wondered how they were going to do that. I've heard about it on the doorsteps in Battleford and North Battleford, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if the NDP had formed government, they would have needed to increase the PST by nine points to pay for that \$4 billion in new spending — nine points, Mr. Speaker. That would mean a double-digit PST, 15 per cent, something we've never seen in this province and, Mr. Speaker, definitely something we do not plan to see under a Saskatchewan Party government.

You know, another thing I want to speak about, Mr. Speaker, you know, the members opposite, they don't seem to want to talk about the carbon tax. In fact I took the time this week to review *Hansard* for the 29th legislature, this current legislature, Mr. Speaker. And you know, through combing through *Hansard*, only two members on that side have even uttered the words "carbon tax."

So it's the members from Regina Douglas Park and Saskatoon Nutana who used "carbon tax" in estimates proceedings last spring, you know. And those are verboten words in that caucus, Mr. Speaker. So why is that? Why is the NDP not talking about the carbon tax when it's been the first thing on people's tongues at the gas pumps, at the grocery checkout, or at the water cooler?

Now, Mr. Speaker, I had some time to think about this this week, and I would suggest that the reason we don't hear those two words uttered by NDP members is, Mr. Speaker, they know, like most Saskatchewan people do — I'll add that — is that the NDP are complicit in the imposition and increase of the carbon tax.

And for the members opposite who deny this charge, you know, let me break it down for them and also the people of the province, Mr. Speaker, because I also had some time this week to review the constitution of the Saskatchewan NDP. And, Mr. Speaker, you know, it's an interesting constitution because it's filled with

references that connect the provincial NDP to the federal NDP, Mr. Speaker.

But I guess I shouldn't be that surprised about that, coming from a party that just wants to nationalize private companies they don't like out of nowhere. Mr. Speaker, the NDP constitution reads very much the same way, the NDP wanting Ottawa solutions for Saskatchewan people. And, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about out of touch, it doesn't get more out of touch than that.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, since the original imposition of the carbon tax and ahead of the carbon tax increase just last week . . . And I know I'm using those words "carbon tax" a lot. I know it must be really difficult for the members opposite to take it all in, but stay with me, guys.

So the NDP members opposite have had ample opportunity to speak with their federal leader, the same federal leader who is now keeping Prime Minister Trudeau's government on life support. Mr. Speaker, that's a federal government that's talking about adding a surcharge to buying an SUV [sport-utility vehicle] or a pickup truck. That's a federal government that's talking about a fertilizer cap, Mr. Speaker, and that's a federal government that just can't make up their mind if they like nuclear power or not.

You know, these members opposite support federal government policy implicitly by their silence and sitting on their hands, Mr. Speaker. So if those members opposite want to talk about affordability for Saskatchewan families, if they want to talk about affordability for Saskatchewan farms, if they want to talk about affordability for Saskatchewan businesses — because let's not forget the carbon tax makes life significantly more expensive for all those people and organizations, Mr. Speaker — they need to pick up the phone. They need to find their feet, they need to find their voice, and they need to speak up for the people of this province.

But, Mr. Speaker, sorry. Enough about the backwards ideas of the opposition NDP. Let's look forward, because I'm proud to talk about our government's record on affordability and how we are making life more affordable for the people of Saskatchewan. Let's give some examples here.

Mr. Speaker, it's been canvassed at length in this House in question period, but I wish to again draw attention to the two SGI rebates the government has been able to return to Saskatchewan drivers over the last couple of years. You know, given low claim rates over the last two years, largely in part just fewer drivers on the road and fewer claims and strong investment returns out of the Auto Fund, the SGI Auto Fund was able to return \$285 last year and then \$100 this year to Saskatchewan drivers. And if we compare that to what Alberta and Ontario are doing with the fuel tax rebate, those rebates are significantly more than what those fuel tax rebates are going to mean for the people of those provinces, Mr. Speaker.

Another great example of putting money back into people's pockets has been the home renovation tax credit, Mr. Speaker. And you know, for most people we know that their home is the most important asset they're going to own in their lives. And owning a home, it comes with maintenance. It comes with renovation costs. And, Mr. Speaker, that ten-and-a-half per cent

tax credit that we're putting back into the pockets of Saskatchewan people is helping them invest into their most important asset.

Mr. Speaker, we know that affordability is a real challenge for young people in this country, but I would put forward to this House that Saskatchewan is a very affordable place for young people to get their lives started, you know, and perhaps I can speak to my own experience in this regard. And you know, moving from British Columbia, I pay less in Saskatchewan for car insurance. I pay less for my cell phone, Mr. Speaker. I pay less in PST, Mr. Speaker.

But you know, in addition to that, Mr. Speaker, young people who graduated from a post-secondary institution, Mr. Speaker, are eligible to receive a rebate on tuition through the graduate retention program. And I really believe this is one of the best programs that our government has going, Mr. Speaker. And you know, even if you didn't attend a post-secondary institution, if you reside in Saskatchewan after your graduation, you're eligible for this benefit, Mr. Speaker. This is bringing young, intelligent, professional people to our province. You know, I can certainly relate to that. And this government is giving graduates a leg-up with the continuation of the graduate retention program.

Now something that's so often ignored by the NDP opposition — I can see why they want to ignore this — is how our government has reduced personal income tax so significantly since 2007. You know, so significantly, Mr. Speaker, that over 112,000 people in this province are now off the provincial income tax roll. You know, and members opposite have laughed at this in question period, Mr. Speaker. I would contend that's not a laughing matter for those people who are no longer paying provincial income tax in this province.

You know, under the NDP, an average family of four started paying provincial income tax at about \$26,000 of income. But, Mr. Speaker, now that same family of four doesn't pay provincial income tax until an income of nearly \$54,000. And that speaks exactly to the contrast that I illustrated earlier between this government's approach to affordability and the opposition's approach to affordability.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, all these items are a part of our government's collective strategy to keep life in Saskatchewan affordable for everyone in our province. You know and, Mr. Speaker, it's probably no surprise, but I can't support this motion here today. And I look forward to answering questions on this topic. And, Mr. Speaker, I will be more than happy to remind members opposite of this government's long-standing record on making life more affordable in Saskatchewan. Thank you.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Seventy-five-minute debates are always a great opportunity to witness some of the sad and really out-of-touch cabinet auditions that some members from the backbench are making. And it's pretty clear, Mr. Speaker, where the speeches that they've written from themselves drop off and the talking points that they've gotten pick up.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, it's clear. Oh, and they're already cranky, Mr. Speaker. It's clear. It's clear. A discussion today talking about the 32, 32 taxes and fees that this government has introduced in this year's budget has struck a nerve. We've got members heckling everything from seniors not being able to afford to buy groceries, suggesting they should be vegans. And we've got members from communities with people struggling, like really struggling with the rising cost of living. The member from Saskatoon Riversdale, the member from The Battlefords, who should be listening to people in their communities who are hard pressed right now. There are poor, desperate people that you represent who are having a harder and harder time making ends meet. And you have a duty and a moral obligation to advocate for those people, not to stand up and try and defend the indefensible, Mr. Speaker. Because let's talk about it. Let's talk about it. Thirty-two taxes and fees in this year's budget for 20 million bucks.

And the member from The Battlefords, you know, he's flipping through his laminated pages. And he's going on and he's talking about, you know, the Trudeau government and the federal NDP. And clearly he's got some time on his hands if, like, if he's going through a party constitution. He's searching *Hansard* for every mention of the carbon tax like Nancy flipping Drew over there.

But you know, what he should be doing is he should be having conversations. He should be talking to members of his own government and saying, you know, how did this get through treasury board? How did this get into the budget?

Thirty-two taxes and fee increases for 20 million bucks. Twenty million bucks that this government doesn't need. This is petty. This is short-sighted. And this just grinds people.

You know, the member from Saskatoon University talked about simple pleasures. So let's talk about that. You know, we've heard some speeches. I listened closely to some of the responses to the budget from members opposite, and one member, one member talked about how individuals just need to work harder and build character. They need to just work harder and that's going to lift them out of poverty.

[11:45]

So let's talk about that, and I'll tell a personal story. So you know, the member from way back there in the corner can pipe down for a second. So you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my dad was here today. And as members may know, I introduced him before. My dad's from Scotland and grew up working-class poor. And my dad's grandma, his favourite person in the world, his nan, worked her whole life. Her father was a bad alcoholic, hit by a car, died in the streets. Her mother had already passed.

And when she was 15, she became the parent in her family, the only breadwinner, only person able to work. So she went out. She left school — younger siblings behind her — at 15 years old, and she got a job working in the hospital as a cleaning lady. And she worked from 15 well, well, well into her later years.

And when my great-grandma, my dad's nan, when she went to retire after working, building character, supporting her family . . . she literally worked until every tooth in her head had fallen out; tiny little lady. Great face. Looked like a friendly walnut. But she

worked her whole life. That's building character. You know, the members are heckling, saying they also work. That's great. We all do.

And when she went to retire, when she went to retire — you can heckle my great-grandma; classy move, guys — when she went to retire, she found out . . . the hospital told her she'd been hired on as part-time staff despite working more than 50 hours a week her entire life. And you know what that meant? That meant she had no pension. Nothing could be done. So she died as she lived, in grinding poverty, working every day. And that type of grinding poverty does not build character. That does not build virtue. That is a waste. And that is a tragedy. And we still see that happening in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And the members opposite cannot defend it because it is indefensible.

The minimum wage right now, Mr. Speaker, you have to work over half a day to afford a single container of formula. You've got to work at least 10 per cent of your week just to feed your baby if you need to. Does that speak to a prosperous province? The member from Riversdale, the member from The Battlefords, does that mean your communities are doing well, if people have to work in grinding poverty and work over half a day to afford a container of formula? Shame. It should be an honest day's work for an honest day's wage. No one in this province should work full-time and live in poverty.

And it is not just about not living in abject, grinding poverty while you're working, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You should be able to have some small, simple joys in your life. Maybe you're a knitter, Mr. Speaker. I'm not; I have very few domestic skills where textiles are involved. But maybe you're a knitter. And I've talked to some knitters who've reached out to me — knitters, of all people. Talking about grandmas, although of course not all knitters are grandmas and not all grandmas are knitters.

But they've reached out to me to say, I pay PST already on my knitting supplies. And this is what they've said to me, Mr. Speaker. I've never knit, or poorly at best. I tried once. Thought it might be good for the old mental health and boy, was I wrong. But they reached out to me to say, we pay PST. We pay PST on our knitting supplies, and now if we go to craft shows there's another PST charge. Explain that to me. It's indefensible, Mr. Speaker.

Thirty-two taxes and fees — simple joys, gyms. Healthy body, healthy mind. We should be supporting not just industries, not just industries that are struggling to get back on their feet, but we should be supporting people in not just having to work to get through the week, not just being able to claw their way to managing to pay their bills at the end of the month. People should be able to have a tiny bit of fun. I mean come on, can't we agree on that? Folks shouldn't be getting dinged at the door to a movie theatre. Folks should be able to enjoy live music. Folks . . . Like, like, what are we talking about?

This is indefensible, and you notice, because the members opposite can't defend it. None of them mentioned this in their speeches. You know, they're going through *Hansard* looking for mentions of the carbon tax. Well like, let's talk about the carbon tax. You want to talk? Oh, they've woken up. They've woken up, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they're not going to like this.

You voted against an affordability motion on the gas tax. You did. The carbon tax on gasoline is lower than the amount that your government collects today, today. And you know, we've got members chirping from the seats in the back, which is always fun to say. You know, it delights me. But this is a government that has cited these 32 tax increases as an opportunity to harmonize with Justin Trudeau's taxes. Like, what cognitive dissonance, Mr. Speaker. It's remarkable.

And you know, they like to stand up and they like to yell, well how are you going to pay for it, how are we going to pay for it? What do you want to do? Are the members opposite really saying that \$17 billion isn't enough money? We don't have a scarcity problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a problem of priorities.

You guys want to talk about your biggest investments, and we've already canvassed that. You add a buck next year, guess what, it's going to be the biggest investment again. That's the way that it works. But if you are shortchanging people, you're still spending \$17 billion. And too many people in this province — people in Saskatoon Riversdale, people in The Battlefords — are living in grinding poverty. And you turn around, you turn around with \$17 billion and decide that you're going to slap another 32 taxes and fees on people just because Justin Trudeau did.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that has lost its way. And I look forward to future debate on this motion today.

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — I recognize the member from Lumsden-Morse.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to respond to this 75-minute debate on the motion from the NDP member from Saskatoon University. Mr. Speaker, during my brief remarks, I'll attempt to show that Saskatchewan is one of the least expensive places to live in this country.

Mr. Speaker, under the NDP a family of four started paying provincial income tax with an income of only \$26,150. Under this government, Mr. Speaker, that family doesn't start paying Saskatchewan income tax until they earn \$53,435. This change removed 112,000 low-income citizens from the provincial tax rolls altogether, giving Saskatchewan one of the highest tax-free thresholds in the country. Cumulatively, Mr. Speaker, with this '22-23 budget in the books, our government puts \$2.4 billion into the hands of Saskatchewan people.

Under the NDP, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan had some of the highest education property taxes in North America. The NDP had promised to do something about the problem since 1944, Mr. Speaker, and they did. They made it worse. They made it worse until there were property tax revolts around the province with many people refusing to pay. This government fixed it, Mr. Speaker, and quickly, after we were granted the privilege of governing in 2007.

Under the NDP, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan had the highest corporate tax in Canada at 17 per cent, driving investment dollars and the jobs they create elsewhere and forcing existing businesses to leave for greener pastures, taking thousands of jobs with them.

Mr. Speaker, in those dark days when the NDP clung to power in

this province, they raised major taxes 21 times, including raising the PST four times. In 16 long and expensive years, Mr. Speaker, they raised the PST to a high of 9 per cent. This, combined with their Marxist-style hatred of business and business people and business investment, drove many of the best and brightest young people out of this province to Alberta, BC [British Columbia], Ontario, and to all over North America and beyond. As a result, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan had absolutely the worst job creation record in Canada and Canada's most dismal economic growth rate from 2001 to 2007.

Mr. Speaker, they either don't know their own dismal record or they pretend they don't. They drove tens of thousands of our young people out of the province and forced them to start their lives elsewhere. Then, Mr. Speaker, many of their parents moved out as well so they could be closer to the kids.

Mr. Speaker, under the NDP there was no graduate retention program, no children's drug plan, no active family benefit, no support for children with autism, no support for diabetics, no home renovation tax credit, no volunteer responder first firefighter tax credit. And the list goes on, Mr. Speaker.

The provincial highways resembled the road to Baghdad. And in spite of chasing thousands of young people and many of their parents out of the province and then closing 176 schools and 52 hospitals around this province, they somehow managed to have the longest surgical wait-list in all of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the question remains unanswered. Who did they help? Was it perhaps themselves, Mr. Speaker? It's difficult to find anybody else in the province that gained anything. Mr. Speaker, I remember life in Saskatchewan during their reign of economic terror. And I remember that near the end of that dark time, there was a popular postcard sold in the thousands in Moose Jaw that depicted a deserted, boarded-up Moose Jaw Main Street with a gigantic tumbleweed rolling down North Hill.

Mr. Speaker, a popular bumper sticker at the time, read, "Will the last one out please turn out the lights?" And the most popular graduation gift for young people was luggage so they could leave to make a better life for themselves elsewhere, in places where investment jobs and prosperity were welcome and people really could make a better life for themselves.

I remember how deeply sad and troubled I was when many of my friends' children left the province because they had to. And then my two oldest, my daughters Stephanie and Alison, did the same thing. It seemed impossible, Mr. Speaker, that a province as rich in natural resources and containing 46 per cent of the arable farm land in the country, and a place endowed with sturdy people with a work ethic that was second to none, could be a have-not province with the worst job creation record in the country and the highest unemployment. Roads crumbling. Schools closing. Hospitals closed, and the ones still open unable to cope.

I could see the problem was the socialist NDP government, Mr. Speaker. And I made the hard decision to step back as much as necessary from the life I love, that being farm and ranch life, Mr. Speaker, and joined this upstart new Saskatchewan Party who saw things the way I did, and run for office to try and help effect change in this wonderful province.

What a turnaround I have seen, brought about by these wonderful women and men and many that served before me. What a rewarding career to have even played a tiny part in the change that we have seen in this place that we love. What a privilege to have been a colleague of the great people that made all that change possible.

Mr. Speaker, I have an interesting chart in front of me which shows conclusively that Regina, the capital city of our province, has the second-lowest cost bundle of taxes and utilities for families with total incomes of 100,000 and 125,000 out of the 10 capital cities in the country. You see, Mr. Speaker, this government has been addressing affordability all along and the people of Saskatchewan are the winners.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let's see what effect the recent budget will have on affordability for people of Saskatchewan. I mentioned earlier that our government has put 2.4 billion in the hands of Saskatchewan people. Let's take a closer look at that, Mr. Speaker.

I see I'm running out of time already so I'll go straight to a summary of the benefits to Saskatchewan people: personal income tax, 720 million; Saskatchewan low-income child credit, 140 million; seniors' income plan, 34 million; Saskatchewan housing benefit, 11 million; active families benefit, 4 million; disability tax credit, 23 million.

Mr. Speaker, I'm out of time, but I hope I have shown that this government has addressed affordability since our beginnings. And accordingly, I will not support the politically motivated motion of the NDP member.

[12:00]

The Deputy Speaker: — The 65-minute period has expired. The 10-minute period question and answer will begin. I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Ms. C. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Affordability is a key issue so I appreciate the NDP bringing it up. To quickly recap, with the NDP Saskatchewan had no grad retention program, no children's drug plan, no active families benefit, no supports for children with autism, no support for diabetics, no home renovation tax credit, no first-time homebuyers tax credit. You know what else makes life unaffordable, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Not being able to find a decent-paying job, the worse job and economic growth record in Canada under the NDP.

To the member for Saskatoon University: please present the NDP plan and explain why your colleagues voted against those tax breaks introduced by this government.

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to the member opposite, the NDP is the party of working-class people. That's who we stand for in this province, unlike the members opposite who continually, continually make efforts to make life harder and harder for average working people and the poor. That's the deflection that comes from this side.

I just want to use a little bit of my psychology degree background here to just remind the members opposite of what the term “psychological deflection” means, Mr. Speaker. Psychological deflection: a defence mechanism that people use to try to take the blame off themselves. That’s exactly what we see from these members.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Nine billion dollars, that was the Sask Party’s first budget, \$9 billion, and now it has doubled to nearly \$18 billion, doubling the size of government. Talk about small government, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To the member from Saskatoon Riversdale: with \$17 billion coming into your government, how did you vote against giving people relief at the pumps?

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

Mr. Friesen: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we are very proud of the record investments, over \$13 billion in this province this year alone, Mr. Deputy Speaker, creating great jobs, great-paying jobs.

Interesting that you bring up the fuel tax. I would love to talk about that. This is really rich coming from your side, the NDP that recently discovered, recently discovered that gas is expensive, this after years of best efforts to shut down the oil and gas industry. Mr. Speaker, let me remind you and remind the member from Regina Rosemont, under your government, your road tax that you had didn’t even . . . you didn’t even spend it all on the highways. We spend far more than we even collect. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

Mr. D. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I’m going to quote the member from Saskatoon University: “They point to something like the home reno tax credit or income tax brackets, which is out of touch with tens of thousands of minimum-wage workers.” Mr. Speaker, under the NDP, in 2007 a family of four started paying income tax just after \$26,150. Today that number is \$53,425.

I’d like a direct answer from the member from Saskatoon University: is she actually against our indexing of personal exemptions so inflation doesn’t erode families’ incomes?

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’ll remind the member opposite that we called for that. That’s something that the NDP called for. So I mean, maybe the member opposite should do a little more research like his colleague, the member for The Battlefords appears to have all the time in the world to do from his backbench seat, and look at the history books and look at who proposed that.

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. Order, please. I

recognize the member from Regina University.

Ms. A. Young: — I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A fun Thursday here today. Mr. Speaker, on Monday night in committee, the Minister for Trade and Export Development talked about power prices in this province being uncompetitive for industrial investment. So to the member from Saskatoon Riversdale: is an 8 per cent increase on for the people of Riversdale? Do you believe 8 per cent increase is affordable, not just for businesses, not just for industry, but for the people that you represent?

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

Mr. Friesen: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And thank you for the question. I seem to remember last year when we gave the 10 per cent reduction in SaskPower rates and that was something that a lot of the members opposite were against. We are very much involved with affordability, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we have a plan that is sustained affordability, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with over 2 billion a year in reductions, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Martensville-Warman.

Mr. Jenson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Four billion dollars, that’s how much the NDP promised to try and buy people’s votes during the last election campaign. Every day in this Chamber we hear demands for more programs, higher coverages, more staffing. And it’s not a politicalized slam at the members opposite, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Some of those requests are very real and they’re very heartfelt. But we’ve very worked very hard to get off this resource-royalty roller coaster in our budgets.

So to the member from Saskatoon University: how do you plan to pay for the promises? Is it through deficits? Is it cuts to other programs? Or is it going to be higher taxes?

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the member opposite who doesn’t seem to understand. He and his entire government do not seem to understand what kind of taxation is progressive taxation in this province. They don’t understand that regressive taxes like PST . . . I can’t hear myself over these buffoons, I’m sorry.

The Deputy Speaker: — That’s called inappropriate language. Please refrain from inappropriate language in the House. And members opposite, come to order. Or members of the government, please come to order. Continue.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, the members on this side do not understand what progressive taxation looks like and they don’t care, because that’s not what they want, right? They do not want taxation that is fair for working-class people, that is fair for people who are of average means. They want to give all of the money and all of the tax breaks to their corporate buddies who scratch their back. And

then it's just a cycle.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the member for The Battlefords: he voted against any relief at the pumps, fuel-price relief. He's supported and voted for a budget that's hiking taxes on Saskatchewan families at a time they're facing crushing cost-of-living increases. How does he defend this to his constituents?

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

Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You know, I'll let the member opposite know I defend this government's record because we've grown this economy, Mr. Speaker. We understand that if we want to invest in government services like the members opposite have asked for, we have to have a fiscal track, a clear understanding of matching expenses with revenue, which the members opposite have no sense of at all, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Keisig: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Now I know all the members across are urban, but I'd like to inform them that everything comes into the grocery store on a truck. The provincial gas tax has not changed since 1993 when it was raised under the NDP. That means the last government adjustment on the price of fuel was the carbon tax.

Will the member from Saskatoon University call on the federal government, Jagmeet Singh and Justin Trudeau, to remove the carbon tax? Yes or no?

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you for the question. The member is straining from the back to hear my response on this. And my response, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — The 75-minute debate period has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 1 — Federal Government's Approach to Gun Crime

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by Mr. Domotor.]

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

Mr. Keisig: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm very happy

to be on my feet today and comment on the motion put forward by my very esteemed colleague, the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford. I want to put the motion into the record:

That this Assembly condemns the federal government's targeting of law-abiding firearm owners in recent regulatory changes, and calls on the federal government to halt any proposed reduction of sentences for serious offences through the Criminal Code of Canada, as prescribed in Bill C-22 introduced to the House of Commons in 2021.

There are many flaws, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the proposed legislative changes and we have to analyze them all in detail. Bill C-22 would reduce consequences for drug-related crimes, which could increase recidivism and overdoses. Reducing minimum sentences for trafficking, importing, and producing hard drugs is not a path forward for any society.

Across this country, Mr. Speaker, over 17,000 people passed away from opioid overdoses during the first six months of last year, and the people selling this product have to be held to account. Where's the justice for families who are affected by this lifestyle? Why would we encourage a society with lesser penalties for criminals who put deadly substances into loved ones' hands? Why is the federal government giving criminals a hall pass for producing, importing, and trafficking drugs? The federal government is shifting our nation into a very dangerous territory.

Bill C-22 would make all of our communities less safe by reducing penalties for firearms-related crimes, thereby reducing the incentive to follow the law. Bill C-22 could increase gang activity as well as providing shorter sentences to gang members, allowing them to be released earlier.

Bill C-21, Mr. Deputy Speaker, unfairly targets law-abiding firearms owners, while Bill C-22 decreases penalties for lawbreakers. The National Police Federation has publicly commented, Mr. Deputy Speaker, saying:

Costly and current legislation, such as the order in council prohibiting various firearms and the proposed buy-back program targeted at legal firearms owners, does not address these current and emerging themes or threats to public safety.

The head of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police said:

The firearm laws in Canada are actually very good right now. They are very strict. There are many law-abiding citizens out there who possess guns for very legitimate purposes. When you look at the steps you have to go through to possess a firearm in Canada, it's actually quite rigorous. Once you get a licence, the actual purchasing, transportation, and storage, all of that has very strict laws in Canada.

I would also like to add, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that any elected official, whether provincial or federal, that is working on changing existing firearms legislation does his due diligence and takes the proper courses to acquire a possession and acquisition licence. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when a person takes the PAL [possession and acquisition licence] course, it provides

legitimacy to all of their arguments moving forward.

I'm happy to put it on the record, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am one of those individuals, along with well over 2 million other Canadians. When a person takes the PAL course, they are taught everything they need to know about how to safely handle and store a gun, for example ensuring firearms are unloaded when stored, ensuring that a person locks their firearm in a cabinet, stores ammunition separately, and ensures unauthorized individuals cannot access keys. An individual is taught everything from how to hold, shoot, and store firearms, yet the Trudeau government blames the people who took the proper steps to ensure that they could legally own a gun.

[12:15]

Mr. Speaker, in 2020, 85 per cent of handguns seized by Toronto police were smuggled into Canada from the United States. Law-abiding citizens are being targeted and treated as criminals while the real criminals are handed a lesser punishment. Criminals are allowed to go home to the same communities they committed a crime in, putting victims at risk of being revictimized. Victims should not have to worry about going about their day-to-day life because the federal government has decided that they no longer matter.

Imagine that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Our self-proclaimed feminist Prime Minister is now telling female victims that the person who sexually assaulted them will be returning to their community. Bill C-22 could create situations where the victims of violent crimes are revictimized. We should be protecting victims, not the criminals. That is something every elected official should prioritize.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd also like to take a moment and recognize our provincial Chief Firearms Officer, Robert Freberg. Robert does an excellent job representing Saskatchewan and promoting safe gun handling throughout the province. He has an extensive background in firearm safety and, like many Saskatchewan residents, is an avid hunter. With Robert's high standards in firearm safety, I know that Saskatchewan will continue to strive for and enhance our gun safety education standards throughout the province. We are very lucky to have him.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I have a character weakness it is that I am very susceptible to a good advertising program. My favourite meal in a restaurant, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is breakfast. And when I'm reading the menu and they have rancher's breakfast on there, well you can guarantee I'm going to order that. When the Ford trucks came out with their King Ranch edition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I really wanted one of those trucks.

And years ago I was in a sporting goods store, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they had a Ranch rifle on sale. And I thought to myself, I live on a ranch; I should own a Ranch rifle. So I purchased it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that rifle went everywhere with me. You know, particularly at this time of year during calving, I used it to protect my livestock. I used it to protect my outbuildings. And I used it to . . . You know, we went through so many years of flooding. And those wet years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, beavers were building dams and flooding out acres and acres of productive farm land, and you have to get rid of those pesky beavers.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I followed all the rules. I followed all the laws. I did everything right. And on May 1st, 2020, Justin Trudeau turned me into a law-breaking citizen if I went about on my regular day. With absolutely no parliamentary oversight, his order in council turned thousands — thousands, Mr. Deputy Speaker — of law-abiding firearms owners like myself into criminals with a stroke of his pen.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, licensed firearm owners are inherently law-abiding. We are meticulous in understanding the rules and responsibilities of owning firearms, are incredibly diligent in following all the laws. Bill C-21 unfairly targets us, and Bill C-22 reduces sentences for gun-related crimes. It makes absolutely no sense, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The most prominent problem law-abiding firearm owners face boils down to a very simple concept, Mr. Deputy Speaker: trust. Why would the government trust us one day — we follow all the rules; we pay all the taxes; we take all the courses; we do everything that's asked of us — and the next day the government does not trust us? What have we done to lose the government's trust? Why does Justin Trudeau not trust us?

Saskatchewan's citizens have a long history of responsible firearm ownership, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Early settlers faced many hardships settling in this great province, and sustenance hunting was an early facet of many pioneers' lives. As our province grew, many urban people kept a very strong connection to the land by enjoying many outdoor pursuits, and a large part of that involved hunting. Saskatchewan has the fifth-highest rate of firearms ownership across Canada, Mr. Deputy Speaker, compared to all the other provinces and territories. I've enjoyed many outdoor adventures with my two daughters, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I know that is very common for many Saskatchewan families. Spending time outdoors provides many healthful opportunities, and firearms play an integral role in many of these activities, especially for anyone living in rural Saskatchewan.

In June of 2020, this government brought forward amendments to Bill 194 to further protect the rights of law-abiding firearms owners in this province. The amendments prevented the banning of firearms ownership at the municipal level. This government passed this legislation to ensure there's only one set of firearm regulations for the province of Saskatchewan. We understand that firearm regulations are under federal jurisdiction, but this government is relentless in standing up for all Saskatchewan citizens' interests.

A core principle, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that all firearms owners possess, it's a very simple concept. It's the concept of personal responsibility. It's ingrained in all the mandatory training courses that you have to take, and all law-abiding firearm owners genuinely live and breathe that concept.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bill C-22 and C-21 will not make our society safer. It will not prevent criminals from plying their trade. It creates a gulf in our communities when governments attempt to discredit a large segment of their population. This government supports all law-abiding firearms owners, and that will never change.

Seeing as I have some extra time on the clock, Mr. Deputy

Speaker . . . No, I'm going to . . . just rearranging my notes, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Absolutely. Seven more minutes?

An Hon. Member: — Just flip it over. It's the other side.

Mr. Keisig: — Yeah, well I could do that. Yeah, you know, people don't realize the amount of stress that we were under during those wet years. Like you can't even imagine the amount of damage that a rodent can do to your property and how important it is to remove such a thing. The amount of acres and flooded . . . and destruction they can do. They are an ingenious animal and relentless in their work ethic. And you know, the only way that you can successfully remove them from your property is with the proper use of a firearm. And it was a very common occurrence, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know, it's really funny how children raised by the same parents in the same households are two totally different people. Like my one daughter . . . We spent hours. And she was an avid hunter. And you know, we really enjoyed it. And I made sure both of my daughters knew how to shoot a firearm and how to safely manage them and clean them and store them and everything else.

But I had one daughter, Mr. Deputy Speaker, she hated them. She did not like them. She is currently enrolled in Vermilion at veterinary technology and she absolutely loves animals and will . . . Like it's abhorrent to her to hurt any living creature.

My other daughter, Mr. Deputy Speaker, she is borderline ruthless. Like I give her credit. I mean she is tough as nails, and she's shot like a far better buck than I've ever got in my lifetime, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it was literally a hundred yards from our house. Like it was kind of a fluke shot, I thought, but she said she knew that she was going to get it. But anyway, it was a beautiful buck. We got it mounted. It hangs in our house and she should be very proud of that because that is a tremendous accomplishment at a very, very young age.

And you know, the rural municipalities in conjunction with this provincial government had a bounty on beaver and that was an extremely effective tool on reducing that population. And my older daughter and I, we would spend hours. And she was always wanting a car or wanting this and that, and she got thousands and thousands of dollars at \$30 a tail. You can do the math on that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. She definitely put the hours and the effort into it.

And I mean, during those wet years, honestly, it really wasn't that hard. Like every slough was overflowed and there was 30 beavers in every slough. Like it was just tremendous how the population can explode in such a short time. And the damage that they do to rural Saskatchewan is just tremendous. The plugged culverts.

You know, the rural municipality had a bounty in conjunction with the provincial government. It was a very effective tool, very well received by ratepayers. It was incredibly effective. It was such a common activity for every, you know, late teenager, young person, I guess, across the constituency. They would spend, you know, virtually every evening. That's when you've got to go out, is when the sun's starting to set and just before dark

and the beavers are active. And you can get very, very . . . You know, they're out and about. They're out of their houses and you can get them all.

So it was a very common activity for young people and very healthy. Outside, spending time with their friends and doing something for the greater good of the community. I mean the amount of damage from plugged culverts was just unbelievable. And the amount that we saved on infrastructure from a government's point of view of, you know, basically hiring all these young people to handle this situation was, you know, really remarkable piece of government legislation in conjunction with the good work of the people at SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] and the good people of all the rural municipalities. And how everything flowed together during those years was just, you know, very coordinated in a way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the outcomes were so efficient and everything else.

The drought last year was very challenging, but I don't know. Those wet years are just absolutely ingrained in my mind, and you know, I'll probably never forget them. You know, the member from Saskatoon Wildwood talking about feral pigs. I got a half section of land . . . Well I used to have a half section of land, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was Crown land and it was old, kind of, Land Bank land. And there was an application process that you used to apply. And anyway, it was pasture land so I applied and I got it, and I had it for quite a few years. And it was like very, extremely low-quality land, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a lot of bush and everything else. I used it for oh, probably 10 years. We grazed cattle there and everything else. And a large group of feral pigs moved into that very native prairie land, and just tremendous amount of damage, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And you know, when you're on a ranch, you're checking cows; you always keep a rifle with you. I talked about my favourite Ranch rifle. And we had always had that with us. But you could never spot those feral pigs, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They were incredibly hard to catch and they're always breeding. They're always making more of them and it's . . . I don't know. You have to be a far better hunter than I am, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to get a chance at one of those.

So I know our Minister of Environment is doing his due diligence and working very hard at trying to handle the feral pig situation. It's top of mind for government. We are always concerned about the amount of damage because it's absolutely incredible the amount of damage that they can do, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So there's many challenges going forward, but seeing as we are almost out of time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would really like to move to adjourn debate at this point in time. And thank you for listening, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[12:30]

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Mr. Dennis: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move that this Assembly do now adjourn.

The Deputy Speaker: — It is moved that this Assembly do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried. This House stands adjourned till Monday at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:31.]

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Scott Moe
Premier
President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

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

Hon. Lori Carr
Minister of Social Services

Hon. Dustin Duncan
Minister of Education

Hon. Bronwyn Eyre
Minister of Energy and Resources

Hon. Donna Harpauer
Deputy Premier
Minister of Finance

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Minister of Trade and Export Development
Minister of Immigration and Career Training
Minister Responsible for Innovation
Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan

Hon. Everett Hindley
Minister of Mental Health and Addictions,
Seniors and Rural and Remote Health

Hon. Warren Kaeding
Minister of Environment

Hon. Gene Makowsky
Minister of Advanced Education

Hon. David Marit
Minister of Agriculture
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation

Hon. Don McMorris
Minister of Government Relations
Minister Responsible for First Nations,
Métis and Northern Affairs
Minister Responsible for the
Provincial Capital Commission

Hon. Paul Merriman
Minister of Health

Hon. Don Morgan
Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Minister of Crown Investments Corporation
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
Minister Responsible for
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Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Government Insurance
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Power Corporation
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Telecommunications
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Water Corporation
Minister Responsible for the
Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board

Hon. Jim Reiter
Minister of SaskBuilds and Procurement
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Liquor
and Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for The Global
Transportation Hub Authority

Hon. Laura Ross
Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Hon. Christine Tell
Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety

Hon. Gordon Wyant
Minister of Justice and Attorney General