



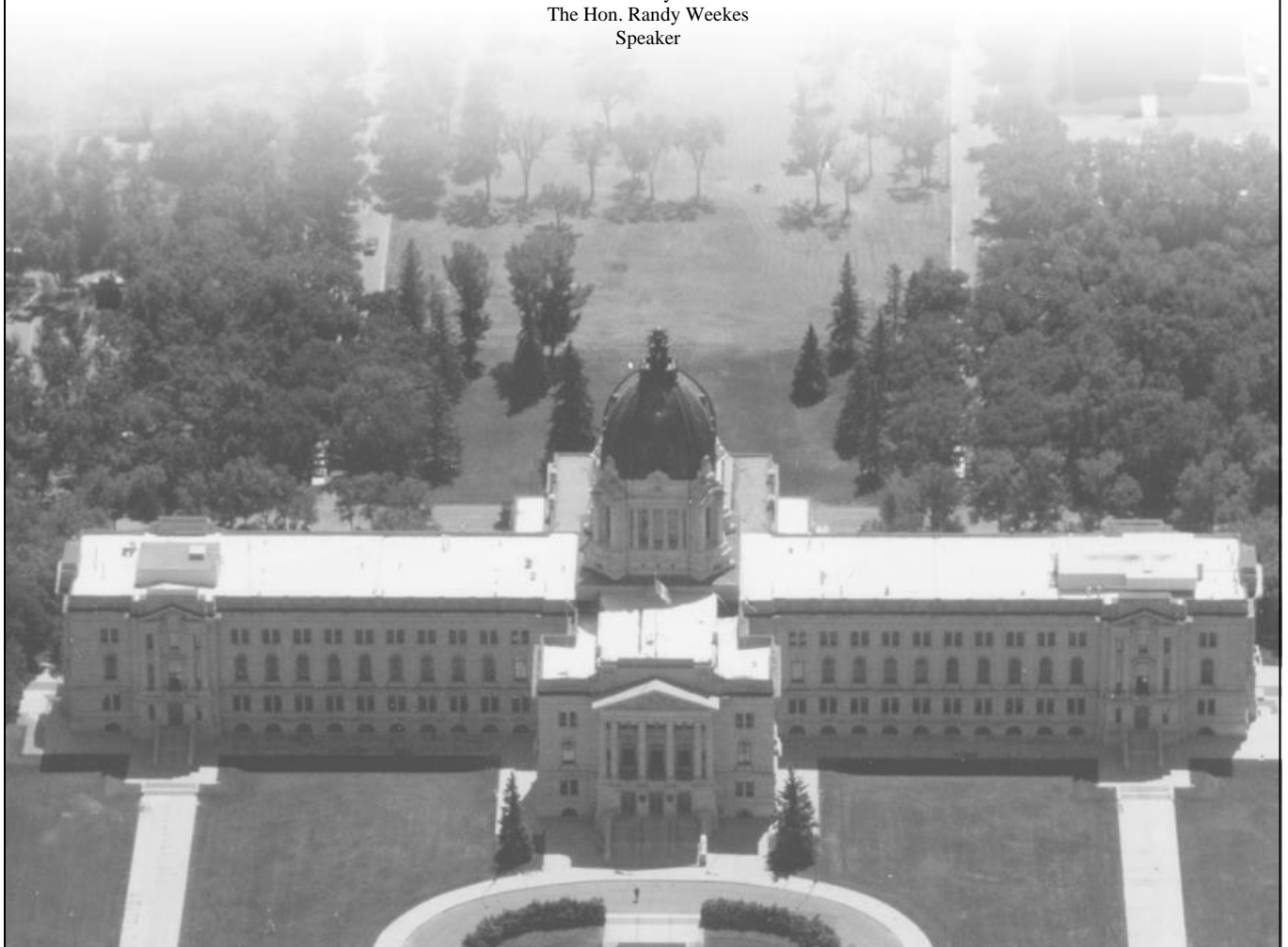
THIRD SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
AND
PROCEEDINGS**

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



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
3rd 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 — Carla Beck

Beck, Carla — Regina Lakeview (NDP)	Makowsky, Hon. Gene — Regina Gardiner Park (SP)
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Dennis, Terry — Canora-Pelly (SP)	Nerlien, Hugh — Kelvington-Wadena (SP)
Domotor, Ryan — Cut Knife-Turtleford (SP)	Nippi-Albright, Betty — Saskatoon Centre (NDP)
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Eyre, Hon. Bronwyn — Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota (SP)	Reiter, Hon. Jim — Rosetown-Elrose (SP)
Fiaz, Muhammad — Regina Pasqua (SP)	Ritchie, Erika — Saskatoon Nutana (NDP)
Francis, Ken — Kindersley (SP)	Ross, Alana — Prince Albert Northcote (SP)
Friesen, Marv — Saskatoon Riversdale (SP)	Ross, Hon. Laura — Regina Rochdale (SP)
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Grewal, Gary — Regina Northeast (SP)	Skoropad, Hon. Dana — Arm River (SP)
Hargrave, Joe — Prince Albert Carlton (SP)	Steele, Doug — Cypress Hills (SP)
Harpauer, Hon. Donna — Humboldt-Watrous (SP)	Teed, Nathaniel — Saskatoon Meewasin (NDP)
Harrison, Daryl — Cannington (SP)	Tell, Hon. Christine — Regina Wascana Plains (SP)
Harrison, Hon. Jeremy — Meadow Lake (SP)	Vermette, Doyle — Cumberland (NDP)
Hindley, Hon. Everett — Swift Current (SP)	Weekes, Hon. Randy — Biggar-Sask Valley (SP)
Jenson, Terry — Martensville-Warman (SP)	Wilson, Nadine — Saskatchewan Rivers (Ind.)
Kaeding, Warren — Melville-Saltcoats (SP)	Wotherspoon, Trent — Regina Rosemont (NDP)
Keisig, Travis — Last Mountain-Touchwood (SP)	Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)
Kirsch, Delbert — Batoche (SP)	Young, Aleana — Regina University (NDP)
Lambert, Lisa — Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood (SP)	Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)
Lawrence, Greg — Moose Jaw Wakamow (SP)	
Lemaigre, Jim — Athabasca (SP)	Vacant — Lumsden-Morse
Love, Matt — Saskatoon Eastview (NDP)	Vacant — Regina Coronation Park

Standings

Government Caucus: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 46; Opposition Caucus: New Democratic Party (NDP) — 12;
Independent: Saskatchewan United Party (Ind.) — 1; Vacant — 2

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Principal Clerk — Robert Park

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[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Oh, I was going to say hear, hear. I'm not supposed to say that. Anyway to you, Mr. Speaker, and to all the members in the Assembly, I want to introduce 55 grade 12 students from Balgonie Greenall High School, Mr. Speaker, and they're accompanied by their teacher, Ms. Marley. It's not the first time that she's been here for sure, always glad to see her. And then she brings the school group through, and I'll be looking forward to meeting with them.

But before I sit down, just so that you know, this place was full of guests yesterday. We had a budget, a very good budget, by the way. And in that budget there was some reference to Greenall High School and that there's going to be a renovation and renewal of the high school there. And that was all part of the budget. So if you think things that happen in this room don't affect you, they truly do because it did yesterday. And I want to thank the Finance minister for that and the Minister of Education.

Also before I sit down, somebody had mentioned in the building that there is a Payton Hicks in grade 12, and I was supposed to single her out. And doesn't that feel comfortable when you're in grade 12? And you can thank your aunt for that.

Anyway I'd like all members to welcome the Greenall grade 12s to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I would like to welcome Carolyn Brost Strom, who is seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. It's not Carolyn's first time here, but she's here today as an observer to take in the festivities that are question period. Carolyn, many of you will know in this Assembly, she is a clinical nursing instructor with the Regina Campus of the University of Saskatchewan. She hails from Prince Albert, has been very active in advocacy over the years, and we want to thank her for that work.

And I would ask all members to join me in welcoming her to her Assembly today.

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

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all members of the Assembly, I'd like to welcome 48 grade 4 students sitting in the east gallery today because the west gallery is totally full. Is there some up there too? We are all over the place. Okay. All right. They're accompanied by their teacher, Valery Tchemebe and Vanessa Sylvestre. And I look forward to

having a meeting with you following question period this morning. I'd like all members to join me in welcoming these fine kids to their Assembly.

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

Mr. Buckingham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome Kim Groff, a good friend of mine and president of my association for the last 14 . . . well since 2014. And so thanks, Kim. He became a very good friend over the years and always knocked on lots of doors and worked hard to keep me elected. So I want to welcome Kim. I know that he'll probably . . . He's at that stage of life now. He has four grandchildren under three and that's very important to him. And so I know that that's where he spends a lot of his time. But I know he also will be coming to a door close to you some day soon.

So with that, I'd like all members to welcome Kim to his Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Teed: — Mr. Speaker, through you and to you, I'd like to join with the member opposite in welcoming Kim Groff to his Legislative Assembly. Kim, it was a pleasure to meet you on the doorsteps of Meewasin. I think both sides of our campaign ran great campaigns. Kim is a small-business owner; it was something that we both had in common during that campaign. And I'd just say maybe we'll see you on the doorstep in Meewasin in 2024. But as always, welcome to your Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join the member opposite in welcoming Carolyn to her Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

I had the opportunity to meet with her a couple of times. I know that we're meeting again next week with some nursing students, and look forward to that conversation to be able to discuss how our budget is impacting them as students, and hopefully they could choose a career in Saskatchewan. So I'd like to welcome Carolyn to her Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you, through you, and to all members of this Assembly, I would once again like to introduce my constituency assistant, or one of my constituency assistants, Sally Jacobson, that works in the office in Rosthern. She's worked there since 2011 when I was first elected. She aligns herself with Cindy Painchaud and now helping the folks in Rosthern-Shellbrook, Mr. Speaker, and even beyond from time to time. But I would like to welcome Sally to her Legislative Assembly and thank her for the work that she does on behalf of the province and the constituents in Rosthern-Shellbrook.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

Mr. D. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring to your attention the following: that the Liberal-NDP [New Democratic Party] federal government continues to infringe on the constitutional rights of the province of Saskatchewan and implement policies that are detrimental to our province's economic well-being; that the commitments and actions of the federal government have made the control of Saskatchewan's resource rights unclear; that an unsupportive federal government will continue to impede Saskatchewan's potential to play a global role in providing resources to the world market.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to implement Saskatchewan-first policies and legislation that will support the development of Saskatchewan as a global supplier of food, fuel, and fertilizer without federal infringement on Saskatchewan's constitutional authority.

These are signed by residents from Wawota, Alida, Regina, and Alameda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Conway: — Mr. Speaker, I'm on my feet to present a petition calling on the Saskatchewan government to increase SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] rates. We saw an increase announced in this recent budget of an extra buck a day, Mr. Speaker, and this simply was described, as one SAID recipient in articles about yesterday's budget, as a slap in the face.

I'd like to just read an excerpt from an article about these SAID increases:

"Just \$30 is basically a slap across the face," Pelletier said. "You might as well have slapped us all across the face and said, you're getting nothing."

Pelletier has been on the SAID program for about five years, she said. She described her life as a daily struggle, where she constantly stresses about where her next meal will come from and whether she will have enough money to get her through the month, including paying for personal hygiene products. Sometimes she skips meals so her family can eat, she said.

And I hear heckling from the other side — folks who are getting a 3 per cent increase in their salary, but that's not good enough for the good people . . .

The Speaker: — Go, go, go to your petition quickly please.

Ms. Conway: —

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the government to increase SAID rates and provide targeted relief to those in deepest poverty such as single individuals paying market rent.

The signatories of this petition reside in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. I do so present.

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present our petition calling on the Sask Party government to prohibit conversion therapy. The undersigned residents of our province would like to bring to our attention the following: conversion therapy uses discredited and abusive practices which attempt to actively change sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression; *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* names sexual orientation and gender identity as one of the prohibited grounds of discrimination; the practice of conversion therapy or reparative therapy is seriously harmful to individuals and is opposed by the Canadian Psychological Association, the World Health Organization, and the American Psychiatric Association; the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child indicates that children should not be discriminated against based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Mr. Speaker, I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to ban the practice of conversion therapy and prohibit transporting youth and adults outside Saskatchewan for such purposes.

The signatories today, Mr. Speaker, reside in Humboldt. I do so present.

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

Ms. Ritchie: — I rise again today to present a petition to the Government of Saskatchewan to protect Saskatchewan's water supply. Mr. Speaker, yesterday was World Water Day. World representatives are meeting at the United Nations assembly in New York to discuss protecting global water supplies. And Saskatchewan is not immune to these global concerns, and protecting source water from contamination from human activity are real, present day concerns. As of yesterday, there were 79 precautionary drinking water advisories and two emergency boil water orders in the province.

Last year, SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] passed a resolution advocating for an investigation into the impact of the effects of residual chemicals used in the ag industry on safe groundwater supplies used by municipalities, and further that appropriate action be initiated to reduce and prevent increased contamination of groundwater sources.

Groundwater supply is also at risk from rampant unregulated and

illegal drainage of cropland that is preventing groundwater recharge in many parts of the province and threatening communities' source water supply. Water is essential, not only for our economy but vitally for human health and the health of our ecosystems upon which we all rely.

I will read the prayer:

We 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 Regina. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Response to Provincial Budget

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 2023-24 budget announced by the government was marketed as growth that works for everyone. The government revealed how tone-deaf they are to the common struggle of Saskatchewan people. They congratulate themselves for the higher than expected revenues which are a direct result of a 40-year record-high inflation, the same inflation that has dramatically increased the cost of living for people and families across Saskatchewan. Meanwhile this government is prepared to give themselves a pay raise, consequent to the increase of costs for goods and services.

The government proudly proclaims a strong and growing economy with growth that works for everyone. In reality, Mr. Speaker, that is growth that works for no one. We hear from Saskatchewan people from every walk of life and they have been very vocal about their hardships, and yet the government would like the Saskatchewan people to believe that this economic situation could not be better. Why not meaningful tax reductions and expanded tax rebates rather than expanded government bureaucracy? Instead of this government's tone-deaf political rhetoric, why not listen to the needs of Saskatchewan people and put people before politics? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

[10:15]

Global Change Required to Meet Water and Sanitation Crisis

Ms. Ritchie: — Mr. Speaker, did you know there are billions of people and countless schools, businesses, health care centres, farms, and factories that don't have safe water and sanitation systems? Here in Saskatchewan, as of yesterday, there were 79 active precautionary drinking water advisories and two active emergency boil water orders in Saskatchewan, some of these dating back several years. Last summer the community of Manitou Beach felt the effects of having toxic blue-green algae in their lake. Residents and visitors were not only unable to enjoy the lake, the community suffered financial losses as tourists stayed away.

In 2015 as part of the 2030 agenda, the world committed to the UN [United Nations] sustainable development goal 6, the promise that everyone would have safely managed water and sanitation by 2030. Sadly the world is off track to meet this goal.

This year on World Water Day, the focus was on accelerating global change to meet this water and sanitation crisis. Water affects everyone in the world, and in order to meet this lofty goal, everyone in the world needs to take action, even in Saskatchewan. We can't forget that water is a precious resource. It is essential for our health, for recreation, the health of our ecosystems, and our economy.

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

Observance of Ramadan

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week begins the month of the Ramadan. Muslims around the world will practise fasting. Mr. Speaker, fasting is not new to the Muslims. It was prescribed in other faiths prior to Islam.

Fasting is mandated to all healthy adults only. Eating at dawn time; iftar is at sunset. Ramadan is a very important month for Muslims because fasting is one of the five pillars of Islam, where primary task is concentration in prayers and more charities.

Mr. Speaker, praying at regular time plus wake up at midnight and pray; pray for humanity around the globe; prayers for end of the wars; prayers for the peace around the globe. Mr. Speaker, mosques around the world are busy in prayers and iftar.

At the end of the Ramadan, Muslims celebrate Eid, which signifies the end of Ramadan. And, Mr. Speaker, I ask all the members of the Assembly to join me in wishing Ramadan mubarak to everyone celebrating this holy month. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Purple Day Supports Epilepsy Awareness

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to acknowledge the upcoming Epilepsy Awareness Day or Purple Day, as it is widely known. This day was founded in 2008 by a Canadian and Nova Scotian named Cassidy Megan when she was nine years old. Her intention was to raise awareness about epilepsy through public education and to reduce fear and stigma for those living with the disorder.

Epilepsy is a neurological disorder caused by irregular bursts of electrical activity in the brain, which then interrupts communication between brain cells, leading to a wide variety of seizure activity to occur. Treatments can depend on an underlying cause of the seizure but that case is often unknown. The unpredictable nature of this disorder means that individual needs greatly vary for those who live with epilepsy.

It's for this reason that I invite my fellow members to join me in wearing purple on March 26th, this Sunday, in solidarity with the nearly 11,000 people in Saskatchewan who are living with epilepsy, and to elevate public awareness and further

understanding about epilepsy with the goal to alleviate fear and stigma faced by those individuals. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Z99 Radiothon for Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

Mr. Grewal: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is the 2023 Z99 radiothon. All funds raised by the radiothon go towards supporting the neonatal intensive care unit in the Rawlco centre for mother baby care at Regina General Hospital. Over the 35 years that the radiothon has gone on for, the Z99 radiothon has raised more than 10.8 million for the Hospitals of Regina Foundation in support of the NICU [neonatal intensive care unit].

Mr. Speaker, there are many great ways to participate and raise funds for this great cause. If anyone wishes to make a gift or donation, you can contact the Hospitals of Regina Foundation at 306-781-7500 or visit the Z99 radiothon website. Group fundraising and individual donations drive the success of the Z99 radiothon. I encourage all residents to pull together to support fellow citizens and save babies' lives.

Mr. Speaker, thanks to the generosity of Saskatchewan people, the hospitals in our province are able to provide the best of care with the highest level of technology. Last year the radiothon raised over 400,000. Let's try to beat that record this year.

Thank you to everyone who volunteered, donated, and especially thank you to Z99 for their continued support for the NICU. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Saskatchewan's Record Population Growth

Mr. Jenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Legislative Secretary for the Minister of Immigration and Career Training and the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for two of the fastest growing communities in all of Canada, I've seen directly the impacts of the record population growth our province is now experiencing. And, Mr. Speaker, in 2022 Stats Canada reported that Saskatchewan grew by 29,307 people, to a population of 1,214,618 people. That's the largest increase in our population in a single year since 1914. That is a remarkable and historical achievement.

In January of 2006, only 17 years ago, our population was shrinking, reaching a low of 992,237 people. Mr. Speaker, these were dark times, as parents and grandparents watched an entire generation of young people leave our province's farms, towns, cities, for opportunities elsewhere, many including university academics. And the NDP themselves said it would be impossible for Saskatchewan to ever get past 1 million people again. Under the NDP, that was true.

But today, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is growing faster than it has in 109 years. And it's no coincidence either. Our province is attracting more people, more doctors, more nurses, more teachers, more entrepreneurs. We're building for the future, Mr. Speaker, and that future is brighter now than it ever has been under the NDP. A stronger economy, a better quality of life, and

more people, Mr. Speaker. That's growth that works for everyone.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Kindersley.

Responses to Provincial Budget

Mr. Francis: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday our Minister of Finance unveiled the 2023-24 provincial budget, and I'd like to read some of the comments from our stakeholders into the record.

Global Regina:

We've seen some really encouraging announcements recently. We've seen increased immigration numbers. We've also seen the provincial government provide higher nominations through the provincial nominee program. So things are certainly tracking in the right direction.

The president of the University of Regina, Dr. Jeff Keshen, had this to say, and I quote:

The budget is exactly what we expected it to be. The government has delivered as they said they would. They have also made a number of strategic investments in the university such as psychology, nearly a million dollars there, and another \$2 million in nurse training seats expansion. That is really good news for us.

The Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce quoted:

The chamber applauds the significant paydown of the province's debt and the elimination of the budget deficit for 2023-24. The interest savings on this payment will amount to 44 million in debt-servicing costs this year. Overall the move sends the right message to those looking to invest in Saskatchewan and provide a stable, economic climate for businesses already operating here.

Our government is delivering on its promises because that is growth that works for everyone.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Provincial Budget

Ms. Beck: — During a cost-of-living crisis, when 55 per cent of Saskatchewan people feel worse off this year than they did last year, how could that tired and out-of-touch Premier fail to deliver any relief at all to Saskatchewan families struggling to make ends meet?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, there's a tired and out-of-touch party in this Assembly; I'm just not sure that they're on the government side, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is, is that the governing members, the Sask Party members, most certainly are proud of

the budget that was introduced yesterday by our Deputy Premier, our Minister of Finance, and it truly does resemble growth in this province that does work for everyone, Mr. Speaker.

There's a 6.7 per cent lift to our health care investment in this province, bringing much-needed human resources to the front lines of health care centres across the province, Mr. Speaker. A 6.7 per cent lift to our education budget in this budget, Mr. Speaker, funding our classrooms and funding new builds across the province. Mr. Speaker, there is supports in this budget for those that need a hand up in our communities, those that are most vulnerable in our communities, Mr. Speaker.

And in addition, in addition to all those public services, a record investment in capital in this province all the while, while paying down our deficit, our debts in the province of Saskatchewan. This is a budget truly that does work for everyone, and a budget that the people of Saskatchewan can be proud of.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, it is so clear that that tired and out-of-touch Premier simply doesn't get it. Families are struggling to pay the bills. Grocery prices are through the roof. Gas is back up over a buck fifty a litre, but there's nothing for relief in this budget. Nothing at all except the same fee and tax hikes that they brought in last year, and more power and energy bill hikes to come.

Now how is it, after years of tax hikes, this Premier couldn't find one single measure as he sits on a \$2 billion windfall?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — You know, Mr. Speaker, there are investments. Last year, investments in the affordability tax credit cheque that was put out. Investments, Mr. Speaker, where we aligned with the federal government to deliver low-cost child care to Saskatchewan families, many of them young families here in the province, Mr. Speaker.

In this particular budget there's a 6 per cent lift to the social income assistance program in this province, Mr. Speaker, an important lift. There's a 6 per cent lift to the personal care home benefit in this province . . . No, pardon me, I'm mistaken. It's a 20 per cent lift to the personal care home benefit — a personal care home benefit that frankly didn't exist under the members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

There is a 6 per cent increase to the Saskatchewan assured income disability assistance program, Mr. Speaker. Again, a program that under the NDP didn't get a dollar-a-day lift, didn't get a dollar-a-week lift, didn't get a dollar-a-month lift. It didn't get a dollar-in-16-years lift, Mr. Speaker, because it didn't exist. It exists today thanks to this government. We've increased it four times, a fifth time in the budget yesterday, Mr. Speaker. And we're going to continue to invest in Saskatchewan families, Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker, and support them with the services that they expect this government to be providing.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, it's not just this year. That tax-and-

squander Sask Party government has been making life more expensive for years. Since they hiked and expanded the PST [provincial sales tax] in 2017, families are paying almost \$1,000 more per year in PST. Mr. Speaker, that is a 70 per cent increase. There are so many of these tax hikes and fees that this tired and out-of-touch government could have rolled back, Mr. Speaker: Riders tickets, kids' clothing, restaurant meals, PST on used cars. The list goes on and on.

The question is, why did that Premier choose not to deliver any relief to Saskatchewan families who are struggling with their tax hikes?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I just went through a number of investments that have been made, targeted investments to support families, to support individuals in our communities, Mr. Speaker. And the fact of the matter is, is that today yes, we have a PST of 6 per cent in this province — a far cry from 9 per cent as it was under the New Democrats, Mr. Speaker, when they had the opportunity.

And when you look at what is happening here in Saskatchewan, the most recent . . . In addition to the budget, Statistics Canada — who does not lie, I might add — came out with their numbers yesterday for the population growth last year, Mr. Speaker: 29,300 people, more people, have made Saskatchewan home. They're coming to Saskatchewan because yes, there's 20,000 additional jobs here, Mr. Speaker.

We're now at over 1.2 million people in the province, Mr. Speaker. Growth, a faster rate of growth than this province has experienced in . . . I'm not sure if it's 108, 109, 114 years, but it's well over a century, Mr. Speaker. When you compare that to the growth that we had in this province when we didn't have a SAID program under the NDP, we didn't have a personal care home benefit under the NDP, we also didn't have people here, with a net loss over those 16 years of 627 people, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, let's paint this picture clearly. More than half of people in this province say that they are worse off than they were last year, and that Premier is doing nothing, nothing at all to help them. In fact he's plowing ahead with the same fee and tax hikes that are already making things worse for people in this province.

[10:30]

So the question is this: why is the Premier ignoring the cost-of-living crisis that families in this province are facing? And how, how is that growth that works for everyone?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Let's ask some people across the province that may be collecting seniors' income plan assistance. Mr. Speaker, it didn't receive an increase in 16 years under the members opposite; increased again yesterday. Let's ask those folks that are under the SAID program in Saskatchewan. Didn't exist under the members opposite; received an increase

yesterday. Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is . . .

Let's ask the folks, the young folks that are entering our workforce in the province that did not have a graduate retention program under the NDP. Thankfully, they have one today, Mr. Speaker. No children's drug plan under the NDP; families have a children's drug plan today. No active family benefit, Mr. Speaker; no support for children that have autism, Mr. Speaker. Over \$2 billion, over \$2 billion in each and every budget, including the budget that was delivered yesterday by the Minister of Finance, have affordability measures in them for each and every Saskatchewan resident, Mr. Speaker. And I'm happy to discuss many more of them in the questions coming.

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

Affordability and Cost of Living

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, this tired and out-of-touch government that's swimming in cash is failing to deliver on front after front. The budget presented yesterday does nothing to help families or small businesses who are struggling with a once-in-a-generation inflation crisis. Families are facing hardship. Small businesses have made their voices clear before the budget that this government's power and energy rate hikes need to be scrapped. Rising fuel and energy costs are the number one concern for members at the CFIB [Canadian Federation of Independent Business].

Just how out of touch does a government need to become to ignore small businesses and refuse to provide any relief from the rate hikes for households and local businesses already facing so many challenges and costs added by that government?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an opposition that we hear from, chirping from their seats about us swimming in cash, and how we spent that money already, that they've spent it already, Mr. Speaker. That is the sound of irresponsibility that will keep them on that side of the House for a great long period of time. Mr. Speaker, this is a group of people that have no credibility when it comes to affordability as long as they stand with their leaders, Jagmeet and Justin, who plan to triple the carbon tax. Watch for the changes coming next week.

Mr. Speaker, our province is the most affordable province in Canada. We have the second-lowest-cost utility bundle in the country, the lowest auto insurance rates, the lowest natural gas rates. For a total utility bundle, the average Saskatchewan family pays over \$700 less than a family in British Columbia; \$1,300 less than a family in Quebec; \$3,700 less than a family in Ontario; 4,000 less than a family in Alberta; and 5,500 less than a family in Newfoundland.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, of course we've stated our concerns with federal policies, and we've taken that government to task time and time again that's piled on taxes and costs on

Saskatchewan people — utter mismanagement from that government. Now they're putting the bill to Saskatchewan people. This budget doesn't provide a dime of cost-of-living relief for families or local businesses.

And it doesn't roll back any of the damaging PST hikes brought in under this Sask Party government — tax hikes like the PST on construction labour, a boneheaded tax that drives up the costs for projects small and large, and drives people, jobs, and investment out of this province.

Why did the Finance minister and that Premier choose not to undo the economic damage of the PST on construction labour?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very glad to have the opportunity to stand up and encourage all those that are listening to turn to page 70 and 71 of our budget document which demonstrates how, if you include taxes, utilities, and housing costs, Saskatchewan is the lowest province in Canada to live for a family of four, Mr. Speaker.

We have within this budget, within every budget, a number of measures to address assistance for seniors, assistance for families, assistance for students, assistance for those most vulnerable, and we're going to continue with those benefits and supports for everyone within Saskatchewan.

But we're also going to have in this budget, Mr. Speaker, we're going to have record-high investment in health care, Mr. Speaker, because we're hearing that around the province, and that's important to Saskatchewan people. We're also going to increase for education, Mr. Speaker. We are going to do this, Mr. Speaker, through a sustainable, responsible manner where we have the revenue to pay for those expenses and in order to sustain them into the future.

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

Support for Health Care

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, our emergency rooms are in a state of collapse, and this budget does nothing to fix the problem. SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses] President Tracy Zambory had this to say:

This budget does nothing to remind registered nurses that they are valued. There's nothing of retention, nothing to incentivize this healthcare workforce to stay in Saskatchewan . . . Other provinces in Canada have prioritized retaining their registered nurses, but here at home, you guessed it: nothing.

Why is the Health minister presenting nothing to address the crisis in our ERs [emergency room]? And will he finally agree to work with nurses to find solutions to this crisis?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very proud that we were able to invest \$6.9 billion, a 6.7 per cent increase in the last year's budget, Mr. Speaker; \$100 million for our recruit, retain, incentivize, and train individual plan, Mr. Speaker; nation-leading compensation for our nurses, Mr. Speaker. That's not nothing.

Mr. Speaker, nearly 400 Filipino nurses that are coming in, Mr. Speaker; 250 more full-time jobs, Mr. Speaker. That's not nothing. Mr. Speaker, up to \$50,000 for incentives for nurses in hard-to-recruit areas. Up to \$200,000 for doctors to be able to get into those areas on a five-year return-to-service, Mr. Speaker. That's not nothing.

Mr. Speaker, these are significant investments. Student loans, bursaries. We are making sure that our health care system is secured, Mr. Speaker. For them to say that's nothing, they just weren't paying attention, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Mowat: — That's a shameful answer, Mr. Speaker. It's completely shameful. I guess we should just trust the Health minister, not the nurses who are working on the front lines.

Mr. Speaker, this government is failing to deliver on ERs and they're failing to fix the shortage of family doctors across the province. This budget included nothing for family doctors. There are no new supports to help cover costs, nothing on team-based care, and no progress to fixing the problems with the current model.

Why has this tired and out-of-touch government given up on fixing problems in family medicine?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Health minister.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and as I've said many times in this House, we have a primary compensation working group that is working with the Saskatchewan Medical Association to be able to provide options for payment, Mr. Speaker. We currently have a fee-for-service and salary. Other provinces have moved into this direction, Mr. Speaker, and we're having a look at it. Nobody has said that we're not, Mr. Speaker.

But what they continue to dismiss, Mr. Speaker, is the 170 doctors that we have brought in to this province in the last 18 months, the 98 nurses that we brought in December. We have more coming in in April, Mr. Speaker. We're out there. The Minister of Rural and Remote Health and myself are out there talking to these front-line health care workers. We toured all of the . . . the majority of these health care facilities in the summer, Mr. Speaker. That was the information that we took to develop the plan that we brought out in September, that we budgeted for this year, and that we're going to operationalize the rest of this year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, other provinces are moving quickly on this. This minister's conversations are getting us nowhere.

After the budget came out yesterday, I spoke with a family doc to see what she thought. She told me that it left her hopeless, and she's made the choice to leave family medicine as a result of this government's lack of action, as a result of what she heard yesterday.

She told me that the fee-for-service model "incentivizes me to provide a service, not to provide care." But there's nothing in this budget that shows that this government is even interested in fixing these problems.

What does the minister have to say to family doctors who are going to stop practising altogether because of their failures?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I just categorically reject the question. I'm meeting with the family physicians tomorrow in the Saskatchewan . . . If they were paying attention, Mr. Speaker, not heckling, I'd let them know I am meeting with the family physicians tomorrow. I'm also meeting with ER nurses from St. Paul's tomorrow to be able to discuss some of the things that are in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

But the rhetoric that they're putting out there, and continuously running down our health care workers that have done an amazing job over the last few years, continue to do an amazing job . . . This budget is able to support them. This is a 6.7 per cent lift, Mr. Speaker. I've talked to the previous Health ministers and they were wishing that they got a 6.7 per cent lift, Mr. Speaker.

We've been able to deliver it for the people of Saskatchewan — almost \$7 billion invested, Mr. Speaker. This is a budget that's going to help out our health care system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Funding for Education

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, this government is absolutely failing to deliver when it comes to supporting education in Saskatchewan, and yesterday's budget is just the latest example. The president of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association said that this budget falls short. I'll quote her directly: "It does not provide boards with the investment that is needed, and it doesn't even come close to providing what's needed for covering inflationary expenses."

Mr. Speaker, why is this tired and out-of-touch government shortchanging public education in our province again?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this budget includes \$3.1 billion for education in the '23-24 budget, Mr. Speaker. That's an increase of 6.7 per cent or \$192.8 million, Mr. Speaker. This is \$1.94 billion in education budget, Mr. Speaker, compared to the last budget of the NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, it includes nearly \$2.1 billion in operating funding,

Mr. Speaker; \$49.4 million for boards to deal directly with enrolment growth, record enrolment growth, that we're seeing in this province, Mr. Speaker.

It includes for inflationary pressures, Mr. Speaker, as well as includes for things like CPP [Canada Pension Plan] and EI [employment insurance] enhancements that the boards are going to be facing because of changes at the federal level, Mr. Speaker.

On top of that, it's \$50 million in preventative maintenance, Mr. Speaker. And nearly \$150 million for 30 projects across the province.

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

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, every time this minister speaks, he shows just how out of touch he is with the entire education sector in this province. Because it's not just boards who are calling this government out for its failure to invest in public education. Teachers are also speaking out about how this tired and out-of-touch government is failing our students.

Samantha Becotte, president of the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation], had this to say after the budget yesterday. I'll quote her again directly: I have heard the Premier say, you can ignore reality but you can't ignore the consequences of reality. And the consequence is that our students are going to have fewer supports in school to ensure their success.

Mr. Speaker, what does the minister say to the parents of students who stand to lose their supports because of his choice to fail to provide adequate investment in public education?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said before, Mr. Speaker, this is a 6.7 per cent increase to the Education ministry budget. Mr. Speaker, it's a 6.7 per cent increase to the education budget, Mr. Speaker. I hope the member opposite isn't selling short the work that Education does in, yes, K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education, but in libraries and in early childhood intervention programs and in child care, Mr. Speaker. We do a lot of things in the Ministry of Education. It's a 6.7 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker.

Divisions will receive their budget allocations, Mr. Speaker. They will be building their budgets over the next several months, and I look forward to what they're going to do with the largest operating increase that we've seen in this province in eight years.

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

[10:45]

Tax Rates and Provincial Budget

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in the House, the government unveiled their budget with a sizable surplus. Mr. Speaker, they are proud of not raising taxes on the Saskatchewan people. Mr. Speaker, why did this government choose to not decrease taxes on the people in light of this surplus?

Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to this a number of times in all of the media outlets. It's a question that people are asking for sure, of why you don't decrease taxes when you have a surplus. We have in the past, and governments of both stripes in the past have relied on renewable resources in order to balance their budgets. But those prices are very volatile. They go up and unfortunately they also go down. So when governments bake in that one-time revenue into programs or services, or if they drop taxes and they reduce their base revenue, then they run into trouble the following year.

I have committed that I do not want to do that as a Finance minister, Mr. Speaker. This government does not feel that that is responsible. We want to have a budget that can increase services for our people while still being able to maintain and sustain it into the future, Mr. Speaker. And that is what we feel is responsible and balanced.

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

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is boasting and taking credit for this surplus, patting themselves on the back for a job well done. But in reality, Mr. Speaker, this surplus has almost nothing to do with them and everything to do with the inflationary fuel commodity prices and the taxes that they reap from them.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my question again. Why did this government choose to not decrease taxes to help alleviate the cost-of-living pressures on Saskatchewan people?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the member opposite is now adopting the NDP talking points. That is rather special. She's basically cut-and-pasting you guys. But it's the same answer, Mr. Speaker.

You have to have base revenue. The province has three sources of revenue: it's resource revenue, it's taxation, and it's transfers from the federal government. That's our three sources of revenue.

You know, we have a general idea what the transfer will be from the federal government, and we have to set a tax base in order to maintain and sustain in a responsible manner for our services going forward. And we try to keep over-reliance on resource revenue . . . because those prices will fall. And we're going to stick to that principle because we think it is balanced, measured, and responsible.

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

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously this government is not listening to the people. Why won't this government recognize that it's profiting off the plight of the people?

This government knows the dirty secret of their budget. The whole province knows where this surplus came from: they felt it came out of their pocketbook, Mr. Speaker. This windfall came at the expense of the cruellest tax of all, the inflationary tax. Why won't this government, at a minimum, give back to the people 1 per cent of the PST across the board? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not even too sure what to say to that because the surplus came from potash and oil. That is what we're seeing a surplus from — in particular, potash, Mr. Speaker. Any of the taxation revenues that are up, largely is also due to potash when you talk about the corporate income tax is up. But it is largely potash, is helping to bring that number up as well.

It is a good indicator that our economy is strong and it is resilient. And we're going to do whatever we can to keep that economy growing in this province because that is what is going to help fund services for the people of Saskatchewan, is keeping the economy growing. And that's growth that'll work for everyone.

The Speaker: — I'd like to refer to the petition made by the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre. There was a lot wrong with the presentation. Refer to the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly*, 16(3)(b) for the official interpretation. But you need to go to the . . . First of all you need to read the prayer, but only a general explanation, and certainly not finger pointing and an argument across the way. And it wasn't through the Chair. So please respect the rules.

I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — State your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Mr. Speaker, during question period, in his typical, respectful fashion, the member for Rosemont referred to the Finance minister as boneheaded. I would refer to *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker, from March 7th, 2019, and I'll use the words of my friend opposite, the Opposition House Leader, who raised a point of order on this very topic, saying “. . . the member . . . used the phrase ‘boneheaded,’ which . . . we can all agree is unparliamentary.” The member, referring to the member for Carrot River Valley, who then had to withdraw and apologize.

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask the member for Rosemont to stand, withdraw, and apologize.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Ms. Sarauer: — Once again we have the Government House Leader taking words completely out of context of how the member said. He called the tax “boneheaded,” not the minister, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask that you find that point very much not well taken.

The Speaker: — I will review the record.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Harpauer that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.]

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you. Don't clap all at once, folks. It's a pleasure to enter in briefly here this morning into the budget debate. I got a lot of my concerns onto the record, the concerns of my constituents, those from across Saskatchewan, yesterday, Mr. Speaker, so I'll be more concise today.

But without a doubt, what we've seen presented is a budget that's out of touch, that doesn't meet the moment that people face, a government that's flush with cash and a tremendous opportunity that was presented to deliver on what matters to Saskatchewan people, to address the generational cost-of-living challenge that people and households and businesses are facing, as well as to do what we can to make sure we fire up this economy that's grown stagnant under this government, under this Premier, under that minister of jobs, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that people have the opportunities and the jobs that they can count on, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to health care and the pressures there, of course, this government has failed miserably. They've treated this sector with disrespect, Mr. Speaker. They've presided over massive waits at ERs, Mr. Speaker, hospitals that have been put on bypass, ERs that have been shut down, Mr. Speaker, and a situation where many people can't access their doctors.

And the way they've gone about it, Mr. Speaker, is to bring about, yeah sure, cuts, Mr. Speaker, on different fronts but also disrespect, Mr. Speaker, and that's just so damaging. It goes no distance to being able to build the conditions and the teams that will allow us to recruit and retain health professionals and workers to make sure that Saskatchewan people have the health care they need when they need it, where they need it, Mr. Speaker.

We know the record of the Sask Party's always been one of disrespect towards the education sector, Mr. Speaker. We see the consequences of that in our classrooms. Both our pre-K to 12 [pre-kindergarten to grade 12] classrooms but then also into post-secondary and universities, Mr. Speaker.

But this budget doesn't rise to the occasion. In fact at a time where this government's sitting on record revenues, Mr. Speaker, it's flush with cash, if you can imagine they bring forward a budget that's going to force more cuts, more strain, more hardship upon those classrooms across Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We owe it to the kids of today to ensure that they can live up to their full potential. Education is a key foundation in that, Mr. Speaker. And when they live up to their full potential,

then this province can live up to its full potential as well.

This is a short-sighted, damaging approach of this government that limits the potential of young people, limits the potential of this province, and hampers our future and hurts our finances and our economy into the future, Mr. Speaker, because all of these things connect directly back to our labour force and making sure people are able to pursue their studies, pursue their dreams, and advance, Mr. Speaker.

I want to also just touch, Mr. Speaker, on a couple specific local things. Want to give a shout-out, as most people do, to their families in this. I want to say a shout-out of love and thanks to Steph and William and our extended families that are all a part of the work in here and the service, Mr. Speaker.

I want to give a shout-out to Jennifer Morin in our constituency office for serving the good people we represent, Mr. Speaker, and helping at times in situations of crisis and that are emergent, Mr. Speaker, and always advocating for those that need help, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the others that serve in the community, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank all of the leadership of all of the community associations, Mr. Speaker, who are just so incredible in their leadership and their service and extending programs and volunteering hours and enriching community, Mr. Speaker. I'm just so lucky to work with these good folks and to see the strength that they all bring to community and the supports that they extend to so many.

I think of all the good folks that I represent across the communities of Rosemont and Mount Royal and Normanview West and Prairie View, Mr. Speaker, and to them I just say thank you for your trust, thank you for your ideas, your engagement, your conversation, Mr. Speaker, and your input and your care about our province, our community, and where we're headed, Mr. Speaker. Without your input and engagement and involvement, none of this would be represented the way that it should, Mr. Speaker.

I want to recognize as well local leadership: our councillors Shanon Zachidniak and Jason Mancinelli with the city, Mr. Speaker. I want to recognize those that serve on our public school board, Mr. Speaker: Sarah Cummings Truszkowski as well as Lacey Weekes, Mr. Speaker. You should meet this Lacey Weekes, Mr. Speaker. She's pretty awesome. Same with Sarah, Mr. Speaker. I thank them for their service and leadership to the schools and the community as well, Mr. Speaker, and I thank all those that serve the Catholic school board. Of course the Catholic school board doesn't have specific areas that they represent, so I want to thank all the members of the Catholic school board.

I want to recognize as well the leaders in all those schools, those teachers, those education workers, those facility managers, those custodians, those bus drivers, and to thank them for doing all they can in the schools. Those at St. Josaphat, those at St. Joan of Arc, those at Ruth M. Buck, those at McLurg, those at St. Francis, those at Rosemont, those at Walker, those at Martin — Mr. Speaker, they're amazing. They're amazing, amazing public servants, Mr. Speaker, that make such a difference in the lives of children, which is why these education budgets matter so much.

Because you know, they're doing everything they can in tougher and tougher conditions with classrooms that have been cut, Mr. Speaker, and you know, that want to make sure that they're putting children in the best position possible. And when you have a government that's working against that effort, Mr. Speaker, it's pretty damned hard for them, Mr. Speaker. I know that for certain.

I also want to recognize on the school front, Mr. Speaker, Dieppe School, a beautiful school, Mr. Speaker. It's not being utilized these days as a full school. It is being utilized on some fronts. It's been well maintained by the Regina Public School Board, Mr. Speaker. We need to make sure we have budgets, Mr. Speaker, that allow our classrooms to have the supports they need, to allow our school boards to make decisions that allow those enrichments and those wraparound supports and to reduce the class size and make sure those supports are there for learning.

And you know, something I've pushed for a long time in this Assembly and within the community, Mr. Speaker, is making sure that our school division here in Regina has the adequate funding they need to reopen Dieppe, to redeploy Dieppe and make sure it serves the community who deserves to have that local school, and to also be able to serve Westerra, Mr. Speaker, which has grown in the last number of years.

It's a wonderful opportunity that would present incredible value from a financial perspective. We don't need to build a new school but we can invest in that school, Mr. Speaker, serve the community, and take some pressure off some of the other neighbourhood schools that are really pressured with the increases to enrolment by closing that school. Of course that school was closed under the budget cuts of this Sask Party government, Mr. Speaker.

[11:00]

On health specifically, I want to continue to push for the . . . something that's been disregarded and not acted on for so long, and that's Pioneer Village and its replacement, Mr. Speaker. We have a government that's flush with cash, that's been so over the years, that just slow-walked this while so many seniors have been impacted, so many in care, Mr. Speaker. And it's critical that that facility be replaced with public spaces, Mr. Speaker, and making sure those options are there, and making sure we have those other supports as well, Mr. Speaker, for our seniors.

Sure, on the cost-of-living side, which you know, seniors often get hit so hard because of the fixed income, Mr. Speaker, that the power bill, of course, just keeps going up under this government, the energy bill, the taxes — they all come — the grocery bill is just so hard for so many. So we need to address the cost of living but also the wraparound supports and home supports for seniors, Mr. Speaker, that could provide such a level of security at a time where so many feel vulnerable, socially vulnerable, economically vulnerable, and are in a precarious situation. This is something that would provide independence in health and financial improvements for people. And it's common sense. It's a wiser way to go at some of the challenges we face as well.

I need to mention, of course . . . I mean I went into this yesterday but, you know, accessing a local doctor shouldn't be the task that it is. It is so hard for so many young families or others that have

lost a doctor to find one, Mr. Speaker. We owe it to Saskatchewan people to make sure that they can access that doctor.

We need to make sure when they roll into the ERs, Mr. Speaker — where those health care teams and doctors and professionals are working so hard — that there's not hours of waits, Mr. Speaker, because of inadequate support and disrespect by this government, Mr. Speaker, but that they're met with a timely response, that when minutes matter in someone's life, Mr. Speaker, that they have the supports they need when they need them, Mr. Speaker.

On health I also want to touch on the sad and tragic reality that plays out around mental health and the broken system there, and the failed response around addictions, Mr. Speaker, treatment and harm reduction, a government that has not come forward with meaningful solutions here, Mr. Speaker. And sadly, far too many that are facing a challenge from a mental health perspective or an addictions perspective are not able to access the care they need when they need it, Mr. Speaker. And I can't stress enough on this front, Mr. Speaker, that if someone's dealing with a mental health emergency, or if they're in a place with their addiction, Mr. Speaker, where they're looking for a path forward, where they're looking for help, they need it then, Mr. Speaker. They don't need long delays, they don't need waits, they need it then, Mr. Speaker. And the options right now under this broken system, Mr. Speaker, simply don't cut it, Mr. Speaker.

I'll touch just on a couple of other things before I cede the floor to a much more able colleague, Mr. Speaker. I want to touch on a government that's really given up the fight on equalization, Mr. Speaker. You know, this was a matter of fairness for Saskatchewan. It's a matter we should be principled and consistent and strong with, Mr. Speaker, to ensure fiscal fairness for Saskatchewan within this nation, Mr. Speaker.

You know, this Premier and frankly the one before, Mr. Speaker, threw in the towel on equalization a long time ago, Mr. Speaker. You know, this is an important matter for Saskatchewan. It's to the tunes of hundreds of millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker. But the only way we're going to fix equalization and ensure fairness for Saskatchewan and to improve our fiscal foundation as a result, Mr. Speaker, is by consistent, principled presentation and effort, Mr. Speaker.

We see none of that from this government, Mr. Speaker. And that's too bad, because you know, certainly the NDP government previous, Mr. Speaker, fought hard, along with working with Saskatchewan people and other provinces on this front. And it's a fight that shouldn't be given up, Mr. Speaker. There's a round of renewal coming up, Mr. Speaker, but you know, this government is nowhere to be found in advancing the interests of Saskatchewan on this front.

I want to touch on a couple of my critic areas briefly, Mr. Speaker. You know, when it comes to connectivity, Mr. Speaker, this is something that's so important to Saskatchewan. It could be transformational to the economy and certainly the community and the economy of many regions, Mr. Speaker. In 2023 connectivity by way of high-quality internet and cell coverage is not a luxury, Mr. Speaker, it's an essential service. It's critical for business and agriculture. It's critical to secure investment. It's

critical to just basic quality of life and safety and security, Mr. Speaker.

And that's why we've been pushing this government so hard to take this on as the priority it should be, to connect rural and northern Saskatchewan, our towns and our villages and our First Nations and Métis communities, Mr. Speaker, and our farms, Mr. Speaker, to make sure we have that connectivity. This is a government that's all talk on this front, Mr. Speaker.

If we wanted to be meaningful on this, this government would've taken us up on our call a long time ago — and along with that call that came from others such as the agricultural producers and those through SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], Mr. Speaker, our rural municipalities — and that would be to scrap the dividend from SaskTel at this time to ensure that that dividend gets invested and leveraged now to make connectivity happen.

Instead we see a government slow-walking it. Certainly representative of a government that's fallen out of touch and has grown old and tired, Mr. Speaker, and people deserve better on this front.

I want to touch on agriculture. You know, we have a government that finally signed on to some improvements on AgriStability. Of course we've pushed hard for that, Mr. Speaker, pushed this minister. He, you know, delayed action, actually blocked action from happening on this front for a number of years. The agricultural community was united, Mr. Speaker. The federal government was there with their dollars, but this government blocked that action. And as a result during the drought year, you know, two years ago that impacted so many, they left producers really high and dry. Now we see the improvement on the compensation rates that we've been calling for. That's good, Mr. Speaker. Long delayed though, and certainly many suffered losses as a result.

But we also need to improve and ensure equity and fairness on the livestock side, and you know, we have livestock producers and beef producers across Saskatchewan that are struggling. We see a beef herd that's in great decline, Mr. Speaker. We hear of ranchers and operations that are having to shut down and sell off those genetics and that herd that they've built over generations. And it's a devastating thing for those ranchers and those livestock producers. And it's devastating for our province as well, Mr. Speaker. We produce the best beef in the world, and livestock producers play such an invaluable role in being stewards of the land, stewards of the grass as well, and sequestering carbon and protecting wetlands, Mr. Speaker.

It is not in our interests, Mr. Speaker, to see this industry decline and to suffer. It's not in our interests to be putting ourselves in a position to be importing beef from around the world. It should be right here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And we should be, you know, proud of that and we should be growing it. We need equity on the livestock price insurance program, Mr. Speaker, just like on the grain side where the federal and the provincial governments cost-share on the premiums. That has to be offered up, as well as a commitment and a backstop to our livestock producers.

And we also need to make sure that we ensure fairness around

meat pricing for our livestock producers and for consumers, Mr. Speaker. A government that has washed their hands of taking meaningful action and investigating this to address the anticompetitive meat-packing industry that's consolidated and out of province, Mr. Speaker. And that prevents livestock producers from getting a fair price at a time where they're facing lots of challenges, Mr. Speaker.

And that impacts consumers of course as well. Anyone that gets to the meat aisle or the meat counter, Mr. Speaker, knows the reality on this front. Sadly there's not a correlation that those high prices are ensuring our beef industry is in good shape and our producers are getting a fair price. It's not on. We need a government to, you know, not dismiss this challenge but be willing to roll up their sleeves and lean into the anticompetitive meat-packing industry for the interests of Saskatchewan, both producers as well as consumers.

Mr. Speaker, couple of last pieces before I cede the floor to a much more able colleague, who's frankly brilliant. But you know, I want to touch as well just on the importance of this government finally addressing the challenge that producers have had with respect to the carbon tax, Mr. Speaker. Of course they pay the price on this front. They've been stuck doing so for now quite a few years, and this government has failed them.

We've been pushing hard to exempt grain drying of course, Mr. Speaker. And much more than that, Mr. Speaker, we've been pushing this government to make sure that there's recognition, compensation by way of a rebate or offset or a structure that works, an offset that works, to recognize the role of producers as environmental stewards, their work in sequestration, their work in grasslands and wetlands and how invaluable that is, Mr. Speaker, and its meaningful impact around sequestration of carbon.

Yeah, I think I'll leave it there. I've got a few other things that we could touch on, but I know I'm getting I think a couple on both sides of the House telling me to wind 'er up here.

But we've got an amazing province, Mr. Speaker. I'm so thankful to serve the good people I serve. I'm so thankful for their support and engagement, Mr. Speaker. And I'm also so thankful for our wonderful province, the leaders and the people in all industries from producers through to industry, through to the workers, Mr. Speaker, for their engagement with us in all corners of this province.

It's our efforts to always build toward that bright future that everyone deserves in Saskatchewan. We had a heck of an opportunity in Saskatchewan right now. People and workers and businesses are doing their part. It's this government that's not holding up their end of the bargain. This budget presented an opportunity, one that's once again squandered by this government, Mr. Speaker, that just simply doesn't meet the test, doesn't rise to the reality that people are facing — cost of living, jobs, health care, and the economy or classrooms.

So with that being said, I will look for my motion that I wrote this morning. And I've got . . . My House Leader's amazing, Mr. Speaker. She's always there to help me because often I'll lose my motion while I'm speaking here.

So at this time, Mr. Speaker, I will move the following:

That all the words after "Assembly" be omitted and inserted with the following:

does not approve the budgetary policy of the government because it fails to provide cost-of-living relief for families, fails to make needed investments in health care and education; and further, that the Assembly has lost confidence in the government.

I so move.

The Speaker: — Moved by the member from Regina Rosemont and seconded by the member from Saskatoon Fairview:

That all the words after "Assembly" be omitted and inserted with the following:

does not approve the budgetary policy of the government because it fails to provide cost-of-living relief for families, fails to make needed investments in health care and education; and further, that the Assembly has lost confidence in the government.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the Government Deputy House Leader.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Point of order.

The Speaker: — State your point of order.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Mr. Speaker, when the member from Rosemont was giving his reply to the budget, he called the Minister of Trade and Export Development the minister of jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I let it slide yesterday. This is something that you have already ruled on and said it was out of order. The member opposite continues to thumb his nose at you by disrespecting your previous ruling, and I would ask that he stand in his place and apologize, if you see fit.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I'm perplexed, but I will withdraw and apologize for referring to . . .

The Speaker: — That's it. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to rise and second the amendment brought forward by my colleague from Regina Rosemont, although I feel there are high expectations now that he has referred to me as brilliant. So I just want to temper those expectations before moving forward, Mr. Speaker.

[11:15]

I do want to take some time to review what came forward yesterday, Mr. Speaker. But I do want to identify that we don't serve in this House alone. I get a tremendous amount of support

at home and virtually through my partner, Grayson Beaudin. I would not be able to do this work without him. He is my strongest cheerleader, perhaps my daily counsellor and sounding board, and is doing great work in the education system with the youth across this province.

So I do want to thank him dearly for his unwavering support over all of these years, including his lack of enthusiasm when I first told him that I was interested in running. And we were dating at the time. But he has been along for the ride and such a trooper throughout all of this, and has really, you know, taken up the torch of advocacy himself and, yeah, is someone I care deeply about and respect more than I can really express here, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to thank the support teams that we have around us. In particular as a member I rely very heavily on my constituency assistant, Twyla Harris Naciri. I've been so happy to have her back in the office after she returned from mat leave this year, and to meet her little boy. And she's been working tremendously hard in that space. She works with a lot of the other constituency assistants as well and tries to make sure everyone's on the same page, and really goes above and beyond in her work without complaint.

And when she is off on union business, or you know, travelling around with us on some of the tours she's helped book, we rely very heavily on casual constituency assistants in our office. I want to thank our casual constituency assistants, Robyn, Dylan, and Brock, for the work that they put in in our office as well, especially today Robyn who is in our office at this moment.

I do want to speak to this budget that's in front of us, Mr. Speaker. It really does show how out of touch the Sask Party government has become, and I really have to speak to the arrogance that we saw on display yesterday. The smugness, the laughter, Mr. Speaker, when we're talking about some very important issues to people of this province but also people that were in the room yesterday. And we heard from so many folks that were quite offended by the behaviour of members in this House and how they were treating other members when they were speaking. So I did want to let folks know about this, and I think it speaks to where this government is at and the arrogance that's on display. People are noticing.

Budgets are about priorities. This one confirms that the Sask Party government is not focused on the issues that matter to most of the folks in the province. People who have always been able to pay their bills are struggling to keep up with increases. Fifty-five per cent of people in this province say that they're worse off this year than they were last year, Mr. Speaker, and there's not a stitch of serious cost relief in this budget.

I don't know what doorstep conversations look like for the members opposite, but an often refrain that I hear when I am on doorsteps is "life's getting more expensive, my wages aren't going up, and I'm very afraid I'm going to lose my house." And you know, we've got a lot of working people in my riding, Mr. Speaker. We represent a good segment of this population, hard-working folks who deserve so much better from this government.

We have mothers giving birth on the side of the road; hospitals on bypass or closed with just a sign on the door to let people

know that they have to go to another emergency room; seniors waiting 10, 20, 30 hours, days to get an emergency room bed; and no real plan to get our health system back on track, and no help for these folks, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier has the worst jobs record in Canada, and he still doesn't have a plan to kickstart our economy. The government is flush with cash because of the war in Ukraine, and this has sent oil and potash prices through the roof, and still they have failed to deliver on issues that matter. This is an out-of-touch budget, Mr. Speaker.

Let's talk a little bit about cost of living and what people were expecting from this government. With the outrageous costs of food and fuel, people in this province feel worse off financially compared to almost every other province. Only 15 per cent, Mr. Speaker, 15 per cent of people feel that they are getting ahead right now. If that's not a cost-of-living crisis, I don't know what is. That's the second-highest level of financial insecurity in Canada.

And we feel that, as we talk to people, as we hear from people, and I don't know how the members opposite don't feel that. I don't know how they don't get these . . . I know that they get these stories in their offices. I know that they have . . . Because a lot of their constituents, all our constituents, call lots of offices, right. We have an idea of what comes into their office.

So if they do know that these are the struggles that people are facing, then why aren't they addressing them, Mr. Speaker? And if they don't know, why don't they know? They need to be more in touch with what people are going through. Instead of plowing ahead with their 32 taxes and fees from last year and their higher energy and power bills, Mr. Speaker, they could have been making choices that make life more affordable for the people of this province.

Power bills raised three times during a cost-of-living crisis, a generational cost-of-living crisis, Mr. Speaker. Energy bills raised, Mr. Speaker. We have called for these raises in rates to be eliminated and we hear nothing from this government. No new tax relief. No power bill relief. No relief from crushing cost of living. And they're making life more expensive for people in this province. Twenty per cent of Saskatchewan kids are living in poverty — kids, Mr. Speaker.

And instead of launching an investigation into food pricing, you know, instead of taking these measures, they're creating a new tax collection agency. They're creating a marshal service. They're implementing things that are pet projects for them that people haven't asked for, Mr. Speaker. That's where the money is going. But what more can you expect from a out-of-touch Finance minister who will fire up a jet to go to North Battleford for lunch, Mr. Speaker.

I've heard the Finance minister on the radio this morning being asked straightforward questions about cost-of-living relief. She had no good answers, Mr. Speaker, about what is in this budget and why. When they can't even spin something, Mr. Speaker, you know it's bad news. She had no good answers. It rings hollow for everyday folks who are just trying to get by.

I'd be remiss if I didn't talk about health care in this budget, Mr.

Speaker, as the Health critic. Our health care system is on the verge of collapse. This government's health plan is still a thousand workers short, and they know that because the Provincial Auditor did a thorough investigation of this at arm's-length. This is her responsibility to look at these things, and it's like they go along as if they've never heard that there were any problems or concerns.

In fact they sit around talking about how this is the most ambitious plan in the nation. You know, I don't know a single other person, aside from those members opposite, who has ever said this. And I get a lot of diverse viewpoints that come to my office, Mr. Speaker, and a lot of folks that talk to me about health care, but not a one of them has ever said this — not one. Patting yourselves on the back, the display of arrogance from this government is appalling.

The budget doesn't address the crisis in our emergency rooms. There's no primary care reform. No funding to support primary care doctors. This is family medicine. We were talking about this in question period today. We've talked about it a number of times, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Health has been sitting on this for months. He has known for months what the doctors want, and they just want to be competitive with other provinces. They just want action like other provinces have taken to reform the system, to allow flexibility within the model so that not every doctor needs to become a business owner and have those overhead costs in an area that they're not trained in. They want some ability to provide care for their patients, not just a service, Mr. Speaker.

And we've stood with nurse practitioners to talk about the role they could play, the fact that there are nurse practitioners in this province right now that are not practising that can play a very key role. And this is what the doctors are asking for, is team-based care. That can include doctors, nurse practitioners, a whole host of health care providers, you know, including counsellors that can provide mental health services, Mr. Speaker.

They brought forward a grow-your-own program to be able to have nurse practitioners from a local area represent that area. We hear nothing from this government on that, Mr. Speaker. Slowly dragging his feet while people don't have access to a family doctor, while people can't get the care they need, situations get worse, and they end up in our overcrowded emergency rooms, Mr. Speaker, waiting days for beds. It's completely unacceptable.

But what does this budget have? Not much for targets, not much for timelines, not much for substance. This out-of-touch budget won't help women who are giving birth on the side of the road, Mr. Speaker. It won't help seniors that are waiting 10, 20, 30 hours, days in the emergency room to get a bed.

But what more can we expect from this government who referred to the Regina General Hospital being on bypass — the Regina General, Mr. Speaker — as “ebbs and flows.” He dismissed this as “ebbs and flows” and treated it like it's business as usual. Completely unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

And I see the eye-rolling and the hums and haws every time we talk about the president of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, Mr. Speaker, as though this is business as usual. I have not heard

the president of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses speak out in this way before. This is unprecedented, Mr. Speaker. They are irresponsible to dismiss it. They're warning of collapse. They're saying that the time has come and that action needs to be taken now. And they're providing solutions, Mr. Speaker. How stubborn do you have to be to not listen to these folks and to work with them?

And we're hearing about these and so many more concerns as we talk to people across the province, hearing about health care solutions. In our travels we hear from folks who feel that their local voices have been completely left out of the equation, that they don't have any real dialogue, any real conversations with the Minister of Health or the Minister of Rural and Remote Health, that they simply don't care. They feel that their voices are not being heard and they're not being propped up. And as a result, they've invited myself, the Leader of the Opposition, the member from Saskatoon Eastview, out to their communities to hear them out.

When we were invited out to Delisle, Mr. Speaker, we showed up. We showed up, we heard from those folks, we brought forward solutions, we talked about the things that need to happen, and still we get nothing from the Minister of Rural and Remote Health. Mr. Speaker, people are tired. They're tired of this out-of-touch government, and it's showing. The cracks are showing in health care. They're not cracks; it's a flood, Mr. Speaker.

No commitment to community health advisory networks, which were promised at the time of amalgamation to ensure that local voices would be heard in health care. It's one simple thing that this government could do to ensure that local voices are heard. Instead the Minister of Health talks about oh, I had a conversation with someone on my way home. Is every health care worker in the province going to be privy to his personal cell phone number so that they can call him up when they have a concern? These systems exist for a reason, Mr. Speaker, so that those voices can be heard, not someone who's lucky enough to have the Minister of Health's phone number.

Mental health and addictions, Mr. Speaker. I know we can all relate to the fact that we're not feeling better off after the pandemic here. A lot of folks are feeling worse off, and the pandemic has exposed a lot of lack of services that exist. It's been hard on people across the province across the board.

Year after year we see announcements from this government, headline-grabbing announcements about the mental health crisis investments they're making. Meanwhile the crisis is getting worse and worse, Mr. Speaker. They need to take a step back and instead of just saying they're investing in it, throwing money at the issue, actually looking at targeted investments, looking at what measures they want to succeed on, Mr. Speaker. Talk to families, talk to the experts in the field. Listen to what they're calling for. Follow the evidence, Mr. Speaker.

We're on track for another year of record overdoses. This budget doesn't provide a cent for funding safe consumption sites. We know that they save lives. We know that they save money, which they should also be concerned about, Mr. Speaker. No answer from this government.

Many of the people who are struggling with addictions, family,

friends, neighbours, won't find any relief from this budget. There are significant gaps that exist within our system of mental health and addictions, Mr. Speaker, gaps between counselling time, access to counsellors, time between a detox facility and a residential treatment facility. What is someone supposed to do during that period of time who is struggling with addictions, Mr. Speaker? Gaps with publicly available care, where people are paying for treatment, and separate mental health and addictions systems that have been siloed, Mr. Speaker, which doesn't help anyone who is going through a crisis.

[11:30]

And of course the suicide prevention Act that was brought forward by my colleague from Cumberland, it passed two years ago, Mr. Speaker. It's been two years. Sometimes it feels like *Groundhog Day* and time passage is confusing around here, but two years since that was passed. And we got lip service from this government that there was going to be major changes. Still no action. We've offered a bipartisan committee on mental health and addictions, Mr. Speaker. Still no action.

It's been a year since the child advocate did a report on kids' mental health, and I encourage everyone to take a look at the recommendations in that report, Mr. Speaker. I understand there will be a follow-up coming out soon. We will be watching closely, but we did not see the investments that we need to make sure that people's mental health across this province is looked after.

In the area of social services, this government hasn't increased benefit payments for our most vulnerable for nearly a decade. Now they're celebrating a dollar a day. It was referred to by someone on the program as a slap in the face. A slap in the face, that's what people are saying about your budget today. Open your ears, read the articles — a slap in the face. This is not something to be heckling on folks.

In this economy, that's not even an apple a day, Mr. Speaker. I know SIS [Saskatchewan income support] and SAID recipients, who can't pay their rent, are constantly having to ask family members for money, can't afford power bills, you know, are going to the food bank, can't pay for groceries. Mr. Speaker, this is a dire situation. It's creating more homelessness in this province.

This government is offloading that responsibility on to municipalities. They're not taking responsibility for the homelessness crisis that they have created. This increase will not help people who are living in deep poverty, especially when this government continues to claw back SIS and SAID benefits. You can tell a lot about a government by the way it treats its most marginalized, and this is completely indefensible, Mr. Speaker.

The members opposite don't like to talk about this, Mr. Speaker, but we have to talk about their record on jobs and the economy. This budget shows just how out of touch the Sask Party government has become. People in this province just want to work hard, have good mortgage-paying jobs, and this Premier has the worst job creation record in the country. They're nowhere near their jobs creation targets. He has the worst economic record in this country. Since becoming the Premier five years ago, Saskatchewan has ranked dead last in job creation among

provinces. Dead last. And this is something they brag about, Mr. Speaker. The cognitive dissonance is amazing.

Mr. Speaker, their economy also ranked last with 6 per cent GDP [gross domestic product] shrinkage. We can't even talk about it as growth, Mr. Speaker. Negative growth is shrinkage — GDP shrinking, Mr. Speaker. That is what's happening in this province, yet they pat themselves on the back. It's completely unacceptable.

Local businesses are struggling to pay for these hikes to power and energy rates. This out-of-touch budget isn't going to help them. You know, their spinning of the numbers isn't going to help folks at the everyday level. Municipalities are still reeling from the job-killing PST that was added onto construction labour. It's something we hear about so often, Mr. Speaker. This budget won't help them.

And the government is putting all their resources into a capital action plan when what we needed was a real jobs plan. Wages are stagnating. We have the worst rates of immigration retention outside of Atlantic Canada. It is one thing to have people here, Mr. Speaker, but we need to keep them around. We say the same things in health care — retention. I feel like the members opposite should get a dictionary and open up the book and have a look at what the word "retention" means. Because I don't know if they understand it.

We're losing people to other provinces. We are losing people every single quarter since this Premier took office. Every single quarter we've lost people to other provinces, Mr. Speaker. Shameful.

And on education, this budget shows just how out of touch the Sask Party government has become. The minister says there is record funding in education, but it's all smoke and mirrors, Mr. Speaker. When you account for inflation, school divisions will still be pinching pennies and will likely have to lay off essential staff.

They could have invested in psychologists, speech pathologists, but instead they've blown a huge chunk of the budget on an online learning system that no one asked for, Mr. Speaker. School divisions still have to organize bottle drives because the Sask Party government has cut their funding to the bone. Bottle drives for education, Mr. Speaker. Bottle drives. Not for treats but for essentials, Mr. Speaker. Bottle drives. Education is an investment; it needs to be treated that way. Yeah, bottle drives. The member from The Battlefords should pay attention to this.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House, we're focused on issues that matter to Saskatchewan people: health care, this outrageous cost-of-living crisis, and good-paying jobs. This government's been in power for 16 years. It's time that they own that record instead of pointing fingers elsewhere. People expected so much more from this government and in this budget.

And for that reason, I will not be supporting this out-of-touch budget. And I will be proud to second the amendment from the member for Regina Rosemont. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Earlier the Government House Leader raised a point of order, and I'd like to rule on that. On March 7th, 2019 a

member used the phrase “boneheaded ideas.” At that time the current Opposition House Leader raised a point of order. The member then withdrew and apologized.

To the member from Regina Rosemont: you used the phrase “boneheaded tax” which is along the same vein. I ask the member from Regina Rosemont to do the same now and withdraw and apologize.

I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I would withdraw and apologize.

The Speaker: — People, don’t we have better things to do than the points of order? I recognize the member from Kindersley.

Mr. Francis: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s obvious the opposition hasn’t taken a Tony Robbins lecture lately on the power of positivity.

But what a great day it was yesterday here in the provincial legislature, almost as great as being in Riversdale I would think maybe, Mr. Speaker. The atmosphere of positivity was visible and the eager and excited crowd in attendance was not left . . . And they certainly were not disappointed as they were treated with a very upbeat and informative budget presentation presented by the longest-serving current female cabinet minister in the country, Mr. Speaker. A humble and eloquent address delivered by a first-class individual. A positive budget with a positive message by any metric.

But then right on cue, we had something completely different happen. I sure hope that it’s not unparliamentary for me to have an alternative observation or opinion. But we did have the opportunity to hear the longest-serving opposition member in the province, and what a treat that was, Mr. Speaker. Now I will give the member from Rosemont some credit. He is very well spoken, confident, and even humorous at times, and he does know his material. And he most certainly knows how to work a crowd and a room.

Well the cynicism and grandstanding champion 16 years running was feeling very empowered yesterday by the crowd, reminding all of us of previous leadership bids gone wrong and making us wonder if perhaps this time might just be the time. But why wouldn’t he feel this way with his most recent coziness and the feeling of protection by the media and the Chair? It’s no wonder the confidence meter was redlining.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, last week we did see some humility and remorse. And we really thought he was going to do the right thing, but reality always comes back into focus, Mr. Speaker. After all even the biggest fans realize that Kevin Costner isn’t a cowboy, and Tom Hanks’s friend Wilson wasn’t really a person. They’re just really good actors.

But what is genuine, Mr. Speaker, is the day in and day out bashing of the provincial economy and the talking down to the province, and by extension tossing aside and discounting the efforts of the good working people in businesses here in the province.

And it seems, in opposition minds, success is only achieved if

socialism leads the way. And I’m honestly truly embarrassed for them. We heard the sighing and felt the tension and saw the eye-rolling of the crowd yesterday on much of the commentary by the member opposite. It must be awful to get up every morning and go to work every day with the purpose of telling every person across this province that everything is terrible. Crisis after crisis, day after day.

Well, Mr. Speaker, you will hear a different tone from members on this side. A tone set in the address given by the Minister of Finance, a tone of positivity, a tone of excitement. A tone of every day is a good day here in Saskatchewan, and some are just better than others, Mr. Speaker. A tone and a message that the best days are still ahead for all of us in this province. There will be no shortage of positivity from members on this side, Mr. Speaker. At least a 4 to 1 ratio of good-to-bad messaging will resonate, no matter what the media will report.

Like our colleagues from Lumsden-Morse and Regina Walsh Acres, who are not here with us today, but are with us in spirit. We miss you guys and wish you the best. Your attitudes are inspirational to say the least, especially under the circumstances. And the member from Athabasca, for your courage in standing up to unapologetic bullying, intimidation, and insinuated personal accusations.

Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, these are three individuals that I am proud to call my friends and colleagues. Now we hear heckles of shame, shame from the other side every day. Take a look in the mirror, you guys. We do not claim to be perfect. We are not. We are as human as you are.

And for a party that supposedly prides itself on being the people’s party, the party of compassion, unless you’re attacking a conservative and then the rule book is thrown out. The gloves come off, the rules are tossed aside, and the way they treat opposition members, on that side of the House, when they are most vulnerable is despicable.

Sorry, but being in opposition does not give you free rein and the right to say and do anything you feel and need to do to score political points. They may think they have gotten away with it because of the lack of consequences under this roof. But the end does not always justify the means, and voters of this province will continue to send you feedback at the polls. And be assured if you target one of us, you’re targeting all of us.

Now, Mr. Speaker, their platform . . .

The Speaker: — Like, really. You know, I caution the member. Some kind of threatening gesture? Give me a break. I mean, come on. This is where it gets back and forth where it’s unacceptable. The pointing, you know, I mean, please. Please refrain from those types of things. Come on. And that’s for both sides, too. I mean, come on.

I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Just seeking clarification, Mr. Speaker, on your ruling — I’m not sure if that was a ruling — on whether we can use hand gestures . . .

The Speaker: — Sorry, you’re challenging the Speaker. Do you

really want to go there? Do you really want to go there? Yeah, you want to go there? Okay. I want the Government House Leader to stand up, withdraw, and apologize.

I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — I withdraw and apologize if that's what the Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Sit down. I recognize the member from Kindersley.

Mr. Francis: — Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, the platform of the opposition continues to be very simple — fear and smear and the promise of throwing money at everything with no plan or clue on how to pay for any of it. A mirror image of the federal Liberal-NDP coalition. Good luck to you for staying on that track. We hope you do.

[11:45]

Mr. Speaker, it is very easy to get sucked into the negativity vortex that is the members opposite. So let's switch gears and let's bring it back to the success story told in yesterday's budget and the success story that is Saskatchewan. There is in fact a lot of good news, lots to be thankful for, and lots to look forward to here in this province, pages and pages of proof from cover to cover in that budget. I heard several colleagues say it would be very easy to write a 15-minute speech on the good news in every single ministry, and I agree.

I am of course extremely honoured to be given the opportunity to second the motion put forward by my esteemed friend and colleague, the Minister of Finance, the Deputy Premier. It's extra special for me as I really and truly enjoy taking pride in being a treasury board member. This being the beginning of my sixth spring sitting, I find myself getting more comfortable and familiar with the processes of government. And I really have grown to appreciate the importance, the amount of time and effort that goes into the provincial budget process. And even though treasury board duties can be far more onerous and time-consuming than others, I find it to be one of, if not the most, important and fulfilling roles I have as an MLA.

I'm often asked by friends and constituents, do you feel you're ever making a difference and, if so, how? And I quickly point to our provincial budget development and finalization process, as it is definitely one of those key opportunities to make a difference. It does, and that difference was clearly on display yesterday. I also add usually that ensuring the NDP never form government again is a difference we can all make as well.

Now I don't think the average person has too much of a grasp on the amount of work and collaboration that goes into budget development, and I certainly didn't five years ago, either. The decisions made in the budgetary deliberations each year of course affect each ministry's operations in different ways, and I certainly understand how it could be very easy to fall into the habit as a government of being reactionary in spending rather than being proactive.

And that approach in the past has created far too much volatility and unpredictability, baking in enhancements in good economic

times that are unsustainable when our provincial revenues retract. Governments then find themselves having to make hard choices with taxation rates or reduced program delivery. In a jurisdiction like Saskatchewan it can be very easy to fall into that trap. Our ag- and resource-based economy can be very volatile, as we've seen in the past few years. Add in a pandemic, generational drought, a war, and accurate financial projections become virtually impossible.

And that's why I'm so thankful for the proactive, balanced approach developed and taken by our Minister of Finance, her team, and really by extension, us as government over the last five years.

And what I've noticed through the last five budget cycles is the team has always remained dedicated and focused on making decisions that set us up for success in future years, and this is one of those years. Whether the budget has been balanced or not, deficits or surpluses, the focus remains on stability and sustainability.

And what really impresses me the most is that these decisions in the past have not come at the expense of programming offered by ministries, again a very sharp contrast to what the opposition says day in and day out about cuts. The ministries have in fact experienced consistent funding lifts every year, not the cuts as the members opposite claim. Yes, taxation has changed, expanded in some areas admittedly in the past few budgets.

But no matter how simple the math or how clear the statistics may be, the members opposite refuse to admit the cold, hard facts of the matter is that we are living in quite good times in quite a good province. And we continue to thrive, and again in my opinion largely due to the fact that we have not had an NDP government for 16 years. And it will be very interesting to see how they will attempt to spin this budget into bad news.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this budget is anything but bad news. You heard many great details from the Deputy Premier yesterday. And you will hear many more from the Premier coming up and our colleagues over the next week, reiterating exactly how good this budget is, how it provides more — more services for every resident, more opportunity for every existing business, more for every newcomer or immigrant, more for every company considering making Saskatchewan a place to operate.

Building on the strong economic performance from last year, this budget truly provides growth that works for everyone in this province. As mentioned before, the examples are so numerous, Mr. Speaker. Pick a ministry, any ministry. There is great news in literally every one of them. And I challenge the opposition to try to spin this into something negative.

There are no programming cuts. There are no new taxes. There are no tax increases, period. End of story. The success of this budget is the result of a strong economy backed by sound financial management on behalf of the provincial taxpayer.

I look forward to hearing my colleagues outline what matters to them over the next week, and I really should mention there are a few that are quite meaningful to me as well. And I'm going to start with agriculture, which is important to myself and so many of us rural members. The Premier refers to it as the spinal cord

of the provincial economy, and it is most certainly all of that. It has always had its challenges and risks. That will not ever change, but I'm very excited for the future of agriculture in this province. The world's becoming increasingly aware of the products we produce here, and perhaps just as importantly, how we produce them.

Agriculture has evolved into agribusiness over several generations and the risk and rewards have grown with that. And that is why our Ag ministry has worked hard to forge a new federal partnership deal. Yes, it's costing our government more money in annual budget costs, but this investment, including over 400 million in the ag risk business management programs, ensures that our most important economic driver remains secure, healthy, and sustainable for years to come.

Crop insurance has now reached \$446 an acre. AgriStability compensation rates are up, from 70 to 80 per cent, coupled with investment of 38 million towards research and innovation ensures this province will remain a global ag leader.

The same can be said for our energy and resource products, ethically and environmentally produced goods developed in a better manner than anywhere else in the world. The oil and gas, the potash, the uranium, the lithium, the helium, the copper, the rare earths, Mr. Speaker — we literally have it all and the world wants it.

Our soon-to-be nine trade offices are getting the message out. We indeed are open for business, and we have what you in the world market want and what you need. And as crazy as it sounds, the single biggest threat to our provincial success continues to be the flawed environmental and climate policies of our federal government, backed time and time again by the members on that side. Talk about shameful, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, the opposition scoff at our expansion of our global trade presence. They think it's a waste of time and money. They obviously don't see the importance of world markets to our provincial economy. They scoff at those trade offices, our trade missions, even though we know they are effective and paying dividends back to the province. Seventy per cent of what we produce in this province is exported to over 150 countries around the globe, and the NDP's ambivalence or perhaps ignorance on this front is simply astounding.

After decades and decades of socialist policies holding this province back, this group continues to go down the same protectionist policy path. They would nationalize and milk our industries to the point of extinction like they did decades ago and push industry to more friendly jurisdictions, even after witnessing the growth and prosperity we've experienced here since 2007.

Population growth of more than 210,000 people, something NDP called impossible. The economic growth, the growth of small and medium-sized business, the growth of ag sector, and the growth in the energy sector, the growth in the tech and innovation sector — unprecedented growth everywhere you look. The biggest population growth in more than a century pushes our population over 1.21 million, just announced here this week.

We as a government know there are pressures and challenges

with growth, but we also know what that growth provides. It provides the ability to spend \$7 billion on health care. It provides more doctors, more nurse practitioners, more nurses, more lab techs, more continuing care aides. It enables us to build hospitals, not shut them down: the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital, the Sask Hospital in the Battlefords.

It provides for record investment in education, 4 billion, Mr. Speaker. More students, more teachers, more EAs [educational assistant], more schools, not school closures. More training seats in our post-secondary institutions, more courses, and ultimately a more highly educated and trained workforce.

More support for the most vulnerable: more for seniors, more for the disabled, and more for those in need of mental health and addiction support. More work to do always on that front, all of those fronts. We acknowledge that every day. It's not perfect. And we never say the system is perfect or running smoothly, but we have a plan.

And that is the difference between us and the opposition members. A vision, a vision that relies on a strong economy. Our government has seen and continues to see Saskatchewan's potential. This budget is absolute proof that that vision sets us up for success, not just for today, but also into the future.

Part of the success down the road is fiscal prudence. And paying down another billion dollars in provincial debt is key in ensuring that success. Many of the younger members perhaps won't remember the 1980s where interest rates were out of control. Home repossessions, mortgage defaults, farm foreclosures, massive unemployment — the first of the Trudeau legacies. We are seeing indications of a repeat. Hopefully not. The key difference today in Saskatchewan is our economy is very strong and most everyone is employed. We are fortunate to be somewhat insulated from another big crash. Let's hope that's the case.

There of course are affordability issues here as well. That's precisely why we shared the resource boost that we experienced last year with the folks that own those resources. Paying down a billion dollars in debt in successive years is addressing affordability. Provincial debt is owned by every taxpayer, and so retiring more debt saves us millions in rising interest costs. Good economic times also provide the opportunity to build for the future, and our government is investing a record 3.7 billion into the provincial capital plan — more schools, more hospitals, more highways, more municipal and Crown infrastructure.

And on the municipal piece, just having come through SARM last week, our provincial government has been a willing partner with our federal government on this front. Investing in Canada Infrastructure was very important to many of our rural and urban municipalities, allowing them to tackle infrastructure deficits with partnership funding. And as we heard the Premier announce at SARM, municipal revenue sharing is nearly \$300 million. That is investment that works for every community in this province.

Before I close, I'd just like to take the opportunity to thank some folks back home in Kindersley. My CAs [constituency assistant] do a terrific job handling the concerns of the constituency, so thanks to them for the work they do. And a big thanks to the

constituents of Kindersley. You have put your trust in me, and that responsibility is not lost on me nor is it taken for granted.

I want to thank all the officials in each ministry for your hard work getting this budget to the point where it landed. And like I said before, an immense collaborative effort over many months, prioritizing needs and wants while trying to maintain a level of responsible spending on behalf of the taxpayer.

To the Finance team and ministry folks, a big thanks to you for your preparation, dissection, analysis, and ultimately recommendations you present to our treasury board. So much of the heavy lifting is done by you folks, so we can take the time as a board to come up with the best possible decisions.

And to my treasury board colleagues, thank you for your time and input. We do not see eye to eye on everything. That's okay. We worked through it, and we endeavoured to make the best decisions on behalf of the taxpayer and constituents.

And of course one final thank you to Madam Deputy Premier and Finance minister. Undoubtedly a budget that you can be very proud of. And you, along with the Premier, can and should take so much credit for that. The growth we are experiencing and see in this budget is taking us forward to our vision for 2030. The items are getting ticked off the list faster than we imagined, and the growth we are seeing, experiencing, is absolutely growth that is working for everyone.

I hereby second the motion put forward by the Minister of Finance, and oddly enough will not support the amendment introduced by the member from Regina Rosemont. Thank you.

[12:00]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin I would also just like to make a few comments of thanks to many people that support me in my role as the MLA for Rosthern-Shellbrook, my role as being part of what I think is a great and strong governing team here in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And that starts with my family: my son, my daughter, and most importantly my wife, Mr. Speaker. I can't say much more than that. Thank you to each of them, Mr. Speaker. Words I just don't think are adequate.

Our constituency office in Rosthern-Shellbrook, we had Sally Jacobson here today. Cindy Painchaud also works in that office. She came on board a couple of years ago, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank them for, as I always do, being the eyes, the ears, and most importantly the face of Rosthern-Shellbrook, Mr. Speaker. They treat all our constituents — and beyond in many cases with the calls that we receive in there — with the dignity and respect and try to get to the bottom and find a solution for the issues that they ultimately have.

Last but certainly not least, Mr. Speaker, I'd say a thank you to all of the residents of Rosthern-Shellbrook, which will be moving and expanding a little bit this next election. I'm so very appreciative of the guidance that they have provided me as their MLA over what is three elections now, and thankful as well that they've elected me for three elections. Thankful to, as I've

already said, be running in a fourth and be asking for their support most certainly in that election as well, the coming election in just over a year, Mr. Speaker.

But the folks from Rosthern-Shellbrook are great folks focused on agriculture, some forestry are the industries in the area. And we most certainly in that area of the province are really starting to realize the benefits of growth. We see jobs coming in the area in the forestry sector. As we see the agriculture sector strengthen and grow, Mr. Speaker, we're seeing jobs in that sector whether it be ag tech, whether it be in enhanced machinery, the urban agriculture industry, as I say, the machinery industry, the agronomy industry, Mr. Speaker.

We're very, very fortunate across the constituency. And we're also seeing some of that growth that works for everyone, Mr. Speaker, with capital investments in schools as well as service investments throughout our health care centre and across the province, many the beneficiaries of some of the announced budget changes and investments yesterday.

Which brings me to yesterday, Mr. Speaker, very quickly with respect to the budget that was introduced by our Minister of Finance, also our Deputy Premier, her sixth budget, Mr. Speaker, this government's 16th budget that we have had the honour to bring forward on behalf of the people of the province. And I think I would just say thank you collectively to all of those involved in the budgetary process, but to all of those that across the province — individuals, groups, organizations, community-based organizations — that have provided advice through their MLA, through their minister, through whoever that might be in bringing this budget to where it is.

We've waited some time for a budget like this, Mr. Speaker. We talk about, you know, a billion dollars in debt reduction that came forward in this budget. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's an important, that's an important investment in our future. Over the course of the last couple of years we had invested heavily. We had a couple of deficit budgets.

About \$2 billion was provided to support families, to support communities, Mr. Speaker. I'm thinking of the municipal economic enhancement program, Mr. Speaker, \$150 million to support municipalities. The dollars that was provided to support our health care system, our education system, to support small businesses that are driving employment in community after community, Mr. Speaker.

We did experience a deficit, a pandemic-related deficit, Mr. Speaker, with a billion dollars. A billion dollars provided to debt relief last year and a billion dollars provided to debt relief this year, Mr. Speaker. All the while, going through one of the most significant droughts that this province has faced in over three decades. We were able to do that, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the people of this province, we were able to eliminate that pandemic deficit that we had.

And most certainly, Mr. Speaker, are going to forgo paying interest — tens of millions of dollars, if not hundreds of millions of dollars over the years — by not paying interest on that amount of money, Mr. Speaker, and investing those dollars into services that are provided to Saskatchewan residents. Mr. Speaker, that's sustainable investment that we were able to make by reducing

our debt.

Second-lowest net debt-to-GDP in the nation is this province, Mr. Speaker, which makes these investments that I want to talk about so very sustainable into the future, Mr. Speaker. I always say we do not want to find our province in the position where we're hiring a doctor, hiring a nurse, or firing a doctor or firing a nurse, the same with a teacher, Mr. Speaker, or any public service worker in this province on the price of a barrel of oil, on the price of a tonne of potash, or on the price of a bushel of canola. That most certainly is not where we want to be, relying on those natural resource revenues for the services that are being provided. And this budget that was put forward most certainly provides that sustainable funding into the future for the services that Saskatchewan people rely on.

Investments like 6.7 per cent increase to the largest line item in this province, Mr. Speaker, which is our health care budget. 6.7 per cent increase to the second-largest line item in our budget, Mr. Speaker, which is the education budget. Both I would say are paramount among the decisions and the investment that any government can make, any provincial government can make, Mr. Speaker, in the nation of Canada.

Along with that, along with those investments, very pleased to talk. And I had the opportunity in question period. And I think the Minister of Social Services is going to have much opportunity to speak about this in the days ahead, Mr. Speaker, the investments that were made in our social services area of government, providing those that are maybe most vulnerable in our community, maybe living with a disability, a hand up, Mr. Speaker, and making sure that that investment is sustainable.

There is a significant investment in this budget on ensuring that our communities are safe, so that my family and your family and everyone's family is able to go out in their community and feel safe, Mr. Speaker. Wherever they might live in this province, that is an investment that this government most certainly stands behind, Mr. Speaker.

And we're going to bring much of that investment to fruition over the weeks, months, and in particular the years ahead, all the while, all the while ensuring the sustainability of the provincial finances by paying down our pandemic debt, Mr. Speaker, all the while providing a 6.7 per cent increase in education and health care. We were able to continue on the capital plan in this province — building the schools, building the highways, building the hospitals in this province, Mr. Speaker, with record investment. Just under \$4 billion was provided to this province's capital plan, Mr. Speaker.

And I think when you look at this budget as a whole . . . And we'll have the opportunity over the weeks ahead to read in, I'm sure, a number of quotes of different credit rating agencies, Mr. Speaker, folks from across Canada, on just how sustainable this budget is, providing that sustainability for those investments that we are making, Mr. Speaker. And I would say just at the very bottom line, the bottom line statement that we look at and that we go to is that this puts Saskatchewan in the second-strongest position — next to Alberta, Mr. Speaker — the second-strongest position in the nation when it comes to net debt-to-GDP. That is a record that we most certainly are proud of as the Saskatchewan Party government.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak just a little bit about the investments in health care. And we had many opportunities to do this throughout the weeks up to and including yesterday. But you know, I often refer to the . . . that the challenge we have in health care, Mr. Speaker, is its people. And we're working hard to bring additional people to those front lines, to provide that support, to provide that assistance to the folks that are already on the front lines.

And I see that in the communities that I represent. We have a health care facility in Spiritwood. We have one in Shellbrook. We have one in Lawson, Mr. Speaker. I see that first-hand. I was through two of those three facilities over the course of the last number of weeks. And that's why I refer to, when you saw the investments in this budget, Mr. Speaker, but to the health human resource plan that we have in this province as being one of the most ambitious in the nation of Canada, Mr. Speaker, and it most certainly is that.

As we see today, we have 700 additional nurses working in this province compared to March of 2019. Mr. Speaker, that isn't enough. We need more. That's why the Minister of Health and both ministers of Health went through with the ministry and the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] the number. We heard the complaint from folks in the industry, front-line folks, that there's too many part-time jobs that are available, and they're not moving to community X in Saskatchewan for a part-time job. They went through and reallocated I believe it was 150 positions. Brought them from part-time to full-time positions.

We added positions into the Saskatchewan Health Authority's mix, Mr. Speaker, across the board, not just with nurses. The Minister of Health was in the Philippines recently. The Saskatchewan Health Authority, back in the Philippines, have 400 job offers that are on the table, Mr. Speaker. And some of those folks are already landing and providing that service here in the province, Mr. Speaker.

We have over 150 incentives that are being provided to ensure that any of the more difficult places that we have to recruit, whether it be a continuing care assistant, a nurse practitioner, an RN [registered nurse], Mr. Speaker, an LPN [licensed practical nurse], that those positions are being incentivized so that we can continue to provide those services. And it is starting to work in multiple communities. And I'm sure other members and the ministers of Health will read into the record all of those communities that are being impacted in a positive way by what is the most ambitious health human resource plan in the nation. Mr. Speaker, this builds on this government's record.

And I see multiple previous ministers of Health here. The record of this government is one of significant investment in health care. The record of this government is one of investing in additional physicians in our community. Over 1,000 — over 1,000 — additional physicians are offering services in our communities from corner to corner in this province. And that's due to work from multiple Health ministers being backed by multiple caucus members over the last 16 years of budgets that we have had the honour to introduce in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to our nurse complement in this province, this health human resource plan that we put forward is really building on some of the work that we have put in place in

previous years' budgets, Mr. Speaker, because of the commitment that this government has had to improving health care access in all communities across the province, Mr. Speaker. And the result of that is not only 1,000 additional physicians, but 5,000 additional nurses that are offering services in our communities employed by the Saskatchewan Health Authority.

Mr. Speaker, we've done that through increasing training over multiple years. We've done that by expanding the training opportunities at the College of Physicians and Surgeons. We've done that, yes, by attracting folks. This is not the first time our Saskatchewan Health Authority has been in the Philippines. Mr. Speaker, we are attracting folks from around the world to live there and we're incentivizing them.

The most recent incentivization package that was increased, Mr. Speaker, was to do with recruiting physicians to rural and remote locations — that was announced at SARM — increasing that program from a four-year incentive program of about \$47,000 to \$200,000 for five years, Mr. Speaker. We're very serious about our health human resource plan in this province, Mr. Speaker, and you're going to see that increased investment, that increased commitment to bringing people to our front lines in the months ahead. And it's only possible by the funding that is provided in this year's budget, Mr. Speaker, that was delivered by the Minister of Finance yesterday.

In addition to people, Mr. Speaker, this government's commitment to infrastructure in health care has been there. I can remember back in 2008, the community where I lived was part of, I believe it was 13 long-term and integrated health care facilities in the province. There was a 14th added in Saskatoon at a later date. And you look at what has happened since that time, Mr. Speaker: a government that has invested in a Jim Pattison Children's Hospital, a government that has invested in a new hospital in Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker, a government that has invested in multiple long-term care homes across the province. The most recent announcement this past year or 18 months would be our largest long-term care investment right here in our capital city of Regina, Mr. Speaker.

This budget, there's long-term care homes moving forward with construction in communities like La Ronge, Mr. Speaker, Estevan involved, many other communities across the province. And that infrastructure investment is one that . . . And that's a traditional infrastructure investment in hospitals and in long-term care facilities. What you're seeing when you drive north on Albert Street here in Regina is a little bit of an innovation I think really, Mr. Speaker. And it isn't that far off of what we've done but, Mr. Speaker, you're seeing an urgent care centre being built here in Regina. Very shortly you're going to see another urgent care centre coming forward in the community of Saskatoon and a unique partnership with Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation, Mr. Speaker, a community not far from where I live in this province.

And what you're going to see in those urgent care centres is much-needed relief for folks that may have an ailment or whatever it might be, Mr. Speaker, that maybe doesn't quite belong in the emergency room, one of our busiest areas here in our capital city, Saskatoon, and many other communities. But, Mr. Speaker, it is much more urgent than maybe waiting 5 or 10 or 15 days for a physician's appointment. And so thus the word "urgent," Mr. Speaker, where those individuals . . .

And these are a pilot program to some degree. We think they'll be a highly successful pilot program where those individuals will have a place to go, Mr. Speaker, not necessarily our emergency room, but will have a place to go to have whatever it is they need dealt with, dealt with by a medical professional in this province. It may be a physician. It may be soon-to-be a physician assistant, as being talked about by the ministers of Health. It may be a nurse practitioner most certainly, Mr. Speaker, but we want to create that access for Saskatchewan people and reduce some of the pressures ultimately that we're having in our emergency rooms.

[12:15]

Innovation, Mr. Speaker, to some degree some would argue not that much innovation. But certainly I would argue it's an investment, Mr. Speaker, in common-sense innovation that's going to provide services to Saskatchewan people.

There's going to be another door on these urgent care centres which I think is important for us to discuss, Mr. Speaker, because it's part of this broader investment partnership, if you will, with places like Ahtahkakoop First Nation, Mr. Speaker, but really a partnership with the people of the province. And that is providing access to those that may be experiencing a mental health crisis or those that may have entered a life of addictions, Mr. Speaker, and are ready to make a change.

This is a focus of this government is to provide rehabilitation services, Mr. Speaker. And that's changed over time. Most certainly it's changed to be . . . The services that are required when it comes to rehabilitating from the drugs that are available today, Mr. Speaker, are very, very different than they were 10 and 20 and 30 years ago. And that's why the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions has been very ambitious in ensuring that we are bringing on those 150 mental health and addictions treatment beds in this province, working with community-based organizations like the folks in Estevan, bringing those beds on, Mr. Speaker, so that we can provide that service here in Saskatchewan.

Bringing on additional detoxification beds as well, Mr. Speaker, so that when an individual enters that other door in the urgent care centre in Saskatoon or Regina to begin, Mr. Speaker, we have the capacity, we ultimately have the capacity to provide the service that they need to bring them in front of the medical health care professional that they may require at the time, Mr. Speaker — an important access point, an important access point, Mr. Speaker, that I think will greatly improve our access to service, to mental health and addictions services ultimately in this province.

That's why, as the Minister of Mental Health will state today and will state every day, we are entirely focused on providing that capacity, providing that capacity for mental health treatment, providing that capacity for addictions treatment, Mr. Speaker, intensive addictions treatment, and providing those access points for Saskatchewan residents as well.

This is a changing place for us as Canadians. It's a changing place for us in Saskatchewan. And this government, this budget, this budget that is titled "Growth That Works for Everyone" most certainly is going to work for the folks that need those services in this province.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to a 6.7 per cent increase to our health care budget, which is ever so important, there is also a 6.7 per cent increase to our education budget in this province, Mr. Speaker, to our kids' future. Some of that flowing through to our school divisions here in the province, Mr. Speaker. Some of that being provided directly to the school divisions outside the funding formula.

For example, the \$7 million again this year is now annualized for educational assistants, Mr. Speaker, educational assistants that ultimately are providing a very important service in maybe this classroom one year and this classroom most certainly the next. And they are there providing those supports for kids and families I would say when needed. And that funds over 200 additional — additional — education assistants in our schools, Mr. Speaker.

Funding provided — this is an important point as well — funding provided to the Saskatchewan Distance Learning Corporation. Mr. Speaker, this is a change in how we are accessing our online learning here in the province. And I think we've all learned over the last few years about the capacity that's needed in that space, Mr. Speaker, as we found our way through a pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, I think we've also found some opportunities that came out of that. I had a child in a rural Saskatchewan community where I live that wasn't able to take calculus, for example, in his grade 12 year. He was able then to find his way through a correspondence course, found a teacher that would support him. Might have been a relation, Mr. Speaker, close relation. He was able to do his calculus course online, Mr. Speaker, through the Distance Learning Centre.

All of those courses are available and more. There's an ag tech course that is available to kids in Oxbow, an ag tech course available to kids in Maple Creek and available to kids in Maidstone, Mr. Speaker, Glaslyn. That just simply hasn't been available before.

And I would encourage Saskatchewan residents that as the Sask DLC [Saskatchewan Distance Learning Corporation] comes on board in years ahead, to watch the lineup of courses grow, Mr. Speaker, and watch how all Saskatchewan students ultimately will have access to, you know, many, many courses that in certain areas of the province we just simply didn't have access to in years gone by.

And I would also point out that in the dollars that were provided to the start-up of that facility, those are over and above, Mr. Speaker. There was no dollars . . . As this is a service that our school divisions offered before, there was no dollars that were pulled from the school division, Mr. Speaker.

Those dollars that they had for online learning in years gone by are still there in the funding model for the school division, Mr. Speaker. They'll use those as we trust the school boards will use those dollars for priorities that are important to the students ultimately and the families that they serve, Mr. Speaker, but those dollars are still available. However the responsibility of providing online learning, Mr. Speaker, will be provided by the Sask DLC.

And so there's some important investments that are made in the education sector, Mr. Speaker, a total of 6.7 per cent above the

inflationary average that we have over the course of the last year, like the health care investments, Mr. Speaker. And I think also important is to mention the capital portion of these investments.

Thirty projects are either being built, in the planning stages, or major renovations, Mr. Speaker. That is a significant amount of projects, Mr. Speaker, and is likely going to put this government over a hundred projects that have been built/renovated over the course of our 16 years, Mr. Speaker. There's more work to do in this space but I think, not these members, but Saskatchewan people can be very, very proud of the priority that this government has put when it comes to our education sector, whether it be K to 12 or post-secondary education sector in this province, Mr. Speaker. And it most certainly shows in new infrastructure, new schools in community after community across the province.

Mr. Speaker, one of the more impactful meetings . . . And I got the opportunity to meet with a number of folks yesterday in the lead up to the budget, a number of folks that, you know, are providing services, in particular I would say community-based organizations across the province. And I had the opportunity, with the Minister of Corrections and Policing and the Minister of Justice, to meet with Tmira and Maddie from SOFIA House, Mr. Speaker, and to have a conversation about what impact the operational funding will have in that space of second stage shelters.

And full credit, Mr. Speaker, to the opposition members, in particular the member from Regina Douglas Park and the Leader of the Opposition, that have mentioned this many times, Mr. Speaker. This is an opportunity for us to make an investment that I think is going to most certainly impact individuals. But, as Maddie had said yesterday, Mr. Speaker, it's about the kids. And it's going to improve the outcomes for the kids that, through no effort or reasoning of their own, Mr. Speaker, have found themselves in a tremendously vulnerable position. And I think it's an opportunity for us in this Assembly to really, in some ways — we don't celebrate often together — this is an opportunity for us to really celebrate together an investment that may very well be one of the most impactful investments that was announced in the budget yesterday, Mr. Speaker. So thank you.

There may be some policies that we don't agree on, Mr. Speaker, and I will get to those in a minute. And we're very fortunate in this Assembly to be able to discuss those policies on behalf of Saskatchewan residents and have that, you know, that open and vibrant discussion on policies, Mr. Speaker. Not people, but policies, Mr. Speaker, and any differences that we ultimately might have, Mr. Speaker.

But I do want to move on and mention a couple . . . And I wanted to mention a number of highlights in this budget, but as the Minister of Social Services, Mr. Speaker, \$1.4 billion being provided to the social services budget here in this province. And there's some important investments, Mr. Speaker, some very, very important investments in this space, Mr. Speaker. Starting with the social income assistance that we have in this province, up 6 per cent, Mr. Speaker. That is a significant increase, Mr. Speaker, to those that are utilizing that program. We have, as we said, the seniors' income plan, Mr. Speaker. And on the political side, we'll always mention, Mr. Speaker, that it wasn't raised in the 16 years under the NDP government, Mr. Speaker.

But I think we can all agree in this Assembly that the increases that have come . . . I believe this is the fifth increase to this program, in addition to the program fully funding actual costs when it comes to things like power bills for example, Mr. Speaker, and a list of another number of items that the program covers the actual costs as opposed to providing a flat rate. And it's important to note, Mr. Speaker, but again increasing by 9 per cent this year.

So SIS is increasing by 6 per cent . . . Sorry, 6 per cent this year. SAID also increasing by 6 per cent. I got ahead of myself. I'm way ahead of myself actually, Mr. Speaker. It's the seniors' income plan that wasn't increased for 16 years, Mr. Speaker. They didn't have a SAID program to increase, Mr. Speaker, because that SAID program was brought in by this government in 2009. Mr. Speaker, there's so many programs that are being invested in here that I'm losing track. But rest assured, the Saskatchewan folks that are utilizing these programs are not losing track, Mr. Speaker.

The seniors' income plan, up 9 per cent, Mr. Speaker. And the personal care home benefit, which has been raised in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, been raised by folks that I've talked to across the province as well as I know a number of other MLAs as well — up 20 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Again another program that wasn't in place prior to 2007, a program that was brought in.

And above all of this, above all of these increases is a 3 per cent increase to our community-based organizations, Mr. Speaker — many through Social Services, a number through Justice, some through Health, Mr. Speaker, and some scattered among other ministries across government. Again, a 3 per cent lift, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that those community-based organizations are able to grow, face some of the inflationary pressures, the wage pressures ultimately, that they may have.

And let me on that note say, thank you. Thank you to all of those folks that are part of a community-based organization, part of supporting their community, Mr. Speaker, and so part of supporting the folks that may be vulnerable for a period of time in their community, Mr. Speaker. It's appreciated by this government and I would say that it most certainly is appreciated through the investments that are being made, Mr. Speaker, by the Minister of Finance.

In order for our communities to be vibrant, growing, they need to be safe, Mr. Speaker. They most certainly need to be safe. You are seeing, I would say, historic investments, Mr. Speaker, over the last number of years in our RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police], in our municipal police forces across the province. Mr. Speaker, you've seen us move into the space of partnering with File Hills for example on community Indigenous policing.

We took another step in the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, also titled "Growth That Works for Everyone," Mr. Speaker. And in order for it to work for everyone, everyone needs to be safe in their community, Mr. Speaker. So we have moved into that space and committed to move further into that space of community Indigenous policing, Mr. Speaker, more eyes and more ears in communities across the province, including our Indigenous communities.

Mr. Speaker, we've expanded and formed the teams, the PACT

[police and crisis team] team, Mr. Speaker, the police and crisis action team, Mr. Speaker. And most certainly I have heard first-hand of some of the very important stories of how that team, a police officer, a mental health crisis counsellor, Mr. Speaker, have made a difference in individuals' lives. And ultimately when you do that, you make a difference in a family life, Mr. Speaker.

We have the ICE [internet child exploitation] team. We have the WEST [warrant enforcement and suppression team] team, newly formed a couple of years ago, the warrant enforcement suppression team, Mr. Speaker. We have brought all of our provincial law enforcement agencies under one umbrella, the PRT [protection and response team] or the provincial response team, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to make note of the crime reduction team, working closely with municipal policing in Regina and Saskatoon, but most notably in Prince Albert where the crime reduction team, Mr. Speaker, made a significant bust the other day. A significant bust where they took, quite frankly, some will call it drugs, but I would say kilograms, tens of kilograms of poison off our streets, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this poison, these drugs that are available today, Mr. Speaker, are changing our society. They're requiring governments to look at different ways of delivering rehabilitation supports, Mr. Speaker. And in this province, with the introduction and the support of over 250 RCMP members over the last decade or so, over, I believe, it's about 87 municipal, additional municipal police force members that have been provided funding by this government, Mr. Speaker. We are also going to bring in additional community Indigenous policing individuals, working with our Indigenous communities across the province and are going to bring in the Saskatchewan marshals service, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that service is going to be there to support all those communities, to support the municipal police force, to support the RCMP police forces that we have, providing safety in our communities today, Mr. Speaker. It's an investment that is necessary. It's an investment that we have heard from Saskatchewan people is necessary in this province, and we are going to march towards that service, Mr. Speaker, being provided to the Saskatchewan people so that we can all be safe in whatever community we choose to live in in this province.

[12:30]

Mr. Speaker, you're seeing investments again in this budget, building on some previous investments with trade offices in eight different countries around the world, representing Saskatchewan interests as we are most certainly and notably taking a Saskatchewan-first sentiment to what we do in this province, Mr. Speaker. We are proud Canadians, Mr. Speaker, from Saskatchewan, most certainly, and we are providing the world with some of the cleanest food, some of the cleanest fertilizer, and most certainly some of the cleanest fuel that you can find anywhere on earth, Mr. Speaker. And if you visit an airport near you, you're going to see that on full display as well.

Mr. Speaker, this is where we get into maybe a couple of the differences between us and maybe some members opposite . . .

probably all members opposite for the most part, all members opposite. I heard yesterday the Finance critic talking about, we need to fire up our economy. Mr. Speaker, so I found that actually humorous, Mr. Speaker.

And so I'll bring back to, you know, a story of back in the day when we did have an NDP government in this province. And it was more of a local story for me, but the member from Lloydminster will be aware of it. The member from Cut Knife-Turtleford will be aware of it as well. Where are we here? Over here. Mr. Speaker, Meadow Lake will be aware. North Battleford quite likely aware of it, Mr. Speaker.

But there was a day in this province, Mr. Speaker, where we had kids leaving. Everyone's heard the eternal joke that your graduation present was . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Luggage.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, for far too long, you know, that joke was . . . That wasn't rehearsed either by the way, Mr. Speaker. That's how it was in this province. That was the expectation. We had, you know, a province that from 1991 to 2007 actually I think lost just over 600 people in population, Mr. Speaker. It was a sorry state of affairs.

So when families came to the government of the day at the time and they said, you know, why are my kids . . . why do my kids have to leave to Alberta to get a job? Why can't they have a career like that here? The answer quite all too often from the governing party at the time was, you know what? Don't worry about it too much because we're actually, if more people leave, we're going to get a bigger slice of the pie. Right? The pie isn't going to grow. The pie might actually shrink, but there's more left for the rest of us, Mr. Speaker. Well it's because our kids were leaving. Generations of kids have left this province during that period of time, Mr. Speaker.

And so, you know, Saskatchewan kids are polite. And so as they were leaving, one of them was polite enough to stop his vehicle on the side of the road and to walk out to the backside of the "welcome to Saskatchewan" sign that they would see next time they come home for Christmas, Mr. Speaker, and take out his bottle of spray bomb, and he politely put on the back on the sign, he says, would the last one leaving please turn out the lights?

Well, Mr. Speaker, in 2007 Saskatchewan people erased that sign, that graffiti Mr. Speaker, and they have changed. Mr. Speaker, in 2007 things in this province took a notable change. And I would say, you know, we have talked about the opportunity that lies before us in this province for some period of time, Mr. Speaker, and I would say that those days are now beyond, gone by.

Mr. Speaker, our time is now. We're seeing that in the economic figures that are coming in, Mr. Speaker. We're seeing that in the budgetary position of the Government of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And I would say the hope is that that is going to strengthen most certainly years into the future.

But the other large announcement yesterday, Mr. Speaker, that was often overshadowed by the budget in this province, was the announcement of the population numbers where we had

twenty-nine thousand three hundred, and I believe, seven people that have made Saskatchewan home over the course of the last year. Well they didn't just come here for the weather, Mr. Speaker, that I can guarantee you. Saskatchewan is experiencing the largest population growth, largest degree of economic growth, than we have in the last 108 years. Mr. Speaker, they're coming here because there's 20,000 jobs that were created by industries, by small businesses, Mr. Speaker, in community after community across this province.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at our respective records, about 16 years under the NDP from '91 to 2007, I said there was a reduction of 627 people, Mr. Speaker, over those 16 years. We're up over 212,000 people in the 16 years that we have had the honour to form government. That is a record of Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker. That is a record of Saskatchewan people that believe in their community, are investing in their community, and they're creating jobs in those communities, Mr. Speaker.

It's also the record, Mr. Speaker, and the responsibility of all of us in this House to ensure that that continues into the future. Mr. Speaker, that's why you see the Minister of Energy and Resources putting forward, putting forward exploration tax credits in the space that is going to provide energy into the future, Mr. Speaker, and that's in the space of rare earth elements or critical minerals. That's why you're seeing this government getting ahead of the curve, Mr. Speaker, with the investments that we're making through the Saskatchewan Research Council to ensure that we have a processing industry here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

We've done this before. Saskatchewan people have done this before in building and expanding the potash industry. And I'd just say on the record, we're not going to nationalize any of this, Mr. Speaker. We've built and expanded a uranium industry in this province, Mr. Speaker. We've have built and expanded a very vibrant, and I would say the cleanest, one of the cleanest energy-producing industries, oil-producing industries in the world, Mr. Speaker. We have the very spinal cord of our Saskatchewan economy which is the agriculture industry, Mr. Speaker. And we are going to build a critical elements industry, a rare earth elements industry in this province as well, Mr. Speaker. And you're going to hear more about that in the very, very near future.

Mr. Speaker, it's the strength of that resource-based economy that has provided us with the opportunity to make these investments that we were able to introduce and in many ways to strengthen in the budget yesterday. It's the strength of that resource-based economy, Mr. Speaker, and I would say the fine touch of the member from Humboldt, Mr. Speaker, our Deputy Premier, in ensuring that the investments that we make are sustainable into the future. A very important point, Mr. Speaker, that we do not find ourselves in that very, that position where we are hiring and firing doctors, nurses, teachers, on the price of a tonne of potash, Mr. Speaker, on the price of a barrel of oil. But we make those investments on the royalties that are collected from that, the strength of our natural resource-based industry, Mr. Speaker.

We make those investments where we can on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. That's why you see 6.7 per cent increase in our

largest line item, Mr. Speaker, I would daresay the most important line item to the people of the province, and that's in the Ministry of Health; same in the Ministry of Education, Mr. Speaker, funding our children's future, Mr. Speaker.

And I would say that of all of the budgets that I have had the opportunity to be part of over the last 11 or 12 years now, Mr. Speaker, this is one of the ones that I most certainly, as a member of the Saskatchewan Party government, am most proud of to deliver to the residents that I represent in Rosthern-Shellbrook. Mr. Speaker, one of the budgets that I most certainly am most proud to be a part of alongside what I view as a very strong team, the strongest governing team in the nation of Canada, I might put forward, including federal levels of government, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you're going to hear the Minister of Finance say this numerous times, but this budget, it's about more people. It's about more jobs, and it's about more opportunities for those folks that have moved here and for our next generation. Mr. Speaker, this budget is about more doctors. It's about more nurses. It's about more continuing care assistants. It's about more people in our health care system, and it's about more surgeries, Mr. Speaker.

It's about more students in our classrooms, record number of students in our classrooms. It's about building new schools, Mr. Speaker. It's about more affordable child care for our families, many of them younger families across the province.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's about more support for our seniors, more support for our young people, more support for those that are living with a disability, Mr. Speaker, and more support for those that need a hand up and some of the most vulnerable in our communities, Mr. Speaker. And it's about safer, safer communities for the families that live there, Mr. Speaker.

We have a bright future, Mr. Speaker. We have a growing economy and we're not waiting for it. We're in it today. You're seeing that through the strength of the budget yesterday. You're seeing that through the strength of the communities that we have, Mr. Speaker. I would say that more than I have ever seen in my lifetime of almost five decades, Mr. Speaker, I have never . . . Saskatchewan's time most certainly is now. Mr. Speaker, we are no longer next year's country. We are here and now, Mr. Speaker, in the opportunities that have arrived.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would just say in closing, I most certainly will be supporting the budget put forward by the member from Humboldt, our Minister of Finance, and our Deputy Premier, Mr. Speaker, seconded by the member from Kindersley. I will not be supporting the amendment put forward by the members opposite, Mr. Speaker. With that I conclude my remarks.

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

Mr. Friesen: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. And one of the things that I've kind of made as a tag line here is — and this budget has made it really easy — but it is a really great day in Riversdale, Mr. Speaker, with this budget.

This budget has more in our province in every way — oh, wait a minute — except for one: no new taxes. This really is a budget

that is growth for everyone. A little tough to follow the Premier of the province in my speech, and actually the member from Kindersley did an amazing job in his seconding as well.

Really need to thank many people, and I'm just going to be a little brief on this, but the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance, and treasury board. A number of my colleagues are on treasury board. And I just see the absolute incredible commitment of time and of really, as the member from Kindersley mentioned, the disagreements in those rooms and in those meetings which is so important because if we don't have differences of opinion, we actually are not going to get the best decisions, the best outcomes, in my opinion.

And so really, really thankful to all the people on treasury board, all the people in committee discussing all this, and absolutely thankful for our current Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier and what she brings to our government. Just incredible leadership, incredible person that can still drive this economy and keep it sustainable. So thank you so much to those people.

I do want to talk a little bit about my colleagues as well. We talk about not serving alone, and you know, there's family. I'm going to touch on that. I certainly want to talk about my colleagues — the ministers in the offices, how accessible everyone is. How great it is to be able to walk into an office, text a minister, get a response, get a call back right away with the issues that we are facing in our constituencies.

And we are out there, Mr. Speaker. We hear this over and over again. And I'll tell you, it's getting tiring. The tired and out-of-touch narrative is absolutely getting tiring.

I will say sometimes we are tired on this side of the House, and it's because we're in touch. We are actually in the communities. We're in our constituencies. We're at the meetings. We're at the events. We are at places where we . . . I don't even understand how many things we can go to sometimes. I did a check one day just to see how many events and things I'd been at with all the other work I was doing, and in 38 days I averaged three a day in person. And so, you know, with that certainly there is, you know, a possibility of getting tired, but definitely in touch.

And I wish that maybe the member from Rosemont would maybe get in touch with his own constituency, because maybe he would like this province a little better. Because, you know, his speech yesterday, Mr. Speaker, was really, really kind of disappointing. It did not show the hope and the excitement that we have on this side of the House.

And you know, the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood is just an amazing way of showing how we really feel in his statement yesterday. And you know, it is excitement. You know, hope does beat fear, Mr. Speaker, and this side, we have hope. And we're now seeing the fruits of, you know, some budgets over the years that have come and come to this, where we're paying off billions of dollars in debt, Mr. Speaker.

And with that I don't actually think that the opposition really understands what paying off a billion dollars of debt means. It means you're saving millions of dollars in interest. It means there's programs that are able . . . We're able to deliver on more programming by saving all this money on interest.

Mr. Speaker, debt is not something — you have to have it — but it's not something you want to keep building and building on. So the fact that we're able to pay off debt and increase all across the board everywhere — education, health, on and on, and I'm going to touch on a few of those later — it's just so very great that we're able to do that.

I do want to mention, just touch on it — the member from Kindersley mentioned it as well — but I just wanted to shout out to the member from Walsh Acres. Been in touch with him, and I'll tell you there is not someone that is going through some tough times that has a more positive attitude.

[12:45]

It's absolutely inspiring to me. It is so heartfelt. You know we actually had a chat, the member from Walsh Acres and I, because he actually has been sitting without a seatmate the entire time he's been elected. And he was so excited at the start of the session. He said, I've got a seatmate. And I said, yeah, but it's me. And he says, you know what? I'll take anyone; I've just been alone for so long. But his attitude — and all the members on this side will absolutely attest to this — his attitude is the best attitude that I can . . . yeah, just best I've ever seen.

This is kind of interesting too, because you know, I was going to talk about the member from his location. But I actually get to say a shout-out to Lyle Stewart. I've had a tremendous privilege of getting to know Lyle since I've been elected. I'm not sure what it was about me, maybe the fact that I'm into cars, but Lyle has been one of those guys that just stops in for a coffee and a chat. And he's been an amazing mentor for me. Been able to go to his house and let him cook me a big steak dinner, which was amazing, and ended up buying a car from him.

But you know, as everyone knows here, Lyle's going through some challenges too. And really interesting because he actually called, like in his time of not feeling so well, made sure that he called the member from Walsh Acres to look after him. So I mean, just selfless acts and just amazing. Like, both these two gentlemen. I'm just so, so proud. Just a couple singled out here that I'm so proud to serve with.

I wanted to touch a little bit just a couple of my new . . . I got two new CAs in my office. They were here yesterday, had the pleasure of coming to see the budget: Jamie Martens, as well as Alison Klassen. And I was really happy to have them here yesterday. These two young ladies are absolutely amazing. They have such an empathetic way of dealing with people. They are just so caring and great people. So I'm really, really fortunate to have them helping me out in Riversdale as not even a year ago, Mr. Speaker, we had the misfortune of losing my CA, Terry Bubnick.

And you know, at the time I . . . When I was given the privilege to hire Terry, I looked at him and — I've probably said this before to colleagues — but I looked at him and he was kind of a scary-looking guy. Like, he had a bit of an intimidation about him and the biggest heart ever. You know, there was a 100-year-old lady in our office the other day, came to see Terry, heartbroken. And it reminded me of this, and I just wanted to, you know, just speak of this. But she was very well served with my new CAs, so to them I say thank you.

We don't serve alone, Mr. Speaker, and I have to acknowledge . . . I want to briefly acknowledge my kids. And it is part of what is going on with the budget, so I'm going to try and tie it together. I'm probably not as good . . . well I know I'm not as good as the member from Melfort, but I'll do my best.

My son Christopher has been just a rock, you know. A little bit of a tough year for me last year. My son lives with me, and 21 years old now. Just so very proud of him. In university, in the Edwards School of Business, and also just a very, very hard worker, Mr. Speaker, and just a very caring individual. So thank you, Chris.

My oldest daughter, Danielle, she just graduated, convoked from the University of British Columbia in fall, and she has made me so proud. My kids all make me so proud, but my oldest daughter started getting involved volunteering with kids, and everyone in this House knows that's such a big passion of mine, Mr. Speaker. So to watch my oldest daughter get involved in this respect too is just absolutely heartwarming for me. So thank you, Danielle.

Morgan. I have talked about my daughter Morgan — this is my middle child — in this House before. And I am going to briefly touch on this story because, you know, some of the things in this budget tie directly into the story of my daughter. My daughter attempted her life a couple of years ago, and it was a very low time. My daughter and I are very, very close now. I'm very fortunate. I believe we were before. This was just something that, you know, I thought I saw in her, but I wasn't sure.

But I was able . . . Like, we've talked about this many times, and we talk about . . . One of the things I was taught when I was in high school by a mechanics teacher — that I could not stand but he really taught me a lot — and it was, don't bring me problems, bring me solutions. And you know, that was one of the best things I learned in high school.

And so when I talk to my daughter and talk about mental health and addictions, you know, and when I talk to constituents, that is what I'm looking for. What are their ideas? What can we bring back? What are their suggestions to bring back into government? And the beautiful thing is then we bring them back and the ministers listen. Government listens, caucus gets together, we join up. We figure out the best way to provide these services.

Mr. Speaker, I am so proud of this over \$518 million in mental health and addictions this year. Incredible budget. And the depth of this budget certainly does not give me enough time to talk about this today, but I am going to try and do my best.

So back to my daughter. We talk about solutions. We talk about some of the ways that we can do better in this province and in our own communities. And I am so proud to say, Mr. Speaker, that the member from Melfort had this great idea. Interestingly enough, weeks, a month later — I don't even know what it was — I went into the Minister of Mental Health's office, had a chat with him about an idea that my daughter and I were talking about. Well it turned out the member of Melfort had the same idea. The Minister of Mental Health said, were you guys . . . Like you didn't actually talk to the member from Melfort, or like you don't know what he is doing? It was really amazing.

So some of these great ideas, where do they come from? They come from the community. We get these from the people that we are talking to. My daughter is so, so proud that we are able to start delivering on some of these programs, helping CBO's [community-based organization], helping our community-based organizations that, you know, I heard the Premier mention it, but it can't be mentioned too often: thank you to those community-based organizations and what they do. It's incredible work and we're now expanding on that work. There are so many good things coming out of that. It's just incredible.

Certainly one of the common things that I hear talking to people in the communities and, you know, just not my community, surrounding communities. I really believe that I represent the west side of Saskatoon. I don't deal with it all, but I do get, you know, people from all over the area. One of the commonest things that we know we need is surrounding supports for mental health and addictions.

And I am so proud to talk about the treatment spaces we have. We have 475 treatment spaces right now. Is that enough? No, it's not, but we're working on that. We're fixing that. There's money in this budget for at least 150 more. In fact, Mr. Speaker, some of these 150 new beds are going to be completed, I believe, in the next couple of weeks or month. So this is coming soon and this is a resounding thing that I hear about. So I'm so very happy to be able to talk about that as well.

I do have to kind of . . . I'm going to circle back to my daughter in a minute, but there was a number of guests I had here yesterday. And it's always great bringing people into the building, certainly, letting them see what we do here and what it looks like in a question period, but also the majesty of the building. And I've said it many times, but when I walk up those steps, when I walk through those hallways, I feel so honoured and so privileged to represent the constituents of Saskatoon Riversdale.

A few of my guests yesterday, Mr. Speaker, Joe and Jen, it was their first time in the building and so giving them as good a tour as I could with the time we had, and then actually having a chat with them later. So on the way to walk them up to get into the chambers, I just was explaining kind of what the process looks like in a day. So what a, you know, the statements by members, the petitions, and kind of what they look like and what they're about.

And I was explaining how member statements are typically a positive thing in our constituency, or our community. And so they said, well that sounds great. And then you know, I told them some of the places that I'd been able to highlight, some of the people I've been able to highlight, and they were really quite, I think, excited to see what the member statements would be.

After the display yesterday — I don't even know what to call it — but when we walked out of here and I actually walked them back to my office the first thing they say . . . I asked them what they thought of it, and they said, I thought you said member statements were supposed to be positive. He said, I don't think the members on the opposition understand that, because they certainly were not positive. And they were really, I think, more surprised and really saw the reality of the doom and gloom from that side of the House. And we see it day in and day out, and so

it's really interesting to talk to constituents and, you know, friends that come into the building for the first time and they see that right away. That's one of the first things they saw.

Sometimes I actually think the NDP don't live here. I really do. I can't believe the negativity and how they can't get anything positive. We were talking about . . . There was mention of the spin, like, how do you spin this budget to positive? How can you spin this to negative? This budget's incredible. I got through not even one page of my . . . just one page of my notes yet, and I could go on and on.

I talked about saving millions in interest by paying off a billion of debt. More great news, another great time in Riversdale, Mr. Speaker. We have a new school going in in Riversdale. There's money budgeted for a new school in Riversdale, and my people in my area are super excited about that.

Urgent care centres in Regina and Saskatoon — another great, incredible budget — \$30 million, I believe. The one in Regina here is already over half complete and, you know, with any luck, Mr. Speaker, the new urgent care centre will end up somewhere near Riversdale, I'm kind of hoping. But you know, what a great thing that will be with the mental health department, as well to it, an addictions area.

So many other things I can talk about — more people, more jobs. You know, more than 29,000 people added to this province, more than 20,000 jobs added to this province, the most affordable place to live in the country, Mr. Speaker. When we talk about affordability measures, our Minister of Finance has made affordability measures that will annualize over 2 billion, taking over 112,000 people off the debt roll or off the provincial tax roll. They're . . . on and on with what we've done.

Mr. Speaker, the one thing I do want to mention as well as Legislative Secretary for Parks, Culture and Sport is more in the arts and culture file, Mr. Speaker. And I, as the Legislative Secretary, I attend a lot of events. I meet a lot of people, and wow, are they happy with what is going on in that industry. So to the Minister from Parks, Culture and Sport, thank you for what you've done there. It's been incredible to be a part of it.

Highest budget ever in education, another 6.7 per cent increase. More yeas. And that is something again we hear in talking to people, and certainly with people in my area, and so happy about that. More than 30 projects, as I've said, with schools which are actually in my area as well.

Anyways I'm going to wrap up my comments, Mr. Speaker, and I do want to say I am so happy to support this budget put forth by the Minister of Finance and seconded by the minister from Kindersley, and I absolutely — the minister? No, the member from Kindersley — and I will not be supporting the amendment. So thank you very much.

The Speaker: — Time has elapsed. This House now stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.]

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

Hon. Lori Carr
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. Jeremy Cockrill
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Hon. Dustin Duncan
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Hon. Bronwyn Eyre
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Minister of Immigration and Career Training
Minister Responsible for Innovation
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Minister of Mental Health and Addictions,
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Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
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