



THIRD SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

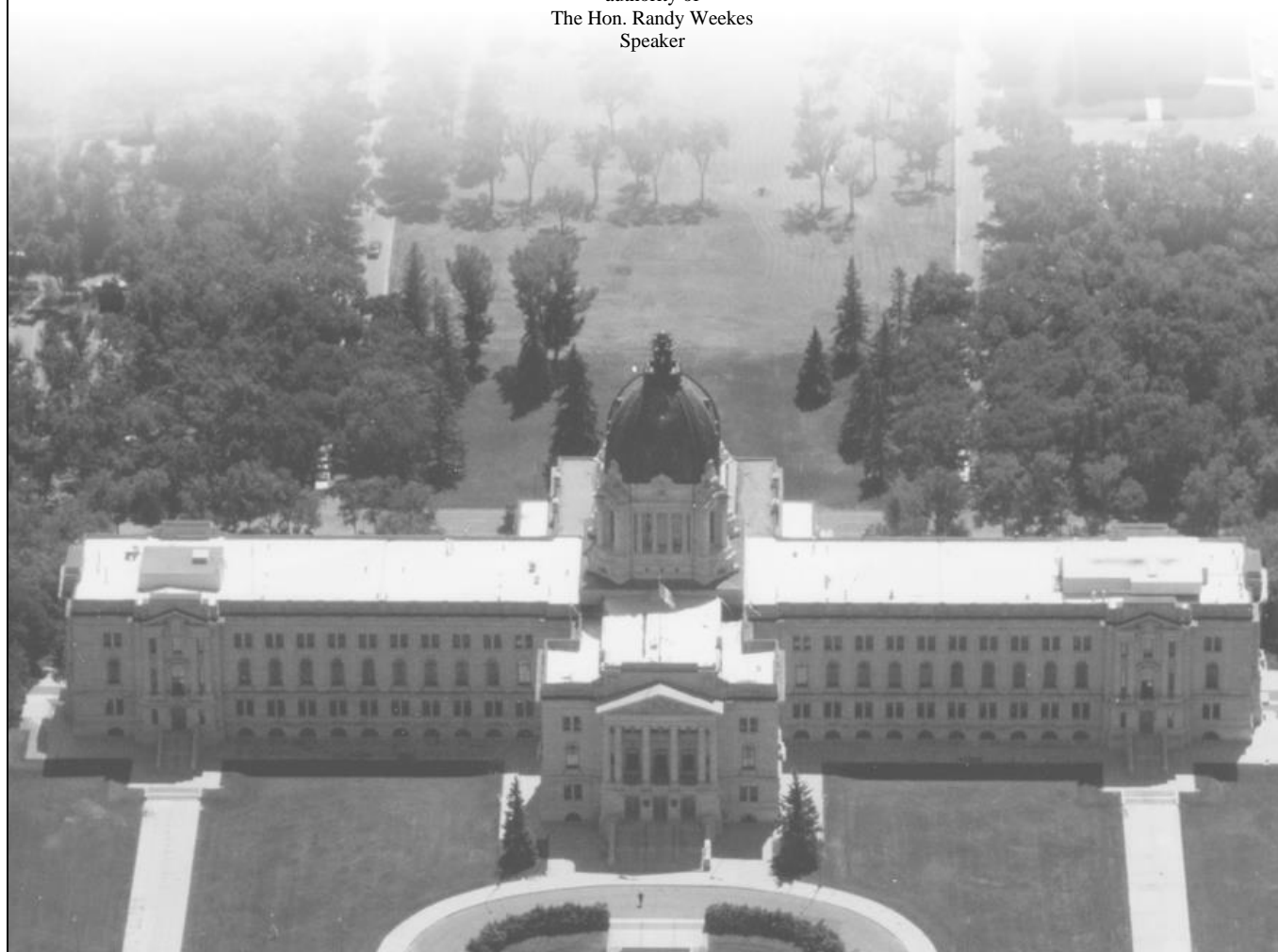
of the

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)
Bonk, Steven — Moosomin (SP)	Marit, Hon. David — Wood River (SP)
Bowes, Jennifer — Saskatoon University (NDP)	McLeod, Hon. Tim — Moose Jaw North (SP)
Bradshaw, Fred — Carrot River Valley (SP)	McMorris, Hon. Don — Indian Head-Milestone (SP)
Buckingham, David — Saskatoon Westview (SP)	Merriman, Hon. Paul — Saskatoon Silverspring-Sutherland (SP)
Carr, Hon. Lori — Estevan (SP)	Meyers, Derek — Regina Walsh Acres (SP)
Cheveldayoff, Ken — Saskatoon Willowgrove (SP)	Moe, Hon. Scott — Rosthern-Shellbrook (SP)
Cockrill, Hon. Jeremy — The Battlefords (SP)	Morgan, Hon. Don — Saskatoon Southeast (SP)
Conway, Meara — Regina Elphinstone-Centre (NDP)	Mowat, Vicki — Saskatoon Fairview (NDP)
Dennis, Terry — Canora-Pelly (SP)	Nerlien, Hugh — Kelvington-Wadena (SP)
Domotor, Ryan — Cut Knife-Turtleford (SP)	Nippi-Albright, Betty — Saskatoon Centre (NDP)
Duncan, Hon. Dustin — Weyburn-Big Muddy (SP)	Ottenbreit, Greg — Yorkton (SP)
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)
Goudy, Todd — Melfort (SP)	Sarauer, Nicole — Regina Douglas Park (NDP)
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

Clerks-at-the-Table

Clerk — Iris Lang
Law Clerk & Parliamentary Counsel — Kenneth S. Ring, K.C.
Deputy Clerk — Kathy Buriannyk
Principal Clerk — Robert Park

Sergeant-at-Arms — Lyall Frederiksen

Hansard on the internet
Hansard and other documents of the
Legislative Assembly are available
within hours after each sitting.

<https://www.legassembly.sk.ca/Calendar>

CONTENTS

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker	3437
-------------------	------

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Kaeding	3437
Love	3437
Duncan	3437
Mowat	3437
Hindley	3437
Beck	3437

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Kaeding	3437
Teed	3438
Conway	3438

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

SK Arts Launches We Celebrate You Campaign for 75th Anniversary Year

Teed	3438
------------	------

Carrot River Wildcats Win Big at Wrestling Championships

Bradshaw	3439
----------------	------

Ringside Wrestling Holds Ninth Anniversary Show

Sarauer	3439
---------------	------

Eight-Year-Old Dancer Defies Health Complications with Powwow Spirit

Ross, A.	3439
---------------	------

Possibilities Recovery Center Offers Healing from Substance Use

Friesen	3439
---------------	------

Holdfast Resident Displays Extraordinary Giving Spirit

Skoropad	3440
----------------	------

North Saskatoon Business Association's 26th Annual Business Builder Awards

Cheveldayoff	3440
--------------------	------

QUESTION PERIOD

Affordability and Cost of Living

Beck	3440
------------	------

Harpauer	3440
----------------	------

Primary Care Physicians in Saskatchewan

Beck	3441
------------	------

Merriman	3441
----------------	------

Mowat	3441
-------------	------

Harm Reduction Initiatives

Mowat	3442
-------------	------

Hindley	3442
---------------	------

Social Services and Affordability

Conway	3443
--------------	------

Makowsky	3443
----------------	------

Funding for Education

Love	3444
------------	------

Duncan	3444
--------------	------

Overdose Deaths in Saskatchewan

Mowat	3444
-------------	------

Hindley	3445
---------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 128 — *The Mineral Resources Amendment Act, 2023*

Reiter	3445
--------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

Ross, L.	3445
---------------	------

Teed	3448
------------	------

Nerlien	3452
---------------	------

Kaeding	3455
---------------	------

Keisig	3457
--------------	------

Eyre	3460
------------	------

Love	3463
------------	------

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — I would like to table a report from the Chief Electoral Officer pursuant to subsection 5.1(6) of *The Election Act, 1996*. The Chief Electoral Officer has submitted a report regarding actions taken during the constituency of Saskatoon Meewasin by-election.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Kaeding: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and all members of the Assembly I would like to welcome, seated in the west gallery, George and Esther Haas, well-known constituents of mine from Langenburg. George and Esther are good friends to many on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

George is in the city to receive his Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal tomorrow, recognizing his contributions to the province through volunteerism and civic politics. I'd like to ask all members to welcome George and Esther to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I'd like to extend a warm introduction to a number of individuals seated in your gallery. They're here today from Prairie Valley School Division. I'd like to welcome all of the elected members of their board as well as their leadership team here. On behalf of the official opposition and as critic for Education, I want to thank you for your work in standing up for and strengthening publicly funded and delivered education in our province.

I want to thank you for the work that you do to support your teachers, school staff, and most importantly your students in your division. We know how important adequately funded public education is in our province. So thank you for being here. I invite all members to join me in welcoming them to their Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to join with the member opposite in welcoming the members of the board and administration that are here this afternoon for question period from Prairie Valley School Division.

Mr. Speaker, members of the government caucus that are in Prairie Valley School Division, or represent those areas, had an opportunity to meet with the board members and administration this morning. We had a very, I think, a very good discussion this morning. And I would just like to ask all members to welcome

them to the Legislative Assembly.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, it brings me great pleasure to introduce a group of College of Medicine students who are joining us in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. They're here with Students for Harm Reduction and Informed Policy, speaking to the opposition today about our drug toxicity crisis in Saskatchewan and the work that needs to be done to prevent overdoses and provide real harm reduction strategies.

With this group today we have Noah Reaume, Kacie Kushniruk, Madison Macnab, Janan Ashique, Ryan Krochak, and policy consultant Alex Popoff. I want to welcome you to your Assembly today and ask all members to join me in welcoming them to the legislature.

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

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join the member opposite in welcoming the group that's here today. We've had the chance to meet before — I see Ryan and, well some other familiar faces — as we've had previous conversations and meetings on this very important topic for all of us in this Assembly. And as a matter of fact I believe we have a meeting set up for Tuesday of next week here in the legislature. So again just like to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I should have done this before, but at the risk of pointing out one individual, Mr. Speaker, while there is a group, I did want to recognize and ask members to welcome a former member of the Legislative Assembly, Judy Bradley, who was the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency — I think Weyburn-Bengough when she was first elected — Bengough-Milestone when she was first elected.

Anyways, Judy was my MLA a number of years ago. And so I just wanted to welcome Judy to the Legislative Assembly.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming Judy Bradley, former legislator, formerly my MLA at home, to her Legislative Assembly. I invite all members to do so as well. Thank you.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Kaeding: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to bring forward a petition that discusses the frustration that so many of our provincial residents have towards the federal Liberal-NDP [New

Democratic Party] coalition that continues to wade into provincial jurisdiction. And I'd like to read the petition.

We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring to your attention the following: that the Liberal-NDP 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.

And these concerned residents are from Carlyle and Wawota, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Teed: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present our petition calling on the Government of Saskatchewan to prohibit conversion therapy and join provinces and municipalities around the country. I will read some of what the undersigned residents wish to bring to your attention: conversion therapy use discredited and abusive practices which attempt to actively change sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression; 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 their sexual orientation or gender identity.

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 of Saskatchewan for such purposes.

Mr. Speaker, the undersigned residents reside in Duck Lake, Wynyard, and Dalmeny. I do so present.

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

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be on my feet to again present a petition calling on the Sask Party government to change a number of policies with respect to the SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] program, as well as increase rates. Mr. Speaker, the SAID program didn't see

an increase in nearly eight years. That represents over a 20 per cent decrease in real benefits going to folks that rely on SAID. We did see a meagre increase with this past budget, a dollar a day, and despite claims that that represents an average of 6 per cent increase, that's about a 2 to 3 per cent increase for folks on the SAID program after years of neglect. It simply doesn't cut it, Mr. Speaker.

But one of the things that this petition really touches on is the practice of clawing back pensions dollar for dollar, requiring people to apply for early pensions, making them eligible for less after they turn 65, then clawing that back dollar for dollar. This is a practice that's been ruled discriminatory in other provinces and we are pushing this government to follow suit and end that practice.

With that, I will read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan increase SAID rates to account for inflation; respect the constitutional rights of persons with disability in Saskatchewan by halting discriminatory practices and aligning policies with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms; index SAID basic amount to inflation going forward; and provide targeted relief to those in deepest poverty.

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

SK Arts Launches We Celebrate You Campaign for 75th Anniversary Year

Mr. Teed: — February 2023 marked the beginning of SK Arts 75th anniversary year. Established by Tommy Douglas's CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] government in 1948, the Saskatchewan Arts Board, now operating as SK Arts, is the oldest public arts funding institution in North America and second-oldest in the world, after the Arts Council of Great Britain.

To celebrate this milestone, SK Arts has launched the We Celebrate You campaign. SK Arts asked 75 established artists to nominate one strong emerging artist, program, or training opportunity that makes the future of Saskatchewan arts exciting.

I am proud to say that Saskatoon Meewasin is home to many amazing artists. We saw support from the arts board lead to the amazing exhibition by Meewasin artists Dawna Rose and Betsy Rosenwald entitled *Journal of the Plague Year*. And as official opposition critic for Parks, Culture and Sport, I've had the opportunity to meet with some amazing advocates in the arts community over the past several weeks, including SK Arts CEO [chief executive officer] Michael Jones, Em Ironstar of the Arts Alliance, and Wendy Nelson, executive director of CARFAC Saskatchewan [Canadian Artists' Representation/le front des artistes canadiens Saskatchewan Inc.]. Thank you so much for meeting with me.

Here's to many more years of supporting the arts in Saskatchewan. I would like to ask all members to join me in congratulating SK Arts on their 75th anniversary year.

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

Carrot River Wildcats Win Big at Wrestling Championships

Mr. Bradshaw: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Wildcats are at it again. The Carrot River Jr. Sr. High School girls' wrestling team completed their fifth season of competition at the Saskatchewan High Schools Athletic Association wrestling championships in Regina over the March 18th weekend.

This season saw Adrian Maynard and Abigail Prutton win silver medals at the regional championships, and Abigail winning the silver medal at the provincial championship. During their five seasons under the guidance of coach and teacher, Kevin Duchscherer, a total of 11 wrestlers have represented themselves, their school, and the community of Carrot River well, winning 11 individual regional medals — two gold, six silver, and three bronze; as well as three provincial medals — one gold, one silver, and one bronze. As a team, they have won three regional medals — one gold and two silver; and two provincial medals — one gold and one bronze.

The future is bright for the team as we expect all the members of this year's team to return as well as some new recruits signing up for next year, all of whom hope to have a banner with their name on it hang in the new school gym, representing their legacy of being fierce and proud Wildcats. Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join with me in congratulating the members of the Carrot River Wildcats wrestling team. Thank you.

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

Ringside Wrestling Holds Ninth Anniversary Show

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize Regina's lone wrestling promotion organization, Ringside Wrestling. This past March 10th Ringside Wrestling held their ninth anniversary show at the Eastview Community Centre. Ringside Wrestling hosts monthly shows the first Friday of each month at the Eastview Community Centre in Regina Douglas Park. Ringside Wrestling offers Regina the opportunity to enjoy affordable family fun while getting the chance to see local, homegrown wrestling superstars face off against notable wrestlers from around the globe.

So far this year, Ringside has held three events: the New Years Showdown; Aggression 2023 which was a sold-out event; and as mentioned, their celebratory ninth anniversary show. For a small promotion like Ringside Wrestling to survive and excel after nine years demonstrates the ability of the wrestlers, the passion of their fans, and the support of the community. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members in joining me to recognize Ringside Wrestling and to congratulate the wrestlers, volunteers, and fans who make this monthly community event possible.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert

Northcote.

[13:45]

Eight-Year-Old Dancer Defies Health Complications with Powwow Spirit

Ms. A. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Keaton Constant is from Wahpeton Dakota Nation near Prince Albert. His heart did not fully develop and his lower body didn't grow. Yet despite these health complications, this eight-year-old has inspired those around him and is a shining example of strength and resilience.

Mr. Speaker, Keaton's family participated in the Indigenous ceremonies at powwows between his hospital visits and medical appointments. Those celebrations ignited a powwow spirit in Keaton. With his deepened passion, Keaton practised the drums at home and used toys to make his powwow circle. He learned to dance with a Jolly Jumper until his wheelchair got decorated with his regalia.

Kirby Constant, Keaton's father, posted videos of his singing and dancing online that gained popularity and eventually caught the attention of Northern Cree, a well-known Indigenous drumming group. Mr. Speaker, Northern Cree has asked Keaton to sing with them at Peepeekisis powwow this summer. Keaton plans to be at that powwow with his family. They will travel there in a Make-A-Wish Foundation camper he received last summer.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking Keaton's family for their unwavering support and dedication to him and congratulate him for his strength and courage and for not letting limitations dictate what he can achieve.

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

Possibilities Recovery Center Offers Healing from Substance Use

Mr. Friesen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fall Eric Olason invited me and a few of my colleagues for a tour and briefing of Possibilities Recovery Center. On Saturday I attended a fundraiser for them and I was able to speak briefly on how the role they play is so important in our province.

Possibilities Recovery Center offers pre-treatment, treatment, youth out-patient, aftercare, and recovery programming to help individuals get the treatment they need. The duration of the program, 120 days, is developed around the chemistry of the brain as it heals from substance use. One reason for relapse after 28-day in-patient treatment is the chemistry of the human brain. Around day 45 in healing from substance use is when the brain produces the least amount of dopamine and endorphins and one feels at their lowest. Recognizing this and having supports in place in the most vulnerable time while you move towards chemical balance is how and why an intensive out-patient treatment program is so successful.

Youth intensive out-patient program is free and open to adolescents 14 to 20, thanks to the many private sponsors in the community. Martensville Youth Connection is a mobile support system that helps provide barrier-free support to youth outside of

Saskatoon.

I would ask all members to join me in thanking this organization, their staff, and volunteers for all their hard work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Holdfast Resident Displays Extraordinary Giving Spirit

Hon. Mr. Skoropad: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, acts of kindness, acts of generosity, acts of compassion blanket this province daily. Most of these actions, as with most of the people who perform them, often go unnoticed. Laverne Deibert from the Holdfast area in my constituency is one of these very giving souls. On Laverne's shelves you probably won't find any trophies, and on his walls probably not going to find any plaques. However his relentless, giving spirit is certainly that of a champion. This quiet, gentle man is a humble pillar in his community.

When a senior is in need of a ride, Laverne is there. When a senior is shut in, Laverne checks on them. When the local church needs repairs, Laverne gets to work. And when a neighbour's crop lays in the field late in the fall-time, Laverne moves in to help close out the harvest. These examples only chip away but some of the edges of Mr. Deibert's deep character, Mr. Speaker.

In the words of Leo Rosten, the purpose of life is to matter, to count, to stand for something, to have it make some difference that we lived at all. Mr. Speaker, I would argue that Mr. Deibert has met that great challenge.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to help me recognize Laverne Deibert, a man who symbolizes so many people in our communities, for making an extraordinary difference in his community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

North Saskatoon Business Association's 26th Annual Business Builder Awards

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday I had the privilege of joining the Minister of Advanced Education and the member for Saskatoon Meewasin at the North Saskatoon business awards. And I'm happy to say that Saskatoon's business community is thriving. This year marked the 50th anniversary of the North Saskatoon Business Association and the 26th annual NSBA [North Saskatoon Business Association] Business Builder Award ceremony. The NSBA was started by people like Harold Latrace, Ken Sawatsky, and Shirley Ryan.

Mr. Speaker, as we saw the 2022 labour force statistics, Saskatoon and the province are growing at a faster rate than ever before. We have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the nation and a high labour participation rate. And that's because of the high-quality businesses we have right here at home.

I ask that all members of the Assembly join with me in thanking Keith Moen and his team, as well as the evening sponsors, for helping this event take place. And I thank all the members of our

business community for continuing to believe in Saskatoon, providing good jobs, and for all their efforts to build our city.

Congratulations to the 2023 award winners, winners like Saskatchewan Behaviour Consulting, The Prairie Grazer, Sandy Shores Resort & Marina, The Saskatoon Club, and many more. You've all made our city and our province a better place, and for that we thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Affordability and Cost of Living

Ms. Beck: — This tired and out-of-touch government is failing to deliver when it comes to the cost of living. More than half of the people in this province feel worse off than a year ago, but this budget offers not one thin dime of relief to families struggling to make ends meet.

What does the Premier have to say to Saskatchewan people today who can't make the rent? And why didn't this budget offer any relief at all to families struggling to get by?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I encourage the member opposite as well as the listening public to turn to page 70 and 71 of the budget document, and it will display a cost comparison when you take utilities, taxes, and housing costs into consideration. And they will see that Saskatchewan is the most affordable province in the country right now. That is not denying that there are pressures. There are pressures when in inflationary times, Mr. Speaker.

But what's in this budget, Mr. Speaker? The member opposite asked, what's in the budget? Well for seniors, Mr. Speaker, there's an increase to the seniors' income plan. We have a seniors' drug plan. We have subsidized ambulance care for seniors, which was increased last year. There is home care subsidization, which was also increased last year for seniors. And we increased the personal care home benefit.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to need more time, so I hope there's another question. But for families, the personal income tax deductions increased because we index that. We have the lowest personal income tax for families in the nation. We have the active families benefit, Mr. Speaker, which is something that we introduced as a government. And I'm looking forward to the next question so I continue the list.

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

Ms. Beck: — I guess those families, Mr. Speaker, have it wrong when they say they're feeling worse off than they did a year ago.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this government has zero credibility when it comes to the cost of living. The Sask Party government has never cut the PST [provincial sales tax]. They've only ever increased it, and that means that families today pay \$1,000 more every year.

Mr. Speaker, that is their record whether they like it or not. Will

the Premier accept any responsibility for the cost-of-living crisis his government is making worse, and when will they finally offer families some relief?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, again for a family of four we have the most affordable province in the nation of Canada, and I'm just going to go back to my list.

For families, Mr. Speaker, we have the lowest personal income tax. We have the active families benefit, which was introduced by our government. We have the first-time homebuyers tax credit. We have the children's drug plan, again introduced by our government. And as of April 1st, we'll have \$10-a-day daycare for children under the age of six.

For students, we have the graduate retention program, a program that was introduced by our government. We have the Sask Advantage Scholarship, again something introduced by our government. It's in this budget.

For those most vulnerable, Mr. Speaker, we've almost tripled the low-income tax credit. We have the Sask housing benefit. We have the disability tax credit — I believe doubled under our government — caregiver tax credit, and we've added to the Sask Aids to Independent Living. That's on top of the affordability tax credit that we had in the fall, which is \$500 to each and every person in our province that filed for income tax.

Mr. Speaker, there are many things in this budget to help with affordability. Over \$2 billion is in this budget to help with affordability, and that's why Saskatchewan is the most affordable for a family of four in the country.

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

Primary Care Physicians in Saskatchewan

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, I think the people of this province are a little more in touch with their finances than that Finance minister. This is a government failing to deliver on the cost of living, and they're failing to deliver when it comes to health care. And nowhere is that more clear than when it comes to the family doctor shortage in this province.

This is what the president of the Saskatchewan Medical Association has to say talking about the 200,000 people in this province who are currently without a family doctor. Mr. Speaker, I quote: "With every day that passes and as we continue to fall behind, Saskatchewan becomes a less desirable place to practise family medicine." All while that minister says that everything is just fine.

Who would the Premier have us believe — the doctors or that Health minister?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First off I want to say to the SMA [Saskatchewan Medical Association] and Dr. Gjevre, thank you for being so available to be able to talk to me. We just had a conversation on Thursday while I was driving

home. I talked to Dr. Gjevre for half an hour about what was going on in the budget and some of the things that we need to work on, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Gjevre and I and the SMA have a good working relationship, Mr. Speaker, and I've continued that relationship with the family physicians who I met with for over an hour on Friday to be able to discuss some of the budget. I'm pleased to report to the House that we do have almost 170 more physicians practising in our province in the last 18 months, Mr. Speaker. We also have 61 physicians that we've been able to recruit. Despite the opposition running down our health care system, we've been able to recruit those 61 physicians in the last six months. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Speaking of six months, Mr. Speaker, they've had six months to have these conversations with the SMA. They need action today. Mr. Speaker, this budget presents nothing new to fix the crisis in family medicine that is leaving 200,000 Saskatchewan people without access to a doctor. There's nothing to fix the outdated fee-for-service model, nothing on team-based care, and nothing that shows that this tired and out-of-touch government is taking the problems in family medicine seriously.

When will the minister do something, anything, to address the shortage of family docs in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And a direct response to the opposition question: just a couple of weeks ago, \$200,000 to recruit rural and remote doctors in our province. That's quadrupling it, Mr. Speaker. Again they say that's nothing.

I did talk to this about . . . with the family physicians, Mr. Speaker. I did talk about this with Dr. Gjevre. We have some work to do, Mr. Speaker, and we're working with the primary care compensation working group to be able to set out parameters on the fee-for-service and salary and see if there are other options.

Mr. Speaker, we're seeing what some other provinces are doing. We're looking to see how we can adapt that into Saskatchewan, if it works in Saskatchewan. But, Mr. Speaker, I'll let my officials and the SMA work that out. Certainly won't take any suggestions from the member opposite.

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

Ms. Mowat: — We need this to happen quickly, Mr. Speaker. We don't need another committee to look at this. We need action today.

Mr. Speaker, we're joined here today by medical students who are advocating for harm reduction, but we also want to make sure they can practise here in Saskatchewan after they graduate.

What does that future look like under this government? Here's

the president of the SMA:

Our concern is that we're falling behind relative to other provinces. A lot of them are retiring or moving to other provinces because of the high costs associated with running a practice.

They don't want to hear it from me; they can listen to the SMA, Mr. Speaker.

What is the plan to make sure that medical students can set up shop and provide good patient care to Saskatchewan people?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As usual they're getting mixed messages from the opposition. One says we should consult with doctors. Now they're saying implement it without consulting with the doctors; we should just ram right ahead without the SMA's endorsement of this. Mr. Speaker, they need to pick a lane on this. The lane that we have picked is we're going to sit down with the doctors and be able to consult on this. We've been able to do this in the past, Mr. Speaker, and we'll continue to do it in the future.

Mr. Speaker, though, I think the opposition needs to stand up and recognize that this government, working with the SMA, has brought in 170 physicians into this province, 98 nurses that we just hired in this. Mr. Speaker, those are facts that they just completely ignore time and time again. They need to stand up and recognize the hard work that the SMA and the human resource agency is doing to be able to recruit physicians into this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[14:00]

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

Harm Reduction Initiatives

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, they don't talk about the number of doctors that are leaving in our province. They don't talk about burnout. They don't talk about the fact that there are real issues here that need to be resolved that people know the answers to, Mr. Speaker.

This tired and out-of-touch government isn't listening to nurses when it comes to the crisis in our ERs [emergency room], and they're not listening to the evidence when it comes to harm reduction and safe consumption sites. Safe consumption sites save lives and they save money for the government in the long run with reduced ER costs, but this government has refused to listen for years and refused to provide support last week in the spring budget.

With all the evidence in front of him, why didn't the minister fund safe consumption sites in last week's budget?

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

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the budget

that will start here in a few days, that was delivered last week by the Minister of Finance, there is record funding for the area of mental health and addictions: \$518 million in the new budget, Mr. Speaker, with a specific increase of \$12.4 million in new funding for a number of initiatives in this very important area.

Mr. Speaker, this government is focused on treatment and prevention as well as long-term recovery for those that are struggling with addictions. It's why in the budget, the year that is about to wrap up, that we have dollars committed toward the expansion of more treatment and recovery beds and spaces here in this province, the first of which, 14 post-treatment beds, were announced in Estevan a couple of weeks ago.

And, Mr. Speaker, that coupled with a number of other harm reduction initiatives that we are doing across this province, tied specifically towards treatment and recovery, is something that we'll continue to focus on to provide that much-needed care for people in this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Mowat: — It's really disappointing to hear no answer from that minister. Let the record show that he did not answer that question.

Mr. Speaker, the medical students who are here today know the evidence, and they're calling on the government to listen to the evidence. They're here specifically to call on the minister to fund intranasal naloxone and to make it available throughout the community. It delivers more naloxone, it lasts longer, and it's easier to administer. It would be a major step forward in reducing overdoses in our province.

If the minister won't fund safe consumption sites, will he at least fund intranasal naloxone and make this life-saving medicine available across the province?

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

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government is currently embarking on a pilot project with intranasal naloxone, which we are monitoring very carefully in terms of its efficacy.

I've had the opportunity to meet with a number of organizations on this very issue, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to naloxone, since this program started, the take-home naloxone program started in this province a number of years ago, we've had over 44,000 kits that have been distributed, 12,000 in the year 2022-23. Thirty-one thousand people have completed training, and a number of those continue to happen across this province.

The budget of the year that's currently wrapping up has \$200,000 in it to expand the take-home naloxone program into more pharmacies, into more communities, to make it more readily available, Mr. Speaker, along with other initiatives such as take-home drug-checking strips which has now been implemented here in this province alongside mass spectrometer drug-checking machines. The government has purchased four of those, two of which is my understanding are now operating in Saskatoon and

Regina, Mr. Speaker.

Social Services and Affordability

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

Ms. Conway: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Social Services. During a cost-of-living crisis, how can it be that an extra dollar a day is all this government could muster to support vulnerable people?

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

Hon. Mr. Makowsky: — Mr. Speaker, just a couple days ago, the Minister of Finance tabled a budget that saw the Ministry of Social Services' budget increase by \$46 million, \$26 million on income assistance alone, Mr. Speaker. That is \$1.43 billion, Mr. Speaker, 620 million in income assistance supports all together.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the benefits monthly paid, we take a whole of income approach. We have some of the highest rates in all of Canada. A third party has looked into that and said that, Mr. Speaker.

There are many things that are not necessarily coming from the provincial government as well. There's federal credits as well. There's areas from Finance, including the low-income tax credit, Mr. Speaker. We've been able to increase the rates by 53 per cent since this government brought the disability income assistance, where there was nothing before that under the former government — 53 per cent increase not including utilities, which I'll get to in the next answer, Mr. Speaker. But this government was able to do that.

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

Ms. Conway: — Mr. Speaker, the minister says that the global Ministry of Social Services' budget has increased. You know what else has increased? Grocery bills, utilities, rent. How can it be that a dollar a day in income support is going to make a meaningful difference for people, Mr. Speaker? It's not. It's not going to put a roof over the head of folks that are living rough. It's not going to put breakfast on the table before school. A dollar a day is more than eaten up by this Sask Party government's utility increases.

How can the minister pat himself on the back for this completely inadequate response to the cost-of-living crisis?

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

Hon. Mr. Makowsky: — Mr. Speaker, again in terms of the SAID program, we're the ones that brought it in. We've brought forward 53 per cent increases, just on the living benefits side. But the member opposite doesn't talk about the other side and where this program pays the actuals on behalf of those clients that are on that program, Mr. Speaker. And that's a significant amount. That's actual pay for utilities, which is going up on April the 1st because the carbon tax is going up on April the 1st which is supported by the members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, the taxpayers will be there for those folks on that program, including transportation as well as some medical benefits, etc. So we've . . . [inaudible] . . . far more on the actuals. That member opposite tends to ignore that fact. We were able to increase all of our income assistance as well as the personal care home benefit. That was up 20 per cent. The seniors' income plan, up 9 per cent. And our two income assistance areas are up 6 per cent, Mr. Speaker, right around the rate of inflation or higher.

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

Ms. Conway: — Mr. Speaker, the minister just blamed the carbon tax for the fact that homelessness is on the rise. The fact that people can't eat. The fact that people can't heat, Mr. Speaker.

Here's what Marina Pelletier, who relies on SAID, told CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] last week: "You might as well have slapped us all across the face and said, 'you're getting nothing.'" A slap in the face for those on supports, while this minister gives himself a pat on the back. It's shameful, Mr. Speaker.

How can this tired and out-of-touch government justify sitting on windfall revenues, windfall revenues, Mr. Speaker, while offering the most vulnerable a slap in the face with a dollar a day?

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

Hon. Mr. Makowsky: — Mr. Speaker, again, \$300 million on the SAID income program alone. Over \$600 million on income assistance supports, not to mention other areas that we support the most vulnerable on homelessness, our response to homelessness. The CLSD [community living service delivery] is 310 million, up \$15 million, Mr. Speaker.

I don't characterize it as patting myself on the back, Mr. Speaker. I'm laying out the facts. I'm trying to refute the things that the member opposite is saying. I understand challenges out there, Mr. Speaker, but we've been able — because of the strong, growing economy — been able to increase rates over the last few years. For example, on the SIS [Saskatchewan income support] program, we've increased rates by \$145 over the last two budgets, Mr. Speaker. As well as the affordability tax credit, \$500 that was exempted by the ministry for those most . . . [inaudible] . . . Mr. Speaker. The NDP came up with \$105 per person.

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

Ms. Conway: — Mr. Speaker, this is a tired and out-of-touch government that can't even rely on its own record.

Setting aside the shameful human cost, setting that aside, Mr. Speaker, the economic cost to our province and our communities will now only continue to grow. This will only result in more homelessness, more evictions, and more costs for municipalities. That's been this government's MO [modus operandi] for years, Mr. Speaker: download the costs to community-based organizations, to schools, to municipalities, when they should be taking responsibility, when they should be coming to the table as a true partner.

What does the Minister of Social Services have to say to the municipal leaders who will be forced to pick up the pieces yet again because of folks falling through the cracks?

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

Hon. Mr. Makowsky: — Mr. Speaker, we're happy to partner with the municipalities. We're happy to partner with the CBO [community-based organization] sector, and we do that all the time. We do that every day. We want to do more of that, and in this budget we are doing more of that. I hope the members opposite will come on board with that, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of homelessness and those hard to house, Mr. Speaker, it's certainly a complex issue that we're dealing with currently: \$1.7 million for shelter supports within the budget year, Mr. Speaker. So that results in nearly 500 emergency shelter sites; when we took government, it was 224. Many of those are block-funded, Mr. Speaker.

Indigenous-led wellness centres in Regina and Saskatoon and those are working as we speak. In terms of social services income support programs, which we've already talked about. We've worked with Phoenix Residential, Mr. Speaker. We've got sawêihtôtân in Saskatoon. Again, Mr. Speaker, cold weather strategies. We're going to continue to work with our partners.

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

Funding for Education

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, last week the government announced a 2.5 per cent increase to operating funding for schools in this province. The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and the Saskatchewan School Boards Association both say that this fails to keep up with inflation.

It's clear that cuts are going to happen in our classrooms again, but this tired and out-of-touch minister seems to think that everything's fine. If that's true, can he guarantee that no educational assistants and no full-time teachers will lose their jobs because of his failure to adequately invest in education in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member is correct that while it's a 2.5 per cent increase overall for school divisions, that's going to range based on their enrolment growth, Mr. Speaker. I believe one school division is slated for about a 5.3 per cent increase, and one is slated to see a reduction, Mr. Speaker, because of the fact that we are moving forward with a centralized online learning. And so Sun West School Division, obviously those expenditures will be moving over to the new treasury board Crown corporation, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is a 6.7 per cent overall lift to the education budget, nearly \$200 million this year. What we've tried to do in the operating grant for school divisions, Mr. Speaker, is to provide additional enrolment growth dollars as well as funding their CPP [Canada Pension Plan] and EI [employment insurance] enhancements that have been announced by the federal

government, Mr. Speaker, as well as non-salary inflation.

Mr. Speaker, what we've said is that last year we know that the school divisions' projections were 2,800 less than what actually showed up, Mr. Speaker, and we'll look to see what their actual enrolments are later this fall.

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

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, a billion-dollar surplus but the Minister of Education can't even guarantee that there won't be cuts to jobs. And not just any jobs — jobs of people that serve our kids, Mr. Speaker. Teachers and students deserve so much better. In 2012-2013 we were first in Canada in per-student funding. Now we're not even in the top five.

Now the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation] says, and I quote, they are "baffled by the government's disregard for our students." Mr. Speaker, when resources are cut — and they will be cut — students and their families will suffer. Can the minister explain how that's growth that works for our kids?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have to say I'm a little bit baffled by the STF, Mr. Speaker, and what they had to say. Because two years ago when it was a 1 per cent operating lift for school divisions, the STF president at the time said, "It's a good news budget for education." Last year we increased it by 1.5 per cent. That turned into a sad day, Mr. Speaker. And a 2.5 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker, turned into being baffled.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know they were looking for a \$400 million increase — I think they were the only ones in the province that were looking for that — even though after that they then lowered what they were looking for in the provincial budget.

Mr. Speaker, well the member says, check the record. I will check the record. This is what the record says: since 2013 we have 325 more teachers than we did, a 3.6 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker. This is the highest operating grant provided to school divisions in eight years, Mr. Speaker. And as Stats Canada says, we have the highest primary and secondary funding for education of all the provinces, 24 per cent higher than any other province in Canada.

[14:15]

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

Overdose Deaths in Saskatchewan

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, over the weekend CBC published a news story profiling 24 of the more than 1,200 people who have lost their lives to overdoses since 2020 . . . Not something I'd be heckling about, Mr. Speaker. It was gutting. They come from every background, from all walks of life, and from all over our province.

The status quo isn't working, and although there is no one-size

solution for this problem, the people of Saskatchewan need a government who can provide the evidence-based services that people need to survive. We need to keep people alive long enough to get treatment.

What does the Minister for Mental Health and Addictions have to say to families who have lost loved ones to overdose? And when will we finally see a plan to get this crisis under control?

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

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I too saw the article in the CBC on the weekend and have in fact met with some of those families and others across this province, Mr. Speaker, and to them I extend my sincerest condolences on the loss of loved ones that has impacted communities right across Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, one of the areas that we are investing more dollars into in the new budget will be to the Saskatchewan drug task force which has a number of leaders in it from various ministries, also chiefs of police, the chief of the Saskatoon Tribal Council, those with lived and living experience. And it's one of the areas where we have funded and are starting to fund through a pilot base this year, overdose outreach teams to try to reach people where they're at in their communities, meeting them where they need those supports, Mr. Speaker.

We're halfway through that pilot project here in Regina and in Saskatoon as well. And I would expect, Mr. Speaker, as we continue to watch what happens with that and make expansion when we can when it comes to this area of very important coverage for health care in our province, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 128 — *The Mineral Resources Amendment Act, 2023*

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

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 128, *The Mineral Resources Amendment Act, 2023* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that Bill No. 128 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time? I recognize the minister.

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

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

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

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to begin by acknowledging that the land where I'm speaking to you from is Treaty 4 territory, the ancestral and traditional territory of the Cree, the Saulteaux, Dakota, Nakota, Lakota, and the home of the Métis. And we acknowledge the land in an act of reconciliation to those whose territory we are on.

Before I begin the discussion on the budget, I have some thank yous that I'd like to extend. I'd like to extend a thank you to all my colleagues. On this side of the House we have an opportunity to represent the whole province both rural, urban, up in the North. We have an opportunity to hear from people across the whole province, and they have shared with us that they believe that this budget is growth that works for everyone.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had the opportunity previously to sit on treasury board, so I know the kind of work that goes into presenting a budget. And at some point, and I don't think in too near a future, some of the members opposite may have that opportunity, and they will realize the kind of work that my colleagues have committed to putting together this incredible budget. And I have to thank our Deputy Premier and our Finance minister who has shown such dedication to our province to bring forward a budget that really does answer the needs of so many people in this province.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to thank my family. I'd like to thank my husband, Terry. Now Terry is going through a little bit of a tough time. He finally had his surgery after two and a half years of waiting, but he had double knee replacement surgery on Tuesday. And I picked him up and brought him home yesterday, so I've been playing Nurse Ratched for a bit here. But you know, Terry was such a wonderful support when I had my cancer issues a few years ago, and so it is my duty but also my love of this man that I can give him this support.

I'd also like to acknowledge my constituency assistant, Kelly Zazula. Now Kelly has been with me since 2008 and she's been through strikes and she's been through lots. And you know, I just have to appreciate the firm and steady hand but also the compassion she shows for my constituents, because when they phone, Kelly is on their side. So I really appreciate the hard work that Kelly Zazula does for the people and the constituents of Regina Rochdale.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd also like to thank the office staff

here in the building: my chief of staff, Molly; we've got Sherry, Christian, and Halle. We've got a really good team of people that really, we all just kind of pull together to ensure that the needs that come into the minister's office are looked after.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank the staff within the Ministry of Parks, Culture, Sport, Status of Women, and the francophonie community. They work hard. And we had so many meetings where we had the opportunity to talk about the budget that was coming forward and how we could put together a budget that would really benefit the most people within this province.

And because it's such an interesting ministry — we've got parks; we've got culture; we've got sports; we've got the Status of Women and the francophonie community — so you know, we have lots of different options and people that we have an opportunity to meet with, that they get to share their issues and their concerns with us.

Now you know, our Premier talks about — what is it? — food, fuel, and fertilizer. But I have to tell you, I think there's another one and it's called fun. And I think this ministry really does have the opportunity to put the fun into Saskatchewan and that we, within our parks, within our cultural community, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we absolutely go to the wall to ensure that Saskatchewan is the province where people want to come, live, work, and enjoy what we have.

You know, our parks have the . . . Attendance of our provincial parks has gone up so much since COVID. You know, last year as of September the 11th, 2022, we had over 900,000 entry permits. Yeah, and so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that really indicates the kind of attendance in our parks and the kind of people from across the province — but not just the province, across the country and outside of Canada — that get to come and enjoy what we have to offer.

And we've had the opportunity this year to invest an additional 14 million for capital projects. Because you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we realize that maintaining our parks is so important because it is the experience, and that's how we showcase our province. So you know, we really work hard to ensure that the experience is something that is memorable. Because we all know that as we leave a place, it's the memories that we take with us. And they get to say, oh gosh, I've got to tell more people about Saskatchewan because it really is the place that you want to spend some time.

You know, and we've ensured that our parks are becoming accessible for everyone because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we want to make sure that when someone with physical disabilities comes to our parks that they can enjoy it. We never want to see someone sitting there or standing there saying, I would love to be able to, say, experience that pool or that campsite, and there's no room for me. Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we believe that there's room for everyone in our parks and in our province.

So I was so pleased to be able to ensure that we had an increase to the maintenance within our parks so that we keep up the high standards that people expect to see when they come to visit Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that it's the cultural fabric

that makes the province special. Yes, there's jobs and we've got a really good, strong economy but it's also the quality of life. What do people get to experience? Where, you know . . . and so we do ensure that our arts and culture and our heritage is being supported, and this 2023-24 budget, our government is committed nearly 30 million in funding to arts, culture, and heritage organizations across the province.

And I've had the opportunity to hear from many that said thank you, thank you so much for thinking of us and supporting us. Because we know that they've had some tough times, there's no doubt about it. But the province, everything's going up. The attendance at events is going up. The enjoyment that people are experiencing here in Saskatchewan . . .

You know, when we increased the funding by 2.5 to third-party organizations, those organizations are so appreciative. We've got SK Arts, Western Development Museum, the Royal Saskatchewan Museum, Wanuskewin, Saskatchewan Science Centre, Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation, Meewasin urban park, and Saskatchewan Regional Parks.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are paying attention. Because the best part about it is that because we've got MLAs that represent the whole province, we get to hear their concerns. They bring their issues to us, and we are able to work with them so that any concerns they may have within their specific constituency and riding, it gets addressed.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Creative Saskatchewan. Now this is an organization that we can all be so proud of. The film and television industry is really creating an economic boost across Saskatchewan. We just had an announcement of *Guardians of the North*, and that was an absolutely incredible film, television production that was undertaken in the North. And the filmmakers embedded within the firefighters. And so, as the filmmaker said to me, as others are running out, they're running in.

So it was pretty exciting, and I know the launch was well received. And I talked to Chris Triffo, who is the filmmaker, and just said, the number of hits they're getting is just incredible because the footage is just . . . Well again, it showcases the kind of commitment that our Saskatchewan firefighters are doing. So I mean this is, like I said, an exciting time.

And I had an opportunity to talk to Erin Dean, the CEO of Creative Saskatchewan. And I'm going to share with you a quote of what Erin said:

We're very pleased with the government's decision to extend the reach of our Feature Film and Television Production Grant program.

Productions are a multi-faceted endeavour, built around labour with the potential to create many new jobs, and have far-reaching impacts on local hospitality, travel, and tourism sectors. This is estimated to result in a total of \$55.8 million in positive economic outputs, and over 250 jobs.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is growth that works for everyone.

And I'd like to also share a quote from Mike McNaughton, SMPA [Saskatchewan Media Production Industry Association]

president:

Creative Saskatchewan Feature Film and Television Production Grant is one of the most competitive in the country. And this is a catalyst which gives our producers the support they need to attract new private and federal money while expanding their screen-based business ventures.

[14:30]

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that our television and film industry is alive and thriving very well and growing in this province. And one of the exciting — I think I've had an opportunity to talk about it before, but again it's worth mentioning — is that we have within our soundstage a new LED [light-emitting diode] wall. And I was there this week, saw all the boxes, all the shipment. We waited. Yeah, it was like waiting for the birth of a child, you know. You're kind of all . . . everybody lines up, gets ready, and it showed up.

So they have started mapping it out and creating what is going to be the state-of-the-art LED volume wall. And you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this again puts Saskatchewan on the map. And I'm so excited because we know the opportunities that this will bring to the industry. And in fact, like I said, I got a call last week. It's coming together. So it's pretty exciting.

But you know, right now we have a really interesting production taking place in Maple Creek. And the member from the area, I don't know. Did you get a walk-on part? Yeah, he did. Yeah, there you go. So now he thinks he's a star. Well he is a star in our eyes. Okay, I've got some other people saying, what about me? There'll be time.

To quote the mayor of Maple Creek:

I want to welcome *A Cowboy Christmas* to the community of Maple Creek and thank them for choosing the friendliest town in Saskatchewan . . . The Production showcases the community of Maple Creek, where we get the impossible done with a smile on our faces and a song in our hearts. We welcome any and all upcoming opportunities to share the warmth and wonder of our . . . [community].

So we want to congratulate that community for . . . You know what? They ended up . . . It's not Christmas now, but because the movie is set as a cowboy Christmas, the town just all rallied together and redecorated and put up a market. It just, well it's a fantasyland, and it really is exciting. And like I think that this is the sort of thing that makes Saskatchewan special, you know, because everyone there was excited. They wanted to participate.

And so you know, this brings me to the next item in the budget, which was the Community Initiatives Fund. And this was 6.4 million to the Community Initiatives Fund, which uses casino revenue to provide grants to community-based programs. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a 35 per cent increase over last year. And I'll give you some examples of the funds and the programs: community wellness development programs throughout the province, school nutrition and after-school programs, adult literacy programs, support and settlement for newcomers. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are paying attention to the needs of every Saskatchewan resident because we really believe that

everyone in Saskatchewan deserves the best they can.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have the opportunity to also be responsible for the Status of Women. I'm passionate about this aspect within the ministry, and I'm so proud of the work that the office is doing. You know, we've had this year a 30 per cent increase to our budget, and that's pretty incredible. And we've had some really exciting projects that we've undertaken with partners.

So the Status of Women was the major sponsor of Women Breaking Barriers Conference, and that last month was held at the Saskatchewan Science Centre. And this Women Breaking Barriers wasn't just shown and discussed in Regina, but in fact we had the opportunity to do it live from the Science Centre and then pushed it out to communities across the province.

And then when I happened to be having an opportunity to speak to the minister responsible for the status of women from Newfoundland, herself and her deputy tuned in and said, next year we're joining in. It was probably one of the best conferences they had ever attended.

And it really again had the opportunity to talk to local women who have become very successful in their own right. And they talked about who was their mentors, who helped them along the way, and how they got to be as successful. And each one of them, the women talked about their moms and how important their moms were to their development. And I know myself, I grew up on a mixed farm out by Yorkton. And I grew up with a really strong mom — very German dad but a really strong mom. There was never any boy jobs, girl jobs. There were just jobs and chores and just get to it. And you know, I grew up with that kind of philosophy.

And you know what was really interesting? Each and every one of those women that presented at this conference talked about how they felt that they earned their place where they are today, but they didn't do it by themselves. They had mentors. They had champions, both men and women.

So you know, it was an absolutely incredible conference where hundreds of participants across the province . . . and I'll name some of these locations, the satellite locations: Pinehouse Lake, Prince Albert, Lloydminster, Humboldt, North Battleford. And so it was, like I said, a really exciting opportunity.

The Science Centre also had previously in February teamed up with the Status of Women to do the Girls in STEAM [science, technology, engineering, art, and math]. We used to call it STEM [science, technology, engineering, and math]; now we're calling it STEAM. And so that was again an opportunity where they did it live but then they pushed it across the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, over 2,000 girls across this province attended that Girls in STEAM Conference. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Status of Women are making a difference in this province, and I want to commend them for the work they do. And I also want to thank Sandy and Tenielle at the Science Centre for partnering with Status of Women to making this all come together.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had the opportunity, along with my chief of staff and the members from the Status of Women, to

present in New York at the United Nations. And I've got to say, this was a "pinch me" moment. You know, who would think that a farm girl from Saskatchewan would ever get to go and present at the United Nations — and I did. It's memorable.

And we talked, and our presentation was on the work we're doing with both Justice and Public Safety, the ministries, on Face the Issue. And this is an information campaign that we've had — not one but two campaigns — that we've pushed out information on interpersonal violence. And again we're proud to say that Face the Issue is both translated to Dene, Cree, and French.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we really are paying attention to the needs and making sure that we can reach out to as many people as possible, because this is why it's so important that when we talk about this budget, it's not just the title "Growth That Works for Everyone." This really is a budget that pays attention and is ensuring that we have looked at people's needs across the whole province, from north to south to east to west, urban, rural. You name it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're paying attention.

Well the Status of Women also had the opportunity to sign on to the national action plan to end gender-based violence. And again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we had to make sure that Saskatchewan's needs and wants were being met by the national action plan, that it wasn't just something that was cookie cutter coming out of Ottawa, telling us what we need here in Saskatchewan. Because in Saskatchewan we understand the needs of our province; we understand the needs of our residents. And so we negotiated and ensured that the national action plan to end gender-based violence has a provincial and territorial skew to the kind of programs that is going to be offered. So we had, like I said, the opportunity to ensure that Saskatchewan's needs are being met.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am so proud of the work that our treasury board has done, but also our Deputy Premier and Finance minister, because to put together a budget that ensures that . . . Does every kind of "I need, I need, I want" get met? Absolutely not. But hard decisions have to be made.

And then when you realize that in fact what has been done was paying down the debt so future generations have the opportunity to ensure that there's growth, that's the important thing here that I think the opposition seems to miss. Because we're looking at . . . And we both got the same information. We both got the same budget package and yet somehow or other there's just doom and gloom over there. And over here we're looking at what do we have that meets the needs of people in Saskatchewan. This is a budget that does that.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could never support the amendment put forward by the opposition, but I will be supporting our budget.

But before I end, you know, it's so important when we go to events and we spend time with people to ensure that we hear our name. And there's someone — I'm not going to cry but it's pretty close — that is missing that absolutely had come to this building with the most excitement I've seen in years. Well no, there was maybe a couple back there that share the same kind of excitement that our member from Regina Walsh Acres had. But you know, he is so dearly missed. His seat's empty back there but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Derek Meyers is with us today. Thank you very

much.

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

Mr. Teed: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to enter into the budget debate today on this slightly chilly Monday in March.

I want to start by saying a huge thank you to my friends and family for their support over the last number of months in striking out on this new adventure as the MLA for Saskatoon Meewasin. I want to make a shout-out to my three biggest fans and also my support group back in Saskatoon: my good friend Kim Warner; my mother Carolyn Teed; and by proxy my sister who hears about the channel in the evening at the dinner table; and my partner in crime and life, my partner James Rayner. Thank you all so much for your support.

The other day I got a text from my partner after my colleague from Saskatoon Fairview gave such warm remarks about her partner, and I had to say that it was a high bar to make. But I have to thank him for all his support. I think it was about this time last year that I had started thinking about running for . . . I wanted to run to be an MLA. And I remember it was around June that I sat down and said, hey, this is what I want to do; here's the time commitment. And he said — not if but when — when's it going to happen? So he has been my rock and my support through all of this, as all of us folks, you know, we travel away from home to do this work. He holds down the house. And I'm always very excited to get home and see the dog and the cat and him every Thursday when I return to Saskatoon. So huge thank yous, huge thank yous to my support network back in Saskatoon.

And I also wouldn't be able to do the work I'm doing here today without the incredible talent and support of my constituency assistant, Jason Hicks. I want to say a huge thank you to him and his family for their long support and service to the cause. Jason brings such a wealth of knowledge and experience, and I feel so fortunate to have him on my team. Thank you for the work you do every day supporting the people of Saskatoon Meewasin, for making their lives better through your tireless advocacy. And this isn't the first time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Jason has served the people of Saskatoon Meewasin, so I feel like they're in very good hands.

Mr. Speaker, I'd be remiss if I didn't say that it was the honour of my life to stand in this Chamber representing the people of Saskatoon Meewasin. Saskatoon Meewasin includes parts of our essential downtown business district. We've got to get a sexier name for that, central business district. Oh, careful with . . . City Park, North Park, Richmond Heights, and River Heights, all along the beautiful Meewasin Valley. And this is a city that I've called home my entire life.

[14:45]

Last Christmas season, I had the pleasure of bringing poinsettias to many of the great organizations and schools around the riding. I had the opportunity to meet school leaders, leaders doing important work in their community-based organizations that call Meewasin home, and so many folks on the doorstep throughout the Meewasin by-election. Mr. Deputy Speaker, they shared their

hopes and dreams with me. They shared their hopes and dreams for our province.

And they shared with me their worries and concerns. Worries about the cost of living, if they'll be able to pay their bills at the end of the month or buy groceries, as the costs just keep going up and up. They shared worries about the state of our public health care system, whether they will be able to get an ambulance in time or if they'll get a spot in the ER when they need it. Worries about the size of their kids' classrooms or if their kids will get the supports they need. Worries about folks living below the poverty line and worries for a changing planet.

Like them, I love this province and I want to see it be a world leader on all these fronts. I know it has the potential. To the people of Saskatoon Meewasin, know that I have heard you and I will continue to champion these issues here in this House.

Lastly I want to give out a shout-out to the small-business community in Saskatoon and across this great province. On Thursday night I attended the NSBA dinner with my colleagues, the member from Saskatoon Willowgrove and Saskatoon Northeast, to celebrate. We joined 800 fellow small-business owners and leaders to celebrate local small-business owners that are killing it in their fields.

Then on Friday and Saturday I was fittingly called to put my small-business hat back on and unloaded about 10 pellets of furniture, almost 4,000 pounds of stock that was delivered to our store, that had finally arrived after months and months of back orders from the literally business-crushing supply chain issues that we've been seeing. It was at apt moment to be reminded about the hard work, and sometimes back-breaking work, that Saskatchewan's small-business owners put into their business.

I was also reminded about the challenges our small-business communities are facing in this current economic environment. Being a small-business owner, watching small-business owners struggle and in some cases close over the pandemic, was one of the reasons I was inspired to run for office. Local small-business owners continue to struggle to pay for this government's financial failures through hikes to power, energy rates. And this out-of-touch budget won't help them one bit. We won't see any relief on their plan to stick families and small businesses with huge increased power rates.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say thank you to all the small businesses in our province that make this province a better place to live. And I promise to continue to advocate for small businesses that haven't been represented in this government's policies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will turn my remarks over to the 2023-2024 provincial budget. A budget of a little of everything and mostly nothing at all. As the Finance minister has been quoted . . . Did the budget do much? No, not really. Is there anything for working people in the budget? No, not really. Are they saving any of the good stuff for an election year? Oh, probably.

Is it the everything, everywhere, all at once budget, Mr. Speaker? Or the nothing, nowhere, not-right-now budget? Mr. Speaker, I have to feel that it's just the not-right-now for this budget, and

that's a shame.

On Wednesday, while the eyes of the province were on this Chamber with so many folks sitting on this very floor, the out-of-touch smugness and arrogance of this government was on full display as they unveiled a budget with absolutely no support for families during a generational affordability and cost-of-living crisis.

The opportunity to provide real relief for folks and families struggling under the costs of fuel and food — not taken. The opportunity to make transformational investments in health care, in education, in advanced education, and social services — not taken. The opportunity to make the lives of the most vulnerable in our province so much better — not taken.

Now the government will tout that they are overseeing growth of Saskatchewan that is reaching all people in our province, but it's simply not true. We have the highest rates of child poverty, skyrocketing crime, outrageously high levels of food bank use, and a housing crisis that is pushing homelessness up and up and up.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a crisis of tainted drugs that has pushed overdose deaths through the roof. Twelve hundred people have died in Saskatchewan over the last three years of drug overdose. Those numbers are sobering; they are staggering. And a responsible government would move to end this crisis. It's beginning to be hard to meet a family in Canada that hasn't been affected by this crisis, and we have a government that continues to ignore experts by not funding safe consumption sites in our cities for harm reduction. And we have a government that has turned a blind eye to the mental health crisis.

They simply continue to ignore experts on every front. They are out of touch, and this budget proves it because each of these social metrics are signs that their failed trickle-down economic policies are not reaching everyone.

All the while our social metrics are the worst in the country, our economy continues to lag at the back of the pack as well. Working people continue to struggle, with 55 per cent of folks feeling worse off now than they were one year ago. On jobs, from February 2018 to February 2023 this Premier and Finance minister have overseen the worst job creation record in the country. Saskatchewan is dead last on job creation, and the numbers of this budget forecast are dismal — 5,400 in 2023 and 5,700 in 2024. We will never reach their goal of 100,000 jobs by 2030.

On economic growth — in our province's case shrinkage, I should say — despite a full year of windfall revenues from our natural resources, the Premier and this Finance minister continue to oversee the second-worst GDP [gross domestic product] growth in Canada. While they focus on 4.8 per cent increase to the GDP in 2023, that will still leave us second worst in the country with minus 4 per cent shrinkage to our economy. One has to wonder, in a province as chilly as ours, if the tag line for this budget really should have been, shrinkage that works for no one.

On debt, it's rapidly increasing. Even with a billion towards it, this budget predicts that the debt will increase to 37 billion by

2027. This Premier and Finance minister have doubled the debt since 2018. They are the worst fiscal managers in the country.

And on taxes this government has overseen the single largest number of tax increases in recent Saskatchewan history, all regressive taxes that hit the lowest income folks first. In 2017-18, we saw CCT [corporation capital tax] increase, PST increase from 5 to 6 per cent, and the PST newly applied to children's clothes, restaurant meals, snack foods, insurance, home renovation, and construction labour.

In 2018-19, we saw PST applied to used vehicles, more cash grabs by this tired government. They also removed the PST exemption on Energy Star appliances because you know, probably climate denialism.

And in 2021-22, we were the only jurisdiction not to offer tax incentives for electric vehicles. Instead the government brought up a new tax, an annual tax for EV [electric vehicle] drivers. They also increased property taxes . . . Mr. Speaker, the government is "hear, hear"-ing their tax record, the increased taxes on EVs and their tax record that they have, the largest in history. They also increased education property taxes with little or none going to that education budget.

2022-23, tobacco taxes were increased, education property taxes were increased again, and the government slapped 32 new PST hikes on the people of this province. The tax on fun — taxing admission and entertainment to events, shows, conferences, memberships, and all other recreational activities. All sectors desperately trying to recover from the pandemic.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this regressive conservative government has been the king of aggressive tax increases. In this budget alone, taxation revenue accounts for 9.6 billion in revenue, up 19 per cent from the previous budget. That's compared to our non-renewable resource revenue at 3.3 billion. We are the only jurisdiction that, instead of diversifying our economy, diversified our tax base instead. All at the expense of the lowest income earners.

This government is balancing their books and their own financial shortfalls off the backs of hard-working people of this province. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said before, this was a budget moment of opportunity. After five years of the worst economic record in the country, the government was swimming in cash. And let's be very clear. The government has seen windfall resource revenues worth almost \$2 billion because of the terrible invasion of Ukraine by the Putin regime, not by any masterful economic policy management from a government that's way in over their heads.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, teachers, nurses, anti-poverty advocates around the province — for them, this vanilla budget fell flat. Between pats on the back for no tax increases — after I said, the five-year previously mentioned bonanza tax increases — and a bit of money for debt, little was done to advance the needs of folks across our province, who have been desperately in need of inflationary boosts.

Nowhere is this more felt than in our cost-of-living file. Mr. Speaker, no situation is causing people more anxiety today than the rising cost of living. We hear it on the doorstep, and it's the

number one issue people have expressed in polling data. Nowhere does this budget miss the mark more than on this front.

This is an out-of-touch budget that includes absolutely no measures to reduce the stresses that families and small businesses are facing, no new tax relief, no power bill relief, no relief from the crushing cost-of-living crisis affecting families. They are powering forward with tax hikes and rate increases, all on the backs of Saskatchewan families.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are the most regressive taxes on the books, and they are hitting the lowest income people the most. I will say it again. But what more can we expect from an out-of-touch Finance minister who will fire up the jet for lunch in North Battleford or, when asked if she's worried about folks tightening their belts around the province, complains she just wanted a bigger house? Our tired and out-of-touch government is certainly not the government of the people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, experts are panning this government's claim that this is the most affordable place to live, as they see right through the fictionalized numbers on pages 70 and 71 that they're reporting in this budget, because those averages barely represent the people in our province. So many folks are struggling, and it's time for this government to wake up.

On social services, this budget has been dubbed a slap in the face. We have expressed our concerns over and over, Mr. Deputy Speaker, again today in question period. And anti-poverty experts agree that this budget falls short. Peter Gilmer of the Regina anti-poverty league said, "It is movement, but it's disappointing how little the movement is." Marina Pelletier, a SAID recipient herself, in response to \$30 buck-a-day program said, "Just \$30 is basically a slap in the face. You might as well have slapped us all across the face and said, 'You're getting nothing.'"

Marina recounted to the media that she often skips meals just so that the rest of her family can afford to eat. Shameful, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is simply an out-of-touch budget, an out-of-touch, uncaring government to the most vulnerable.

On education, yet another slap in the face — this time teachers. The minister will claim record funding, but it's all smoke and mirrors. As my colleague rightfully said, I am spending record amounts on groceries, but I'm getting no farther ahead and my cart just keeps getting smaller and smaller. For teachers, it's less money, more kids, and more diverse needs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the STF is baffled. I'll read the quote from their president, Samantha Becotte:

The government either does not understand the issues or doesn't think they are important. There is a serious concern for student well-being because school divisions simply don't have enough funding to meet student needs. These decisions have lasting impacts on the future of our province.

In a press release they note that the operational funding of 2.5 per cent increase is not enough. A minimum of 5 per cent was required just to meet last year's funding levels. In 2012-13, we had the best per-student funding in the country. Now we are sixth. The Fraser Institute pointed out that 400 million would be

needed to restore funding to the 2012-13 levels.

Becotte continues: “This budget continues the Sask Party trend of eroding quality of public education in our province.” I couldn’t agree more. More from an out-of-touch budget.

[15:00]

On health, my colleague from Saskatoon Fairview has said it so well, but I’ll touch on a few things. First SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses] president Tracy Zambory wrote of this budget:

I write to tell you all today, to express my profound disappointment with the provincial budget. The budget contains nothing new that recognizes the dedication of registered nurses nor the state of our overwhelmed, overburdened, and collapsed health care system. Nothing.

Alongside nurses, Saskatchewan family doctors say that the provincial budget is short on needed reforms, and their associations call for urgent change and reform to primary care. This budget includes no funding for this change. With a health care system on the verge of collapse, it’s time for this government to start listening to local voices for solutions. The health care dollars allocated in this budget show an even more out-of-touch government than ever before. And one has to ask, who do we trust more on health? The nurses and the doctors on the front lines, or the Minister of Health? This budget and this government is completely out to lunch and out of touch on health care.

And on Parks, Culture and Sport, my critic area, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance said this. They are a stalwart advocate for the arts in Saskatchewan and acknowledge and are thankful for the modest increase to the arts, but is asking for growth that works for everyone, and that includes the province’s arts, artists, and art administrators and patrons.

Even with the modest increases, the arts are still underfunded by 180,000. The arts in Saskatchewan are in a funding crisis and have been for years under this out-of-touch government. Research shows that 85 per cent of people in Saskatchewan agree that arts and culture activities in a community make it a better place to live. In 2020 the GDP generated by the arts and culture sector in this province was at 895 million, while accounting for 11,000 jobs in the province.

We must increase funding to stabilize the arts and culture sector. And this government needs to acknowledge that every penny invested in arts and culture and tourism will ensure further revenue growth, increased GDP, and a better quality of life for the people of our province.

The last argument they make is that with the recent addition of the PST on admissions and memberships to cultural entities, earning the government so much revenue, it’s time that that revenue came back to the sector.

Last but not least, on the climate. Oh sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there really wasn’t anything on the climate in this budget. Fifteen years, running 15 years behind, 15 years of ignoring science, 15 years of ignoring a changing world. This all on the heels of a world scientific report that we must act lest we move too far down the path toward not having the ability to act. There likely

should be a tab in this section of the budget that any climate dollars are earmarked for, see: court cases fighting the feds. The Sask Party government classic.

Mr. Speaker, the arts, health care, education, social services, then the climate — for all these areas the budget missed the mark. It missed the moment. It’s out of touch. It’s tired. And it’s a shame for the Saskatchewan people.

Lastly I want to look over a few areas where the government really has gone off the rails in spending, because it wouldn’t be a Sask Party government budget without a major boondoggle. I’ll quickly remind the viewing public at home of some of the best Devine-level boondoggles this government has chosen to spend our money on.

First, the Regina bypass, where \$2 billion was given to a French multinational to build the bypass. Better yet to the \$2 billion, better yet an Alberta company is being paid an undisclosed amount to clear and sand the 60 kilometres for 30 years. We have the GTH [Global Transportation Hub] land scam and scandal; health care; tech spending gone awry; lean, \$40 million spent on lean cost the taxpayers nearly \$1,000 for every dollar spent. Liquor privatization, hundreds of million in revenue down the drain.

More MLAs, the Sask Party added three new MLAs at the cost of \$700,000 a year. Thirty-seven million for smart meters that caught on fire and had to be scrapped. Carbon capture that has failed so much that we’ve had to pay fines to the company we promised that it would work for. They killed the STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company], leaving so many out in the cold on how to get around in our province, most of them most vulnerable and seniors. And they’re slowly gutting our Crowns through contract workers from other provinces. It’s absolutely no wonder that the job growth in this province is so bad. These are all examples of a government that’s in it for themselves and in it for their rich donors.

Now that we’re all caught up, I will say that budgets are about choices, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and in this budget the choices the government continues to make are quite puzzling. Millions are being spent to explore a Sask revenue agency. Let me help you with that as an industry stakeholder: no Sask small-business owner wants to file their taxes twice. There you go, you don’t need to, you don’t even look anymore. I know the government has taken my consultation seriously in the past, so I might just need to write a letter about Sask revenue. I’ll post it, don’t worry.

Twenty million dollars set aside to create a marshals service; 1.4 million to open a new trade office in Berlin, adding to the list of other trade offices that really should be generating more GDP.

Twenty-three million — this is a good one — 23 million on an online school system that nobody asked for, leaving so many teachers in the lurch not knowing what their employment will be like next year. Teachers in this area have called it a huge waste of money, as we had a completely functioning online school system being offered already, connected to their communities. It represents hours of work done by these teachers developing online classes. All of that down the drain. Huge waste of time and money for the teachers who’d worked so hard to create these lesson plans that were community-connected works. Again,

ignoring local voices.

We also see in this budget the P3 [public-private partnership] costs doubling on education. Building schools on the credit card, and we're the ones who are paying for it for years and years to come.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are bad choices. They are bad choices of an out-of-touch government presenting a tired and out-of-touch budget. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget has been panned by workers, families struggling with the cost-of-living crisis, folks living on SAID and SIS, anti-poverty advocates, small-business owners facing no relief from the onslaught of rate hikes, educational assistants, teachers, family doctors, nurses — the list goes on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be standing with these groups and will not be supporting the budget. Instead I will be supporting the amendment tabled by our venerable Finance critic, the member from Regina Rosemont, and seconded by our fearless Health critic, the member from Saskatoon Fairview. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: — Before I recognize the next member, I'll caution the member. In your comments you called official government numbers fictional, and that is sort of unparliamentary. I just caution you on it. I'm not asking you to withdraw and apologize, but in future be very careful about official government numbers.

And I'll recognize the member from Kelvington-Wadena.

Mr. Nerlien: — And now for something completely different. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, sometimes we feel like we have to mentor or guide the opposition members through the numbers in a budget because, based on the questions they ask, clearly they struggle to understand how the economy works. The question of alternate reality has come up in the Chamber a number of times, and based on what I hear from members opposite, I reside in an alternate universe from those across the aisle.

Following are a few statements that display the profound lack of awareness by members opposite on how the economy works, and clear statements of exuberant imagination by the member from Rosemont, who is the Finance critic, that display a complete lack of awareness of where money comes from and where it goes and what the value of those funds are in the economy.

The CRA [Canada Revenue Agency] is no cost to us, he said. I think there's one taxpayer, and I think the CRA does cost us some money. There's no money for family doctors, he said. I think there's a \$6.8 billion budget this year for health care, and I'm sure there's a few dollars in there for family health care. In fact I think there's a lot of money in there for family health care.

The biggest cut is per-student funding, he said. There's a \$4 billion budget for student funding this year, for education. The new online school that nobody asked for, the member just referred to that. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm going to deal with that specific issue a little bit later. And more lately he said, we need to get the economy back on its feet. Well clearly they're not paying attention, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The member from Sask Rivers — I'm going to be an equal-opportunity critic here — the member from Sask Rivers last week was advocating for a \$37 million reduction in municipal revenue sharing. She was calling for a reduction in PST, and we all know that a portion of the PST is directly paid to municipal revenue. Their collective lack of awareness of the impact of droughts, market conditions as a result of the war in Europe, and the residue from the recent pandemic further shows that they have no idea what Saskatchewan people deal with.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what do the following communities have in common: Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Lloydminster, Yorkton, Swift Current, North Battleford, Warman, Weyburn, Estevan, Martensville, Melfort, La Ronge, Humboldt, Meadow Lake, and White City? Mr. Deputy Speaker, the population of Saskatchewan has grown by the combined population of these communities since we were given the honour of forming government. Obviously that will create opportunities for more services in health, education, law enforcement, and municipal infrastructure.

And of course there are challenges. The professionals needed to provide services take time to train, graduate, go through the residency requirements, get appropriate credentials, etc. It's absolutely mind-boggling that members opposite and their sponsoring organizations think that these folks just magically appear in an incredibly competitive national environment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, provincial budgets are about big numbers: a billion here, a billion there, a few hundred million in another ministry or Crown. Frankly most of us can lose track of what it all means to you and me as individual citizens in Saskatchewan. Let's see if we can break it down a bit.

I'm going to talk a little bit about money and a bit about the numbers around the budget, and then I'd like to address a few more issues raised by members opposite. Mr. Deputy Speaker, money is a medium of exchange and generally represents the relative value of goods and services in a market-based economy at a point in time. So what does that mean? Well money made it possible to store value and allow exchanges to be independent of time.

Historically in a barter economy, transactions needed to be done by exchanging goods and services in real time, with the exception that mutual trust could allow exchanges to become independent of time. As a result we had the creation of money. This allows us to buy and sell goods and services without the issues of time and trust. Money became the tool to settle agreements. You and I use money every day. More recently money is exchanged by electronic means like debit and credit cards, online banking, and e-transfers. The provincial government, and frankly all governments, rely on you, the taxpayer, to create the money through economic activity necessary to pay for services you and I need and want.

Members opposite think that money grows on trees, but the reality is that everything we do — and I repeat, everything — as your government is entirely dependent on you, the taxpayer, entrusting us with your money to work with you to build the economy and its benefits for you. For clarity, you, the taxpayer, includes individuals, businesses, users of government services and resources. And it is you, the taxpayer, that creates the

economy through the exchange of money.

Governments, with the exception of our current federal government supported by the NDP, should have no role in a market-based economy in creating money, but that's a subject to a whole other conversation. We'll watch with interest tomorrow's federal budget to see if the NDP leader, Jagmeet, is singing his new favourite hit, I'm a believer in justinflation.

We as your government only have four tools to work with in managing a budget. The first is federal transfers, which we have no control over. These include things like the health dollars transferred under interprovincial agreements. We can use tax tools, which means that we get money either through personal or corporate taxes, royalties, provincial sales tax, or fees like licences, power, energy, phone bills, park entry fees, and so on.

[15:15]

Alternatively, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we can borrow money. Historically we've borrowed money from you, the taxpayer, through instruments like provincial savings bonds, but now we typically borrow on the open market through bonds and other debt instruments. It's very important to note that we must have a strong economy in order to get good interest rates. This is no different than you and I, if we don't have a good job or assets and a good credit history, we will have to pay higher interest rates. Today, because of the strength of our economy, we have the significant advantage of an excellent credit rating, which gives us that access to excellent borrowing rates.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, debt includes short-term operations debt and capital investment, supported by long-term debt. Think about operations borrowing like a credit card or operating a revolving line of credit, and think of capital borrowing like a mortgage or bond. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm reminded of an old statement, "debt is not your friend." And the management of debt and the correct relationship between what you own and what you owe is critical to your success as an individual and to us as a province.

Our debt must relate to added value in the economy and improve our ability to expand our GDP, which is the sum total of all economic activity in the province. For example, short-term debt might be payroll, while long-term might be for hospitals, schools, or highways, power lines, or cell towers. You wouldn't want to be making payroll with a new mortgage debt, and you wouldn't want to build a highway with your credit card.

Members opposite often raise the issue of too much debt. What they don't understand is that we are building that much-needed infrastructure to support a growing Saskatchewan. We need to understand that the NDP never worried about this because more people were leaving the province than coming in, so expanding facilities wasn't part of their thought process.

On that point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a few points of statistical interest, given the opposition's fixation on their interpretation of numbers. They've been criticizing the government about immigration and interprovincial movement of people, so I thought I'd look back. According to Statista, an independent global portal of data which has detailed data for the past 20 years, the average number of out-migration under the NDP in Saskatchewan from 2000 to 2006 was 7,248 per year. The

average number of out-migration under the Saskatchewan Party government in Saskatchewan from 2007 to 2022 is 3,075 per year. Clearly fewer moving out on average than under the NDP.

Hold on, there's more. More importantly, and this is why we're growing so quickly, the total number of immigrants to Saskatchewan under the NDP from 2000 to 2006 — 11,315. That's the total number. The number of immigrants to Saskatchewan in the last year — 16,281. For over the equivalent last six years — 82,202 including the two COVID years. That's more.

So more on where the money goes on your behalf through financing initiatives. Our investments of 422.3 million in highways, \$204.5 million in hospitals, 147.4 million in schools, 348 million in transfers to towns and RMs [rural municipality] for streets, water and sewer, equipment, and many other community needs is, in part, on borrowed money. So is that good debt? Can you put a value on a hospital or a highway? Would you rather pay for a long-term value of a hospital this year out of your taxes? Let's use a bit of common sense. Growing a business or a province is likely to require some debt.

The third tool governments have is to adjust the level of services provided. In other words, if we have a strong balance sheet we can invest in staffing and operating hospitals, schools, highways, and many other things, including pensions and benefits for those workers in the public service.

Just like you though, we must be very careful that we don't bite off more than we can chew. If we earn \$60,000 and get a \$3,000 bonus, we probably shouldn't commit to that shiny new truck and camper. The same applies to government. If we don't see certainty in our forecast, we must be very careful in creating long-term obligations that we can't afford. So short-term revenue from high oil or potash prices must be taken in the context of sustainability.

If your job is dependent on your company doing business with solid partners, you can have some comfort that your employer can continue to pay you. The same applies to this government. We are an export-based economy. Most of what we produce — oil and gas, potash, uranium, ag products, forestry products, machinery — is sold to our international trading partners. That is why we work hard to build good relationships around the world, so we can have reliable, long-term certainty. And again this allows us to have more certainty in our budgets.

As 2017 showed us, you always have to try to plan for tough times when a global market fails. 2020 and 2021 were further examples. That is why, in part, we made structural changes in our budget in 2017-18, which were difficult at the time but have proven to give us a much more stable planning environment.

Another fact is that most of our trade is done in US [United States] dollars, so the exchange rate very much affects our budget. We have an amazing Finance ministry and Finance minister that balance all of these things each and every day.

So in summary, a budget is about your money. It's a snapshot at a day and time of what we think is going to happen in the future based on months of research, planning, and analysis. Ministries, agencies, Crown corporations, and many stakeholders provide

input. Treasury board gathers and assesses that input, and Finance ministry officials put it together so we the taxpayers can see where the money comes from and where it goes.

So let's break down some of the things that are important to you and me in our daily lives. In December we had 22,455 job vacancies in the province, which is likely similar today. In fact a quick survey of my local small towns tells me that there were 50 to 60 jobs open in my immediate surrounding communities.

Full employment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is historically seen to be about 4 per cent. In other words, at any given time about 4 per cent of the population is not working for any number of reasons. They may be moving, changing careers, going back to school, temporarily laid off, or any of a dozen of other circumstances. We are at 4.3 per cent, which suggests that virtually everyone that wants a job can get one in their chosen field.

It also clearly tells us that this is no different from much of North America — that we all need people. We need those who chose early retirement due to the pandemic to come back to the workforce. We need the young and old sitting on the sidelines to get engaged in the economy. We need immigration control, and thus our desire to get the federal government out of the way so we can grow our economy.

Changing the subject a bit, Mr. Speaker, I have to read a couple of things into the record, and please bear with me for a second. "SUN hosted a press conference releasing the shocking results from a survey we conducted and the need for 600 more RNs and RPNs in the province." A second quote: "The need for recruiting and retaining registered nurses, including RPNs, in Saskatchewan became a hot issue on the floor of the Legislative Assembly." A third quote: "Throughout this meeting, it became evident that the Department of Health is not willing to work with SUN at this time." So why would I bring these quotes to this debate? Well actually, Mr. Speaker, they came from the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses' summary of their actions in 2006.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, every government has human resource challenges, and perspective is critical. Mr. Deputy Speaker, grandstanding by the members opposite, patting themselves on the back, and boasting about a couple of dozen rural meetings they've had is insulting to the people of Saskatchewan. They come away thinking they have the solutions all figured out from a couple hours here and there.

Members on this side hold regular meetings with health care workers, municipal governments, stakeholders, businesses, and citizens. We live in those communities and we deal with the same issues as our constituents each and every day. I dare say there are collective thousands of hours with stakeholders on this side. This is not a drop-in meeting as we all have family and friends that work in health care, education, social services, and policing. We talk about these issues at coffee shops and kitchen tables every single day.

We travel the highways and grid roads every day. Some of us are small-town business people, some are farmers, some are nurses, and some are educators. This is our life and our home. We meet with and sit beside the ministers every day. We talk about the issues and look for solutions that will work for everyone.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, new health care facilities will be creative in treatment options and will be better positioned to triage mental health, addictions, acute and primary care needs. These new facilities, initially in Regina and Saskatoon, will take significant pressure off of our existing facilities.

On education, a couple of things are front and centre in my mind. I'm particularly excited about the opportunities that the new Sask DLC [Saskatchewan Distance Learning Corporation] distance learning initiative provides. I've long been an advocate for giving every student and in fact every citizen an opportunity for equal access to the highest levels of education and to the best teaching resources available. I fully expect this will be an indispensable addition to our education system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our social safety nets are built around the concept that respect the integrity of the individual, the human value of dignity, the fundamental principle that everyone can rise up in the morning and be the best person they can be that day. A hand up is far more valuable than a handout. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this budget one thing of note is the \$400 million and 3 per cent lift for CBOs. This is really important to local organizations helping people reach their potential like POP [Porcupine opportunities program] in Porcupine Plain or Mallard in Wadena.

On our economy, I must highlight the recent announcement of a formal signing of a deal between Cameco and Ukraine that will provide up to 70 million pounds of Saskatchewan uranium over 12 years. This deal alone is worth billions to the Saskatchewan economy and will significantly stabilize Ukraine's power needs for generations. Additionally, the recent acquisition of Westinghouse Electric by Cameco puts another piece directly in the supply chain agreement on this deal.

Last week, I spoke of the new partnerships between BHP and local First Nations. It's important to note that throughout this budget there are numerous initiatives for existing and new partnerships development between First Nations, Métis, municipal, and provincial governments.

Here's a few highlights from the Ministry of Highways that affect us, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're getting work done on No. 23, and you're very familiar with that piece of highway, Mr. Deputy Speaker — between Porcupine Plain and Carragana — significant work there this year. We're getting passing lanes and the widening of No. 5 East, which is continuing and it's been ongoing for some time. That makes a significant difference to all of us from east central Saskatchewan.

There's \$15 million in the budget for municipal roads and bridges. There's 6 million for northern forestry roads, and some of us who have been up in the far North will really, really appreciate that investment. There's 5 million for winter road maintenance; 19.7 million for intersection safety projects. There's \$62.8 million for 14 more bridges and 100 culverts across the province. Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are investments that affect all of us and the travelling public every single day.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a few things that kind of get lost in the numbers, but I want to mention them. There's \$3.9 million of annual investment to SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] for the rat control program, the invasive plant control program, the beaver control program, and plant

health network and new growth for control program. Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are really, really important on-the-ground investments in rural Saskatchewan.

There's the SLIM or Saskatchewan lean improvements in manufacturing three-stream approach providing funding for \$750,000 for value-added production efficiency in emission reduction initiatives.

[15:30]

There a 35 per cent increase in funding for the Métis Development Fund providing equity for Métis businesses, loan supports, community economic development initiatives, and assistance for Métis business owners and entrepreneurs to develop management skills.

There's an additional forty-two and a half million dollars to reduce surgical wait-lists, which affects all of us in this room because we all have friends or family who are waiting for hip or knee surgeries or eye surgeries and any number of other things.

There's a highway preservation project from Tisdale to Elfros that affects us, and another one east from Wadena towards Invermay. And there's also significant improvements to the highways around Yorkton as a result of the significant expansion of grain-handling capacity in that area.

There's the consolidation of the elementary and high schools in Kelvington and much better utilization of the facilities there.

There's \$4 million investment in targeted mineral exploration incentive, and an increase in the Saskatchewan mineral exploration tax credit from 10 to 30 per cent, as we've identified that Saskatchewan is home to 23 of 31 critical minerals that will be the foundation of future technology driving environmental innovation.

There's a recommitted funding for the volunteer firefighting school in Melville. There are the crime reduction and warrant enforcement teams. And we all know that we have significant issues around crime across Saskatchewan, and I think these are really important programs that are going to make some difference in that area.

There's an increase of 6,000 more surgeries to a number of 103,000 surgeries to be performed this year. There's a \$7 million increase in funding for medical imaging, and we know how important that is in terms of triaging and appropriately treating people.

This budget could have simply been titled "More." There's more for everybody. There's more across the board for every ministry, for every agency. There's more for the people of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in summary, the budget reflects where we stand as a province today. The money coming in and going out is not the government's money, nor does it grow on trees. It is the hard-earned dollars of the citizens of Saskatchewan, and we have an obligation to respect that fact.

The taxpayer is a person who, as much as possible, should have choices in how they spend their money. And our role is to provide

the services needed in a modern society, providing a level of certainty and policy that both protects the province's responsibilities and getting out of the way so workers and businesses can be successful.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I lived in Alberta as a result of opportunity in the 1980s and '90s. The most asked question on the street in business and in social environments was inevitably, what part of Saskatchewan are you from? As the Premier said last week, the oft-used phrase was, will the last one out turn out the lights. Mr. Deputy Speaker, those were the days of NDP governments, and I and my colleagues and frankly the people of Saskatchewan never want to go back to those dark, negative days.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I close I want to take a moment to thank our constituency assistants and ministry staff for the work they do. Often they are the proverbial front line in handling sometimes tragic and challenging situations, and the work they do in moving issues and opportunities forward should never be underestimated. My CA [constituency assistant], Chris, and all CAs have had incredibly difficult conversations over the past two and a half years through COVID, and we owe them a great deal. Thanks.

There are always those who have no idea what our offices deal with or who are quick to judge our value, but I will proudly stand in this Chamber and say that the most gratifying moments we have are in the situations where we have collectively made a difference for each and every citizen we work with daily.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts on this budget that highlights growth that works for everyone in Saskatchewan. And I will be supporting the motion by the Minister of Finance, and I will not be supporting the amendment by the member from Regina Rosemont. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Kaeding: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to and support this positive budget. I would like to speak to the positive effects that it has and will have on my constituency of Melville-Saltcoats, and how it will positively shape our province for decades and generations to come. I'm hoping that enough positives counteract the negative position that unfortunately our opposition and provincial media have taken on what should be a time to celebrate.

However I would like to tone down this a bit and put on the record my support for a colleague and his family who are extremely courageous as they are going through a very difficult time, and that is the member from Walsh Acres. I'd like him and his family to know that we've got you. You are part of a big, loving family that will be there to take care of you and your family.

I found out the other day that this member during COVID called on every church in his congregation just to check in and see how they were making out. He took this one step further and called on friends of ours that live in his constituency, that when he found out they were both struggling quite badly with the effects of COVID, he called on them just to see how they were making out, how they were doing. He didn't know them personally. He didn't

know them at all actually, but when hearing that they were struggling he felt compelled to check in on them. They're still so thankful to this day that their MLA from Walsh Acres was that committed to his constituents.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd also like to take this opportunity to wish my constituency assistant, Rick McIntyre, a happy retirement. At the end of this week he is turning in his Bluetooth phone headset, his "world's greatest constituency assistant" coffee mug, and he's heading out the door for one last time. Rick has been with me from day one, from April 4th, 2016 when I convinced him really that this would be a great job for him to wind down from his very busy career that he just completed with the purebred cattle business. I think he's forgiven me for dealing with the difficult calls from the 2017 budget, taking on more of a constituency rep role when I entered cabinet, and then navigating the new world that we were living in during COVID.

Rick is an extremely extraordinary individual that has empathy to no end, the patience of Job, and represented me very well at the various golf tournaments, curling spiels, forums, meetings that were held in our constituency. And he did all of this while his wife was having major surgery — she's an organ recipient; severely breaking his collarbone, a non-constituency-related event I want to remind everyone; two of his kids getting married in one summer at his acreage; and then going through his own significant battle with cancer. And as well he had cataract surgery on both eyes last year.

So needless to say Rick has tremendous multi-tasking skills. He's going to be sorely missed, most definitely by me but also the municipalities, the constituents that he took so much interest in to help them through their difficult situations.

Rick and his family were informed earlier this week that their daughter Devynn was just accepted at her residency of choice at Saskatoon, specializing in pediatric medicine. She'll be one of our top medical specialist up-and-comers in the medical profession that will benefit significantly from our health recruitment and retention program.

Rick's adult twin sons: Brendon is a journeyman carpenter and his wife, Tara, is a professional home painter, and they've both been taking advantage of this government's home improvement tax credit. They've been very busy doing home renos and upgrades for our local residents, who are certainly taking advantage of the tax credit.

Their other son Riley has worked with Prairie Blasting & Coating, who's busy working in Esterhazy on some of the major projects for Mosaic potash. Mosaic continues to invest heavily in this province and certainly in our area of Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are young people just from one family in my constituency who have found growth that works for everyone.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm also pleased to announce that we have a very qualified individual replacing Rick, starting full-time on April 3rd, by the name of Tim Ziola. Tim recently was a managing partner and owner of Pharmasave 407 in Melville. He's been a Melville city councillor, president of the local chamber of commerce, president of the Melville branch of the

Canadian Mental Health Association, and is currently the area coroner. On top of that he still holds the provincial record for five-pin bowling average in league play and is an awesome golfer. So I'm looking forward to having Tim on team Melville-Saltcoats.

All right, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's get down to the huge number of positives from this budget that directly affect the great constituents of Melville-Saltcoats. Probably the most anticipated announcement that directly affects at least 70 per cent of our constituency is the \$250,000 of planning dollars that's been allocated to Esterhazy to begin planning their new integrated health facility.

The community and area has been fundraising for close to 15 years now to get to this momentous announcement. Needless to say there is incredible excitement. The naysayers have been quieted and the Esterhazy region is highly motivated to get to work and start planning the construction and development of this new integrated health facility. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the 500,000 that was provided Yorkton to continue planning their regional hospital will have a significant effect on almost all of my constituency as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Esterhazy health clinic has also seen the positive benefit of this government's health professional recruitment strategy. By converting some part-time positions to full-time and by providing incentives from the ministry and the community foundation, they were able to attract three new CLXTs [combined laboratory and X-ray technologist] to fill vacant positions. Needless to say the community was more than excited as a result. This has stabilized our ER to the point that I don't believe we've had a single bypass since these new CLXTs were placed in their new roles.

As well, by working and understanding the professional health needs of the area, the ministry approved funding for one more full-time nurse practitioner, converted a part-time to full-time, and this again has provided much-needed care at the physician clinic level, which has reduced our ER wait times and significantly reduced the wait time to visit a health professional in our area.

We are currently receiving one new SIPPA [Saskatchewan international physician practice assessment] doctor and anticipate another coming to Esterhazy in June. That will round out our complement of doctors. Mr. Speaker, this is growth that works for everyone.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the second-biggest announcement in this budget from Melville-Saltcoats was the firefighting training program that's now in Melville that was put on hold in 2021 and is now reopening after receiving an additional \$1.8 million in funding. The provincial government along with the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency, Ministry of Advanced Education, and the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training will make the combined investment in the training program at Parkland college for the upcoming year.

1.33 million is coming from the SPSA [Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency] for the purchase of training equipment. 250,000 in annual training funding is coming from the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training to deliver firefighting training

programs. \$210,000 in capital grant funding is coming from Advanced Ed for fixed, on-location capital assets.

Our government is committed to ensuring people can train for and build a rewarding firefighting career right here in Saskatchewan. Before this announcement, many of our firefighters had to train out of province or even out of country to get their professional qualifications and designation.

In addition, the college is going to offer industrial firefighting training specific to supporting our private sector companies, such as Nutrien, Mosaic, Federated Co-op, Cameco, and many more. Applications are open for the National Fire Protection Association training starting in July. The provincial firefighting training centre will accommodate between 18 to 24 students per cohort.

Unknown to many is that several of the professionally trained firefighters graduating from the Melville facility stay on and continue their training as paramedics at the Parkland college primary care paramedic course, which traditionally follows immediately after the firefighting course. This provides training for both disciplines, ensuring that we have a number of locally trained, quality professionals ready for the firefighting and paramedic service in our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the universally coveted municipal revenue-sharing program that's used to provide consistent, dependable funding to our urban and rural municipalities is being provided their largest payment out of municipal revenue sharing that they've ever experienced. At nearly \$300 million, at a 13.4 per cent increase over last year, it's going to help our municipalities build up infrastructure, replace needed capital items, and improve services for the residents that will work for everyone.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the last thing I'd like to talk about today is the significant increase in the personal care home benefit announced in this budget. There will be an increase of up to \$400 a month and, for SAID clients under the age of 65 who live in personal care homes, they will receive up to \$684 more per month. The personal care home benefit provides seniors with monthly financial assistance to help them with the cost of living in a licensed personal care home.

Mr. Speaker, I have four personal care homes in my constituency, all providing incredible care for the residents. They are Maple Street Manor in Esterhazy, Morris Lodge in Bangor, and Helping Hands and Westview Manor located in Melville. This financial boost to their residents' benefits is going to certainly improve their homes' abilities to be able to maintain if not increase their level of care to their deserving residents.

[15:45]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is really so much more that I could speak to but I know many more of my colleagues can share their experience and stories how this positive budget will make a difference in their constituents and discuss this growth that works for everyone.

I applaud our Minister of Finance, her officials, her treasury board colleagues, and everyone that was involved in bringing together this well-balanced and thoughtful approach to working

with a surplus. I fully support this budget and will not be supporting any amendments that may be proposed by our opposition. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — I recognize the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Keisig: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think everyone on this side of the House is well aware that I had an absolutely great winter and I'm happy to be back in my seat today. I want to thank my constituency assistant. I'm glad our schedules were able to jive today and she's able to join us in the Chamber. I want to thank her for all the hard work that she does on behalf of the constituents and how important these roles are for all of us on both sides of the Chamber. So thank her for that. She's also joined by her sister Robyn. So it is very nice to see her be able to make it today.

My family's doing great, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My older daughter Shannara and hundreds of other nursing students will graduate this June. I want every one of them to know that there are jobs for you here in Saskatchewan. Please look into our rural facilities for employment and the incentives that are out there. Up to \$50,000 will help many of them pay down student debt, save for home ownership, or increase their net worth. Please take the hint, Shannara.

Sharlize, my younger daughter, has graduated from Lakeland College in Vermilion in veterinary technologist and is currently doing her practicum at Earl Grey veterinary clinic and is looking forward to entering the workforce once she's done. I know both of my daughters will live in this province, Mr. Speaker, and I am very excited to see them working.

My wife, Sheila, and I celebrated our 26th wedding anniversary this winter, and she is always busy serving the ratepayers of Tullymet and serving on the Rural Municipal Administrators' Association as vice-president. After the budget was announced, she was on her phone looking up the revenue-sharing grant for Tullymet. The Ministry of Government Relations does a really great job of updating its website. She knew that the RM of Tullymet would receive \$292,587 in revenue sharing, a 233 per cent increase since 2007, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This budget has 298 million targeted for all municipalities to have stable funding based on an existing formula.

One of the highlights this winter, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was the Queen's platinum jubilee awards. This program was spearheaded by the Lieutenant Governor and supported by the Government of Saskatchewan. I hosted my ceremony on the 10th of December in this building, and it was very enjoyable. I went to many ceremonies across the province and my colleague, the member for Moosomin, he put it the best, it's so good to be around genuinely good people. And I really thought that's a great way to describe all of the Queen's platinum jubilee award recipients.

A big thank you to our Provincial Secretary, the member for Moose Jaw North, and Jason Quilliam and his team in the protocol office. Their hard work behind the scenes and during the ceremonies made them all truly special.

Recently, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's been some changes have occurred in this Chamber. My colleague, the member from

Coronation Park, announced his resignation in February. I met Mark after the 2020 election — I didn't know him before I got into politics — and his office was just down from mine, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So growing up in rural Saskatchewan, my father taught me it's very important to be neighbourly, and Mark was my neighbour. We had a lot of great coffee conversations in the building and he quickly became someone I could call a friend.

About a year ago, Mark asked to take me to lunch, so I said, yeah, sure. We left the building, drove to a Coronation Park neighbourhood, and drove up to a very nice house. And we walked into the house and the house was absolutely packed. Like, it was full. We were celebrating . . . the people in the house were celebrating a spiritual holiday and everyone in there was so excited for Mark to show up. We sat on the floor on pillows, and I remember everyone coming up to Mark and so excited for him to be there, and I remember myself being terrified I was going to spill on my suit. Mark was a champion of his constituency and I will miss his presence around caucus.

The member from Lumsden-Morse announced his retirement early in session, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and Lyle Stewart was a very long-serving member in this Chamber. Elected in '99, Lyle served in cabinet since 2007 when this party had the privilege of forming government. His work as the minister of Agriculture was instrumental in growing the pulse sector in this province, and his advocacy for family farms was really remarkable. I want to thank Lyle for his service to the province, particularly rural Saskatchewan, and let him know that the foundational work that he did on so many files will continue to benefit everyone in the province long into the future.

Now talking about the budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, 7.1 billion in health care spending is something many constituents have been asking for, and this budget delivers. The health human resource action plan is an aggressive plan with almost \$100 million of funding. Recently, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I did a member's statement about changes our Health ministers were able to make, but I really want to take some time here and just explain fully how the program rolled out.

When it was initially rolled out, there was a policy that if you had an existing SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] employee number, you would not qualify for any of the recruitment bonuses as it was only for new employees. So any health student that worked the summer at their local seniors' home or hospital would not qualify for the benefit upon graduation from nursing, laboratory tech, X-ray tech, and other relevant medical training. I brought the issue forward and the Health ministers did their research and realized the program had a problem, and they made the appropriate changes. This change is going to help thousands of students and it's going to help all of Saskatchewan keep these newly educated people entering the workforce here.

I want to thank the Minister of Health and the Minister of Rural and Remote Health and all of their staff for all of their work in this case and the whole file overall. Thanks to the aggressive four-point health plan, I've had many successes in my constituency. We've got lab technicians in Balcarres, Southey, and Cupar, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Five and a half million to hire 75 continuing care aides is also very welcome, and 9.3 million to help third-party long-term care providers is going to help care homes all across the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Four billion dollars in education funding is excellent news for all of Saskatchewan — 98 million for Prairie Valley School Division, which we met with this morning; and 78 million for Horizon School Division. Both of these are in my constituency. Our youth are our future, and this budget supports them.

\$540,000 in the budget for five new seats at the veterinary college. It's going to help all of our rural vets that are short-staffed and is very welcome news across rural Saskatchewan.

Agriculture is seeing 548 million in funding to support crop insurance and all the other business risk management tools. A \$38 million funding for research and innovation is critical and will help keep all of our family farms on the cutting edge of agricultural production.

The Ministry of Parks announced a group pavilion at Rowan's Ravine Provincial Park at Last Mountain Lake, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for \$14 million. Pairing this with the completed highway project to the park last year, this will set Rowan's Ravine Provincial Park as a must-see in the Qu'Appelle Valley.

776 million in the highway budget to build, maintain, and improve our network of roads is critical as our economy surges forward. Our potash, agri-food, energy, and forestry products need a reliable infrastructure to reach end markets. I really want to thank the Minister of Highways for all the work he's doing working with the Port of Vancouver. We need strong leadership to keep that port operating at full capacity as 80 per cent of all of our products head out through Vancouver. As our production increases, we have to plan to try and stop bottlenecks from occurring. And that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is growth that works for everyone.

I have many people reach out to myself and my office. They have concerns about health care. They bring forward concerns about education. They bring forward a lot of highway condition concerns. But overall, the number one reason people phone me is frustration with the federal coalition government of Jagmeet Singh and Justin Trudeau.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, people are, I don't want to use the word "angry," but they're just very, very frustrated. The carbon tax policy drives higher inflation, just like our former Environment minister and current Premier said it would. It does not lower emissions. It does drive up the price of goods and services and it disproportionately affects rural families. And it's going up from \$15 a tonne on April 1st to \$65 a tonne — on April 1st, Mr. Deputy Speaker, April Fool's Day. It almost makes you feel like they're mocking us, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A carbon tax is not environmental policy. It is terrible economic policy and does nothing but punish Saskatchewan families for heating their homes and driving to work. It puts us at a distinct disadvantage on the global stage where most of the goods we produce here are sold, costing this nation billions in lost income.

My phone rang off the hook with the implementation of Bill 21 and the proposed amendments punishing so many law-abiding firearms owners. This federal legislation singled out our hunters, farmers, and sport shooters. Thankfully it was stopped, but if the federal Liberals were to get a majority government, I feel they would really, honestly try this again. We have put 7.4 million in our firearm secretariat, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of all the

hard work Robert Freberg is doing in that leadership role.

Now the latest thing that this coalition government is labelling plastics as a toxic substance. The whole premise is absolutely absurd. I ate my sandwich at lunch today wrapped in a toxic substance? And all in this Chamber understand that words have meaning. The member from Meewasin was just admonished by yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Words have meaning. How can they label plastic as a toxic substance? I really want to say I fully support our Justice minister as she intervenes in a court challenge on the federal government's single-use plastic ban, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We all want less litter. We want less waste, but banning plastics is poor policy and shows little big-picture thinking, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now there's something here I want to talk about that is very close to myself. The federal coalition government announced a 30 per cent reduction in nitrogen fertilizer emissions a while ago. And the uproar in the agricultural community was tremendous. They walked back a lot of their wording. First it was mandatory, then quickly changed to voluntary, which boils down to a simple point: that rural Saskatchewan people have no trust in this federal government.

The Western Producer, a famed agricultural paper, wrote an article by reporter Karen Briere, where she interviewed University of Saskatchewan researcher Stuart Smyth, associate professor in agriculture and resource economics, where he asserts there is no scientific evidence that Environment and Climate Change Canada used to set this 30 per cent reduction target. I want to read a quote into the record, Mr. Deputy Speaker, "Without any government regulations, directives, mandates, targets, whatever you want to put . . . farmers have significantly increased their fertilizer efficiency."

I just want to talk for a minute, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about how I make fertility decisions on my farm. And I'm very confident saying this is how the majority of Saskatchewan farmers make their decisions too. I use three different groups of advisors when making my spring planting decisions. First I consult with my local input supplier of choice. They will usually employ agronomists or an agrologist or a certified crop advisor. These people do a great job informing producers on many fertilizer issues and practices, and they educate people on the 4Rs [right source at right rate, right time, right place] of nutrient management — right source, right rate, right time, and the right place. Most producers have adopted this practice without government intervention because it is profitable and environmentally conscious.

The next person I consult with is my banker. Like many others, my farm depends on outside investment to acquire the capital to invest in our operation. Interest rates, carrying costs, and business plan development are issues that are discussed.

[16:00]

Lastly I talk to my wife. Every small-business owner has a different level of risk that they are comfortable taking on. This is a very personal and private discussion, as every person is unique in how much risk are you comfortable in carrying. Agriculture is incredibly risky — mother nature runs the show — and that risk assessment must include all business partners. I want all

Saskatchewan producers to know that this government is aware of what's transpiring, and we support you wholeheartedly.

Last August German Chancellor Olaf Scholz came to Canada looking for liquefied natural gas due to the war in Ukraine and changing geopolitical circumstances. Our Prime Minister met with him, gave some vague talk of hydrogen and climate change, and said there is no business case for LNG [liquefied natural gas]. The chancellor left, went to Qatar, and signed a historic \$15 billion deal to purchase LNG. There's a lesson here that I know, and many people in positions of authority should learn: the customer is always right. A \$15 billion deal would have provided this country with billions of dollars of employment, royalties, and taxes.

How much money did we lose that could have gone to more health care, more education, more social services funding? This is why we have to fund our trade offices. I'm glad we're opening an office in Germany — fourth-largest economy in the world — at a cost in this budget of 1.4 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

If I will make a single criticism of this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would be that 19.3 million for a trade and investment strategy, it's not enough. Our federal government has shown a complete disregard for marketing our products on the world stage, and we have to take the reins, so to speak.

I want to thank the Minister of Trade and Export Development on this file, and all of our cabinet ministers, our agricultural minister, and everyone involved for all their hard work in these trade missions, and our Premier for engaging internationally on this critical file. A government cannot sit back at home and expect people to come to you. We have to go to them.

On this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we understand what the people of Saskatchewan expect from a government. They want a government that works hard, and when the federal government fails them time after time, they can depend on this forward-thinking government to get the job done when it comes to promoting all that this province has to offer. We will always be an exporting province, and our vital role in government is to sell what we create here at home. And that is growth, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that works for everyone.

In this Chamber, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we debate, we critique, and we pass laws for the province of Saskatchewan. But outside of this Chamber, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are far more powerful laws. These are the laws of physics. This federal government has imposed the clean electricity regulations and mandated they be imposed by 2035. They state no coal use by 2030 and no natural gas use by 2035. Our society is dependent on reliable, safe, and affordable electrical generation. Renewable energy has a role, but it is not the answer.

I want to thank the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation for all his hard work in this file, and I'm very excited about his leadership role in developing small modular reactors for the province. Still, we have to keep our feet fully planted on the ground in this area. Ontario is currently working on an SMR [small modular reactor] set to come online in 2028, and that's great to see. But we will need coal and gas as bridging fuels moving forward. And I've said before, Saskatchewan people should decide our energy future, not the federal government.

I do want to give credit where credit is due, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was very happy to see the Prime Minister and the president of the United States discussing on Friday critical minerals and how vital they are moving forward. Our government's \$4 million investment into the targeted mineral exploration incentive is going to support the development of these emerging commodities.

This budget also provides a billion dollars in debt repayment, which is absolutely supported by myself.

So with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank the Finance minister for all her hard work. I want to thank all the members of treasury board and the Premier for his leadership of the province. And I also want to say that, to the member from Regina Walsh Acres, all of us here are thinking of you and we're supporting you and wishing you all the best.

I will be supporting the motion brought forward by our Minister of Finance, seconded by the member from Kindersley, and I will not be supporting any amendments from the official opposition. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And spoiler alert, I will be voting for the budget motion put forward by the Deputy Premier and seconded by the member for Kindersley in a forceful, a forceful speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I will not be voting in favour of the amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the former member for Kindersley once said that the friends in this room — and by that he meant caucus — will be friends for life. Being a band of brothers and sisters will do that to you. And he was right. And it's in that spirit that I would like to join with my colleagues and pass on collective love to the member for Regina Walsh Acres, an amazing dynamic life force, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the member for Lumsden-Morse, a veteran, a founder who served this province with great dignity. We are all behind you.

And turning to the budget, the Deputy Premier's budget, what a budget. Top hits. Zero tax increases. One billion dollars in overall new spending. \$235 million to education, the largest operating increase in eight years. Saskatchewan has the highest per capita primary and secondary school funding of any province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, 24 per cent higher than the cross-provincial average; a \$46.7 million increase for social services; \$8.8 million more for EMS [emergency medical services] services in rural and remote areas; a \$42.5 million increase to address surgical wait times; a \$39 million increase for seniors care, including more long-term care beds, more providers; a \$20 million increase for more acute care hospital beds; 1000 kilometres' worth of highway improvements; a \$35.3 million increase to municipal revenue sharing. Come on, what a budget.

And I was picking up dry cleaning on Friday, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the lady who worked there said, great budget. And I was almost taken aback after having been in here all week. I said right, it was great. They always run it down, she said, they always do that, but it was great. They always do that.

Mr. Speaker, you've heard the expression, it's got to be 5 o'clock somewhere. Similarly with our friends across the aisle, someone has got to be angry somewhere. They'll find one. They'll find one. Someone who'll say there are cuts in education, even though there's a record increase and we're the highest per capita. See point above. Or will say the universities are unhappy, even though both presidents continue to say, and said last week, that the four-year funding agreement is working great. Internal friction, it must be our fault. They fiercely protect the legacy of the SAID program which we brought in. Their investment in the SAID program, zero, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Highways, I'm sure they'll find someone who hates the 1000 kilometres in new twinning and passing lanes, count on it, who wants to return to the pothole-ridden rabbit trails of yesteryear under them. In the meantime, everyone else loves our highway improvements. We are proud of them.

And health, of course they ignore that every single health system across the country, across Europe, is facing the exact same challenges. Mr. Deputy Speaker, a friend of mine from the UK [United Kingdom] was telling me a few weeks ago when she saw the news here, it's exactly the same at home.

My theme today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is Macbeth. Yes, the Scottish play. And there's a phrase that's repeated throughout the play, "borrowed robes," which becomes a symbol of everything that is ill-fitting, literally and figuratively. The opposition wraps itself in borrowed robes every day. First on affordability, they wrap themselves in that flag. If you listen to them, you'd think affordability was an issue only in Saskatchewan. It is an issue, but recession, inflation — these are issues that the world is grappling with.

Not only that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the world is grappling with governments that have overspent, not paid down 2 billion in operating debt within the last year like us. Governments that are pursuing disastrous policies, as we see the French continue to take to the streets against Mr. Macron. On paper it's about increasing the retirement age, but there is so much more going on. There is so much subtext. In Germany they've had a mild winter, but next winter, here come the headlines again. They risk running out of gas.

In Canada, just transition is coming at a time when we can least afford significant disruption — as the feds themselves called it in a leaked briefing report — significant disruption for up to 13.5 per cent or 3 million people of the Canadian industrial workforce in only three provinces: Newfoundland-Labrador, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. The federal government calls just transition the new Industrial Revolution, but the Industrial Revolution wasn't about turning off the gas and turning off the heat and turning off the lights and thousands losing their jobs, going backward. Position over there: clear impact on affordability. Anything? I think they mocked our criticism and concerns about federal just transition — just get along; respect your betters. That's being a good Canadian. That's being enlightened. Good people.

And yes, there is . . . let's call it a narrative that is alternate that they put forward. And if we can't say that in the legislature, that phrase that was ruled out of order, if we can't weave in phrases such as that or inconvenient truth or even cognitive dissonance — which has to be the cheesiest, most pretentious phrase out

there — if we can't use phrases such as that in debate and discussion and rhetorical flourish and with wit, we are finished in here. And fake news, Mr. Deputy Speaker, everyone uses it. Left, right. Just as every side claims Orwell, even though it's only the right which rightfully can claim him.

So borrowed robes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. How can you talk about affordability and pretend to care about it if you don't address, just for starters, the carbon tax going up again in a few days? And it is not just we saying it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Last year the federal parliamentary budget officer testified before committee that, as a result of the carbon tax, at least 60 per cent of Canadian households are financially worse off. And of course the wider economy is impacted as indirect costs are passed on to people by businesses.

The PBO [parliamentary budget officer] also reminded us, if we needed reminding, that Saskatchewan producers will be paying \$28 million in carbon tax for grain drying alone by 2030. And consider, producers are hit by this tax at every turn. Every farmer is paying carbon tax every time product comes onto their farm, but also when it is shipped out, on inputs during seeding, harvesting, drying the grain, shipping it, on utilities to process it. There's also tax on transporting the grain or another product to a further-stage processor — a wheat miller, for example — then on utilities for milling the wheat, delivering the flour to a bakery, on utilities at the bakery, and finally on delivering the bread to a grocery store.

[16:15]

And of course the carbon tax affects utilities, particularly SaskPower. That side is wilfully blind to that, and to the fact that the carbon tax affects people on-reserve, low-income people who don't file tax returns and don't therefore get rebates, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In many ways the carbon tax hits them hardest. Northern communities that rely on diesel have no EV charging stations, long distances to travel.

That side is wilfully blind to the fact that businesses don't get rebates on the carbon tax. You can't ignore that if you're talking about affordability or if you claim to be a friend of business or the energy sector or producers. And you cannot ignore the fact that when taxes, utilities, and housing costs are combined, Saskatchewan is the most affordable place to live in Canada. Let's say that again — the most affordable place to live in Canada.

Also Saskatchewan has the second-lowest utility bundle in Canada. It has one of the highest tax-free thresholds in the country. A family of four pays no income tax on its first \$56,550 of income. Under them, 26,150.

And if they don't like to be compared to their political forefathers or forepeople, what would they do differently? Saskatchewan's economy is leading the country in growth. They talk critically about Saskatchewan's growth rate compared to that across the country, its job growth rate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But what they don't talk about is the historic drought of 2021 or the fact that our economy rebounded from COVID well over a year ago, ahead of other provinces.

In early 2022 we had exponential job growth numbers, which of

course tempers the numbers now because we're already so far ahead of everyone else. Yes, our white-hat economy, as it's been called, is confronted with labour shortages, which we're doing everything we can to address, but the fact is there are nuances to these things.

And it's not only the carbon tax, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There are real economically harmful federal policies that that side appear to have never heard of, or if they have, have no position on them. The federal fuel standard is one. This year, 2023, the federal government is introducing new fuel standard regulations. They've largely fallen under the radar because they are regulations, not legislation, but they really are carbon tax number two.

We predict that these regulations will have an impact of at least \$700 million a year on both gas consumption and diesel consumption in our province while we await our infrastructure in the biofuel sector, for example, to really get established, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And the federal government has never contradicted us on this. In fact it has suggested that it actually could be much, much higher. Just one set of regulations, no rebate, and a huge impact on retail, rail, the ag sector, trucking, manufacturing, and of course heating your home and fuelling your car.

What is their position through their famous affordability lens on that? You're not taken seriously out there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you have no position on the federal fuel standard, because out there people are very literate about it: farmers and energy workers, manufacturers, truckers.

Another one: what's that side's position on the clean electricity regulations? In committee they were news, seemingly, to the member for Regina Douglas Park. As a critic, really there's no excuse. No fossil fuel-generated power by 2035; that is a problem for affordability, you would think.

Bill C-69, another one. I'm not sure I've ever heard a single one of them say anything about Bill C-69 even though right now it's before the Supreme Court of Canada, an intervention brought by 10 provinces, including Quebec against the federal government's clear violation of Section 92A, exclusive provincial jurisdiction under the Constitution.

Bill C-69, the federal *Impact Assessment Act*, killed — and it was referenced by my colleague as just one example — the Saguenay liquid natural gas facility in Quebec. Liquid natural gas, which our allies around the world now want, which we could provide but, but for federal policies we can't. So Canada's democratic allies — Japan, Germany — have to seek it elsewhere, sometimes in unsavoury places.

Last spring the Alberta Court of Appeal held that Bill C-69 had taken a "wrecking ball" to exclusive provincial jurisdiction, exclusive provincial jurisdiction over natural resources.

When we stand up for it, they deride and mock — a stunt, the member for Regina Douglas Park called it — clearly out of step with the rest of the provinces. And the arguments before the Supreme Court last week, leading provincial counsel from across the country arguing that if this Act is upheld and the increasing stealth tendency of the federal government to micromanage

provincial jurisdiction and regulations, it constitutes an actual threat to the structure and workability of this federation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let alone the cost again that this and other stealth federal policies impose on crucial sectors, including energy, agriculture, small business. Just a stunt? At least the former leader of that party, Allan Blakeney, with Peter Lougheed fought for the inclusion of 92A in the Constitution in 1982. That is something. That's some vision.

Last December the member for Regina Douglas Park said:

The Saskatchewan NDP absolutely believes we should be standing up for Saskatchewan at the federal level. We need to be ensuring that we're getting the best deal for this province.

That's the real stunt. How stand up? What would she propose? One day *The Saskatchewan First Act* is a legal nothingburger. The next, it's a stunt. Her calling it a stunt, is a stunt. And the next, she's wildly concerned about all the supposed grave ramifications. Pick a lane. Bottom line, why does being a good Canadian, a good Saskatchewanian, mean deferring to Justin Trudeau? Quebec doesn't.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, plastics is another one. We're arguing in a federal court intervention being brought by Alberta and Saskatchewan that the federal government's including single-use plastics in the same category as arsenic and mercury is ridiculous. We're not arguing the merits of being environmentally responsible with plastics. Although while we're at it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, under the federal plan, introducing substitutes for plastics into landfills will actually add substantially to the proverbial carbon footprint and exponentially add costs. The feds admit that. We're arguing it, again on a jurisdictional basis, that constitutionally the federal government cannot infringe on exclusively provincial jurisdiction. Again, what is their position? They either have no view at all or they see it through a purely urban lens.

Are they even remotely aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the cost of the single-use plastics ban on agriculture? As the member from Melville-Saltcoats was telling me the other day, there is enormous concern in the agriculture sector about the federal single-use plastics ban. After all, bale net wrap, twine, grain storage bags, silage covers, pesticide containers, small seed bags, mini tote bags are all made of plastic. And as he said, there's a recycling program for pesticide containers and grain bags that we sponsor in Saskatchewan. We have a pilot going on twine and net wrap. But if the federal government bans their use, it doesn't matter if we recycle them. And we have a poor, expensive, or no-substitute system for many of these products, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Do they hear any of this on their so-called listening tours when they venture outside their urban bubble and claim rural creds by making it to the occasional coffee row?

And just ask coffee row, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about the importance of paying down the debt. One billion dollars paid down in operating debt last fiscal, another billion this fiscal. Paying down the debt reduces interest costs by \$44 million this year and allows us to invest in people, in programs, in projects. That matters to people, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I find it frankly astounding, this call out to spend out the

surplus from the same crew that wants a sovereign wealth fund; from the same crew that was, under the former government, the definition of penny-pinching, of school and hospital budgets slashers, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Borrowed robes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in Justice, proud to have announced \$876,000 over three years, part of \$27.5 million per year to address interpersonal and sexual violence in our province. And the Premier and I and the Minister for Corrections and Policing, we were in meetings with representatives from some facilities that offer second-stage services on budget day, and they were very positive. They were very moving meetings, and I thank them for everything they do. Together we can forge a very positive path.

In terms of broader aims this coming year, Justice is focused on empowering and recruiting prosecutors to improve access to justice every day, in every way we can. I was very proud to reopen Lloydminster as a full judicial centre, and Weyburn on the King's Bench side over the past year. That matters to people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it helps the administration of justice at every level.

We will continue to represent Saskatchewan's interests as recently announced on bail reform, an instance where we worked with the federal government. At the same time, we will continue to be cautious, particularly about strings attached on federal funding arrangements and what expectations they create.

But speaking of forging a positive path, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this beautiful brooch, this flower, it was given to me by members of the Elders Forum, which meets regularly with the Ministry of Justice. And I had met with them along with the Minister of Corrections to talk about *The Saskatchewan First Act*, the marshals Act. And it was so positive and so personal. And it just reminded me that on a human level, often when we take out gatekeepers and rhetoric, we can meet and resolve things person to person. And I'm always open to doing that.

Similarly with the member for Athabasca. He has travelled thousands of kilometres meeting with constituents, meeting with people on a human, personal level to, again, forge a positive path. We've met together with stakeholders. But he will not be cowed or condescended to. Imagine the idea that all Indigenous people should think alike, that any group should. And we've seen that same condescension when it comes to energy projects in this country, the belief that all Indigenous people are against them, that everyone thinks the same way. Of course that's just not the case. Anyway, watch out world. The member for Athabasca means business. He's his own man.

Similarly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Premier, who is back this week telling Saskatchewan's story just as those wonderful digital billboards do in all the airports now. Sustainable Saskatchewan, going bold; I love those billboards. And the Premier is the real deal, Mr. Deputy Speaker, no borrowed robes there. A guy who bought potato-harvesting equipment on his honeymoon, who ran a business with all the twists and turns that come with that and learned from that and farmed. If anyone understands affordability and the need for a balanced, non-reckless approach, it is he.

He can face the people of this province on their terms, on his terms as a natural representative. He knows them. He is one of

them. And as he has said, consulting with communities on this side, it means going home.

And for all the negativity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, encountering it, the best revenge, said Liz Taylor, is living well. I've always loved that phrase. The best revenge in this case is Saskatchewan living well and fulfilling all its promise and potential. We love this province. I love this province. The older I get, the more sentimental I get about it. I will give everything I have to defending it and strengthening it. We all will, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we have so much to fight for.

[16:30]

Thank you to my friends on this side because you really are. And I also want to say thank you to Jeremy, to Carter, Michelle, my most recent chiefs; Ang who is now rocking caucus; to Ashley, my chief now. Thank you for coming along for the ride. It's as if you've always been here. My DMO [deputy minister's office] team, Krista, Sydney, Mariia, and Paul, I love you guys. Betty Anne in Saskatoon, my absolute partner, and my beloved family whom I love so much.

And just yesterday, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my son who is now 18 and he's in commerce, he was performing with the Greystone Singers in Saskatoon. And the concert was at Knox cathedral and it was themed *Elemental Forces*. And I was there with my elemental forces, my parents, watching him.

He's a tenor 2 and he was so good. And I'm a tough critic. I'm a tough critic. When he taught himself to sing during COVID, because that's basically what he did, I was skeptical. He has perfect pitch. And he's just gone from strength to strength. And it's a weird feeling as a parent to suddenly see what your child will be. Realize. With him, it's a singer, it's a performer. I just realized that absolutely yesterday, if there was any doubt. And he just strode to the front, and he sang a solo in Gaelic, "My Gallant Hero." He would bring an Irishman to tears. He did us.

And I think it would be great if Greystone Singers sang for all of us at the Throne Speech in the fall. Not that I'm biased or anything, but you would love them. My gallant hero, for him I will never give up or stop fighting, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Here, Madam Deputy Premier, is to a great budget, budget 2023-24. Saskatchewan, we have your back. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Honoured to be on my feet here and deliver a response to the budget brought forward last week. And again, spoiler alert, at the conclusion of my speech, I won't be supporting this budget. I will be supporting the amendment brought forward by my . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I know, the disappointment. I'm glad that there was some surprise opposite. But I've got this awesome seatmate over here, and I'm going to be supporting his amendment.

But I'm going to start off my time here today, as is customary in here — some do it at the beginning, some at the end — but just with a few thank yous. First of all, to my family. You know, that

circle of support that we all have, our loved ones in our lives that support us in this work, because it can be tough, you know, it can be tough. It's a tough job. I think members on both sides experience that. But it's also an honour to serve in here, to serve with my colleagues in opposition, folks that I rely on and look up to and have a laugh with, and stand shoulder to shoulder with, in service to this province.

But, yeah, I've got this amazing crew. I'd like to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, an amazing crew at home supporting me. But the truth is, they're not at home. They're a long ways away from home. My wife, Emma, and our three kids are in Albania this week, and they're sleeping right now because it's the middle of the night. And they're in Albania.

Many members opposite ask me about this, and I appreciate it when you do. But my daughter does weightlifting, and she's competing for Canada in the sport of Olympic weightlifting at Youth World Weightlifting Championships in Durrës, Albania. If anybody knows where that is, I'm impressed. I've got one hand up over there. So they've been there for a few days. She competes on Saturday. I'll update folks next week on how she does, but just so proud of her for all that she's achieved.

My daughter is currently the number one ranked lifter in the world in her category. She trains in our garage in Eastview, Saskatoon by herself. She never needs any encouragement or prodding. She's just the most self-directed athlete I've ever seen, and I've coached a lot of athletes over the years. And she's just an incredible human being, and I'm so proud of her for reaching for her goals and her dreams and for the way that she goes about it. Just makes me incredibly proud to be her dad.

She's there supported by my middle son, middle child, Tom, 10 years old. Just the most wonderful, wonderful kid around. We enjoy so many good things together, and I'm proud of him to be there supporting his big sister.

And our youngest, Myles, again just a wonderful kid, so proud to be there supporting his sister. But I guess it breaks my heart when we do these video calls and he's missing home and missing dad and missing bedtimes together. So I want those three special human beings to me to know that I'm thinking of them while they're about 8000 kilometres away and thankful that they're there supporting their sister.

And also a huge thanks out to my wife, Emma, who is really just a huge support for me, full of wisdom and guidance for me in this work and with our family life. Just incredibly thankful that she's taken on this huge task of taking three kids several flights to get there and more coming up on their way home in about a week. And thanks to her for everything she does, but especially for putting this adventure together for our family in support of our daughter.

I also want to give thanks to my office staff, to Betty and Judy in particular, just an amazing couple of CAs who, you know, they do so much of that real work serving constituents in Eastview who come into our office in Market Mall with their concerns, looking for help, you know. We know when someone comes into one of our offices, it's often because something isn't going well in their life, they need help with something. And they're two amazing people to be there to show that kind of compassion but

also competence and getting people the help that they need.

I want to take a minute and just also acknowledge, you know, on a human level, some of the members opposite I've heard express concerns for their colleagues experiencing, you know, challenging health matters. I want them to know that those members are also in my thoughts and prayers, and that we appreciate the service of these members to the province. And their service in this Assembly is valued and it's appreciated by members on both sides.

Finally I want to thank my constituents in Eastview. You know, we've got such an incredible community, and I've enjoyed getting out lots this year, whether it's knocking doors, chatting with folks at events. We're going to hold an open house coming up soon here.

And I just want to thank everyone that's taken the time to email, call, or drop in and share their thoughts with us, and I'm going to do my best to do them service in this response to the budget. Because I think that the priorities that we've seen — and budgets are always about priorities — the priorities that we've seen in this budget really fail to meet the moment, fail to deliver on things that really matter to my constituents and to the people of Saskatchewan.

You know, when we look at the biggest challenges facing our province right now, I think that we all know what they are. We hear them all the time as elected folks. We've got folks struggling with cost of living. Those inflationary pressures that are driving up the costs of everything are making it tough on individuals, seniors, families. We hear about it all the time, and I simply, you know, don't even see a recognition of this fact coming from this Sask Party government, who in fact claim that it's already affordable here and that nothing needs to be done to change that. That's I think a really out-of-touch position to have, one that's just simply not the reality for lots of folks out there.

The other concerns that we see, we hear people asking for more jobs and bigger paycheques and hoping to see their paycheques go further. But we see this government that is patting themselves on the back for not increasing taxes. I mean let's just pause for a minute and think about what a strange flex that is to say that we're not increasing taxes this year. Like what . . .

It just seems so incredibly out of touch when they brought in 32 new taxes and fees in last year's budget that are continuing to have a detrimental effect on people's bottom line. So to brag about not doing anything new is like it's kind of owning the fact that they made it really hard on folks a year ago and that nothing is going to change now, that those increases are going to stand, and that we should just forget about that.

And then of course the other things that I think are really missing, and I'm going to dig into this, into my critic areas, are real investment and vision in our health and education systems. I'll kind of start with a little bit, a few points here on the cost-of-living crisis that our province is facing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You know, yes, we've heard this government talk about not adding any new taxes, but there's also nothing here to help families with a once in a generation cost-of-living crisis.

So we see this government talking point of keeping life

affordable, which presumes that it currently is. But we know that over half, I think 55 per cent of Saskatchewan people report being worse off this year than a year ago. Fifty-five per cent being worse off now, and no acknowledgement of that in this budget.

I saw that the Finance minister was asked if there were any new supports for families struggling to make ends meet. Answer was no, nothing new. No supports for those realities facing people today. And then to add insult to injury, we see this buck-a-day increase for SIS and SAID recipients, you know, which has been described as legislated poverty for folks who are going deeper and deeper trying to afford food on the table. You know, increased utility rates, energy rates, power rates, it just appears to really be the actions of a government that is tired and out of touch.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's very hard to accept this line from the government that this is growth that works for everyone. And again it just leads me back to that place of seeing this is a tired and out-of-touch government when we have the highest rates of food bank usage in the country. You know, the highest rates of folks, and that's increasing. And in Saskatoon we have some of the highest rates, the biggest increase . . . I see children, children who need access to the food bank. We have some of the highest rates in Canada of children living in poverty, childhood poverty, more than 1 in 4. I don't know who came up with that slogan, but I just, I need them to know that when 1 in 4 children are living in poverty, it certainly is not growth that works for them.

We have some of the highest rates of mortgage insolvency in the country. And I've mentioned before, 55 per cent of people who are worse off this year compared to last year. Just again, I don't know what else to say. It's completely out of touch to not acknowledge that those are reality for a lot of folks in our province.

Well I'll dive into a few of my critic areas here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and put some comments on the record. When it comes to health care . . . So this is a trend I've seen from this government. They really like to talk about the front end, how much money is being invested. Let's just provide that big number as a way to absolve from any real responsibility.

But I'll tell you what that number doesn't do. It doesn't provide a vision, a vision both to acknowledge the realities of the present and where we need to go to meet the health care needs of people in this province. There's no vision coming from this government for a crumbling health care system, and I think that the reason for that is we actually have proof, we've got proof that this government isn't listening.

They haven't listened to the folks who really know, who know their hospitals well, who know their communities well. And those are doctors, nurses, and local voices in health care. Mr. Deputy Speaker, nurses have solutions and yet when we raised their concerns in this Assembly last week, when we raised and quoted word for word the concerns of nurses, I heard the Health minister accuse us of not paying attention. By raising the concerns of nurses, being accused that we're not paying attention.

Well I'd like to read the news release from the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses into the record, just the first part:

I write to you all today to express my profound disappointment with the provincial budget. This budget contains nothing new that recognizes the dedication of registered nurses, nor the state of the overwhelmed, overburdened, and collapsed healthcare system. Nothing.

This budget does nothing to recognize the severity of the registered nursing shortage and the threat that poses to the safety of patients.

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, particularly mid-career and senior nurses. Other provinces in Canada have prioritized retaining their registered nurses, but here at home, you guessed it: nothing.

[16:45]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, how disappointing is it that we can stand in this Assembly, raise these concerns from those who know the situation best, and be told that we are not paying attention. Maybe that Health minister, even worse, was insinuating that nurses aren't paying attention, that somehow they've got it figured out. I sure hope not because I tell you what. If I've got to make a decision between trusting that Health minister or 11,000 registered nurses, I'm going to choose the nurses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other place that this government isn't listening is to local voices in health care. So there was nothing in this budget to bring back those community health advisory networks. These are networks that would elevate the voices of local leaders, elected municipal leaders who are very frustrated that they've been shut out, and other local health care workers and professionals who can be the folks that are seeing what's happening and raising those concerns, bringing them, feeding them in to a government.

This was supposed to happen when health regions were amalgamated, and it didn't. But it's not too late. Nothing in this budget to bring back those local voices in health care. And I'll tell you, when I'm out with my colleague from Saskatoon Fairview, our outstanding critic for Health, we hear about this all the time. And that's why we brought this forward as one of our solutions.

I also want to point out that there's nothing in this budget to really reform, no vision for reforming primary health care, no real concrete actions to change the broken fee-for-service model. There's nothing about bringing in team-based care or responding to the variety of factors that are driving family doctors out of our province. And I've heard this government report over and over again on adding new doctors. That's great. We need them. But there's no acknowledgement of why doctors are leaving. There's not even curiosity, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We don't see the Health Authority conducting exit interviews, being curious about why these doctors are choosing to leave Saskatchewan. I think that we'd want to know that if we want to do the real work of retaining those valuable family doctors who serve our communities so well, but there's no curiosity to find out. And those doctors, many of them are leaving. In fact this Health minister and this government had been warned that this

year's budget will make that situation even worse, not offering any vision or any concrete changes to really ensure that we are attracting and retaining those primary care doctors. And how important is that when we've got over 200,000 people without a family doctor in this province?

I'm going to move on here to education, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I've got a lot of concerns. And I probably could have filled this time with my concerns over this budget, but we've got to put this budget in context of previous budgets. Year after year after year, school divisions are forced into a position to make tough choices. They should never, ever have been put in that, especially year after year after year. Tough choices, tough choices that have led to cuts.

Now there's a lot to wade through here in this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but this government has been incredibly crafty at forcing those tough choices onto divisions and maintaining this talking point that we've been hearing for years that it's record spending in education. Of course it is, of course it is. It's record spending on education. We've all got record salaries. We've all got record spending in lots of areas. That's how inflation works. That's a reality that none of us can change. That's how inflation works.

But I'll tell you, in the rotunda on budget day, last Wednesday, I got a question from a journalist, and it went something like this. I stood in front of the camera, light goes on, and he said, I've talked to 15 people today, stakeholders in education. All of them said that this is a bad budget for our schools. The Minister of Education is the only person who disagrees. What do you think? Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I said, your question hit the nail on the head.

We've got every stakeholder in the province in K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education on one side and the Minister of Education on the other side. They're not even seeing eye to eye. He's not even in the ballpark when it comes to the needs in our K to 12, primary and secondary education system.

So I'd like to read a few things into the record here. I'm going to start with the news release from the Saskatchewan School Boards Association. I won't read the whole thing but I'd like to read some of this into the record:

The Saskatchewan School Boards Association (SSBA) recognizes the small increase in funding for the school system in today's provincial budget, but cautions that the increase falls short of covering pressures due to inflation and enrolment growth.

"The operating increase announced in the 2023-24 budget does not cover the expenses the school divisions are facing," said Jaimie Smith-Windsor, president of the SSBA. "This budget contributes to the existing instability and continuing erosion of the publicly funded education system and school boards are increasingly concerned about that."

I'll stop there. I could read the whole thing but I think in summary, the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association] represents 27 public and separate school divisions in the province. They again are going to be facing very tough decisions.

Now we've been down this road before. This shouldn't be surprising to any members opposite. Last year in here and out there, we heard members of the government, including the Minister for Education, use the same lines: record funding, record spending, using big numbers.

But I'll tell you, last year this is what that record spending led to. Saskatoon Public school division had a \$4.5 million shortfall. They had to get rid of 12 full-time elementary teachers, seven full-time secondary teachers, one full-time EAL [English as an additional language] teacher, one educational psychologist, and one full-time resource teacher. They also had to bring in a \$100 lunchtime supervision fee for families if a child chooses to stay at school for lunch, with a maximum of \$200.

So not only, not only — and this is in our province's largest school division — not only did we see fewer teachers driving learning for more students, we also saw families hit hard by having to pay more out of pocket for their kids to eat lunch at school.

I'll go through a few other examples here. Greater Saskatoon Catholic, they saw a reduction of 19.5 full-time teachers. Again this is record spending on education leading to damaging, damaging cuts. Let's go to Chinook School Division. They had to reduce EA [educational assistant] hours by 30 minutes a day to meet budget shortfalls. Prairie Valley School Division, they had to decrease full-time equivalents of 36.4. Again, record spending, massive cuts. So I think it's time that we increase the level of honesty here in this Assembly when we talk about record spending. We have to know that that's leading to massive cuts that are hurting our classrooms.

I'll go on. South East Cornerstone, they cut 21 full-time teachers, 11 support staff, and two consultants, and that was to cover a \$2.5 million deficit. The list goes on and on, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Again these tired and out-of-touch talking points are doing nothing to serve our teachers, our students, and our families who are experiencing year after year after year of damaging cuts in the classroom.

It's also affecting teachers. And I'd like to read a little bit from the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation release. And again I could read the whole thing, but we don't have too much more time here so I'll have to pick and choose here:

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation is baffled by the government's disregard for students. Budget 2023-24 fails to provide adequate funding for increasing student enrolment and more complex needs.

"Government either doesn't understand the issues or doesn't think they're important," says STF President Samantha Becotte. "I hear from parents and teachers every day. There is a serious concern for student well-being, because school divisions simply don't have enough funding to meet students' needs. These decisions have a critical, lasting impact on the future of our province."

I think I'll choose to end there, but the news release goes on to detail the drop in per-student funding despite the numbers that we're hearing from the member opposite. I'll tell you what. If I'm asked to choose between believing in what that tired and out-

of-touch minister says, or thousands of teachers serving our . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — I ask the member to watch your comments, please, for when you're referring to specific ministers or specific members on the opposite side. Thank you.

Mr. Love: — Gladly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you. If I have the choice between believing the talking points from that tired and out-of-touch government versus the realities that our teachers are facing in the classroom, I'm going to stand with our teachers. That's who I'm going to stand with. They know the situation.

In summary here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, getting back to my notes here on page after page of cuts in our classrooms, I'll conclude with a few comments here before we're ready to adjourn.

This government has said that Saskatchewan is already affordable. It's not. Folks in Saskatchewan are struggling to make ends meet, and they need a government more concerned with families than with their own bottom line. And we don't have that right now. They want to pat themselves on the back for paying down some of the debt that they've racked up, tripled, during their time in government. I'm not ready to give that pat on the back, especially when the only thing, the only thing that's changed in the last year driving up this increase in revenue, is an illegal and an immoral Russian invasion of Ukraine. I haven't seen any management on that side that's led to any positive changes in our province's finances.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, I've heard a lot of noise from members opposite about who's positive and who's negative, okay? I've heard a lot of talk about . . . It's kind of become, you know . . . we're kind of used to talking points in here and things that get said over and over, so I'm sure that instruction is coming from somewhere. They say, let's talk about who's positive and who's negative. But I'll tell you what. On this side of the House we're never going to see the positive side of a premier that's overseeing the worst economic record in the country. I don't know what the positive side to that is — a premier that's seen the worst jobs performance in the country during his five years in office. I'm not sure that on this side that we're going to see the positive side.

We were asked by a member opposite to see the positive side of hundreds of people dying of COVID. We were asked in this Assembly to see the positive side of that last year. I'm not sure what the bright side of this government's mismanagement of the health care system is, but I'm not going to stand and see that as a positive.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not sure what the bright side is to the levels of childhood poverty that this government is overseeing, that I'm supposed to stand in my place and sing their praises over the situation our children are in, the rates of food bank usage that we see.

I'm not sure I can stand in my place and talk about the bright side of leading the country in domestic violence rates and interpersonal violence rates. I'm not going to do that. I love this province too much. I'm not going to stand here and talk about the bright side of these devastating situations that many people in Saskatchewan see themselves in.

I'll tell you what I will do. On this side, we're going to stand up for nurses and health care workers. We are going stand up for those nurses who let the province know this budget was disappointing.

I'm going to stand here and I'm going to stand up for teachers and students, teachers who said that this budget made them baffled, baffled at the lack of supports for our young people.

I'm going to stand up for families, families struggling to make ends meet when the Minister of Finance simply said there was nothing in this budget to support them.

I won't be supporting the budget because I will be supporting our health care workers, our teachers, and our families. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — It now being 5 o'clock, this House stands recessed until 7 p.m. this evening.

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

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

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

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

Hon. Dustin Duncan
Minister of Education

Hon. Bronwyn Eyre
Minister of Justice and Attorney General

Hon. Donna Harpauer
Deputy Premier
Minister of Finance

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

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

Hon. Gene Makowsky
Minister of Social Services

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

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

Hon. Paul Merriman
Minister of Health

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

Hon. Jim Reiter
Minister of Energy and Resources

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

Hon. Dana Skoropad
Minister of Environment

Hon. Christine Tell
Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety
Minister Responsible for the Firearms Secretariat

Hon. Gordon Wyant
Minister of Advanced Education