



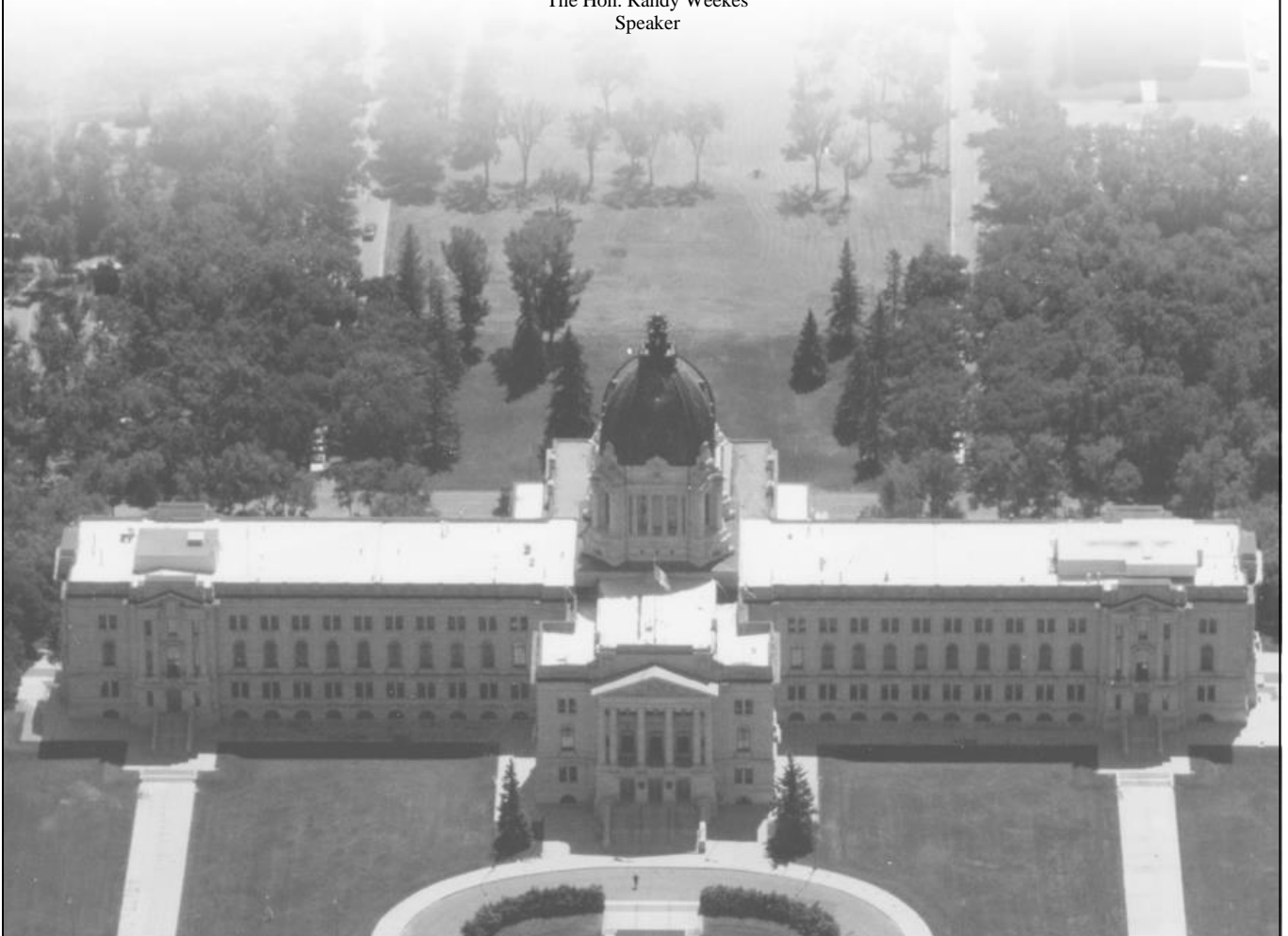
FOURTH SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
AND
PROCEEDINGS**

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



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
4th 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

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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, Dana — Arm River (SP)
Hargrave, Hon. 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 (Ind.)	

Standings

Government Caucus: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 44; Opposition Caucus: New Democratic Party (NDP) — 14;
Independent: Saskatchewan United Party (Ind.) — 1; Independent — 2

Clerks-at-the-Table

Clerk — Iris Lang
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Deputy Clerk — Kathy Burianyak
Principal Clerk — Robert Park

Sergeant-at-Arms — Lyall Frederiksen

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[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — It being 7 p.m., we resume the session.

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 Deputy Chair of Committees: — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Mr. Clarke: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's good to be back after a short break. Just to pick up where I was speaking to before we took our recess, talking about the crisis in health care, particularly in rural Saskatchewan, a crisis that we know that the Sask Party government has created under their watch. And when you've been in power for 17 years now, there is nobody else to blame but yourself.

Now since this Premier took office, 21 per cent of rural registered nurses have left their positions. That's 474 fewer registered nurses in rural Saskatchewan. Now that's their record, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It sure doesn't sound like growth that works for everyone.

Now in this budget I do see some focus being put on hard-to-recruit training seats, and this is a good thing. Absolutely yes, we should be training Saskatchewan people for these jobs. And I think specifically of rural people or Indigenous people who are going to stay in their communities once they've been trained, and where they live. This is a good strategy.

Now while training new health care professionals is important, we do need to retain these health care workers, which is something that the current government is struggling to do. And time and time again we hear that this is where the government is failing. Today we talked about numbers during question period. You know, 14 per cent of pediatric specialists from the graduating class of 2022 stayed in this province after being trained here; 17 per cent for general surgery; 38 per cent stayed here for anesthesia. These are not great retention numbers. And when we talk to nurses in the field, when we talk to continuing care aides in the field, when we talk to doctors in the field, they also talk about the issue of retention, and this is something where they feel that the government is lacking.

Now let's talk a little bit about breast cancer care in this province because as an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly], this is something that I hear a lot about, have a lot of folks reaching out to my office to tell us about their struggles.

The current state of things in this province is that women are waiting too long to get mammograms, MRIs [magnetic resonance imaging], and biopsies that they desperately need. Imagine being a woman, you know, finding a lump in your breast and desperate to get that testing but having to waiting in limbo.

Some women are being asked to wait for a mammogram for a full year. This is unacceptable. And we see the government making strides to fund a new breast care facility coming online in 2025. It's important; however what are the solutions today for women who are waiting now, who are having to go to Calgary or not able to go to Calgary to get that mammogram or that biopsy?

People's lives are depending on this today, right now, and we don't have solutions. We need a government that starts listening to Saskatchewan health care workers, people like lab techs, porters, care aides, nurses and doctors, first-aiders and paramedics. And I know Saskatchewan New Democrats are ready to do just that.

We're ready to implement the nursing task force that the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses have been calling for. We're ready to amend *The Ambulance Act* to help retain ambulance workers and make the system work better, something paramedics and firefighters have been calling for. We're ready to implement a grow-your-own training program, something that the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities have been calling for.

Why were none of these ideas that have been brought forward by front-line workers put into this budget? Because this government has stopped listening. And now this is an election-year budget. Make no mistake, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's plain and simple. The question is, where are the solutions? Where are the plans to . . .

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Bonk: — Request leave to make an introduction.

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — Member asked for leave to introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Bonk: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you. I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome two guests sitting in the west gallery. We have Justine Hendricks who is the CEO [chief executive officer] of Farm Credit Canada, and she's here visiting us today. Justine lives in Montreal, but she's soon moving to Regina with her whole family. She's doing an excellent job in her role at FCC [Farm Credit Canada], and we wish her all the best and continued success here in Saskatchewan.

And sitting with her is Todd Klink. And if I remember correctly, you're the executive vice-president and in charge of communications or marketing for FCC. And Todd is a good

Saskatchewan boy. He's been around in the Saskatchewan agriculture scene for quite a while. And I'd just like all members to help me welcome them to the Saskatchewan legislature.

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

Mr. Clarke: — Thank you. I'd like to join with the member opposite and welcome Justine and Todd to their legislature here. I've got family members who work at FCC and I know FCC is always ranked high for employee satisfaction across Canada. So thank you for the work that you are doing, important work for agriculture producers here in the province and across Canada. So thank you for being here.

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.]

Mr. Clarke: — I will continue on with my speech here. I'm going to transition to talking a little bit about education. This is something that we've canvassed pretty thoroughly here over the last few weeks, over the fall sitting too. As a teacher, you know, I had a front-row seat into what was happening in education, in our classrooms.

But one of the things that's come up, you know, what we hear from teachers on the picket line out here, outside of the legislature earlier this week, is that they feel disrespected by this government, that they're not being heard. And members opposite will say, no, no, no, no, no. We have teachers in our family and we talk to them and we talk to teachers. But when you have 15,000 new students in the school system in Saskatchewan and you hire one new teacher . . .

An Hon. Member: — That's not right.

Mr. Clarke: — That is not right. That's not right. Thank you.

Now so I want to just touch on one other thing that one of the members talked about today in their speech about how the school in Pinehouse is going to be life changing. And I agree, as a teacher. Having a new facility is important to a community and it can be the heart of that community, absolutely. But you know what else is life changing, Mr. Deputy Speaker? A grade 6 kid who has a learning disability and needs to get an assessment in school but can't because the wait-list to get that assessment is two years — saw that with my own eyes. You know what else is life changing? A kindergarten kid who can get access to a speech pathologist because they have a speech impediment, which isn't happening in our schools today.

And you know what else is life changing, is if you are a new immigrant who has come to this country, to this province, to this city, and you get plunked into a school and you know no English

and there is no supports for you as a new student in school to learn how to speak English. Those are all life-changing things, and those are happening all across this province right now. There's a lot of ways that we could change the lives of Saskatchewan students by investing in teachers, in supports, in the learning conditions of our kids. That would be life changing.

All right. I'm running out of time here so I'm going to just jump ahead . . .

An Hon. Member: — In conclusion.

Mr. Clarke: — Not that far ahead. I'm sure one of the members opposite is going to stand up after I'm done here and say something along the lines of, those NDP [New Democratic Party] members are just so negative. But I want to be clear. I want to be clear to Saskatchewan people: this province is a spectacular place and Saskatchewan people are spectacular people.

And I've lived in this province my whole life, and I've travelled across most of it. I proposed to my wife down at Roche Percee. I've explored the Cypress Hills with my daughters. I've climbed huge poplar trees to band ferruginous hawks with Dr. Stuart Houston in the Kindersley PFRA [Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration] pasture. I've conducted breeding bird surveys up at Deschambault Lake, canoed and portaged to Ajawaan Lake in P.A. [Prince Albert] National Park to see Grey Owl's Cabin with friends.

We've canoed the North Saskatchewan River, the Waterhen, the Churchill. We've explored the Cumberland delta with the late Gary Carriere. I've captured and banded northern hawk owls on the No. 3 Highway just east of the Hudson Bay, and grew up camping at Duck Mountain Provincial Park. I do need to get north of Missinipe though.

But the point is that everywhere I have gone, Saskatchewan people are welcoming, kind, and full of fortitude. And Saskatchewan people are doing amazing things. And I am so grateful to get to call this province home, so proud to be part of this province. But I think that this Sask Party government is doing a bad job of governing. I think that's fair. I think it's making poor choices on so many fronts and especially when it comes to this budget. Their record from the last six years clearly shows that.

This is a great province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a great place to live, a great place to raise a family. And it's worth fighting for its future because I think the people of this province deserve better than what they're getting right now.

Now I think I have one more minute, and I just want to say a couple thank yous. Of course to the good people of Regina Walsh Acres, who I represent, it is a privilege to represent you in the legislature here. It's been wonderful to get to know so many of you over the last six, seven months as your MLA, on the doorstep, at events such as like New Hope Church fowl supper, you know, at the Regent Park Community Association events, and so many more.

I want to shout out to my constituency assistant, Erin Klassen, for all of her work in helping me get established as a new MLA in our office. And also to Bre Litzenberger who was here earlier today, I want to say thanks.

I also just want to just say how proud I am of my family, my twin girls Rowan and Teal who are in grade 6 this year. They've taken up curling and volleyball, even got involved in the school musical this year which is pretty awesome. I'm a pretty proud dad right now. Also I want to say thank you to my wife, Kristen, for her help in this crazy life that is being an MLA.

But lastly I want to say thank you to my colleagues. I am so proud to be part of this team. We've got such a diverse group on our side who are passionate about this province, passionate about the good potential that we have here in Saskatchewan. And it's an honour to be able to serve alongside them each and every day and of course under the leadership of the member from Regina Lakeview who I just respect so much.

So with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will wrap up, and I will be voting in favour of the amendment my colleague from Regina Rosemont brought forward. Thank you so much.

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — I recognize the member from Martensville-Warman.

Mr. Jenson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees. It's great to be on my feet and be able to enter in some of my own personal thoughts and remarks as it relates to this year's budget. And I'll be talking a little bit about what's happening in the constituency of Martensville-Warman and some of the people there as well, and also how the budget is affecting that area of the province. And we'll also maybe do a little history, too. I think I'm going to pick up where the Minister of Government Relations kind of left off, and I might visit that at some point.

You know, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees, the budget theme is classrooms, care, and communities. I can't think of three more appropriate and terrific pieces to be focused in on in this budget. You know, it's no surprise to my colleagues in caucus I have two kids. They're both in school. And one is going to be graduating in June, and the other one, my daughter, just turned 10. So now she's in double digits, and we're having fun with that, trust me. She's at that age.

[19:15]

So when I look at this budget and I see the record operating increase that we have, and I think about my kids in school and what that means to them — and what it means to their classmates and what it means to the rest of the kids in their schools and kids around the province for that matter — I'm very proud to be able to stand here tonight and say thank you to the Minister of Education for this. It's important. It's needed. And as a parent, I think most parents will agree with me that this is a good thing.

You know, as MLAs, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees, it's our job when we're back home in our constituencies to listen to parents. We listen to constituents. We listen to community members. And I think this budget, with this increase in the education funding, is a result of those conversations that we've had at home with these parents, with these teachers, administrators, and other educators.

This side of the House sometimes get a bad rap, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees. We get a bad rap because we're not caring, we're not compassionate people for some reason. And I totally

disagree with that. Everybody on this side of the House, we stepped up to do a job, and that's to represent the communities that we come from. We wouldn't be here if we didn't want to make things better. And we make things better by having dialogue with the people in our communities.

So you know, for us to be characterized as a government that isn't compassionate; isn't caring; is old, tired, out of touch, whatever, I think is completely wrong. We have so many members on this side of the House. The ideas are terrific. Yeah, we might have the odd older one, elder ones. But I think, you know, we have a lot of energy on this side of the House, and when we see a budget like this that has record investments in education, record investments in health care, you know, record revenue sharing for our communities, it's things like that that keep us energized.

And when the province is growing like it has been over the past 17 years, 16 years, you can't help but come to work feeling energized and wanting to keep that momentum going. So I think we're in a very, very good place as a province, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees.

So when I also look at the challenges when it comes to health care delivery in our province, a lot of those challenges are associated with growth. We have more people than we've ever had. We've grown by almost 225,000 people since we formed government. It's a much better record than what the other guys can say on the other side when the population of this province declined under their watch, right?

We have a health human resources plan that is second to none in the country, and the work that our two Health ministers have been doing on that plan — recruiting, retaining, incentivizing — the work that they are doing as Health ministers is paying off. And we're starting to see that, with nurses coming from the Philippines, where we've hired over 1,000 nurses to work in our system from Canadian schools. These are all important things.

And one that I'm going to really point out is, because it affects my constituency directly, and that's the nurse practitioner program that we started up last August. We cut the ribbon on the Warman primary health care clinic. Three nurse practitioners are doing excellent work. And I'm happy to say for my colleagues that are here, we're hoping that we can cut the ribbon on the Martensville nurse practitioner clinic here in the next few weeks, you know, heading into the spring.

So we made a further announcement a couple of weeks ago in Warman where we're going to be training an additional 25 nurse practitioners, increasing the number of seats by 25. We're also going to now allow nurse practitioners to operate independently in a publicly funded system. This is a game changer, I think, especially in rural Saskatchewan where nurse practitioners can set up, and they can take on new patients and be really no different than a family physician. So this is very important work that's happening.

Some other really neat things that are happening in my constituency over the past, you know, three, four years, and I'll even go back all the way to 2007 because I think it's important that people remember all the good things that have been happening. So we also have in Warman, Martensville, Osler, and the surrounding rural area, we've got some new facilities. The

Martensville recreation centre, construction is under way. If you're heading north on Highway 12 past Martensville and you look on the west side of the highway, this big, beautiful new building is going up. That's going to be open this fall. It's a new hockey arena, indoor soccer pitch. It's going to be an absolute wonderful facility. Forty-four million dollars, and that came together through the ICIP [Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program] program. The people of Martensville have great reason to be very confident in their future there.

We have lots of other things. We've got 24-hour dedicated ambulance service now for our area, also based out of Martensville. When it comes to health care and recreation, this government has been responsive to the needs of not only of people in Martensville, or not only people in Warman, but across the province. And we can only do that because we have such a strong economy. We have sectors that are growing. We have emerging sectors that are coming out. We've done several announcements over the past few weeks, and the future is absolutely looking bright.

Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees, through my work as Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Immigration and Career Training, I get the opportunity that not a lot of people get to see regularly — like usually about once a month — and that's to participate in citizenship ceremonies in Saskatoon. And you know what? It's something that everybody should go to at least once. I've been able to shake hands and meet, it's in excess of now 2,400 individuals, newcomers to Canada that are now Canadian citizens.

And when I talk to them, they've made Saskatchewan their home. They're confident in what we are doing in Saskatchewan. And they are going to play a big role in our future success, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees. So those citizenship ceremonies are incredibly important, and they're absolutely wonderful.

I also get the chance to meet with the different community groups, whether it be the Filipino community, the Bangladeshi community, and listen to what they're telling us and things that they would like to see improved. And so we have those conversations. And so my work as Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Immigration and Career Training is absolutely rewarding, and I absolutely love what I do.

So just going back to my constituency of Martensville-Warman for a minute, you know, we go home on weekends when we're in session. And it never ceases to amaze me; I go home and there's always, you know, at least one new basement — if not two, three, or four — being dug in the city of Warman when I go home. I drive past them. The amount of growth that we're experiencing . . . And I know on the other side they keep talking about oh, this many jobs were lost and all the negative stuff.

Well come to Warman. Come to Warman and you will see job creation like you've never seen it before. Come to Warman. You will see growth like you have never seen before. 2006, when I first moved to Warman, population 3,200. Today that population is edging 14,000 people. Okay? Yeah, it's hard to explain. In Warman we're seeing expansion to the Warman Home Centre Communiplex, another ice surface taken on by the city. We've got, like I said before, the dedicated ambulance service based out of Martensville.

We've seen skate parks built. We've got BMX [bicycle motocross] and pump tracks that have been built, new walking paths, path lighting, baseball and softball diamonds, soccer pitches. The list goes on and on, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees. And a lot of that is through programs — whether it's MEEP [municipal economic enhancement program] through the provincial government or ICIP or through municipal revenue sharing, which is up 14 per cent this year. So we're doing good things for the communities that we serve, and it's all tied to a strong and growing economy.

So I'm just going to go through a couple of thank yous, and then we're going to maybe delve into a bit of a history lesson, but we'll see. The first thank you I'd like to give a shout-out to is my constituency assistant, Whitney Friesen. He celebrated his 30th anniversary as a constituency assistant in December. You know, it's a long time. He loves what he does. He keeps me on task. He keeps me organized. And you know what, I'm absolutely thrilled to work for him, so it's wonderful.

Another person who I'd like to give a shout-out to is our Premier. Our Premier shows great leadership. He's got an equally great vision for the province, and I can't think of anyone better sitting in that chair than the guy that we have right now. So I'd like to give a shout-out to the Premier.

I'd also like to give some congratulations to our Minister of Finance. You know, being involved in 17 budgets, being the signatory on seven of those as the minister, what an incredible, what an incredible person. You know, she's given so much, and I think all we can do is say thank you for everything she's done for our province. She's an amazing lady, and you know, hopefully we can all glean a little bit of knowledge before she goes.

My colleagues, we're like family. We really are like family. You know, we cheer together, sometimes we commiserate together, and you know, sometimes we even laugh at the member from Saskatoon Southeast's jokes once in a while. So it's all good. It's all good.

And I'd also like to say thank you to the caucus staff and the staff in the ministries and executive council. They're some of the hardest working people I've met. They're intelligent, intuitive people. They know how to get things done, and we're all the better for it. And the people of this province are all the better for it as well.

And I guess I'd better mention my family. My wife, Angela, and I don't know if many know here, but she was my high school sweetheart. I'm not going to sugar-coat it. She's a wonderful lady. We've been married almost 19 years now, and I didn't have to stop and pause to think about that. And she takes care of things at home, and for that, I'm so grateful because it allows me — and by extension, us — to do the work that we do here.

Like I'd said earlier, my son Asher, who's going to be graduating in June . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No, I don't think he's going to be following in his dad's footsteps. He's got designs on joining the Canadian Armed Forces.

An Hon. Member: — Good for him.

Mr. Jenson: — Yeah, I think so.

And then there's my daughter Kolbie. She just turned 10 in February, and we're not sure what she's going to do. She's an artist; she's good at building things. She gets things out of the recycling bin and creates something and gives it to a friend. Like she's super creative. So not really sure what Kolbie's going to wind up being when she's older, but she's going to be successful. I know that.

As promised, we're going to talk a little bit of history now. You know, we've talked about the growing economy and how that's able to fund things like health, education, social services, highways, things like that.

You know, for 27 years I was an active member of the print media in this province, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees, and I vividly remember the '90s and the early 2000s. They were some of the darkest years I've ever experienced. I grew up in Saskatchewan. I was born right here in Regina. I never left the province. I'm 53 years old, so I've seen it all. I've experienced it all.

I watched under the NDP government back in the 1990s, or maybe it was early 2000s, the school in Conquest closed. The school in Macrorie was closed. The school in Hawarden was closed. One after another after another, I saw first-hand the devastation of those villages when they lost their schools. The look on the parents' faces told the story.

I watched as the hospital in Outlook was closed, turned into a health centre. Doctors were let go. Nurses couldn't find work. They left the province.

We had highways that were an absolute disaster. We had Highway 45 going north to Saskatoon; we had Highway 219. Nobody was sure which road the ambulance would take if they had to rush you to Saskatoon because both of them were in terrible shape. So if you didn't make it because of the condition you were in, the road was probably going to do it for you. That was the running joke at the time, and it was no joke.

Population was in decline. Jobs were scarce, and our province was becoming known in other jurisdictions around the country and around the world as a great place to come from but not a great place to be. Why? It's all because of the ideology of the members opposite.

[19:30]

The NDP, by its nature, are not friendly to business. That is a fact. Business owners and investors never know what they're going to get under an NDP government other than higher corporate taxes, more government red tape and intrusion. And if you happen to be making a profit, they're going to come for that too in the form of nationalizing an entire industry. We've seen it before; we'll see it again.

And the other one is the direct investment into different industry. Direct investment — all you have to do is turn the chapter back in the book to SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company]. I watched. I saw it with my own two eyes, mister deputy committee of chairs. I watched farmers lose

everything all because of their ideology that they needed to be in business. They knew better than the business people. It's not true.

This government will create the climate to let business happen, entrepreneurship happen. End of story. That's why we are seeing the growth under this government. That's why we're seeing record investments in education, record investments in health care, revenue sharing that is absolutely fabulous for the communities that we all live in.

We're investing \$4.4 billion in capital alone, mister deputy committee of chairs — 9 new schools, 2 more to be renovated and expanded, 69 new or replacement schools, and 32 renovated schools since 2007. That never ever happened under the NDP. And dare I say it would never happen again if they ever have the privilege of forming government.

We've got capital funding for new hospitals in Weyburn, Prince Albert, plus capital for long-term care projects in La Ronge and here in Regina. And again we can't do these types of things without a strong and growing economy.

The word "confidence" means everything. If you give people confidence to do what they want to do, they will go out and do it. But every time this opposition runs down our economy, runs down the people of our province, that takes away the confidence. We're not going to let that stand. We're going to make sure that people are confident to invest in this province, confident to start businesses in the province, and confident to stay here and get a career and work in this province and raise a family in this province.

My time is getting fairly short here, mister deputy committee of chairs, so I'm just going to leave off with this. Since we were given the privilege of forming government in 2007, we've been able to create that environment that I just spoke of that creates economic growth, creates the jobs, and keeps people here in our province. It allows our ministries to build higher and to make sure the facilities and services that people expect are here for them.

There's going to be a choice later this fall. No matter what happens, we cannot let this iteration of the NDP anywhere near government for the sake of our economy and everything that we've built.

It's estimated our province will collect \$521 million in gas tax this year. The opposition wants the gas tax cut today. Where is that money going to come from? Are you going to fix the roads? Or are you going to tell people to go out and fix the roads like you did in the '90s? That leaves a \$500 million hole in the budget, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees, but no solutions from the other side — none. They're really good, they're really good at spending other people's money, but they have no way of accounting for it.

So with that I'm just going to wrap things up by saying, you know, I'm definitely going to be supporting the budget put forward by our Finance minister, but I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you.

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

Mr. Goudy: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a great day to be in this building. You know, every time, I think, we come to this place you walk up those big marble steps, and it's a pretty exciting day ahead.

And you know, I was thinking about the Finance minister. And you know, she's put forward this budget. And I had a little bit of chance to sit in the treasury board with her for a few years and really see what kind of character she was.

I'm the member from Melfort, which is an hour from her constituency, which is Humboldt, and so you know, you hear things about each other, I'm sure. And people get, you know, what they think you're like and what she's like. And sitting in treasury board, I learned a lot from our Finance minister.

And you know, I just want to say about her that the thing that impressed me most is sometimes when you don't know the way forwards — it seems like things are pretty foggy — our Finance minister is able to cut through the fog and be able to speak common sense into the whole situation. And you know, she brought hope to treasury board though it's a difficult thing to try and balance a budget.

One of the guiding principles for the Sask Party is that we have the constant commitment to reducing taxation and spending, keeping a constant commitment to balancing budgets, and being the Finance minister in that organization's a tough call. And she's done a great, great job at that.

Some of the other members that are going to be stepping away from politics, I just wanted to mention a few of them. Member from Yorkton, I'll never forget when I . . . First of all, I'm not feeling very good tonight. And he says, "Well suck it up." He says, "I took four days off for cancer, so just . . . You'll be okay." So member from Yorkton, he'll tell you what you need to hear, not what you want to hear. So he's a good man.

And you know, member from Saskatoon northeast, I remember the day that I found out that Kevin Phillips passed away. You and I were there together. You were the Education minister. And that was a very tough day. Melfort lost a good MLA that day, and we downgraded, but you've helped me in many ways . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . average, subpar.

Member from Indian Head-Milestone, I'll never forget I was pestering you in your office, and I wanted you to help me get to the Premier to pitch something. And I'll never forget sitting in there at the desk, having a panic attack, and you helped me get my feet in this building. And I'll never forget you gave me the big double thumbs-up at the caucus retreat there. And thank you for all you've done.

And the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy, you know, I appreciated being . . . Somebody said — a number of people have actually said about you outside of this building — that the guy, he seems to have no ego, which is strange for a politician. And you know, I have said many things. I think the day I asked you if you were an idiot, that was probably . . . But you know, we've been able to have fairly clear conversations, and you know, you've been a privilege to work with as your secretary.

And the member from Kindersley, too, he and I came into politics

at the same time, and you know, he treats me like a little brother. And you know, you make friends in this building that you really never knew that you would come together with such a diverse crew. Like we're kind of, you know, a big cross-section of the province — from different places, different backgrounds, different perspectives.

And so all the other ones that are leaving, I hope they know that when they do leave this place . . . First of all we're hoping that some of them come back. They're young. Some of the guys that are leaving are younger than I am. And you know, if their wives and kids get tired of them out in the world, we hope they send them back here to work with us again.

But all the others though, you know, that I didn't mention, you left a piece of your life in my heart. When I came into this building, I really was not a political individual. Like I watch no news. You know, I've never been a political person. I'm sure if you would have said to my grad class, who's the most least likely to ever get involved in politics, I might have been the one. If not, maybe number two from the bottom. But I never really was a politician, and you all helped me navigate this building.

And when I was having difficulties back in my constituency and I didn't know how to navigate a problem in health care or something else, you were all here for me. And those ones who are leaving, I wanted to say thank you and say that you left a piece of your life in mine. And hopefully I can serve better.

Just a few words on the budget. You know, it was funny. We had a guy who ran against me for the NDP. His name is Lorne Schroeder. And if you know Lorne, he's probably one of the nicest people you'll ever meet. And when I met him I thought, uh-oh, this is a nice guy; I might have some problems here. But you know, he hardly got any votes. And I thought, what in the world happened there? Because I wasn't a political person, you know, I didn't know why. I thought, how could he not get any votes? He's such a great guy.

But you know, when it comes to the economy, and it does boil down to, it's the fact it is about the economy when you compare the NDP to the Sask Party. That's why Lorne lost. I didn't know. But I was a Sask Party representative and he was the NDP.

So you know, I'm just going to read you here something that I found on your website. I think this is the problem, why Lorne lost here. It says:

The purpose of the party shall be to promote, through political action and other appropriate means, the establishment of a co-operative commonwealth in which the principle regulating production and exchange will be the supplying of human needs and not the making of profits.

And you know, Lorne may be a great guy but when you stand with a group that stand against profits and private industry . . . So the group that I am so happy to be with, what's our guiding principle? What's guiding principle number one? Economic growth and job creation through the private sector and not the government as the economic engine.

So you know, when we look at, when I came into this government we were at \$14.6 billion. And what's our budget this year?

\$20 billion. And you know, it's pretty amazing that those dollars of our budget came from a strong economy.

You know, if you go into my part of the world, Gerry Bourgault just sold Bourgault Industries. Started from pretty much nothing, and sells his business for, I don't know what. \$680 million industry. A thousand or so employees. So much of what's driven in my community comes from the vision of private industry. You've got, his community there, St. Brieux, it's bursting at the seams. You've got all sorts of corporations in that place. You go over to Englefeld and you see Schulte and Koenders and you go to Annaheim, and you see all these different companies looking for people. Driving our economy so that we can focus on classrooms, health care, and our communities.

And you know, I hate to say it but I just . . . I'm glad I'm a part of this team. And you know, it's kind of tough to be on the other side these days, but you know, I really would like to say that this budget of \$20 billion, there's a lift of 9 per cent for education, 10 per cent for health care, and 14 per cent for our communities.

For someone who is looking . . . Like I'm more on the social side. I don't know if you've noticed, but I'm not a great business person. I'm not the industry driver to create the great economy. But there are people in this society who are on the social side. So when you look at the two branches of government, you've got the economic side and you've got the social side. And all the money comes in through the economy. And you know the social side though, it's important to have a strong economy so that we can serve the people that we love.

You know, I love to have sometimes some difficult situations in my life because I was raised in a home with really very few problems. My parents were so kind and good. My dad was a business person. My mom was a stay-at-home mom. I never really saw tragedy growing up. And you know, being an MLA you start to see a little bit of real difficulties. Casework comes to our offices. And a few months ago my daughter ended up having a real health crisis. And you know, we compare Alberta and Saskatchewan . . . She was living in Calgary. And we have two great health care organizations in Saskatchewan and Alberta, and she was in Calgary.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, when I was driving through the night to go see my daughter, I thought a lot of thoughts. And I was panicking, and it's dark out. And I was eight hours from my daughter, and I thought I might not . . . [inaudible] . . . But she had a good health care system in Alberta that was caring for her and looking after her. She was sitting in a hospital and she had no platelets, and they couldn't get the bleeding to stop.

[19:45]

But you know what, they have a strong economy in Alberta, and they have a strong health care system, and they look after people. And then when I got back to Saskatchewan, I brought my girl back home. And you know, we go in to the doctor, and what's your platelets at today, sweetie? And I can look up on eHealth, and I say, whoa. You know, who'd have thought 169 is a number to celebrate? But I tell you, in the Goudy family 169 . . .

We have a strong economy that allows us to look after people. So I'll tell you what. When somebody comes in with a panic for

their daughter, or when they say to me, my mom needs to refill her prescription, like that means a lot to me. It means a lot to the people on both sides of the House.

You know, we need a strong economy so that we can get enough doctors. Do we have enough doctors in Melfort? No, but we have more than Kindersley. But do we have enough nurses? Do we have enough money for all these different things? You know, we're always a little bit short, Mr. Speaker. We could use two or three more doctors in Melfort.

But the Minister of Health and the minister of remote and rural health sat down with me and a few doctors from my community and the head of the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority]. And we had a conversation of, what's the funding model need to look like in Melfort to retain our doctors there and to be able to recruit more? And they took the time and they listened. And they heard those doctors, and they changed the funding model for our area. And those doctors — we just about lost three — they all stayed, and now we're recruiting more.

You know, there's always negatives to look at and there's always difficulties. You know, this world is a tough place to be, and yet I think we need to be positive. You know, and maybe we have rose-coloured glasses at times, being in government 16 years, and we think everything's going well. But we do have a connection to all these people in our communities, and that's why we desire to have a strong economy because that strong economy pays for all of the services that the people that we love depend so much upon.

You know, when we talk about no new supports, you know, no new supports? There have been so many supports in this province for so long. And it's not tired and old; it's, like, consistent and steady. And you know, to be able to look at the kind of the tax advantages, and you know, the costs that we try to keep low for the people of this province, it's a great place to live.

Mr. Speaker, there's a Proverb, it says, "There's six things the Lord hates; yea, seven are an abomination to him." And it says, "Hands that shed innocent blood, feet that are quick to run to do evil." And then the last one, it's very interesting, it says, "And he who sows discord among friends." And you know, sowing discord among friends . . . I heard some people that don't even know our Education minister talking about him in a way that is definitely not our Education minister.

When I watched this guy, he was young and new. And you know, he came into this building about as kind and good of a young man as I had met. And I thought, boy, who is this guy? Like I grew up not caring about politics. He grew up caring about politics. Like I don't watch the news; I don't keep up. He watches the news and keeps up. But you know, when I heard some people say some things about the guy, I thought, who in the world is saying these things? Who is sowing discord among friends?

You know, my dad, he was a chemical farmer. In my office I have the front page of a magazine, and it says "Chemical Warfare," and there's my dad sitting on the front. And Dr. Yemi is a Nigerian we kind of adopted into our family, and he called my dad — he passed away — he called him Chemical Ken because he loved to spray.

He kills weeds. He loves to kill weeds. Like honestly, this guy. So you know, I don't know if I have an earlier memory of my father than him taking me out just inside the field. And I don't know if anybody's farmed here long enough to remember when fields looked dirty. There were patches of wild oats at different spots throughout the fields. And so he took me out and he pulled his hand through some wild oats. And he had those wild oats in his hands, and he said, "Todd, I'm going to show you something here." And he poured water onto those wild oats, and he said, "These stupid things."

And he was the guy who developed Treflan. So Treflan, it turns out it doesn't kill wild oats, but it stunts them so that they can't germinate quick enough so that the other crops can get ahead and they can grow up.

So dad was all about production and increasing yield. So anyways, he developed Treflan when Eli Lilly — Elanco — said, you know, drop it. And he said, no, no, give me a year to work with . . . They didn't have the subsoil moisture to incorporate Treflan, the farmers said at the time. But when rapeseed prices went up, they all said, hey well I think we can use this Treflan. But it stunts those wild oats, and those wild oats, they try to steal all of the nutrients and all of the moisture from the crops.

So you know, this is a \$20 billion budget. And we want that \$20 billion budget to produce as much in the lives of all the people that we love around this province. And you know, what gets me is, you know, I don't know why my dad showed me those wild oats.

This is the first real lesson I . . . But they were stealing from things, just stealing. And you know, somebody told me one day, they were talking about, what's the worse thing you ever done. And he said, "It was I stole pears or something from a pear tree." And what in the world, like he says, "You know what the thing is? I don't even like pears." And sometimes when you steal something from someone and it's to feed yourself, that's one thing. But if you steal something from someone just to destroy it, or you graffiti something or wreck something just for destruction, that's horrible. If somebody's hungry and they go out and steal something, then we can say, well there's a rationale behind that. But tearing down a \$20 billion budget and complaining and saying there's nothing good in here.

You know, the member from Cumberland and myself, I've compared my constituency to his. You know, he and I both have a consolidation of a school, a new-build school consolidation coming to both of our constituencies. We both have, for our seniors, a long-term care facility in the queue. And we both have had some fairly significant college spending. You know, for the people in the North in his constituency, as the NDP sent him down here to represent them; and me, member from Melfort sent down here to represent the people, both of us received from the strong economy a future hope for education, health care in our own constituencies.

And you know, who knows what's coming next? I know in my constituency there's some highways money that's going north from 41 . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Thanks, I think Lori laughed. The Highways minister pushed for that a little bit and our current minister is going to get 'er done. But yeah, some upgrades to the highway going north from our 41 to St. Brieux.

So I'm sure that the member from Cumberland is also going to have some highways work in his future in their constituency.

So you know, I think we need to, rather than tear down and say there's nothing new, there's nothing good, we need to encourage each other and inspire each other.

Do I have any time left? I don't even know.

An Hon. Member: — Yes, you do.

Mr. Goudy: — What time is it?

An Hon. Member: — Three more minutes.

Mr. Goudy: — So I'm going to tell a little story of a fellow I met. We were having a conversation. And the reason why I do this with others is because my wife did it to me. My wife is my biggest encourager. You know, if you would ask me what's one thing I want to do in this world. And actually somebody did; they said, "What do you want to accomplish in this world?" And I said, "I want to turn the hearts of children back to their parents and the hearts of parents back to their children. That's what I want to do." And that's what our education system is, I believe, going to do. We're going to facilitate that great relationship.

And my wife said to me one day . . . I miss my first son. And I think he figured things out. But my wife said, "Todd, Dave, he's getting old enough you should probably have the sex talk with him." So I said okay. So there we go.

And she said, "Don't just have the sex talk. You're going to go away for two days, and you're going to do something that Dave wants to do." So we grabbed a couple of bikes, our bikes. We threw them in the back of the van, we drove to Saskatoon, and we went biking through the paths of Saskatoon. And then we stopped and we had conversations. And my wife encouraged me to do this: "Why don't you go out and have a talk with Dave?" Because she did it with all of our daughters.

And you know, so many times, "Todd, why don't you just take time tonight and go have a daddy-daughter day with your girl?" Or "Todd, why don't you go do this?" Or "Todd, why don't you go do that?" She inspires me. She encourages me.

I sat down with a guy, and you know, I was talking to him. I said, "How are you doing and where are you at?" He said, "Well I'm kind of homeless and couch surfing right now." And I looked at him and I said, "My goodness, look at you, you're a strong, healthy young man. What's the problem?" And I might have asked him if he might have been an idiot too, but maybe not. And I said, "You know, I don't think that you're actually an idiot." He described his life. And I said, "But you know what? Maybe you're hanging out with people who are a bad influence."

And so he described his life. He says, "I'm in town." He was actually in Yorkton. "I'm in town to visit my children." And he's got two little kids. And I said, "Oh my, how old are they?" And he described . . . And I asked him, "Does your two children have the same mom." And they said, "Yeah they do." And he described his life to me and I'm just thinking, are you kidding me? You have the most potential; you have the most exciting future ahead of you if you'll just change the way you're thinking.

And maybe a few of your friends, get rid of some of your friends.

So I said, “You know what? I think you’ve got bad friends in your life. Could I give you my cell number and could I maybe be one of your friends in life?” And he said, “For sure.” So I said, “Why don’t I give you a little advice? You mind if I speak fairly frank?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “There’s all sorts of industry where I live. If you can’t find a job here or where you’re from, come over to where I’m living and there’s a whole bunch of people that’ll hire you.”

“And here’s one thing for you. This girl that’s the mother of your children, has she gone on and got another guy yet?” “No, no, she doesn’t.”

“All right. Okay. So here, let me just give you a piece of advice. Why don’t you go to that girl . . . And BHP have the greatest opportunity for you. You can work two weeks in and then you’re off for a bit. Two weeks in. How about you go to the mother of your children and ask her, sweetie, if I was to get a job and give you my entire paycheque, could I live in the basement, just sleep on the couch for the time that I’m off?” And I said, “What would she say to that?” And he said, “Yeah, you know what, I think she’d go for that.”

And then I said, “Well what if, what if you were to say one night — that’s the new scenario and you’re at home with the mother of your kids and you got your kids there — what if you were to say, honey, can I borrow 40 bucks tonight? I want to go out with the boys. What would she say to you?”

He said, “She’d say, ‘Forget it. No way.’” So what if you said to her, “Sweetie, could I borrow 40 bucks tonight? I’d like to take you on a date. What would she say to that?” And he said, “She’d say, ‘Absolutely.’”

And what if you said, “Honey, can I get 40 bucks, and why don’t we take the kids out for ice cream tonight?” You know, he went from couch surfing and no vision of where he was headed. He texted me the other day and said, “I got a job!!!”

You know, so we got \$20 billion to try and encourage people. And I’d say, you know, one of the worst, most tragic things is . . . Like wild oats were my dad’s biggest enemy back in the day because they stole from the opportunity that those farmers had to grow the most canola that they could possibly grow. And my dad went after those weeds, and that was his life calling and ambition, was to destroy weeds out of the fields. And he turned out, he has lots of ambitions in life. He was a great man.

But you know what? We got a \$20 billion budget that we can encourage people with. And I want to encourage the member from Cumberland and all of his constituents, and I want to encourage all of my constituents that we get to share this great budget. And so I will be supporting the budget put forward by the member from Humboldt and the member from Saskatoon Willowgrove who did a great job in his speech seconding the budget response as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — I recognize the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy.

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

Speaker, I’m honoured to rise in my place to speak about the budget. I think this is the 18th budget that I’ve had the opportunity to make comments on, on behalf of the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy. Mr. Speaker, before I get to the budget I do want to, as all members have done, thank a few people. And I’ll do this as quickly as I can, Mr. Speaker. I’m going to have a few more words to say hopefully towards the end of the session in May about some of the people that I’m going to talk about.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to first thank Marcie, my constituency assistant in Weyburn. I want to thank the staff here at my office in Regina: Cindy, Dawn, Robyn, Linda, Mike, and David. Knowing that this will be my final session, Mr. Speaker, I have to say I’ve really enjoyed working with them and I’m sorry that it’s going to be for too short of a time. But they do such a great job in my ministerial office.

[20:00]

As well I want to thank all the officials that I have the opportunity to work with at CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan], all the Crown corporations, SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority], and the Public Service Commission. Mr. Speaker, I want to as well thank the caucus office staff for all the support that they provide to us.

And I want to thank my family, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank obviously Amanda for all of her love and support over these last, well 18 years of being here, but certainly a lot longer that she has been in my life. I want to thank and say a few words about our kids, Mr. Speaker. Jack is in grade 4. He is just made AA baseball here this last week, and he is pretty excited about that. He is our expert when it comes to all things animals, and keeps us up to date, including what kind of pet that mom and dad should buy some day. Hasn’t happened yet. And in fact . . .

An Hon. Member: — Tomorrow.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Not tomorrow. And in fact, Amanda is teaching Jack and Ephram piano. And so he’s becoming quite a good piano player.

Mr. Speaker, Ephram is in grade 1. He’s also signed up for baseball. We’re a baseball family and so we’re looking forward to the season upcoming. As I said, he too is playing the piano. And he is all things numbers, and so thanks to the Finance minister, who has provided Jack and Ephram with her copy of the game Poleconomy. They are now becoming students of that game, and Ephram likes to be the banker, Mr. Speaker.

And Penelope, it is hard to believe that Pippy is going into kindergarten this fall, Mr. Speaker. She is in dance. She is getting ready for their spring recital where they are doing, my understanding is that it’s an adaptation of *A Prairie Alphabet* which is written by Jo-Anne Bannatyne-Cugnet from Weyburn. So it’s going to be neat to see her dance in that.

And right now one of the things that we’re doing to keep busy is, once a week usually on Sunday afternoons, Penelope and I, just the two of us, go swimming and so that’s something that we’re enjoying right now, Mr. Speaker. And so I want to thank them for their support and their love and their encouragement and all the really good questions that they’ve had for dad, especially

lately, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to say a few words about our Finance minister, but actually I want to say a couple of words about our first Finance minister, Rod Gantefoer. Mr. Speaker, and actually this goes back to . . . and I don't think I've ever told this story in the House. If I have, forgive me for repeating myself. I tend to think about things so often that I don't know which things that I've said publicly and which things I've only said in my mind. So if you've heard this one before, forgive me.

But, Mr. Speaker, this actually goes back to the days when we were still in opposition, in fact before I was even elected. It was 2006 and my predecessor had resigned her seat in quite a surprise to everybody, and I'll say it was pretty tense times. Maybe not so much of a surprise, but it was pretty tense times around the office. I was on staff in the office of the official opposition. And you know, I would just say that there felt from a staff perspective just a lot of . . . just questions. I'll say a lot of in camera meetings where the staff were not involved in.

And I'd been talking with some people back home about running for the nomination. And one day after a meeting I was . . . So in the bank of offices, I think in room 265, the opposition offices, there's a narrow hallway between the two offices and the inner suite of offices. And I could see Rod Gantefoer down at the end of the hallway, and he was coming towards me.

And I didn't work directly for Rod. I didn't really know him all that well. And you know, I wouldn't say I was intimidated by him, but I certainly knew that he was a senior member of the opposition. And I think he was the Health critic at the time, and a founder of the party. And so you know, I certainly had a great deal of respect for him.

And I just, I knew in that moment that he was coming to talk to me, one of those moments where you just knew. And I thought, oh here we go. Rod's been tapped to tell this young staffer that, you know, to pour some cold water on his ambitions to run for the nomination, and here we go.

And so we stopped and he said, I hear you're thinking about running for the nomination. And I said, yeah, I am. And he said to me, you know, think about it like you're standing on the platform of a train station. And you can hear the train whistle and you can see the train coming in the distance and you know it's coming to the station. And you can get on that train or you can let that train pass by and wait for the next train. But don't ever forget, there's no guarantee that another train is coming.

And so I kind of took that to mean that it was okay — you know, whatever was going to happen in the nomination — but it was okay if I was going to consider running for it. And I have to say, after 18 years I'm sure glad I got on that train. Mr. Speaker, and so I want to thank Rod for the advice that he gave me all those years ago.

And I want to congratulate our Minister of Finance, the member from Humboldt, on not only, I think, a terrific budget but all of her advice and her hard work over the last number of years, including these last seven in producing a budget, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to call her a colleague. I'll have more to say about her, Mr. Speaker, in the final time that I'll rise in this Chamber

later this spring.

Mr. Speaker, I want to, you know, maybe pick up on something that the member from Indian Head-Milestone was talking about and the member from Martensville-Warman was talking about. And you know, I had planned out, worked very hard on this speech over the last 45 minutes, Mr. Speaker, a little bit longer than that.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would just say that, you know, I listened to some of the speeches across the way, and I think it was the member from I think Saskatoon Eastview that was talking about recognizing that there is money in this budget to build a high school on the east side of Saskatoon. But I think his comments "well, you know, this should have happened a long time ago," Mr. Speaker. And you know, I would just say that I think we've maybe all of us including my constituents, people in this province have maybe become a bit complacent.

So I want to talk a little bit about where we've come from and where we're at today and put it in a little bit of context, Mr. Speaker. This budget talks . . . And this is, you know, a helpful reminder of what is in this budget — \$216 million in capital funding for 11 new or consolidated school projects and three major renovations, as well as the planning of nine new schools and two renovations, Mr. Speaker. So let's put that into context, \$216 million.

And you know, you could say that, yeah, we should have had a high school in southeast Regina or southeast Saskatoon earlier, Mr. Speaker. But you know, I think you have to look at all the work that's gone before that and all the other projects that we've had to build for a province that is now nearly 1.25 million people, Mr. Speaker, growing at the fastest rate that it has in the history of the province.

You know, I would say, look back at a headline from, of all places, the CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] in 2017: "Twenty new schools open in Saskatchewan." That was in one year — 20 new schools. So let's back up a little bit to see kind of where we came from, Mr. Speaker. So 2007, the capital budget of the province of Saskatchewan was \$23 million. That included \$5.1 million for Bethlehem, which opened I believe in that year, and 3.7 million for the adjacent school, Tommy Douglas — which I don't think was the original name for that school; just put that on the record — but Tommy Douglas high school that opened in Saskatoon.

The year before that, 2006, \$26 million for six capital projects in Ile-a-la-Crosse, Warman, La Loche, P.A., and Moose Jaw. 2005, \$32 million for again projects in Ile-a-la-Crosse, Warman, La Loche, P.A., and Moose Jaw. I think those were probably holdover projects that, you know, they announced for another year that they were going to continue to build. 2004, seven school improvement projects for a grand total from the province of Saskatchewan of \$521,000. And, Mr. Speaker, what I was able to find — and sorry, you know, I enjoy doing research but I only had a few minutes to do so this afternoon — 2003, the province of Saskatchewan announced one new school. That was in Nipawin, Mr. Speaker.

So you know, when I look at the fact that \$260 million is being provided by this Education minister to provide for schools across

this province, Mr. Speaker, I think it's an issue of ensuring that we know where we've come from, where we're at today. The fact that that capacity doesn't grow overnight, both in terms of the construction industry — how much they've had to ramp up to do these projects, and that's just in education — but in the school divisions as well.

When you look at a year where there were maybe five or six projects, in some cases one brand new build among all 27, or before that time it was, you know, 72 or whatever the number of school divisions it was, Mr. Speaker, we've come a significant way.

And as a part of that, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I have tried to remind my constituents of when we have this debate and discussion about where education is funded from, Mr. Speaker, a continued insistence by this government that we're going to get it right when it comes to the fair and equitable way that education is funded in terms of the property tax.

So making that shift from 40/60 to 60/40 in terms of what the province is going to be provided, which not that long ago, which we forget, was a point of contention in this province, Mr. Speaker.

I really quickly found this article from 1999 in the *StarPhoenix* about the tax revolts that were taking place in this province and, Mr. Speaker, just happened to find an article that was right near the top of the searches that came up, actually talking about a couple of my constituents. Ron Borys from Cedoux, a farmer just north of Weyburn who talked about, and this is in 1999:

He noted that he only has an average-sized farm, but still pays about double the education tax that a doctor in the city of Weyburn pays.

"I lost \$35,000 last year and I've got to pay double to support education."

Mr. Speaker, that was at a time when rural municipalities in Brokenshell and the RM [rural municipality] of Weyburn had voted to withhold their taxes in 1999. They were the sixth and seventh municipalities, but I think eventually that number grew to over a hundred municipalities, Mr. Speaker.

But it didn't end there, Mr. Speaker. And you know, I found one news story from 1999 that talked about the old rule actually required owners to pay 40 per cent of the education costs and the province picking up 60 per cent. But that over time had reversed, Mr. Speaker, over about the prior 15 years, and as a result there was significant unrest, particularly in rural Saskatchewan, including in my constituency.

And I find it interesting where some former education trustees are making comments locally about how we need to restore the . . . Or you know, they question why the education property tax was taken away in terms of access to the local mill rate, Mr. Speaker. And they forget this is why. Because it was becoming unfair for too many people across particularly rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, fast forward to 2004. This is a story — I think it was from the *StarPhoenix* again — where we heard a lot about

how the status quo wasn't on, Mr. Speaker. Learning minister Andrew Thomson announced the government would press for amalgamation but there was no movement on the commission's call for education property.

So they studied it, studied it over and over and over, Mr. Speaker. Lorne Calvert went to the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention on multiple occasions in multiple years to say the status quo was not on. And, Mr. Speaker, nothing seemed to change.

In fact SARM, Neal Hardy was the president at the time, and in this article said, at the time that there was no deal in place, but on Tuesday he said he had a — and this is 2004 — Tuesday, he said he had a handshake agreement with Industry minister Eric Cline and deputy Finance minister Ron Styles — yes — that a third of new equalization money would go to rural property.

But, Mr. Speaker, of course it never happened. They didn't get it done, and that is why we have a situation today where the province of Saskatchewan now does fund education at the levels that we are, Mr. Speaker.

And so as it relates to my constituency though, Mr. Speaker, I do want to make some comments because I'm not going to speak about this later in May, in terms of not only how this budget but also the previous budgets have impacted my constituency, Mr. Speaker.

But in terms of the themes of this budget, classrooms. Over the time we have seen a significant rebuild of our education, both at the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] and at the advanced education level, Mr. Speaker, with the new Southeast College building in Weyburn being built attached to the high school, Mr. Speaker, which saw a significant amount of renovations over the last number of years; St. Michael, which was one of the earlier projects that we actually did in government, Mr. Speaker; and most recently Legacy Park Elementary that has opened up just in the last couple of years, Mr. Speaker.

And a significant investment in operating, Mr. Speaker, at 9 per cent overall. I think that that obviously will come out in terms of the enrolment to different levels, Mr. Speaker, but certainly more than the, you know in our case, South East Cornerstone. They were looking for 5 per cent, Mr. Speaker, and so this is going to go well above what South East Cornerstone had indicated to myself and the member from Estevan and the Minister of Education just not that many months ago. So I'm looking forward to seeing South East Cornerstone using the dollars over and above what they were really asking for in this provincial budget, Mr. Speaker.

[20:15]

Mr. Speaker, when you . . . So that's on the education side. In terms of communities, Mr. Speaker, revenue sharing last year for the city of Weyburn, \$2.25 million. It'll be above that this year, Mr. Speaker. That's from a starting point, 2007-2008, of \$800,000. So it's significant revenue sharing that the city of Weyburn has benefited from.

I know they were really looking for two things: the urban connector program, Mr. Speaker — and I think we're going to

have good news this year on that, Mr. Speaker — as well as an investment in our hospital project, Mr. Speaker, which leads to the care section of my remarks, Mr. Speaker.

But before I leave communities, I just want to say a couple of other things. I want to give my thanks to the treasury board and to the Highways minister for a number of new projects in our constituency, or continuations of projects. Highway 39 northwest of Milestone is going to get about 12 kilometres of repaving, Mr. Speaker. There's going to be some medium treatment work north of Pangman on Highway No. 6, as well as the continuation of the twinning and passing lane program on highways 6 and 39.

Mr. Speaker, to kind of reference back to when we first formed government, another founder of the party, Ken Krawetz, Mr. Speaker, had . . . I remember him very clearly saying to me, write down three things that you want to do for your constituents. For me it was a new replacement for the health centre in Radville, which is done; Highway 39, which is almost done; and a new hospital in Weyburn, Mr. Speaker, which will be done at the end of 2025 is the current estimates, Mr. Speaker. So I'm really grateful, Mr. Speaker, that my colleagues have saw fit to invest in these really important projects.

In health and education alone, Mr. Speaker, it will mean, just for the city of Weyburn, nearly a quarter of a billion dollars in health and education capital, Mr. Speaker. And so I'm really grateful for the government, for my colleagues agreeing over the years — that's over the years, not just in this budget — over the years in these projects.

So finally I just do want to talk about the care section of the budget, Mr. Speaker — 10 per cent health budget. I want to congratulate the Health minister and the Mental Health and Addictions and Rural Health ministers for this budget, Mr. Speaker. You know, Mr. Speaker, I can say that I had a 10 per cent health budget; it just took four years to get there when you add them all up, Mr. Speaker.

But they're going to do a lot of good with this budget, Mr. Speaker. In particular, and I saw in the *Weyburn This Week* — the week that the budget came out, last week, at the end of last week — two new doctors in Radville through the SIPP [Saskatchewan international physician practice assessment] program, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's going to go a long ways to ensuring that there are health services in that community and in the surrounding community.

Of course I've already indicated the \$55 million in the hospital project, as well as the fact, Mr. Speaker, I remember — I'm trying to think of what year it was, 2013 or maybe a little bit later than that, perhaps 2015 — it was pretty precarious when it came to doctors in Weyburn. I think we were down to about eight doctors at the time. I was the Health minister at the time, and it's a pretty precarious position to be the Health minister and have a shortage of doctors in your own community.

We had been very well served for many years in Weyburn with, like a lot of communities, just a stable complement of doctors. In fact at that time, with the eight doctors that we had left, I believe four of them were the Fong family; and Dr. Bigland and Dr. Lenferna, a married couple who were still practising; Dr. Stewart; and Dr. Paszkiewicz I think was . . . I think he was in

Weyburn at the time. I'm pretty sure he was there at the time, Mr. Speaker.

So we were really, you know . . . almost 70, 80 per cent of our doctors were basically two families. And today for the most part, Dr. Lenferna I know is still practising a little bit, but the Fong family have all either retired or they've left Weyburn. We've had a lot of turnover and today, depending on the time of year, we're sitting at 15 or 16 doctors in Weyburn, Mr. Speaker. And so that has been through, you know, a lot of hard work from our local foundation, but as well as the SHA, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we have a good complement of doctors in the city of Weyburn.

Mr. Speaker, just to wrap up, I do want to acknowledge what the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions is doing as a part of the mental health and addictions action plan, Mr. Speaker. I know that for my constituents anything that we can do to increase treatment options and the access to treatment, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to addictions will be welcomed, Mr. Speaker.

I know that certainly this is something that has touched a lot of families in our province, Mr. Speaker. Again I don't know if I've said this publicly. I was a pallbearer for the first time at, I think, 13 years old. I had a cousin that had an addiction and he lost his life due to that addiction, Mr. Speaker, and so it has affected our family tremendously. And so everything that we can do to increase the supports, to be able to provide people with a seamless transition when they need help, Mr. Speaker, and find them a place to find hope and to find healing, Mr. Speaker, will be welcomed by me and certainly by my constituents, Mr. Speaker.

And so I want to thank the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions for putting a focus on recovery and putting a focus on giving people hope and giving people dignity in which they can live their lives, Mr. Speaker.

And so, Mr. Speaker, that's . . . You know, I could talk about a lot more, but I don't think I'm going to, Mr. Speaker. So with that, I think I've talked . . . I think I've said it all that I want to say for tonight, Mr. Speaker. So with that, I won't be supporting the amendment put forward by the opposition. I'll be supporting the motion moved by the Finance minister and seconded by the member from Saskatoon. Thank you.

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

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I join in my comments on the budget. This will probably be my last, obviously, my last response to the budget and maybe my last, you know, speech in this House.

When I think about . . . There's been so many people over my going on 16 years that I've served in this House. You know, I think about the challenges. I was told, you know, better get some tough skin if you're going to go there. And I understand that politics is politics. And people can talk about taking care of their constituents. And people want their government to take care of the needs, and when they identify those needs, they hope the government will respond.

You know, we have a government that thinks it responds to

everything, you know. And I'm going to get a little bit into that later, but for now I would just like to acknowledge just starting out with a few thank yous.

The list goes long for the people that have supported me, and I think about the northern people, the constituents. I want to thank them for giving me the honour to serve. I'm not a perfect man; I make mistakes. But I try to serve the people that I care about, and that are in my heart, that I've come to have extended family with. Some of them have accepted me as extended family, some of them that I've come to truly love as family and care. And I've been there for them when they've gone through hardships and loss of loved ones, for many different reasons, and the list goes on. Whether it's suicides, addictions, the list goes on, the mental health, the challenges.

I've tried to advocate with many leaders who have . . . northern leaders who have fought for people who struggle with addictions, mental health, and the suicide crisis. I want to thank those leaders for giving me the support and the guidance. I have worked very hard to have the trust of our leaders.

I started out just as a parent wanting to be involved in my kids' education. And I did that. As a parent on the parent council, I did that. I went from there to the village of Air Ronge sitting on council. I moved up the Jim Brady Métis local. I've had a lot of opportunities to sit on different boards.

I've got to sit on the board of education, what an honour to serve; Gabriel Dumont Institute, what an honour to serve; Sask Water Board, what an honour to serve. There's been many boards . . . Métis local. I have had the opportunity to serve, work with individuals. But it is an honour to truly be the MLA and to work with the leaders and the community members.

And I think about all the individuals that have been in my office, and I'm lucky. I didn't have a lot of them, but I want to acknowledge them just to make sure, in case I don't ever get back here again to do a farewell or response, you know, for the record. I want to thank my first constituency assistant was Vicky Sanderson. I want to thank her. Al Rivard, then there was Devin Bernatchez. My current one is Jude Ratt. Bernice Custer, the late Bernice Custer was my CA [constituency assistant]. I miss her dearly. Doris Morin served in my office as a CA. And there was a few more casual CAs. I want to acknowledge them and thank them for their support.

And I think about our elders, the elders that give advice and guidance. You know, sometimes it's interesting to watch our elders and the way they watch and observe what your actions are, what you do, and then they give you advice. And sometimes it's very stern and sometimes it's needed. Sometimes you need to be told exactly, you know. Like I've said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I haven't done everything perfectly in my life. And I try. I try to accept, you know. I guess, as you say, sometimes some of us in here, maybe we need to thicken up a little bit our skin. But that's okay. And I'm going to get into a little bit of that and share a little bit about that and why maybe it's important.

You know, I think about . . . and I'm going to get into a little bit of the budget and, you know, some of the challenges that are out there facing the North, and the roles that I've been given as critic, the roles that I've played in this House. But I also, before I do

that, I want to thank my colleagues on this side of the House. You know, it's not always easy. We all have different personalities and different issues and, you know, wants and needs that we want to fight for the constituents — and we've done that — and bring stuff forward. But we have a great team of staff. I want to thank them.

I also want to thank my executive with the Cumberland constituency — truly are amazing, amazing, amazing workers. And I just want to thank them for their support and their guidance. You know, it's not easy. It's a long way to travel from my community to come here. But I'll say this. I can tell the people of the North — whether it's Athabasca, whether it's the Cumberland constituency — myself as a northerner, I have lived in my constituency my whole time serving this constituency that I've been honoured to serve. I have lived there with the people and supported the people in many different ways, and that's been an honour and a true privilege.

You know, I think about some of the challenges and some of the issues that we have brought forward over the years. And I'm going to get into a little bit of some of those challenges, and I want . . . I was chuckling a little today when the Minister Responsible for Corrections and Policing said some comments. I thought when he said that, I'm going to use that when I come back, because I just don't want to forget about it.

You know, I've had the ability to serve with the Gary Tinker Federation for people with disabilities. For myself, I'm a person with a severe learning disability. But you know what? I still came here and learned many things. And some of the challenges, I've had people who've accommodated that. At first when I got here, I'll be honest with you, I had a few people poked at me and, "Spit it out. Spit it out." And it was, it was challenging. Till one day I finally, I have to be honest, I said, you know, what my disability was and the challenges I had. And you could just tell, you know, those that had said what they'd said. I mean it's back and forth. That's what we do. We heckle in here. We do our job as opposition. We want to take the government off their game and they want to take us off our game. I understand that process, you know. It's there.

I've made some friendships with some of the members on the opposite side that have left. I've made some good friendships with members on this side. It's like on this side we call it a small family. And you know, we'll wait. There are going to be time and people will wait for time. But when I think about some of the challenges, you know, when I . . . And I want to get into a little bit of the challenges that people face.

[20:30]

The minister said, soon there will be election in October, is what the Minister of Corrections and Policing said. And I paid attention when he said that in October there will be an election. And you know, we all, you know, those of us that are seeking re-election, those that are not seeking re-election and are going to go home and do other things or retire, on both sides, I wish them well, those that are retiring. Those that are going to be door knocking, asking for people to support you for re-election . . . And I guess it's up to the people.

But I'm going to focus, because my area as critic was Northern

Affairs, First Nation Métis relations. I've done that. So I'm going to, a little, focus on those on the North. In the North we have Athabasca and we have Cumberland. And today I witnessed something. Today I can be tougher skinned, and that's okay. People can say what they want. I get it. We go back and forth.

But I want to correct something. I'm very proud for the fighting I have done. I have come here to represent the people of the North, the leaders, our First Nations, our Métis, our municipal leaders. I have come here for school divisions. I have worked with groups who have shared their concerns, families who have shared their concerns, and I have won their trust to come here. And four times they've sent me back, and they've asked me to serve them again.

I have had good relationships. I have been very respectful to my leaders. I have worked with people. I have worked with members that support the Sask Party, people who came into my office saying, I'm having troubles; can you help me? And we have. And that's what an MLA does, and that's what I have done. And I have done that to the best of my ability and I think I have done it honourably.

But having said that, politics is politics. We want to play politics? Well I'm going to play a little politics now with our northern MLAs. I have brought issue after issue. I have seen when my colleague, the member from Athabasca, when he resigned and left office, and then there was a by-election. And I seen people come out running, and lo and behold the by-election was called, and the member that sits here right now representing Athabasca went around . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . That's good. You say, hear, hear. Went around door knocking, telling the good people of that constituency, vote for me, I'll be a part of government and I'm going to get things down. Very clear. That was the promise.

Well you know, I've heard that again. You know, I might be hearing that message again, that you know what, you've got to have a member a part of government. That's interesting. A member, a part of government to get things done. Okay. Province, government that's supposed to take care of all people — vulnerable, those struggling — leaders work with them to make sure, for economics, to make sure that safety, safety is done. Okay. Making sure safety is done.

So here's what we go. You look at some of the challenges. I was just at the annual general meeting for two days for the Saskatchewan fishers, co-operative fishers. They had their meeting. And it's interesting to hear some of the comments that they're talking about. When we used to have . . . the North used to have a minister responsible for Northern Affairs. You know, we used to have a freight subsidy for fish to haul the fish out. Our fishermen needed . . . they're struggling, they needed help. What did the Sask Party do? They cut it.

They used to get \$50,000 to have their annual general meeting assembly to come together, to work together . . . [inaudible] . . . Who cut that? The Sask Party. Sask Party government cut those things. We can go back through the list, and I will go back to the list, talking about it. But here's a member who wants to say why you should have a member of government.

When I think about the challenges and, you know, about the

mental health, the addictions, and the crisis going on, when I think about affordability and I watch families struggling and they're asking, I cannot make it, I cannot make it. They're begging for help. And I've watched local leaders helping, doing what they could. I've seen the food bank. They have to . . . They can't do it the way they were doing, so they're having to cut the time, that there's too many people lining up.

What does that tell you? What does it tell the government? Like that should be a wake-up call that there's a crisis going on. I've tried to work with government in different areas. There was one time I thought we could work together. And I hear some members say, let's work together. And that's all nice. It's nice in here to say that stuff. But when you see the realities back home, people struggling, they wonder, well when's this working together going to really help us?

And then you have members to go and say, well if you elect a member with government, we're going to get things done. Well here I just want to say what was in this budget. I want to be very clear. Sixteen million dollars cut from the northern transportation system, including the highways, airports, and ice roads, out of this budget. Now why would . . . We're in a crisis in the North. The roads are terrible. Why would you cut from the northern roads, would you cut money, would you decrease the budget?

Now there's different areas where we're going to be asking and I know our northern leaders are asking for more help when it comes to affordability, housing. There's so many homeless people. It's a crisis going on there, the addictions, we know that. But they're willing. Our leaders are doing their part. First Nations, Métis leaders, they're doing their part and that's amazing to see. And then, you know, you have . . . I was on Northern Lights School Division, and yes, and I think about different projects that get announced.

And I'm going to bring us back to . . . Well thinking about this, I wanted to talk a little bit about the long-term care. In 2015, you know, we fought hard — our leaders — petitions for long-term care. You know, we've lost many that door knocked and got hundreds and hundreds and thousands of signatures and bring awareness about long-term care.

And in 2015, the government finally, they . . . we had to drag them, and we did. We dragged them. They finally put some planning dollars. 2015 I believe it was \$500,000 they put in for planning. Well you know, budget went through. I voted against the budget. As an opposition member we voted against the budget and of course support the amendment.

But having said that, lo and behold they ran ads — because we were going to be going into election — that the member voted against the long-term care building. You know, in a brochure. I think I still have one at home, in my house. "The member voted against the long-term care building." You know, and that was fine, that's the politics of it.

Now, you know, change the channel. We have a member from Athabasca wants to get re-elected. He wants to go back into the North and tell the people, vote for me because you know what, I'm going to get you . . . Oh I'll get the \$16 million reinstated that we cut from the budget. Oh it's the best budget. It's going to be an election budget, but we decreased the North because you don't

need Highway 106, the Hanson Lake, you guys don't need that road. Northern roads, you don't need anywhere. You don't need them fixed. Your roads are good.

It's about safety. Talk about cell service, the Hanson Lake, about safety. There's been petitions put in, government's well aware of it, and they have . . . We have had questions. We've had leaders ask, can you please put cell service in. Phase it in.

And then we had announcement by this government about towers going up all over, cell towers. There were 70-some of them, not one to even . . . You know, and I have some people, you know, even a few, I think I've had a few conversations with some of the members opposite about safety. And maybe some of them have tourists and friends, families, travelling on that road. Maybe they think it was a great idea. I waited to see, well, maybe they can get that government to listen about safety. But unfortunately that didn't happen.

Now, you know, going on to this part, and I think about . . . I'm sure the member from Athabasca will be going doing his door knocking. I want to reassure him. Today he went after me pretty good; I give him credit. He really went after me that I'm laughing. I'm laughing at his government and his involvement in failing northern people, northern leaders. That's who I laugh at because I find it almost insulting, so you laugh and smirk. And you know what? If that hurt his feelings, well you know what, there's a lot of northern people are hurt because of his government and his inaction to represent and fight for them.

And I'm going to give you an example. I've seen the galleries full here. Bill 66, the Sask-first Act. I thought maybe we would have the northern members stand up as Indigenous northern members and maybe not support that bill. But in front of many of the people, the constituents, he got up. And I'm still hearing about that today. And he'll deal with that when he goes door knocking. He knows that. I know he knows that.

So there's issues like that that are challenging, and those are going to be for up to . . . As the minister said, the election's coming and there will be door knocking, asking for supports. And I'll leave that to the member from Athabasca and the good people of his constituency, if they think that they've been served well. And from what I've talked to some of them, you know, hey, I'll leave that with them and him to have the discussion if he should come back here. It's an honour to serve, as I said, so I'll leave him do his work, and we'll see where he goes.

But as I make my way, and I see the challenge, and government loves patting themselves on the back. And I joke back with a few of the members and the ministers. And I like having a little fun with them. Pat yourselves on the back. You know, you just want to give yourselves all the credit. You know, it's amazing. You know, I've been here a little bit, and I've watched. The people truly do want the government to take care of the issues.

We see many challenges, and I hear the government say, where do you want us to get the money? Where do you want us to spend it? You know what? Many of my colleagues have talked about, people have come here saying about the waste. The waste of millions and millions and millions — I think we could even go on probably more — that have been wasted by this government.

So you know, if that's the challenges, I'll tell you what. We'll make sure that we'll take care of the dollars, you know, and if . . . Truly the people will decide and we'll wait and see. October will come along and we'll watch what happens. It's up to the good people of this province who they want to support, who they want to serve them. And they'll see.

You'll see if our teachers are so happy. When the member from Athabasca goes door knocking in his constituents, I can't wait till he talks to some of the teachers I've talked to. I can't wait. I'd like to . . . Well I might even be out there helping. I might even go door knocking in the Athabasca. I've been asked, would I go help? Sure I would. I know a lot of people over there. I could do that.

So there might be some help that I'll offer that. And I'll sure work with the teachers, the health care workers who are struggling, the families who cannot afford to feed their kids — they're struggling — pay their rents, mortgages. We're in a crisis, so maybe it's time that we do focus on making sure the whole North gets treated right and do what it needs to.

We have so many resources. The North is beautiful. We welcome people. Our leaders want to work with industry, but they want to be consulted. And it's terrible that our leaders have to fight. And I give credit to Saskatoon Centre, my colleague, for the bill, you know, that she brought, and you know, the fight she's fighting with leaders, saying the meaningful duty-to-consult and accommodate.

You have failed the good people of the North, Indigenous community, the rural, those that would have ability, when industry comes on their traditional territory or it impacts a municipality, that they're consulted, that they have the ability to be consulted. And I think that's important.

You know, I know for myself, my family, you know, I have served as best I can. You know, there's a young man nominated that will be working hard in the Cumberland to win the trust of the good people, and I'm working with him to make sure that happens. But I can also say, I could get into a lot of different things. Time will tell.

I hope the member from Athabasca gets over, you know, my laughing. I hope he doesn't . . . understand I wasn't laughing at him, at the government. I'm laughing at the credit and the . . . You guys take credit for stuff that you want to, and it makes me laugh sometimes. And it's the leaders and the people, the industry that's done it, but you like to pat yourselves on the back, as I tease. And I hope at the end of the day . . .

I'm probably needing to wind up here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I'm just about there. But time will tell. Time will tell. You know, and I am. I'm going to watch . . . There's one seat I'm going to watch comfortably. And I'm going to make sure I keep an eye on it, and it will be Athabasca. I promise you. Cumberland and Athabasca, the northern seats, I'm going to pay close attention. To many of my friends that I know, I'm going to make sure, encourage them to get out and vote. I'm going to do that.

So having said that, the last individuals I want to take note of is, I want to make sure to thank my wife and my family. You know, they're . . . We have a long way to travel when you come here

and you leave, you're away from home. A lot of things happen. And you know, as families, I'm lucky. I've got 17 grandkids. I've got . . . Well we had five great-grandkids; I've got another one, just announced that I'll be having another one. So back home when you're called a great-grandparent, you're called a c p n. And it is an honour to be called c p n. And I take that with honour.

But I think about those people back home that are struggling. And you know, I just want them to know that I have done my best to serve you, to serve the people with the issues. I have made government well aware of the issues. The government knows, whether it's petitions, letters, leaders coming here in the galleries, the government knows all the issues for Cumberland and the North we've shared with them. It's up to them. As the government says, well the people have voted for us and we're the government.

[20:45]

So I leave those with you, and we watch closely as you fix things. And this budget didn't fix some of the things that northern leaders and people are struggling with. Affordability, you failed miserably. And I'll say that.

But having said that, again as I was saying, I wanted to thank my wife, my family. I wanted to just thank those, even members on government side who had reached out to me when my grandson was in a serious car accident, and some of the guests that are here, the prayer group that have been praying for my grandson, my c p n. You know, he was 18 months at Hague in a serious accident. It's been over a year, April 1st. And you know, it's amazing to watch. Creator has blessed us with keeping him here and he's giving him strength and he's getting his little sense of humour and he's starting to take a few steps, you know. And we're going to celebrate a third birthday, and we're just going to celebrate like crazy with him. And we are so blessed that he's with us.

And those are the challenges, you know. And I want to thank STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Service], you know. And me and my granddaughter and my daughter have talked; we're going to go see them at some point to let them know, you know, how great . . . Like this little guy, the shape he was . . . they were going into this like, no way. And today to watch what's happened, he's a miracle, because he should not have survived an hour. And it's amazing. So with that I'll just say, family's important. Take care of your families on both sides. It's important.

So with that I will just say, you know, there's struggles. This budget, as I normally would say, I watched my colleague as he responded to the budget. You know, and so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so with that, Mr. Speaker, I won't be supporting the budget motion and I will be supporting the amendment moved by the member for Regina Rosemont. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — I recognize the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Kaeding: — Thank you, Mr. Chair of Committees. I rise once again to proudly represent the fine constituents of Melville-Saltcoats and certainly provide their response to the budget.

You know, I'd like to thank our Minister of Finance for her 25 years of dedicated service to both the people of Saskatchewan as well as the constituents of Humboldt. I know the member from Kelvington and I were in Humboldt on Saturday meeting with the Saskatchewan professional trappers association, and I know they had high accolades for their representative that they had in the legislature.

And I believe it'd be really a fitting time to thank the many other members that are going to be retiring from, I guess, we call this meat grinder of the political world. Hopefully spend more time with their friends and their family and their community. You know, the contributions made to the growth and the prosperity of this province by these members is going to be their legacy, their legacy for the future, and really their legislative accomplishments are going to be felt for generations to come.

You know, I know the member from Saskatoon Southeast become a great friend to all on both sides of the House. I think he can be very proud of the number of accomplishments that he's had. And this member is probably also the reason that we now have a requirement for two-factor authentication on all our electronic devices.

The member from Saskatoon Northwest has held a number of very influential positions in our government, including deputy premier and attorney general. But I've also come to appreciate, you know, his taste in classic cars, eight-track players, and scotch. You know, I've admired his steady approach with every issue that he faced.

The member from Big Muddy, you know, he was the guy that when I grew up I wanted to be like him. You know, his calm, his cool, collected approach to the issues I admire to this day, Mr. Chair. You know, he served in a very diverse list of cabinet positions, and every one of them, bringing that can-do attitude to every one of them. And you know, he got baseball. Baseball is a very cerebral sport, and there's only a few of us that can actually appreciate the cerebral components of baseball, all right?

Member from Indian Head-Milestone, you know, he's become a valuable mentor really to every new MLA on this side of the House. And I also think that he knows, probably met, played against, or certainly was introduced to probably 70 per cent of the people in this province.

Member from Carrot River Valley has become a good friend and admittedly a bit of a doppelg nger to me. You know, at least once a day someone, somewhere in the building has, you know, was probably confused a little bit with who they were actually talking to. I do have to admit that even my granddaughter was confused once in a restaurant, went up to him saying, "Hey, Grandpa." You know, and he's given me the opportunity that he says, once he retires now, that I'm going to be able to become my own person now. And to that, I appreciate his retirement.

The member from Yorkton has also become a very good friend and, you know, I continue to think of him as a mentor as we often tag team the, you know, the important issues for our area. And I will always admire his faith, his commitment to his family, his community, and to Chuck Norris.

The member from Canora-Pelly, you know, he's become a good

friend even though he's a Bruins fan, and I know there's others that I'm tolerating, I'm tolerating. You know, we were competitors and actually collaborators for many years on baseball fields and hockey rinks as our sons played both against and also with each other in a number of different sports. And I've also had the very enviable experience of experiencing Terry's shishliki well before anyone else was introduced to it in the province.

The member from Kindersley, oh my, the member from Kindersley. You know, we all need that one person that, when you're having a bad day, you just need to reach out and have a quick conversation with someone, really just get you back on track. And even if it meant that he was going to beak you later on, you know, from the back of the House, he was that guy that you knew was always on your side. And you know, his incredibly quick wit, his uncanny impersonations, and really his just general appreciation for life is truly contagious.

The member from Arm River has also become a very easy person to get to know, become friends with, and certainly respect for his commitment to his family and his community. And if we're honest, he's also influenced the fashion sense of a good number, I think, of members on this side of the House. There was not a lot of plum, paisley, or pastel worn in this Chamber before 2020, admittedly.

The member from Batoche, as we have discussed often here, is a historian, you know, and our similarities lie in the fact that we were both Hereford producers at one time and elders in our Lutheran church. And that led to many interesting conversations.

The member from Regina Northeast, also a very fascinating member. He's dedicated to serving his constituents. But before he retires, I really need him to give me a tutorial on how do you actually score cricket.

And thanks again to our fallen colleague Derek Meyers. You know, there was a guy who knew a guy — or two — if you needed to find that guy, right? And he'd always help you out in a pinch, and boy, he really appreciated life to the fullest. And you know, he's a human being that I hope to get close to being like as I evolve yet.

Thank you to each of our retiring colleagues. You know, rest assured that you really have left this province in far better shape than you did when you started your career.

A big thank you to my constituency assistant Tim Ziola, who's just a rock star of a constituency assistant. I've never met a guy who knows so many people across the entire constituency. Now that's also resulted in him having to fix refrigerators and, you know, file various paperwork to the federal government, international governments and wherever, as well as help with different prescriptions, as he's a retired pharmacist.

My wife, Carla, who is slowly trying to enter retirement — I think she only has three big projects on her desk right now, and certainly one of them is riding herd on our two wonderful granddaughters, who I had the opportunity to introduce here the other day.

A shout-out to our son Michael and his wife, Laine, both

gainfully employed in Saskatchewan, certainly took very big advantage of the graduate retention program. And our youngest son, Matthew, who is getting married this October in Ontario. And I hope we are able to bring him back to Saskatchewan once we develop an aerospace program here, and I think we're getting there. There's going to be an opportunity there, absolutely.

Mr. Speaker, spring is really one of my favourite times of the year, you know. Travelling extensively this weekend I had a lot of windshield time. I got to really view the growth and renewal that we have every spring going on in this province. You know, the water was flowing, new calves bouncing around in the field, saw lots of producers getting their equipment ready for spring, geese are back, gophers getting creamed on the highway, you know, and camper trailers are coming back from the South. Saskatchewan residents are ready to start that annual renewal, and that's what this budget is providing. It's really going to continue to provide for the growth and renewal that this province has experienced from 2008.

You know, as I was watching that tired and out-of-touch member from Rosemont give his 6,350-word essay over two days on why things are so bad in this province, you know what I noticed? I noticed that there was people starting to stir about the 1,500-word mark. Then about the 2,000-word mark, people were actually starting to leave the Assembly. And you know, that's when I finally understood why people were leaving this province when they were in power. You know, they really couldn't handle the negativity, the fear, and the doubting of the potential of this province that his party was communicating.

I could also understand why our Sask Party came into power. It had that hope-beats-fear attitude. Interesting enough, that very conversation, you know, was being held in the rotunda and in the receptions after the budget speech really with everybody wondering, did they hear the same budget speech that he did?

Mr. Speaker, our residents really want to hear about this province being one of the most affordable provinces to live in, one of the lowest tax rates, one of the lowest utility bundles, one of the lowest personal income taxes, and one of the lowest business tax rates in the country, one of the incentives to stay here after post-secondary graduation or maybe entering a difficult-to-recruit-for health position. Or maybe they want to participate in some of the over \$17 billion of capital projects that are occurring in this province as we speak.

Just this morning in a Regina office in a waiting room where I was at, I met a young guy from Fort Saskatchewan. And he was moving his family here to work in the province, to work on the Cargill project that was going on in the GTH [Global Transportation Hub]. He definitely was not bringing his family here because of a 6,350-word essay on what this province does not have going for it.

Mr. Speaker, that essay and these other positive and uplifting messages followed up by other NDP members — Hansard, I'm saying that sarcastically — is why they will continue to be sitting on that side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, the constituency of Melville-Saltcoats is taking advantage, taking advantage of the classrooms, the care, and communities theme of this year's budget. We are seeing another

\$250,000 invested in the preparation and planning for a new integrated health facility in Esterhazy. We've experienced significant positive results in the human health resources plan where they've been converting part-time or non-permanent positions to full-time positions at the RN [registered nurse] and LPN [licensed practical nurse] level in both Esterhazy and Melville, resulting in lower bypass occasions at our emergency facilities.

We've recruited more nurse practitioner positions for Langenburg, for Esterhazy, and Melville, helping our complement of doctors reduce their in-clinic visits. Our pharmacists, like Ty's Pharmacy in Langenburg or Shoppers Drug Mart in Esterhazy or Pharmasave in Melville, have helped reduce the pressure on our doctors by giving them, the pharmacists, the opportunity to expand their scope of practice.

On the weekend I had a number . . . five in-depth conversations with a number of constituents regarding their personal experience with health care in this province. Four out of the five talked about the excellent quality of care that they received in the Regina General; in St. Paul's, Saskatoon; Jim Pattison Children's Hospital; and the Allan Blair cancer clinic. More work needs to be done. We still had that one out of five that didn't have the best experience, Mr. Chair, but it's going to be done. That work is going to be done. Those improvements are going to be made with that record \$7.6 billion in investment in health care that this budget provides this year.

Another hot topic that certainly gets discussed at spring break-up is our highways investment. And again the constituency of Melville-Saltcoats is seeing significant investment in the No. 16 Highway with repaving of that 23-kilometre stretch between Saltcoats and Yorkton, as well as a number of other projects on the No. 9 and the No. 8 Highway.

Fun fact: with the new upgrades at the Richardson Pioneer and the LDC [Louis Dreyfus Company] oil seed plant and grain millers and the new pea processing plant at LDC Yorkton, we're going to see — get this — 9 to 10,000 semi loads of grain coming to the city per week. 9 to 10,000 semi loads. Do you know that there is going to be more grain coming in to Yorkton than what the port of Thunder Bay sees in a year?

And that is why this government is continuing these significant, regular investments in highways to support the growing economy of this province. We have moved a long way from that adopt-a-pothole program of the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, potash mining, agriculture, and transportation are the cornerstones of the economy of Melville-Saltcoats. Contrary to the comments of the member from Rosemont, no agriculture producers in this constituency believe that the NDP will be their champion to support agriculture.

[21:00]

Their record of agriculture support is truly abysmal, you know, dating all the way back to the ill-conceived land bank era of the '70s to the infamous sit-in in 2000 where the Romanow government said, it's not his job. Not their job, the NDP's job to support agriculture; that should be left up to the federal government. And even the reluctant support that that government

gave our beef producers during the BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy] crisis, and then certainly we have the various agriculture business scandals that we were left with to sort out with the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, this Sask Party government has been there for agriculture producers in this province, whether it's been through drought, trade issues, or dealing with the remnants of BSE. Investments and enhancements in crop insurance, whether it's increase the number of weather stations to improve the weather-based insurance component; increasing coverage to include cover crops, mixed feed crops; or even moving to individualized premiums and many more options. Livestock loss, revenue loss programs have been enhanced over the last couple of years. The AgriStability compensation rates have been increased from 70 per cent to 80 per cent last year to better support farmers in need.

And that's not all. Our government continues to support ongoing research at the University of Saskatchewan at VIDO [Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization], Crop Development Centre, and a number of other institutions like Ag-West biotech that I think almost all of us members attended here this evening. Fascinating work that's being done in the biotech sector. And really it's all state-of-the-art research now that we're seeing here going on in Saskatchewan for supporting crop, animal protection, and certainly genetics. And we've also frozen Crown lands grazing rates at 2022 levels to support our livestock producers with the effects of drought.

And talking about drought, our continued and increased investment in irrigation expansion across the province will continue to strengthen our support of promoting food security, as well as increasing crop diversification to enhance ag producer returns.

Irrigation affects my constituency. We have pivots going up in Langenburg. We actually have pivots operating in Spy Hill. Economic returns found by other jurisdictions in investing in irrigation expansion has shown huge dividends in increasing value-added development and creating more capital investment and more employment in our province. We need to grow our economy to support our services, and that's what helps build classrooms, care, and communities.

Now let's talk about trade. We've been breaking trade records on a yearly basis. We now have over nine key destinations that take over a billion dollars of our production yearly, and we have trade offices in almost all of them. Trade offices that provide support, support between buyers and sellers; promote our sustainably produced products to new customers and buyers daily. These are trade offices that that NDP said were pointless; they were a duplication of services, and honestly that could easily be done by email and thank-you cards.

You know what? They really don't have a plan on how that they would increase exports, increase trade, or increase production in this province. I think we should call that the net zero plan, right? Zero plan for growth, zero plan for increased trade, and zero plan for investments. Maybe that should be the focus of our member from Sask Rivers — the NDP net zero plan.

Mr. Speaker, my constituency plays a significant part in the world's most sustainable potash production. Record capital

investment by Mosaic in Esterhazy and Nutrien in Rocanville are supporting major economic drivers of our area. Over 1,400 employees live, work, and raise a family in my constituency, and that wasn't always the case. No. When the NDP nationalized the potash industry in this province in the '70s, capital investment stopped. Labour issues increased, productivity decreased. And it wasn't till our government was firmly in place before capital flowed back into the Saskatchewan economy, and flow it did.

New multi-million-dollar mines at Belle Plaine and Jansen, huge investments in expansions in Esterhazy and Rocanville, and none of this was even considered when the NDP was in power. All they had — labour strife and deteriorating infrastructure. I know a shiver went down the spines of our potash partners when Eric Cline and Erin Weir started suggesting that maybe we need to charge more royalties. Maybe we should be increasing taxes, you know, from extraction from this industry.

Potash production can be done, it can be done cheaper in Belarus, Russia, China. But you know what? Mosaic and Nutrien chose to be here in my backyard because of our stable, predictable royalty and taxation structure. If past performance is a future indicator, the NDP would crash the potash industry and drive capital out of this province again.

This budget is showing record payments in municipal revenue sharing. Municipal revenue sharing is responsible for our municipalities to expand their lagoons, water treatment systems, build community complexes, and move to develop regional services. Our government has invested billions of dollars into supporting our communities, supports that help a community grow its residential area, its business and commercial core. All I can remember the NDP rebuilding was their “Coming soon” signs at the upgrader at, I think, every election cycle.

You know, in the Melville-Saltcoats constituency in the early 2000s our population was stagnant, if not declining. Ten short years, we've grown our local population by 15 to 20 per cent. Where I live in Churchbridge I have one neighbour who, and his family, come from Ontario. My other neighbour came from Manitoba. In the early 2000s we were just a wee province, but became a robust, growing province not long after the government changed. And with that change came a change in attitude, a change in mindset, and the encouragement to realize the things we could become.

I'd like to talk about the almost doubling of financial investment to our many regional parks: Carlton Trail, Esterhazy, Saltcoats, Melville. These are great golf destinations, lake destinations, and camping destinations.

Could maybe talk about the increase in funding to support our regional colleges. Suncrest College, based in Yorkton, Melville, and Melfort hosts the reinvigorated professional firefighter training course, located in Melville. Just recently they opened up the first of its kind in the province, a diagnostic medical sonography course. This college and others in the province continue to train and educate our future health care workers and our education support people. They offer drone training, play a big part in the trades training that we so desperately need to support our growing economy.

I think you need to move on. You know, I'd like to support the

growth-supporting budget presented by our Minister of Finance. It supports a stable, a steady growth that doesn't crash the economy, but rather supports a great, hard-working people in this province to help build their classrooms, their care facilities, and their communities. Appreciate the very historical and detailed support of the seconding of the motion by the member of Willowgrove, Saskatoon Willowgrove. And I do not support the soul-crushing comments by the member from Regina Rosemont.

But I do want to leave you with one of my dad's favourite quotes from Winston Churchill: “The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings. The inherent virtue of socialism is its equal sharing of miseries.”

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know, it's past my bedtime, I get that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise here tonight and support our government's budget for the year '24-25.

I have some thank yous, and then I've got to tell a few stories about some people in here. I want to thank my constituency co-workers, Jackie and Kirsten; minister's office personnel, Ken, Emni, Anshumaan, and Kielle.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by acknowledging the efforts of our Finance minister, our Deputy Premier. Thank you for all your hard work in presenting the budget as we announced record investments in classrooms, record investment in health care, and record investment in communities. Our government's vision is clear: promote a strong economy, foster job creation, and ensure a prosperous future for all who call Saskatchewan home.

But before I launch into the various segments of government investment into our province, I want to first speak to our retiring members and members who are leaving this legislature. All of you leave a piece of you here. We will talk about you and some of the funny . . . usually the funny things and the not-so-funny things that each of you have contributed to this province and to government in Saskatchewan.

And there's a few that I need to give special notice to, and that is the member from Yorkton. And we were elected together in 2007. And we were giving members' statements or whatever the case may be, bearing in mind that I was his seatmate so I got to see it all first-hand, up close and personal. So anyway, beside him was seated our Finance minister and House Leader, Rod Gantefoer.

I'll never forget this. And Greg — no, sorry — the member from Yorkton went over on his member's statement. Well, you know, and to run a legislature properly, you really do need to have those things narrowed down and everybody following the same song sheet. Well the member from Yorkton chose to talk longer than he was allotted. I have never seen that quick and that fast and that to the point as that former Finance minister getting up and he ripped Greg like, it was a new one . . . yeah, or the member from Yorkton. He absolutely tore a strip off him in two seconds flat. And the look on the member from Yorkton's face was beyond

the pale. And I thought I was . . . I mean it was really, really funny to me because I was the one that didn't do that. So anyway, I mean, all of those stories of being seatmates and we certainly had a number of laughs over the years.

When the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy first got elected and I went — and this was before I was in government — went and door knocked for you in Weyburn. And I'm looking at this young man, and who is this kid that I'm door knocking for? And you know, you have definitely turned into, I mean, something quite amazing, articulate, you know, analytical, calm, and . . .

An Hon. Member: — Good looking.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Oh, of course, good looking, and same with the member from Yorkton. Yeah, you too. Yeah, I'll go down the list. Anyways, those are just some of the stories. But each of you, each of you will leave a piece of you here, and I certainly do appreciate it.

Mr. Speaker, since the Saskatchewan Party came into power, this government has invested over \$14 billion in post-secondary institutions and student supports. This budget is providing a record \$3.3 billion investment in education. That is an increase of 8.1 per cent over last year's budget. This is going to support pre-kindergarten to grade 12 schools along with early learning and child care and libraries.

It would help, Mr. Speaker, it all helps in shaping the future of Saskatchewan. Imagine what would have happened if the NDP was in power. They would have probably closed more schools. And quite frankly, the impact of those school closures throughout the province of Saskatchewan has been significant and it has taken a long time for us as a province to get back to where we actually have schools where we need to have schools, where the populations are growing, and it's a lot of communities in Saskatchewan.

On March 8th, 2024, our government signed a multi-year funding agreement with Saskatchewan School Boards Association that represents all 27 locally elected school boards. This agreement provides a minimum of 356.6 million per year over four years to all divisions for classroom supports, as well as increased investment into youth mental health resources. The 356.6 million for classroom supports is the largest increase in school operating funding in Saskatchewan's history, of 180 million or nearly 9 per cent over the previous year, for a total of 2.2 billion.

[21:15]

As our Finance minister said the other day, we are investing in what teachers and students have told us that matter the most. We listened to what we were told in our communications with our constituents. We were told this. We knew as a result of those conversations that this is what mattered the most.

We have a strong economy and that is why we are able to invest in our economy. We are building more schools and more child care spaces for our kids and their parents. This budget includes funding for the planning of nine new schools, two major renovations, along with 11 projects and three ongoing major renovations across the province.

Since our government came to power, my riding alone has seen major projects such as Emerald Ridge Elementary School in White City, École St. Elizabeth joint-use elementary school, École Wascana Plains joint-use elementary school. Planning and design of two more joint-use elementary schools are under way, and one is under construction.

You know, the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy was talking a little bit about education property tax, and I found a little bit of information here tonight about that. And he gave a great explanation as to why those changes were required and why they were made. In 2008-2009 this government reduced cumulative education property tax burden by approximately \$3.18 billion as a result of the change that was made.

Mr. Speaker, let me take a moment and share how the NDP responded to the people of this province when it comes to education capital. And of course we all know and we've talked about it many, many, many times.

As I said, the impacts on the province as a whole weren't just that year that they were closed. They continued on. They carried on and infiltrated the province. They responded by closing 176 schools and according to a June 2001 enrolment project paper produced under the NDP, come 2010 there would only be 140,000 students in this province. Again, very self-limiting statement. There were 160,000 in 2010 and today there's over 195,000 students.

The NDP did not plan for growth, that's for sure. They didn't believe that this province could grow. Well we know better. They never had to deal with growth because there were over 30,000 fewer people after 16 years of an NDP government. When they were in government, our young graduates — we all know, we all know them, we all know their parents — graduates left the province, and now so many more are staying here in Saskatchewan and finding amazing opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, this budget makes significant investments in our health care sector, a record investment of 7.59 billion, an increase of over 10 per cent as compared to the previous budget. The SHA will receive 5 per cent more this year, Mr. Speaker, as compared to last year.

One of the major problems we identified was the newcomer health professionals and what they were facing to have their credentials accredited and that recognition. We all know of a few people that are very, very highly trained, whether they be doctors, nurses, whatever the case may be, that may not have received their education here in Saskatchewan. It may be somewhere else in Canada or outside of Canada. And I know a few of them myself, and they have been languishing in this province because they're not able to use the skills, that recognition of those skills has not happened here.

And it's so exciting to see that the first of . . . this process of credential recognition in this province is the first in Canada. And I know that there has been discussion about how this is going to proceed, and I'm very excited to see that office of credential recognition actually, you know, starting to look at some of the people that we have here that are very, very highly trained.

In this budget we are investing 1.8 million in streamlining and

assessing their degrees and licences to start working in our communities, which is what we want. If they're able to work here, we want them to work here. We are investing 179 million more than last year, with a total of 516 million for facilities and equipment, which includes 21.9 million for the Regina General Hospital parkade.

Now the Regina General Hospital parkade is to provide a safe and enough parking for the people that work at Regina General Hospital. It is also for those who are visiting loved ones in the hospital, and it will . . . Because there have been some concerns over the years, again this government listened. This is why we're building this, because we do care about our health care professionals and we do care about the safety and security of those using our hospitals: \$20 million for specialized long-term care bed replacements in Regina; 55 million for Weyburn General Hospital, and construction is ongoing; 180 million for Prince Albert Victoria Hospital. We are allocating more money for the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency with an increase of 26 million, for a record budget of close to 249 million.

The people of Saskatchewan are recognizing the efforts that are being made by this province in fighting cancer. Here's what Sarah Wright, a breast cancer survivor, said in an interview:

It's really exciting to see that this centre is going to bring all of us together. It will be a simpler process and take out the guesswork, which is very, very scary when you are waiting months and months. All of that ends this fiscal year. I'm so appreciative of our government.

Our government cares for the people of the province and that is shown in this budget, Mr. Speaker. A record investment of 102 million for addiction treatment and 472 million for mental health care. This budget provides 556.9 million in direct support of Saskatchewan municipalities, an increase of 53.9 million or 10.7 per cent from last year's budget. This is a very clear indicator of the robustness of Saskatchewan's economy and the growth that we are experiencing. You just tell by the increase of the support that's being provided to municipalities. Municipal revenue sharing is up 42.4 million this year, an increase of 14.2 per cent over last year's investment.

The lowest level of revenue sharing that this province has seen was under the NDP government in 2001-2002. Funding was only 54.87 million. Under the NDP Saskatchewan people paid the highest — and I referred to that earlier — paid the highest education property tax in the country. The NDP promised many times, as the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy talked about, to reduce taxes for Saskatchewan but never did deliver. Saskatchewan Party government is keeping those promises as we did in 2008-2009.

We're building more roads, improving our highway conditions for better safety and efficiency in our transportation corridors all over Saskatchewan. In this year's budget we've allocated 740 million to improve more than 1100 kilometres of highways. Some of the construction projects will carry on or are expected to finish, including completion of the replacement of two Highway 6 bridges over Regina's Ring Road, continuing construction of twinning projects near Rowatt and Corinne on Highway 6 and 39 between Regina and Weyburn, corridor improvements on Highway 5 east of Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, we heard last week or last Thursday that members across the way, they talked about this large tax increase. I must mention that every individual of this province knows that it was the NDP Finance minister under the NDP who gave the highest PST [provincial sales tax] to our province — 9 per cent.

Since our government came to power we have introduced various programs to make life more affordable for citizens of this province. Saskatchewan family of four with \$100,000 in total income pay 2,443 less in combined provincial income tax and sales tax in 2023 when compared to 2007. Under NDP government, a family of four started paying provincial income tax at 26,150.

An Hon. Member: — You don't say.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Yeah, seriously. In this year's budget we will provide an estimated \$2 billion in affordability measures for Saskatchewan residents each and every year. Each and every year, Mr. Speaker, we are investing over 83 million in the maintenance and repair of up to 1,400 housing units in '24-25.

All of these investments I have mentioned are because we have a strong and growing economy. Saskatchewan really is one of the best places in the world to invest in and do business, and that results in more jobs and opportunities across this province. And there was a time where we could not have said that. There was a time where we did not say that. More job opportunities mean more people staying in the province, second-lowest small-business tax rate in the country.

Let's look at some recent capital investments in Saskatchewan. BHP approved 6.5 billion in investments in stage 2 of Jansen potash project. Nutrien continues to invest to accelerate potash production capability to 18 million tonnes by 2025. We would not be talking about this under an NDP government. Foran is investing with 368 million McIlvanna Bay copper mine project which is expected to produce an average of 34.5 million pounds of copper and 58.6 million pounds of zinc annually. Cargill has come up with a \$350 million canola crush project at the GTH. Richardson canola crush plant expansion in Yorkton to double processing capacity to 2.2 million metric tons annually.

Forestry, Dunkley Lumber \$100 million expansion of the saw mill in Carrot River, and it will create 240 direct and indirect new jobs. Manufacturing, Crestline Coach facility expansion of an additional 30,000 square feet of manufacturing space in Saskatoon. Pro Metal Industries expansion of the existing facility at Regina and a new facility to open in 2024. Mr. Speaker, all these investments make our economy stronger and create more jobs for a better life for the people that live here.

As the Minister of Environment I would be remiss if I did not mention our 2024-25 budget as well. It will support investments in environmental protection, sustainable resource management, and make Saskatchewan more resilient to the impacts of climate change. We are investing 140 million to support clean electricity products as well as keeping power rates affordable for the people of Saskatchewan.

620,000 is being invested in our lands branch, which will improve Crown resource land management in support of the critical minerals and investment attraction strategies. In support

of the growth plan goal to double the growth of Saskatchewan's forestry sector, the ministry's investing \$400,000 this year in our forest resource inventory project.

[21:30]

This budget will greatly benefit Saskatchewan people by providing an investment into crucial areas that will benefit current and future generations. This year's budget reflects the times we are living in today, and it is going to create a better future for generations to come — today and tomorrow. The belief that Saskatchewan can and the belief that Saskatchewan will is prevalent in this province right now, today, and into our future.

I'm proud to support this budget, and I will not be supporting the amendment put forward by the member from Regina Rosemont. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jensen): — I recognize the member from Regina Pasqua.

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to rise in the House and represent people of Regina Pasqua, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in my constituency, Regina Pasqua, very diverse community and vibrant community lives in there, people around the world actually. When we talk immigration, we can see there's people from all over the world living in my constituency. Everywhere actually in Saskatchewan, but in my constituency you can see people from Europe, east Europe, and people from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, Africa, Greece, Mr. Speaker, from Turkey and Philippines. You can see it's a small world in there, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have travelled around the province since I was having a privilege as a Legislative Secretary to Minister of Education. I had the chance to go Prince Albert and North Battleford, Saskatoon, and Yorkton and a few other places as well, Mr. Speaker, and met many community leaders there. The one of the things actually I got that was very prominent, that they like our education policy. And meeting people who's been living in Saskatchewan, like since 30 years, or the newcomers, and giving me the same thoughts about our education policy. And they encourage us to keep up that way, Mr. Speaker.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I have attended a few of those citizenship ceremony in Saskatoon. And in those citizenship, almost it's happening every 15 days, and many of those . . . All those people, 7 out of 10 are from Saskatchewan immigration nominee program, and people are very excited to call Saskatchewan their home. They're happy with their family. They're having good jobs, Mr. Speaker. They're having a house, living in there. And you can engage them in a conversation and you can feel that they very much like to be in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, coming back in my constituency, again that's very good businesses in my constituency. And my favourite store in Regina Pasqua is Cabela's store, Mr. Speaker. And when my kids talk to their cousins in Ontario and they tell them that we have a Cabela's store just about a walking distance. And all other stores, Mr. Speaker, we have a Superstore, Walmart, and we have lots of restaurants, Roughrider store, Mr. Speaker. And much more in

that constituency, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of the budget tabled by our Minister of Finance. First I would like to thank you to our Minister of Finance and her team for their hard work for tabling this 2024-25 budget where we have record investment in nation's most vital infrastructure, health, education, and social services.

Mr. Speaker, we all know Saskatchewan is one of the most affordable provinces with growing economy, employment opportunities, quality of life, and sense of communities. The most sunshine place on the earth has abundance of resources and most attractive place around the world, not only for the investment, but also destination for live and raise families and enjoy quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, first I would like to say thank you to all who supported me, making my job easy, Mr. Speaker, and that's my CA Mounir Rahwan, and my other CA is Ainey Kamal. They are taking all the load in my office, Mr. Speaker.

And my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, and all those cabinet ministers. And I would like to highlight a few of that. The member from Saskatoon Southeast, Mr. Speaker. Any time I need to get a suggestion, I can go and can have a very good conversation. And the member from Indian Head-Milestone, and the member from Regina Wascana Plains, and the member from Rochdale, and the lovely member, actually, from Melfort, Mr. Speaker. If I count all those members . . . and Weyburn-Big Muddy as well, Mr. Speaker. If I count their experience, 100 years experience right there, Mr. Speaker, and so proud of those members. And I would like to say thank you to all those members for putting those quarter of the century each to serving this great nation in this country and their sacrifice, Mr. Speaker.

I also would like to say thanks to all my constituents for their support and time-to-time feedback which help our government make our policies.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say thank you to my family, my wife, Attia. Coming up on July 25th, it's going to be 25th years we're together, Mr. Speaker. Those were very easy, and there was much of that side, Mr. Speaker. And my three boys. One, Ayaz is the oldest one. He's graduating from the University of Regina, Mr. Speaker, this year. And the second one is in university, first year U of R [University of Regina]. And the third one is in grade 9, Arsalan. And, Mr. Speaker, very good boys. I'm so proud to have this family and would like to say thanks for supporting me in my job, Mr. Speaker.

The Saskatchewan population is growing at its fastest pace, more than ever in the last hundred years. And we are more than 1.2 million people living in this province now, Mr. Speaker. This budget responds to the opportunities and needs of an increasing population as a result of the benefit of a strong economy and growing province. Mr. Speaker, this budget embarks the needs of classrooms, care, and community.

Mr. Speaker, this budget speaks what matters the most — the people of Saskatchewan, parents, and their children's education. Classroom funding is a priority for the Government of Saskatchewan, with a record investment in 2024 and '25 budget. The Ministry of Education receives \$3.3 billion funding, an

increase of 247.8 million over the previous year to support pre-K [pre-kindergarten] to grade 12 school, early learning, child care, and libraries.

This budget especially provides 356.6 million in supports of direct for our classroom, including funding to address classroom size and complexity. This includes 4.9 million for the Teacher Innovation and Support Fund and specialized support classroom fund project. Saskatchewan's 27 school divisions receive a record \$2.2 billion in school operating funding for this school budget, Mr. Speaker, an increase of \$180 million. This includes nearly 30 million to fund operational pressure such as salaries or non-teaching positions, bus drivers, and educational assistants. New schools and classrooms are also the priority in our rapidly growing province.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan Party government holds its bright record in building schools. I would like to highlight only for Regina, Mr. Speaker, what we accomplished. Scott Collegiate was completed. Sacred Heart Elementary School was completed. Connaught Elementary School was completed. Wascana elementary and Douglas Park elementary, Argyle community school was completed. And Laval French high school was reopened, which used to be Usher high school was closed by NDP. Mr. Speaker, Harbour Landing School, St. Kateri, and Harbour Landing School, was built in 2017 and we are going to have groundbreaking for Harbour Landing new school sometime as soon as weather permit us to do that.

But the 216 million for pre-K to grade 12 education capital, an increase of 41.8 per cent over the previous year, this includes 165.9 million for 11 new or consolidated school projects and three major renovations. 28.5 million to establish new classrooms through the relocatable classroom program, and 8.8 million for the planning of nine new schools and two renovations, and 12.8 million for the minor capital renewal projects to address structural repair and renovations to prolong the lives of the schools across the province.

Mr. Speaker, this budget provides 408.7 million for early learning and child care to support young families in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, from the pre-K to grade 12, this budget provides more than 4.4 billion for overall education in the province, which is the record investment ever made in education in Saskatchewan.

While health care remains the top priority for the Government of Saskatchewan with a record investment of \$7.6 billion ensuring the well-being of our citizens; maintaining public health; and addressing health care needs here in Saskatchewan; providing accessible, affordable, and quality of health care services for all Saskatchewanians as close to home as possible.

This budget includes the spending on acute care; primary and community care; mental health and addictions; health human resources hiring more doctors, nurses, and medical staff. 71.4 million focuses on increasing the capacity of the acute care system. This includes \$30 million for Saskatoon and Regina capacity pressure action plan, as well as nearly \$10 million for the Regina urgent care centre.

Funding is also being directed to continuing to reduce the surgical wait-list, working to achieve a three-month wait time

target, years ahead of the schedule. The budget invests in enhancing the capacity of emergency medical services by supporting emergency services and the community paramedicine positions in various locations, including rural and northern communities.

Medical imaging capacity also increases as a result of 5.1 million in operating funding by increasing capacity, and the wait-list for MRI and CT [computerized tomography] scans will decrease.

Mr. Speaker, this budget includes a 459.4 million increase for targeted initiatives to expand access to the primary, community, and senior care across the province. Saskatchewan residents will have additional opportunities to achieve better health outcomes with the 16 million increase for primary and community care programs in the province.

Understanding the importance of caring for those who helped build our province, the Government of Saskatchewan will invest 43.4 million to stabilize services and programming so Saskatchewan seniors can live safely and comfortably in their communities. This includes a new funding model for third-party long-term care facilities and alternate levels of care that allow for care in settings other than the hospital.

Mr. Speaker, the mental health and addictions continue to be the priority for the government. With an investment of 574 million in this budget, it includes the increase of 34 million for targeted mental health and addictions initiatives which include plans to achieve 500 new addictions spaces, Mr. Speaker, and 30 new complex needs emergency shelter spaces. Investments are focused on the children and the youth addictions, vulnerable population, and other mental health initiatives.

[21:45]

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to invest in recruiting, training, and retaining health professionals throughout the province. An agreement was reached with the Saskatchewan physicians to support efforts to recruit, train, and retain physicians in the province. It also allows Saskatchewan to remain competitive and one of the best places for physicians to live and work.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, this government provides high-quality care. And meeting the needs of our growing province, the '24-25 budget will help ensure our health professionals have appropriate facilities to provide care to the people of Saskatchewan. The budget invests the record amount, 516.8 million, in health infrastructure such as a new hospital and health care centres. This budget also increase 179.3 million from the previous year, include the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital and Weyburn General Hospital replacement projects, 27 million for construction La Ronge long-term care project, and 22 million to complete the construction on Regina General Hospital parkade, Mr. Speaker, and 20 million for the Regina long-term care specialized beds project.

Mr. Speaker, this is our commitment to secure the bright future for our generation to come for people of Saskatchewan by investing in health, education, mining and agriculture, forestry, and manufacturing by building a strong Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, this budget speaks affordability and addresses

the demand of people such as education, health care infrastructure, and social welfare while maintaining the fiscal responsibility and promoting the economic growth and stability. So I support the budget, Mr. Speaker, and I do not support the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jensen): — I recognize the member from Regina Douglas Park.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise this evening and enter into the debate on the budget, always an important part of the legislative session. Glad to see that I'm up actually a little bit earlier than I was anticipating being up this afternoon, but I'll still keep my remarks fairly succinct tonight. I know there are a lot of colleagues that want to enter in on the debate. And frankly these lights are a little punishing on my eyes, so I'm not going to stand up for too long.

But I do want to take the opportunity first to thank some people in my life, as is of course custom at this time. First of all I want to thank my constituency assistant Aiden, who's been doing a phenomenal job of holding down the fort in the great constituency of Regina Douglas Park while I'm in the legislature, doing a great job reaching out to constituents, talking to them, and helping me with my schedule and correspondence.

And of course I want to thank my family, my partner who is home with the kids today, and my parents who are helping out at home with them as well because they're both a little . . . Both of my kids, I should say more specifically, are a bit of a handful. They're a lot of fun, but they're also a lot of work. And I do want to take one opportunity to tell a very quick story, since I'm on my feet, about them. You never know how long you'll have the opportunity to embarrass your children on the public record, so I want to take the opportunity to do that tonight in case it . . . You never know. It could be my last, Mr. Speaker.

My daughter is four; she's turning five in July. And my son is two; he's turning three next week. And we were spending some time together on Sunday, Mr. Speaker, Sunday afternoon. It was about 5:30. I had an event I had to go to last night at the Mahmood Mosque — amazing event, incredible people. Love them very much. I always enjoy going there. There was an iftar dinner there last night.

So I was helping get my kids ready. My husband had some work he had to get ready for, so he was doing that in our office. I was getting the kids ready for supper. My three-year-old is obsessed with helping me cook right now. So we were preparing some meals for him and his sister in the kitchen, and my daughter was sort of flitting about. She's really into crafts right now, so she was kind of running about helping with supper and then running off to work on her crafts and then coming back.

Anyways, I went . . . After preparing supper, my son wanted to cuddle, so we went onto the couch, had a little cuddle for about 10 minutes or so. I knew I had to leave pretty soon, so I was kind of trying to wrap up the cuddle time, honestly. And then I turned to my side and I let out an audible gasp, Mr. Speaker, because I turned and I saw a gigantic chunk of hair on my couch. And I knew that that hair was definitely the hair of my daughter's. And I knew that my daughter was really into crafting this weekend, and I knew she had her hands on some scissors, Mr. Speaker.

So I went and tried to find her. She was hiding. She knew she had made a mistake. And I finally found her by following the clumps of hair throughout my house, Mr. Speaker. And we had a quick, little conversation because I had to leave. And she was very embarrassed, but I think she's learned her lesson, hopefully, that you know, you don't cut your own hair. She's got a little half mullet she's rocking now these days, Mr. Speaker, but I ended up just taking that big pile of hair, finding my husband and saying, this is your problem now; I have to run.

And I think that's a pretty good microcosm of my life, Mr. Speaker. And it's always good to talk about, first of all, you know, to embarrass my kids a little bit because I want to traumatize them with having these stories on the record in the future, Mr. Speaker. But I also think it's good to talk about what lives look like behind the scenes, because they're often quite messy and definitely not perfect. But of course we wouldn't want to have them any other way.

So just a thank you to my husband for being home and helping put those kids to bed today. And I do hope I go home tomorrow morning . . . tonight, tomorrow night to see them tomorrow morning, and there isn't any new haircut or any sort of thing cut off that wasn't cut off before, Mr. Speaker. That's the hope at least, Mr. Speaker.

Of course I also want to thank the folks that work in our office, our caucus office. We are very lucky, all of us as opposition colleagues, to work with a very dedicated and hard-working group of staff, and we're forever in their debt. And we owe them greatly, the sacrifices that they also make with their families to serve us, Mr. Speaker.

Also I want to take this opportunity, because it'll probably be my last chance, to thank all of the MLAs that are not returning again, either by retiring or moving on to other things, on both sides of the House. Thank you wholeheartedly for your service. I think for many of us we've had the opportunity to have, to forge friendships and to develop relationships, and just thank you so much for your time here and all the best to all of you in the future. And we hope to see one another again. This is a very small province so most likely we will.

I particularly want to thank the two outgoing colleagues on my side of the House, the member for Saskatoon University and the member for Cumberland, for their service. The member for Cumberland in particular has been around for a while and he's been around the whole time that I've served. I've particularly benefited from his wisdom and his expertise. He's very thoughtful, and he's incredibly passionate for his constituents and for his community and wanting to see a better province that supports everybody in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and in particular those in the North. He's been an incredible voice. I've seen him very passionately and very successfully push for issues in this Chamber on behalf of constituents. And I think specifically about the time, the many times he has pushed for the government to take seriously the suicide crisis and in particular the suicide crisis in the North.

And sometimes there's a debate in the House about . . . When we talk about suicides in the North in particular, there are some members — not all — opposite who say, well we need to talk about suicides throughout Saskatchewan and the crisis that is the

mental health struggles for so many throughout the province. And that's not incorrect, but it would be wrong to not recognize and acknowledge the staggeringly high rates of suicides in the North, especially as compared to in the South, Mr. Speaker, and how difficult it is to access services up there compared to . . . Yes, it's difficult here in the South as well, but it's astronomically harder in the North. And that needs to be recognized.

And I want to acknowledge and thank my colleague, the member for Cumberland, who's really laid his heart out on the floor in particular with respect to this issue and will continue. I know he'll continue to fight for the people in his community no matter what he ends up doing beyond serving in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker.

Moving on to the budget, Mr. Speaker, the budget in particular, you know, I've heard members opposite complain that we've been too negative on the budget, quite surprised. It's like the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood has never been a part of the budget process before and keeps expecting that we're going to support the budget, when it's our job as critics to hold the government to account, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to do that because we need to be the voice of the people that we're hearing from, and that's people throughout the province.

And what we hear from people in Saskatchewan in particular are concerns about the rising cost of living, Mr. Speaker. And this budget doesn't provide anything in terms of relief for those people. In fact if you hear question period and you hear some of the answers from some of the government members and the Premier in particular, you would think that everything is fine, that there's actually nothing wrong in the province, and that the province is actually doing very well and it's a very affordable place to live.

Maybe that's the truth for some, Mr. Speaker, but it's not the truth for many, Mr. Speaker, and we hear that when we're out on the doorsteps. We hear that from the people who approach our office, Mr. Speaker. And you can also see it in the polling that's been coming out lately. I forget what the polling said, about 60 per cent of . . .

An Hon. Member: — 62.

Ms. Sarauer: — Sixty-two per cent of people are worse off than they were before. They're struggling, Mr. Speaker. They're truly struggling. We have the highest mortgage arrears in the country, Mr. Speaker, and the food bank usage in this province is through the roof, Mr. Speaker. So I urge members opposite, when they're busy patting themselves on the back, that they remember that that is the reality of this province right now.

It's not us slugging Saskatchewan or dunking on Saskatchewan or saying that we don't like this province. We love this province. That is why we're fighting for this. This is why we're fighting for a better future for everybody in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

In addition I wanted to talk a little bit about the public safety file because that's one of my critic areas, Mr. Speaker. And I did hear the Minister for Corrections and Policing talk earlier today about his file and some of the provisions in this bill with respect to public safety. Now this budget provides almost \$6 million more for the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police], Mr. Speaker,

and he was quite happy with this and said opposition members would say that government doesn't want to fund the RCMP.

Now this is the first time that government has chosen to fund detachment officers, to provide an increase in funding to detachment officers since 2013, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's been a very long time coming to see at least a little bit of an increase in this budget. So this is a welcome increase but it's not nearly what has been proposed by RCMP. In fact, the RCMP suggested and provided a budget proposal for an investment of \$100 million over five years to adequately resource the Saskatchewan RCMP. So that would have been \$20 million this year that they were seeking, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for adequate funding for RCMP.

And you know what that would have provided Saskatchewan residents, Mr. Deputy Speaker? A hundred and thirty-eight members. In fact it would have been an additional 300 Saskatchewan RCMP regular-member positions, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is significantly more than what the marshals service is proposing to provide potentially in 2026-2027. We're not entirely sure when it's going to be operational. But until then, we're still investing tens of millions of dollars into this police force. The Sask Party government could have chosen, instead of the marshals service, to invest that money in the RCMP and provided more boots on the ground immediately, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[22:00]

I've been talking to police throughout the province over the past several months, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And those are always really good conversations because I truly believe that police have a . . . are on the front lines of a lot of struggles in community right now, that they really see what's going on in community. Because they can't turn people away, you know. Sometimes social services will say no, sometimes the health care systems will say no. And then ultimately those people, those issues fall on police. So they're great to have conversations with because they really see what's happening in community.

And I've asked many of them, what is the one thing that government could do that could help the work that you do today, that could really impact the work that you could do or that you do for your community? And no matter where I go in the province, the answer is almost always the same: fix the addictions and mental health crisis in our community, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Fix the addictions and mental health crisis in our community.

What did we see for mental health in this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, going back to that conversation I had earlier about my colleague? Not much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now we've seen some new addictions beds, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that's a positive step forward, for addictions beds. But we also see a government who is refusing to provide any sort of harm reduction or safe consumption. And when you are in an epidemic, a crisis, the response should be "yes, and" to the solution. It should not be ideologically based. It should be, let's do every single thing we possibly can to keep people alive. Because the struggle is, we all want people to recover from addictions issues. We've talked about that.

The crisis has touched everybody at this point, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But in order for people to recover from their addictions, they need to be kept alive, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that's why that piece is important. And that's why it's disappointing to see this government, yet again, ideologically decide that they're not going to do every single thing they can to fix the issue, to address the crisis.

And these are the things that would affect one of the things I've been hearing a lot in my constituency in particular, which is concerns about crime and the solutions that are needed to solve it. So again, this government could have chosen to better fund the RCMP, to put boots on the ground today. And they could have chosen to address the mental health and addictions crisis in a "yes, and" way, Mr. Speaker; instead we're seeing — in particular the marshals service — this government carry on.

And I've heard the minister and the minister prior, when asked about what the mandate will be for the marshals service, it's everything you can ask for. Well they're going to deal with cattle theft. They're going to deal with property crime. They're going to deal with warrant apprehension. They're going to deal with guns and gangs. And then just a few weeks ago in question period, they were the solution to the security challenges we're seeing in our hospitals, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There are much more economical ways the issues can be addressed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, than creating an entirely new provincial force, police force, from scratch, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that's a decision that this government has made.

So when members opposite say that we're too negative about the budget, it's because we see time and time again misplaced priorities or misplaced spending, and we know that the province could be better. And we know that the problems that we're hearing from our constituents, from people throughout the province, from those who are struggling to decide whether or not they can put their kids in soccer this year or pay their grocery bills, that the government has a role to play in that, and this government is choosing not to, Mr. Speaker.

And that's why I won't be supporting the budget, and I will be supporting the amendment from my colleague. Thank you.

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

Mr. Bonk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll start my comments, as I should, by thanking some family members. I'd also like to thank my constituency assistant, Garry Beckett. Now Garry Beckett is one of the most empathetic people I've ever met in my life, and he does such a great job of running the office that we have in Moosomin. Everyone who comes to our office or calls, it's either the best visit they've had that year or the best call they've had that year. He's just one of those guys who looks after everyone, makes everyone feel special. Just an excellent, excellent individual.

I'd like to also thank my wife, Candace, the best woman I've ever met in my life. Talk about winning the lottery. She's just such a support to me. She looks after our household. She does a lot of the business, or looks after a lot of the business at home. Patient and kind, long-suffering. And she's doing such a great job in her

role as Honorary Consul of Hungary to Saskatchewan. And she approaches that role, like she does everything else, with just this effortless charm and grace, and I couldn't be more proud of the job she's doing.

I'd also like to mention my daughter Emma who's studying in Budapest. So she's studying international relations there now and international law, and she switched from . . . She was taking equine cardiology, but she started to hang out with some international law students, and she really found that interesting. And so she's in her first year of that, almost finished her first year, but really enjoying it and really doing well. And she quite often calls when she's in her, you know, political science classes and asks some questions. And she always says, as a non-practising intellectual, what do you think of this? And that's just the way she approaches everything, just with . . . just pure power.

I'd also like to thank my parents, Lorne and Diane Bonk, who have been just nothing but supportive. They've been steadfast in their support of what I'm doing. Just calm, never changing. It's just so nice to have that stability and reliability in my life. And like the member from Melfort had said about his upbringing, where he said he just had a good upbringing, there was no drama, there was no problems, didn't really understand some of these situations that we deal with as MLAs. Well that was exactly my upbringing. Just everything went well. It was steady. My parents were always there for us when we needed them. They also made sure we did what we had to do. But just very, very good, good people, and I just want to thank them for all the good things that they do for our community and for the province, actually.

While I can, I'd like to mention, as a few of the members in the House have done, that we have a few members sadly who are retiring. And I know in the Chamber tonight we've had the member from Cumberland. I know he's not running again. And I don't know him well, but every time I've ever ran into him and talked to him, he's been very pleasant, very kind. And I just want to wish him all the best in his retirement. And I know he wants to spend some time with those grandkids of his, and I really hope he gets to do that and spend more time with them.

I'd like to mention also the member from Indian Head-Milestone. He was always a bit of a political hero of mine. I remember one time I was sitting in Moscow in a hotel room and I was watching question period, and there was Brad Wall, Brad Wall and the member from Indian Head-Milestone sitting there, and they were just giving it to the NDP. It wasn't even fair. It was just lethal. And I remember I was like, someday I want to meet that guy. He's pretty good.

And he's a bit of a hero, like I mentioned. And you know what they say: sometimes it's better when you don't meet your heroes. But not in this case. Not in this case. I tell you, I have learned so much from him. I respect him so much. I'm going to miss him around this place. And I hope that your phone will still be on when I call, because I'm relying on you. All the best in your future.

To the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy, I remember when I first got elected, I went to talk to him about something and I was just ready to go. Just . . . I wanted to tackle this particular issue and just fight it out. I remember him sitting there going, well it's easy to hop on the tiger, not so easy to hop off. Thank you so

much for that advice, because that wouldn't have ended well for me, I know. So appreciate that and please, just enjoy some time with your family, that wonderful family you have. And I know that whatever you want to do in the future, it'll be nothing for you.

I'd also want to mention the member from Saskatoon . . .

An Hon. Member: — Southeast.

Mr. Bonk: — Southeast, yes. I remember when I first got elected he was sitting in the same chair he's in now, and I was right behind him. And Lyle Stewart, the former minister of Agriculture, was sitting there and I was just behind them. And I'd just been elected for a few days and I remember him turning around to me one time — and I didn't really understand what was going on yet at that point — and he turned around and he said, "Stand up. Stand up." So I stood up of course, and the Speaker says, "Why is the member on his feet?"

And he's known for playing a practical joke or two, I'll tell you that. And I have to say, he's one of my daughter's favourite people in this whole building because when she was quite little she came here and she was finding little, little cutouts of him. He had taken little cutouts of himself and put them on pictures all over the building. All these historical paintings and portraits, and so that's always a bit of a treasure hunt that she would find was to find little cutout pictures of that good, fine man. And I hope he enjoys his retirement.

To the member from Yorkton . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yeah, he's an interesting guy. I remember my mother, when I first got elected too, we were in the rotunda and she kept seeing this guy running around and she's like, who's that long-haired bald guy? So forever in our house, in my parents' house, you are the long-haired bald guy. And just, I want to thank you also for all the . . . for the friendship and the support you've given me, and just kind of that moral base. You don't waver, and it's really nice to know that there's people out there that are just . . . when they say something, that's it. They're not going back on it. So really appreciate you and I hope that you also enjoy whatever's next for you.

With that, I'll probably get right to the budget here. Mr. Speaker, this marks a significant moment for Saskatchewan as well as the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Finance as we unveil a budget that speaks volumes about the trajectory of our province. In her address, she highlights pivotal milestones emphasizing a resounding commitment to the prosperity and well-being of Saskatchewan citizens. With unwavering dedication, this budget champions the essence of growth, setting a precedent for the future endeavours.

As Saskatchewan experiences its most rapid expansion in over a century, poised to reach a population milestone of 1.25 million, our government stands at the forefront, addressing the challenges and opportunities inherent in this remarkable journey. Crucially, the budget signifies a profound understanding of the pulse of our province. It echoes the sentiments of our people, channelling resources where they're needed the most — education, health care, and the vitality of our communities.

As our Deputy Premier articulates, the essence of growth lies not

only in its magnitude, but in the meaningful reinvestment it affords our citizens. Amidst a burgeoning labour market, with employment opportunities on the rise, and an enviable unemployment rate, Saskatchewan's economic engine propels forward. Yet our government remains steadfast in its resolve to ensure affordability for all.

[22:15]

With a strategic approach this budget delivers essential investments without burdening our citizens with new taxes or heightened levies. Instead it builds upon a legacy of fiscal responsibility, delivering over 2 billion in targeted tax reductions and affordability measures. This figure speaks volumes, a revenue forecast at 19.9 billion for the 2024-25 budget, an increase underscored by growth across all sectors.

As we navigate fluctuations, our commitment to prudent financial management remains unwavering. Notably Saskatchewan stands as a beacon of fiscal stability, boasting one of the healthiest net to debt GDP [gross domestic product] ratios in the nation. This is a testament to our prudent stewardship and reaffirms our commitment to long-term prosperity and sustainability.

As we embark on this transformative journey, let us embrace the promise of our province's future. Together let us forge ahead with confidence, knowing that this budget is not merely a fiscal document, but a testament to our shared vision for a vibrant, thriving Saskatchewan.

In this carefully considered budget, education emerges as a cornerstone of our investment in Saskatchewan's future. With a resounding commitment to our students and educators, this budget allocates a record 3.3 billion from the Ministry of Education, marking an 8.1 per cent increase over the previous year. This substantial investment translates into tangible support for every facet of education, from pre-kindergarten to grade 12 programs, early learning initiatives to child care and libraries. Crucially, our 27 school divisions will benefit from a historic 2.2 billion in school operating funding, representing an 8.8 per cent increase.

As the Deputy Premier aptly notes, this budget reflects a keen understanding of the priorities voiced by our educators and our students. With a focus on classroom support including a \$45.6 million boost to address classroom size and complexity, we are committing to fostering environments conducive to learning and growth. Moreover this budget earmarks 216 million for pre-kindergarten to grade 12 education capital projects, a 41 per cent increase, underscoring our dedication to enhancing educational infrastructure across the province.

Our investment extends beyond the classroom with 793 million allocated to post-secondary education sector, facilitating enriched student experiences and expanding opportunities for career development within Saskatchewan. Notably post-secondary students will directly benefit from a \$46.5 million in financial support, including innovative grants aimed at reducing barriers to education for low-income students with dependants.

Furthermore our commitment to skills training programs underscores our unwavering dedication to supporting individuals

in their pursuit of meaningful employment opportunities. As we embark on this transformative journey, let us reaffirm our collective commitment to education as the bedrock of our province's prosperity and progress.

In unveiling this budget, the Deputy Premier heralded a pivotal moment for Saskatchewan's health care system, signalling a robust commitment to enhancing patient care and accessibility. With a record investment of 7.6 billion allocated through the Ministry of Health, this budget marks a monumental stride towards meeting the evolving needs of our growing population.

Central to this initiative is the provision of nearly 4.7 billion to the Saskatchewan Health Authority, representing a substantial operating increase of 248.3 million or 5.6 per cent compared to the previous year. This is a testament to our unwavering dedication to the well-being of all of Saskatchewan's residents.

Of paramount importance is the allocation of 71.4 million towards bolstering the capacity of our acute care system with specific attention directed towards the Saskatoon and Regina capacity pressures actions plan. Additionally the significant funding is earmarked for expansion of the Regina urgent care centre, further enhancing access to timely medical services.

Addressing the pressing need for mental health and addictions support, this budget allocates a record 574 million, underscoring our commitment to prioritizing the holistic well-being of our citizens. This includes targeted initiatives aimed at children, youth, and vulnerable populations, ensuring equitable access to essential services across our province.

Recognizing the critical role of the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, a substantial increase of 26.1 million is dedicated to advancing cancer care and treatment options, with particular focus on enhancing breast care services and establishing a state-of-the-art breast health centre in Regina.

Moreover, the budget demonstrates a steadfast commitment to seniors' care, with a 43.4 million increase aimed at stabilizing services and enabling seniors to age gracefully within their communities. This strategic investment reflects our pledge to uphold the dignity and the comfort of our aging population.

To fortify our health care infrastructure and meet the evolving demands of our burgeoning province, this budget earmarks a record 516.8 million for health care infrastructure projects, notably in initiatives in the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital redevelopment project, the Weyburn General Hospital replacement project, and the La Ronge long-term care project, among others. And among others, I would have to say that the Grenfell long-term care project is on its way and construction will start this year. And the residents of Grenfell could not be happier. These investments underscore our commitment to providing cutting-edge facilities and resources to support our health care professionals in delivering exceptional care to the people of Saskatchewan.

Another thing I'd like to highlight, Mr. Speaker, is the CT scan that will be going into Moosomin. And I know this wasn't announced in the budget, but that's because there's no operational funding yet allocated. But our government has committed to making this project a reality.

In essence, this budget represents a comprehensive and visionary approach to health care. Under . . . Sorry, I read that part. In an unwavering commitment to the well-being and prosperity of Saskatchewan's municipalities, this budget heralds a landmark increase of municipal revenue sharing totalling an unprecedented \$340.2 million. This substantial boost of 42.4 million, marking a remarkable 14.2 per cent increase from the previous year, underscores our dedication to supporting the vibrant communities that form the backbone of our province.

Furthermore, recognizing the vital role of transportation infrastructure in driving economic growth and ensuring public safety, this budget allocates 29.5 million to empower municipalities and industry partners in enhancing the provincial transportation system. This investment not only facilitates smoother travel on rural and municipal roads but also bolsters the foundations for sustained progress and prosperity across the province.

Within the realm of public safety and justice, our commitment remains resolute. The '24-25 provincial budget earmarks a substantial \$719.4 million for the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety, reflecting our unwavering dedication to safeguarding our communities. Notably this allocation includes 228 million to sustain RCMP operations, and 21.6 million for the RCMP's First Nations policing program, ensuring the provision of essential law enforcement services across our great province.

Furthermore with a forward-looking approach this budget anticipates the inception of the Saskatchewan marshals service in '26, allocating \$7 million to lay the groundwork for its operational commencement.

Recognizing the critical role of justice services in fostering community well-being and upholding the rule of law, the Ministry of Justice and the Attorney General receives a significant investment exceeding 250 million. This allocation, which includes 31.7 million dedicated to programs and services aimed at reducing interpersonal violence, underscores our commitment to fostering safe and resilient communities.

Additionally recognizing the evolving nature of public safety challenges, the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency receives funding to renew its air tanker fleet, ensuring continued effectiveness in wildfire response in their emergency management.

In line with our commitment to reconciliation and empowerment, this budget reaffirms our investment in First Nations and Métis communities. With targeted funding exceeding 255 million, an increase of 6.1 million from the previous year, we aim to bolster community resilience and foster inclusive growth. This includes initiatives to prevent violence and enhance safety as well as support mechanisms to facilitate meaningful participation in the consultation process, ensuring the voices of First Nations and Métis communities are heard and respected.

As we forge ahead, let's embrace the future built on collaboration, inclusivity, and prosperity for all Saskatchewan residents. In a steadfast commitment to fostering prosperity and well-being for all citizens of Saskatchewan, the budget embarks on a journey of continued affordability, reflecting our enduring

dedication to making Saskatchewan one of the most desirable places to live, work, and raise a family in Canada.

The Deputy Premier's assertion resonates deeply as she underscores the pivotal role of the affordability measures in shaping the fabric of our society. At the heart of our affordability measures lies the resolute commitment to maintaining one of the lowest personal tax burdens in the nation. Since 2007 our personal income tax exemptions have liberated over 112,000 individuals from the grips of taxation, infusing our citizens with over 830 million in annual income tax savings. These exemptions not only alleviate financial pressures but also empower citizens to invest in their futures and contribute to the vibrant tapestry of our provincial economy.

This budget stands as a testament to our commitment to Saskatchewan's families with an array of targeted programs and services designed to enhance accessibility and alleviate financial strains. From reductions in education property taxes to essential supports such as the active families benefit, children's drug plan, and the funding for vital medical equipment like insulin pumps and glucose monitors, our initiatives aim to foster healthy, resilient communities where every family can thrive.

In recognition of the challenges faced by low-income individuals, families, and seniors, this budget introduces a pioneering Saskatchewan employment incentive program, a \$17 million investment aimed at empowering working families with lower incomes. By providing essential financial support, this initiative not only enhances economic inclusivity but also cultivates pathways to prosperity for all Saskatchewan residents.

The decision to eliminate the carbon tax on residential home heating in Saskatchewan has yielded a substantial reduction in inflation with the province experiencing a noticeable decrease of 1.9 per cent. This bold move not only alleviates financial burdens on Saskatchewan homeowners but also mitigates inflationary pressures contributing to overall economic stability.

By lifting this tax burden, households across the province enjoy significant cost savings resulting in increased disposable income and enhanced purchasing power. As a result consumers are better positioned to meet their daily needs and engage in discretionary spending, stimulating demand, and fostering economic growth. Moreover the reduction in inflation serves as a testament to the efficacy of targeted policy interventions in addressing key economic challenges, underscoring our government's commitment to fostering affordability and prosperity for all our residents.

In addition to these groundbreaking initiatives, the '24-25 budget allocates a record 1.5 billion for the Ministry of Social Services, amplifying our efforts to support vulnerable populations and strengthen the social fabric of our communities.

As we chart a course towards a brighter future, let us stand united in our commitment to affordability, opportunity, and well-being, ensuring that every Saskatchewan resident can thrive and prosper in the Land of Living Skies.

In Saskatchewan, we embrace the fundamental principles of a free market economy, recognizing its profound impact on the prosperity and well-being of our citizens. At the heart of this

economic model lies the principle of voluntary exchange wherein individuals and businesses engage in transactions based on mutual consent free from government intervention.

This foundational tenet fosters a dynamic marketplace characterized by competition, innovation, and efficiency driving economic growth and enhancing the quality of life for all its residents. Moreover the principles of supply and demand, central to a free market economy, ensure that resources are allocated efficiently to meet the needs and desires of consumers. Through the mechanism of prices, which serve as signals of scarcity and value, market participants are incentivized to produce goods and services that are in demand, while reallocating resources away from less desirable uses.

An Hon. Member: — Thirty seconds.

Mr. Bonk: — Thirty seconds. I'll skip to the end here. Ladies and gentlemen, as we draw to a close, allow me to reflect on the profound significance of the journey we have embarked on today. Here in Saskatchewan we stand on the cusp of a new era. With meticulous attention to detail and an unwavering commitment to the well-being of our citizens, we have crafted a budget that speaks volumes of our collective vision for Saskatchewan.

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — It is now being 10:30 p.m., this House now adjourned until tomorrow, 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:30.]

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