



FOURTH SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

of the

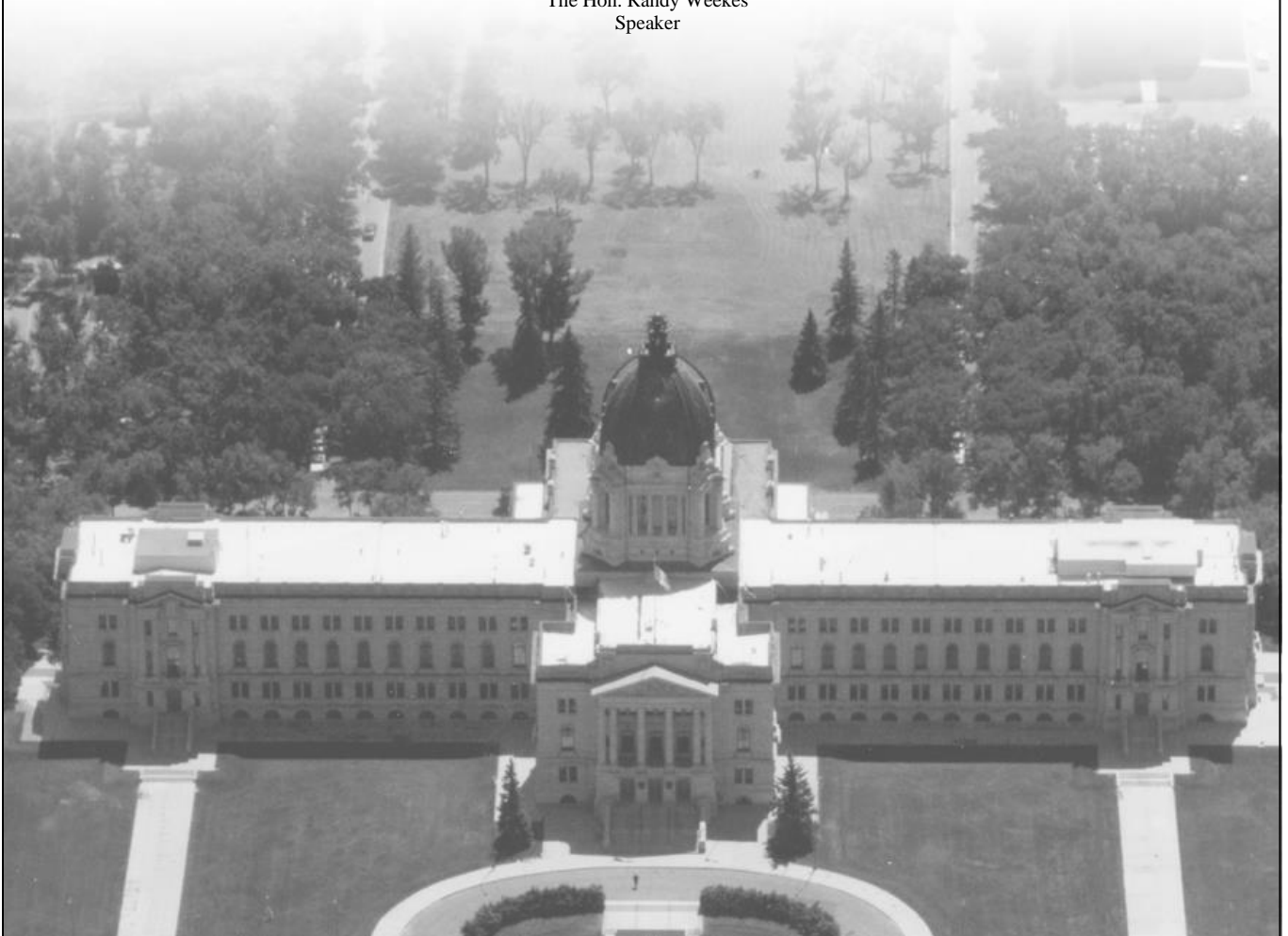
**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

---

**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

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

**Sergeant-at-Arms** — Lyall Frederiksen

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

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

## CONTENTS

<b>ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS</b>	
<b>INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS</b>	
McMorris .....	5149
Burki .....	5150, 5163
<b>PRESENTING PETITIONS</b>	
Francis .....	5149
Nippi-Albright .....	5149
Clarke .....	5149
Sarauer .....	5149
<b>STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS</b>	
<b>Recognizing Saskatchewan's Chief Coroner</b>	
Morgan .....	5150
<b>Contract Negotiations with Teachers</b>	
Love .....	5150
<b>Saskatchewan Highway Patrol Seizes Illegal Cigarettes</b>	
Keisig .....	5150
<b>Decline in Value of Building Permits in Saskatchewan</b>	
Young, A. ....	5151
<b>Capital Investment in Schools</b>	
Lambert .....	5151
<b>High School Athletes Compete at One-Day Basketball Tournament in Moose Jaw</b>	
Harrison, J. ....	5151
<b>Government Investments Meet the Challenges of Growth</b>	
Ross, A. ....	5151
<b>QUESTION PERIOD</b>	
<b>Fuel Tax and Affordability Measures</b>	
Beck .....	5152
Moe .....	5152
<b>Health Care Staffing and Provision of Care</b>	
Beck .....	5152
Moe .....	5152
Clarke .....	5153
Hindley .....	5154
<b>Contract Negotiations with Teachers and Funding for Education</b>	
Love .....	5154
Cockrill .....	5154
<b>Government Supports for Immigrants</b>	
Burki .....	5155
Harrison, J. ....	5155
<b>Overdose Deaths and Treatment for Addictions</b>	
Young, A. ....	5156
McLeod, T. ....	5156
<b>ORDERS OF THE DAY</b>	
<b>STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER</b>	
<b>Ruling on Written Question</b>	
The Speaker .....	5156
<b>SPECIAL ORDER</b>	
<b>ADJOURNED DEBATES</b>	
<b>MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)</b>	
Bradshaw .....	5156
Nippi-Albright .....	5157
Lemaigre .....	5158
Eyre .....	5160
Love .....	5163
McMorris .....	5167
Ross, L. ....	5170
Merriman .....	5172
Clarke .....	5176



[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you I'd like to introduce to the rest of the Assembly 20 grade 12 students from the Greenall High School which is located in Balgonie, takes in some other communities but located in Balgonie. And they're being accompanied by their teacher Melissa Marley.

Ms. Marley's had different groups in here before and always has them so well prepared, I dread the question-and-answer period after. No, I don't. Actually it's really good to have students that come in and understand the Assembly a little bit more, understand it and once they see it and how it properly operates.

Not very often are the galleries this empty, so I can just go on and on with my introduction because it normally takes 15 minutes to get through introductions. But I would just like all members to thank and welcome this grade 12 class from Greenall High School. And we'll be visiting after and answering any questions you have. Thank you.

### PRESENTING PETITIONS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Kindersley.

**Mr. Francis:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring to your attention the following: whereas the Trudeau Liberal-NDP [New Democratic Party] coalition carbon tax is one of the main causes of affordability issues and inflation in the nation of Canada; that the federal Liberal-NDP government was politically motivated in issuing a carve-out for home heating oil; and that the Government of Saskatchewan's decision to not collect or remit the carbon tax on home heating in Saskatchewan has led to a drop in inflation; further that despite the decision not to charge the carbon tax on home heating, Saskatchewan families continue to pay that tax out of pocket at the pumps, grocery stores, and so much more.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately suspend the carbon tax across the nation of Canada and acknowledge its significant impact on the affordability and inflation in Canada.

The below undersigned are residents of Yorkton. I do so submit.

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

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Miigwech, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present the following petition. The folks who signed this petition

wish to bring to your attention the following: the Sask Party government voted against the meaningful duty-to-consult legislation; the Sask Party government continues to move forward in duty-to-consult processes without fulfilling constitutional obligations; and the Sask Party government has never addressed cumulative impacts, yet duty-to-consult must consider cumulative impacts on the ability to practise inherent and treaty rights before approving projects in Saskatchewan.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to enshrine duty-to-consult into law by enacting the meaningful duty-to-consult legislation.

The folks who signed this petition reside in Saskatoon. I do so present.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

**Mr. Clarke:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present our petition calling for the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to fix the crisis in health care. The undersigned residents would like to bring to our attention the following: that there were 951 health care closures across rural Saskatchewan between August 2019 and July of 2023; that 407 of those closures were to Saskatchewan emergency rooms and, for the first time, an emergency room in one of our major cities shut down due to short-staffing; that Saskatchewan has the longest wait times for hip and knee replacement surgeries; and that it is unacceptable that women in this province are being forced to travel out of the province for routine breast cancer diagnostic care.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately address the short-staffing crisis in health care and work with health care workers on solutions to improve patient care.

Mr. Speaker, the signatories today reside in Regina. I do so present.

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

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today to present a petition calling for the improvement of labour laws in Saskatchewan.

Those who've signed this petition wish to bring to our attention the following: that even after the October 1st increase, Saskatchewan's minimum wage remains the lowest in Canada at \$14 an hour. As well, Mr. Speaker, we've been calling for paid sick leave legislation since the onset of the pandemic, calling for a minimum of 10 paid sick days each year. As we all know, paid sick leave has been proven to save employers money while making workplaces healthier and safer for all workers.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, 71 per cent of workers in Canada have experienced workplace violence and/or harassment, and much more needs to be done to protect survivors and ensure that workplaces in Saskatchewan are harassment free.

I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to improve conditions for Saskatchewan workers by passing legislation to increase the minimum wage, guarantee paid sick leave, limit nondisclosure agreements which could silence survivors of workplace harassment, and require employers to track and report incidents of violence and harassment in the workplace.

Those who have signed this petition come from Carlyle and Weyburn. I do so present.

**The Speaker:** — Why is the member on his feet?

**Mr. Burki:** — I want to seek leave for introductions.

**The Speaker:** — The member has asked leave for an introduction. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Burki:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you, to you, in the east gallery we have our CA [constituency assistant] from my constituency, Bre Litzenger. She is a very hard-working and very energetic person in my constituency, dealing all the clients very well and we are very happy and very proud of her for her work. I will request all members of the Chamber, the Assembly to join me and give her a warm welcome to her Assembly.

### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member of Saskatoon Southeast.

#### Recognizing Saskatchewan's Chief Coroner

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today our government wants to bid farewell to Chief Coroner Clive Weighill. Prior to becoming Chief Coroner, Clive served as the chief of Saskatoon's police service. He came to the Saskatoon Police Service during a troubled time and did an excellent job working with the community and setting a new path forward. His tenure has been marked by a strong commitment to justice, compassion, and professionalism.

Clive was recently thanked by the James Smith Cree Nation for his efforts during the recent inquest. Though the result of the tragic circumstances, the inquest was a valuable undertaking for Saskatchewan and fostered deeper understanding of the important experiences and perspectives of those impacted. In his own words, Clive recently stated that:

I truly believe if nothing else comes out of these inquests, that it was a stepping stone to bring families together again on that First Nation. I saw people hugging. I saw people talking to each other that previously before the inquest would not be. I think it brought the community together.

His dedication to the well-being of all our communities has left a legacy that will be remembered for years to come. On behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, I express sincere gratitude and wish him and Lois a satisfying and fulfilling future going forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Contract Negotiations with Teachers

**Mr. Love:** — Last week, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party government refused to meet at centre court and play ball with teachers, leaving students in Saskatchewan with only one day of their provincial Hoopla tournament. Now the Minister of Education has recalled his own days as a high school basketball coach. His squad's own post-season hopes were dashed by that same Sask Party government in 2020, so you'd think he would get how important this is.

Mr. Speaker, adjusted for inflation, this year's budget provides 175 million less than operating funding that was provided to school boards in 2018-19. Under that party's stewardship, inflation in Saskatchewan was almost 18 per cent since 2018-19. This means that the operating budgets for school boards need an increase to maintain their purchasing power, plus funding increases for over 15,000 new students, plus funding for the always-increasing complex needs of our students.

Now some say that this government is guilty of too much travelling. I think it's more of a flagrant foul situation, Mr. Speaker. This government needs to quit using Sask Party math to justify their actions, quit fouling the teachers, and meet them at centre court to get a deal done.

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

#### Saskatchewan Highway Patrol Seizes Illegal Cigarettes

**Mr. Keisig:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 1st, 2024, the Indian Head police detachment received quite the surprise courtesy of the Saskatchewan Highway Patrol. It was like a scene out of a blockbuster movie, I tell you. Picture this. A semi-trailer unit innocently cruising down Highway 1 near Indian Head only to be halted by the vigilant eyes of our highway heroes. And what did they discover? Brace yourselves, folks. A treasure trove of illicit tobacco hidden within. But wait, it gets better. The final count, a jaw-dropping 6.6 million unstamped cigarettes. Now that's what I call a smoking hot discovery.

Of course we owe a massive thank you to the Saskatchewan Highway Patrol for their commitment on keeping our roads safe from organized crime. Without their keen eyes and quick actions, who knows what else might be rolling down our highways. Maybe next time it'll be pirate ships navigating the asphalt seas.

In all seriousness though, our government is immensely grateful for the dedication of teams like the Saskatchewan Highway Patrol. Rest assured, Mr. Speaker, we will continue investing in public safety because, let's face it, nobody wants to see our highways turn into scenes from a heist movie. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Decline in Value of Building Permits in Saskatchewan**

**Ms. A. Young:** — Mr. Speaker, it's truly comforting to listen to members opposite talk about the economy. To hear them tell it, everything's great — so long as you're doing Sask Party math.

Now in this budget we heard a lot about how much construction is happening in the province, but unfortunately the January '24 building permits tell a very different story. Between December and January, the value of building permits actually fell. And it fell by 23 per cent — a 33 per cent fall in residential and a 12 per cent decline in non-residential. And that's not good, Mr. Speaker.

But how about year over year? Surely there's growth there. Except wait, the value of building permits fell by 33 per cent, a 42 per cent fall in residential and a 23 per cent fall in non-residential. That's right, Mr. Speaker. Over this Premier's term, Saskatchewan has the second-lowest rate of annual growth in the value of building permits.

Instead we have skyrocketing rent. You have to step over the bodies of people sleeping on the streets of downtown. Is this the growth that they're talking about? Because there has been no increase in residential construction. It's almost as if the affordability crisis is real, almost as if the 6 out of 10 Saskatchewan people who can't pay their bills are telling the truth.

The economy is struggling, Mr. Speaker, and the Sask Party math doesn't add up.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood.

#### **Capital Investment in Schools**

**Ms. Lambert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan continues to attract young families from across Canada and around the world, thanks to our low cost of living and high quality of life. And that means we need to build more schools to support these young families.

Mr. Speaker, in the 2024-25 budget, our government is investing \$216 million into education capital to support this growth. There are currently 11 ongoing or consolidated school projects under construction in the province. And we will be providing nearly \$9 million to support the planning for nine new schools and two renovations in Pinehouse, Regina, Saskatoon, Cormorant Park, and Swift Current.

Mr. Speaker, we're so proud of this growth, but we also need to maintain our existing infrastructure. To support our classrooms, the budget provides 12.8 million for minor capital renewal

projects that will allow school divisions to address structural repairs and renovations.

[13:45]

Since 2007 we've provided more than \$2.6 billion in funding towards school capital. This includes 65 new schools, 32 major renovations, and 7 other projects approved through the minor capital renewal program. Because unlike the opposition, we believe in maintaining our infrastructure and growing our province rather than closing schools and hospitals, shrinking our population and economy, and leaving residents to repair their own infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, we're building for the future. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Meadow Lake.

#### **High School Athletes Compete at One-Day Basketball Tournament in Moose Jaw**

**Hon. Mr. J. Harrison:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Congratulations to the SHSAA [Saskatchewan High Schools Athletic Association], parents, volunteers, and athletes who found a path for Hoopla to go ahead this year and letting the kids play.

Saskatchewan volunteers and athletes made their way to Moose Jaw this weekend for a day of sport. Each team played one game with rankings and matchups based on their respective records from the regular season. Winners included communities from across the province. The division champions for the boys were 1A, Legacy Christian Academy; 2A champion, St. Brieux; 3A, Regina Christian School; 4A, Moose Jaw Central school; 5A, Saskatoon's Walter Murray Collegiate. The division champions for the girls include 1A, Wilkie; 2A, Preeceville; 3A, Lanigan; 4A, Meadow Lake; and 5A, Regina LeBoldus.

Congratulations to these teams on their victories. A special shout-out to the Preeceville team for breaking their nearly three-decade-long Hoopla drought, and an even more special shout-out to the girls from Meadow Lake. And I'm told this was the first time we've won since 1998. I was told that by my sister though, who was on that team, so I'm not entirely sure whether that's the case.

Mr. Speaker, congratulations to all of the athletes, volunteers, teachers, and coaches on this year's Hoopla, and thank you to the SHSAA for all their hard work in putting this event together. Congratulations to all.

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

#### **Government Investments Meet the Challenges of Growth**

**Ms. A. Ross:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan is growing and we are meeting the challenges of growth. It's obvious the opposition NDP doesn't understand that concept, as their goal while in office was planning for decline.

Saskatchewan is no longer a have-not province like it was under the NDP. We are investing in a growing Saskatchewan. We are

building. The Leader of the Opposition doesn't think there's any value in that. Just this week in response to record spending for classrooms, care, and community, she said, "Government has been spending and not getting value."

So which schools have no value in her eyes? The 17 in Saskatoon? The 24 in Regina? Which hospitals? The Victoria Hospital in Prince Albert? The children's hospital? Sask Hospital North Battleford? Which long-term care facilities? La Ronge? Meadow Lake? Watrous?

We believe there is value in building. We believe there is value in investing in classrooms, care, and communities. And we believe there is value in investing in the people of Saskatchewan, even if the opposition doesn't.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### QUESTION PERIOD

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

#### Fuel Tax and Affordability Measures

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, this increasingly tired and out-of-touch government isn't focused on what matters to Saskatchewan families. And at a time when 57 per cent of Saskatchewan people are struggling to put food on the table, to pay the bills, this Premier brings forth a budget that includes nothing new to help with the cost of living — Mr. Speaker, not one thin dime of relief.

Just today, the Doug Ford government announced that he's extending fuel tax relief to the end of the year. Now why won't this Premier finally act, cut the gas tax, and deliver some relief to the people of Saskatchewan?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — The first point I would make, Mr. Speaker, is Ontario's debt-to-GDP [gross domestic product] ratio today is about 38.2 per cent; 14 per cent in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Second point I would make is the overall affordability matrix between cities, which is listed in pages 75 and 76 of the budget document, will show that, for example, a family of four making \$75,000 in Regina, Saskatchewan would rank number one when it comes to being the most affordable city to live in. Toronto would be number nine, Mr. Speaker. That's 9 out of 10, Mr. Speaker, only being . . . [inaudible] . . . by Vancouver.

With respect specifically . . . Well if they didn't want the answer, they shouldn't ask the question, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the specific question, Mr. Speaker, over the last two and a half, over the last two and a half years, Mr. Speaker, over the last two and a half years the gas tax savings in Ontario have saved families about \$320 over two and a half years. That's about \$128 a year, Mr. Speaker. The \$400 in carbon tax savings that Saskatchewan families are going to receive annually, Mr. Speaker, far outweigh the \$128 that Ontario families are receiving.

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

#### Health Care Staffing and Provision of Care

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, not only is this Premier failing to deliver on cost of living, he's failing to deliver when it comes to keeping health care workers in the province. Now the Premier claims to have the most ambitious health human resource plan in the country, Mr. Speaker.

[Applause]

Mr. Speaker, they're so predictable, I even wrote the line in, "as they're clapping for themselves." Maybe they want to know that the numbers simply don't bear that out. Short-staffing means longer waits in the ER [emergency room], and it means longer waits for surgery.

Now why is this Premier making Saskatchewan people wait longer for health care because of this short-staffing crisis that his government has created?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Mr. Speaker, I would point the members opposite to the second plank in the theme of this year's budget, the first being classrooms, the second being care — as in health care, Mr. Speaker — and the third being communities.

When it comes to that health care budget line item specifically, it's a 10.2 per cent increase this year, Mr. Speaker. What that is, is ensuring that yes, we are continuing to build infrastructure like the Prince Albert hospital, like the Weyburn hospital, like long-term care centres in communities across this province, Mr. Speaker.

Building an urgent care centre just on north Albert here. Another one in common, a partnership with Ahtakakoop Cree Nation in Saskatoon, an urgent care centre that's going to alleviate the stresses on our emergency departments, Mr. Speaker, but also provide an access point for those that may be struggling with a mental health crisis or, unfortunately, may be living a life with addictions, Mr. Speaker. We need an access point to get to one of the beds, Mr. Speaker, the recovery beds that the Minister of Rural and Remote Health, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, has so diligently been focused on expanding to 500 across the province, Mr. Speaker, which again is part of that 10.2 per cent lift.

When it comes to the most ambitious health human resource plan in Canada, Mr. Speaker, that plan is showing results in this province. Over 1,000 Canadian nursing grads hired into our health care system, Mr. Speaker. They're serving and providing services in a community, Mr. Speaker, in this province. Over 400 Filipino grads, Mr. Speaker — 170 of them on the ground, more on their way — providing services in Saskatchewan communities, and a 23 per cent reduction in our surgical wait times initiative.

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

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, there is so much room between that Premier's speaking points and the reality out there for Saskatchewan people. Here are the facts. Only 14 per cent of new pediatric specialists stayed in the province last year. Meanwhile



the waits to see a doctor at the children's hospital are long and growing longer.

What does the Premier have to say to Saskatchewan parents who are waiting month after month with a sick child, waiting for an appointment while 86 per cent of new grads are leaving for other provinces?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Mr. Speaker, I would say to those families that this is a government that is entirely committed to attracting more physicians into our health care system, attracting more nurses into our health care system, attracting more medical professionals of all disciplines into our health care system, Mr. Speaker, and into multiple communities across this province.

Mr. Speaker, there was questions across this floor on some of the special warrants to close out last year's budget, Mr. Speaker. Well over \$200 million of those special warrants went specifically to fund the physicians' contract, Mr. Speaker, that this government had worked hard on to ensure that we are competitive with other provinces and other places around the world so that we can attract and retain the physicians right into our communities, Mr. Speaker.

This is a far cry, a far cry from what we saw under the members opposite when they had the honour of being government in this province. They had 60 medical training seats at the College of Medicine, a College of Medicine that was on probation, Mr. Speaker. Today that number is 105, I believe, with 120 residency positions, Mr. Speaker, and over \$300 million put into the infrastructure at that College of Medicine to ensure that it is no longer on probation and is turning out high-quality medical graduates, Mr. Speaker, that are serving the people of this province.

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

**Ms. Beck:** — But, Mr. Speaker, 86 per cent of those new grads in pediatrics are leaving the province — that's kind of the point. And it's not just parents of sick kids who are being failed, Mr. Speaker, by this tired and out-of-touch government. It's also the thousands of people in this province who are waiting for surgeries. We continue to have the longest waits for knee and hip surgery in the entire country. And last year, only 17 per cent of new general surgeons stayed in the province.

What does the Premier have to say to all of those out there who are waiting in pain for their surgery about the fact that 83 per cent, Mr. Speaker, of those new grads have left the province?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health is not hugging any type of ideology when it comes to lowering our surgical wait times, to lowering our diagnostic wait times in this province, Mr. Speaker. They are looking abroad — like other provinces have, like BC [British Columbia] and Manitoba, Mr. Speaker — if they can access some surgical capacity in other areas. And we are looking at building within, Mr. Speaker, with expanding the number of health training seats that we have in Saskatchewan and hiring people into our system with the most

ambitious health human resource plan in the nation, which is funded by this budget that was introduced just this past week, Mr. Speaker.

I guess the question that I would have for the members opposite, in today's day with some successes coming from that health human resource plan, Mr. Speaker, with a 23 per cent reduction in our surgical wait time, how many physicians worked in the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital under the members opposite?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

**Mr. Clarke:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to see the Premier practising to be the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, this minister can't keep medical grads in this province, and he can't keep family doctors here either. Last week we learned that since this Premier came to office six years ago, there are 14 fewer family doctors practising in Saskatchewan. Hundreds of thousands of Saskatchewan people without a family doctor in this province waiting at walk-in clinics and emergency rooms, unable to access basic care that they need and they deserve. How does this minister defend his record when so many people are going without basic health care?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Mr. Speaker, what we got is just a lesson in how the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, actually read the data that comes out. Mr. Speaker, when he references physicians — and I think it's 14 fewer physicians — he's only counting, he's only counting fee-for-service physicians, Mr. Speaker. He is not counting all of the salary-paid positions across this province, Mr. Speaker.

That, Mr. Speaker, seems to be what NDP math looks like, Mr. Speaker, is that you only torque the numbers, only count the certain segment of the physicians that are working in our communities, not the numbers of physicians that are increasingly going to a salary model, or as we move forward, Mr. Speaker, with a new physician contract, leads eventually to a blended capitation model here in the province, Mr. Speaker.

So in addition to the fee-for-service physicians working in our communities, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of salaried physicians working in our communities, and there are over 250 more nurse practitioners as well, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

**Mr. Clarke:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not going to take my notes from the Premier. I'm going to take them from the 200,000 people in this province who don't have access to a family doctor right now. Saskatchewan people deserve and expect health care to be there when and where they need it. People shouldn't just have to drive for hours to receive basic care, and they shouldn't have to sit in the emergency room for hours either.

Yet this tired and out-of-touch government has lost more than one doctor per year every year from rural Saskatchewan — eight

fewer family doctors providing basic care for rural people. Why, why are there fewer rural family doctors providing health care today than there were when Brad Wall was Premier?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

[14:00]

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Appreciate, Mr. Speaker, the lesson on rural Saskatchewan residents driving hours to access their health care, Mr. Speaker, largely due to the closure of 52 hospitals by the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage that member to tap the member in front of him on the shoulder, the member from Rosemont, and ask him what he thinks about health care policy moving forward, an avid supporter of the Fyke report, Mr. Speaker. The Fyke report called for, in addition to those 52 hospitals that they closed, close another 50, Mr. Speaker. That was the Fyke report. That was the member from Rosemont, Mr. Speaker. That was his comments in May 25th of 2016.

Can tap the member from Regina University on the shoulder and ask her what she thinks about Stephen Lewis's policy, Mr. Speaker, where he said, this government in Saskatchewan desperately needs to listen to renowned health policy analyst Stephen Lewis when he says, if the rural health care system was redesigned to have health care be consolidated even into fewer centres, Mr. Speaker.

So the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, under the NDP, rural Saskatchewan residents are going to drive farther for their health care. Thankfully under this government, Mr. Speaker, we have the most ambitious health human resource plan in the nation of Canada, Mr. Speaker, and that just simply isn't going to be the case.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

**Mr. Clarke:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier remembers that he's been in government for 17 years, right? And under this Premier's watch, under this Premier's watch there's been 53 hospital closures around this province.

Now this tired and out-of-touch government is failing to recruit new doctors, and they're failing to retain the doctors that we currently have. In 2022 alone Saskatchewan lost 69 doctors to other provinces and only brought in 34. That's a net loss of 35 doctors in just 2022 alone. To the minister: how many physicians have left this province due to this Premier's mismanagement?

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

**Hon. Mr. Hindley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And further to what the Premier has said already, the government's track record when it comes to recruiting and retaining doctors is one that is very solid, Mr. Speaker. Since 2007 you've heard us talk about over 1,000 more physicians in this province prior to 2007, Mr. Speaker. In the past 28 months, 107 family physicians and 155 specialists have been recruited to our province for a total of 262 physicians. In just the past six months alone, Mr. Speaker, 24 family physicians and 29 specialists have been recruited to

Saskatchewan. It includes 11 physicians from outside of the country, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to that, the new contract with the Saskatchewan Medical Association will go a long way towards retention of doctors and bringing even more doctors into our hospitals and health care facilities in this province, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Contract Negotiations with Teachers and Funding for Education

**Mr. Love:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The behaviour of that Education minister has destroyed all good faith that teachers had in this tired and out-of-touch government. Now he's backing up his latest offer with a pinky swear, and he wonders why teachers won't believe him.

When good-faith negotiation is gone, binding arbitration is the only option. Why won't the minister get out of the way and commit to binding arbitration so teachers can get a deal that they can trust?

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

**Hon. Mr. Cockrill:** — Mr. Speaker, I've been clear on this floor and out in the rotunda and other appearances as well that binding arbitration is not a reasonable option in terms of where we're at with negotiations with the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation leadership at this time, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation] leadership have only been at the bargaining table for half an hour in the last five months. Mr. Speaker, I think people around the province, teachers included, should be embarrassed at that level of effort from their leaders, from their union leadership, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, you know what the people of this province can trust on — the students and teachers and parents around this province, Mr. Speaker — is a record increase to school operating funding. Nine new schools announced last week in the budget, Mr. Speaker, two major renovations, a couple of new minor capital projects. This is a government that has invested into education and is going to continue to do so.

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

**Mr. Love:** — Mr. Speaker, even if the minister had behaved appropriately, his party's record would speak for itself. That Sask Party government loves to promise big education spending but only in election years. And then the year after that, they'll have to slash that spending down to the bone. They did it in 2012, 2017, and 2021. How can teachers give students the support they need when they don't even know what kind of funding they'll actually end up with?

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

**Hon. Mr. Cockrill:** — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it seems we've found another member on that side who needs a history lesson. Mr. Speaker, if that member wants to talk

about his party's record on education, that was his party, the NDP party, that shut down 176 schools while they were in government, had no PMR [preventative maintenance and renewal] funding while they were in government, Mr. Speaker. That isn't investing in education; that is letting education, in rural Saskatchewan especially, decay, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of how classroom support funding will be for the next number of years, our government was proud to sign a multi-year funding agreement with the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, endorsed by all 27 school boards, Mr. Speaker, to set classroom supports funding at a minimum floor over the next four years. That shows this government's commitment to funding education into the future.

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

**Mr. Love:** — Mr. Speaker, I won't be taking any history lessons from a minister who's never spent a day in a Saskatchewan classroom. Teachers, parents, and students know that this tired and out-of-touch government isn't investing in public education. In 2015-2016 Saskatchewan was first in Canada in per-student funding. With this latest budget, we're dead last.

Now that minister's going to talk about per capita funding, which is just more classic Sask Party math. But here's the reality. His government is investing the least in students of any province in Canada. Will the minister stand and apologize to the students that he's failing today?

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

**Hon. Mr. Cockrill:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well yes, actually the member is right. I will talk about per capita funding, Mr. Speaker, and how in Saskatchewan we have led the nation for numerous years in terms of how we invest per capita into K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that means your family, my family, their family, Mr. Speaker, a higher proportion of our provincial tax dollars go into the education system than anywhere else in the country. Mr. Speaker, that is a sign that this government is investing in education and preparing for the future, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'd highlight again nine new schools announced in last week's budget, Mr. Speaker — four in Regina, four in Saskatoon. That is a government that's responding to a growing province, and we can build these schools because we have a growing economy, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Government Supports for Immigrants

**Mr. Burki:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this year the Sask Party government closed down the hard-to-fill skills program. This program made it easy for workers and businesses in certain sectors to access the SINP [Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program]. The Sask Party government closed the program, giving workers and businesses only 10 days to complete their

approvals.

Why did the Sask Party government close this program and make it harder for people to become permanent residents?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Trade and Export Development.

**Hon. Mr. J. Harrison:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the question from the member opposite. This government is very proud of its record on immigration. This government has increased the size of the provincial nominee program by orders of magnitude from where it had been under the NDP, when it was literally in the hundreds.

This year it's 7,500 people, Mr. Speaker. We've worked hard to make sure that program is responsive. We work with newcomer communities. We work with the business community to make sure that the streams are appropriate and responsive to what the labour market needs are within the province.

This was a temporary program, Mr. Speaker, the particular one that was referenced. It was rolled out and announced as a temporary program with a limited number of nominations that would be available. That cap was reached and that program, those numbers will be reallocated through other streams, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Burki:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Omer Khayyam is a lawyer in Saskatoon who practises immigration law. He told CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] that he hears from people every day about this change: "It's sloppy. It's irresponsible the way they have done it. It is really sending a bad message. It shows that the government really doesn't care for foreign workers."

Mr. Speaker, under this Premier's watch we only have 58 per cent of newcomers staying in Saskatchewan after five years. Why is government pausing this policy? Why are they making harder to stay in Saskatchewan?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Trade and Export Development.

**Hon. Mr. J. Harrison:** — Well I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, and I think the House is well aware, that we take the protection of newcomers to this province extremely seriously. That's why we were the first province to introduce legislation for the protection of workers who were located here in Saskatchewan. And it's as well why, Mr. Speaker, in just a couple of days we're going to be introducing a new immigration services Act that will be the most assertive statute in the entire country in protecting newcomers to this province.

And we've done that, Mr. Speaker, working with newcomer communities, working with our business community, making sure that we have the best system in the entire country. And I think, you know, in a lot of ways, Mr. Speaker, we very much do.

We're not going to rest on our laurels. We're going to make it

even better. And we've expanded it markedly, Mr. Speaker, over the years as well, to make sure that our economy and our labour market are able to reflect the skills that are necessary through our immigration program. That work's going to continue as we go forward, Mr. Speaker, including with a new immigration services Act.

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

**Mr. Burki:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This decision will result in people leaving the province. We need to be growing our economy and growing our population. This change does the exact opposite.

Rose Mary Antony, living in Saskatoon, after five years of living in Canada she told CBC that these changes will force her out of country. There are many people in the same situation. Why is the Sask Party government making it harder for people to stay here in Saskatchewan?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Trade and Export Development.

**Hon. Mr. J. Harrison:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, that's clearly not accurate. What I can tell you about though, Mr. Speaker, is how we have worked hard on our international recruitment initiatives: 470 Filipino nurses will be relocating to Saskatchewan to work in our medical system, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to that, we have worked with our regulators through our credential recognition service to go from a two-year bridging program to 14 weeks, Mr. Speaker, leading the country. And that's something that we want to see continued.

That's why right now we are running advertisements, people might have seen them, inviting newcomers with skills that have been obtained from outside of Canada or from outside of Saskatchewan to contact us. We want to work directly with those newcomers to make sure that their credential is recognized, and we're going to work with regulators as well to make sure that credentials that are earned elsewhere are going to be recognized, Mr. Speaker. Leading the country in this work. Leading the country in this work, Mr. Speaker, because it is vitally, vitally important.

What we're also doing is directly recruiting on the ground, Mr. Speaker, in countries like the Philippines which . . .

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

### Overdose Deaths and Treatment for Addictions

**Ms. A. Young:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Since that Premier took office, 1,999 families have lost a loved one to overdose. Nearly 2,000 people, Mr. Speaker, that's like the town of Biggar gone. And year after year more people are lost to overdose than the year prior. And what is this government doing?

Well, Mr. Speaker, what they're doing is worse than the status quo. They're choosing to cut supports that save lives. When will the minister do the work and bring forward an evidence-based

plan to save Saskatchewan lives?

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

**Hon. Mr. T. McLeod:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we know that the best way to prevent overdoses is to help individuals overcome their addictions, Mr. Speaker. And that's why we've introduced a mental health and addictions action plan that does precisely that.

We are focused on treatment and recovery with that action plan, Mr. Speaker. We are making it easier for individuals to reach addictions treatment spaces. We are making more addictions treatment spaces around the province. And, Mr. Speaker, we are wrapping supports around those individuals, providing them with the individualized care that they need through the recovery-oriented system of care. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

#### Ruling on Written Question

**The Speaker:** — Before calling written questions, I draw the Assembly's attention to question no. 5 standing on today's order paper. Pursuant to rule 21(4), "A written question may not ask for the return of a document," and therefore I am ruling the written question out of order. The member may submit a notice of motion for a return to seek the documents.

[14:15]

### SPECIAL ORDER

### ADJOURNED DEBATES

#### MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

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

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

**Mr. Bradshaw:** — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I went on a little long the other day, so I'm going to be really short here. I know it's hard to believe I could go on for too long. But anyway, Mr. Speaker, there are just a couple more things throughout this budget we're talking about.

The member from Rosemont had mentioned about transportation. Well he obviously forgot about what the roads were like when the NDP was in power. And here's the other catch, Mr. Speaker. I have two shortlines in my constituency. In that budget there's \$530,000 to help with shortline infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, something that was never ever there under the NDP.

They keep on talking about health. As our member from P.A.

[Prince Albert] Northcote said, the rebuilding of the Victoria Hospital is great for all of us people in northeastern Saskatchewan. That is really going to help out Carrot River Valley.

But, Mr. Speaker, I said I was just going to be really short, so I'm definitely going to be supporting the budget put forward by our Finance minister, and I definitely will not be supporting the opposition motion, for they know not what they speak. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Chair of Committees:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Centre.

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Miigwech, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before I offer my response to the '24-25 budget, I just want to give a shout-out to some folks who continue to be my biggest supporters and cheerleaders.

I want to thank my CA, Shane Partridge, for keeping my office running. Shane is a hard-working CA, addressing the casework that comes into our office. What is extra special is that Shane is a great community developer who is still an active volunteer within our community. Thank you, Shane.

Being a busy MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly], Mr. Deputy Speaker, doesn't give me a lot of time to spend with the ones I love, my family. I'm so grateful to have the love and support from my sweetheart Ivan, my children, grandchildren, siblings, relatives, and community back home. And a special shout-out to my friends, who keep me grounded, make me laugh, and remind me not to take myself too seriously.

I would be remiss if I didn't thank Saskatoon Centre for the trust and support they have given me to raise the issues that concern our community neighbourhoods. Thank you for including me in your community events and your warm and gracious greetings you extend to me. I will keep raising your concerns.

Finally I want to thank the Indigenous communities in this province who have embraced me as your MLA even though I am a Saskatoon Centre MLA. Thank you for encouraging me to keep speaking truth to power and for being the Indigenous representative you truly deserve in this legislature, one that is fighting the Sask Party to honour the treaties, right the wrongs of the past, and to ensure our Crown lands are protected for our inherent and treaty rights holders for the present and future use. Gichi-miigwech.

Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to enter my remarks for the '24-25 budget, a privilege that is not offered to many. This budget did not come as a surprise to me because, Mr. Speaker, this is an election-budget year. Money and in some cases a little bit more money to others is spread around only to suppress the problem and just to keep citizens quiet.

And this government, Mr. Speaker, loves to make plans to plan without target measures and indicators of their outcomes. Mr. Speaker, this so-called record spending is not enough to show improved results. We have the worst crime levels in Canada. We have the second-highest rate of intimate partner violence in the country. Citizens in this province are still going to the food bank in record numbers, and many still are houseless.

This Sask Party government continues to fail the Indigenous community in mental health and addictions. We have low high school graduation rates. And it keeps failing when it comes to duty-to-consult. Of the 2,000 overdoses in Saskatchewan since 2018, 60 per cent were Indigenous. This result is a huge failure of the government who has been in power for over 17 years.

This government continues to fail Indigenous students. Graduation rates for Indigenous students in the pre-K [pre-kindergarten] to grade 12, the graduation rates for Indigenous students have flatlined since 2018. So this government is failing Indigenous students when graduation rates have flatlined since 2018. So why does this Sask Party government that has been in power for 17 years continue to fail Indigenous students? Mr. Speaker, it's because this Premier and this government don't care.

Remember when the former Education minister, the member from Stonebridge-Dakota, did not want her child to learn about treaties in his classroom? Not only did she feel it was unnecessary, she pooh-pooed it. When an Education minister publicly makes statements about not seeing the necessity for students to learn about treaties her ancestors made with the First People, it shows how arrogant and out of touch she is when it comes to the significance of our history and the continued mistreatment of Indigenous people in this province.

Now let's talk about the impact of duty-to-consult and the investments made by this government. While this government keeps throwing money into the consultation fund, they continue to ignore what treaty rights holders are saying.

The duty-to-consult policy framework previously and the so-called new framework that was rolled out last summer does nothing to address the concerns that have always been raised by the treaty rights holders regarding their inherent and treaty rights. This government offers no meaningful solutions and keeps failing when it comes to meaningful duty-to-consult.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan under this Premier is still leading the country in child poverty and intimate partner violence in the country. This Sask Party government keeps patting itself on the back and giving themselves standing ovations in the House with how they're investing in communities, as they continue dumping money into problems and failing to come up with solutions and show results.

To the citizens in this province, this is an election budget. Next year the budget will show us again who they really are. This government will show us who they really are, and they will reveal their true intentions. They'll claw back expenditure increases they are giving to education, health, and to social services. Remember the election promises made in 2016? Then, in the Sask Party's first budget after the 2016 election, we saw clawbacks. Severe cuts were made to all these areas. We also saw the largest tax increase in Saskatchewan history. PST [provincial sales tax] was expanded to restaurant meals, grocery products, vehicle registration and insurance, and many other items went up 6 per cent, starting the affordability problems citizens in this province face.

Let's talk about some of these cuts that were made, Mr. Speaker. The present problems in education and the present strike

originates with the 57 million reduction in 2017 that pushed the system into crisis. The long list of surgeries originate from the 2017 post-election budget as well. Now we have to go to Calgary to have our hips and knees fixed while waiting months longer.

And in 2020 they made more promises, and what happened in the following budgets? They expanded the PST and increased your education property taxes by 8.4 per cent and raised your SaskPower rates over 12 per cent in just one year. No wonder why citizens in this province are struggling with cost of living. This tired and out-of-touch Sask Party government continues to speak out of both sides of their mouth.

Mr. Speaker, this out-of-touch and tired government's 2022 budget theme was "back on track." While they were back on track with their misspending, poor governance choices, and making backroom deals with their friends and Sask Party donors, they were doing this while neglecting the rest of the people in this province. Mr. Speaker, on the flip side of being back on track, the Sask Party government veered right off the track when it comes to fiscal responsibility. Under this Premier, they balanced only one budget.

Remember, this is an election budget where this Sask Party government keeps throwing money just to suppress the problem. They have no solutions and they certainly have not produced measurable outcomes from the investments they previously made. This is a government that has demonstrated repeatedly that they have failed in solutions and in results.

Mr. Speaker, the expenditure increases they are giving to education, health, and social services will certainly be clawed back in 2025 when and if this government gets elected.

To the citizens in this province: remember, please remember this is an election budget and that they will not deliver after they are elected back in. They will deliver cuts and tax increases. Furthermore they may be promising money to fix problems. The question is, can they deliver on the solutions and the results we need in this province?

Remember their performance in the last 17 years in power. The problems we have today were created by this government and they have not fixed anything. We have the highest child poverty rates in the country. Record number of people using the food bank. We have the highest level of intimate partner violence in the country. We have more homelessness. We have the worst levels of crime in Canada. And we have a declining, declining standard of living. That's \$2,500 lower today than in 2017. And we have the worst economic growth record in Canada.

These bad decisions and empty budget promises won't change the Sask Party's willingness to spend foolishly and spend on their friends. Let's look at some of those. One million dollars to Stephen Harper over the past six years. One million dollars to Stephen Harper over the past six years. Twelve million to lawyers to lobby Washington. Forty-two million for fancy trade offices around the world they can fly to. Two hundred and forty million for a computer system that doesn't work. To the folks watching, 240 million to a computer system that doesn't work. Fourteen million for a marshals service that hasn't added a single officer and won't until 2026. That's \$14 million of taxpayers' money where you haven't seen one set of boots on the ground yet.

[14:30]

A proposed Saskatchewan revenue agency that would double the cost of collecting corporate taxes and increase compliance costs for businesses. Twelve million in subway billboards and airport ads in other provinces and countries. What could we do with 12 million? A lot here in this province. But no, it's being spent for ads, billboards in other countries and other provinces.

And here's this — get this, people that are watching — \$11 million settlement with a local business over the government's actions in Wascana Park. Millions of dollars are going to be spent by the Sask Party over court actions related to a pronoun policy that takes the rights away from our children and wastes your tax dollars.

Hundreds of thousands in ads attacking teachers, and trying to convince taxpayers that they've done a good job. Two hundred and fifty thousand a year for a Sask-first assessment panel. And get this. A Regina bypass that each and every day costs you, the taxpayers, \$200,000 for 40 years, and could have been built for half that if we would have built what was necessary.

And three MLAs have been added to this Assembly for what is unknown. What is known is that it has costed taxpayers about 8 million in taxpayers' money since. This is a government that does not make good decisions. It wastes taxpayers' money and has created very real affordability, health, and education problems.

The result of electing the Sask Party is debt. We have more debt today than any other time in our province's history, with no plan to reduce it. This Premier has added more government debt than any other premier in our history and is following a legacy of conservative premiers who have created over 94 per cent of all government debt. The increase in our province's interest payments this year alone is \$100 million. With the addition of another 3 billion in debt this year, the '25-26 budget will show that this government now has us making over 1 billion in interest payments.

Mr. Speaker, this Sask Party government has only balanced the budget once in seven years. Don't be fooled. Next year's budget will reverse any investments made in this election-year budget because next year they'll increase your taxes, your electricity bills.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I support the motion that was moved by the Finance critic and member from Regina Rosemont. Miigwech.

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

**Mr. Lemaigre:** — [The hon. member spoke for a time in Denesuline.]

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on the budget. And first of all I would like to thank my family for supporting me to be here. Just this past week was my mom's 81st birthday, and we celebrated. And what a . . . Every time I visit with her, I'm reminded of where we've been and how far we've come in northwest Saskatchewan and northern Saskatchewan.

We have a long family history of what my parents have done for the people, the respect that they've gained. And because of that I've formed many friendships and bonds throughout the visits and engagements that I've done, and I'm forever thankful for that.

I'll also like to take a moment to thank the Deputy Premier and the Finance minister. I have been entrusted and the privilege of sitting on the treasury board. And that type of guidance and leadership by somebody who has been here for so long, I'm grateful for that.

But before I get into my remarks about the budget and what it means for northwest Saskatchewan. While the Deputy Premier, Finance minister was delivering her speech on budget day, there was a mention of Pinehouse getting a school. And I observed the member from Cumberland House bow his head. He's laughing to himself. He gathers himself and then joins the group again. That is the calibre of the representation, half of the representation of the North.

When we are investing in the North . . . I've visited Pinehouse and walked through the school. I grew up with my mother being a janitor at our school. And I know the heart that goes into keeping a school. And my goodness, people were proud of how they kept that school. But they also talked about the need for it to be replaced. And when we're investing in the North, from this representative you will not see me laughing at the people as member of Cumberland House did.

Mr. Speaker, we should be beyond that. When we talk about Indigenous language, Indigenous education, this side of the government, we've invested into four-year teacher education programs to be held in our communities. I have family that are recipients of that. And now we've invested in Waterhen, Hatchet Lake. Clearwater River Dene Nation is in its second cohort.

And yet the member from Cumberland House is still chirping. You know, this is an investment in the North. These are some of the people that he's represented. La Ronge health care, right in his constituency, \$27 million to long-term care. That is going to improve northern services for our seniors. And yet he will laugh at that.

Health care in the North. Nurse practitioner is a program that's going to be advanced. Northern Saskatchewan is going to benefit from that.

I visited Jans Bay community not long after I was here, and I will remind people I've only been here just a little bit over two years. I visited the community of Jans Bay and I heard the community talk about their school. They don't have a gymnasium. They have to pack the kids up, take them to the community hall, and then bring them back to the school. In this budget, we announced that Jans Bay is going to get a gymnasium. Nothing to laugh at. The community was ecstatic. I talked to the mayor of the community and they thanked me because that is the quality of the representation. I will not sit here and laugh at the investment of northern Saskatchewan.

To the communities, to the communities and northern revenue sharing, we have an increase. I'm quite excited to get into the communities and for us to have a discussion what that means for

them. And that is something that was started by this government. This was an investment that was needed. This government identified it and moved forward. So when members from opposite talk about the past and they talked about what does that mean, I can confidently go back to my communities and have a discussion about the increase in revenue sharing and what impact it's going to have of the people that I represent. I will not be laughing at them.

We talked about record investment. Ducharme Elementary School, I was very proud to be there in the community and tour the brand new school that's being built. And then I went to Birch Narrows First Nation and visited the school that was built by this government. I will not laugh at them because their needs were being met, what we've seen through member opposite.

[The hon. member spoke for a time in Denesuline.]

When we show up in the community and we hear people talk, I have the privilege of showing up and talking and having discussions about how can we work together and how could we serve the people we represent. I don't sit there and just speak the language of "the government should." That's what people have had for how many years in Athabasca.

I had the privilege of visiting communities this past weekend and, my goodness, what an incredible conversation we've had of what could be, working together between First Nation communities and Métis communities and municipalities — of what could be. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is what I bring to the table. That is the language that I use.

[14:45]

And that is how people in my constituency are represented. At no point would I belittle and laugh when we're investing into their future. Our teacher education program, our Cree education program, our Dene education program — those are investments where we're empowering the people of northern Saskatchewan to take ownership of education, to teach ourselves. That is an investment by this side of government.

And then our resources, our economic development. I had a lengthy discussion just this past weekend. Communities are excited about what does that mean for them and how we're going to work together, provide for the people of northern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Chair, when we talk about increase in budget, when we talk about record investment, our reality and the reality of the discussions that I have in my community, is exactly that. Record investment into northern Saskatchewan, our improvement in infrastructure.

I was driving between Buffalo Narrows and La Loche, and what did I see? I saw a sign indicating that Highway 155 between Buffalo Narrows and La Loche is going to get attention. And that is two years in a row that highway is going to get improvements. That is nothing to laugh at.

Mr. Speaker, this is what it is. We talk about the quality of our representation, the calibre of our representation, and what that means for northern Saskatchewan. I've shown up in communities

and leadership has said to me, “Thank you for showing up because we don’t even see our representative.” Mr. Speaker, I can tell them that sometimes their representative is laughing at their needs.

Our people have gone through a lot. We have a history of what we shouldn’t be doing. We have a history of when we were told you should not speak your language. We have a history of where our culture could not be expressed. But if anything, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I can stand here and speak my language and express it to the province of Saskatchewan, that is reconciliation.

Nationally we did an exercise of truth and reconciliation. We spoke of our truth, and 94 Calls to Actions were identified to us, of what that means as we heal. In there, it would not say, laugh at the people that you represent. If anything, people want to be included.

On this side of the House, just not two weeks ago, we had an exercise where we brought Indigenous business owners, Indigenous business community to a gathering hosted by this government, and we were only able to do that because of our tremendous economic opportunity that we have.

I had a conversation this weekend about some of the economic opportunities in the North, how we could introduce it internationally based on our offices in the international community. Northern Saskatchewan, northern businesses talking about how could we introduce our product to the world. That is the conversation being had here. At no point is that a laughing matter. That is how northern Saskatchewan is being represented.

And when you have that conversation, when you tell them what is possible, and when you tell them what we could do together, and when you tell them what our investment looks like, there is hope. There is trust. There is a vision of what we could do in northern Saskatchewan.

What this budget has allowed northern Saskatchewan to do, we have uranium production. We are having a real conversation of what that looks like. We have an electrical course happening right now through Northlands College in partnership with Sask Polytech so we could have electricians in the North that will be working at the productions of northern development, is what’s happening right now.

We’ve had carpentry courses in partnership with industry where people are in an apprenticeship program because of that investment. I can go on and on, but at no point when I’m sitting at the table hearing and listening and showing up, am I coming back here and laughing at that. And yet some on the side of opposition right now are still smirking. That is the calibre of some of that representation in this building.

And so what I want to talk about next is the opportunity that I’ve been given being here just less than three years, and thank the people that have entrusted me with huge responsibilities as part of government on this side of the House. I don’t have to go to my people and say, “Well you’re right, the government should do this.” I’m having real conversation, and I’m having those real conversations because of the trust that has been given me.

Treasury board is not a small task. Human Services to the cabinet

is not a small task. But one of the biggest ones that I really feel privilege is Public Accounts. Why I say that is because there’s accountable measures in place for the province. But in that exercise I just want to point something out before I wrap up here, and it was touched on.

The coroner of this province has identified the high rate of suicide rates being of Indigenous people. And then we had a discussion of northwest Saskatchewan about the health care and the rate of suicide. And there was a question posed during that that I took offence to, and I showed a reaction. Not because of the question that was asked, but mostly because I thought about the people that I represent. I represent people that are Dene. I represent people that are Cree. And I also have the privilege of being Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Government Relations where there’s 74 First Nations. And in moments like that, were clumped into one stat: Indigenous.

Why I reacted to that question was I think the better question should have been, when we’re delivering health care, how are you including the Dene people of northwest Saskatchewan? How are you including the Métis people of northwest Saskatchewan? And the Cree community? Because in my discussions here, that is what I speak. That is the calibre of representation on this side, that when I’m meeting with the ministers I’m talking about the Dene people of northwest Saskatchewan, the Cree people of northwest Saskatchewan, the Métis people of northwest Saskatchewan, and everybody in between.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are at a point where people will have to decide. And if anything that this budget does, it gives northern people not only hope but it gives northern people a tremendous amount of pride because they’re involved. They’re included. And it was because of this economy that we’re able to give La Loche a school. We’re able to give Pinehouse a school. We’re able to give Jans Bay a gymnasium. We’re able to have Prince Albert a hospital — an investment that is going to change the health care of northern Saskatchewan.

So to the people of Athabasca, thank you for trusting me to be your representative here. And to northern Saskatchewan, thank you for welcoming me into northern Saskatchewan. Your hospitality is never not acknowledged. To the people of Wollaston, Hatchet Lake, Fond-du-Lac, Stony Rapids, Uranium City, Dore Lake, Sled Lake, all the communities in between that I’ve been at — La Ronge — I want to say thank you. And this budget has been for you, and I think our investment shows that we are listening and investment is there. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair of Committees:** — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

**Hon. Ms. Eyre:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So you’ll be an honorary Mr. Speaker, for the course of this speech at any rate. And, Mr. Speaker, every week when I’m down in Regina and I roll my suitcases back to my car on Thursday mornings, there’s a young Ukrainian gentleman who often helps me, one of the 4,000 Ukrainians whom this government has helped to settle in Saskatchewan over the last two years. And what is the most touching thing about him is his optimism, how absolutely uncynical he is.

Now over the past few months we’ve often conferred about the



weather — the blustery wind gusts, the frigid cold, the recent snowstorms, the fact that his car has trouble starting below minus 17. And my question to him every time I see him at the doors: what are we dealing with today? Pray be to God it will be spring soon, he has said. And he's finally almost right.

Last fall he told me that he had taken up rowing on Wascana. He said that the lake is close to his apartment, which is affordable, and he said that gas is cheap. Not cheap enough, I said, with the carbon tax. He has also said, which stays with me, you can work hard here and get ahead. Ukrainians, he says, have determination.

And one day after speaking with him I actually wrote down what he said, which was, "We have been welcomed here. And the province has so much to offer, we have to do everything we can. It is a good life here. Pray be to God." I like the way he puts that and translates that.

And in these sometimes challenging days it's good. It's good for the soul. It's good for one's perspective to chat with him. Opportunity, certainty, a future — that's what this lovely guy is seeking here in Saskatchewan, to move forward. Isn't that why we are here? To provide momentum for the people of this province, including for the thousands of newcomers to this province, our growing population. Which brings me, Mr. Speaker, to this budget, what the opposition likes to call toxic positivity.

[15:00]

And actually, before we get to the budget, I do have a tip for the opposition's crack everything-old-is-new-again senior advisory team as they sit huddled over their daily QP [question period] and speech scripts for the members opposite. Stop pretending. Stop pretending that the job numbers are bad, or that growth isn't happening, or that all the members over there are united against the carbon tax, that they actually like the oil and gas sector. Stop pretending. Have the courage of your convictions. Stop pretending that COVID didn't happen, Mr. Speaker, that that side didn't call every day for more shutdowns, more mandates.

Stop pretending that all jurisdictions didn't experience an impact on staffing, particularly within the health sector, Mr. Speaker, which we are doing now everything to counteract. Or that our children's sense of certainty about what generations before them have taken for granted, that that wasn't effective, Mr. Speaker, that there would always be tournaments and grads and performances and band concerts, which we are now seeing threatened again.

I say. We say. Do they? Good for Norquay and Preeceville, and for standing up. Good for those students. We are so proud of you. I'm proud to be indirectly from that community. My grandparents farm north of Pelly. And we say, good for the Moose Jaw community and your spirit for fighting back and for garnering all the resources available to try to put on some form of Hoopla last week, only to be told by the teachers' union on Friday that, "no one is to reschedule extracurricular activities to another day." And that should extracurricular activities be rescheduled, STF members are "not to participate." How cruel.

On this side, Mr. Speaker, we don't have to pretend about their positions because they've been very clear about them. For

starters, absolutely in lockstep with the STF teachers' union.

And on the economy, the member for Regina University, cheering when oil and gas workers lost their jobs, or she and her leader calling on us to demand the same carve-out for Saskatchewan on home heating fuel that the federal Liberals gave to Atlantic Canada. I guess, Mr. Speaker, she forgets that she and that entire side voted with us to stop remitting the carbon tax on natural gas, which really is our home heating fuel in Saskatchewan, and also the fact that the federal Liberals have been very clear — no more carve-outs. Vote for more Liberals if you want more carve-outs.

And when we reasserted and asserted our own carve-out to stop paying the carbon tax on home heating, the federal Liberals called that anarchy, Mr. Speaker. It would be amusing if it weren't so astounding. As other provinces in recent weeks, including Newfoundland, have called for a pause on increasing the carbon tax on April 1, Prime Minister Trudeau has called that a sign of carving in to political pressure. The ironies, the ironies, Mr. Speaker.

We also don't have to pretend that the member for Rosemont has repeatedly called on us to raid the "windfall profits" of the potash companies. And believe me, the potash companies know it, Mr. Speaker. It's obvious where this is going. That side is clearly angling for a wealth tax, just as the NDP did in Alberta, to raid the profits of companies to fund their hard-left policies, Mr. Speaker, raid the profits of companies whose investments bring opportunities and jobs to the people of this province.

Never forget — under them oil exploration stopped at the Alberta border. It stopped. It was next to nothing. On the well sites map, Mr. Speaker, look at it now. Right, member for Kindersley — who's not here — and Swift Current and Cypress Hills and Lloydminster? Under that side, K+S retreated to Germany, Mr. Speaker, vowing never to return until Brad Wall. Look at our potash sector now, Mr. Speaker. Members for Moosomin and Wadena and Humboldt and Yorkton and Melville, they know; we know.

Would a wealth tax and raiding profits have helped attract BHP to this province, Mr. Speaker? Would raiding profits create a climate for growth and opportunity? There's the member for Kindersley; he's just switched places. Would raiding profits help create jobs for the communities around the Jansen mine, Mr. Speaker? No way.

This Premier told UAE [United Arab Emirates] officials last year when they were planning COP [Conference of the Parties] in Dubai, if you're going to invite oil and gas and mining and nuclear stakeholders to a global environmental conference, we're in. That's courageous. We'll be there because we have an amazing story to tell, Mr. Speaker. Our sectors and their environmental records, they are among the greenest, most sustainable in the world.

In terms of trade, the global relationships that we seek and have established — where the relationship between Canada and India, as one example, has been so damaged under this Prime Minister — our relationship, our diplomatic relationship if you like, has enabled exports to continue and grow and thrive, Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of our provincial economy and the jobs and

livelihoods involved.

They belittle those relationships, Mr. Speaker. This province cannot afford that side. This province cannot afford hard-left policies and there is no pretending about that. There is no denying that, Mr. Speaker.

These are challenging times around the world, but also in our own country. The instances of antisemitism, for example, that we are seeing, Mr. Speaker — mobbing, intimidation of businesses, acts of vandalism — in this country. We're also hearing that Jewish MPs [Member of Parliament], Jewish MLAs across Canada say they are no longer comfortable within the Liberal and NDP parties.

Is that any wonder, Mr. Speaker, when a member such as Regina Elphinstone openly and unabashedly minimized the impact of the racist, antisemitic phrase, "From the river to the sea"? B'nai Brith publicly called her out for attempting to justify "the use of that hateful and genocidal slogan." Apparently she experienced the phrase differently, Mr. Speaker, than leaders, leaders in every sense, across the Western world.

Incidentally, I know the member's daily defence is that she was just a wee little thing when the NDP was last in power. But for all her interest in boards, as one example, she should look up John Solomon. She should look up Jack Messer. And she should look up Judy Junor, Mr. Speaker, a list that includes MLAs and people who served respectively on a quasi-judicial board, a Crown board, and a board during a nomination. All of it, Mr. Speaker, all the positions over there — the raw negativity, the base insinuations about good, honourable people — they are not the Saskatchewan that our lovely gentleman from Ukraine is seeking. In fact for so many new Canadians, it's exactly what they're escaping, Mr. Speaker.

And speaking of the promise of spring, over there it's always winter and never Christmas. Mr. Speaker, we cannot afford the hard left. And they say that we're tired and out of touch. I'm not tired. Are you tired?

**An Hon. Member:** — I'm not tired.

**Hon. Ms. Eyre:** — Are you tired?

**An Hon. Member:** — No.

**Hon. Ms. Eyre:** — Are you tired? We're not tired. We're not tired. The member for Yorkton or Cypress Hills or Cannington or Lakeview or Regina Wascana, the member for Athabasca. The Premier — he's definitely not tired, Mr. Speaker.

And our members, they're not out of touch. So far from it. They are deeply rooted in their communities, and they bring the voices of those communities, urban and rural, to the provincial table every day. We're wide awake. We're full of energy and full of passion about our amazing province, Mr. Speaker.

So let's talk about the budget. And I'm going to look at the budget through the prism of Saskatoon, which of course includes my beautiful constituency.

And I want to thank my amazing constituency assistant, Betty

Anne, who is such a gracious ambassador. And while I'm at it, Mr. Speaker, my amazing chief of staff, Ashley Boha. I'm so lucky. And the amazing team in the JAG [Justice and Attorney General] MO [minister's office]: Krista and Megan and Emma and also, as of this week, Candle, who's new to the building. So absolutely welcome to her. A team of women. Watch out.

If you look at my constituency, Mr. Speaker, and Saskatoon since 2007 when we formed government, the effects, the investment, the impacts have been amazing. And it's these impacts which I share with constituents every chance that I get.

Since 2007, on the education front our government built the Chief Whitecap and St. Kateri Tekakwitha schools in Stonebridge. I was proudly there when they opened. They're just two of the 101 major capital education projects across Saskatchewan since 2007, including 69 new schools, 32 major renovations.

Last year, general education funding was up to 2.8 billion, an increase of 89.4 million over the year before. With this budget, we are making a historic investment of 3.3 billion, up 8 per cent over last year.

Then there are the highways, Mr. Speaker. Since '07 we've expanded highways 16 and 5 and invested over 120 million in road and highways infrastructure in the Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota constituency alone. Across the province we've invested over 1.3 billion, Mr. Speaker . . . 13 billion. My eyes are getting weak. Excuse me. The overall highways budget is 741 million this year, so the days of school buses getting stuck in potholes and fix-your-own-roads are long gone, Mr. Speaker.

When I door knock, I tell constituents — and this is another big one — since 2007 we have transferred more than \$764 million to the city of Saskatoon in municipal revenue sharing for city infrastructure, maintenance, and operations. None of this funding was available before 2007. This year municipal revenue sharing across the province is at an all-time high of \$42.4 million. That is amazing, Mr. Speaker.

We've also built the children's hospital in Saskatoon, and we're in the process of building the Saskatchewan Polytechnic campus on the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] campus, a \$200 million investment in what really is the future of post-secondary education in this province. So onward and upward, Mr. Speaker.

Just on justice, I was disappointed. I was disappointed when the comments of the member for Regina Elphinstone and Saskatoon Nutana were brought to my attention — that our investments in human trafficking have been, according to them, measly, and that we've committed "zero dollars." Again, stop pretending, Mr. Speaker. Try 27 million — \$27 million to address interpersonal violence in Saskatchewan. Of that 27 million, we've made historic, first-time-ever-in-the-province investments in second-stage housing, and nearly \$1 million over three years has been allocated to Hope Restored Canada whose entire purpose is to provide support for human trafficking victims, Mr. Speaker. We've also introduced legislative wraparounds that, for example, cut ties between traffickers and their victims through coerced debts, that make protection orders easier to achieve. The list goes on.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the justice budget, and just to get some key aspects on the record, this year we've announced a new prosecutions case readiness unit, which will help Crown prosecutors to prioritize high-priority caseloads, complex criminal files, and as well a dedicated gang prosecutor through the gang-violence reduction strategy.

[15:15]

We've also announced a team commander for the serious incident response team, an expansion of the drug treatment court program in North Battleford, initiatives that enhance courtroom safety and efficiency across the province including new detention areas and safe rooms, standardized security and distress systems across courthouses, and the installation of more video conferencing equipment which among other things will decrease prisoner transports from correctional centres and free up police resources.

We're also providing \$100,000 in '24-25 to the University of Saskatchewan College of Law's clinical law program to expand applied placements for students in public prosecutions — the Ministry of Justice and with legal aid — in rural Saskatchewan because we want to attract the best and the brightest, Mr. Speaker. So stay tuned for that announcement next week.

Mr. Speaker, in Justice we continue to focus on common sense, on public safety, on improving access to the system. As a province, with other provinces, we've called for bail reform from the federal government, and there have been some very important first steps there.

Over the last year we've announced further support in bypassing the adversarial court system for family maintenance calculations, a higher small claims court limit which will help access to justice, new bear spray regulations to provide police with an important provincial tool in our cities, Mr. Speaker, and the expansion and funding of 211 services. The practical can have very profound effects.

I have been asked by other ministers across the country to co-host the federal-provincial-territorial meeting on human rights next year. Certainly we have challenges, but we also have great successes and we will share those with our provincial partners.

And we are looking at more things we can do, Mr. Speaker, potential pilot projects around de-escalating even further the adversarial nature of too many separations and divorces, particularly where children are involved. Also what we can do to potentially free up police officers' time, which they are spending too much of in traffic court, and what we can learn from the broken windows model.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, we continue to remain focused on protecting our constitutional exclusive jurisdiction over natural resources and power generation, and the protection of the notwithstanding clause and what it actually means and was intended to achieve for provinces.

Mr. Speaker, it's been a good year. Here's to another one and another one after that. Our vision: to build, to provide certainty and strength in contrast to the chaos, the closures, and absolutely the crashing that would be the reality under that opposition. Mr.

Speaker, long may this Premier lead this beautiful province.

And with that, I am pleased to support the budget motion and will not be supporting the amendment.

**The Deputy Chair of Committees:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview . . . Oh I recognize the member from Regina Coronation Park.

**Mr. Burki:** — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just requesting for extended leave for introducing a sweet family in the east gallery.

**The Deputy Chair of Committees:** — The member seeks leave for introduction of family. Is permission granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair of Committees:** — I recognize the member from Regina Coronation Park.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Burki:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Deputy Speaker, for this interruption in the debate. Over here I will be introducing one sweet family in the east gallery. They are Arisha Khan and Muhammed Yusef. I think Muhammed Yusef was along with Zara, and Zara was giving a lot of trouble to them. And when I went there she wanted to come over here to the Chamber. I said, well I don't know when you can bring it but hopefully in the near future we'll see a good politician.

This family is having their parents-in-law, Shimshad Bonno and Abdul Salam. And the good thing is today is, Abdul Salam and Shimshad Bonno, that is their 40th anniversary. Happy anniversary.

And their sister-in-law Khakashan Khan is over here. Thank you very much for coming to your Legislative Assembly. They have two daughters, Sophia and Zara. They're over there. Zara is there but Sophia is outside. She is making a lot of trouble and they don't want to make noise over here.

I will request all members of this Legislative Assembly to give a warm welcome to this Legislative Building to this family.

**The Deputy Chair of Committees:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

### 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. Love:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees. And it's always nice to hear such a warm welcome from colleagues

on both sides of the Assembly when folks join us here at the legislature.

It's my honour to be on my feet and put a few comments on the record about this year's budget, and enjoying lots of inspiration from my colleagues — including the only member of the Assembly who's allowed to heckle me during guest introductions, my colleague from Regina Rosemont, who does give me a hard time when I'm welcoming guests.

But his speech on budget day, Mr. Speaker, was one of the finest that I've heard in this Assembly. The members might not want to hear that, but I'll tell you, people were sure talking about it out there. And what he did here on budget day was . . . It just made me really happy, most of all, to see his beautiful family sitting here behind him and seeing how proud they would be of him and the work that he does here for the people of Saskatchewan.

And family, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is so important, and I know that we often . . . All of us like to take time to acknowledge those who support us there at home. And I've said it before, you know. There's a lot that goes on in here that's tough; that goes both ways. But when I hear members opposite and members from this side talk about their loved ones, probably the best part of my experience here is hearing those stories, how proud we are of the accomplishments and the support we get from our families.

And so I will take a few minutes to give some thanks to the folks in my home who support me in this work, most of all my beautiful wife, Emma. You know, while I'm here, she's home taking care of our three kids, holding down a job, running a business, taking care of so much.

You know, I don't know what the duties are like in each of our families, but there's a lot of things that I enjoy taking care of when I am home. And when I'm not there and it snows 30 or 40 centimetres, Emma's taking care of the snow. She's got the kids out there shovelling like they were just a couple of weeks ago here when we got that big snowfall. She's taking care of all those things that I'd do, and so much more.

And I know she's doing that today and every day, providing for the needs of our kids, taking care of all the responsibilities that we have as parents and community members and neighbours, and all the folks in our circle that she provides friendship to, guidance to, support to. She does such a wonderful job, and I benefit from that each and every day.

I also want to thank my three kids for really allowing me and supporting me to do this work. I talk about them lots, and I enjoy the back-and-forth with members on both sides as we catch up on what our kids are up to.

My daughter Etta, who's the weightlifter, has had a great year. She continues to do really well. She won senior provincials on the weekend in Prince Albert. She continues to set records, and very shortly she'll resume her status as the number one-ranked weightlifter in the world in her category. And so I'm very proud of her. She's currently ranked number two, but the young woman ahead of her will age out, and so she'll get back to a world number one ranking for youth weightlifter, which is incredible. She's a brilliant young woman with her school work, with her role at our home, and she's just such a wonderful big sister to my

boys. So I want to thank her for that.

I want to thank my middle son, Tom, who . . . You know, I hear the member from Riversdale talk about how his son Chris, who's just a great young man — I've had the pleasure of knowing him as well — he talks about them as being best friends. And with my middle son, Tom, like, we're just such good buddies. We enjoy so much of the same things. Music. We got to see a Roughriders game this summer, followed by a Sloan concert. We're big Sloan fans in my home, and so we get to share that. We were out this weekend playing catch with a football on the tiny path that doesn't have any snow on it across the street from our house. And we just enjoy so many of the same things.

And as well as my youngest son, Myles. He's really grown into quite an amazing young athlete. And he'll get out there. We play a lot of soccer together, throw the football. He's got great hands for a six-year-old, so he's got a bright future as those two boys get ready for flag football season to kick off here in just a few weeks. And while I do enjoy my work here, Mr. Speaker, getting home to coach those boys on Thursday nights and Saturdays out at SMF [Saskatoon Minor Football] Field, that's often the best part of my week. And so I'm looking forward to the seasons turning and getting to do more of that work with my kids.

So I want to take a few minutes to thank the folks who work in my constituency office. Primarily I've got Katie there most days, as well as Judy. Judy is typically there on Fridays, but Katie's been filling in as Judy's been away dealing with some personal health issues and needing some time away. So Katie's really been holding down the fort there. She's just one of the most talented people I've ever met in so many ways. She's got these gifts that she brings to our office with organizing, keeping me focused with the things I need to do, whether it's preparing for session or, you know, getting member statements done, reaching out to constituents and stakeholders, making sure we've got all that outdoor advertising that we all love. She's just so talented in her work, and I really want to thank her for what she does in our office and with our constituents.

And finally I want to thank my constituents in Eastview, the folks that I have the honour of representing. I'm often inspired by what they do. And I try to impart that in my newsletters and in members' statements and celebrating all the good work that goes on with my constituents, whether it's in education or health care or small business or industry. Really I'm deeply honoured to get to represent just incredible constituents.

I want to thank everyone who came by an open house two weekends ago now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I had a number of people come by. We had some mini-golf at the mall; we had some doughnuts. And a lot of folks came out. It was really great to touch base with so many people that I have the honour of representing.

And if there was one theme that emerged, one message that I heard over and over, whether it be from old or young or folks who I've met before and knew, the message that I heard was from so many people, have said, I've never supported the NDP in election but you'll have my vote this time. And so much of that message came from people who have seen first-hand the state of our health care system, or they've got a family member, a child or a relative or a spouse, who's a teacher. Or they have a family

member in our education system and they see what's happening right now and all of the ways that this government is letting people down and simply can't be counted on to be the ones to fix it.

So we see that . . . I hear somebody piping over from in the corner. I can't see who that is, but he's piping up about record spending. And I'd say, let's have a look at what the results are for this government because the receipts are in. The receipts are in for this government. And while we have by all accounts an election-year budget, Saskatchewan people can clearly see that this isn't a government that could be counted on to fix the crises that they've created.

There's not a cent, there's not a cent of relief in this budget for the cost-of-living crisis that we see today, that we've seen for years. We've seen nothing from this government that would let us know that they're up to the task of meeting the challenges of the day. And all of this comes at a time when 6 out of 10 people in Saskatchewan indicate that they're worse off today than they were a year ago — 6 out of 10 people worse off than they were a year ago.

So what does that look like being worse off, Mr. Deputy Speaker? It means families struggling to put food on the table, families struggling under this cost-of-living pressure to feed their kids the kind of healthy, adequate food that all of us would want for our own families.

Now I started off saying today, many of us are parents and I enjoy hearing these stories. But I wonder how many of us really understand what that kind of pressure would be like as a parent, what kind of tough decisions you have to make if just simply providing healthy food for your most cherished, cherished people in the world is at risk or jeopardized. I don't think most of us know that. I mean some of us maybe have had upbringings where that reality may have been there. But probably today, that's not a daily concern that we have.

[15:30]

But I'd ask members on both sides to consider what would that be like as a parent. If you knew that coming home meant stopping from your full-time job maybe at the food bank to pick up something to ensure that you're doing just the bare minimum to supply for the needs of your children.

It might not be our reality but just because it isn't our reality — that those aren't the burdens that we maybe bear in here — doesn't excuse us from listening to those and responding with empathy and humility for those whose daily lived reality includes wondering if they have the means to provide food for their families. I think empathy and humility are two values that I would certainly, certainly think we would find agreement that we could use more of those values in this space. I won't be holding my breath, Mr. Speaker, to see those values emerge in here.

Now there is a lot of money in this election-year budget, but at the end of the day the government has no one to blame but themselves for the state of things in our province. And the people of Saskatchewan will look at this budget and ask if the same group that broke the system can be counted on to find the solutions. And the people of Saskatchewan deserve results, not

empty promises that the government has no intention of keeping on the eve of an election. So this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the choice is clear and it's time for change in Saskatchewan.

I'll spend a few minutes talking about my critic areas, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I'll start with education which is getting a lot of attention now. And I think it's clear as day to everyone watching politics in Saskatchewan that this is an election-year budget and that the party that broke our education system can't be counted on to fix it.

And a news flash to the members opposite, whether it was 5 or 6,000 people outside this Assembly on budget day, they were not here to celebrate the Sask Party government. They were here to bring a clear message that this government has failed education, failed our teachers, failed our students, our children and youth to provide the funding for an education system that is well resourced, sustainably resourced, and predictably resourced.

This is a Sask Party government that has broken our classrooms and they can't be counted on to fix what they've broken.

Our kids have spent years in classrooms, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that have been overcrowded and underfunded. And in particular I'd point to the member from Willowgrove who talked at length last week about the new capital investments. They're good. Absolutely no doubt there's been a ton of growth, incredible growth on the east side of Saskatoon, and there's a need for new school buildings on that side of our city, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But the truth is that, I believe, in his constituency every single school is well over 100 per cent capacity and has been for years. So for him just to pat himself on the back and celebrate these announcements . . . We know this is an election-year budget. These schools should have been announced years ago. And if it wasn't about playing politics with their classrooms, I think that they would've been. But they waited for an election-year budget to announce projects that were years overdue. And we know from this government's track record, when those schools do finally get built and are open, they're most likely to be over capacity the day that the door opens. That's not the kind of responsible planning ahead that Saskatchewan people deserve.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how do we know that this government is providing an election-year budget that they have no intention of sticking to? Well we've got a couple reasons that Saskatchewan people might be suspicious of that. Number one reason, this government had a chance to prove their work. They had a chance to take their promises and to prove that they're going to stick to it. They could prove that by putting it into a contract or bringing it to an independent arbitrator. They've chosen to do neither of those things. And so it stirs up certainly a lot of suspicion, and I think that Saskatchewan people are right to recognize that this is not the group that can be counted on to fix the problems in our classrooms.

And I also want to take this, just for a minute, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to correct the record on what teachers are asking for. I've heard the Premier and the Minister of Education say that they don't want education funding to flow through the teachers' union. That's absolutely not what teachers are asking for. Teachers want to see local boards getting predictable funds that will allow them to make local decisions on what our classrooms

need. That's what teachers believe.

What they don't believe is that this government will provide those funds after an election and stick to what they say. And why would they believe that? They've got every reason to question that because that's exactly what they did in 2012, in 2017, and in 2021. In 2011-2012 they promised \$119 million in their budget, and the year after that was reduced to 59 million. In 2016 it was a 142 million increase, but in 2017 that led to a cut of nearly 50 million. And in 2020, before the election, they promised 42 million in education spending, and then the next year after the election it was 19 million.

So this is their track record. And teachers have every reason to question this government. They've been fleeced before and they're not going to take it anymore. If minister after minister from this failing Sask Party government won't do right for our students, then teachers are standing up and saying that they will.

So what is the path forward, Mr. Deputy Speaker? The path forward will be one that includes respect — respect for teachers, respect for families and students. And that would be the advice that I would offer to members opposite. The path forward is one of respect. But in this Assembly, on budget day, we all witnessed one of the most blatant and disgusting shows of disrespect to teachers that I've ever seen. We saw the Minister of Education lash out at a teacher — that he invited to this Assembly — and point the finger at her as a leader of teachers for being the problem. It lacked the kind of respect that we're going to need to move this situation forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll move on to a few comments as critic for seniors, and some of the things in this budget that I felt were lacking when it comes to providing the things that older adults in Saskatchewan were looking for and indeed asking for. The first thing that I'll note is that there's really no cost-of-living relief.

And while 6 of 10 Saskatchewan people indicate that they're worse off this year than last year, we know that cost-of-living crisis is especially hard on older adults, many of whom are living on a fixed income. They have little if no means to earn any more money or to bring in any more funds when the cost of everything is going up. So we know that seniors are especially hit hard in this cost-of-living crisis and the way that inflation is impacting all of us and the decisions that we make with our spending.

We know that seniors nowadays in Saskatchewan are paying more for food, for rent, for personal items, for medications, and for so much more. And to see that older adults aren't being supported with a cent of cost-of-living relief is truly a sign of a tired and out-of-touch government.

I will note, Mr. Speaker, that we did see a \$100 increase in the personal care home benefit, and while I will take a minute to say that this is going in the right direction, it's only \$100 more to a benefit that works on an income threshold. And I would challenge any members opposite to try and find a personal care home at that price point for a low-income senior, one of their constituents, maybe somebody comes to them for help trying to find an adequate personal care home, maybe close to loved ones in their community where they live or were raised.

I could be corrected; I certainly stand to be corrected. But that's

a near impossible task. I know that because we hear from people all across the province in my office, certainly in Saskatoon Eastview, who are struggling to find an affordable place for their loved ones to age with dignity.

And finally in relation to seniors, Mr. Deputy Speaker, really see nothing new in this budget, nothing really responding to many of the lessons that we've learned throughout the last four years that we've all been here in this Assembly in terms of what have we learned about the needs in care for older adults, whether that be in personal care homes or long-term care homes, care in the communities with home care or home supports. Really nothing new.

We've learned a lot — I mean, we have across the globe — about what older adults are asking for, what their needs are, and we've really seen no response from this government to rise up, to show that learning, and to put it into a provincial budget.

All of those lessons seem to have just washed away and they've been forgotten, but I believe that there is a future here for older adults in Saskatchewan to age with dignity, with a strategy and a purpose and a vision around positive aging in Saskatchewan, and I know it's a vision shared by members on this side of the Assembly. And it was missing from this year's budget.

So in conclusion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that we need to ask ourselves in this Assembly, where are we as a province? As we get to the end of this twenty-ninth legislature, where are we as a province? We have record debt — level of debt never seen before in the history of Saskatchewan. Now you'd think that with all of that debt that's doubled under this Premier's watch, you'd think that we would have potentially, you know, the best health system in the country, or education funding that's leading the pack, or maybe seniors' care that is the class act of the country. None of those things are true here in this province.

Record debt and failure after failure after failure that falls at the feet of this Premier and this tired and out-of-touch Sask Party government. We have the lowest per-student education funding in the country. We have plummeting math and reading scores, near the bottom in the country. We have stagnating Indigenous graduation rates. Despite this government's previous commitments to see those improve, we've seen nothing.

We have worst-in-the-nation health care metrics, including the longest wait times for hip and knee surgeries that are leaving people waiting in pain while this government drags their feet. We actually have, under this government's watch, a decrease in life expectancy. This government is so bad at managing our health and wellness that people in Saskatchewan are living less — living less under their watch. What a shame.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't have time to get into things like childhood poverty rates, the addiction crisis, failures in mental health, the hundreds of nurses that have left rural Saskatchewan, or the description of nurses on social media last week describing chaos in our hospitals. And I certainly don't have time to touch base on scandal after scandal after scandal that follows this government everywhere that they go.

But at this point I will say that I will not be supporting the motion brought forward by the government. I will be supporting my

seatmate who again delivered one of the finest speeches I've ever seen in this Assembly on budget day. I'll be supporting his amendment. But at this time, Mr. Speaker, I'll conclude my remarks. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Indian Head-Milestone.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — It's a privilege to rise again to respond to my last budget speech. When I was thinking of what to say, I thought this would be the last time I was going to speak kind of in the Assembly. I'm not getting many questions lately, not that I want any questions, but it might be the last time I get to speak in the Chamber. But I think any of the retiring members are going to have a time kind of right near the end, and so maybe I'll save my . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — We just said that.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — You just said that. I'll save those remarks for then. But you know, I find that especially if I speak right after a member on the opposite side, I have to start with a really smooth and — like the thank yous — because I am so riled up after some of the stuff that I heard come from that member. Not the least of which, the best speech he's ever heard is the fellow that sits beside him? Are you kidding me? Whew.

[15:45]

Anyway, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about my thank yous, who I want to thank, and I've got many of those to thank. Then I'm going to talk a little bit about the budget and what a great budget it is. And then I'm going to get to the part that I like the best — the end, when I can talk about what the NDP would do if they ever, ever have a chance to run this province again and how scary that would be.

So as far as the . . . And I've been doing it this way for 25 years. And if I change, I'll get all mixed up, so I've got to do the same thing over and over again. I'm a bit of a creature of habit. So first of all I want to talk about my Ministry of Government Relations, First Nations, Métis Relations, and Northern Affairs and what a great group of people those people are there.

I want to recognize my deputy minister, who's out on personal leave right now, and thank him for his service. And you know, hopefully he's back soon. I want him to know that he has the full support, I know, of the ministry and does of government. And our prayers and thoughts are with Laurier Donais right now as he goes through a difficult family time, Mr. Speaker.

But he also should know that he's in a great spot because of the work that he's done. Great ADMs [assistant deputy minister], whether it's Jeff Markewich, Sheldon Green, or Giselle Marcotte — great. And then directors after that. So the ministry is in great shape. So, Laurier, please take the time that you need moving forward.

Also want to recognize the responsibilities that I've assumed, I guess, since the last time I stood in the Chamber, and that's Labour Relations — with Drew Wilby, who goes back many, many years in this building — and Workplace Safety. And we're in good hands with people like that. So great ministries that serve

the people of this province very, very well. I'm fortunate to be able to work with amazing bureaucrats that know their files so well and are able to brief me as well as they do.

In my office that has been a big change in this building in the last year. Everybody that was in the office last year at this time are no longer in the office. So I don't know what that says about the minister on the way out. Maybe they all were fleeing too. I'm not sure. But my office right now with Ryan, Darlene, Jesse, and Alex again served very, very well with that leadership team in the office here in the building.

I also want to talk a little bit about Nicole, and I'll try to keep this brief because for 17 years I've been talking about what a great job Nicole has done. I know I've been elected for 25 years. I had a CA that, after we became government, moved into the building and worked in the building for a while. And Nicole started with me right in 2007 and has been there ever since. And whoever my predecessor is would be well served if they kept Nicole on. I'm not sure that's what her career path is, but they'd be well served because I have been well served by the work that Nicole has done not only for myself, but more importantly for the constituents of Indian Head-Milestone.

That's part of the reason why I'm not going to be running again, because the title of the constituency has changed and I would not be able to change with that new title of White City-Qu'appelle. But Nicole has done and served the people of Indian Head-Milestone, and hopefully she continues on. But if she didn't, she would be serving a new constituency, but the people of Indian Head-Milestone have been well served by Nicole as good as you're going to find in the province. And we all say that, but I certainly believe it wholeheartedly.

Quickly, family is healing, I guess you might say. Craig just got back. He had a great . . . He's anyway doing his thing announcing and snowboarding and signed with a company out of Switzerland and spent some time over there with them. Kind of an interesting story, but I won't get into that because there goes my 20 minutes if I started talking about that.

Mark had a bit of an accident, for those that don't know, in the back country, but is healing fine. Was able to fly yesterday for the first time, and the sinuses didn't bother him, but he had some great health care in Canada and is doing well and is healing well and, I think, is still going to do that crazy thing called snowboarding in the back country, which has caused him so many broken bones. I said to him . . . It's his orbital bone that he broke, and I said, is that the last one now that you haven't broke, and that kind of finishes it? But not quite.

And the last thing, I will talk about this more when I get to my final remarks in a couple weeks, but the constituents of Indian Head-Milestone. I had a school group in today, and it's always interesting hearing questions from them. And they always are like, what is the worst part of your job? And I just had to look . . . No, I didn't have to look across the way. What is the part of your job that you dislike the most? And you know, it's when people phone in and you just can't help them. You know, the requests are past the powers that we have. That is probably the most difficult part of the job. But the best part of the job is the same thing but flipped, when you can help somebody within your constituency that, you know, they are forever thankful.

And I have been really fortunate to represent some of the best people in the province. And it has always . . . You know, you can tell — whether it's volunteer medals awards or awards of merit, all of those — and people from Indian Head-Milestone have been at all those ceremonies because they are, you know, salt-of-the-earth people that I've been fortunate to represent.

The budget. You know, some people would say it's an election budget. I don't think it is a budget. I think it's a budget that addresses the concerns that we hear from people across the province, whether it's classrooms, whether it's care, or whether it's community. Those are three themes that we have been hearing on a regular basis.

You know, classrooms, 8.1 per cent increase, nine new schools, three new renovations. And I know the member that seconded the budget speech talked a little bit about it, but it really tells you where the province, the state of this province is at when you can announce nine new schools in a budget and it isn't headlines across this province. You go back a number of years and think, nine new schools under the NDP. Would it be two years? Four years? Eight budgets? Ten budgets? Twelve budgets before you could get to nine new schools and two new renovations? While the member from, I don't even . . . What's your constituency?

You know, I've been in here for a long time, a long time, Mr. Speaker. And again I was talking to the school group and somebody was saying, you know, was there more heckling when a female person was talking? And I said, you know, I haven't heard that. I didn't see it, but I can guarantee you the most heckling I've ever heard in this building is from a female right over there that doesn't ever miss an opportunity to let us know what she's thinking, even though we can't hear 90 per cent of what she says, Mr. Speaker.

The budget is at . . . classroom spending at record levels. Health care at 10.6 — 10.6 per cent increase for health care. I was the minister. I would have loved to have a 10.6 per cent increase in health care, Mr. Speaker. Social services is in the care category too. Under care, 7.8 per cent increase in social services. And, Mr. Speaker, in community, 14 per cent increase in municipal revenue sharing.

You know, and if you listen to the media after, whether it was SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association], whether it was mayors, whether it was SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], all had very, very good things to say about the budget. That isn't always the case and hasn't always been the case. There have been budgets where some of that sector were maybe perhaps a little bit more critical. But when municipal revenue sharing goes up 14 per cent — 42 million, Mr. Speaker — that's a huge shot in the arms for all the municipalities.

And what is even more important and what they love about that is there's no strings attached. They can put it to whatever they think best because who knows what's best, what needs in that community, whether it's an urban community or a rural community, are the elected members within those communities — \$42 million extra, bringing it up to \$340 million for municipal revenue sharing.

Mr. Speaker, a budget that addresses so many needs within this

province, whether it's in the classroom, whether it's in a community, or whether it's in the care environment, whether it's social services or health care, a budget that certainly does hit the mark, Mr. Speaker.

I talked the other day at SARM, and we were talking a little bit about education. We were also talking about property tax and some of those things. And I brought up the fact that when I was first elected — and it was many years ago obviously — when I was first elected we talked a lot about the education portion of property tax. And for some of you that were around back in those days . . . And I know the former SARM president was certainly aware of the tax revolt meeting after tax revolt meeting that was happening all over rural Saskatchewan. And why was that? And it was because school divisions had the ability to set their own education portion of property tax, and it was not really reflective necessarily on how the economy was doing. It wasn't reflective on how the agriculture community was doing. You could have a drought.

We had more school divisions at that time, and I would say one very positive of the former government at the time is they consolidated a lot of those school divisions down to 27 so that there was a more uniform delivery of education. But back then it didn't matter. There was a number of school divisions. It didn't matter what happened in the agriculture community. If the school division wanted more money, it went on the mill rate whether the farmer had the ability to pay or not.

And so there has been some musings, and some from the other side, with this teachers' dispute that perhaps school boards should have the ability to increase the mill rate again. And I believe it's coming from the other side, Mr. Speaker, and I believe if they ever got a chance to form government again, they would go back to the way it was. And I said at SARM that we would have tax revolt meeting after tax revolt meeting because, Mr. Speaker, they didn't learn their lesson then and I don't think they would learn it now. They'd put it back on the school divisions so that they would raise the education property tax.

I'm going to keep within 20 minutes. I promised myself I'd keep within 20 minutes. But I do have to say . . . And you know, I could go on and on about the budget and what a great budget it is and how it addresses so many things, whether it's in, again, the classroom, care, and community. But other members have gone deeper into those and have done such a good job.

What I have found fascinating . . . It's going to get a whole lot quieter in here now. What I have found fascinating is the new love for Brad Wall that we're hearing from the opposition. You know, and I really admired Brad. We both were elected in 1999. You know, we served as critics in different areas on the opposition side, of course. And after the 2003 election, Brad took over the leadership, and I had some different portfolios then. But Brad of course was a great speaker.

And then of course in 2007 we became government, and I don't remember — from 2007 to, what, about '17 or '18 — a whole lot of positive words coming from the other side. But they've got this new-found love for Brad Wall. Brad Wall would have said this and Brad Wall would have done that.

And the most recent one is, you know, your future behaviour is



dictated by your past behaviour. In other words, we can learn what a party's going to do in the future from what they've done in the past. So let's kind of run that out because, you know, an election's coming real soon. I'm not going to be part of it. And I do have mixed emotions, but most of them are on the positive side, a few on the negative side. But let's look at what would happen if the election happens and the NDP are going to run.

They've got to set out a platform sooner or later. They're going to have to finally stand for something because they don't stand for anything right now. They're going to have to lay out a platform. And here's what I think it's going to be because if their past behaviour is going to dictate what they're going to do in the future, I am going to say that, first year or two of an NDP government, they're going to come back with the CCTA [Crown Construction Tendering Agreement].

Now some of you may not remember what the CCTA is, but I know a few members on the opposition side do because that's what they're going to bring back in. They're going to bring back in the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement, and for those of you that don't know, every Crown corporation, any Crown corporation that was doing any capital work, any construction work, in order to bring on a contractor they had to be unionized.

You know that over half of the businesses in this province are not unionized? But in order to get any sort of a contract with a Crown they had to be unionized, which was one thing when the opposition spent so little that Crowns were able to spend so little on their infrastructure, i.e. SaskPower, because most of their profits were going to dividends for the NDP government, or whether it was SaskTel or anything else.

The budgets for Crown corporations right now for construction in this province . . . Can you imagine with a CTA that they could only access about 20 to 30 per cent of the companies to do that work, and what that would do to driving up prices because they are trying to pad their union friends' pockets, Mr. Speaker? That's what the NDP would do. Now they say, oh no, we're not going to do that. We won't do that. No. Okay.

Let's look at some of the other things. I think I already mentioned the education portion of property tax would go up under the NDP because they'd turn it back to the school divisions and say, no, no, we're not going to do that . . . Okay. No. I heard it right there. They're not going to do that.

Resource revenue sharing for First Nations. You know, they say, oh, man, I've . . . Dwain Lingenfelter was for it. I don't know where this leader is but sooner or later she's going to have to stand on one side or the other. We believe on this side that resource revenues are for everybody in the province. That's why municipal revenue sharing goes up. That's why there's a 10.6 per cent increase in health care. That's why there is an 8.1 per cent increase in classrooms that benefits everyone in this province.

Now I'm looking forward to seeing where the NDP land on this one, whether they're going to let municipal revenue sharing change it the way that Dwain Lingenfelter wanted or not, Mr. Speaker.

Highways. They're going to take . . . This is a classic one. Now this is the one thing that they're standing on. They're going to

take away the fuel tax off of fuel, Mr. Speaker. That's about a \$500 million hit to highways.

[16:00]

We don't have necessarily dedicated tax in this province, but this government does when it comes to the fuel tax. It's not dedicated by legislation, but it has . . . For 15 years, every cent that this government has taken in on fuel tax has gone directly into the highways, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's a \$500 million take-away from highways.

So what is going to happen? Is highways budget going to go down 500 million? No. Is health care going to go down 500 million? No. Is education going to go down 500 million? I don't know where they're going to get it from, Mr. Speaker. I truly believe that what they're going to do is they're going to say to community after community, let's go back to the way it was. You fix your own roads and we'll take the fuel tax off, Mr. Speaker. That isn't going to wash, Mr. Speaker.

Health care. What are they going to do with health care, Mr. Speaker? They've got a lot to say with health care. We had the worst human resources plan under the NDP. We've got the best human resources plan under the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to recruiting. But I know they're dead set against . . . And they need to come out and come clean during the next election. Are they for or against private health care delivery? For example, private surgery centres; for example, the diagnostics, Mr. Speaker. Are they going to roll all that back?

You know, Mr. Speaker, everything that I have said, they're going to say, oh no, we won't do that. We're not going to roll that back. We're not going to go to the education portion of property tax. We're not going to make communities redo their own highways, Mr. Speaker. Everything that we're doing . . . Why would anybody vote for the NDP? Because it's NDP lite all of a sudden.

At least Dwain Lingenfelter stood up for something. At least Cam Broten stood up for something. But this bunch, they try and be everything to all people, Mr. Speaker. It's kind of like an NDP lite, Mr. Speaker, because if people go to the polls, when people go to the polls next October, they need to remember what it was like under the NDP.

And I know they say it's only 17 years ago. The party still stands for the same beliefs that the party did today as the party did in the past, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we can never go back to those dark days — absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. And I think that the province just needs to be reminded every so often of some of the policies that were implemented under the NDP. And those same policies will be implemented after the next election. God forbid they are ever given the power to govern this province, Mr. Speaker. And I don't think that's going to happen.

There could be some changes. There is every election, Mr. Speaker, such as a by-election where we won Athabasca, that I don't think anybody had that on their scorecard, Mr. Speaker, a constituency that we're going to hold into the future, Mr. Speaker. In the last 17 years this province has changed significantly. And if there is one phrase that I would call on the opposition to continue to quote Brad Wall on, number one, hope

beats fear. And all we've heard from addresses from that side is negativity, fearmongering. Mr. Speaker, this province is in an amazing spot and it's only got its brighter days ahead. Hope beats fear. Try that one on for size in the opposition.

And the other quote that Brad often said too at the end, is that you want to make sure that you leave this province a better place than where you found it. And after 17 years, I'd submit this province is far better than it ever was when we took over from the NDP.

And whether it's in health care, whether it's in social services, whether it's in the classroom, or whether it's in the community, our record is strong on this side. We've got a great story to continue to tell the people of the province. We can tell them how terrible it was, but what I'd rather say is how amazing this province is going to be in the future.

I'll be supporting the budget and I won't be supporting the motion.

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

**Hon. Ms. L. Ross:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's a tough act to follow but I'll do my best.

Before I begin to discuss this budget of classrooms, care, and communities, there are some people I would like to thank. I'd like to thank my husband, Terry. Terry is just my rock. Through thick and thin, through hard times and good times, Terry has just always been so supportive and I really appreciate that.

I also have an absolutely wonderful family with my son Jon, his wife Allison, and three incredible grandchildren.

Just this past Sunday, on Palm Sunday, my oldest grandson, Simon, had the opportunity to play percussion at their church during the reading of the Passion. Simon is an incredible student. He's a dedicated musician. He's in grade 11 and he absolutely loves to participate. So he put his name forward to stand for their church council, not as a youth but as a full member of their church council. And they looked upon him and they said, yes, we would love to have your voice at the table. I'm so proud of him for standing up and making sure that his voice is going to be counted.

Our two younger grandchildren, Charlie and Holly, they have their challenges in the world. They were both born with Chromosome 9 disorder which means Holly hears, doesn't speak. And Charlie is Charlie. Charlie is everywhere. Anyone who has ever met Charlie, they love him. But I got to tell you. I love him to pieces, but he makes me crazy because I can't keep up. Talk about tired, he can tire anybody out. But you know, they are a blessing. And it's interesting because I know so many families would say, man, that's tough. And I have a daughter-in-law who said, we are blessed. We were blessed with those kids. So those are the things that each and every one of us get to see and experience every day.

I also want to thank my constituency assistants, Sherry and Jenalyn. Lots of phone calls coming in, lots of emails coming in, and we make sure that we respond to the constituents in Regina

Rochdale. And I do thank the constituents of Regina Rochdale for sending me here over numerous elections.

I happened to watch part of the Rt. Hon. Mulroney's funeral, and I carefully watched his daughter, his beautiful daughter Caroline Mulroney talk about her dad. And she said, the interesting thing she asked her dad was, what are three really important things that we should remember? And he said to her, your riding, your riding, your riding. And you know what, that's exactly what each and every one of us has to do, is we have to remember who sent us here and why we're here. We're here to advocate on behalf of the constituents that we represent. And so I feel so honoured that the individuals in Regina Rochdale have strongly supported me coming back here.

So I feel so honoured to be able to stand in this House today and talk about this budget — *Classrooms, Care & Communities*. But I also want to commend our Minister of Finance, the Deputy Premier. Our Minister of Finance is absolutely one of those most unassuming people that you can meet, but she is absolutely brilliant. And I just appreciate her insight and how she can really narrow down what is needed for this province. She didn't shy away from the tough decisions.

And you know, each and every one of us as ministers, we come to the treasury board table, and we plead our case. And I find this quite interesting, because I did get a text from the Premier when I was going in to make my presentation, and he said, well — because everyone knows I have a song of the day — and he recommended that I go in with the "Take a Chance on Me."

So you know, and I loved it because that's exactly what we do, is we all go in, we put our elbows up, and we fight hard for the allocation of funds to our respective ministries.

Now classrooms, care, and communities have been addressed very strongly in this budget, which I will be supporting, and not supporting the opposition's recommendations. The Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport; Status of Women; Francophonie . . . What else do we . . . We've got a whole bunch of other stuff. Heritage, and we also have Lotteries and Gaming.

Now we're the community part. That's what we get to do. We get to provide services to ensure that people want to live here because, you know, we all can get a job somewhere. There's jobs everywhere across this country. But why do people choose to come to Saskatchewan? It's because of our communities. You know, when newcomers come they say I can't believe I am so welcomed; I feel like I'm at home. And that's exactly how we want everyone to feel. And that's why we want to encourage that. In order to be able to provide for classrooms, care, and communities, you have to have a strong economy. You have to have people who are going to come here and work. And that's how this province . . . and that's how a budget is created. It's based on the back of a strong economy.

And you know, our provincial parks, they are absolutely stellar. Of all the provinces, and you know, I've had the opportunity to travel across this beautiful country. I have to say, I think our parks are outstanding and they're affordable. You know, this year if you look at the budget, we didn't raise the fees. Why? Because we know that a lot of people are, you know, finding financially there's a little bit of a stress. So because of that we made sure that

we maintained the park fees. We didn't raise them. But you know what? It's so affordable.

And you know, not everyone can get on a plane and go somewhere for a holiday. Doesn't matter what time of year, our parks are there for them. And so we provide all sorts of amenities, special events. You know, there's fireworks on Canada Day, and nighttime skiing, and you name it, fat tire biking in wintertime. You name it, we're doing it. And this is the whole thing is to be able to provide experiences because that's what people want. That's what makes, when we talk about communities, that's what we're talking about. You know, not that far from Regina, Rowan's Ravine, Rowan's Ravine is a beautiful park. And so last year we had the opportunity to go out there. And I have to say that highway, it is beautiful. Because we did have some challenges and people were phoning me and saying, we've got to do something about that road.

So in fact, thank you to the Ministry of Highways for providing a nice, smooth road to that lake so that campers, whether they're pulling a trailer, whether they're pulling a van, or whether just in the car with the kids for the day, are able to arrive there safely. But you know what's beautiful is we're building a facility that especially newcomers have the opportunity to come out, have a big family gathering, pack their picnic lunch — you name it. So we're really paying attention to what people can experience.

Now you know, we have as I say, we have these fabulous provincial parks, but Saskatchewan also has some incredible regional parks. Because you know, a lot of times our provincial parks, they get full, but we have the opportunity for residents and visitors to be able to use our regional parks. And so the Regional Parks Association came and explained exactly, you know, some of their challenges, and so we listened to them. We listened. And the MLAs from rural Saskatchewan came and they talked to us and they said, you know, we need a little help out here for our regional parks.

So we sat down. We figured out exactly what kind of help can we give to our regional parks so that the residents of Saskatchewan and our visitors have a great opportunity to really appreciate and enjoy what our regional parks have. So we doubled their funding. So regional parks in Saskatchewan will now receive \$1.2 million annually for them to be able to improve the camping and experiences of people in Saskatchewan and our visitors from outside. Because I have to tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, people come from all over to experience what Saskatchewan has to offer.

Now I'm going to tell you something pretty exciting about what Saskatchewan has to offer, and that is at our sound stage. Just last week we had the opportunity to kind of do a bit of a ribbon cutting at the LED [light-emitting diode] volume wall. Now this is a private investment into the lease space at the sound stage, and these companies have got a lot of confidence in what we are doing with the film grant. And in fact I've had producers come and say to me, you know, this is way better than what the NDP used to have. So I feel pretty good about what we are doing here in Saskatchewan.

[16:15]

Every taxpayer dollar that is being spent for the film grant stays

here in Saskatchewan. There's no bleed off. It's here in Saskatchewan and that's what taxpayers expect from us. They expect us to be prudent. They expect us to make sure that the taxpayers' money is being spent responsibly. So we feel really good about what we're doing in the industry. And you know, last year up to now we've done 46 productions. And so for every dollar that we spend, it's more than double that comes back. I think it's about \$4 that comes back.

Now as anyone who is an investment banker, if you said for every dollar you get four, they're not going to believe you. But that's exactly what the industry is providing. So we feel confident in what we are providing them. And I'll just read a little bit. This is from a press release from Creative Saskatchewan:

After an unprecedented busy couple of years for Saskatchewan's film industry, the sector is pleased with the Government of Saskatchewan's announcement of status quo funding (\$12 million) in the provincial budget for film and television production.

So that lets you know exactly how the industry has grown, and it is strong in Saskatchewan. But as I said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our sound stage here, the LED volume wall is the newest technology. It is the second largest in the world; the largest is in Atlanta.

But you know what? There is going to be films that are produced here. There's going to be a lineup. And what does that mean for this Queen City? What does that mean for the city of Regina? It's business. It means that the hotel rooms are going to be full. The restaurants are going to be full. The construction company . . . Everyone is going to be, as somebody said, it's going to be booming.

So we feel really good that the private company has made an investment of over \$12 million into the lease space of the sound stage. So that's a good partnership. Now I had somebody say, well you know, why wouldn't you own that? You know what? We don't need to, because we have businesses that are confident enough that they are prepared to put, as we like to say, skin in the game, you know. So I feel really good about what we're doing within that industry.

And as the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, I have to say I'm so proud that we were the first province and territory to sign onto the national action plan, the national action plan to end gender-based violence. And we worked very closely with the Ministry of Justice to ensure that programs are being developed that meet Saskatchewan's needs, you know. And I must say I am so proud of the work that the Status of Women did to ensure that this wasn't a cookie cutter, because you know, I must say, the federal Liberal government would have been more than happy to have had a cookie-cutter program. But you know what? The Status of Women's office here in Saskatchewan, they put their elbows up, and they made sure that the programming that is going to be funded and rolled out in this province is Saskatchewan specific. So I feel really good about that. And we've had the opportunity to meet with organizations and stakeholders across the province to start delivering some of these projects.

But another opportunity I've had to talk and meet with residents in Regina Rochdale was to talk about the parkade at the Regina General Hospital. A lot of health care professionals live within

my constituency of Regina Rochdale. And they shared with me that they didn't feel comfortable just parking their car down a side street, especially late at night if you've got a late shift, finishes off when it's dark, and you're walking down the street by yourself. How safe is that?

So I'm so proud that the Ministry of Health stepped up along with SaskBuilds and said, you know what? The Regina General Hospital, it needs a parkade. So now our visitors and our staff are going to have safe parking as they go to work or they go to visit relatives that are in the hospital. So I must say thank you. Thank you so much for thinking of the residents of Regina, of Regina Rochdale, to ensure that they feel comfortable and safe going to work.

Now I think it was about two weeks ago I had the opportunity to partake of an announcement with the Minister of Health along with a physician, talking about women's health and the new breast health centre here in Regina. As many of you know, during the last election I was undergoing cancer treatment for breast cancer. And it was a tough time, you know, going and having chemotherapy and then going to the campaign office. And of course my oncologist said, I do not want you door knocking.

But you know what? I had a wonderful team that went out there and knocked on doors and spread the message of why Regina needed to ensure that Regina Rochdale stayed represented by a Saskatchewan Party individual such as myself. But I have to say, this breast cancer centre in Regina is going to be life changing for a lot of women. It's absolutely . . . I mean, it's stressful. There is no doubt about it. When you've been diagnosed, there is nothing that makes your heart stop and beat harder than having a diagnosis like that, of cancer.

But this new centre is going to take some of that stress away. It's going to make it a little easier to be able to get your results, to make it a little more seamless. And that's what we have to do. We have to ensure that when we're providing health care, it's done in a way that patients feel that they are number one. And that's exactly what this breast cancer centre is going to do for women in Regina, but also southern Saskatchewan.

I must say, I'm so pleased to also see that there was 1 million in the budget for continued ovarian cancer research. Again women who are diagnosed with ovarian cancer, they want to know that some of the most proactive forms of cancer research is being undertaken on their behalf.

So you know, we are not standing still. We are not a tired and out-of-touch government. Having this new breast cancer centre in Regina, that is not out of touch. That is, in fact, making sure that women's needs are being met. We're paying attention. And when I hear that tired and out-of-touch opposition spill out those phrases, it offends me.

It offends me that they are looking at the work that's being undertaken within our health care system and saying, oh it's not important. It is important. This is how we make changes. This is how we save lives. And so for the opposition to kind of just go pfft, wasn't a big deal, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this was a big deal. It was a big deal to me and every woman in this province. So you know, like I said, I'm passionate about this, as you can tell, because to me this is life changing.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we talk about classrooms. We talk about classrooms, and this is the largest amount of educational funding ever being provided in this . . . well ever. And what does that mean? In Regina we've got four new schools. Now someone previously mentioned, you know, if they would have built four schools, I mean, there would have been champagne. There would have been all sorts of, like, fireworks. But people have become complacent. This is not to be complacent. We are going to have a joint high school — that's two schools — first time in 30 years in this city, in east Regina. It's one of the fastest-growing areas in this city. And so, you know, we are paying attention. And then Harbour Landing, Harbour Landing's getting another joint school, so that's another two schools. So that's four schools in the city of Regina. That's big.

And I have to say, talk about classrooms. As many of you know, I have family that live in northern Saskatchewan, Pinehouse Lake, very near and dear to my heart. They're getting a new school. Planning is starting on a new school. Now you know, we are so fortunate to have an MLA that advocates so hard for his constituents. Thank you so much. You know, I met with Mayor Mike Natomagan who came and talked to me, had some of my chili during budget, and said this is life changing. This is life changing for their community because it's not just going to be a school; it's going to be a centre.

So when we talk about classroom and we talk about care and we talk about communities, that's exactly what they're going to get in Pinehouse because it takes and encompasses everything of what we have been talking about in this budget. So when we have the opposition say, oh it wasn't much, I've got to tell you, tell the people in Pinehouse it wasn't much. They are absolutely ecstatic.

Tell the people in Harbour Landing in Regina, oh that wasn't much. They're excited. Tell the people in Regina east to say, yeah well that wasn't much. Are you kidding me? Two brand new high schools, joint high school, first time in 30 years. You can't tell me that isn't exciting times. It's exciting times.

So people in Saskatchewan, they're pleased with this budget. They're hoping that the members of the opposition are going to stand up and say, you know what, classrooms, cares, communities, I'm voting for those guys because they mean business. This is the best kind of announcement you could ever have for our cities and our communities.

I have to say I am so upset with what the opposition have been pooh-poohing, what is real funding in this province. So . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well it's probably never been said here, but I'm saying it today because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting this budget. I could never support something that the opposition has put forward.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Silverspring-Sutherland.

**Hon. Mr. Merriman:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A couple of tough acts to follow. I don't know how I got this far down in the batting order, but very tough acts to follow.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's a few people I have to thank. First of all and foremost, my wife, Leane, who is just an amazing pillar

of strength in our home, with our children. Mr. Deputy Speaker, she does everything from the finances to making sure that the dog's walked, making sure that the house is in order, while running her own career. I'm very proud of the work that she's doing in the schools in Saskatoon with the restorative action program. Very, very successful woman. I'm very, very proud of her, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I also want to thank my children who, you know, being somewhat of an absentee father, being down in Regina. Certainly in the last three years while I had the honour of holding the Ministry of Health portfolio, I had to spend a lot of time down here. And I do appreciate that, not just that my children supported myself but also supported my wife in helping her around the house, especially Keely and Carter. So I'll just quickly thank Cassidy and her husband, Wayne; Keely and her boyfriend, Deshawn; my son Carter and his girlfriend, Katie; and of course my daughter Courtney who is just an amazing young woman and is surprising me almost every day.

We had the opportunity to go on a trip to Disney not too long ago, just Courtney and I, for five days, and it was one of the most enjoyable trips that I've gone on. Courtney was overly excited about Disney, and I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, she would have bought everything there. She would have bought every little piece of Disney paraphernalia that was around there. And she really enjoyed herself. We also had the opportunity to take in an NHL [National Hockey League] game while we were there. I think that was dad's time to get a little bit of sanity outside the Disney chaos, but we did have an amazing time.

I've got to thank of course my parents, Ted and Marie. My mom just celebrated her birthday last week. I will not divulge to the House or on *Hansard* what her age is, but we certainly had a great time at my mom's birthday not too long ago, and my sister also celebrated her birthday. And my father, who obviously got me keenly interested in politics when he ran in 2003 to 2007 and then when I decided to run in 2011, he strongly advised me not to do it. But here I am in 2024, still going and looking for one more term if the people of Silverspring will honour me with sending me back to the Chamber.

[16:30]

Also my in-laws, Leo and Sylvia Durand, down in Willow Bunch, Saskatchewan. My mother-in-law a 30-year nurse; my father-in-law is a lifetime farmer. Likes to have his feet in the dirt and making sure that he's still out there contributing on my brother-in-law's farm in Fife Lake.

My constituency assistant, Sacha, back keeping everything . . . And she's had a few visitors from the local STF in the last few weeks that have been, and I'll say this . . . and also they've been respectful of her and her position. So I do appreciate that. But we did have some high school students that came in and expressed some of their concerns about Hoopla, and those students were very respectful. They just wanted to play. And we wanted them to play as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Just go through my office very quickly. I've got Debbie, Michelle, Tyson, Hillary, and Dan up in my office keeping me on track, which is a daily task. We have our morning meeting so they can make sure that I know everything that I need to know

before I head out the door and start my day.

I've got Dale Larsen and his team over at the ministry that have taught me a lot about Corrections, Policing and Public Safety because it wasn't something that I had a deep background on, but I've learned from the experts that are out there. People like Marlo Pritchard in the SPSA [Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency] as well as Bob Freberg with our firearms office have educated me and sat me down and helped me understand not just the high level but the nuances of the file because there are lots of nuances.

And I want to thank my predecessor, the Minister of Environment, who set things up for this file to be extremely successful. And very proud of the work that she's done to lay the foundation that I can certainly, hopefully, build on in the next little while.

I want to say a quick few things here before I get into my budget speech. I want to thank my colleagues who have decided to live life past politics. And it does make me smile, Mr. Speaker, because this is a challenging job, and coming out of the back end of this there's lots of things that happen in this House that individuals have shaped the future of our province. And I'm just going to go through a few of them here, Mr. Speaker.

I have my seatmate, the Minister of CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan], who I believe was the youngest cabinet minister ever in this province — which he should be very, very proud of — while maintaining a young family and commuting back and forth from Weyburn. Very proud to have worked with him, especially as his seatmate in our last session before going into the election.

The Minister of Government Relations, which always has a very spicy speech, and he's again a 25-year veteran of this place. Learned a lot from the member from Indian Head and very much appreciate what he's done as my predecessor's predecessor's predecessor — the first Health minister from the Saskatchewan Party government who laid the foundation for all the Health ministers after that to be able to live up to the expectations that he had set out there.

Minister of Advanced Education, who is, everybody knows, a huge car enthusiast, loves his Harley-Davidson and loves taking his road trips down through Montana and down all the way down to the southern US [United States]. A good friend of mine, known him for all my political life, even when he was a city councillor, and prior to that with the school board. So I thank him for his service as well.

Member from Carrot River, the butter tart, brownie champion of the Legislative Assembly. And I know I can't reference you directly, but thank you very much for everything you've done to make us all gain a few pounds over the last few years and through your term.

The member from Yorkton, who is the first Whip and the last Whip. Well, before we go to the election he was the Whip. Just an amazing man that's very spiritual, very much bringing great perspective to our caucus, and I want to thank him.

Member from Canora-Pelly, who I gave the . . . whose, I can't say . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Did I say something wrong

again? Okay, well then stop talking. I thought I did something wrong again. I'll go through . . . Canora-Pelly, which I, because he does have two first names, so I did give him the nickname of Ricky Bobby, which I'm very proud of that it stuck over the last eight years. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will say that he introduced me — which I had no knowledge of before — to shishliki, which I'm still not sure if it's actual, real. But, Mr. Speaker, it really, really tastes good.

To the member from Batoche, our auctioneer, who's always a stalwart in our caucus who's been able to bring a very unique perspective to what it is that he sees as a farmer, as a community member who's been here for several years. I believe he was elected in 2003. Just, I mean, you can't say enough about anybody that's spent 20 years doing their job here, so thank you to that member.

For the member from Kindersley, who brings a new perspective of laughter to our caucus, who I can only say has just joke after joke. And just a great man, a great representative of his community. And we're certainly going to miss his humour but also his perspective. And I thank him for his term here.

Regina Northeast, quiet dedication to his family and his constituents. But when he certainly spoke in our caucus, everybody was listening to his perspective and how he represented not just his family, his constituents, but also his community. So again I thank him.

The member from Arm River, who I didn't give this nickname but he got the nickname of Slick, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it might have something to do with all the fancy suits he's got. Man, is that guy colourful. I try to give each one of his suits a nickname, but man oh man, he's got so many colours I just ran out, Mr. Speaker. It's like the old Crayola crayon box of 64, man. He pulls one out every different day.

A couple of ones, kind of a little closer. The member from Regina southeast, who got elected with my father in 2003. And he's a statesman. That's the only way I can say it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is he is a statesman. There's not a lot of them left out there, but he certainly is. He had every challenging file you could imagine. Both Premier Wall and our Premier, we'd put him into the most challenging files at the most challenging times, and he would just take it on with grace and ease. The best way I can describe him is, he is a statesman, and I'm proud to call him a friend.

And certainly not least, but the Minister of Finance who is — very proud to be able to sit here and listen to her deliver her last budget — a friend, a mentor. And she challenged me when I first came into cabinet, as I was the Minister of Social Services and she had been in there, I think she was in there three times actually to Social Services. And she certainly was a mentor to me, but not just in Social Services, but in life. As I always said, we always have the utmost respect for the Premier, but we also had the utmost fear for the Deputy Premier, Mr. Speaker.

So I think that's covered off all of my . . . And now I'll actually start to talk a little bit about the budget. And it's been said many times: classrooms, care, and communities is our theme. And I think that nothing is more appropriate because this is something that touches everybody in Saskatchewan.

Our newly minted Minister of Education came in at a very challenging time, and he's done an amazing job. He's just taken this on. I've talked to him several times; him and I both get in here very early in the morning. And he's meeting with the school board; he just got back from a long drive of another school board; he's sitting down to have a Zoom meeting with school board trustees. The outreach that he's had, and a challenging time — I just commend him.

And again, a young family. This is not easy to do. This is very much a challenge. It's taking away your time. Even when you're not working — and ministers and previous ministers will know that — you're working. When you're not in your office, when you're sitting there, you're watching TV, you're thinking about ways that you can work your file and improve things.

And this Minister of Education's done an amazing job. So I certainly commend him. And previous ministers of Education have commented on the size of the increase that he got, that they never saw that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I see my seatmate's nodding his head here as former minister of Education and former minister of Health. But the investment that we need in our kids because these are our future.

Unfortunately, I saw too many of my friends exit during the early 1990s when I graduated high school. They were all gone. They were getting to universities. They were out the door. This was a reality. The opportunities that we have in our province weren't there. And they weren't there because nobody had confidence in the government and people just didn't have . . . investors didn't have confidence in Saskatchewan. And amazing, as it was just touched on, nine schools in one year. That never happened before. Never.

And now it's just normal, which it's concerning on one side because we think, you know, don't forget where we've come from. The other side of it is it's so impressive that we're able to do that because of our strong economy, because of the people investing in Saskatchewan, because of people choosing to come to Saskatchewan, and people choosing to stay in Saskatchewan. That's why we're able to invest in these schools. That's why we're able to invest in our education, teachers.

That's why we have a record budget going forward, Mr. Speaker. We've made commitments to the school boards. We've made commitments to the teachers. And more importantly, we've made those commitments to the parents and to the students that this government will be there to make sure that those investments go forward with those students so we can produce the best students in our country, and they have every opportunity to choose to stay here in Saskatchewan.

Because I had the opportunity throughout this last year of spending half my time in the Health portfolio and half the time in Corrections, Policing and Public Safety, I'm ever impressed with the Health minister and what he's been able to do while we worked together, but while now he's taken over and stepped forward into the role of the Minister of Health.

We also have to remember that this is a fairly newly elected individual from Swift Current. We also have to remember he's seen nothing else in his cabinet portfolio other than Health, which is a challenge. And previous Health ministers, I think they're the

only ones that can understand what the weight of the health care file is on you when you're in there. There is no rest. There is no downtime. There are challenges all the time, and the challenges aren't created by lack of investment or lack of caring.

There's challenges within the system, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of the way that the system is set up, and it's a challenge and a weight that each individual Health minister will only understand. And when you come out of Health, on the back side of it, you start to realize the weight that that carries. I know it certainly carried a lot for myself from 2020 until 2023. Could see it physically; my family could see it. But coming out the other side, you have an appreciation. And what your goal is is to try to just make some improvements in the health care system to make things better for other individuals that come in behind you.

I'm very proud that the member from Swift Current is now in there and, again, going from not being in cabinet to the Minister of Health in three years, unbelievable. Unbelievable. But he's absolutely suited to take it on. And the new Minister of Rural and Remote Health, Mental Health and Addictions, is doing an amazing job. And that's why they were able to come to treasury board and be able to get 10.6 per cent — certainly something that I didn't see in my term in Health; would have really liked that — because of their commitment and their passion.

And the Premier, when the cabinet shuffle happened last year, tasked me with a couple of tasks that I hadn't done before, certainly with my file but outside of that in committee work. I had the opportunity and the privilege to sit on both treasury board and SaskBuilds, which previous treasury board members will know that, again, that's a lot of work, a lot of reading and you get to have an in-depth knowledge of everybody's file.

And on the other hand, I'm not coming into treasury board asking for big dollars for health or social services. I'm actually on treasury board, and now I get to evaluate everybody else's proposal, which was a unique position. And I very much enjoyed that, but it was a lot of work. The treasury board colleagues that I had were all well informed of everything that was happening, as well as SaskBuilds on our capital side, and it was an honour for me to sit in those rooms and be able to see the dollars that we can invest.

And the only reason again we have those dollars to invest is because of a growing economy. And I'm going to go after the NDP a little bit on this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I can't understand for the life of me how they stand up and they say everything is in a crisis; everything is bad in our province; there is absolutely nothing going on here in Saskatchewan.

And every time more people are coming to Saskatchewan. Why are they coming here, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Why are they going to come to Saskatchewan if there's no opportunity? Why would they do that?

The NDP do nothing but run this province down for no reason other than politics. They can't find anything good that's happened in this province in the last 16 years, absolutely nothing. They run every aspect and every file down, Mr. Speaker. But yet nobody's listening to them because people are still coming here and people are choosing to stay here, Mr. Speaker, month after month after month.

[16:45]

Yeah and, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Not yet. Just getting warmed up. One thing I will touch on, again because of my previous file, is social services. The Minister of Social Services has been able to come and get a 7.8 per cent hike and I don't know how they do this. Obviously I was on treasury board. I must have been a little too spendy while I was sitting there and approve all of these projects.

But the minister has taken this file and these are some of the most challenged people that we have, whether it's a disability, whether it's people that are experiencing some challenges from financial reasons. They're on social assistance. They've come on to social assistance. We need to bridge them back so that they can be employed. He's taken this to heart and he's just absolutely invested, not just in programs that had started before him, but invested in the people to make sure that each individual person understands that this government is trying to assist them in, no matter which way that their situation is, no matter what's happening with them specifically.

We also want to make sure that they are taken care of and that's why we had the theme of "Growth That Works for Everyone." And there are going to be challenges in there. There's going to be policies that don't work for every specific person. But I know the minister and I know him personally. He's going to look at it and make sure that there's . . . on a case-by-case basis and see if we need to adapt policies. Do we need to adapt legislation to make sure that everybody is being taken care of or has the opportunity to be able to get into housing, to be able to get into a stable job. And the programs that he's built on from previous Social Services ministers are just absolutely amazing, Mr. Speaker.

As far as our communities — I'll touch on my file just a bit here — we were able to work with the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] and municipal policing to get our police officers out there and making sure that our communities are safe. Because that's a big piece. That's my role of the communities file, is to make sure things are safe.

And we've been able to do that working with municipal policing, increasing their funding, our crime reduction teams, our highway traffic enforcement team, our warrant enforcement and suppression teams. We've been able to get these teams out there and they're making huge impacts. We had a couple of news releases today on some of the work that they've been able to do, that they go into communities. We hear praise from SARM and SUMA on what those individuals have accomplished in a very short amount of time.

And, Mr. Speaker, we want to be able to again increase that. We want to work with the RCMP — I've had a great working relationship with Assistant Commissioner Rhonda Blackmore — to be able to increase the amount of RCMP. As much as the opposition thinks we don't want to do this, we do want, we want more RCMP officers in Saskatchewan. We also want to work with the federal government to make sure that the contractual policing that's done across our country expands past 2032.

On top of that we've appointed our chief marshal and this is an individual with 25-plus years' experience making sure that

people are safe. This is a person that's going to set up and make sure that the marshals run. They work with SARM, SUMA. They work with our cattlemen, producers, our ranchers, to make sure that things are safe out in our community. This is over and above the grants that go to the RCMP and municipal policing. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our team's been able to increase those funds to make sure that we can put more boots on the ground.

With the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency, we have a large capital investment, a very large capital investment of \$170 million for some new water bombers to protect the North, again in conjunction with the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport. I would encourage people to go and watch *Guardians of the North* and see what they do up there. We've got some great people up there that are doing some amazing work. It was my education on forest fire, forest fire fighting, what they do, how they do it, and just the personalities up there are something. So I would encourage . . . Season 2 is now out and I would certainly get everybody to watch that on Citytv. There we go.

So again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know my time is winding down because I can see our Whip giving me the, not quite the whip but he's just giving me the eye out of . . . I can feel the pressure coming from him.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are going to face a choice. That choice is coming up this October and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we understand the honour it is to sit on this side of the House. We never ever take that for granted. That's why we sit down with people. I know MLAs, cabinet ministers are calling on their way home, talking to people about their problems and trying to help them.

And as the Minister of Government Relations identified earlier, there's some great wins that we have in there. And you feel great and you go to bed, you've got a smile on your face. And then there's some other times where it just doesn't work. And we're trying to help somebody and there's too many challenges or too many barriers there and we can't. And those are the ones that we don't go to sleep right away. We stay up a little bit later. We're trying to figure out how we can help that individual, how we can modify a policy to be able to get people the help that they need.

But we are going to have a choice coming up this year. We're going to have a choice and the people of Saskatchewan are going to make a decision. They're going to make a decision between stability and crash and burn. They're going to have a choice between radical ideas or a steady hand on the wheel. They're going to have a choice of nationalizing or entrepreneurship over here on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

They're going to have a choice between shrinking our province and running people out of the province or growing our province and having opportunities for not just this generation, for the next generation. They're also going to have the choice between very dated ideology or looking forward to continue to grow this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will not be supporting the motion brought forward from the opposition, but I am very proud to stand here and support the budget that was brought forward by our Minister of Finance.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Walsh Acres.

**Mr. Clarke:** — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Now for something completely different. Ah, we've got them going already here. Seventeen years this Sask Party government has been in power, and it's sure showing in the budget that they just tabled last week. Now this was my first budget as an MLA, and I've been thinking about it a lot and just reflecting on it and thinking about how much they missed the mark and let so many people in this province down. You know, the big take-away for me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is this government has stopped listening to Saskatchewan people.

**An Hon. Member:** — What did you say?

**Mr. Clarke:** — There. There it is right there. I mean, to have 5,000 people picketing outside this building on budget day last week, and for this government to be on the inside of the building suggesting that everything is great, is wild. It's just wild. Whether it's families, teachers, parents, students, health care professionals, those on SIS [Saskatchewan income support] and SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability], small-business owners, I mean, the list goes on and on and on of who this government isn't listening to anymore.

You know, food bank use is going up through the roof, and yet no relief for people in this budget. The highest rate of mortgage arrears in Canada, meaning that people are losing their homes because they can't pay the bills, and yet no relief for people in this budget. More and more people are becoming homeless in this province, and yet no relief for people in this budget. I mean, recent polls are showing that people are struggling. Sixty-two per cent of people polled said they are most concerned about cost of living and inflation. Fifty per cent of people report being worse off financially than they were a year ago, and yet no relief for people in this budget.

People are struggling to pay their bills, pay their mortgage, pay their prescriptions, or even put a little money away to go on a family trip. Saskatchewan people are struggling, and yet no relief for people in this budget. This is a government that isn't listening to Saskatchewan people anymore.

Now how about our economy? They talk about a growing economy. Here's another weird disconnect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of what we hear from the government. Day after day we hear, you know, our economy is just a-rockin'. Except when one looks at the facts, they tell a different story.

This government's economic growth record continues to be abysmal, with the second-lowest average rate of growth among Canadian provinces from 2018 to date. Over the last six years, this Sask Party government's economic growth rate has averaged just slightly more than half a percentage per year — the second lowest among provinces in Canada. Under this Premier, Saskatchewan has had negative economic growth in three of the last six years.

This is the Premier's seventh budget, and how many deficits have they tabled? Six. Eighty-five per cent of their budgets have been deficits . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . How much did you grow? I've got that coming up. In six years, in six years, they have



balanced one budget. Now those are some financial gurus over there, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Now I had a question from a member opposite about the debt. Thirty-four billion dollars of provincial debt by the end of this fiscal year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, up 3 billion in this budget alone. I mean, under this Premier's watch we have seen the provincial debt grow by \$14 billion. That's more debt added than Grant Devine's government added.

Now the tired old line that I hear so often from members opposite: back in my day, in the '90s, the NDP closed hospitals.

**An Hon. Member:** — Do we sound like old ladies?

**Mr. Clarke:** — Little bit.

When Premier Romanow came into power in '91, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was five years old. I was five years old, in kindergarten. And of course, back . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well it's not my record. Of course, back in '91 after that election, it was discovered that this province was just three months away from bankruptcy. We had three months' worth of cash to pay the civil service. And so Romanow, Premier Romanow, had to go and get a secret loan from the prime minister at the time to keep this province afloat. Because if the creditors found out and downgraded us, we would have gone into bankruptcy as a province. Now I'm struggling to recall which government it was that put us in that mess, but I'm pretty sure it was one of the founding parties of the Sask Party.

Now I've heard a lot of hurt feelings tonight about our side trying to hold this government to account. And I'm sure that when members on the opposite side were in opposition and there was an NDP government, I'm sure it was nothing but roses and hugs from them at that time to the NDP government. I'm pretty sure.

Now as a new MLA, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all that stuff happened in the '90s when I was in elementary school. And as an MLA today, what I'm most concerned about is making sure that we're doing things right today, now. And since we're talking about now, you know, who's closing hospitals now, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Well it's the Sask Party government. Fifty-three hospitals have closed under this government's watch, labs, emergency rooms. I mean, the hyperbaric chamber in Moose Jaw has been closed for two and a half years. I'm wondering if they can explain how that is temporary.

Now imagine your family is experiencing a health emergency, and because an ambulance isn't available to attend your emergency, you drive your child or an elderly parent to the hospital in your community only to find a sign on the door saying that the emergency room is on bypass and no one will see you there. I don't think it matters if it's temporary if you are having an emergency and need health care in that moment.

This is happening across the province. And this is the health care crisis that exists in rural Saskatchewan today. It is a crisis, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we need a government who is actually going to address it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The time now being 5 o'clock, this Assembly stands adjourned until 7 o'clock this evening.

# GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

## CABINET MINISTERS

---

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

**Hon. Lori Carr**  
Minister of Highways

**Hon. Jeremy Cockrill**  
Minister of Education

**Hon. Dustin Duncan**  
Minister of Crown Investments Corporation  
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission  
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated  
Minister Responsible for  
Saskatchewan Government Insurance  
Minister Responsible for  
Saskatchewan Power Corporation  
Minister Responsible for  
Saskatchewan Telecommunications  
Minister Responsible for  
Saskatchewan Water Corporation  
Minister Responsible for  
Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority

**Hon. Bronwyn Eyre**  
Minister of Justice and Attorney General

**Hon. Joe Hargrave**  
Minister of SaskBuilds and Procurement  
Minister Responsible for the  
Global Transportation Hub Authority

**Hon. Donna Harpauer**  
Deputy Premier  
Minister of Finance

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

**Hon. Everett Hindley**  
Minister of Health

**Hon. Gene Makowsky**  
Minister of Social Services

**Hon. David Marit**  
Minister of Agriculture  
Minister Responsible for  
Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation  
Minister Responsible for  
Saskatchewan Water Security Agency

**Hon. Tim McLeod**  
Minister of Mental Health and Addictions,  
Seniors and Rural and Remote Health

**Hon. Don McMorris**  
Minister of Government Relations  
Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety  
Minister Responsible for  
First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs  
Minister Responsible for the  
Provincial Capital Commission  
Minister Responsible for the  
Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board

**Hon. Paul Merriman**  
Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety  
Minister Responsible for the Firearms Secretariat

**Hon. Jim Reiter**  
Minister of Energy and Resources

**Hon. Laura Ross**  
Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport  
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women  
Minister Responsible for  
Lotteries and Gaming Saskatchewan Corporation

**Hon. Christine Tell**  
Minister of Environment

**Hon. Gordon Wyant**  
Minister of Advanced Education