



FOURTH SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

of the

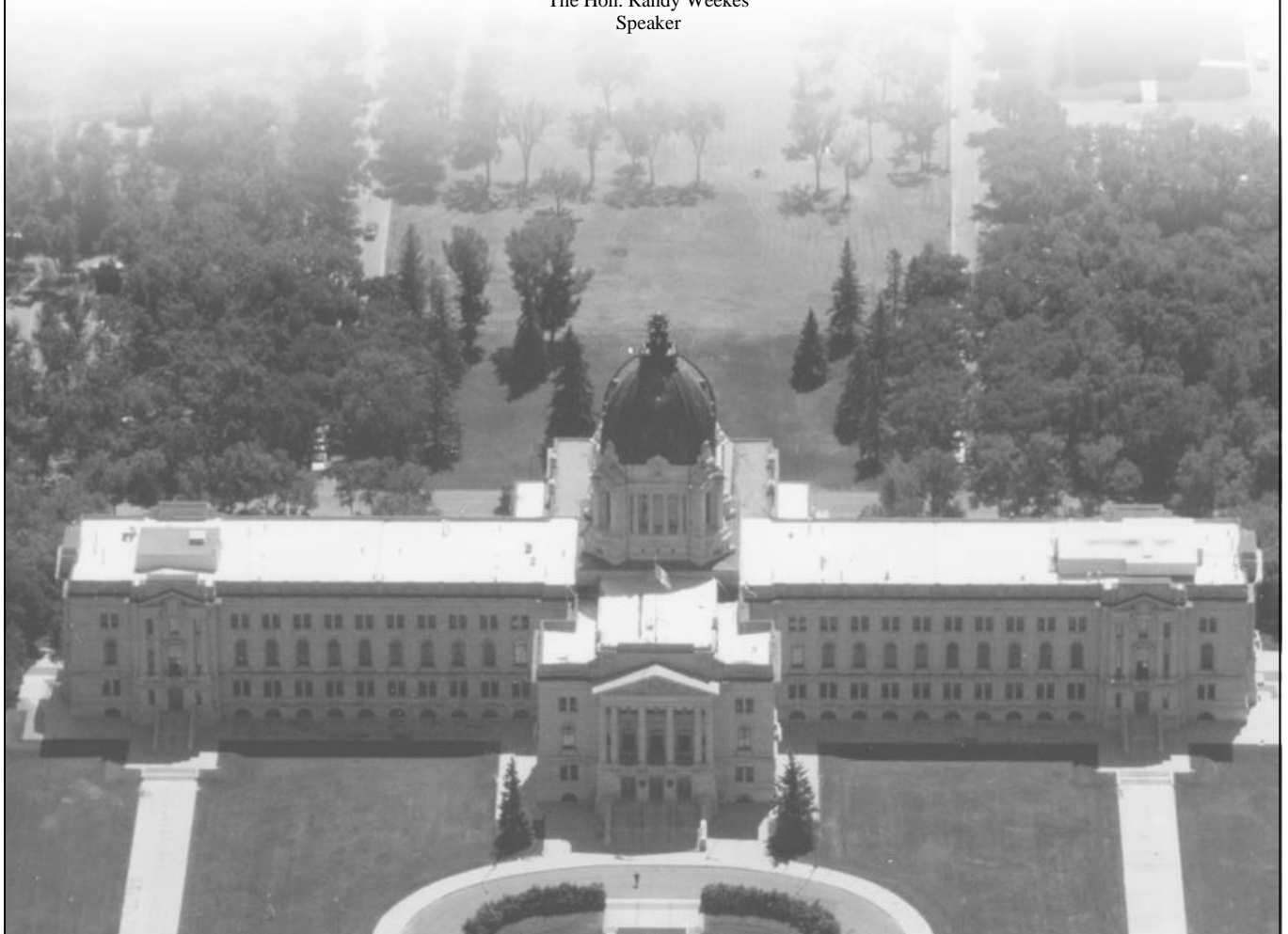
**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

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**DEBATES  
AND  
PROCEEDINGS**

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



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**  
**4th Session — 29th Legislature**

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

**Speaker** — Hon. Randy Weekes  
**Premier** — Hon. Scott Moe  
**Leader of the Opposition** — Carla Beck

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<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)
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<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)
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<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.)	

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**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

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave for an extended introduction.

**The Speaker:** — Leave has been requested for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to my colleagues for the leave. Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to introduce, to the members of this Assembly, friends and distinguished guests.

First, Jerry Sherman of Embassy Connections Canada in Ottawa. Just give us a wave as I introduce the individuals. Jerry and his wife, Carol, are good friends who for years through their organization have built relationships and friendships with diplomats from around the world, 105 countries so far, and shown them our country from another view. Embassy Connections regularly brings ambassadors, high commissioners, and others out west to Saskatchewan to experience Western Canada and our people for themselves.

With them are Stuart and Joellen Rempel of the Great Commission Foundation. The Great Commission Foundation is a team of skilled administrative and accounting personnel serving in over 100 countries, dedicated to using their talents and expertise to enable people to follow God's calling to fulfill the great commission of Jesus Christ.

Jerry and Carol are hosting two dignitaries on this trip. Firstly, Vietnam ambassador to Canada, His Excellency Pham Vinh Quang; and Türkiye ambassador to Canada, Her Excellency Esra Demir. Also with their group today is one of our own, Honorary Consul to Türkiye Omer Al-Katib.

This group is touring a number of places and meeting with many officials, provincial ministers, and members, including the Leader of the Opposition, I believe, as well as MPs [Member of Parliament] over their three days here. I ask all members to join me in welcoming these guests to the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, and Omer to his Legislative Assembly.

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

**Ms. A. Young:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members, on behalf of the official opposition I would like to join with the member opposite in welcoming these distinguished guests to the Saskatchewan

legislature.

Your Excellencies, Mr. Al-Katib, Stuart, Joellen, Jerry, and Carol, thank you so much for your presence here today, the work that you're undertaking to showcase Western Canada and Saskatchewan in particular. And to Your Excellencies, I hope you have an absolutely sterling visit here, that you get to experience the best of Saskatchewan. And with such wonderful hosts, I have no doubt you will.

So on behalf of the official opposition, I'd like to ask all members to join me in welcoming these fine guests once more.

**The Speaker:** — In my gallery I'd like to introduce 27 students from Hague. They're the Classical Conversations Saskatoon North, age 4 to 17, grade K to 10 [kindergarten to grade 10]. And they're accompanied by Nikki Janzen. We're going to meet later, have a photo, and have a bit of a meeting. So please welcome this wonderful group from Hague, Saskatchewan.

I recognize the Minister of Trade and Export Development.

**Hon. Mr. J. Harrison:** — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I ask for leave for an extended introduction.

**The Speaker:** — Leave has been requested for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

**Hon. Mr. J. Harrison:** — Thank you to colleagues, Mr. Speaker, for that. I would like to join in the introduction of our dignitaries visiting here today, starting with His Excellency, my friend, Pham Vinh Quang, the ambassador of Vietnam to Canada. His Excellency has been serving as the ambassador of Vietnam to Canada since February of 2023. We look forward to working with the ambassador to strengthening our relationship.

Our government first opened our Saskatchewan-Vietnam trade and investment office in 2022 in Ho Chi Minh City to strengthen our ties with Vietnam and raise our province's international presence as a preferred partner. And I want to personally thank the ambassador for his engagement and the engagement of his predecessor in the role, and ministers in the Vietnamese government for their direct engagement on resolving a very challenging trade issue that would not have been resolved but for the direct relationship and the direct engagement that we have had with him, his office, and ministers on our trip that we did last year.

What that resulted in was durum wheat exports from Saskatchewan, from Canada being at literally zero dollars, to this year being probably near \$300 million. So for those across the way and others who criticize, Mr. Speaker, this is why we do this. These relationships are going to result, this year alone, in \$300 million of activity for our Saskatchewan producers . . . They criticize again, Mr. Speaker. But I want to thank the ambassador personally for his engagement.

I also want to thank, Mr. Speaker, and welcome the ambassador

from Türkiye, our friend Esra Demir, ambassador of Türkiye to Canada. This is Her Excellency's first visit to Saskatchewan, so I welcome her to this province and hope she's enjoying the hospitality thus far. Türkiye is a very important market for Saskatchewan, a very important partner. And we look forward to that continuing.

And I want to thank as well, Omer Al-Katib, the Honorary Consul from Türkiye representing the country here in Saskatchewan, for his leadership and for the leadership of he and his colleagues and his family in this space as well.

So I'd ask all members to welcome these ambassadors, Omer to his Assembly as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Conway:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek leave for an extended introduction.

**The Speaker:** — Leave has been requested for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

**Ms. Conway:** — Mr. Speaker, it's with pleasure that I stand in my place to introduce 17 students from the University of Saskatchewan nursing program. These students are split between your gallery and the west gallery. They are in their fourth year doing their community placement, and I'm just going to take a moment to acknowledge them all.

We have Gesryl Capecenio and Landrey Tyacke who are at Carmichael Outreach. We have Allyha Bersaluna and Christalyn Babuyog from YWCA. We have Teagan Kager, and I believe she's the only one from Coronation Park elementary school. I'm sorry, there are two others: Katelyn Leischner and Allen Labo.

We also have OJ Attah, Laraine Handoc, Dennice Delos Santos, all of whom are working right now at Allan Blakeney Adult Campus. We have Ruth Villafranca, Lennie Enon, and Kae Fangon, who are at Rosemont Elementary School. We have Maria DeLeon and Rance Dimaano at Albert Community School. And I hope I haven't forgotten anyone, but we also have, last but certainly not least, Samantha Schryer and Oyedamola Akinloye from the AIDS Program South Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to meet with just a handful of these students out in their community placements. What I will say about this program, Mr. Speaker, is that every single year I get an email. I get an email from nursing students in their community placements. And they want to meet with their MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly], and they want to talk to me about housing, about getting more supports for folks on social assistance, about investments in education, about all of the social determinants of health, Mr. Speaker. And I have been so impressed by these fourth-year nursing students and their engagement not just within that small area of health care, of formal health care, but in their larger community, recognizing all of the different factors that contribute to good health.

So I want to wish all these students so much well wishes, luck, as they embark on a tough career but an absolutely beautiful career. It's a calling. It's a profession to be a nurse. It's truly wonderful to see your lively approach, and I'm just so honoured to host you here today as you observe your democratic process in person. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming these nursing students, 17 of them in total, to their Legislative Assembly.

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

**Ms. A. Ross:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and all members of this House, I too would like to welcome the nursing students to their Legislative Assembly. I know one of my very favourite practicums when I did my nursing degree was going into the different community agencies and learning how the community agencies function. So I wish you all the best of luck in your upcoming career, and I hope you all choose to stay in our beautiful province of Saskatchewan. Thank you.

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

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Mr. Speaker, I'd just ask for leave for an extended introduction.

**The Speaker:** — Leave has been requested for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, I'd like to welcome a few of our post-secondary leaders from Saskatchewan that are sitting in your gallery. Mr. Speaker, these individuals travelled from across the province to join us as our government announced more details around the one-time increase in operating funding to Saskatchewan's post-secondary institutions, Mr. Speaker, an announcement that we made at the University of Regina this morning.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to welcome Dr. Brad Mahon, president and CEO [chief executive officer] of Great Plains College. Dr. Mahon is also Chair of the CEO council and spoke at the announcement today on behalf of Saskatchewan's regional colleges.

Many in the Assembly will be familiar with the famous Carhartt's & Caviar Welding Showcase event that Great Plains College hosts each year, which features incredible work by its welding students.

I'd also like to welcome Dr. Eli Ahlquist, president and CEO of North West College who is joining us today from North Battleford. Dr. Ahlquist has been leading North West College for just over two years now, and during that time North West College has had a number of accomplishments, including multiple partnerships to offer more programming to Saskatchewan students. Dr. Ahlquist played a key role in the recent renovations to Cenovus Energy learning simulation centre which provides an

excellent hands-on learning experience to students pursuing careers in health care.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to again extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation on behalf of the government, not only to these individuals here with us today but to all our post-secondary leadership for their continued support and collaboration throughout the multi-year funding process.

Mr. Speaker, the work we do together is truly a partnership and I feel fortunate to have such committed educational leaders across the entire post-secondary sector, Mr. Speaker. So please, I'd ask my colleagues in the legislature to help me in welcoming Dr. Mahon and Dr. Ahlquist to their Legislative Assembly.

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

**Ms. Bowes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming Dr. Mahon and Dr. Ahlquist to your legislature. It's really a pleasure to have you here. We so admire the leadership that you show in our post-secondary sector, leading the future leaders of tomorrow. It's important work. It's hard work. And I know that it's in difficult times with cost increases for everyone across the province including at our post-secondary institutions. There's a lot of decisions, tough decisions that have to be made and I know that you do the absolute best you can with the resources that you have available to you. We thank you for being here and thank you so much for joining us here today.

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

**Hon. Mr. Marit:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to welcome in your gallery Karen Churchill, president and CEO of Ag-West Bio and Kelly Gallagher, vice-president of marketing communications. Karen and Kelly are profound advocates of the ag industry and have remained very optimistic about adopting new trends and the support of the industry.

Last year our government was proud to support Ag-West Bio with a new five-year \$9.5 million funding arrangement. I was happy to attend last night's reception hosted by Ag-West Bio and this morning sit down with Karen and Kelly to discuss important issues the sector is facing and champion the successes we are seeing.

[13:45]

This government couldn't be more proud of the support of the industry and the work it does to provide sustainable, adaptable solutions in our sector. I ask all members, Mr. Speaker, to welcome both Karen and Kelly to their Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to join with the minister opposite to welcome Dr. Karen Churchill, CEO of Ag-West Bio and Kelly Gallagher to their Assembly. I also through them want to welcome and thank all of

their staff team, their board, and all of the collaborators. And certainly we got to visit with some of those important collaborators and partners last night at the reception.

I want to thank Karen and her team and all at Ag-West Bio for their significant and invaluable contributions here in Saskatchewan and to the world. They play such an invaluable role in bringing together the work of researchers and innovators and industry, and of recruiting, investment, and start-ups to Saskatchewan from taking ideas through to commercialization, Mr. Speaker.

Because of their efforts, we have a world-class ecosystem on this front and we really are the heartland of ag-biotech here in Saskatchewan. And I want to thank them again and all the partners that make this happen. I ask all members of this Assembly to provide our appreciation for their leadership and their efforts.

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

**Hon. Mr. Hindley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the Assembly, just a couple of quick introductions. One, I want to join in with the Minister of Advanced Education in welcoming Dr. Brad Mahon to his Legislative Assembly here this afternoon. Brad and his wife, Jade, moved to Swift Current a year, a couple years ago I think and have . . . two years ago to make Swift Current their home. And he is an outstanding leader in post-secondary education but also in our community, Mr. Speaker. In addition to having 25 years of post-secondary expertise, an M.B.A. [Master of Business Administration] in executive management, he also has a Ph.D. [Doctor of Philosophy] in musicology, Mr. Speaker, and is an amazing guitarist. If you ever get the chance to see Dr. Mahon, he is extremely talented.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, also in your gallery I see seated over there a couple of individuals who I had the opportunity to meet with this morning from endometriosis Saskatchewan. I see Tina Dolcetti and Celeste Pinder. We had a very, very good meeting here this morning in person. We were joined virtually by a couple of other representatives as well, including a physician, to talk about some of the work being done to advance endometriosis awareness and treatment in our province.

Had a very, very good conversation building on some of the previous discussions that I know that the group has had with the former minister of Health and other government members here as well. And I just want to thank Celeste and Tina for their advocacy, for being here today, for the great presentation. They were very well-prepared and I had a number of questions, which they were able to answer. We've got some follow-up work to do, and I look forward to continuing engaging with them in the weeks and months ahead. Welcome to your Legislative Assembly.

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

**Ms. Bowes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister opposite in welcoming Cristina and Celeste to their legislature. These are two incredibly, you know, persistent, incredibly competent advocates in our province.

I want to thank them for their courage, for taking the time to advocate on behalf on all women in our province who suffer from a very painful condition, endometriosis. It's such a pleasure to have you here. And I know the women of Saskatchewan thank you for your service, for your sacrifice, and for your time in advocating for this very important condition that we need to be managing better here, Mr. Speaker. And so appreciate meeting with you earlier today as well, and look forward to question period today. Thanks.

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

**Hon. Mr. Cockrill:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with the Minister of Advanced Education in welcoming Eli Ahlquist, president and CEO of North West College in The Battlefords and Meadow Lake to the legislature here today, Mr. Speaker.

As the MLA for The Battlefords, I can speak to Eli's leadership of the regional college in our part of the province, Mr. Speaker. And certainly it has been really appreciated, his focus on health care training in our part of the province. And really, under Eli's leadership, we've seen the doubling now of registered psych nursing seats in The Battlefords, from 16 to 32 confirmed in the budget last week, as well as a quarter-million dollars of planning dollars towards a new proposed campus in The Battlefords as well, with North West College.

And I know Eli and his board have been vocal advocates for that project moving forward, and we sure appreciate his leadership. And as the minister said, several renovation projects that we have been working with North West regional college on both the Cenovus simulation lab as well as a recent renovation at our Frontier mall in North Battleford to increase the training space.

So I would ask all members to join me in welcoming Eli on behalf of North West College here to his legislature today.

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

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask leave for another extended introduction.

**The Speaker:** — Leave has been requested for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to my colleagues once again. To you and through you to all members of the Assembly, in your gallery, two friends of mine, Gus and Dolores Zelinski. They're Wishart-area farmers. They've been married for 53 years. Dolores has supported farmers in multiple roles throughout her career at Sask Crop Insurance, Sask Municipal Hail, AgriStability, and ultimately Sask Crop Insurance once again, and has recently retired after almost 40 years. Dolores's father, William Stephaniuk, was a World War II veteran, so she chose to engage with the Legion back in 1986 to further support vets. She currently serves as a zone commander and deputy zone commander . . . or she has served with the Legion as zone commander, district commander, and provincial

zone command, and is still an active member.

Both Gus and Dolores are integral members of the Civil Air Search and Rescue Association, Saskatchewan zone 6, as spotter navigators. And Dolores also serves as the search and deputy zone commander for zone 6, as well as secretary and treasurer for Civil Air Search and Rescue provincial command.

I'll have more to say about them, specifically Gus, shortly in members' statements, but I ask all members to join me in welcoming Gus and Dolores to their Legislative Assembly.

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

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have two guests that I would like to introduce that are sitting in the back row of the west gallery. These are people that have come to Canada via London, England, and are touring here. They are both linguists. They are Jason Musialo and Christina Senechyn.

I'd like to thank my colleague, my seatmate, for commenting on my handwriting, and would like to ask all members to welcome them to the Assembly today.

## PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

**Mr. Clarke:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present our petition calling on the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to adequately fund education.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we're in the middle of a heated labour dispute right now, obviously to everyone on the floor of this Assembly. But I think it's important to remind all of us about who this is about. And this is about students, and students in this province getting the supports that they need, right? And we've talked at length about this in the Assembly around how the supports that students need to learn and to be successful in schools are life changing. And they can be life changing.

I'm being heckled about supports over students. I don't understand, Mr. Speaker. But as a teacher who saw first-hand the impacts of what is happening in schools today, right now because of underfunding, this matters to Saskatchewan's future and Saskatchewan kids. That's what this is about.

I'm going to read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to provide adequate, sustainable, and predictable operating funds for our 27 public and separate school divisions to ensure that schools, teachers, and other caring professionals are able to meet the . . .

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

**Mr. Friesen:** — 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, the grocery stores, and much more, Mr. Speaker.

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 Canada to immediately suspend the carbon tax across the nation of Canada and acknowledge its significant impact on affordability and inflation in Canada.

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

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

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise yet again today to present a petition calling for the government to improve labour laws in Saskatchewan. Those who have signed this petition wish to bring to our attention the following: that even after the October 1st increase to the minimum wage, Saskatchewan's minimum wage remains the lowest in the country; and, Mr. Speaker, the official opposition has twice introduced paid sick leave legislation calling for a minimum of 10 paid sick days.

Paid sick leave, Mr. Speaker, 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 ensure that workplaces in Saskatchewan are harassment free.

Mr. Speaker, all of these provisions are addressed in our private member's bill, Bill 613, the fairer workplaces, better jobs Act, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately the government so far has chosen not to pass that bill. We do hope that the minister takes a look at the legislation, at least sees some of those provisions as reasonable, and passes them expeditiously.

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've signed this petition come from Regina. I do so present.

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

### Community Chili Night at Rosemont Outdoor Rink

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, on February 28th at the Rosemont outdoor rink on 4th, it was a pleasure to be a part of the annual community chili night once again. It was a cold evening for our Outdoor Hockey League team's practice, but it was warmed up by a bowl of hot chili, a roaring fire, and caring community.

Volunteers prepared 800 bowls of chili and served them at no cost to the community. It made for a wonderful evening and a wonderful demonstration of what community is all about. It was so appreciated by our Outdoor Hockey League players, their families, my fellow coaches and volunteers, as well as people and families from across the community. I can attest that the chili was delicious.

I want to give a massive shout-out to the inspiring and big-hearted volunteer squads that are the Walker and Rosemont school community councils for making it happen, along with the support from the Rosemont Mount Royal Community Association, Crawford's No Frills, Sherwood Co-op, Evan's Delivery, Pokey's Tackle Shop, Tim Hortons, and Cobs Bread.

Mr. Speaker, an evening like this doesn't happen by chance. It happens because of the dedication and hard work of community leaders, friends, and neighbours. I ask all members of this Assembly to extend our gratitude to all that made the community chili night happen once again and to celebrate their efforts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Government Funding for Lloydminster Interval Home Society

**Ms. C. Young:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government remains committed to reducing interpersonal violence across Saskatchewan and we're also committed to providing for women fleeing this violence. Yesterday we announced an additional \$160,000 in operational funding for the Lloydminster Interval Home Society. This brings our total funding for LIHS [Lloydminster Interval Home Society] to \$358,000.

The LIHS operates a 24-hour domestic violence emergency shelter with 33 beds for women and their children. This transition house offers increased access to safe shelter and wraparound supports for women. In 2022-23 the LIHS supported over 300 women and children leaving circumstances of violence and abuse.

LIHS began operating in 1980 and has provided emergency shelter and transition supports to thousands of women and children. This funding will be used to support critical services and support for survivors of domestic violence in Lloydminster and the surrounding region. We are deeply grateful for the hard work and dedication that LIHS puts into ensuring these supports are there for women and children who need it.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Legislative Assembly, thank you to the Lloydminster Interval Home Society for all the work they have done and continue to do to support women in the Lloydminster area. Any form of violence in Saskatchewan is unacceptable, and we will continue to work with our partners to create a society free of abuse.

[14:00]

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

#### **Lack of Supports for Women Affected by Endometriosis**

**Ms. Bowes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This month is the second annual Endometriosis Awareness Month in Saskatchewan, and in honour of the occasion I rise today to bring awareness of endometriosis and the lack of supports available for women.

Endometriosis affects anywhere between 10 and 20 per cent of women, Mr. Speaker. It's a painful disease. Women dealing with it lose on average 11 hours of work per week. They find themselves stepping away from their education, their careers, and their means to support a family. It's estimated this forced non-participation in the economy costs Canadians \$1.8 billion per year, and that's on top of the incalculable cost of women's suffering.

There's still no cure for endometriosis, but we could be doing much more to manage it. Ontario, British Columbia, and Nova Scotia have all established centres to treat endometriosis and its associated complications. Advocates in Saskatchewan are calling on the Ministry of Health to create an endometriosis action plan. That would improve the lives of somewhere between 60 and 120,000 women in this province, Mr. Speaker. It would ease the burden on our overextended health care system, and it would grow the Saskatchewan economy, which is badly needed in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in calling on the government to create an endometriosis action plan and to make life better for Saskatchewan women.

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

#### **Wishart Pilot Inspires Others**

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to highlight some remarkable achievements of Wishart-area resident and farmer, Gus Zelinski. For nearly 55 years Gus has defied the odds, demonstrating his determination as a pilot despite facing unique challenges of flying with only one arm.

Gus's journey is inspirational. The loss of his arm in a farming accident at the age of 22 would have stopped many from his accomplishments, not to mention having to prove to Transport Canada he could operate an aircraft safely. Through an unwavering passion for aviation he has shattered stereotypes and set an example for individuals everywhere. His dedication to honing his skill of aviating coupled with his commitment to safety has earned him respect and admiration within the aviation community and beyond. Gus's story is a testament to

determination of human spirit and serves as a reminder that with perseverance, anything is possible.

With encouragement and support from his wife, Dolores, Gus's courage has allowed him to pursue his passion for flying and has also inspired countless others to overcome their own obstacles and pursue their dreams. As we celebrate Gus Zelinski's remarkable milestone of 55 years of aviation with one hand, let us also recognize the importance of work ethic and never letting barriers keep us from achieving our goals in all aspects of life.

On behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Gus and am personally grateful for his and Dolores's friendship. May his story continue to inspire all of us to reach for the skies and never let anything hold us back.

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

#### **Government Increases Funding to Post-Secondary Institutions**

**Mr. Fiaz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as a part of '24-25 budget, our government announced a one-time \$12 million increase to operating funding for post-secondary institutions across the province. This increase will help institutions maintain services for students and ensure they remain responsive to Saskatchewan's labour market needs.

This increase supports classroom, care, and communities. The University of Regina said it appreciates the additional funding and that it will allow the university to invest in areas that will support students. Saskatchewan Polytechnic said it appreciates the government's clear commitment to post-secondary education in our province.

I could go on, but there is not enough time, Mr. Speaker. Several institutions have already signed the amendment and want to continue with the multi-year funding model. 2024-25 marks the fourth and the final year of this agreement, and discussions are already under way to negotiate the new one.

Mr. Speaker, this increase of funding combined with the other initiatives result in 793 million total investment in the post-secondary sector this year, an increase of \$28.2 million from the Ministry of Advanced Education. Post-secondary education supports all sectors of our economy, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

#### **Supports for Women Entering the Skilled Trades**

**Ms. Lambert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was pleased to join the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women this morning for an important announcement regarding women in the skilled trades. The province will be providing \$248,000 towards Women Building Futures to support their Journey to Trades program.

Women Building Futures is a non-profit organization that empowers women to enter careers in the trades. The Journey to Trades pre-employment program provides opportunities for women to explore the world of skilled trades, gaining hands-on work experience and knowledge about jobs in the construction

industry. Women Building Futures offers a variety of free training programs, support services, and direct connections to local employers.

Mr. Speaker, women are an essential part of Saskatchewan's growing workforce. The province recently achieved a new all-time high in female employment for the month of February, increasing to 278,400. Our government continues to create more opportunities for women entering the trades, while increasing capacity to keep up with our growing population.

These targeted investments into the skilled trades support the Saskatchewan labour market strategy's goal: to prepare people for jobs that our rapidly growing economy is creating. Careers in the skilled trades provide an excellent opportunity to build a life in our province, and the women benefiting from this program will be doing just that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Government and Opposition Priorities

**Mr. Francis:** — During budget debates last week, the member for Regina Elphinstone said that this government isn't spending on things that matter. Well we have some questions.

Do 11 schools not matter? Do improved roads and highways not matter? Do new hospitals, long-term care beds, and addiction treatment beds not matter? Does increased wages for CBO [community-based organization] workers not matter? Does increased support for people on SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] not matter? Does indexing income tax to save families money not matter?

Apparently none of these things matter to the NDP, and the folks who benefit from these investments don't seem to matter to the NDP either. Should we be surprised? Absolutely not. The NDP closed hospitals, fired nurses and doctors. They shuttered schools and fired teachers. They focused on building liquor stores over new schools. They gutted highways budgets. They told people to fill their own potholes.

What mattered to the NDP when they were in power? High taxes, population decline, and a plan to remain a have-not province with a stagnant economy. This government has a plan for growth and investing in the things that matter to Saskatchewan people.

### QUESTION PERIOD

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

#### Fuel Tax and Affordability

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, can the Premier tell this Assembly: how much is the fuel tax in Ontario, and how much is the fuel tax in Saskatchewan?

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

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Mr. Speaker, with respect to the reduction in the fuel tax in Ontario, we went through this yesterday, where that is saving an Ontario family about \$320 over two and a half years. That works out to about \$128 a year.

That same Ontario family, Mr. Speaker, is paying more per litre for fuel in Ontario than Saskatchewan families are here in Saskatchewan. Part of that is because when they harmonized their provincial sales tax of 8 per cent in Ontario — it was harmonized — every litre of fuel in Ontario also has an 8 per cent provincial sales tax on it. It does not in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, our proposal to suspend the provincial tax on gasoline and diesel would save the average Saskatchewan family \$350 a month over that course of time. Not nothing, and more than anything that we found in their budget.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Ontario and other provinces have cut their fuel tax to give families a break at the pump, but meanwhile Saskatchewan families are stuck paying the third-highest fuel tax in the country under this tired and out-of-touch government. And more than half of Canadians at this time, Mr. Speaker, live in provinces that have cut the fuel tax to provide some relief.

Why is this Premier leaving Saskatchewan people in the minority? Why is he leaving families in this province without any relief from the cost of living?

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

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Saskatchewan families, I would say, Mr. Speaker, are very fortunate, because there is only one province in the nation of Canada that has cut the carbon tax on their home heating fuel. That's to the tune of about \$400 a year, not \$128 like the fuel tax in Ontario that also has the 8 per cent PST [provincial sales tax] charged on it, of which there is no PST on the fuel that we purchase in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And when you look at the affordability matrix from Regina to Toronto, Regina is ranking first, the most affordable city in the nation. Toronto is ranking ninth out of 10, Mr. Speaker, ninth out of 10. And if you're in Toronto, in addition to paying PST on your fuel, which you don't in Saskatchewan, in addition to paying the carbon tax on your heating bill, which you don't in Saskatchewan, you are also going to be charged a health care premium.

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

### Health Care Staffing and Provision of Women's Health Care

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, I don't know. It shouldn't come to any surprise to the Premier at this point, but 60, almost 60 per cent of people in this province are having trouble paying for groceries. But this tired and out-of-touch government is failing to deliver on the cost of living. And, Mr. Speaker, they are failing so badly when it comes to delivering on health care.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we're joined by Shannon Orell-Bast. Shannon was diagnosed with aggressive breast cancer in August of 2022. And, Mr. Speaker, she's here today because she has faced delay after delay in getting treatment.

What does the Premier have to say to Shannon and to all

Saskatchewan women who have had to wait for breast cancer care in this province?

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

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Mr. Speaker, I would say to Shannon and all women, some of which I know, that are going through breast cancer treatment, that this government is entirely committed to ensuring that we are reducing not only the wait time for women to get into the screening programs that we have, but also lowering the age so that more women can get those screening opportunities at an earlier age, Mr. Speaker.

In order to do that we need to expand the services that are being offered. That's why you're seeing an investment, in particular in Regina that appears to have somewhat of a longer waiting time than other areas of the province, Mr. Speaker. You're seeing that investment in the breast health care centre of excellence here in Regina. It'll mirror what we see happening in Saskatoon in streamlining that process for screening for not only the patient but also for the practitioners, Mr. Speaker.

I think this is an important investment. It's one that is most certainly necessary here in the community of Regina. And I think it's a testament in part, one of the steps in the way that this government is showing its commitment to ensuring that we are lowering those wait times in all Saskatchewan communities, and meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, also lowering the age on where women can access screening here in the province.

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

**Ms. Beck:** — What it's a testament to is this government ignoring problems until it's an election year. This is their problem, Mr. Speaker. Shannon has faced barrier after barrier in trying to access breast cancer . . . that she needs. She's had 16 rounds of chemotherapy, a double mastectomy, 25 rounds of radiation. Mr. Speaker, she's had to fight tooth and nail to access those treatments. But she's a fighter.

With 1,000 fewer mammograms being done each year, the queue of women waiting in this province for care under this tired and out-of-touch government has grown and it's grown.

Why did the Premier mismanage our health care system so badly that women like Shannon have to wait for months for the care that they desperately need?

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

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Mr. Speaker, first and foremost I would say that the Minister of Health would like to meet with Shannon to ensure that the path that she's taking through the health care system is as expedient as possible and ensure that the first opportunity that we have for, whether it be a mammography, whether it be for diagnostics, Mr. Speaker, is made available.

Because there are different wait-lists in different areas of the province and we want to ensure that we are getting those that need the services that they need as quickly as possible. Mr. Speaker, that's why — and as I identified, Regina does have a slightly longer wait-list — that's why you're seeing an investment in the breast health centre of excellence.

You're also seeing, in addition to that, investments in this most recent budget as well in cancer care. Cancer treatment and cancer care, Mr. Speaker. Cancer treatment through the cancer centres that we have in both Regina and Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker.

But also cancer research, Mr. Speaker. You saw the investment in ovarian cancer research. I had the opportunity to speak with the ladies that were down here representing Ovarian Cancer Canada, Mr. Speaker. They were talking of the research, how they are collaborating with breast cancer research in genetic identification and in ensuring that they are narrowing down those that may be susceptible or may be more prevalent to these particular cancers.

And I think it's important for this government to remain committed to the research, to the treatment, and also to as early a diagnosis as we can find in this province, Mr. Speaker, as is possible. And that includes genetic testing. It includes lowering the age of our screening programs, Mr. Speaker.

[14:15]

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

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, Shannon has met with the minister. And I dare say she could teach everyone in this room something about navigating the system.

But let's talk about the so-called solutions that this tired and out-of-touch government has put in the window. They're sending women to Calgary at 10 times the cost for basic mammograms that should be available here in Saskatchewan. They're building a new centre here in Regina that won't be open at best until 2025.

And meanwhile for women like Shannon, for women like Lyndia Kakakaway, for women all across this province, they're forced to wait months and months for care that could save their lives. How did he mismanage women's health care in this province so badly, Mr. Speaker?

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

**Hon. Mr. Hindley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank Shannon for being here today. We had the chance to meet, I think on December 12th to talk about her case, and I'd be pleased to meet with Shannon here again this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, as the Premier has indicated, we take this issue very, very seriously. The investment into the breast health centre of excellence here in Regina, that is an important step. When we announced that a couple of weeks ago, we were joined by one of the surgeons here in Regina, Dr. Sarah Miller, who talked about how important that will be towards building capacity here in the city of Regina for women, not just in the city but right across southern Saskatchewan.

The surgeon talked about the importance of establishing that centre and how that will help retain and also recruit more specialists to Regina for this very critical area of health care for women across this province, Mr. Speaker. As part of that, there will be hirings of breast health navigators at the centre here in Regina. The budget also includes additional investment into the Saskatoon centre, allowing them to hire more staff to help with

navigation and make sure that we put our best foot forward in this, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Clarke:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Shannon knows the health care system through her experience as a patient, but she also knows it as a health care worker. She works as a medical social worker providing support to patients.

And health care workers like Shannon have seen the first-hand damage that this tired and out-of-touch government has done. Chronic short-staffing and burnout has become the norm under this Sask Party's watch. And the minister likes to talk a lot about recruitment, but what is the minister going to do to make sure we retain the health care workers that we already have?

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

**Hon. Mr. Hindley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member will know, this government has a four-point action plan for health human resources to recruit, train, incentivize, and retain health care workers, Mr. Speaker, in a number of different areas including for physicians, for nurses, for care aides, for other health care workers in our health care system which are very valuable. We're grateful for the work that they do.

As the Minister of Health and formerly as the minister of Rural and Remote Health, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity and continue to have the opportunity to meet with and visit with front-line health care workers in hospitals, in long-term care homes, in communities right across this province, doing so as recently as just last week, to hear from front-line health care providers as to what it is that is going well for them in their facilities, in their places of work, but also where we need to help support them better. And that's why we continue to make significant multi-million-dollar investments into health care recruitment and retention, and we'll continue to do so, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Clarke:** — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people deserve so much better than those tired lines from this tired and out-of-touch government. Opening a new centre is a good thing, Mr. Speaker, but that centre won't solve problems if we don't have staff to assess patients, operate the equipment, and provide care and support.

Health care workers know that. Shannon knows that. How come the minister doesn't know that? What's his plan to retain the health care staff we have left so that Saskatchewan people can get off of the wait-lists and into the treatment that they so desperately need?

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

**Hon. Mr. Hindley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In addition to the work being done by the Ministry of Health, the Saskatchewan Health Authority, but also the new Sask health recruitment agency, they are focusing on a number of these very significant

and high-priority designations in the health care system where we need to not only fill existing vacancies but build capacity for the future, Mr. Speaker.

As I indicated previously, the establishment of a breast health centre in Regina will not only help with retention but also with additional recruitment. We've heard that from the front-line health care providers, the significance of establishing that centre and also building capacity to the breast health centre in Saskatoon.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, we're also working closely with other partners within the health system, for example, such as the Hospitals of Regina Foundation which is providing fellowship funding for two Regina radiologists who are currently in other provinces receiving their specialized training to be able to work in the area of breast health. They'll be coming back to Regina, Mr. Speaker.

That's another example of partnership that's happening between the government and partners such as our health foundations to make sure that we're building capacity, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Clarke:** — Mr. Speaker, health care workers like Shannon need to feel valued and respected by the Sask Party. And at every turn this tired and out-of-touch government shuts down local voices and ignores solutions that come from the front lines. The minister still hasn't said yes to the nurses who are calling for a nursing task force.

This minister needs to end the culture of fear and burnout so we can fix the crisis in retaining health care workers and get people in this province the care that they need. When will the minister finally deliver on that?

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

**Hon. Mr. Hindley:** — Mr. Speaker, we have more health care providers in this province than we've ever had. More nurses, more doctors, more specialists, He makes accusations across the way, accusations of the government or myself personally, as the minister, shutting down health care workers. That couldn't be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker.

As a matter of fact, the member opposite for once . . . And he was questioned yesterday by the media, what would he do? What would his plan be? And you know what he said, Mr. Speaker? He would listen. That's all he said — he would listen. He has no plan, Mr. Speaker, and if he would ever actually put some work into this, come up with a plan, I think the people of Saskatchewan would actually like to hear that.

Like the plan that the Government of Saskatchewan has been putting forward, a four-point plan to hire 1,000 more health care workers into the province, more nurses, more doctors, more specialists, more health facilities. That's the plan of the Government of Saskatchewan. We'd like to hear what the members opposite actually have to say, for once.

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

University.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Mr. Speaker, in addition to Shannon, we are also joined here today by Cristina Dolcetti and Celeste Pinder. They came to their legislature today to advocate for timely diagnosis and treatment for endometriosis. Like Shannon, they too have faced delay after delay in accessing care for this debilitating disease.

Mr. Speaker, thousands of women in our province are suffering with endometriosis, forced to step away from their careers, their education, and their ability to support their families. What is the government doing to ensure that women like Cristina and Celeste no longer have to fight for treatment and access to care for endometriosis?

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

**Hon. Mr. Hindley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thankful for the opportunity earlier today to meet with Tina and Celeste and others advocating for endometriosis patients across this province. I thank them for being here in Regina today to talk to me about what's important to them, about their personal experiences with the system, so that we can make improvements and make sure that we are creating stronger pathways for those patients here in our province, Mr. Speaker.

Some of this, for example, is tied to the Regina Chronic Pain Clinic, as an example, where in the new budget, there's an additional \$1.132 million for the Regina Chronic Pain Clinic to support new staff. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, we had a very, very good discussion this morning about some of the barriers that currently exist when it comes to patients struggling with endometriosis and some paths forward.

We look forward to continuing that conversation with our officials and with advocates who we have here today to form out that pathway, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Bowes:** — Mr. Speaker, these endometriosis patients met with the former minister last year, and yes, they met with the current minister today. Unfortunately they didn't hear any firm commitment from that minister in ensuring that women with endometriosis no longer have to face delays in diagnosis and delays in treatment.

Other provinces, like Ontario, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, they have all taken this issue seriously and established a plan, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister do the right thing and commit to an endometriosis action plan today?

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

**Hon. Mr. Hindley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I committed to this morning in the meeting was that we would have additional follow-up. There were some questions that I had.

This was my first opportunity to meet with the advocates for endometriosis Saskatchewan. We had officials from the ministry there, joining us for the meeting. I had some questions of our

officials that we're going to follow up on and then establish that connection back to the advocates to pursue additional action from that point in time.

Mr. Speaker, as an example, we had Dr. Rattray joining us virtually for the meeting this morning. He specializes in this area. We talked about some of the challenges faced when it comes to remuneration. We'll have a discussion with the Ministry of Health about the rates, when it comes to that.

Mr. Speaker, I'm informed that there is training that is happening across the country, including, there is a seat here in Regina where they expect a graduate a little bit later this year. And we'll be making sure that we hire that individual here into our province so they are delivering that health care specific to endometriosis right here in our province, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Bowes:** — Mr. Speaker, I hope that the minister's follow-up will be swift because failing to act has an economic impact as well. This disease impacts nearly one in five women, who miss an average of 11 hours of work per week. An estimated \$1.8 billion is lost annually to this disease.

When this government fails to provide women's health care, they're also failing to ensure women can reach their full potential in their communities, in their careers, and in the economy, Mr. Speaker. We have not seen enough action by this government to ensure that women have access to the care they so desperately need. Will the minister today commit, in addition to following up, to creating an actual action plan for endometriosis? Yes or no?

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

**Hon. Mr. Hindley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In addition to the items that I mentioned earlier that we discussed in the meeting this morning, I was also presented with some information from other countries, Denmark and France for example, where they've established some strategies. I committed to the advocates that I would take a closer look at the documents that they provided, the reports that they provided to us here today, and follow up those conversations with our federal government partners as well on the potential for a national strategy.

Mr. Speaker, we talked this morning about surgical management, about medical management, about clinical management as well and again identified a number of areas where I think that we have an opportunity as a government to work closely with the advocates to identify some areas where we can make some improvements in this very important care for women in this province.

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

### Emergency Hotel Stays Paid by Social Services

**Ms. Conway:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's painfully obvious that more supports are needed to go to the real priorities of Saskatchewan people. But unfortunately this tired and out-of-

touch government, instead of investing in things like women's health care, we see them wasting money on hotels connected to Sask Party MLAs. First we learned about the Sunrise Motel, Mr. Speaker, but we need to talk a little more about the Thriftlodge motel.

I wrote to the minister in February about this. No answer. I asked about it last week. No response, Mr. Speaker. Does he finally have a straight answer today? How much public money did his ministry pay out in the last five years to the Thriftlodge motel, the motel invested in by his officemate, the Sask Party member for Regina Northeast?

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

**Hon. Mr. Makowsky:** — Mr. Speaker, in terms of hotel usage, yes we do use hotels when there's emergency situations, similar to what the members opposite did. In terms of information asked for, there was extensive asking for information as well as information passed on to that member. And that has been thoroughly looked at, I'm sure, by all as it was released publicly, Mr. Speaker.

As a result of that we've made some changes, Mr. Speaker. We're in the process of that in terms of policies around procurement. Again it's the caseworkers that make those decisions, oftentimes last minute, as to when a hotel is necessary when our shelters are full and when there's often no other option for individuals. So we'll continue . . . likely continue to use hotels in emergency situations. We have a new policy that we're working on, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Conway:** — So disappointing, Mr. Speaker. In addition to not answering my question, he's sort of claiming that he has answered my question. So if the minister is right about that, why not just say it here on the legislative floor? How much money did the minister pay out to the Thriftlodge motel over the last five years?

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

**Hon. Mr. Makowsky:** — Mr. Speaker, in terms of a direct question, I don't have that information. A lot of information was passed on to that member in the last few months, and I'm sure she's had a chance to see that. Again we've heard many questions about this, and we will continue to, in necessary situations, use hotels, Mr. Speaker.

[14:30]

What I haven't heard from that member opposite, and I've asked her several questions about this, Mr. Speaker . . . She's concerned about the amount used. We have policies in place to ensure we are trying to get the best number for the taxpayer but also to be able to, obviously, have people safe when it is an emergency situation for them. But she hasn't told me what number, what dollar amount should the Ministry of Social Services and Mobile Crisis not go over for an individual.

She often brings those people forward from her constituency

office, Mr. Speaker. What is the dollar amount that they should not go over?

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

**Ms. Conway:** — Mr. Speaker, that minister's having a rough ride in QP [question period], but he'd make it so much easier on himself if he just cleared the air. My God, Mr. Speaker, they share a constituency office. People deserve to have answers about this.

At the Sunrise Motel, we see that payments from the minister to the hotel owned by that Sask Party MLA jumped suddenly after that owner was elected and after that minister assumed the role of Minister of Social Services. Coincidence? Perhaps. But if it walks like a duck and it talks like a duck . . . Well, Mr. Speaker, the point is we still haven't gotten any answers about the Thriftlodge motel, where the member, the Sask Party member for Regina Northeast, is an investor.

How much money did the minister pay to the Thriftlodge hotel in the last five years? They have these answers. Why won't they provide them?

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

**Hon. Mr. Makowsky:** — I'm not sure what the member opposite is alluding to, Mr. Speaker. I have shared constituency offices with various members over time since I've had the honour to be in government. And the reason for that is to save money for the taxpayers. I always pass those savings from sharing office on to the taxpayer, Mr. Speaker.

And so in terms of hotel procurement, Mr. Speaker, there was a lot of information passed along to that member. But what she doesn't want to answer herself . . . She has a chance to say, what is the dollar amount that the Ministry of Social Services and mobile caseworkers should not go over if there is an emergency situation? What is her number? What situation would she not provide that?

There's people that, I know in her constituency there's a lot of people that come into her office. She advertises that she'll get hotels for those people. And that's great, Mr. Speaker, but she doesn't say at what point would she not provide those because it costs too much per night.

**The Speaker:** — I remember the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

### Overdose Deaths and Treatment for Addictions

**Mr. Teed:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Four hundred and seventy-six lives were lost to overdose in 2023. That's 1.3 lives lost to this crisis every single day last year. More than one family every day had to learn that their loved one was no longer with them, that their mother, father, sister, brother, or child's life was lost to this overdose crisis. This affects everyone in our province, including folks living in my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, we need an evidence-based plan that will ensure that people are alive long enough to get treatment, instead of

continued cuts to life-saving harm reduction supports. Mr. Speaker, when will the minister admit that he is wrong and commit to an evidence-based approach?

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

**Hon. Mr. T. McLeod:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I have said many times and will say again, every loss of life due to an overdose is a tragedy. And it is the illicit drugs that are resulting in those overdoses. And that's why our government is sending the message to individuals that there is no safe use of an illicit drug. Providing individuals with an addiction the crack pipes and the instructions to use those crack pipes is not sending those individuals the right message, Mr. Speaker.

The message that we're sending those individuals is that there is help available through treatment. There is hope for recovery, Mr. Speaker. And we are providing more addictions treatment beds, we're making it easier for people to access those addictions treatment beds, and we are providing the supports that they need to overcome their addiction and live healthy lives in recovery. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### SPECIAL ORDER

#### ADJOURNED DEBATES

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

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

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

**Mr. Keisig:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Always a pleasure to be on my feet and enter into debate on the 2024-25 budget. First of all, I have to thank the constituents of Last Mountain-Touchwood. They sent me here to represent them and work for them, and they are always top of mind on every issue that we bring forward on a daily basis.

I also have to thank my constituency assistant, Tina Knowles. She does great work in the office and goes really above and beyond to help constituents and help myself. And I also want to thank Nicole McCullough. She has been just so helpful in mentoring Tina and helping her learn her role and responsibilities, and you know, working together on solving problems.

I also want to talk about my daughters, Mr. Speaker. My oldest daughter, she's a licensed practical nurse working at the General Hospital in Regina. She works in a general surgery ward. And we have a bit of a routine, Mr. Speaker. After work she'll phone, or on her way in to work, and just kind of talk every day as she walks to her shift. She always talks about some of the challenges and what happened during her day, and she also sends me a lot

of Snapchats on the construction update of the parkade at the General Hospital.

This is really going to be a fantastic thing. There's going to be over 1,000 parking spots for employees, patients, visitors, and it's really needed. Construction is progressing rapidly, and it's going to be open later this year. And it's great to see. It's going to be a huge boon to all of the employees and visitors and users of that hospital facility, Mr. Speaker.

My other daughter is Sharlize. She's a veterinary technician. She's working in Melville at the clinic. She loves her job, loves her animals, the large and small animals that she works with. And she truly loves the work that she does.

Both of my daughters were able to apply for the student loan forgiveness program that's open to certain fields for all Saskatchewan graduates. And they were also able to apply to the graduate retention program, which is open to all Saskatchewan residents as long as they choose to stay in this province. These are good programs, Mr. Speaker, that are going to help many of our young people and provide them with a financial incentive to stay home. I'm very proud of my daughters, Mr. Speaker, and I'm glad they're both living and working in Saskatchewan.

Whenever we work on policy issues in caucus in government, Mr. Speaker, there's always kind of the north star that I always like to use. I grew up in a time when there was no opportunities in this province and all of my friends left for Alberta. Anyway, I mean that really shapes your vision when it happens at a younger age. And every policy that I try to bring forward, that I advocate for, that I want to see happen, is to encourage young people and make sure there's opportunities for them in this province and they don't have to leave anywhere.

Classrooms, care, and communities is the theme for this budget and is delivered by our esteemed Minister of Finance. I want to thank her for 25 years of public service. Her work ethic is huge, and she really sets the bar high for all of us serving in caucus together. That plucky young girl hailing from Guernsey who went to school, became a lab tech, then got into public service, now she's part of Canadian history as the longest serving female cabinet minister. You know, that is such a remarkable feat, Mr. Speaker. And it really shows that in Saskatchewan it doesn't matter where you come from, you can achieve anything you want in this province.

A \$4.4 billion investment in education is record investment, Mr. Speaker. 2.2 billion for our 27 locally run kindergarten to grade 12 school divisions. It's also the largest ever budget. Increase of 180 million, over 9 per cent from last year. The school divisions in the constituency that I have the honour of representing, 7.3 per cent increase across the board, Mr. Speaker. Our locally elected school boards know what's best for their communities and their schools. This increase in funding will assist them in delivering high-quality education in our schools and preparing young people for a very exciting future.

I was curling in a bonspiel this weekend, Mr. Speaker, and the number one topic people wanted to talk to me about was the ongoing contract negotiations between the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and the government-trustee bargaining committee. Now I know negotiations do not belong on the floor



of this Chamber, but I do want to address the issue briefly.

Our government fully supports teachers and their valuable work. I know many teachers across the constituency and across the province, and I consider many of them my friends. They do great work in their communities. I had some teachers growing up who inspired me to serve in public office, and I know my daughters had some fantastic teachers who helped them through their educational journey. I want to reassure every Saskatchewan teacher, we are listening to their concerns and bringing forward policies to assist you in your work. We look forward to a timely conclusion to these negotiations.

And I really want to thank our Minister of Education. He is going above and beyond. His work schedule is loaded, and he is truly doing everything he can to assist everyone in the province.

It's also worth noting, Mr. Speaker, that a growing economy is seeing billions of dollars invested in this province's resource sector. Agri-food processing and manufacturing all have one thing in common. They need a highly skilled workforce to sustain that growth. That's why the additional investment of over a million dollars in the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission is a very timely investment. We need more boilermakers. We need more ironworkers, pipefitters, and all construction trades. And well of course, Mr. Speaker, we always need more welders.

I've worked in the construction industry. I know it very well, and these tradespeople are so important to our community, our province, and society. A thriving economy presents tons of opportunities for the youth to venture into the trades, learn practical skills, and earn a good income.

It's worth noting that every mine, every canola plant, every processing plant, every power station that gets built in this province hires a lot of people for construction, but there's ongoing maintenance employment opportunities at those plants for 50 to 100 years. The mine at BHP, that's a 100-year mine, Mr. Speaker. These plants are great places to work and good opportunities for all young people in this province.

I encourage all young people as they're graduating high school this year, consider a career path in the trades. You will not regret it. There is tons of opportunities, and this is a great time to get involved in that process.

Care, Mr. Speaker. This budget includes a record investment of 7.6 billion in our provincial health care system, an overall increase of 726 million over last year's budget. This includes 4.7 billion for the Saskatchewan Health Authority. This budget includes a three-and-a-half-million-dollar increase for the breast cancer care and screening. This means Saskatchewan residents will witness technology enhancements, new diagnostic imaging equipment, and the establishment of the breast cancer health centre in Regina. The establishment of this centre is going to be very beneficial for everyone in southern Saskatchewan.

And I really want to thank the Minister of Health and the Minister of Rural Health for all of the hard work that they do in this file and meeting with so many stakeholders and always having such an open-door policy in their offices. It's greatly appreciated, Mr. Speaker.

And I also want to thank the Minister of Rural Health. We toured the constituency this winter. We stopped at three different facilities across my constituency, and we talked about different challenges within those communities. And it kind of all boils down to our health human care action plan. We need more staff. We need more nurse practitioners. And we have a vision and a plan, and this budget is going to help see that come to fruition, Mr. Speaker.

Community. Mr. Speaker, it's also another focal point of this budget. Municipal revenue sharing, a policy brought forward by this government, is returning over 340 million to our local municipal governments, an increase of 42 million from last year. Revenue sharing is very simple — three-quarters of 1 per cent of the PST. As our economy grows, our municipal partners share in this economic growth. It's a simple but very effective policy, with both levels of government working together to continue growing our economy and creating opportunities for all of our citizens.

[14:45]

We've also allocated \$15 million for our provincial parks. I had the opportunity last fall to attend a groundbreaking ceremony with the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport at Rowan's Ravine. It's going to be a beautiful multi-use pavilion in that facility. And I really want encourage everyone to get out to our parks. They are just absolutely gorgeous, and Rowan's Ravine is tremendous. It's going to be a nice addition to the park.

And I really want to thank everyone involved that brought forward the \$1.2 million increase to our regional park system. There's several regional parks across my constituency. They do beautiful work, and they are very fiscally prudent with all of the funds that these parks are able to accumulate.

I'm going to do a little bit of criticism right now, Mr. Speaker. I know that the member from Regina Elphinstone likes to refer to us people in the backbench as clapping seals. But we do have independent thoughts, and I'm going to just criticize a little bit of this budget.

Our Minister of Trade and Export sector, we're putting \$40.6 million in this budget, Mr. Speaker. I believe that should be larger. We should grow that part. We produce the highest quality agri-food products in the world, the lowest carbon-intensive energy and mine products. We have a highly-trained and responsible workforce. By any measure, we produce the best qualities in the world, and we need to sell that. We need to sell that globally and get the premium that the market . . . we can extract from that and provide more money for our farmers, for our energy workers, for our forestry sector. And it's crucial that we have to take that initiative, Mr. Speaker. Nobody else will do it. And I want to commend everybody in the Trade and Export Development file for all the good work we're doing.

We just learned today, \$300 million to Vietnam in durum. That's a huge boon to everyone . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Pasta. Durum is pasta.

The world wants what we produce, and we have to get the premium that we can extract from the market.

So this winter, Mr. Speaker, was relatively mild, but there was a very terrible cold snap in early January. It is critical that our infrastructure system operates effectively and delivers the electricity and natural gas to our ratepayers, and SaskPower and SaskEnergy do a fantastic job. Our facilities ran flawlessly, and we were even able to assist Alberta this winter and sell them 150 megawatts of electricity in the brutal cold of winter.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you're curious as to why an energy superpower like Alberta was short of electricity on a very typical cold snap in January. I can provide you with that answer. A previous NDP government in Alberta closed all of their coal-generating facilities and had a build-out of 6100 megawatts of renewables. And in that cold spell, that 6100 megawatts of energy produced 6. Six megawatts of energy was produced in that minus-40-below weather. At the point in time where you desperately needed power for your house, for your business, for your hospital, for your seniors' care home, for your school, it was producing 6 megawatts.

This proves, Mr. Speaker, in real time, baseload electricity is absolutely critical. And we cannot take ideological stances when it comes to critical infrastructure. And it just shows how much damage environmental zealots can do when they ever have the power to control government, Mr. Speaker. Our Crown corporations are investing billions in system expansions, upgrades, and maintenance. In the harsh climate we live in, this is vitally important.

The members opposite are always talking about affordability issues, Mr. Speaker. And the government removing the carbon tax on home heating, following the policy implementation by the Liberal-NDP coalition, you know, it's all about fairness, Mr. Speaker. They brought that policy forward for Atlantic Canada, and we are making it fair for Saskatchewan people. Our inflation rate dropped in January by 1.4 per cent. This clearly shows how inflationary the carbon tax can be and how it has such a pervasive and destructive impact on our economy, making life very difficult for everyone in the province.

You know, in the media, the federal Environment minister referred to our Premier as immoral. And I went back in *Hansard* and I looked, and one of my very first speeches in the Chamber here, Mr. Speaker, I said, "It is immoral for any government to tax people to stay warm in this country." So it's, I don't know, a little bit flattering to see the Environment minister copying my work.

And it's also important to note, Mr. Speaker, the carbon tax is going up April 1st — 23 per cent increase. So we're going to have more inflationary impacts, more taxes, more costs, and more harm to our economy with zero environmental benefit.

There's one more thing I want to talk about, Mr. Speaker: our highway network. We're investing over \$600 million in this budget and over \$400 million in new construction. The gas tax, which is charged at the pump, it collects around \$500 million. And the members opposite, even today in question period, they were asking us to remove it. But they never, ever have a plan. If we remove it for six months, we lose \$250 million. They never say, are we going to cut \$250 million from our highways budget? Are we going to run a \$250 million deficit? Are we going to cut something else? They never have a plan. No darn plan. That's

what they have, Mr. Speaker — no darn plan.

I just want to end on a positive note here, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member from Saskatoon Northwest. It was very good serving in this Chamber with him in caucus. He was a very talented minister and very inclusive for a newly elected member. He was always there to assist and answer any questions.

I want to thank the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy. He was the first minister I ever had the privilege to serve under as a Legislative Secretary, so I'm always going to remember him. He was a good minister to work with and always tried to include me in the different things and get me up to speed on the files, and I truly appreciate that.

And the member from Indian Head-Milestone. He was truly a mentor to me and has been just someone I consider a very, very good friend. I thank him for his service, and I'm still going to learn lots from him even when he's not in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the budget. I will not be supporting the amendment. And it's critical that Saskatchewan people know, it is only through the strength of our economy that we can make these investments in classrooms, care, and communities. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Chair of Committees:** — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw North.

**Hon. Mr. T. McLeod:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm once again honoured to have the opportunity to rise in the House and address the Assembly. And I do so today in support of the 2024-2025 provincial budget as presented by our Minister of Finance and seconded by the member from Saskatoon Willowgrove.

It continues to be my privilege, Mr. Speaker, to be here on behalf of the constituents of Moose Jaw North. This year's budget is filled with benefits for everyone from my community, and I look forward to touching on just a few of those here today.

But before I do, I want to take a moment to thank some very important people in my life, Mr. Speaker. First and foremost, my family. To Tenielle and our children Presley, Kingston, and Lauchlan, I quite literally wouldn't be here without their love and their support, and certainly their understanding, Mr. Speaker. So I thank them sincerely for that.

A huge thanks is also owed to the wonderful people who surround me and support me in this role, Mr. Speaker, starting firstly with my constituency assistant back in Moose Jaw, Jacqui, who remains to be the best constituency assistant in all of government. And I'd also like to thank, Mr. Speaker, all of the amazing staff here in the building, starting with my chief of staff, Elias, the rest of the team — Cole, Savanna, Nolan, Stephanie — and the newest member of our office, Franz. Mr. Speaker, a special thanks also goes out to the incredible team in the Health minister's office: Clint, Cheyenne, Angela, and Lisa.

Mr. Speaker, these are truly incredible individuals in their own right, but when you unite them into a single team, they are truly an unstoppable force and they make it a pleasure to come to work

every day. So I thank them for that, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to recognize and thank our Minister of Finance. Mr. Speaker, I've had the honour to serve on treasury board for the last two years, and I am absolutely in awe of her leadership at that table. The depth and understanding of all the inner workings of our provincial government is truly profound, Mr. Speaker. This Minister of Finance has a grasp on the finances of this province better than anyone else in this building.

Watching her thoroughly and thoughtfully analyze the budget proposals from every ministry, gradually and methodically crafting a provincial budget that meets the many diverse needs of our province, is how I imagine it may have been like watching Rembrandt or da Vinci paint one of their masterpieces, Mr. Speaker. It's truly remarkable to see, and I feel fortunate and blessed to have had a front-row seat to watch that process. And for that I sincerely thank our Premier for allowing me the honour.

Mr. Speaker, as I listened to our Minister of Finance deliver the budget, I heard her say that this was the 17th budget that she has been a part of, the 17th budget presented by the Sask Party government. And that fact, Mr. Speaker, gave me pause to reflect — to reflect on where we've been, where we are, and where we're headed. Mr. Speaker, 17 years ago the Saskatchewan Party government faced an NDP opposition that tried to prey on people's fears. Well we all know and remember well, Mr. Speaker, that hope beat fear.

The NDP viewed Saskatchewan as a wee province. They said it was farcical to believe that we could grow our population beyond a million people. The NDP actually tried to convince us that we should be happy being a have-not province, Mr. Speaker.

The Saskatchewan Party government 17 years ago, including our Finance minister and many other members on the floor today, had a very different vision for our province. They saw the promise of Saskatchewan and the great potential that it had to offer. When the Saskatchewan Party formed government, they had a dream for this province, Mr. Speaker.

The NDP said it wasn't possible, which reminds me of a scene from the movie *The Pursuit of Happyness* starring Will Smith. For anyone who may not have seen the film, it's a true story about a man named Chris Gardner who is determined to make a better life for himself and his son despite the very difficult circumstances that they faced in the beginning. There's a scene in the middle of the movie where Chris tells his son, "Don't ever let somebody tell you, you can't do something, not even me. If you've got a dream, you have to protect it." And here's the important part, Mr. Speaker. He goes on to say, "People who can't do something themselves want to tell you, you can't do it. If you want something, go get it. Period."

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's precisely what this government has done. When the Saskatchewan Party formed government, they had a dream to grow our province, to build our economy, and to protect our people. The NDP said it couldn't be done because they couldn't do it themselves. They still can't, Mr. Speaker. But the Saskatchewan Party did it, and our government is still doing it. Our government continues to protect the growth and success of this province from all of the negativity and pessimism that we hear from across the aisle.

Our province will reach 1.25 million people this year, Mr. Speaker. We have one of the strongest economies in the nation, and projections are it will just keep getting better. We have more hospitals, more schools, more long-term care homes, and tens of thousands of new or resurfaced roads in this province. We have 5,000 more nurses, over 1,000 new physicians since forming government 17 years ago, and we just keep adding to that, Mr. Speaker.

Yet still the NDP stand up day after day claiming it can't be done. Well, Mr. Speaker, this Sask Party government doesn't pay much attention to those cries because we're too busy actually doing what they say can't be done. And that's the record of our government, Mr. Speaker, growth and investments in classrooms, in care, and in our communities.

I was actually a little surprised last week when the member from Regina Walsh Acres openly admitted that the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. I agree, Mr. Speaker. I wouldn't have expected the NDP opposition to highlight that for us, but I'm sure glad they did. In fact I hope they campaign on it, because what's their record, Mr. Speaker? When they had the privilege to govern this province, they closed 176 schools, 52 hospitals. They decimated our rural communities. The NDP allowed our roads and highways to crumble, and they crashed our economy, Mr. Speaker.

The best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. Since forming government 17 years and 17 budgets ago, this government has made record investments in education, health care, communities, and transportation infrastructure right across our province. The best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour, which brings me to this year's budget, Mr. Speaker, where we continue to see those significant investments into critical areas that will ensure the ongoing and future success of our province.

[15:00]

I want to spend the time that I have left highlighting some exciting investments being made in the areas of mental health and addictions, seniors, and rural and remote health. Starting first with mental health and addictions, Mr. Speaker, another record-setting investment of \$574 million, further expanding our network of addictions treatment spaces across the province. We've announced 183 so far and now funding for another 150 this year as we rapidly progress towards our target of 500 new spaces within five years.

Development of a central intake system that patients can contact directly for self-referral. This new approach to accessing addictions treatment space will allow people to connect with the services they need when they need them, Mr. Speaker. Our focus is on getting people the treatment they need and helping them overcome addictions so that they can live healthy, safe lives in recovery. Making it easier for people to access treatment and having more spaces available will significantly improve a person's ability to choose the path to recovery.

Mr. Speaker, we're also transitioning to a recovery-oriented system of care, or ROSC model, which will help people stay on that path to recovery. The ROSC model moves away from the traditional 28-day model, and it wraps supports around a person,

the individual supports that those people need specific to their position, Mr. Speaker. It's a more targeted, more holistic approach to addictions treatment.

We're also adding funding through this year's budget to support the development of a province-wide program that will offer rapid access to legitimate addictions medicine like Suboxone and Sublocade, Mr. Speaker. This approach helps individuals overcome their addiction to illicit drugs.

We're also offering funding to continue supporting programs to protect people from the harms of illicit drugs and save lives, Mr. Speaker, programs like the take-home naloxone kits. Through this program, we have seen 10,000 overdoses reversed. That's 10,000 lives saved, Mr. Speaker.

We're continuing to support the provincial drug alert program that sends out warning messages to anyone who has subscribed, advising them of toxic drugs that may have been found in their area. Mr. Speaker, we're also introducing community wellness vans and community wellness buses that will connect with individuals experiencing homelessness or addictions, providing them with the supports and services they need to live healthy, safe lives, offering them hope for recovery and help through treatment.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to touch on the investments we're making for seniors. Continuing to support and invest in our seniors is a key piece of this government. One of the most obvious and direct impacts that will be seen through this budget, Mr. Speaker, is the increase to the personal care home benefit. This is the second consecutive increase to the personal care home benefit, now reaching a maximum of \$2,500 per month.

Long-term care investments also remain a focus of our government and can be found in multiple lines of this budget. With new funding this year, our affiliate long-term care providers will receive a \$40 million funding boost. These new funds will support those providers as they continue to offer essential care to their residents. We're also adding new long-term care spaces in Saskatoon and Regina, and we have funding to continue to advance work on the 240-bed specialized long-term care facility right here in Regina.

On the rural and remote health side, Mr. Speaker, this budget offers significant supports. We're increasing our funding for a rural and remote recruitment incentive that has seen tremendous success filling hard-to-recruit positions. Through this program we've filled over 300 positions in nine different health care designations in 54 of our communities across Saskatchewan.

We have \$6.7 million of additional funding committed to continue building upon these successes, and that's on top of the additional million dollars that we're also investing to further incentivize more physicians to work in our rural and northern communities. With the expansion of another eight seats to our SIPPA [Saskatchewan international physician practice assessment] program this year, that will bring us to 53 more international physicians into our Saskatchewan communities this year alone, Mr. Speaker.

We also have funding to create 25 more nurse practitioner positions in rural, regional, and northern communities. These

additions will enable our care teams to see more patients and offer better access to health care for people in every corner of our province.

I also want to point out that we are funding phase 3 of our rural EMS [emergency medical services] enhancement initiative, adding upwards of 40 additional EMS staff in our rural and northern communities this year, Mr. Speaker. Last year we added more than 30 new positions in 31 different communities. The year before that, it was 70 new positions in 15 different communities. Mr. Speaker, we are seeing huge successes with our health human resources action plan, which remains to be the most ambitious plan of its kind anywhere in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, all of these investments in all of these areas and so many more are only made possible because of the growth and strength of our economy. We are a government that has, for more than 17 years, believed in this province, Mr. Speaker. We have always believed and continue to believe that hope will conquer fear. And since being given the honour to form government, we have relentlessly pursued growth and progress in the face of an NDP opposition that spends all their time and effort trying to convince the people of this province that it can't be done.

Mr. Speaker, Benjamin Franklin once said, "Without continual growth and progress, words such as 'improvement,' 'achievement,' and 'success' have no meaning." On this side of the House, we strive for that continued growth, which allows us to experience improvement, achievement, and success.

We have seen this repeatedly over the past 17 years, and we will continue to see it with this budget, Mr. Speaker. New hospitals in Weyburn, Prince Albert, Yorkton, and that's following up on hospitals we've already built in Moose Jaw and Saskatoon. We have new long-term care centres coming in Grenfell, Estevan, La Ronge, Watson. Nine more new schools announced in this year's budget alone, Mr. Speaker, and that's in addition to the 60 new schools and 30 major renovations projects that we've already done, not to mention the countless other investments that we've made in highways, public safety, agriculture, and so many other areas, Mr. Speaker, as we continuously strive to make things even better.

Mr. Speaker, as Brazilian novelist Paulo Coelho said, "When we strive to become better than we are, everything around us becomes better too." We understand that the job is not yet done, Mr. Speaker. There's still more work to do, but as each of us on this side of the House strives to improve this province, there is a positive cascading effect on those around us.

Coelho also said, "You are what you believe yourself to be." Well, Mr. Speaker, our government believes that Saskatchewan is the greatest province in the nation; that we can lead the rest of the world in sustainable production of food, fuel, and fertilizer; and that we are the number one destination to live, work, and raise a family. And with the investments being made in this budget, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to be so for generations to come.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I support the budget presented by the Minister of Finance and seconded by the member from Saskatoon Willowgrove, and I do not support the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Chair of Committees:** — I recognize the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford.

**Mr. Domotor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's such a privilege for me to stand in this Assembly and provide my reply to the '24-25 budget.

Mr. Speaker, I would first like to congratulate the Deputy Premier and Finance minister for preparing a budget that not only supports the people of Saskatchewan, but provides many program enhancements, additional supports, and ensures we continue to build a strong economy to keep Saskatchewan strong and sustainable.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this moment to thank the entire team on the treasury board, which includes treasury board members and the officials within the Ministry of Finance. I appreciate the importance of these individuals and the amount of time that they dedicate to ensure all of the various interests of the province are addressed where possible, keeping in mind they have the incredible task and responsibility of prioritizing where provincial funds are needed to meet the various challenges and demands of an ever-changing world and province.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance, the Minister of Government Relations, the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation, the Minister of Advanced Education, the Provincial Secretary, as well as the Speaker on their well-deserved retirements. You have all served your constituents, this Assembly, and the province of Saskatchewan well over your terms in office in your various portfolios throughout your times.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not also thank all of the members on both sides of the House who will not be returning to this Assembly after the next election. The time that each and every one of you have devoted to your constituencies to serve your constituents is a testament to your commitment to the people of this great province. It is only with dedicated men and women of this nature that help keep our province strong and an attractive place to invest, live, work, and raise a family.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank a few people in my life who have been very supportive in my role. Mr. Speaker, the love and support I've received from my two children, Logan and Lyndon, has been more than overwhelming. They have been so understanding and supportive through this entire endeavour that I can't thank them enough for all that they have done.

Mr. Speaker, this budget reminds me of why I chose to originally run for politics. When I think of this budget, I think of my children, Logan and Lyndon. It is for their future and to ensure that our children's first job after completing their high school diploma or graduating from their post-secondary education is in Saskatchewan. We want to keep them right here at home, and we need to do what's necessary to ensure we have an economic climate that provides opportunities and jobs that our children can embrace and safeguards them from moving to another province to start their careers.

A prime example of this, Mr. Speaker, is my youngest son, Lyndon, who convocated last April from commerce. As a result

of having the economic climate I referred to earlier, he had secured his first job before he even convocated, and started work as soon as he completed his university, working at AgraCity Crop & Nutrition in Saskatoon. As any of my colleagues who have had children attend university can probably attest to, it's always exciting when you see them get their first job and truly become independent.

Mr. Speaker, I know that I've mentioned my oldest son, Logan, before, who works at the Turtleford & District Co-op. Once again, because of our economic environment in this province, this Co-op has been confident enough in our economy that they have expanded their home and agro division to Maidstone and have recently purchased a seasonal convenience store and gas bar at Turtle Lake. Since their purchase, they have renovated it and installed heat to make it a year-round business.

They've had this business operating for less than a year, Mr. Speaker, and they're already presently in the process of constructing an addition to expand their floor space as they have found they cannot keep up to the demand of their supplies. As a result this seasonal convenience store, which used to employ one to two people at best, now employs several persons.

So at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, when you have a strong economy, it means more jobs. And if you have more jobs, you have more people purchasing goods and services, which ensures you continue to have a sustainable tax base, which allows the government to provide and enhance the services to the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank and recognize my constituency assistant, Jackie Gallon. In the short time that I've known her, she's been a strong advocate for the constituents of Cut Knife-Turtleford, ensuring that each constituent's concern that is brought to the attention of our office is looked into and that I'm made personally aware of each and every case.

The pride and dedication that she puts into her work is a testament to her skill and demonstrates the devotion that she has to her employment not only with the constituency but with the province of Saskatchewan as well. For that I say thank you. And I know that you will be an asset to the next representative for this constituency, who would be foolish not to have you continue with the commitment and knowledge that you have for this unique occupation.

Mr. Speaker, and most importantly I would like to thank my . . . my thanks to the constituents of Cut Knife-Turtleford for giving me the opportunity to represent them as their provincial representative. It's hard to believe that almost four years has gone by as their MLA, and I was personally very honoured and privileged to be their representative for that time.

Looking back, the biggest thing that I will truly miss is helping out constituents when I could and meeting so many great people throughout the constituency that I otherwise would not have met, which gave me a better insight and realization of how great our province really is to live in.

Last but not least, Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Clerks, the LAS [Legislative Assembly Service] staff, and the Sergeant-at-Arms for their

dedication, for the work that they do to ensure that our parliamentary system is carried out with value, trust, and understanding.

[15:15]

Now moving into the budget. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a great day in Cut Knife-Turtleford, starting off with no new tax increases along with a previously announced reduction in taxes by not collecting the carbon tax on home heating costs. Although I'm no longer part of this government, I believe they are on the right track in trying to make things more equitable and competitive in our province.

This will ensure that we have an economic climate that fosters opportunities for our residents, that will ensure we have a sustainable and prosperous economy. This in turn provides additional revenue to maintain, support, and enhance the services that are already provided, such as health care, education, and highways, just to name a few.

Mr. Speaker, when I travel throughout the constituency, one of the consistent concerns I've heard about was regarding our rural health care facilities and staffing. Mr. Speaker, the government continues to make improvements and will be investing record health care spending that's 10.6 per cent higher than the last fiscal year into the Health ministry, which is an increase of over \$726 million.

Mr. Speaker, this year's budget includes an increase of 29.2 million for the action plan, which will fully fund commitment to add 250 new or enhanced permanent full-time positions in rural and remote locations. This will also include funding the Saskatchewan rural and remote recruitment program for existing recipients and extend this initiative for another year to try to ensure stable, sufficient staffing of our rural health care centres. This program is available in 54 rural and remote communities right across Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that rural population has to access the emergency care specialists in the cities when it comes to treating people who experience injury, illness, and life-and-death circumstances. That is why this year's budget includes a funding increase of 30 million to support Saskatoon and Regina capacity pressures action plans, which will enhance acute care and emergency department capacity to support our growing population in this province and will assist in accommodating rural patients.

Mr. Speaker, since 2007 the government has invested more than 2.9 billion into capital for facilities and equipment to improve the delivery of health care across the province, including rural communities, which are an integral part of our society and contribute greatly to our overall economy.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the mental health and addictions are having more of an impact on society than ever before, which is affecting individuals throughout the province, not just in our urban communities. That's why it's so great to see that the government's increasing its supports to mental health and addictions services with a 56 million or 10.9 per cent increase. This budget intends to add 150 more addictions treatment spaces to the 183 that have already been announced, which brings them

closer to their target of 500 treatment spaces and will better serve the great people of this province. Mr. Speaker, in February 50 new addiction treatment spaces were announced at the Thorpe Recovery Centre near Lloydminster, which will provide service for the Cut Knife-Turtleford constituency and will provide additional supports for those who require necessary treatments.

Mr. Speaker, this budget includes a record investment in education of 3.3 billion, which is an overall increase of 8.1 per cent in this fiscal year to support pre-kindergarten to grade 12 schools, early learning, child care, and libraries. Mr. Speaker, a record 2.2 billion will be provided to Saskatchewan's 27 school divisions in school operating funding. This includes additional funding for classroom supports, specialized support classroom and teacher innovation, and fund pilot projects to assist school divisions with providing their schools with the necessary tools to deal with classroom size and complexity.

Mr. Speaker, the government continues to provide funding for capital projects for schools in our province and as a result there will be nine new schools built that are included in this year's budget. This year 216 million will be allocated to school infrastructure projects, which is an increase of 46.6 per cent over last year's budget and will help address enrolment growth in our communities and support our classrooms.

Mr. Speaker, the government announced last year that parent fees for regulated child care in the province will be reduced to \$10 per day beginning on April 1st, 2023. That was three years ahead of schedule, and Saskatchewan was one of the first Canadian provinces to achieve this milestone. Mr. Speaker, that announcement was simply life changing for working parents that have young children that require care during the day.

Parents whose children are under the age of six and attend regulated child care on a full-time basis can expect to pay around \$217 per month. The fee reductions will result in families saving an average of 205 to 573 per month for each child under the age of six. I've heard from several constituents who have indicated that they are so thankful for this program as it has made a huge difference in their day-to-day living.

Mr. Speaker, recognizing that our preschool children are so very important to the future success of this great province, the government has included an increase of 21.1 million for the federal-provincial child care agreements. This funding will continue to support the \$10-a-day child care for children under six and will assist in adding more regulated home-based and centre-based child care spaces in the province, helping families and assisting mothers who want to maintain their careers and continue to work.

Mr. Speaker, the government is increasing post-secondary funding by 3.7 this year. This ministry continues to expand health training programs and additional training seats for the various hard-to-recruit health care professionals that are most required in our health care facilities in the province. Students of these post-secondary institutions will benefit directly from forty-six and a half million in financial supports, which includes a new grant for low-income students with dependents under the age of 12.

Other key supports will include the Student Aid Fund, the various scholarships and bursaries, and for students who choose to make

Saskatchewan their home, they will still receive the graduate retention program which provides up to \$20,000 in tax credits and which more than 81,000 graduates have benefited since the program's inception. This program has been very valuable in being able to retain graduating students in our province and assists in filling the void of the various abundance of employment opportunities available.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan loan forgiveness for nurses and nurse practitioners program is provided to five mid-size communities, with The Battlefords being a recently newly added eligible community.

Mr. Speaker, I recently attended the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] annual convention in Regina where it was announced that new record funding of 340.2 million would be provided for the municipal revenue-sharing program. What does this mean for rural municipalities? Mr. Speaker, for the 14 rural municipalities as well as all of the urban communities within the constituency of Cut Knife-Turtleford in Saskatchewan, it means more money to support local priorities within their communities with no strings attached. Total provincial funding for the municipal revenue-sharing program represents a 14.2 per cent increase from the current fiscal year, and 167 per cent increase from '07-08.

An increase of 2 million, for a total of 350.1 million, will be afforded to infrastructure programs in the province, including the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, Canada Community-Building Fund, and the New Building Canada Fund. This budget will also see an increase of 900 million to assist the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency to maintain its capacity for property inspections and ensure municipalities are correctly assessing their residents to safeguard their revenue source and have everyone treated fairly.

Mr. Speaker, agriculture remains the backbone of this province. In February, Saskatchewan's agriculture industry posted a fourth consecutive year of record agri-food exports with shipments totalling 20.2 billion for 2023. Recognizing the impact that agriculture has on our economy, this budget includes an investment of 570.6 million in agriculture. Mr. Speaker, this funding will support important agricultural research and enhancements to crop insurance, all while investing in programming for producers and agribusiness.

Mr. Speaker, we know that some of our agriculture producers have had challenging weather and soil conditions in the past few years. That is why this budget provides 431.7 million to fund federal-provincial risk programs, which includes crop insurance and AgriStability. Mr. Speaker, there have been areas of our province that have been affected by drought conditions for the last couple years. This government recognizes that not only do we have grain producers who have had challenges in these conditions, so have our livestock producers. That's why once again this government has seen fit to freeze Crown land leases for grazing at the 2022 rate levels. Producers who have to reduce their stock due to drought conditions on Crown land will also be eligible for a lease discount.

Mr. Speaker, crime is a concern for many of our residents in this province. I know that I've heard from several constituents who would like to see more done to combat this issue. I see in the

budget that this government recognizes that and is providing additional funding to enhance enforcement across the province by expanding the First Nations community safety officer pilot program, hiring alternative response officers to address public safety issues around shelters, and establishing a K-9 [police canine unit] unit with the Saskatchewan Highway Patrol.

This, along with providing additional funding for the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] operations through the provincial police services agreement, the RCMP's First Nations policing program, as well as funding for 160 municipal police positions and the continuation and implementation of hiring for Saskatchewan's marshals service, will be a big start in addressing those concerns. In our constituency I know that the rural municipality of Meota was eligible to access 30,000 for their regional community safety officer implementation plan and will provide a local police presence that will assist in deterring crime.

Mr. Speaker, I know in talking to several business owners that COVID-19 was a definite challenge for some of them to remain viable. That's why I was happy to see that the government has decided to . . . [inaudible] . . . the small-business tax rate at the current 1 per cent level until June 30th, 2025. This will provide some additional time to assist those businesses that are still recovering from what would be best described as some of the most challenging times in our history.

Mr. Speaker, tourism and recreation is becoming more and more sought after by both residents of this province as well as our neighbours, which impacts our provincial and regional parks. The chairman of the regional parks association, Garry Blanchette, happens to reside in my constituency. He has spoken to me several times about funding issues that regional parks are challenged by with keeping up to the demands of the patrons and infrastructure improvements. That's why it's great to see that the government is providing 15 million for capital and infrastructure improvements in provincial parks as well as 1.2 million for the regional parks association, which is an increase of 615,000 from last year.

It's obvious that our province of Saskatchewan does in fact have what the world needs — fuel, fertilizer, and food, Mr. Speaker, which ensures that we have a sustainable economy and a growing future.

Mr. Speaker, this budget provides the largest funding increase in Saskatchewan history for classrooms, the largest funding increase in Saskatchewan history for care, and the largest funding increase in Saskatchewan history for communities. And, Mr. Speaker, that is why I will be supporting the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance's budget and not the amendment. Thank you.

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

**Mr. B. McLeod:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What you're about to hear, probably could call this McLeod 2.0 since we just had my namesake up a little bit ago, but hopefully it won't be *Groundhog Day* and the same thing over and over again.

So thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the last 229 days of my life, which is the official start of my political career — or as my wife would say, my career diversion — I have done many things for the first

time. But today I rise from my seat to deliver my first response to a budget, a budget delivered by the hon. member from Humboldt-Watrous that continues the excellent work of our Sask Party government, balancing the demands that come from a province experiencing incredible growth and doing it in a sustainable manner that positions Saskatchewan to lead the nation. In the process, delivering the second-lowest debt-to-GDP [gross domestic product] ratio budget in Canada, and a plan to balance the budget within the next fiscal year. An impressive record of service to our province, the member from Humboldt-Watrous leaves us in an envied position in the nation of Canada. Mr. Speaker, clearly she knows and understands that budgets do not balance themselves.

First of all I must spend just a few moments in retrospection. Taking on the role of an MLA is a privilege and a responsibility that is not taken lightly. At times you may feel like you have prepared well for the role, engaging in local boards, attending political meetings, events, taking governance training, door knocking, constituency meetings, industry service, and so much more. But I'm here to say that I really only had a small sense of what I was in for. Borrowing a quote from Alan Watts, "You cannot get wet from the word water." And so I have jumped in and it has been the adventure of a lifetime.

I want to say thank you to all who have helped me get to this place, and a special thanks to those who helped me not only survive but to thrive in this role. I want to say thanks to my dedicated staff back in the constituency office, Brandy Magnus and Kelly Hinderager. Ladies, thank you so much for keeping everything organized, things running smoothly, and plans — and me — on task. To the constituency association and the continued excellent leadership, thank you for hanging in there and being . . . more than just hanging in there. Really, really participating in what we're doing.

[15:30]

To our caucus staff, I want to say thank you so much for the great preparation that you help with, so thorough in every way, and really developing great friendships with you all. Thank you for that.

And to my family. None of us take on this role without support from family. My oldest son, Michael, thank you, Michael, for taking up the reins on the farm and making sure that I have nothing to worry about there. My son Mark, for your help in that as well and for keeping me grounded and the man that I am. And my daughter Jessica, thank you for your love and support as well in her role as a nurse in Royal UH [Royal University Hospital] in Saskatoon, RUH. I think she has the best job in the world, bringing babies into the world. I'm not sure what could be better. And to all of our kids' spouses, thank you for your roles and involvement, your encouragement, your prodding, some of the things that need to be addressed — great feedback.

But most of all to my wife of 43 years this year, Marlie Beth McLeod, my love of my life, a patient woman for sure, but absolutely a rock for me. And thank you so much, hon, for all your love.

And to all my fellow caucus members, you have indeed made me feel very welcome in this place.

So let's turn our attention to the Saskatchewan budget for '24-25, entitled *Classrooms, Care & Communities*. Record funding to schools, health care, and municipalities, funding that continues to respond to a growing province and funding that is only possible because our government continues to build a stronger economy and a brighter future. Gone are the days of woe is us, the have-not province in Canada. We are charting our own course and will continue to lead our nation in growth and opportunity.

Now most people know that I'm a farmer, a dairy farmer to be exact. But regardless of the type of farmer, we all need many of the same things, actually all of the same things to make our crops grow. We need fertile soil. We need abundant sunshine, accurate seed placement, frost-free days, concise timing of seeding and harvesting, and we need adequate moisture. Most of all we need adequate moisture. And when the crop comes up, if the grasshoppers and insects don't destroy it, we need good harvest weather, that absence of rain so quality is not compromised or destroyed. If one of these essential requirements is not met, the yield can indeed suffer and sometimes not even be there.

With all of these factors weighing against us, some might ask, why does anyone want to take the risk to farm? Thankfully there are many who do. And because they are willing to take that risk, we all have food to eat, milk to drink, and Saskatchewan continues to feed the world. It's the principle of sowing and reaping, agreeing with the wise words of Jesus who said, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed; but if it dies it produces many seeds.

And just like farming, there are principles that need to be in place for the economy of Saskatchewan and any economy to flourish. We need vision to plan for the future. Not the kind of vision that says, no, you'll never see a million people in this province.

We need economic policies that encourage investment, laws that protect each of us from wrongdoing, adequate resources including a well-trained labour force, investment capital, and regulation that allows a profit — not a dirty word — a profit. That's a return on capital in order to reinvest and continue the growth.

I would submit to this House that the growth that we are experiencing right now is the result of the careful nurturing of all the items just listed, and an attitude in Saskatchewan of can-do, often known as the entrepreneurial spirit. Yes, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan can and will continue to show the world what we are made of. We can be all that we want to be and take our rightful place in the great nation of Canada. Common-sense principles that say, let's sustainably use the natural resources that are so abundant, let's add value to all we produce, and let's continue to build this great province.

It is only because we have a strong, vibrant, and growing economy that we are able to make the investments in classrooms, care, and communities, investments that will provide our families with the best education possible, health care that everyone deserves, and communities that we can all be proud of. Economic growth provides the foundation to build all of that and more.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me speak to the budget themes. First of all, classrooms. Saskatchewan's 27 school divisions will receive 2.25 billion in school operating funding for the '24-25



school year. That's a record increase of 180 million, 8.8 per cent over last year. And yes, that is sorely needed. It is a commitment to deal with the massive challenge of classroom sizes and complexity. It is predictable, transparent, and written into a contract with the Saskatchewan School Boards Association. Our teachers and students deserve this, and it will be delivered.

Alongside the 180 million increase in operating funding is the equally important budget line of 216 million for pre-K [pre-kindergarten] to grade 12 capital projects, up a whopping 41.8 per cent from last year. You cannot deal with class size without building more schools, more room. And the list includes ongoing funding for 11 projects and 11 major renovations. That's 14 schools, ongoing funding. Funding for planning nine new schools and two renovations. 25.8 million for relocatables, which is over and above the additional 32 million announced for relocatables late in '23-24.

And, Mr. Speaker, education doesn't stop at the high school graduation. An increase of 3.7 per cent for post-secondary, 793 million, providing more space and opportunities for Saskatchewan students to train and pursue careers in Saskatchewan, right where they belong.

Our government's graduate retention program, one of the most important programs that I've seen in my children's lives, has benefited 81,600 students to date — to date — to the tune of 739 million in tax credits. And it will continue to provide 20,000 in tax credits to post-secondary students who live and work in Saskatchewan. All of my children and their spouses have benefited from that program and have stayed and are here in Saskatchewan. That's wonderful.

Health care highlights. With population growth comes the absolute requirement to invest in health care. This budget should make it very clear that our government is determined to provide Saskatchewan residents with the best care possible — a record 7.6 billion, an increase of 726.4 million, up 10.6 per cent. Lots of things are up.

The emphasis will continue to be put on recruiting and retaining through the health human resources action plan, and so vitally important in the area that I serve. We will continue to deliver on the commitment to add 250 new or enhanced permanent health care providers in our rural and remote locations. 11.4 million continues to support the significant seat expansions that were previously announced, things that are so needed. Occupational therapy, speech language pathology, and physician recruitment programs at the University of Saskatchewan are all included.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, record capital investment of 516.8 million for facilities and equipment. That's up 179 million. The list includes Prince Albert Victoria Hospital, Weyburn General, La Ronge long-term care, Regina General Hospital parkade, specialized long-term bed replacements in Regina — all of that delivered to the people of Saskatchewan.

And let's talk about cancer. How many of us have dealt with cancer? And how many that we know in our families that have dealt with cancer. In my own family and extended family, just in the last year both my father-in-law and my mother-in-law. So an increase of 26.1 million to Saskatchewan Cancer Agency to ensure effective and timely treatment options. Total record

budget of 248.9 million for cancer.

A 3.5 million increase for breast cancer care and screening is welcome news. This includes technology enhancements, new imaging equipment, and the establishment of the breast health centre in Regina, much-needed facility. Far too many women have suffered with breast cancer diagnosis and treatment, and this initiative will provide a significant boost to support patients and health care providers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to read a really significant quote from Sarah Wright, a breast cancer survivor, in an interview that she did with the CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] on March 20th, 2024, the day after the breast health centre funding announcement was made. And here I quote:

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

And, Mr. Speaker, the largest funding increase in Saskatchewan history for communities, 340.2 million in unconditional support for municipalities in the province, an increase of 14.2 per cent from the previous year. As our economy grows, municipalities receive a predictable share of that growth. That is making a difference in all of our communities in Saskatchewan.

How does that relate to numbers on the ground, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Just a couple quick examples. The community of Lumsden in 2007 and '08, when this program was first introduced, received \$157,644. In '24-25 they will receive 509,131 — 3.2 times more than when that program started. And right at home where I live, in the RM [rural municipality] of Caron No. 162, '07-08 they received 59,740. This year, \$196,000. Amazing.

Here's what Her Worship Mayor Sandra Masters of Regina had to say on the Greg Morgan Morning Show on CJME on the morning after the budget address. And I'll quote them both.

Greg Morgan:

How did you appreciate or not appreciate the budget? I think you kind of did appreciate it.

Response from Mayor Sandra Masters:

We know what we have been advocating for over the last couple of years. The fact that we have in the kitty the municipal revenue transfer of 42 million, it means a few million more dollars for the city of Regina. That's incredible news.

She couldn't quit rushing to get all the news out that she wanted to say. She continues:

The investment in health care in the city of Regina as a centre to serve southern Saskatchewan, those are all incredible. Big news in terms of schools.

Back to Greg Morgan:

Nothing that you are disappointed in?

Mayor Sandra Masters:

No. It's more expansion for supportive housing, for emergency shelter. We are really pleased with the investment in the city.

Incredible, incredible.

Mr. Speaker, that is a voice that resonates across all of Saskatchewan, from Lumsden to Morse in my constituency to every city, town, village, and rural municipality in our province. And why is this possible, Mr. Speaker? To borrow words from the budget address, it's possible because it's entirely driven by the strength of our economy. Incredible.

Mr. Speaker, communities remain strong because of the people that live in them, where they live, work, play, and raise a family, and I'm very proud to say that Saskatchewan remains one of the most affordable places in Canada to do just that. Our government is committed to keeping it that way. So here are some of the affordability measures. In this budget, we reaffirm our commitment to no new taxes or tax increases. We have among the lowest personal income taxes in the country. Continued relief from reduced education property tax — not something to be just thrown away and say, hey that really didn't matter. That was significant.

Active families benefit; children's drug plan, including help to fund insulin pumps and glucose monitors; 4.7 million increase to autism funding; 17 million to deliver the first full year of the Saskatchewan employment incentive program which will help deliver more affordability to low-income families; and 43 million to targeted seniors' care initiatives which is going to make a significant difference. And that list goes on, Mr. Speaker.

[15:45]

All of this is possible because of our strong, diversified, and growing economy. Every day as I make the drive from my home in Caron to the city of Regina, I see first-hand, first-hand, the economic investment. Along the entire corridor from Regina to my hometown, I see new equipment dealerships; construction companies; livestock facilities supplying service to our cattle industry; veterinarian office; a pork processing plant — Donald's Fine Foods, \$60 million investment, 200 jobs; mining investments; canola crushing at the Global Transportation Hub, 350 million from the company of Cargill; Great Plains Power Station in Moose Jaw; Red Leaf Pulp, planned expenditure of 350 million.

And here's one that I really love. K+S Potash. I can see it. It's not quite in my constituency, but I can see it every time I go by. It's actually in the . . . member right over here. What's your . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Arm River.

**Mr. B. McLeod:** — Arm River. That one always escapes me. From Arm River. K+S chased out by an NDP government with the failed experiment of nationalization 40 years ago. They're back — 3.25 billion in investment in 2015 and on, producing potash again in our province. My drive reminds me of all the jobs

associated with that investment and it tells me that rural Saskatchewan will remain strong and continue to be the backbone of our economy.

And so we continue to invest in unprecedented ways in agriculture. Spending will be up 4.1 per cent, fully funding crop insurance and AgriStability, important programs for the farmers in Saskatchewan; 89.4 million for strategic initiatives under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership. That's super important. The development of new — new — irrigated acres and support for improved energy and water efficiency of existing systems. Finally, finally we will begin to see the fulfilled vision of those who had the foresight to build the infrastructure of Lake Diefenbaker. That, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will make a difference to agriculture in Saskatchewan.

Growth, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that allows all the benefits I have talked about — good jobs, great careers, vibrant and thriving communities where families can grow and flourish. Now there is one piece of growth, Mr. Speaker, that we could do without. Along with our government, 7 of this country's 10 premiers also recognize the damage that will be done when the carbon tax increases or grows by 23 per cent on April the 1st. And by their own admission, the feds have absolutely no idea whether or not it is actually reducing emissions. No idea at all. That is an April Fool's tax if I've ever heard one.

Last month's power bill on my very own farm . . . I want to do some comparisons here. Power bill, not natural gas, strictly power. The carbon tax portion of the power bill was \$492.45. When I add 23 per cent to that, it will make it \$605.71. One farm, my farm, one month. We're not on annualized billing, and so that amount is pretty indicative of what I'll pay over the next 12 months — \$7,268.52. Unbelievable number. I could invest that money in making our operation much more sustainable in a few areas and I think it would return much more dividends than that.

And it's not lost on the people of Saskatchewan that a membership in the Sask NDP Party automatically confers membership in the federal NDP Party, and they are the only reason we may possibly have to endure another 18 months of Trudeau 2.0 and this ridiculous tax that makes all of life more unaffordable. That kind of growth in costs we can do without, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So today I'm proud to stand in this magnificent House and affirm my support of the 2024-25 budget. I will not be supporting the amendment put forward by the party opposite, but I will support the motion put forward by my colleague from Saskatoon Willowgrove and will be happy to vote in favour. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Skoropad:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What an absolute pleasure and honour it is here to rise today to talk about the 17th budget that this government has presented in this Assembly. It was presented so eloquently last Wednesday by our Deputy Premier, the Finance minister.

Over the course of these last number of days you've heard some different visions, a couple of different visions of Saskatchewan.

One certainly is a dark vision, a bleak vision, a vision of the opposition, and it's a reminder of why they are the opposition. And we have a different vision, a vision of Saskatchewan with a bright future, a vision of this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, let me reiterate though what a strong budget it is. It's a budget that is certainly prudent and it's one that addresses the needs of today but positions our province for tomorrow.

Our government certainly does not believe that the grass, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is greener to the east of us and that the grass is greener to the west of us. We believe that the greenest grass is right here, right here at home in Saskatchewan. This budget, Mr. Speaker, is a testament to that firm belief, with record investments in classrooms, in care, and in communities. This budget will see the largest ever increase to school operating funding. This budget will see the largest ever increase to health care in the province. And this budget will see the largest ever increase to municipal revenue sharing to communities right across this province. And, Mr. Speaker, the 22 RMs and 56 communities that I have the good honour to represent, this is meaningful for them, each and every one of them.

Capital investments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the tune of 4.4 billion to build schools, to build hospitals, to build long-term care facilities, to build highways. Actually while I'm on the topic of highways, I do want to mention this, that our budget this year continues the commitment to repair and improve and build more than 1100 kilometres of highways. And there's one particular stretch of highway that's particularly important in my constituency, and that's the Highway 15 east of Kenaston. The important work that's being done on that important stretch of highway is very much appreciated by my constituents.

Stepping back for an instance, if I could, just to consider our government's commitment to infrastructure since 2007, we have repaired and we have improved more than 20 000 kilometres of highways in this province. To put that in perspective, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is nearly half the circumference of the entire globe. It is actually the distance from this legislature all the way to our trade office in Dubai, and from my farm just south of Chamberlain all the way to our newest trade office in Berlin with a couple of kilometres to spare, Mr. Speaker. This investment represents growth and represents an investment to connect our communities, to support our industries, and our economy.

Now speaking of roads, Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I travel too far down these budget remarks and that road I'm going to be travelling, I just want to acknowledge a couple of people here. I want to acknowledge my constituency assistant. I know she's watching here today. I think she's a little under the weather today, but she's watching. She knows what I think of her. She knows how I've stood in this legislature and said how I think she is the absolute best, and I stand by those words, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But I would also like to just say one thing, one thing that certainly she is known for, and she certainly has the largest heart of any person I think I've ever met. So it is an absolute honour to work with her.

Now my family. My family, Terrill and the boys, Noah and Sol. I won't talk too much about them. I talk about them enough in here whenever I have an opportunity, even though members want to hear a little bit about that because they hope I will mess up in

some way, shape, or form. But I just always thank Terrill for having such poor judgment in men. And you know, I just . . . And I'm so blessed to have her in my life.

And you know, today's a big day in our family. When I do go back to the theme of roads I have been talking about, today is a big day. Today is the first time ever that Noah drove he and his brother to school. So they made the 50-kilometre trek, and I'll be honest, I was a little anxious. But eventually you've got to give a little bit of leeway here for your children. And so I'm so proud of them, there's no question.

And I'll tell you, Noah just . . . He got a vehicle finally. He has an old 1970 — no, not a 1970 — 1996 Ford pickup, and he has been fixing away at this . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . You know, I'm hearing all kinds of chirping about Fords, and you know, our farm has done just well with Fords. But that being said, there's parts all over. He loves to talk and he loves to fix it. He just can't get enough. He has the member from Riversdale actually on speed dial because he's got a lot of questions often, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But my other son, Sol, you know, he's not that interested actually in driving. He's more interested in just, you know, just . . . He'd rather drive his bicycle, I think, than drive a vehicle on the highway. But nonetheless, nonetheless, he is someone that certainly makes me proud.

Actually he really loves to talk budget with me. He loves numbers, loves math. So this particular budget, we've been having a lot of conversations about this. You can imagine. So some lessons were given there. Maybe some lessons are going to be given to the opposition here today as well.

But at any rate, I've talked longer than I was going to about my family, but every day they remind me of how important the decisions are that we make in this Chamber here. So, Mr. Speaker, I am truly blessed to be able to do the job that I do, like all of my colleagues here, all the people in this Chamber.

And one of the greatest honours is getting to meet and talk to constituents. And recently I had a couple of interesting conversations with some constituents — separate conversations but similar content. And really, it had to do with children, ironically, and in particular, in both instances, the importance of having your children have a career here and raise a family here, right here in the province.

And that was the theme, and you know what? That, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is living the dream, having your kids right here. And that same dream and desire to have young people remain here, well that's fuel for our growth plan and that's fuel for the budget and that's fuel for me every day that I get to serve the province of Saskatchewan.

Speaking of service . . . Actually I should probably take a drink of water before I get into this one, because this could get really interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Speaking of service, my mom, my mom lives to serve others. Specifically my mom, like probably lots of other moms in this Chamber, loves to feed people. She absolutely lives to feed people.

And as you're well aware, Easter is fast approaching and this is

an incredibly important time for me and for my family for two reasons. One, it's Easter and it's the crux of my faith, and faith is the centre of who I am and what I stand for. Secondly, it's a time when my family in particular gets to gather together for a traditional Easter morning Ukrainian breakfast. And we love it. Complete with pasta, and sausage from the Ukrainian Co-op here in Regina, ham, and my mom makes this special thing. I don't know, it's beets and horseradish, and you know, honestly I hate it. I don't know why she makes it. But everybody else seems to like it. But there's all kinds of things, eggs and pastry, and it's great.

But you know, what once started as four of us — my sister and my mom and my dad — now is 24 of us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, 24 of us, with spouses and children and grandchildren. How is that for growth? And while the size of my family has changed, what's remained the same is the fact that mom happily hosts Easter breakfast. You see, mom's attitude symbolizes the sentiments on this side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the belief that governs this government, that is she invitingly opens the door. She welcomes more. She welcomes the challenges of a house that comes with a growing family. She extends the table.

I'll tell you what mom doesn't do. She does not hope that some of us will make other plans. She doesn't hope that some of us won't stay very long. No, Mr. Speaker, what mom does and what this government does is we work to make the pie bigger. What we do is we work to extend the table.

[16:00]

Like my own family, our province is growing at a rapid pace. This past year alone we've seen roughly, well over 31,000 people — newcomers, neighbours enter this province, and later this year we anticipate hitting 1.25 million people in the province. And our government is working hard to grow that pie and to extend that table.

You know, sometimes I hear comments in this Chamber criticizing our efforts to share our Saskatchewan story abroad. Comments about our efforts to grow the pie. Comments on our international trade offices or trade delegations. Comments about our business-related travel to places like Mexico, India, or Dubai. Mr. Deputy Speaker, those negative comments, those criticisms suggesting it is a waste of time and resources to share our Saskatchewan story abroad are an insult to every person in this province who relies on security and expansion of those same international markets to make a living.

Those comments are an affront to every person working in manufacturing, in mining, in oil and gas, in our tech sector, and certainly in our agriculture industry. It is an insult to every one of those more than 200,000 new Saskatchewanians who have called this province home since 2007, and it is an insult to every person in the province of Saskatchewan with the desire to remain here at home. Because these very exports are the key to an export-driven economy. They are the keys to us growing the pie.

There's a good book I read here just awhile back and I'm sure some other members in this Chamber have read the same book too. It's called *13 Ways to Kill Your Community*. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would argue that it's the Saskatchewan NDP economic playbook for the province. But I would just like to draw your

attention to one particular chapter. It's chapter 12. It's called "Become Complacent." It's waiting for the phone to ring. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the day we stop trying to expand our markets, the day we stop trying to share Saskatchewan's story abroad, and the day we stop trying to grow the pie will be a sad day for this province. But I can tell you this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that day will never be a day that will happen under this government.

As I said earlier, there are two distinctly different visions for this province. Ours is centred on a growing, a stronger economy. It is only through a strong, growing economy that we can care for and are able to improve the quality of life for all who call Saskatchewan home. Our vision as seen in our budget continues to support the cylinders of our economic engine from mining to technology, and oil and gas to manufacturing.

This year's budget also continues our government's steadfast support of the ag sector, the backbone of our Saskatchewan economy. We continue to invest, make important investments in ag research, and we continue to invest in risk management programs to support the people who feed the world.

Of particular importance to my constituency in communities like Outlook and Broderick, Elbow and Loreburn, is our budget's commitment to irrigation in this province, both in terms of increasing irrigation provincially and by our plan to commence work on the Diefenbaker project. Yes, Mr. Speaker, our strong Saskatchewan economy is getting stronger and this budget supports that strength and growth.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what does all this economic growth mean to the people of Saskatchewan? What does it mean to the people that I represent in Arm River? Let me be clear. It is only through a strong economy that we are able to make the investments into the quality of life that are present in this budget and that the people of this province deserve.

A better quality of life is one that cares for our health. Mr. Speaker, this year's budget invests a record \$7.6 billion into health initiatives in our province. This funding supports our health human resources action plan, a plan aimed at recruiting and expanding positions for rural Saskatchewan. And we're already seeing this plan pay off in droves in several communities in Arm River.

This budget includes funding directed to aggressively attack our surgical wait-lists, something our people of the province deserve, and provides more funding to increase capacity and decrease wait times for MRIs [magnetic resonance imaging] and CTs [computerized tomography].

Unfortunately, as was pointed out by the member from Lumsden-Morse, something that does connect all of us in this Chamber is cancer, in that we've all been somehow either directly or indirectly touched by it. That's why increases to the funding to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency are absolutely spot-on. And that's why funding for breast cancer care and for screening are spot-on. And that's why the development of breast health care centre of excellence in Regina is so spot-on. This is precisely, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why the strength of our economy matters.

Mental health and addictions continue to be a priority for this government. That's why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this year's budget

commits \$574 million to mental health and addictions, funding, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that will support additional counselling and treatment services and provide the creation of additional treatment spaces, working towards 500 new spaces in fact. Mr. Deputy Speaker, no one deserves a life of addictions. No one. This year's budget works to combat the destructive force of addiction and help people to attain the life that they deserve in this province.

Speaking of deserve, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our young people deserve the best educational opportunities possible. This year's budget commits record investments in education to the tune of \$4.4 billion, record investment that includes \$180 million for K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] operating funding; increased funding for classroom supports to address size and complexity so that our teachers, who do such great work in the classroom, can continue that work; funding for our libraries, for our early learning and child care, and for our newish Distance Learning Centre.

As for education beyond the walls of grade 12, this year's budget continues to invest in post-secondary education. It continues to support our Student Aid Fund. It continues to support the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship and continues to support our graduation retention program, a program that has now seen 81,600 graduates benefit to date.

But what I think is really important here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that we not lose the faces in the numbers here. Each of those 81,600 people now contribute to our economy and are important to our communities, and every one of these numbers is a person who helps to fill a school, a daycare, and a rink. These are the people that represent our families. These are the people who, if hope hadn't beat fear 17 years ago, they would be making travel plans to visit with mom and dad in Saskatchewan over Easter, instead of just popping over for an Easter morning.

What else do the people of the province deserve? The people of the province deserve an affordable life. Through the strength of our economy, we are able to provide over \$2 billion in affordability measures. Since 2007, as a matter of fact, we've removed 112,000 people from the provincial income tax rolls. We have the second-lowest utility bundle in the nation, and we have removed the carbon tax from natural gas and electricity for home heating. And we'll continue to press the federal government to remove the carbon tax completely, as we know that's the single greatest contributor to affordability challenges we face right here in our province and right across the nation.

And we continue to care for those most vulnerable. Increases to both the Sask income support program and Saskatchewan assured income for disability program are well needed. Increases to the personal care home benefit are also well needed. We will continue to support the seniors' income plan, the seniors' drug plan. Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to support the people of the province.

You know, not much keeps me up at night, not much at all except one thing. And actually it started about 16 years ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's when I became a father. I lay awake and I think about my children. That's something that does keep me awake at night. So I ask, Mr. Speaker, what is the purpose of growth without safe communities? This budget continues our

government's commitment to making our communities safer. To that end, funding to establish our Saskatchewan marshals service, a service that will increase capacity within Saskatchewan and focus on rural and remote areas, well that simply resonates with my constituents. And building safer communities, that also resonates with my constituents.

And our efforts are making a difference. You know, I recently read a news article about a drug bust that was made by our crime reduction team and the RCMP. And a significant amount of fentanyl was recovered. And when I consider what the impact is of just simply a grain of fentanyl on the life of a person, on a family, I shudder. I think of how many lives and how much grief one grain, let alone 1 gram, mean. That's why these investments are so, so meaningful.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I've heard a number of times in this Assembly the joke-no joke about the luggage as the graduation gift. We all know it. That's so common for so many years. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, here's the final punchline to that joke. That past reality doesn't exist anymore. The only luggage that's now being bought is given to someone so they can actually come back home. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, people are coming home and they're coming here from abroad and people are choosing to stay right here in Saskatchewan.

We hear population growth numbers shared right here routinely, but we also see it in our communities. I saw it at the last fundraising gala in Bethune, a sold-out event focused on raising money to build a new child care centre to support a growing community. I saw it at the newcomer welcome night in Davidson. I see it on the streets of Holdfast, the streets of Craik, the streets of Hanley, and the streets of Loreburn.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget, the one so eloquently presented last week, is certainly one for today and one for preparing us for tomorrow. It is said that rising waters raise all ships, and it is by a strong, rising economy that we are able to lift an entire province. Classrooms, care, and community — it is for these reasons, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I will indeed be supporting the budget tabled by the Deputy Premier and Finance minister. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair of Committees:** — I recognize the member for Canora-Pelly.

**Mr. Dennis:** — Thank you, Deputy Speaker. It's a tough act to follow a slick fellow like that over there. But as I stand up for my last budget speech, I would like to thank the Finance minister and the Deputy Premier for a great day on her seventh and her final budget too, and I would like to wish her well in her retirement. Also with this budget it'll continue to grow Saskatchewan through our strong economy and investing in our classrooms, care, and communities.

Before I go on to a little bit of the budget, I would like to thank my colleagues. You know, I have all the retiring colleagues and that — including myself, I guess, not really retiring but I'm going to move on — I would just like to thank them for . . . You know, I came in here, and I didn't know what the heck's going on or anything, and I could lean on people that are the wily veterans that have been here for a long time. And I'd really like to thank them, even the outgoing ones on the other side, although they

didn't accomplish much in helping me, other than maybe heckling them a little bit. But you know, everybody comes here to do their job, and they did their job and I wish them well too, as well.

I'd also like to thank my colleagues and the people on the other side, the MLAs on the other side. It's been a pleasure working for about eight and a half years. And I got a chance to work on both sides, actually. During COVID I went to the other side.

[16:15]

And you know, it's great to say that I never worked on that side. I got to stay in power all my time. But I got to go to that side for a while, and I really enjoyed it over there. It brought a different perspective, a very negative perspective. And I think most of you guys enjoyed me over there, other than Ryan Meili. For some reason he kept sliding over all the time. I don't know if his rug or his table or his floor was tilted, but he sure didn't like me. But you know what, maybe before I leave I'd like to maybe put my seat over there or maybe come visit you guys for a day.

But what I would like to say is, you know what, I made a bet over there, and I'm sure some of you girls heard the bet of \$100. Ryan Meili, he's a doctor and he can't even pay me the \$100 he owes me.

Anyway you know, I'd like to thank a few people too, as well as everybody else. First of all I'd like to thank my CA [constituency assistant], Jessica Kwas. Not only is she a smart, talented, extremely hard worker, but she is flipping awesome. And I'd like to thank her for writing that in for me. She's a good gal and I'm going to miss her, and she hopefully finds a job with the next crew here.

Also I'd like to thank my executive, the supporters in Canora-Pelly. It's been eight and a half years. It's just been a great honour to serve them. I've enjoyed every moment. My wife will be happy that I'm not going to be filling the freezer with bake sale stuff and everything else because I've gone to a lot of bake sales, cookouts, chili . . . I go to a lot. And I will continue to go to them because we have a great constituency and a great area there, and it's great to support them.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank my wife. Married for almost 40 years. I went out with her for six years before I could finally talk her into marrying me. And she stuck with me for 40 years this fall.

And I don't know what she's going to do, because I was never home and now I'm going to be home. I don't know. I might be getting put into one of those senior centres a lot quicker than I want to. Anyway she's worked very hard for me over the years, been my greatest support, pounded a lot of signs for me. And I think she's the happiest person in my household that she doesn't have to pound a sign or pound on a door anymore. So thank you to my wife.

Also my daughter Jazz, Shane, and Lewis, Oliver, and Hendrick. God, I hate this. It's fun, the opportunity to see them play hockey. You know I was over there on Sunday and grandpa might wrestle and take them a little bit too much chocolate, but it's been good watching them play hockey, develop. Both Lewis and Oliver

started the last couple of years.

You know, they take a lot of money out of me. I never ever got paid for playing hockey. I got this nose for free. You know, health care's free now. But it was good. It's good to watch them. I pay them a toonie a point, and they can't just wait to come by and see grandpa, after they undress, and get their money. It's great, and I'm going to enjoy watching them grow up.

Also my daughter Jade and her partner, Jason. They had a four-month-old granddaughter, Toby Emma. And I'm so . . . I'm not as excited as my wife, Lorri. She's buying all these dresses and girly things. I'll wait till she starts playing hockey. Anyways, really good. They live in White City. They bought a house. They're renovating their house. They've kind of moved into my condo for a little longer than I like, but it's nice to have them around and see the granddaughter. Jade's off on maternity leave. She works at the correctional centre in Regina here and so does Jason. So I'm excited to see them all at Easter here.

Also I have my son Carson. He's in Melville, and he's kind of . . . I think he's too mellow for my liking, a little bit. But yeah, really he's been there for about 12 years now, running the golf course in the summertime and then in the wintertime he runs the curling rink. So he's doing a great job, still playing a little hockey. And the one great thing I taught him was that he's a Bruins fan. And I had the pleasure of taking him to game 1 of 2019 Stanley Cup, so that was awesome.

Also my mom and dad never got the opportunity to see me . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . They're proud? Well anyway, between them and the teachers, I think they'd be rolling over in their graves thinking how the hell I got here. But anyways, it's been a pleasure.

Now I'll move on to some highlights, something a little happier. Anyway the budget highlights show record investment and strong economy, growing our population and opportunities, and record investments in our classrooms of 9 per cent, 10 per cent in care, and 14 per cent in communities.

And just before I . . . You know, I'm going to go back a little bit, and now that I said the record investments, I've got a few things. I want to get back to a few of my colleagues, the colleagues that, you know, I really . . . become family, close friends, best friends.

Heck, one guy even made me pay 170 bucks for a tie. You know, I got . . . the guy from, MLA from Cypress Hills, you know. This summer he married his last daughter off, so he takes me over to Colin O'Brian's. He says, you drive, because he, you know, farm boy can't drive in the city, whatever. So I drive down. I drive him down and he says, well come in with me. I go. I don't want to go in there. I buy all my stuff in Yorkton at KW, and blah, blah, blah. Oh, he calls me, takes me in, and I walk in and he's looking at these ties. And for some reason, I don't know why, there's no price tag on these things. So he goes, I like this one. I said, well I'll take this one. So it's right here. I thought I would wear it today just in honour of it.

And so he goes in to try a shirt on and I come back, and I'm already in the vehicle. I rolled this down and I'm sitting in the vehicle, and he goes, holy . . . And I can't even say what else he said. He says, I paid \$430 for a shirt and tie. I says, I got the other

tie for 170. And then he says, this is crazy; let's go for lunch. I says, you think we can afford it? So we went to McDonald's, had a great meal.

So anyways, I'm going to miss, you know, the guy from Cypress Hills who promised me a barbecue. I think when I first moved in about eight years ago, he promised me a barbecue. He says, you're doing all the cooking anyway; you take the barbecue. Eight years later he finally bought a tank and he says, well maybe this spring before you leave, you'll come over and cook at my place. So I might have that opportunity, but I'm going to charge you because I'm going to be unemployed.

Anyway, the guy from Kelvington-Wadena, another good friend of mine. I've been over to his place. I call him Foster Brooks, Hollow Bones; I call him a bunch of nicknames. Anyways he needed some advice one day. He was having a little struggle of how he was going to climb the ladder of success. We were sitting there watching curling, having a few soda pops, and I said, you know what? I says, Hollow Bones, you have to learn to throw two rocks and sweep six, and maybe shut up once in a while, and you'll get up the ladder of life. So he took that advice. He still can't get up the ladder. Anyway.

Also the Highways minister from Estevan. I enjoy going out with her and having supper at her place, playing cards. I'm going to miss seeing that fox in your backyard. Out by the dumpster, she's always feeding this fox. Apparently I'm the only one that sees it late at night.

The guy from . . . the Ag minister, my neighbour who comes over. Well one way or another, we're running over in our shorts at about 10 o'clock at night, watching the hockey game or whatever. I'm going to miss him, and I'm going to miss the games and the friendship and everything else like that.

Melville-Saltcoats, I'm going to miss him. Any time I need something, you know, he's kind of my computer guy, my knowledge guy or whatever. And then we talk sports, and unfortunately he's a Calgary fan, so he'll never see a cup.

And the guy from Athabasca. We've become good friends. He's not here. He's probably on tour.

**An Hon. Member:** — Working.

**Mr. Dennis:** — No, I don't think he's working. Anyways, we were sitting around our great room of 105. We're sitting around our big room of 105 and he goes, it would be great if we would start those lunches again, you know, cooking in 105. I looked at him and I says, the member from Kelvington and I do all the cooking; all you do is sit there and eat. He says, yeah, I know but I like that. So anyways, I think when we get back from Easter, we're going to start cooking a little bit and everything else. Yeah, so I had to throw that back in there — boy, sorry — and now I'll get on to a little bit of the budget. Anyway apparently there was one.

Health care, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've seen record investment of \$7.6 billion, up 10 per cent — 574 million invested in mental health and addictions; 516 for facilities and equipment, which is \$179 million higher than last year; record budget of 248.9 million in the Cancer Agency to allow patients the most

effective way of leading . . . \$30 million to increase the support in Saskatoon and the capacity pressure action plan for an acute centre and community-based emergency department capacity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've had increased funding for a health and human resource action plan and commitments to 250 new or enhanced positions in rural Saskatchewan, which has really helped us in our area. We've gained over 40 new physicians and 107 family physicians and 155 specialists. Mr. Speaker, over the last nine months we've did 71,000 surgeries. That's 6,000 procedures more than last year.

A \$16 million increase to improve the access to nurse practitioners through the integration primary health care settings, which my wife was one of the first ones in our area. And she actually went up into the North and worked for a while. I never thought she'd come back but she did anyways after a year, and you know, she's really missed in the Canora area and stuff like that. What are you looking at?

Mr. Speaker, we've recently added \$60 million into incentive program in rural and remote health, which is to help recruit the health care workers, doctors, X-ray lab, and health care workers. Two hundred and fifty new and enhanced positions were also provided for health care providers who were also in these locations. And in Canora-Pelly we have benefited. Kamsack has gotten two X-ray lab technicians, approximately six new nurses, CAs, and we've reopened 10 beds and expanded the emergency service. So we're no longer doing the moonwalk that the member from Regina Rosemont said we were doing. We went there, we made the change, and we got 'er back open again.

In Canora we've got four brand new grad nurses. I was born there 35 years ago, I think, somewhere in there, and never seen four brand new grad nurses. And we've got two new doctors. And these are grad nurses coming out. The 20,000 incentive program has worked out really well. Preeceville, you've got nurses and doctors, and in Norquay a new nurse practitioner.

So things are working well in rural Saskatchewan although you guys on the opposition, you know, you're getting more negative since I left there on that side. I thought I was getting you happy, and I thought when Ryan Meili left, things would change but they didn't change. You guys . . . Look. I finally got a smile on your face. That's the first time since we started the spring session.

[16:30]

Mr. Speaker, our government has funded capital projects like the P.A. [Prince Albert] Victoria Hospital, 180 million; 55 million in the Weyburn hospital; 22 for the Regina parkade, 22 million; long-term care facilities in Regina, La Ronge, Grenfell, Watson, and Estevan.

Mr. Speaker, now we'll move on to education. We've had record investments of \$4.4 billion in education in Saskatchewan — \$180 million for K to 12 operating fund, record investments of 3.3 billion for the Ministry of Education. Mr. Speaker, the 27 school divisions will receive \$2.2 billion in school operating for the '24-25 season, which is a record 180 million over the previous year.

Overall this budget will provide 356.6 million for supports of

classrooms and classroom size and complexity. This budget also includes funding for 11 projects, three major renovations currently under way in Lanigan, Carlyle, La Loche, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Regina, P.A., Balgonie, and Wilcox. And nine new schools and two major renovations in Regina, Saskatoon, Swift Current, Pinehouse, and Corman Park.

The graduate retention program will continue to provide up to \$20,000 tax credit. 81,600 students have benefited so far to date on this program and it's a program that we'll continue. And it was a program that'll keep our kids in here and our province growing. Since 2007 we've invested \$14.2 billion in post-secondary education institutes and student support.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've had the honour over the years to be the Legislative Secretary for Education, and I did the library review and report. And when the Premier asked me to do the library review and report, I wasn't quite sure what I was getting into because I've rarely gone into a library. I know that surprises a lot of you. So I says, absolutely, whatever the Premier wants.

So I did the review and report and actually found out a lot of things. I think the Finance minister was a little mad at my report because I found out the real values of going into a library and stuff like that. You know, the libraries provide seniors, immigrants, vulnerable people . . . They're putting kids programs and that. And I did a six-week tour and put on over 10 000 kilometres. And you know, I think of that report, and I still get Christmas cards from some of the libraries and the regional libraries. And I think it's an important thing, an important thing for our province. So I was happy to be on that.

And I don't know; before I knew it, I was doing the school community council review and report. So I went around and saw the values of all the school community councils and all the work they do in all the school divisions. The one thing I would say is, you know, when I went down and did these things, it was nice to hear the parents and not the school divisions talk. Because the school divisions people, they have their plan, and I wanted to hear from the parents who work with the school kids all the time, work with the teachers all the time.

I go to Cumberland House, La Ronge, and the MLA for Cumberland House is there. And you know, granted he's been there a lot longer than I have, but he's there and he's there to represent his people, which is good. The only thing is he tried to dominate the meeting, and I wasn't . . . So I listened for about . . . I gave him his choice about three or four times. And then the Premier told me I was to run it, and I'd do what I want so I told him to keep quiet. And all of a sudden he packed his books up and left. And then at the end of the meeting, the member from Cumberland left in a heated thing, and the people that were there says, well it's about time he finally kept his mouth shut and we got a chance to talk. Anyway, just something about Cumberland. He was there to represent his people, but let his people speak.

Mr. Speaker, last Friday the member from Regina Rosemont, he was on *The Evan Bray Show*. So you know, I always listen to *The Evan Bray Show* on my way to the office to work. And I wanted to listen to him. He's been here for a long time, critic for . . . He's been on that side for 17 years as a critic. And so what does he say? He says he would cut the gas tax, shrink the PST collections, and he says there's . . . everything is negative and nothing good

about our budget. But you know what? He never had a solution.

Yeah. The one interesting thing that he did say was, when he was asked by Evan Bray, he said, you know, classroom size and complexity would be better dealt with at division, but only if the NDP were in power. And again you know, I make the statement, you know, I find out what the NDP stands for — no damn plan. They got no damn plan. Okay, how much time . . . Okay.

**An Hon. Member:** — Talk about the Bruins.

**Mr. Dennis:** — Okay, talk about the Bruins? Okay.

I'll do a quick little talk about agriculture. You know, agriculture in our area, quite pleased about the agriculture. In the last couple years in Canora-Pelly we've had good crops and the farmers are happy. We're seeing growth in our province and it's only through the agriculture as one of our main industries. And I would like to thank all the farmers right across the province and everywhere for all they do, to growing our province and feeding the world.

Quick little story about 2006. I was mayor at the time, and in 2006 the premier back then, Lorne Calvert, wanted to have a big meeting in Canora. He wanted to have a big meeting to talk about rural revitalization. So he's talking about rural revitalization. He tells me to invite RCMP and farmers and a bunch of other people. So we invite these people and we have a really good discussion about, you know, the future of Saskatchewan, rural revitalization and that. The next day Premier Calvert and the NDP announce that they are closing down our ag office, which was part of our town office. That's the kind of rural revitalization they did. The day after our meeting, they cancelled our ag office . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Regina Rosemont is dreaming. There's not a chance.

Anyway my time is probably overdue, and I just want to thank everybody for the opportunity — the Premier, the Deputy Premier, and that — for believing in me and giving me the opportunity to be Legislative Secretary for Ukraine, which has been close to my heart. A lot of other things. People on both sides, it's been a great honour. I thank you.

And I will be supporting the budget seconded from the member from Saskatoon Willowgrove, and I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you.

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

**Ms. A. Young:** — Well thank you. Thank you very much, mister deputy deputy speaker. It is a real pleasure to rise and get to do a budget reply. It really is. And it's certainly always fun to hear the budget speeches of members opposite.

But I do want to say it is really genuinely lovely to hear some of the stories shared, specifically about their families, community members, some of the memories that members opposite have made, especially those retiring members. I think "lovely" is the best word. There's not a lot of nuance sometimes in this Chamber, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and these small opportunities to learn more of that nuance about members from around the province, the communities that they represent, and the families that support them in being here is really special and certainly, I



think, the highlight for myself in listening to these budget responses.

I'd like to begin, Mr. Speaker, by thanking my family, who permit me to be here. In particular I want to recognize my husband, who's at home right now with our son Kit Roadhouse, who has just celebrated his first birthday, the happiest baby I could have ever picked — the most good-natured, sweet, fat, hefty, jolly little guy. He is so easygoing. He's just so sweet. I certainly feel like I won the baby lottery with him, although he is getting teeth like a complete maniac, Mr. Speaker. He's got his two bottom teeth. He's getting his incisors. They're coming in in like a very weird pattern. It's deeply concerning but beyond his freakish teeth he's a very sweet baby.

Like to also thank my daughter Hara, who's spent some time in these Chambers and is currently waiting for me patiently at daycare right now, who will be very sad that she's not here today. She calls this mama's big work. She loves to come here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I don't know why.

And perhaps one small divergence before I get into my budget response that I think, at least, is funny. She calls this her mom's big work. And I don't know why because I certainly don't allow my children to watch question period. But she has the phrase "Mr. Speaker" in her mind. And I don't know where it comes from. It emerged at a Christmas party we had here in December. She was walking through our caucus office and she walked into a room and just said, "Mr. Speaker," which I thought was very bizarre because again, I don't let my kids watch question period. I don't watch question period.

But she refers to the actual Speaker of this Assembly as mama's big work Santa, which I wanted to get on the record — I'm not sure why. And she speaks to our Bluetooth speaker at home, which is not responsive to voice commands. It's just a Bluetooth speaker. We don't have like an Alexa or Google Home or anything. And she refers to this as Mr. Speaker. So she'll go up to our wireless Bluetooth speaker and say, "Mr. Speaker, play 'Let It Go.'" So yeah, just fun, embarrassing anecdote about my children that, much like the member from Douglas Park, I hope one day they can read and be deeply traumatized by.

Also like to thank my dad. The member from Canora-Pelly spoke about his role as a grandfather and giving his grandchildren too much chocolate. And apparently this is grandfathering 101. I love my dad dearly but I continually have conflict with him over how much sugar he gives to my children before immediately returning them to my love and care.

I'd also like to thank my CA, Jocelyn Adema. She is one of the most important people in my life. She is absolutely astonishing, the level of professionalism and care that she brings to her work. She is a remarkably organized individual. She is so compassionate. She lives and breathes the social gospel and she brings this to all of her work and I feel so, so lucky to have her working to serve the constituents of Regina University.

I'm deeply thankful for my constituents. I've, outside of the legislature, I tried to spend the majority of my time as an MLA knocking on doors and reconnecting, connecting again with my constituents. And again I am just humbled by the job that all of us get to do, in particular that job, that very peculiar job of

knocking on someone's door and asking them how it's going.

And again I think "humbled" is the best word, because it is truly a remarkable experience to do that. And I'm just continually struck by how authentic, how generous, and how sincere people are when you show up and you want to talk to them. And I feel incredibly privileged in the people that I'm able to represent for at least a few months more in this legislature.

I'd also like to give a shout-out to our remarkable team of caucus office staff who do the work of a staff component three times their size and they do it with good humour. They do it with a level of attention to detail that I can only dream of and are just the hardest-working people I have ever had the privilege of sharing an office space with. And I'm so thankful for them every single day that I get to spend in this magnificent building.

[16:45]

I'd like to thank my leader, Carla, just . . . oh, pardon me, the member for Regina Lakeview, Leader of the Official Opposition, but a friend before politics and someone I feel so privileged to serve underneath of, especially as a new mom. It's been incredibly empowering for me to have a leader who's literally been there and done that, and it's something that I feel incredibly privileged, not just as a woman but also just to see such strong authentic leadership modelled in every room that she goes into.

I'd also like to give a shout-out to retiring MLAs on both sides of the aisle. It's not lost on me that this is a difficult building to leave. So for those of you who are leaving this building you have my appreciation, you have my respect for your service, and I hope you will come back and visit us, especially the member from Kindersley.

**An Hon. Member:** — Minister of Kindersley.

**Ms. A. Young:** — Oh, the minister of Kindersley. He's getting a promotion in the last few months here. But I do mean that sincerely. Thank you. Thank you for your service, and I appreciate the time that you've spent here, the dedication that you've shown to your constituents, all of you.

I also want to give a shout-out in particular to the member from Cumberland who's gotten a lot of recognition in budget responses here today, who I have a deep affection for as our previous Whip who onboarded me into this strange role but also is the only member in this Assembly to have made me cry at work. But he did that through the grace and compassion that he showed me as a colleague, and it's something that I will always, always remember and value the really special interpersonal connections that the member from Cumberland brings when he's at his best, which is so often.

I'd also like to thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as well as the Speaker and his office, all the building staff, the Clerks-at-the-Table, the Pages, and everyone else who make this place function so spectacularly.

You know, I started off talking about how enjoyable it is to sit and listen to all of these speeches, and it is quite fun to listen to the budget responses of members opposite. And the first thing that struck me in listening to these responses, Mr. Deputy

Speaker, is wow, they're really listening when we talk.

There's a lot of defensiveness in some of these replies, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know. You think maybe they're sitting there revisiting the glory days, reminiscing about their last international trip, watching reruns of *Emily in Paris*, maybe. But no, they're listening. And how deeply aggrieved some of these members are.

They're listening, and it is truly fascinating to hear such a divergence from last year in the responses. Because last year, like clockwork, you'd stand up and you would hear, "growth that works for everyone." Like a chorus, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And this year it's been . . . Well I suppose "inconsistent" is a kind word for what it's been. The one thread, the one thread that I've really picked up on is they seem to be trying to workshop maybe some of their election attacks, some of their pre-election messaging here on the floor of the legislature. I guess it's a little bit of what we'd call foreshadowing, and I'd like to thank the members opposite for that effort so I have the chance to set the record straight.

Because here's a few of the things that they've floated. Taxation restoration. Nope, that's not on, Mr. Speaker. Revenue sharing. Nope, that's not on. Potash royalties. No, that's not on. That was the current Minister of Justice who did that, Mr. Speaker. Carbon tax again and again. No, that's not on.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's clear this is a government that's all out of ideas. We hear it again and again: "What's your solution? What's your solution?" You're in government. If you'd like us to give you our ideas, we're happy to do that in an election and let the people of Saskatchewan decide. Because what a privilege it is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to govern. And this tired and out-of-touch government has forgotten what a privilege it is, even with this budget with which they've tried to soften some of the jagged edges that they have carved through the heart of this province with their record.

And you know it's easy, Mr. Speaker, sometimes to point out the many ways that they've failed. But the biggest one is that they're just not listening. And when they do decide to listen, what do they do, Mr. Speaker? Let's remember, because this sitting in the legislature the last four years has been madness. It's been wild.

Members opposite, when they went out on their grand listening tour, what did they do? They held closed-door separatist meetings with Lyle Stewart and Allan Kerpan, tramping about the province on some sort of separatist tour. And what emerged from that, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Their economic manifesto. And I will never, never miss an opportunity to read this quote back into the record. Their economic manifesto *Drawing the Line* was characterized by conservative thought leader Howard Anglin as, and I quote:

A new low in political communications in Canada. It is doubtful that any government in the history of Confederation — federal, provincial, or municipal — has published something so badly written. My first thought was that an early unedited draft had been posted prematurely, but after almost a week it has not been replaced. The text is not so much spoiled by errors but composed of them, and the

run-on sentences meander more than the South Saskatchewan River.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that in these last four years has defended Colin Thatcher for five days it took them to figure out that defending a wife-beating murderer was probably not the look they were going for. They couldn't disavow the Loch Ness monster or Legacy Christian Academy or the member from Regina Northeast's astonishingly and publicly profitable hotels. This is a tired and out-of-touch government that has thoroughly lost the plot.

And you know, in her budget response, the Justice minister really wanted to talk about the hard left, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which is a fun bit of political apocrypha because this party, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is staunchly, proudly planted in the history of Roy Romanow, Allan Blakeney, Lorne Calvert, of Tommy Douglas. This is a government . . . Tory premiers have accounted for 94 per cent of the debt in this province, Mr. Speaker — 94 per cent of all government debt under members opposite and their predecessors, the Devine Conservatives. They've overseen a 13 per cent increase in our debt servicing charges. What a gaping level of cognitive dissonance.

The stories they tell themselves that they are a conservative government, the nearly \$1 billion in interest payments that this government, this conservative government has rung up, those are the payments that families and seniors are paying today on their taxes, their PST expansion, their utility bills.

This is a government who just this year had a one-and-a-half-billion-dollar whoopsy in their budget. They went from a \$1 billion surplus to a \$500 million deficit. They're currently running a \$273 million deficit budget in an election year, which would be a heck of a lot worse if they hadn't rammed through \$750 million in special warrants just a couple weeks before. They've added \$3 billion of new debt. And ironically for this government, there's a \$500 million bonus in their own carbon tax payments boosting their budget. This government, \$500 million.

To the member for Kindersley: find out what the OBPS [output-based performance standards] is. You ask the Minister for CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan]. You ask the member from Saskatoon Southeast. You find out. Do some research. I encourage you. Go into the internet. Do some research like some of you guys did on vaccines back during the pandemic. You'll learn a thing or two.

Because, Mr. Speaker, this is a government that is still balancing their budget on the largest tax increase in Saskatchewan's history. They expanded the PST to everything from restaurant meals, kids' clothes, your vehicle registration, groceries, your insurance, Rider tickets. They tried to slap it on your gosh darn gym membership. Not only that, this conservative government hiked the PST by 1 per cent. Their PST revenue has grown by \$2 billion since 2017 — 2 bil. That's one budget oopsy — 2 bil since 2017 in PST revenue.

In 2024 alone, Mr. Deputy Speaker, PST tax revenues are increasing 17 per cent. Meanwhile corporate tax returns are falling well over \$500 million. And, Mr. Speaker, to be clear, we don't have to keep going back to 2017, which was not a great year for this province. In 2021 following the last election, what

did this government do? They turned around. They hiked property taxes by 8.3 per cent, your SaskPower rates by 12 per cent in just a year. Under this government, this government in this term, they have hiked your electrical bills by 114 per cent.

But, Mr. Speaker, let's be fair. It is not all taxes. It's not all taxes. This is a government that also loves to squander. They love to squander on a new marshals service while underfunding the RCMP. Meanwhile we continue to have the highest crime severity rate, twice the Canadian rate; the highest crime severity index; the highest rate of crime amongst provinces. Again, more than twice the national rate.

They love to squander \$11 million in settlement to avoid any further drip, drip, drip out of whatever happened with Brandt in Wascana Park; \$240 million on AIMS [administrative information management system]. Hundreds of thousands of billboards running down public schoolteachers, which, even if you think that's a good way to bargain, even if you think that's fair, is that not a completely pathetic waste of public money?

They also have a proposed Saskatchewan revenue agency that will double the cost of collecting taxes and increase the cost of compliance on small businesses. Let alone the hundreds of thousands, if not millions, they're wasting on court cases.

And the things that they do try and take credit for, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are the hard work and the sweat equity of others, or for not hurting more. The good news out of this budget for small businesses is that they didn't get their tax rate doubled. Great, I guess it's good. Yay, hurrah. It's good that the government isn't doubling taxes on small businesses when 860 have closed under this Premier's watch.

They like to take credit for the hard work of our experts, our exporters, our producers, our explorers, and our workers. Wow. You know, Mr. Speaker, competitive advantage here in Saskatchewan is grounded in people who work for a living. It's grounded in the work and the future of the people of this province. This government cannot take any credit for that, no matter how defensive they feel about their bottom-of-the-barrel job creation record; about their sluggish, abysmal rate of GDP growth; about the fact that in this budget, in black and white, you have said that people's standard of living, per capita GDP, is set to decline for the foreseeable future. You put that in your own budget, guys, and you're saying this is good news, that you're economic mavericks?

They listen to each other, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They listen to their friends. They listen to each other. And when people who they don't agree with come here, what do you see? You see riot fences. Well news flash — you don't repair relationships with riot fences. You don't build an economy on the basis of spin and talking points.

We have the second-lowest average rate of growth among Canadian provinces. Under this government, this province's economic growth rate has averaged just slightly more than half a per cent per year. Under this government, they've had negative economic growth for three of the last six years. They have an economic growth rate that is only a third of the Canadian economic growth rate. Now I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if their famed economic assessment tribunal is going to be weighing into all of

these threats to Saskatchewan's economy because the biggest threat is that Sask Party government, the damage that this Premier and his leadership team have done to this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't know how the members balance this cognitive dissonance, how they reconcile the experience of people in this province. Do they think 6 out of 10 people are pretending to not be able to pay their bills? Do they think all of those kids are pretending to be hungry, the one in five Saskatchewan residents who's gone hungry in this province since 2021? Do they think those people are just faking it, Mr. Speaker?

This is a Premier who has the worst record on the economy, the worst record on job creation amongst provinces. It's not just one or two polls . . .

**The Deputy Chair of Committees:** — It is now 5 o'clock. This House stays recessed until 7 p.m.

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

# GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN CABINET MINISTERS

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**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  
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**Hon. Donna Harpauer**  
Deputy Premier  
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**Hon. Jeremy Harrison**  
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Minister of Immigration and Career Training  
Minister Responsible for Innovation  
Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan

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

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

**Hon. Tim McLeod**  
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Seniors and Rural and Remote Health

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Minister of Government Relations  
Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety  
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Minister Responsible for the  
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**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