



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

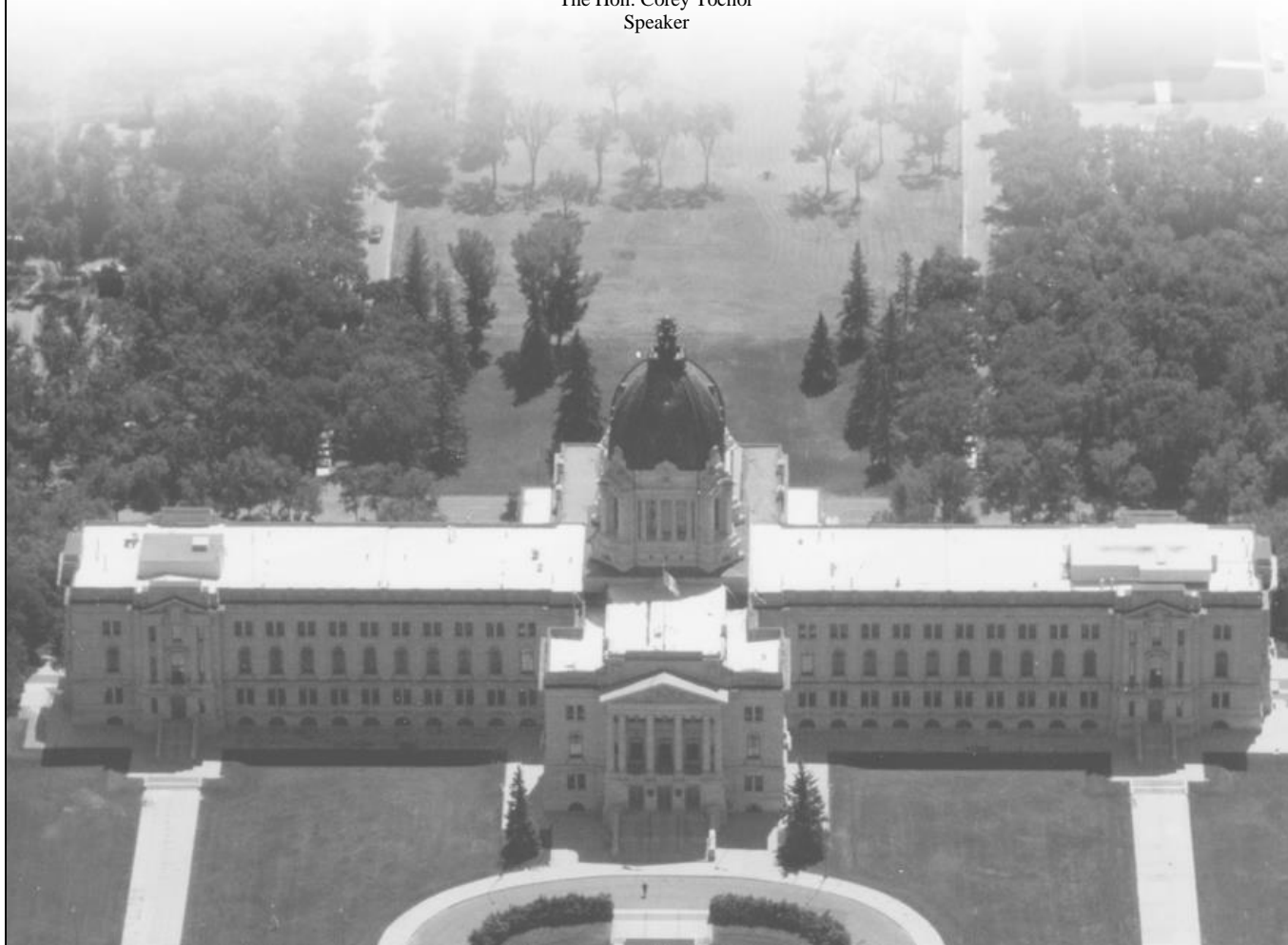
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**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)

Published under the  
authority of  
The Hon. Corey Tochor  
Speaker



**MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**  
**1st Session — 28th Legislature**

**Speaker** — Hon. Corey Tochor

**Premier** — Hon. Brad Wall

**Leader of the Opposition** — Trent Wotherspoon

**Beaudry-Mellor**, Tina — Regina University (SP)

**Beck**, Carla — Regina Lakeview (NDP)

**Belanger**, Buckley — Athabasca (NDP)

**Bonk**, Steven — Moosomin (SP)

**Boyd**, Hon. Bill — Kindersley (SP)

**Bradshaw**, Fred — Carrot River Valley (SP)

**Brkich**, Greg — Arm River (SP)

**Buckingham**, David — Saskatoon Westview (SP)

**Campeau**, Hon. Jennifer — Saskatoon Fairview (SP)

**Carr**, Lori — Estevan (SP)

**Chartier**, Danielle — Saskatoon Riversdale (NDP)

**Cheveldayoff**, Hon. Ken — Saskatoon Willowgrove (SP)

**Cox**, Hon. Herb — The Battlefords (SP)

**D'Autremont**, Dan — Cannington (SP)

**Dennis**, Terry — Canora-Pelly (SP)

**Docherty**, Hon. Mark — Regina Coronation Park (SP)

**Doherty**, Hon. Kevin — Regina Northeast (SP)

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**Duncan**, Hon. Dustin — Weyburn-Big Muddy (SP)

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**Fiaz**, Muhammad — Regina Pasqua (SP)

**Forbes**, David — Saskatoon Centre (NDP)

**Hargrave**, Joe — Prince Albert Carlton (SP)

**Harpauer**, Hon. Donna — Humboldt-Watrous (SP)

**Harrison**, Hon. Jeremy — Meadow Lake (SP)

**Hart**, Glen — Last Mountain-Touchwood (SP)

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**Lambert**, Lisa — Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood (SP)

**Lawrence**, Greg — Moose Jaw Wakamow (SP)

**Makowsky**, Gene — Regina Gardiner Park (SP)

**Marit**, David — Wood River (SP)

**McCall**, Warren — Regina Elphinstone-Centre (NDP)

**McMorris**, Hon. Don — Indian Head-Milestone (SP)

**Merriman**, Paul — Saskatoon Silverspring-Sutherland (SP)

**Michelson**, Warren — Moose Jaw North (SP)

**Moe**, Hon. Scott — Rosthern-Shellbrook (SP)

**Morgan**, Hon. Don — Saskatoon Southeast (SP)

**Nerlien**, Hugh — Kelvington-Wadena (SP)

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**Ottenbreit**, Hon. Greg — Yorkton (SP)

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**Steinley**, Warren — Regina Walsh Acres (SP)

**Stewart**, Hon. Lyle — Lumsden-Morse (SP)

**Tell**, Hon. Christine — Regina Wascana Plains (SP)

**Tochor**, Hon. Corey — Saskatoon Eastview (SP)

**Vermette**, Doyle — Cumberland (NDP)

**Wall**, Hon. Brad — Swift Current (SP)

**Weekes**, Randy — Biggar-Sask Valley (SP)

**Wilson**, Hon. Nadine — Saskatchewan Rivers (SP)

**Wotherspoon**, Trent — Regina Rosemont (NDP)

**Wyant**, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)

**Young**, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

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**Party Standings:** Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 51; New Democratic Party (NDP) — 10

**Clerks-at-the-Table**

**Clerk** — Gregory A. Putz

**Law Clerk & Parliamentary Counsel** — Kenneth S. Ring, Q.C.

**Principal Clerk** — Iris Lang

**Clerk Assistant** — Kathy Burianyak

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It would obviously take the rest of the day to introduce all of the guests that have joined us today, both on the floor of the Assembly and those that are in the gallery. So may I just say, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government benches a warm welcome to all of our guests. I say this of course through you and through the Chair to all of them. We welcome them here to the Assembly to, well, watch question period, but I think they're probably here for something else, Mr. Speaker.

This is their Assembly and meeting with us today here are community leaders who are quite literally involved in every aspect of life in the province of Saskatchewan in education, in municipal leadership, and in health care, and in business, in organized labour. And, Mr. Speaker, this is their Legislative Assembly on an important day in the life of province. So on behalf of the government benches, I want to extend a warm welcome to them to their Legislative Assembly today.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to join with the Premier in welcoming everyone who has joined us here today for an important day to their Assembly. Certainly what makes our province truly strong is its people — always has, always will. That's on full display within this Assembly here today, an Assembly that's filled with people that care deeply about our province, an Assembly that's filled with those that contribute to all facets of our province — culturally, economically, socially, leaders from health care to business, through education, municipalities, rural and urban, First Nations culture, civil society, and more.

We have an Assembly, frankly, that's filled with common sense, compassionate, hard-working leaders from across Saskatchewan — innovators, creative thinkers, entrepreneurs — that make our province a better place. To each and every one of you, on behalf of the official opposition of the province of Saskatchewan, we say thank you for what you do to make our province strong each and every day. Thank you.

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

### STATEMENT BY A MEMBER

#### Apology for Release of Information

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before we get under way in the proceedings here, I'd just like to rise and apologize on behalf of the official opposition in the House for release of information concerning the opposition's critique of the budget and thereby breaking our undertaking under the

embargo, which we take very seriously. But as such, I rise and apologize to the House unreservedly, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Government Deputy House Leader.

**Hon. Mr. Harrison:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The official opposition House Leader referenced this, but there was a very serious breach of an undertaking earlier today. Confidential budget information was released to the public and to the media by the official opposition. This is a very serious matter, and the government will be looking into potential remedies for this. Thank you.

### PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today again to present a petition to improve PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] coverage for all Saskatchewan workers. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners point out that post-traumatic distress disorder can severely impact the lives of Saskatchewan workers, that delay in diagnosis and treatment for PTSD can be detrimental to recovery, that PTSD is not on the list of workers' compensation illnesses presumed to be work-related in Saskatchewan, and that many workers today suffering from work-related PTSD are burdened by lengthy investigations and approval processes.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause the Saskatchewan government to make the necessary changes to ensure that if Saskatchewan workers are exposed to traumatic events on the job and are then diagnosed with PTSD, it is presumed to be caused by the worker's employment, and the worker will subsequently be covered under workers' compensation and receive the same benefits as others with work-related injuries.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens of Prince Albert. I so submit.

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to rise and present a petition in support of funding for heritage languages in Saskatchewan. And we know that after 25 years, the Government of Saskatchewan is discontinuing all support of heritage language learning in Saskatchewan. Since 1991 heritage language schools have depended on this modest funding from the Ministry of Education to help sustain their programs, and as a result of the announcement by the Ministry of Education, many of these non-profit heritage language schools will be faced with a difficult decision of whether they can continue to operate. In addition to providing language and cultural classes, these schools offer a welcoming environment

and crucial support for newcomers who are searching for a way to feel at home in their new surroundings here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly call on this government to reconsider this decision and restore funding for heritage language education in Saskatchewan heritage language schools.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition come from Saskatchewan, here.

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

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the signators, I'd like to present the following petition and draw attention to the following.

In 2012 the federal government announced an end to the community pasture program that had operated under the PFRA [Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration] Act since the 1930s. This Act was to restore marginal lands subject to erosion and manage them for livestock grazing. The land is being transferred to the Saskatchewan government, which has offered the pastures for sale.

These pastures serve a vital role to species at risk, mitigating climate change, for cattle ranchers and their communities, preserving cultural and heritage values, and for recreational and cultural purposes. I will now read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Government of Saskatchewan to halt the sale of public land with ecological value including Crown lands that, until recently removed by order in council, had been protected under *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*; conduct a complete inventory of our remaining native grasslands; create legislation that recognizes the value of our remaining native grasslands; and protect prairie, including monitoring and enforcing conservation easements preventing the breaking of these lands.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens of Saskatoon.

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

#### Argyle School Wins Environmental Society Contest

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, students at a school in my constituency are doing their part to protect our environment and to promote conservation. For a second year in a row, students at

Argyle School won the Saskatchewan Environmental Society's 25 Acts of Energy Conservation contest for their efforts to make the world a little greener.

The Environment Club at Argyle School under the direction of grade 7 and 8 teacher, Mr. Curtis Norman, made it their goal to connect with people from all over the world to improve the environment. Each student had to connect with someone from outside Regina to get them to send a picture or video of them doing good for the environment. Their efforts won them a \$1,000 grant for their school which will be used for a water-conserving drinking fountain that keeps track of how much water is used and how much is saved, allowing students at Argyle School to continue their work in reducing their impact on the environment.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking the Saskatchewan Environmental Society for supporting this important initiative, and also in thanking the students at our Argyle School Environment Club and their teacher, Curtis Norman, for promoting conservation in Regina and around the world. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Saskatchewan Supports World Partnership Walk

**Mr. Steinley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend I, along with the member from Regina Pasqua, had the pleasure of attending the 32nd annual World Partnership Walk. The donations to this walk help support Aga Khan Foundation, Canada's programs in Africa and Asia. They will go towards enabling families to lift themselves out of poverty to create strong and vibrant communities.

Mr. Speaker, the generosity of Saskatchewan people is well known. The people of this province should be very proud of the history in helping their neighbours in times of need. They help those living next door and they'll lend a hand to help those halfway around the world.

Globally the percentage of people living in poverty continues to drop, and we are proud as Saskatchewan exports are helping to feed and fuel the world. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has a spirit of community, and the continued support for this partnership walk is yet another example of that spirit. We have a long way to go in regards to ending global poverty.

Seeing so many people come together with a common goal of building a better future reminds me of our provincial motto, "from many peoples, strength." We must never take for granted the spirit of our community involvement, social responsibility, and global awareness that we see right here in Saskatchewan.

I ask that all members join me in thanking the organizers, volunteers, and supporters of this walk. Their hard work paid off as their event raised over \$130,000 in Regina on Sunday and over \$4.7 million across Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Saskatoon School Program Promotes Intergenerational Relationships

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to recognize June 1st, Intergenerational Day, here in Canada, and to share with the House a bit about a Saskatoon school program that makes sure every day is intergenerational day.

In its second year, Saskatoon Public School Board's iGen program brings together a class of grade 6 students and the residents at Sherbrooke Community Centre. The students spend their time learning with the elders at this long-term care home. Sherbrooke has had a long-standing relationship with schools for many years; in fact, that's where teacher Keri Albert got the idea. She was with one of those classrooms that did a project with the artist-in-residence at Sherbrooke saying, "I was blown away by the power of the elders and the kids together, the circle of giving and receiving."

After some further life, work, and education experiences, Keri proposed the idea of a full-time school program to Sherbrooke and both the long-term care home and the school board eagerly came on board to create iGen. The students cover everything in the grade 6 curriculum, just in a different way than their peers at other schools, and in conjunction with the elders at Sherbrooke.

Jillian, one of the students, says that her time in the program has had a huge impact on her: "I like how it has shown us anyone can be friends with anyone, that things like age and physical disability don't need to get in the way."

Keri sums up the impact of iGen well:

The thing I always think about is the ripple effect. You take a student and an elder and it's perfect on its own. But it's not just the rock in the water. We have made ripples with teachers, community volunteers, and others.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Happy iGen Day.

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

### SaskTel Aboriginal Youth Awards

**Mr. Parent:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise in this Assembly today to recognize the nominees and winners of the last week's 18th annual SaskTel Aboriginal Youth Awards. Since 1997, the Wicahitowin Foundation has organized this awards night to celebrate the many achievements and talents of Aboriginal youth in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I was honoured to attend this event in Saskatoon as well as participate in the opening grand entry which kicked off the evening.

The evening's MC, Donnie Speidel, did a fantastic job in his role. I should also mention, Mr. Speaker, that Donnie is an accomplished Lakota singer, dancer, and choreographer who has performed all over North America and internationally as well. I also had the distinct pleasure of presenting the Spirit Award to an outstanding First Nations youth, Mario Ahenakew.

Mr. Speaker, of the total of 89 nominees, other award recipients

recognized throughout the ceremony included Jodi Delorme for community services; Maggie Eastman for culture; Shayna Uhrn for education; Emily Noon for fine and performing arts; Leah Boyer for leadership; Isabel Gagne, Outstanding Achievement Female; Liam Cummins, Outstanding Achievement Male; Kaylan Muir, Sports Recreation Female; Thomas Johnston, Sports Recreation Male; Joshua Fandrey, technology and science; and Victoria Penner for Saskatchewan Polytechnic Award.

[13:45]

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating the Wicahitowin Foundation for another successful event, and thank SaskTel for being the title sponsor since this event began and celebrating the award recipients for all their accomplishments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Wood River Organic Food Company Thrives

**Mr. Marit:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize an outstanding company in the constituency of Wood River.

Mr. Speaker, Allen and Marilyn Zak own and operate the Zak Organics Food Company from their more than 100-year-old family farm in the Fir Mountain area. The Zaks grow wheat, peas, lentils, and flax, all under strict organic standards on their 6,000-acre family farm. Zak Organics sell healthy Crunchy Green Pea Snacks in three different flavours, all of which are certified organic and contain no trans fats, no cholesterol, and no artificial flavours or colours.

Mr. Speaker, Zak Organics received funding from our government through the Saskatchewan agri-value initiative. This initiative aims to help Saskatchewan agri-business that are seeking opportunities to collaborate on developing, manufacturing, or marketing value-added products which help to create a more profitable and competitive agriculture industry in this province. Thanks in part to this funding, Zak Organics was able to work with scientists at the Saskatchewan Food Industry Development Centre in Saskatoon to fine-tune the recipe and production techniques of their crunch pea snacks.

Mr. Speaker, Allen is proud that his company is able to grow their own product, process it, package it, and meet the people. They are enjoying it right here in this province.

I ask all members to join me in wishing Allen, Marilyn, and the Zak Organics continued success in the agri-food business. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### New Rental Housing Project Opened in Carlyle

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to inform members of a new rental housing project that was officially opened in Carlyle last Friday. This Blue Oak Holdings Inc. project is a 12-unit rental housing development with six units subsidized for low- to moderate-income renters.

The development consists of four one-bedroom units with a den, eight two-bedroom units. Each unit is 850 square feet. This means 12 individuals and families will have new, safe, comfortable homes.

Mr. Speaker, our government is working hard with our partners to help those who are in need of housing. Together with the federal government, we contributed \$240,000 to help create these homes. This funding was made available through the federal-provincial Investment in Affordable Housing Agreement capital rent subsidy program.

Mr. Speaker, from November 2007 to December 2015, there have been 145 affordable rental units completed across Saskatchewan under the capital rent subsidy. Another 53 rental units are currently under construction with support from capital rent subsidy. In total, more than 3,600 affordable housing units have been developed with the assistance of provincial funding.

Mr. Speaker, Blue Oak Inc. contributed \$1.8 million to the development in the form of cash, land, or mortgage financing. This project is an exciting opportunity for Carlyle as it allows citizens to live and work in a welcoming community. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Estevan . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Sorry. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood.

#### **Saskatoon Crime Stoppers 17th Annual Golf Classic**

**Ms. Lambert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday I had the pleasure of bringing greetings at the Saskatoon Crime Stoppers 17th Annual Golf Classic at the Willows Golf & Country Club in Saskatoon. Mr. Speaker, this Texas scramble-style tournament raised funds to ensure that Crime Stoppers is able to continue to assist law enforcement efforts in the Saskatoon area.

Saskatoon Crime Stoppers is a non-profit organization that operates both voice and text tip line services which allow the public to anonymously provide tips on unsolved crimes. Mr. Speaker, the organization offers cash rewards for information leading to the arrest of people responsible for criminal activity. Crime Stoppers works closely with the Saskatoon Police Service, the media, the business community, and the general public in solving and reducing crime and in making the community safer. Since its launch in 1987, Crime Stoppers Saskatoon has helped police clear over 4,100 cases and recover over 6 million in property. Mr. Speaker, even its strongest advocates couldn't have predicted the impact Crime Stoppers has had in Saskatoon.

I ask all members to join me in thanking the supporters, sponsors, and volunteers who made the Saskatoon Crime Stoppers 17th Annual Golf Classic another success, and I ask members to also join me in thanking Crime Stoppers for the important work they do in Saskatoon and in communities across Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — Well apparently everyone's a little excited today, including the Speaker. I welcome the guests here today, and I just want to remind them not to enter into debate, which

does include applause.

#### **QUESTION PERIOD**

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

#### **Government's Fiscal Management**

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, as we all look forward to finally seeing the budget, we have to admit that we have a Premier who really likes deficits. Sure he likes to talk about balanced budgets, but time and time again he delivers deficits. We all recognize oil prices make times tougher now, but even during the sunniest economic times he brought in deficits. In 2010 he ran a deficit, then again in 2011, then again in 2012. In this past year, which will be his fourth deficit, over \$1 billion, and he masqueraded it as something way less. And now he's committed to deficit number five in his budget here today. And of course in each of those years, on budget day they stood and boasted of and claimed of a supposed balanced budget.

Mr. Speaker, while revenues in this province have skyrocketed, this Premier still managed to drain the rainy day fund, add on piles, in fact billions, of debt, and didn't save a dime. Why, Mr. Speaker, despite record revenues, was this Premier unable to balance the budget? Why couldn't he get the job done during the best days?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for the question, although there is so much about it that is just inaccurate and wrong, including his revisionist history about the budgets presented by this government, by the Saskatchewan Party government, which have been successive balanced budgets, Mr. Speaker, to this point, notwithstanding that the current year where we've moved into deficit for obvious reasons.

That would be why I would expect that, Mr. Speaker, for the first time in the life, in the history of the province of Saskatchewan, we've received a AAA credit rating from not one but two different credit rating agencies. And I supposed if they were believing the account that the members opposite like to present, those credit rating upgrades would not have occurred. But of course, they have.

Mr. Speaker, I would also just say this, and we'll get into the pre-budget question period debate. I'd certainly welcome the chance to do that. The House Leader stood before we began today to apologize for what is a very, very, very serious breach of the confidentiality of the budget process and of the budget embargo. That's, I guess, one step to take. There will be others that we're going to look at from our side of it.

But in fact, it was the Finance critic, the member for Saskatoon Nutana, whose press release divulged details of the budget even though they agreed to the embargo. And we have not yet heard from the Finance critic. This is a very serious matter. I have never seen it happen. I've never seen it happen in this place. We have members that have been here since '91. They've never seen it happen. It goes to the importance of how budgets are delivered and shared with everybody at the same time in the

province of Saskatchewan, and people expect more from all of us in this place.

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

**Mr. Witherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, with the last portion, without a doubt this was a mistake that we regret, that shouldn't have happened, that we take serious, and that we apologize unreservedly. And we'll review it and work with government to make sure that never happens again. It shouldn't have happened.

But I'll tell you this, Mr. Speaker, maybe on some other fronts the Premier should start taking some of his own advice. Back in 2009, the Premier said, and I quote, Mr. Speaker: "Deficits are a lot like potato chips . . . They're not very good for your long-term health and I bet you can't stop at just one." In fact, soon after he made the joke, he dug in like going for seconds at the KFC buffet. And you know, seems the Premier was right about one thing: once you pop, you can't stop.

Five deficit budgets despite years of record revenues, Mr. Speaker. Provincial revenue has skyrocketed. It's now beyond \$14 billion, Mr. Speaker. You know, the NDP [New Democratic Party] not only balanced the budget but had surpluses and invested in the rainy day fund with nearly half the revenue. Yet the Premier, yet the Premier couldn't manage to do so despite having billions more. And he can check his own budget documents to find all of those deficits, Mr. Speaker. Why can't this Premier kick his budget deficit habit?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I stand by that statement that they are like Lay's potato chips; it's hard to stop at just one. That's why we're in a deficit this year. We may well hear in a few moments that that's going to continue for this current, the year that we're moving into now, and then we will bring it back to balance in '17-18.

Mr. Speaker, much as the member for Weyburn and I think members on this side of the House were able to save that buffet at Weyburn, that KFC buffet, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to protect the finances of this province. We'll continue with the kinds of policies that have delivered \$2.7 billion in operating debt reduction for the province of Saskatchewan, \$6 billion in tax relief.

Members opposite like to ask, well where did the money all go? Six billion dollars back into the pockets of Saskatchewan families and back to Saskatchewan businesses that are creating jobs in the province of Saskatchewan. Where else did the money go, Mr. Speaker? How about \$8 billion into infrastructure that has at least certainly helped pave the way for unprecedented growth that we've seen in the province of Saskatchewan. And I think it's that overall management of the economy and yes, the finances — I think that's at least part of the story behind what happened on April 4th, Mr. Speaker, where we were able to win some seats. We're going to work hard to earn those seats into the future by continuing to deliver good management for the province of Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. Witherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, when you're talking about the finances, the truth matters. And the record of this government is deficit after deficit after deficit, Mr. Speaker. And as far as where the money went, I think that all of the people in this room could name mismanaged project after mismanaged project that's wasted their dollars by that government, Mr. Speaker.

And you know, that government often likes to get into its revisionist history lessons. But let's actually look back and take a look at some of the facts. Sadly, running deficits is what Saskatchewan conservatives, governments do. In fact this Premier's former boss was no stranger to deficits. Devine racked up more debt than any government in its history. In under a decade he managed to put the province on the brink of bankruptcy, and it took years with the hard work of Saskatchewan people and under the government of Roy Romanow to clean up that mess.

Yet years later we're into a similar situation, Mr. Speaker. We see a government running massive deficits, piling on debt, and hiding their bad news from the public for as long as possible. So why hasn't this Premier learned from the mistakes of his former boss? Why didn't he continue . . . Why did he continue to run deficit after deficit despite having record revenues?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition wants to fight the election campaign all over again. These are the same NDP lines we heard for 27 days during the campaign and for the immediate run-up before the election campaign. And then . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well and he agrees that that's the case, apparently. He agrees that that's what they were saying during and before the campaign.

Mr. Speaker, what people made a decision on, I think, in that election campaign in part is the recognition on the part of members on this side of the House that there's more work to do, Mr. Speaker. We know we have more work to do, and in this case we know we have to get back to balance by '17-18. There's no question about that.

But there's also a record. There's also a record of unprecedented growth in the province that's been assisted I think by a government that would cut taxes by \$6 billion. I think it's been assisted by the fact that the government took some opportunity to reduce the operating debt of Saskatchewan by \$2.7 billion, earning credit rating upgrades not just for people in this place but for the people of the province of Saskatchewan. It's why we took steps to increase infrastructure investment by \$8 billion over the last number of years.

And what's been the result of all that, Mr. Speaker? The result of all of that has been the right economic environment to create 60,000 new jobs in the province of Saskatchewan, and our population now higher than it's ever been at 1.13 million and growing, Mr. Speaker.

[14:00]

They want to talk about what happened in those NDP years. I'm happy to talk about that. We said goodbye to a generation of

young people. We bought luggage for graduation presents, Mr. Speaker. Those days are over for good.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, a record of deficit, of growing scandal, and a hidden budget from Saskatchewan people. Perhaps the Premier needs to be reminded of just how dire things were back in 1991. It was no laughing matter.

By the end of that last mandate, that government was running a \$1 billion deficit. They had driven Saskatchewan into debt to the tune of \$14 billion and had us teetering on the brink of bankruptcy. Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people worked incredibly hard to put this province back on track.

They like talking about the past, Mr. Speaker, but this is one part of the past that they seem to like to ignore. Mr. Speaker, several members of the government opposite were part of that government and it seems now that we're repeating that history. Why is the Premier repeating the mistakes of the government he once worked for? Why did he run deficit after deficit, add billions of dollars of debt, not save a dime, leaving Saskatchewan people very vulnerable in tighter times?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well I note that the question's the same, and so the answer is going to be much the same as well, Mr. Speaker. And again we need to correct the record, and this is the case every time members opposite take to their feet in this place and ask questions in question period or participate in debate.

Mr. Speaker, I would . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, the Finance critic — by the way, who we've not heard from in terms of the breach on the budget release — the Finance critic's just referencing the auditor. Well the auditor, the auditor might disagree with her own leader's supposition about what is a balanced and what isn't a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker. I would make that point.

Here is the major difference in Saskatchewan today over those NDP years: unprecedented growth, people choosing to come to this province to make their home in this province, people coming in every quarter — population growth. And the Leader of the Opposition references that we've had some declining growth in quarters because of the price of oil. Do you know what happened even during those quarters, Mr. Speaker? Our population grew. Our population grew throughout each of the last quarters over the last couple of years, speaking to the fact that there is attendant and real strength in this economy, that this is a province of opportunity, that we have turned things around from the days of the NDP government when people simply just left. You graduated, and more often than not, you just left the province.

That doesn't happen anymore in Saskatchewan. People are staying. People are coming to this province; 60,000 new jobs created; 114,000 low-income people dropped from the tax rolls; debt reduced on the operating side; new infrastructure investment; and \$6 billion in tax relief. We campaigned on that in April. We'll do so again . . . well who knows when, Mr.

Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When this government came into power, there was a rainy day fund with hundreds of millions of dollars in it. And then they created their own rainy day fund. And that's fine. Any financial planner will tell you that saving for the future is a good idea. Their Finance minister at the time said, and I quote:

The reality is that in the wildly swinging income gyrations of the provincial economy, you need to be able to set aside funds in good years so that you can draw on them in poor years.

Well, Mr. Speaker, they put over \$1 billion into it six years ago. Good for them. But now the province is reeling in a drop from resource revenue, and it would be a good time to use some of those savings. Except, Mr. Speaker, we can't. The money is gone. So, Mr. Speaker, what happened? Does the Finance minister regret blowing the money when times were good?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — She just asked what happened, Mr. Speaker. We've been answering that question now in this question period, in the question periods that have preceded this day, throughout the campaign, and prior to the campaign. The money went to \$2.7 billion worth of operating debt elimination, Mr. Speaker — \$2.7 billion. That number alone outstrips any number she wants to portray as what may have been left to the government — by the way, which is to a large extent an exaggeration.

Six billion dollars in tax relief. So on top of the \$2.7 billion in operating debt elimination, \$6 billion in tax relief. That's where the money went, Mr. Speaker. The money went back to Saskatchewan families. The money went back to farmers who were getting . . . who were paying far too much in property tax. The money went back to job creators in this province, small-business women and men right across Saskatchewan. That's where the money went.

But you can understand why that would not be good enough for the NDP or would not be agreeable for the NDP. That a government would say, look there is some good fortune in the economy today and so we'll pay off some debt and we'll build some infrastructure, and importantly, we'll give money back to the people of the province whose money it was in the first place.

Because they took a different tact in government. They raised taxes in their 16 years in government 21 times, Mr. Speaker. And I would suggest to that member opposite and to the Leader of the Opposition that that might explain the current seating configuration in this Legislative Assembly.

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

**Ms. Sproule:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the Premier is



failing to mention is that he also increased debt \$5 billion in the last year. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, they had over \$1 billion in the rainy day fund and now it's not there. So where did it go, Mr. Speaker? Despite years of record revenues, this government drained it.

In 2010 the fund had over \$1 billion in it. By 2014 that fund was down to 600 million. During some of the province's sunniest days, they were using that fund. In their last budget, Mr. Speaker, the fund was down to just \$190 million, just a fraction of what was there just six years before. So will the minister admit that they were wrong and apologize to the people of Saskatchewan for dipping into the fund when times were good, and leaving a fund meant for tough economic situations — situations like the one this province is in now — with nothing, with nothing?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, I don't know if I quite heard that right. I was going through the NDP costing document from the last election and it's a pretty distracting document. But I think that member just asked the Finance minister to apologize. That member, who in an unprecedented way, a way I have never seen, has breached the privilege of every member in this House and broken an undertaking and embargo to keep the budget confidential. I expect she would be the last person in this Assembly to be demanding an apology, on this day, of someone else.

And, Mr. Speaker, with respect to borrowing, with respect to borrowing for capital, I have in my hand page 10 of the NDP costing document from the last election. Mr. Speaker, it looks as if . . . It doesn't look as if. The fact of the matter is, they're going to use, they were going to use, if elected, the exact same accounting per capita and operating as the Government of Saskatchewan uses, and as the Minister of Finance will rise on his feet and use in a few moments.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, towards the end of the document they acknowledge that, "we anticipate that some borrowing will be required for the capital requirements." They even put a number, they even put a number on it, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well it's exactly the same approach. The Leader of the Opposition, caught again on his own information and saying, well at least we were going to be honest about it.

Mr. Speaker, this has been a fact of every . . . of the last number of budgets for the province of Saskatchewan. This approach to budgeting is used by the NDP in Alberta, used by the Government of British Columbia, used in the budget yesterday by the province of Manitoba. It was going to be used by the NDP if, heaven forbid, they were ever elected, and it's been used by the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the Finance critic might want to become familiar with their own costing document in the last election before she asks these questions and most assuredly before she demands any apologies.

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

**Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Speaker, that's the reason why we're having a budget on June 1st because you, sir, hid the budget

from the people of Saskatchewan. That is the bottom line.

Mr. Speaker, last year the Finance minister shed a tear and announced that we could expect a \$107 million surplus for 2015-2016 — a \$107 million surplus, great news. But the other day in the building, the Minister of Education scooped the Finance minister and announced that there's a \$1 billion shortfall. And, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan families will have to suffer cuts to the services that they need.

What changed between March 2015 and today? Can the Minister of Finance even tell us if the price of oil is higher today than it was for the budget in 2015? What was the price of oil when they tabled their last budget?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, the Finance critic wasn't able to explain why the NDP are advocating that this government adopt a costing process and a budgeting process different from what they campaigned on. Maybe the Deputy Leader can, the newly minted Deputy Leader of the NDP, this would be a good time for him to stand up and explain page 10 and 11 of their costing document where they separate operating revenue in the government from capital. And they readily admit, right here in black and white, that if they were ever elected, they'd finance capital.

You know what else . . . By the way, Mr. Speaker, there's nothing wrong with that. That's what every other province in the Dominion of Canada is doing. And that explains, precisely, by the way, the balance that we're going to have in '17-18 and whatever the Minister of Finance is about to announce in a few minutes with respect to the current year.

Mr. Speaker, the premise of the question though is interesting. I think the Deputy Leader is suggesting that there's no explanation for why things might be difficult financially in the province today. Mr. Speaker, oil prices have softened. Potash prices have softened . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well he says, well we knew that before. But it's still the case today though, Mr. Speaker, and so we still know it today. Because we checked, I think I checked this morning and it was \$49.07 West Texas for a moment; I don't know what it is, so it's still . . . The same thing that was causing difficulty a little while ago, I'd say to the member, through you, Mr. Speaker, is still the challenge today.

The good news is we're going to meet that challenge. The good news is we'll engage with third parties across this province, with stakeholders, in transformational change. We will deliver a balanced budget in '17-18. And what the minister delivers here in a few moments is the first step towards a return to balance in that year.

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

**Mr. Belanger:** — The fundamental question I have for the Premier is, why are we having budget day on June 1st? Because this Premier chose to hide the budget from the people of Saskatchewan. That is the bottom line, Mr. Speaker.

There's a lot of nonsense over there. That side knows full well

that the price of oil has hardly changed from last year.

But here's something that has changed. According to Stats Canada, there are 9,400 fewer full-time jobs in Saskatchewan than this time last year — 9,400 jobs in one year under this government, Mr. Speaker. It's bad news to be sure, and it speaks of how this government has failed to properly diversify the economy and create steady growth in the province.

More bad news is that the number of Saskatchewan people receiving EI [employment insurance] benefits is up a whopping 31 per cent, Mr. Speaker, from the first quarter of 2015. Another sign of a government that has mismanaged record revenue. Again, to the minister: what does he have to say — or the Premier — to all those former full-time employees?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister in charge of Immigration, Jobs, Skills and skills training.

**Hon. Mr. Harrison:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let's review the facts. Saskatchewan continues to have the third-lowest unemployment rate in the entire country. For most of the last two years, we've had the lowest unemployment rate in the entire country. From 2007 to '15, we created 68,000 jobs in this province which is a record never surpassed, Mr. Speaker, over that same period of time.

And it's important to point out as well, the previous eight years, Mr. Speaker, what did we see under the NDP? We saw people leaving. We saw the population actually go down over those previous eight years. We saw people losing their jobs. As the Premier referenced, we saw our young people having to leave.

I know when I graduated, a lot of my friends, they got luggage for a graduation present, Mr. Speaker, because they had to leave to find employment. That's not the case today in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. People have opportunity right here at home. We have the highest population that we have ever had in the history of this province, and we're continuing to move forward.

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

**Mr. Belanger:** — Again, Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is they hid the budget from the people of Saskatchewan. Why doesn't he tell that to the 3,500 full-time workers who lost their job in construction this past year? Why doesn't he tell that to the 1,100 full-time workers that lost their jobs in the mining sector or the 900 in the manufacturing sector, or the fully one in four off-reserve First Nations people that are unemployed? And it gets even worse on-reserve, Mr. Speaker.

Instead of growing and diversifying the economy, this government has been busy shipping out jobs and projects out to out-of-country and out-of-province companies. We're seeing companies from France building the bypass and teaching the . . . [inaudible] . . . how to properly run a snowplow across it.

And Mr. Speaker, we're seeing a company from the UK [United Kingdom] build the North Battleford hospital and charging \$4.6 million a year to maintain it. What is wrong with the Saskatchewan workers, Mr. Speaker? And to the minister, when can Saskatchewan workers expect real action on jobs?

[14:15]

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, once again in the premise of his question he wants to talk about, where was the budget? Why wasn't the budget released during the campaign? And by the way, that issue was well canvassed in the election . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And now the member is heckling from his seat, and he said, well you didn't have the courage to release it, Mr. Speaker.

Here's a question for the NDP: how come they didn't have the courage to acknowledge that some of them were going to go and support the Leap Manifesto in Edmonton? How come they didn't tell anybody that? How come they didn't come square with those same workers and mines in this province, northern workers, people in the oil and gas industry, that their Finance critic would go to Edmonton and support in principle — because that's what she voted for — support in principle the Leap Manifesto which would destroy the Saskatchewan economy?

Here's why, here's why they wouldn't . . . Well, now they're . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . They're all yelling now, Mr. Speaker. They're all yelling now. Here's why they wouldn't say that prior to the campaign: because had they said that, the member that asked the question would be the only one sitting over there.

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

**Ms. Beck:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite may not take these job losses seriously, but the people of Saskatchewan certainly do. And the members on this side will never stop standing up for the workers of this province.

Mr. Speaker, there are 5,200, 5,200 fewer educational jobs than last year. And these losses have a profound impact on our kids. Mr. Speaker, education is amongst the last places that Saskatchewan families should be seeing job losses. The reality is that classrooms are overcrowded and teachers can't give students the attention that they need and they deserve. Mr. Minister, how can you expect these enormous job losses in education not to have a negative effect on Saskatchewan students and teachers?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister in charge of Immigration, Jobs, Skills and Training.

**Hon. Mr. Harrison:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, here are the facts: Saskatchewan's employment from 2007 to 2015 increased by 68,800 full-time jobs, Mr. Speaker — a record in stark contrast with the New Democrats when they were in office when we saw job losses and people leaving the province. And as the Premier just referenced, Mr. Speaker, the Finance critic supports in principle the Leap Manifesto, as do a number of other New Democrats in that party over there.

What does the Leap Manifesto call for, Mr. Speaker? They call for an end to modern agricultural practice, Mr. Speaker. They call for an end to energy development. They call for no more

pipelines to be built, ever.

Mr. Speaker, this party will stand for economic growth. This party will stand for economic development every day of the week.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### TABLING OF ESTIMATES AND SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Finance minister.

**Hon. Mr. Doherty:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to submit the estimates and supplementary estimates accompanied by a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

**The Speaker:** — Would you please rise for the message from the Lieutenant Governor. The message is as follows:

The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2017, and supplementary estimates — March of certain sums required for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2016, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

The Honourable Vaughn Solomon Schofield, Lieutenant Governor, province of Saskatchewan.

I recognize the Minister of Finance.

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

**Hon. Mr. Doherty:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to join the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in welcoming all of the visitors here to the Legislative Assembly today on budget day. I am honoured to rise today to present our government's 2016-17 budget, my first as the Minister of Finance in this government, Mr. Speaker.

Before I do, Mr. Speaker, if you'll indulge me and colleagues will indulge me just to make a couple of personal introductions of some family and friends I have here. I would like to introduce my mother, Lenora Doherty, who has joined us here today. Mom is the mother of six children, I being one of six children. She is by far the bedrock of our family, and I'm glad to have you here today, Mom.

I'm joined as well by one of my sisters. I have four sisters, Mr. Speaker, and an older brother, and my sister Maureen is the youngest. Well she's a twin, so the two of them are the youngest in the family. She's an RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] officer serving the people of Saskatchewan in Wadena and is being transferred to North Battleford here shortly, so I'm delighted she could join us today, Mr. Speaker.

My partner, Nancy, is here. And Nancy makes everything better in my life, Mr. Speaker, and I'm delighted that she could be here today as well. Nancy is also the mother of two wonderful,

amazing kids. Her son, Ryder, is going into his third year at the University of Saskatchewan, his first year at the Edwards Business School, Mr. Speaker. He's worked very, very hard to get into that. He had to work today so he couldn't be here today, Mr. Speaker, but I want to acknowledge her son, Ryder.

And joining us as well is her daughter, Libby. Now Libby is a grade 12 student at A.E. Peacock School in Moose Jaw, graduating at the end of this month, Mr. Speaker. She has maintained in excess of a 98 per cent average during her entire school career. She's been chosen as the valedictorian for her graduating class at the end of June, and she is an outstanding athlete, Mr. Speaker, primarily in basketball. She was probably the most highly recruited point guard in all of Canada this past year by a number of universities. And when all is said and done, she has chosen to go to the University of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and play for the defending national women's basketball champions, the University of Saskatchewan Huskies under coach Lisa Thomaidis. So we're delighted Libby could join us here today.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I have some special guests that are joining us, seated on the floor of the gallery here. They would be no strangers to this Assembly. They are three gentlemen who have been members of this Assembly, and all of them former Finance ministers. We are joined here today, Mr. Speaker, by Rod and Carole Gantefoer, the former member from Melfort. Thank you very much for being here today, Rod.

We're also joined by somebody who I'm sure wanted to get into the debate a little bit during question period but kept his tongue to himself. The Hon. Ken Krawetz and his wife, Gail Krawetz, are here today as well, Mr. Speaker. And I am delighted that a gentleman who I worked for many, many years ago, who taught me an awful lot about politics and brought me into this building to begin with, the Hon. Lorne Hepworth, the former member from Weyburn, is here today, Mr. Speaker. And I am delighted he could be here today. These three gentlemen, Mr. Speaker, personified the word honourable, and they gave a long portion of their professional lives in serving the people of Saskatchewan. I am delighted that they could be here today and join in these proceedings.

Mr. Speaker, our government's vision continues to be for Saskatchewan to be the best place in Canada to live, to work, to start a business, to get an education, to raise a family, to build a life. To accomplish that, we need to sustain growth and opportunities for Saskatchewan people. We need to meet the challenges of growth. We need to secure a better quality of life for all the people of this great province, and we need to deliver responsive and responsible government. This budget, Mr. Speaker, will keep Saskatchewan strong by keeping taxes low and by controlling operational spending and by continuing to make key investments in infrastructure and in government services for Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, true strength emerges in challenging times. Today we are faced with a fragile world economy, coupled with sharp declines in oil and potash prices. This poses considerable challenges to our province's economy, its finances, and its people. But the people of Saskatchewan are not daunted by challenges, Mr. Speaker, not by any type. Together we will meet these challenges. This budget builds on the foundational

strengths that we have developed over the past eight years, those strengths being lowering taxes, investing in people, investing in infrastructure, and paying down debt, all to keep Saskatchewan strong. We will continue to manage spending wisely and we will continue to keep taxes low.

More than 1.14 million children, women, and men — the most people in our province's history — now call Saskatchewan home. Last year more people were employed in this province than ever before. Our unemployment rate remains one of the lowest in Canada, but sustaining our province's economic strength and population growth will be a challenge in the shorter term. Continuing low prices for oil and potash is putting pressure on revenue, unemployment, and on our province's economy generally.

You can shrink from the type of challenges we are now facing in Saskatchewan or you can turn them into opportunities. Starting this year, Mr. Speaker, we are commencing a government-wide process of transformational change. Our goal is to ensure the sustainability of high-quality public services delivered in the most efficient, cost-effective way possible. To ensure those services remain viable in the long run, everything government does will be studied. Every expense will be scrutinized.

Change is never easy. Transformational change cannot be achieved overnight, and it cannot be accomplished by government alone. It will require making difficult decisions, beginning with this budget, but also in the years and budgets ahead. It will require all of government's partners, including our public sector employees and unions and our third-party stakeholders, to work together as changes are made to meet the needs of the people of this province.

And as part of transformation, important questions will be asked about every program, initiative, and expenditure. Questions like, is this program or service the role of government? Is it something we should be doing? If so, is it being delivered in the best possible manner at the lowest possible cost to taxpayers? Where similar programs with similar objectives exist, can those multiple programs be combined into one that provides better results at less cost? Could a different governance model provide administrative savings while still remaining responsive to the needs of Saskatchewan people?

For example, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Health will examine whether there are administrative efficiencies and savings to be achieved by reducing the number of health regions. The Ministry of Social Services will review its suite of income assistance programs and services in order to make them simpler to administer, sustainable, and easier for clients to understand while still providing the support to people in need. It could even involve looking at the space government and its agencies occupy.

Mr. Speaker, we will also take a deep look at government's sources of revenue. The overall objectives of our province's revenue system must always be to keep Saskatchewan strong by keeping our economy strong, and to ensure government revenues are sufficient to ensure important programs and services are sustainable now and in the future. That includes a tax system that is competitive, simple, and fair for all

Saskatchewan taxpayers. Those will be the principles of any changes to our tax system.

Mr. Speaker, this will be an iterative process, beginning but certainly not ending this fiscal year. Even with the current challenges, Saskatchewan enjoys a strong economic foundation. Last year, despite challenges in oil and potash, our province has exported \$32.6 billion in goods to countries around the world, the second-highest exports total in our history.

Shipments to China and India were up 18 and 60 per cent respectively in 2015, and we exported goods to more than 150 countries in total. Saskatchewan's agri-food sector led the charge with more than \$15 billion in exports this past year. That exceeded the ambitious target laid out in the Saskatchewan plan for growth to export \$15 billion of agri-food products by 2020, Mr. Speaker.

Our strength as an exporter of goods around the world will continue. Nearly three-quarters of Saskatchewan's Trade and Export Partnership members are forecasting an increase in exports in 2016. We are a trading province, Mr. Speaker, and as such we ought to support efforts to expand trade partnerships around the world.

Our growing population is another economic pillar on which we can build. Last year, Saskatchewan's population growth was the third highest amongst provinces, and our unemployment rate was the lowest in Canada. Still, the impact of low oil prices has been felt. Oil producers have cut production and investment, contributing to a decline in real GDP [gross domestic product] last year in Saskatchewan. Our GDP is forecasted to climb by point six per cent this year but, Mr. Speaker, with a return to growth of 2.5 per cent forecast in calendar 2017. And so our province's economy is expected to rebound as it has in the past.

Following the global financial crisis of 2008, Mr. Speaker, in the five-year period beginning in 2010, Saskatchewan's real GDP growth averaged 3.9 per cent per year. Our ability to weather the storm is a testament to our province's economic strength, resilience, and diversity. This budget strives to further strengthen and diversify our economy, investing prudently in people and infrastructure to keep Saskatchewan strong.

[14:30]

Mr. Speaker, this budget forecasts total revenue this coming fiscal year of \$14.02 billion and total expense of about \$14.46 billion. That combines for a projected deficit in 2016-17 of \$434 million. This deficit is not due to large increases in spending, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the expense side of the 2016-17 budget is up just 2 per cent. By far the biggest factor in this year's deficit is a drop in resource revenues of nearly \$1 billion. That decrease is offset somewhat by higher own-source revenue, including expected net revenue of \$148 million from land sales this fiscal year.

The Government of Saskatchewan is getting out of the farm land ownership business and getting these lands into the hands of producers, Mr. Speaker. Net income from government business enterprises is also up by about \$180 million. This is largely due to better bottom lines forecast at the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority, the commercial Crown

corporations, and the Saskatchewan Auto Fund. And higher transfers from the federal government are included, notably \$200 million related to the transfer of federal dams to our province.

Mr. Speaker, part of weathering the storm means continuing to invest where Saskatchewan people need it most — in health care, in education, social services. That's why our government has opted for a manageable deficit in this budget rather than drastically cutting funding to those priority areas.

There are years with unforeseen events. Drops in the price of oil or potash or costly natural disasters make it prudent to run a manageable deficit rather than implement severe cuts to programs and services or increase taxes on Saskatchewan people, both of which could further shock our economy. This, Mr. Speaker, is one of those years. However we are committed to returning the budget to balance by 2017-18. That is our goal and that is our plan.

Mr. Speaker, our government understands that low taxes are a key element of a strong economy. Low taxes attract investment and new economic activity and help create jobs. Since taking office, our government has cut the tax burden on Saskatchewan people and businesses by close to \$6 billion in total. As a result, our province now has among the lowest personal and business tax rates in all of Canada. Our government remains committed to keeping taxes low, especially during this challenging economic time. Mr. Speaker, in keeping with the Premier's commitment during the recent election campaign, this budget contains no tax increases and no new taxes.

This budget does contain two tax credit changes, Mr. Speaker. To help post-secondary graduates stay in the province and afford a home, we have introduced the graduate retention program first home plan. The graduate retention program is one of the most aggressive youth retention programs in all of Canada, providing income tax credits to rebate up to \$20,000 in tuition fees to post-secondary graduates who stay in Saskatchewan after graduation. Since its creation, about 63,000 post-secondary graduates have received nearly \$290 million in tuition rebates, Mr. Speaker.

The new first home plan fulfills our campaign promise by giving eligible graduates the ability to use up to \$10,000 of their graduate retention program tax credits towards the down payment on their first home. Government's investment in the first home plan is expected to be \$8 million this fiscal year, making Saskatchewan more affordable for our young people. Helping them buy their first home will keep more graduates, more of our sons and daughters in the province, and it will keep Saskatchewan strong.

This budget also ends the active families benefit, a refundable personal income tax credit, saving the government \$5.5 million a year. We believe, Mr. Speaker, community-based charities and organizations such as KidSport and Creative Kids will continue to be more effective at helping children from families with lower incomes participate and reduce those barriers. A similar federal tax credit was eliminated in the most recent federal budget.

Despite economic challenges, our government continues to

invest in health care, education, and social services. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, 74 cents of every tax dollar that is paid by taxpayers in this province goes to these three areas.

We are committed to providing Saskatchewan people with access to timely and high-quality health services. At the same time, we need to ensure the ongoing sustainability of our health system. In this budget, total spending for health is projected to be a record \$5.6 billion, an increase of \$81 million or 1.5 per cent compared to last year. That level of funding will improve access to care, will reduce wait times for surgery and diagnostic services, and support innovative approaches to meet the needs of patients and families.

Regional health authorities will receive nearly \$3.4 billion, up 2.3 per cent compared to last year. This supports programs, services, and care provided through hospitals, health centres, and long-term care facilities across the province. This budget fulfills another campaign promise by reducing health authority administration expenses by \$7.5 million and reinvesting those savings in front-line staff in long-term care homes, Mr. Speaker.

Reducing wait times continues to be a priority for our government. Saskatchewan has gone from the longest surgical wait times in Canada in 2007 to the shortest wait times in Canada in 2015. However we acknowledge wait times have begun to creep up again in recent months. That is why this budget provides a \$20 million boost to the Saskatchewan surgical initiative to ensure Saskatchewan continues to have the shortest surgical wait times in all of Canada.

We also want to reduce wait times for diagnostic services across the province and are making targeted investments totalling about \$8 million in this budget to ensure that that happens.

The Saskatchewan Cancer Agency is receiving more than \$167 million in funding in this budget, up \$9.8 million from last year. This substantial increase in funding will help pay for the addition of 15 new cancer drugs that were approved last year.

This budget also provides close to \$15 million more, compared to last year, for the drug plan and extended benefits, providing for increased utilization as well as the approval last year of a treatment for hepatitis C.

Mr. Speaker, in this budget our government continues to put students first by investing in pre-K [pre-kindergarten] to grade 12 schools and classrooms across the province. Student success and safety has always been a priority for Saskatchewan parents and their children, and it's a priority for this government. That's why this budget increased the school operating funding to almost \$1.9 billion, up 16.6 million or about 1 per cent compared to last year. This budget continues our government's support of early education and child care across the province. This includes 810 new child care spaces being developed as part of the 18 new elementary schools currently under construction on nine joint-use sites in Saskatoon, Regina, Warman, and Martensville.

This budget provides \$288 million to school divisions for learning supports in the 2016-17 school year, supporting

students with intensive needs, students in vulnerable circumstances, and students who require support with the English language. This includes a \$4 million increase for classroom supports provided through the Ministry of Education to meet the needs of a growing and diverse province. In addition, Mr. Speaker, \$5.4 million of school operating funding is being targeted to support the Syrian refugee students.

This budget also includes \$1.6 billion for nearly 200 previously approved child care spaces, which are now coming online this year. This brings total funding for child care to nearly \$53 million in this budget. The number of licensed child care spaces has increased by close to 5,800 since 2008, bringing the total to more than 14,600.

Mr. Speaker, this budget also maintains our government's strong investment in post-secondary students and education to keep Saskatchewan strong. Since taking office nearly nine years ago, our government has invested more than \$7.3 billion in post-secondary institutions and student supports. In this budget, Saskatchewan's post-secondary schools continue to receive strong support, including \$475 million for the universities of Saskatchewan and Regina and their affiliated and federated colleges; \$156 million for Saskatchewan Polytechnic, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, and the Gabriel Dumont Institute; and \$29 million for Saskatchewan's regional colleges. That's a total of \$660 million this year in operating funding for Saskatchewan's post-secondary schools, comparable to what they received last year.

Our commitment to post-secondary students is also reflected in a range of programs aimed at helping them save and pay for their school. This budget provides more than \$53 million in direct support to students, including 32.5 million for the Student Aid Fund to provide student grants, bursaries, and loans; more than \$14 million for the scholarships, including the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship; and \$6.5 million for the Saskatchewan advantage grant for education savings.

This budget also enhances or maintains a number of important job and skills training programs, including a \$2.4 million increase for the Canada-Saskatchewan Job Grant, for a total of 6.4 million this year to provide training that aligns with employer needs. The budget also provides for the continuation of 9,000 adult basic education training opportunities, and the employability assistance for people with disabilities program will continue to support more than 2,500 opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, supporting people in need also keeps Saskatchewan strong. That's why this budget continues our government's substantial investments in programs for children, youth, families, people experiencing disability, and people who need income assistance and housing. This budget invests close to \$17 million more compared to last year to support at-risk children, youth, and their families, including nearly \$8 million more for medically fragile children and those with complex needs, 5.7 million more for foster care and extended family care, 2.3 million more in preventive services to keep children from coming into the ministry's care, and \$800,000 more for assisted adoption.

Over the past nine years, our government has also demonstrated its unwavering commitment to helping the province's most

vulnerable people. This budget provides considerable support for new and enhanced programming for Saskatchewan people experiencing disabilities, as well as funding to address increased program utilization. This includes \$210 million dedicated to the SAID or the Saskatchewan assured income for disability program for people experiencing significant and enduring disabilities, and \$3.4 million to address the emerging needs of people with intellectual disabilities and support the transition of individuals from Valley View Centre as homes and programs become available. Work on a third assessment and stabilization home, part of the safety net of supports for people with intellectual disabilities, will begin this year. Through the Ministry of Social Services, this budget includes \$494 million for income assistance programs, including SAID, that support more than 30,000 individuals and families.

Mr. Speaker, for the 16 years prior to our government being elected, the seniors' income plan and income assistance program for low-income seniors had not had an increase by so much as a dime. Under our government over the last eight years, we have tripled that assistance. But improved seniors' incomes means we'll need about \$250,000 less this year for the seniors' income plan, Mr. Speaker, and that's good news. However, our total funding commitment for that important program will continue to exceed \$26 million in 2016-17.

Revenue sharing plays an important role in helping the province's municipalities meet the needs of people living in cities, towns, villages, and across rural Saskatchewan. This year municipal revenue sharing will approach \$272 million, up 6.4 million from last year, and an increase of \$144 million, or more than 113 per cent increase, since 2007. This is based on our government's commitment to ensure stable, predictable funding by providing the equivalent of one percentage point of the provincial sales tax to Saskatchewan's municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, farming has always been important to Saskatchewan, but in recent years the agriculture industry has really become a key driver of our economy. We will continue to offer the programs and services producers need to keep their operations and the entire agriculture industry in Saskatchewan strong. This budget increases Ministry of Agriculture funding by 7.5 per cent this fiscal year to a total of nearly \$390 million. This includes more than 254 million to fully fund agricultural business risk management programs including AgriStability, AgriInvest, and crop insurance, a \$14.6 million increase from last year. This budget also includes more than \$71 million for strategic initiatives under the federal-provincial Growing Forward 2 agreement, with funding of close to \$27 million for agricultural research to support improvements in productivity and enhanced exports.

Investing in infrastructure is another way that we keep Saskatchewan strong now and into the future. This budget provides more than \$3.5 billion for infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, the largest single-year capital investment in our province's history. Nearly \$1.8 billion will be invested by our commercial Crowns and more than \$1.7 billion by executive government ministries and agencies this fiscal year. Investing in infrastructure helps support jobs in construction when other sectors are feeling the downturn. Investing in roads, highways, and bridges improves safety and expands and improves the transportation system, vitally important to an export-driven

economy. Investing in municipal infrastructure helps build our towns, cities, and communities. Investing in schools creates better learning environments for children and post-secondary students. Investing in hospitals and other health care facilities helps ensure quality health care and long-term care for Saskatchewan people.

[14:45]

Mr. Speaker, in this budget, for the first time in the province's history, the Government of Saskatchewan will invest more than \$1 billion into the transportation system. This puts our government well on our way to meeting our campaign commitment to invest \$2.7 billion into the transportation system over the next four years. More than 1300 kilometres of provincial highways will be repaired or upgraded this year, including much needed repairs to many of our rural highways. Funding has also been provided to continue work on major projects such as the twinning of Highways 7 and 16 near Saskatoon and of Highway 39 between Estevan and Bienfait. Construction will begin this year on new overpasses at Warman and Martensville, two of the most highly congested traffic areas in the province, Mr. Speaker. This budget also provides for continued planning for future twinning and passing lanes on Highways 6 and 39 and passing lanes on Highway 5 between Humboldt and Saskatoon.

This year more than 100 kilometres of rural highways will be upgraded to improve safety and access, including Highway 354 near Dilke. This budget also fulfills the first year of the highways 2020 plan, a three-year \$70 million funding surge to fix more highways announced in our recent election campaign. Thirty million dollars of that total is being invested in this fiscal year to repair many highways throughout the province, including Highways 220 and 322 in the Silton-Strasbourg area, Highway 924 to Dore Lake, Highway 340 north of Radisson, Highway 376 between Maymont and Asquith, Highway 45 south of Outlook, and Highway 58 between Chaplin and Shamrock.

Five hundred million dollars is being committed in this budget, Mr. Speaker, to continue work on the Regina bypass, including new overpasses at Balgonie, White City, and the Pilot Butte access. When it's complete in October 2019, the bypass will greatly enhance the movement of people and goods in our province and vastly improve traffic safety.

When we include the funding in this budget, our government will have invested more than \$6.3 billion since coming to office to improve more than 11 000 kilometres of roads and highways across Saskatchewan. This budget provides more than \$127 million for municipal infrastructure this fiscal year with plans to invest an additional 325 million through 2019 and '20. And this budget provides \$10 million for the first year of a three-year \$50 million commitment towards the north commuter parkway bridge project in Saskatoon that will help ease congestion on existing bridges.

Mr. Speaker, our growing population means we need more schools. This budget provides more than \$391 million for K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] schools and other education capital, up nearly 143 million compared to last year. This is the largest capital spend in the province's history for the education

sector. This significant investment supports the continuing construction of joint-use schools in the high-growth communities of Martensville, Warman, Saskatoon, and Regina. Those facilities are slated to open for the 2017-18 school year adding much needed classroom capacity and child care spaces.

This budget also provides major capital funding of nearly \$42 million for the renovation and repair of schools in Langenburg, Martensville, Gravelbourg, and St. Brieux, as well as Scott Collegiate and Sacred Heart elementary in Regina. Meanwhile, construction continues this year on the replacement of Regina's Connaught School. This budget also provides \$38 million for preventive maintenance and renewal for our schools, up 20 per cent compared to last year, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, over the next four years, almost \$700 million is targeted for K to 12 schools and other education capital. Continuing investment in university, regional college, and other training facilities is also vital to keeping our province strong. This budget provides nearly \$26 million in capital for advanced education and training with an estimated \$170 million to be provided to this sector over the next four years. This budget provides \$2.2 million for completion of the 17.5 million renovation project of the Southeast Regional College in Weyburn. This fiscal year maintenance and capital and renewal funding in this sector will continue at 23.6 million.

Since 2008, more than \$400 million has been provided through the Ministry of Advanced Education for capital in the post-secondary education and research sector. This includes the Academic Health Sciences facility and the international vaccine centre at the University of Saskatchewan, a new student residence at the University of Regina, and notable projects at Southeast, Parkland, Cumberland, and Carlton Trail regional colleges.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people deserve the best health care possible. To help achieve that we continue to invest heavily in health care infrastructure. This budget commits nearly \$240 million to health care capital, part of a \$700 million investment over the next four years. This budget provides final-year funding to complete construction of The Meadows long-term care facility in Swift Current as well as the Kelvington integrated care facility, both slated to open this summer.

More than \$14 million is being provided for electrical upgrades at Regina's General and Pasqua hospitals, and for a power plant upgrade at Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon. Construction will continue on several major projects including the new children's hospital in Saskatoon and the replacement of the Saskatchewan Hospital integrated correctional facility in North Battleford. This budget includes more than \$50 million for health facility maintenance and equipment, up nearly \$7 million compared to last year. And this budget fulfills another campaign promise by providing \$500,000 to expand a pilot project that provides medical robotic technology to more northern communities. This project allows health care professionals to connect with patients remotely and provide real-time assessment, diagnosis, and patient management.

Our province's Crown corporations will invest nearly \$1.8 billion this fiscal year to upgrade utilities infrastructure and keep Saskatchewan strong. Between 2000 and 2007, the

Crowns spent on average about \$568 million a year on capital including both maintenance, capital investment, and new infrastructure. Since our government took office, Mr. Speaker, Crown capital investment has more than doubled to 1.4 billion annually between 2008 and 2014, and we forecast that between 2015 and 2020 Saskatchewan's Crown corporations will invest an average of \$1.9 billion. That's more than triple the amount invested between 2000 and 2007.

Major Crown capital projects for the current fiscal year include 1.1 billion at SaskPower, primarily to renew electricity, transmission, and distribution systems. SaskPower will also expand and renew electricity generation assets to meet Saskatchewan's growing power needs.

SaskTel is expected to invest more than \$330 million to upgrade its wireless and wireline networks across the province, improve customer service, and continue the rollout of Infinet, its high-bandwidth broadband service.

SaskEnergy will spend more than \$290 million, primarily to ensure a safe, reliable natural gas network through the renewal of its transmission and distribution infrastructure, plus expansion of its gas processing capacity.

Mr. Speaker, as we meet the challenges created by falling resource revenue, we will need to continue to control spending. Controlling spending means making some difficult decisions as we strive to keep government's programs and services sustainable in the long term. This year's budget includes some of those difficult and necessary decisions.

Fees under the children's and seniors' drugs plans are rising by \$5 per prescription to a maximum of \$25 per prescription. The last time government increased the cost of prescriptions under these plans was in 2012, when fees rose from 15 to \$20 per prescription. Since then, drug plan costs have grown by an average of \$10 million annually, so we are raising fees by \$5 per prescription to help keep the plan sustainable and prescription costs in line with other provinces. Increases are expected to impact 66,000 families by approximately \$20 a year on average, and 120,000 seniors by approximately \$80 annually on average.

To keep them sustainable, certain Justice and Corrections programs are receiving less funding this year and the Buffalo Narrows Community Correctional Centre is being closed. At full capacity, it houses 18 inmates who will be transferred to other facilities in the province. The closure is expected to save the province more than \$660,000 this year and just over \$1 million annually.

Revenue sharing is intended to provide municipalities with the financial means to address their priorities, but if municipal funding is to remain sustainable, certain supports need to be rationalized as we move forward with transformational change. That's why, in this budget, provincial funding has been discontinued for five urban municipal parks: River Valley in Battlefords, Pehonan in Prince Albert, Chinook Parkway in Swift Current, Moose Jaw's Wakamow, and Tatagwa in Weyburn. This will save the province a total of \$540,000 annually. We believe the funding of municipal parks is best left for municipalities to prioritize.

Also, funding for some labour market training programs has been reduced by about \$3.5 million to better reflect utilization levels, demand, and program realignment. Areas of highest priority and need, including the Canada-Saskatchewan Job Grant, and employability for people with disabilities, are seeing increases, Mr. Speaker.

We are removing the grandfathering provision from the Saskatchewan employment supplement. In 2015-16, the supplement changed to be open to applicants with children 12 years old and under. However the change included a grandfathering provision that resulted in families who were already in the program, eligible to receive support for children 13 years and over. Removing this provision focuses the program on those with highest need, and combined with projected lower utilization, the province is forecast to save \$2.5 million in 2016-17. In addition a number of social services and assistance program changes will be introduced this year to increase fairness and equity among clients and enhance the sustainability of the programs while ensuring that vulnerable citizens receive the supports they need.

Mr. Speaker, also as a part of spending control in this budget, we have decided to defer funding to various initiatives. We have deferred funding earmarked for the health sciences facility project at the University of Saskatchewan to future years, recognizing that 230 million of the province's total 250 million commitment to that project has already been provided. This budget suspends funding for the Canada excellence research Chair and water security for this fiscal year. Support will be considered in future years.

Those are some of the difficult decisions we have taken in this budget. There are many difficult decisions made as well across all areas of government to control spending. Moving forward as part of the 2017-18 budget process and beyond, we will accelerate the government-wide process of transformational change. This means ensuring the sustainability of high-quality public services for the people of Saskatchewan and ensuring we will deliver them in the most efficient, cost-effective manner possible.

Despite the challenges in our resource sector, Saskatchewan's finances remain relatively strong, Mr. Speaker. Our budget deficit is smaller and more manageable than those of our neighbouring provinces. Our debt-to-GDP ratio is the second lowest amongst the provinces, and we continue to receive solid credit ratings. This year we began a process of transformational change to secure a sustainable balance between the costs of providing vital programs and services that the people of this province need, and the province's revenue base.

This budget helps keep Saskatchewan strong by keeping our provincial finances strong and will help us pursue our goal of returning our budget to surplus by 2017-18. This budget helps keep Saskatchewan strong by controlling spending by keeping taxes low. This budget helps keep Saskatchewan strong by providing funding for highways, hospitals, schools, and other important infrastructure projects. And this budget keeps Saskatchewan strong by investing in people, by ensuring support for children, students, families, working people, and those who are most vulnerable. Ultimately Saskatchewan people will keep our province strong by furthering their



education, raising a family, starting a small business, volunteering for a local charity. “From many peoples, strength” — our province’s motto reflects our belief in each other and our confidence in the future.

Mr. Speaker, just a few weeks ago the people of Saskatchewan voted for a Premier and a party who promised to keep Saskatchewan strong. The people of this province expect their government to manage through economic challenges through prudent and pragmatic solutions. This budget continues that approach while laying out a plan to get back to balance. Together we will continue building a great province with a brighter future and together, Mr. Speaker, we will keep Saskatchewan strong. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Regina University:

That the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance, seconded by the member for Regina University:

That this Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And first off, I do wish to take a moment to apologize to all the members of the Legislative Assembly for the egregious error that was made prior this afternoon. We do take very seriously the importance of the embargo, and I sincerely and truly want to apologize for that mishap earlier today. That’s very important and it should never, ever happen. So I want to take that opportunity to the House.

[15:00]

Now before I get into a more detailed look at this budget, it has to be said, Mr. Speaker, there’s absolutely nothing in this budget that justifies a three-month delay. There’s nothing in here that the government didn’t know in February, and there’s nothing in here that had to wait until now to be announced.

So, Mr. Speaker, there’s nothing that refuses the Sask Party’s refusal to tell Saskatchewan people their plans before the election. But let me tell you, there’s a lot in this budget that was not part of the Sask Party’s campaign just a couple of months ago.

They didn’t reveal the reality of the state of the finances, and I certainly don’t remember any of them talking about the cuts they’ve been planning. And I know they didn’t tell anyone about the costs that they now want to shift onto the backs of Saskatchewan families.

And there was nothing in their campaign that told Saskatchewan workers that worry about losing their jobs and those that are now looking for one, that they planned on abandoning them.

Bottom line, Mr. Speaker, this government didn’t want people to know how badly they’ve squandered their decade-long ride through high commodity prices and, through sheer luck, some of the best economic years in our history as a province.

Mr. Speaker, the truth is, after the price of oil started to drop and they had blown through the surplus and the rainy day fund that the NDP had left them, the Sask Party chose — now they made the conscious choice — to hide these plans until after the election.

Now the people of Saskatchewan will be wondering why the Sask Party didn’t lay out their plans in an honest way before election day so that they could have known what they were voting for. Because, Mr. Speaker, I don’t know anyone who voted for a government that would abandon people looking for work, a government that’s no longer interested in diversifying the economy, a government that, in real numbers, is cutting health and education, and a government that would lead us to two 5 per cent increases to SaskPower rates, a government that’s undermining urban parks, holding a fire sale of Crown land, and is cutting protection of the air that we breathe, the water we drink, and our fertile prairie soil.

Mr. Speaker, this budget lays out the Sask Party’s plan to spend over \$3 million per day more than they take in in one day. Think about that, Mr. Speaker, over \$3 million per day. Mr. Speaker, now is not a time to be working without a net, but that’s what the Sask Party’s doing. The Growth and Financial Security Fund is now empty and instead of raising that as a concern, they’re repealing the Act and winding up the fund. And this is all a footnote in the budget, Mr. Speaker.

Now they say it will be because they no longer use the GRF [General Revenue Fund] accounting. But let’s be perfectly clear. Really, they know that they were in violation of their own Act by running a second deficit in a row. So rather than admitting they’re breaking their own law, they’re scrapping it.

Mr. Speaker, in this case it’s not only something they didn’t promise, but it’s actually the opposite of what they promised. They said once oil reached \$75 per barrel, they would start paying back into the rainy day fund. They said that once the fund hit \$500 million, they would start paying down debt. How can they keep either of these two promises if they scrap the fund altogether?

So that’s another broken Sask Party election promise. But what do they care? The election’s over and once again it’s Saskatchewan families, seniors, and workers who are paying the price.

And it goes on, Mr. Speaker. For example, during the election, did the Sask Party say that they would once again hike the cost of medication for kids and seniors? Nope, they didn’t say that. Also just a year ago, Mr. Speaker, despite their cuts, the Sask Party told struggling parents with teenagers that the Saskatchewan employment supplement would still be there for them. Well now they’ve pulled the rug out from under those parents and cut the supplement for all children over 13. Families who are trying to make it, who are struggling in low-paying jobs, can no longer count on this bit of assistance, even those families who were grandfathered in just over a

year ago.

Mr. Speaker, we also see cutbacks to Aboriginal court worker programs and Aboriginal police consulting groups. These programs serve the most vulnerable people in our society and the most overrepresented in the criminal justice system.

The social fabric in this province needs to be protected. And for example, I'd like to mention right now the Gary Tinker Federation, whose namesake is here today, Mr. Speaker. This program supports northern disabled people and it's an essential part of that social fabric. But there's nothing in this budget to help move forward on the TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission] recommendations and this province's necessary role in reconciliation. So I ask again, why did this government think it was right to hide this from the public before the election?

Mr. Speaker, it doesn't end there. We heard the minister today talk about investments in health care and education, but perhaps the minister needs a lesson in inflation and population growth, Mr. Speaker. A minimum of 6 per cent annual increase is needed just to maintain the status quo programs like health care and education. Anything below that is effectively a cut. Health is only getting 1.5 per cent more and education is being increased by 0.7 per cent. Yes, Mr. Speaker, less than 1 per cent.

And so who's going to have to make the cuts? This government is pushing those painful decisions onto the health authorities and to the school boards, punting the cuts down the line right onto Saskatchewan people. That is shameful and that is unacceptable. And the Sask Party didn't tell anyone about those cuts before election day. Top all that off with two 5 per cent increases in just six months in SaskPower rates and it becomes very, very clear, Mr. Speaker, why this government didn't have the courage to put the real picture before the people of Saskatchewan before April 4th.

Mr. Speaker, we also have a government that's no longer interested in diversifying the economy. This is a government that blames everything on low commodity prices, but they're doing nothing to make sure we're in a better shape during the next struggle. They aren't doing anything to create jobs in other sectors. In fact they are cutting, cutting the services that help people get back to work and the programs that support new businesses and job creators.

And, Mr. Speaker, though you wouldn't think of it by the inaction of this government, the situation is grave. Bankruptcies are on the rise in Saskatchewan. Wages are declining. There are over 9,000 fewer jobs today than there were a year ago. Jobs are being lost across the board, from the media to the Sears warehouse to Cameco. And this government is cutting the programs that help people get back to work — everything from apprenticeship programs; they're cutting post-secondary education; youth and adult skills training; adult basic education; cuts to employment development, except of course for \$3 million to SkipTheDishes; provincial training allowances are cut; skills training benefit cut. Immigration programs, economic development, and trade and export are all receiving cuts. And all of these cuts, Mr. Speaker, from a government that said nothing about them when they sought the mandate from the

people. And, Mr. Speaker, all of these cuts by a government that is still stubbornly committing another half a billion dollars on their failed bypass project.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to address one more issue about the mixed messages that the Sask Party's been spinning. First, during their campaign their message was, steady as we go. They got elected on that message. But they've quickly changed it to transformational change. Mr. Speaker, now the budget tells us they have to look into what this transformational change will be. But we know that school boards, hospitals, and all kinds of groups of people will now have to continue waiting in fear that the Sask Party axe will fall on them next. And no explanation, really, of what this transformational change is going to be.

Even the framework they've set up is hard to believe. They say, "Important questions will be asked." Mr. Speaker, now I'm going to repeat a few of these questions that they are going to be asking themselves about government programs.

First question: is this something government should be doing? Is this program or service the role of government? If so, is it being delivered in the best possible manner and at the lowest possible cost to taxpayers?

Mr. Speaker, they have been in government for nearly a decade, and how have you not been asking these questions all along? I mean that, Mr. Speaker. What is transformational about ensuring that programs are effective? What's transformational about the fact that they think . . . responsibly managing government programs and services? That's not transformational, Mr. Speaker; that's frightening. They should have told Saskatchewan people that before the election as well. And frankly, Mr. Speaker, it explains a lot about how the Sask Party got themselves into this difficult situation that they now want to pretend is someone else's fault.

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party needs to quit pointing fingers and instead look in the mirror. Most of all, Mr. Speaker, they should reconsider this budget. They've got to stop making Saskatchewan people pay for their mistakes and mismanagement, and they should apologize for refusing to tell Saskatchewan people what their real plans were.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I will have more to say about this in upcoming days, but at this point I would like to move that this debate be now adjourned.

**The Speaker:** — The member from Saskatoon Nutana has moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

### Resumption of Budget Debate

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move:

That debate on the motion "That the Assembly approves in

general the budgetary policy of the government” be resumed on Thursday, June 2nd, 2016.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

That the debate on the motion “That the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government” be resumed on Thursday, June 2nd, 2016.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move that this Assembly do now adjourn.

**The Speaker:** — Before I put that question on adjournment to the Assembly, I would like to thank everyone for coming and witnessing today’s budget. I would also like to invite everyone to a tea that’s going to be taking place in the library. If you leave the main doors to your right, there is a tea in the library. There’s also a tea in room 218 to your left.

At this time I will place the question. The Government House Leader has moved that this House do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — This Assembly now stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 15:11.]



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