



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

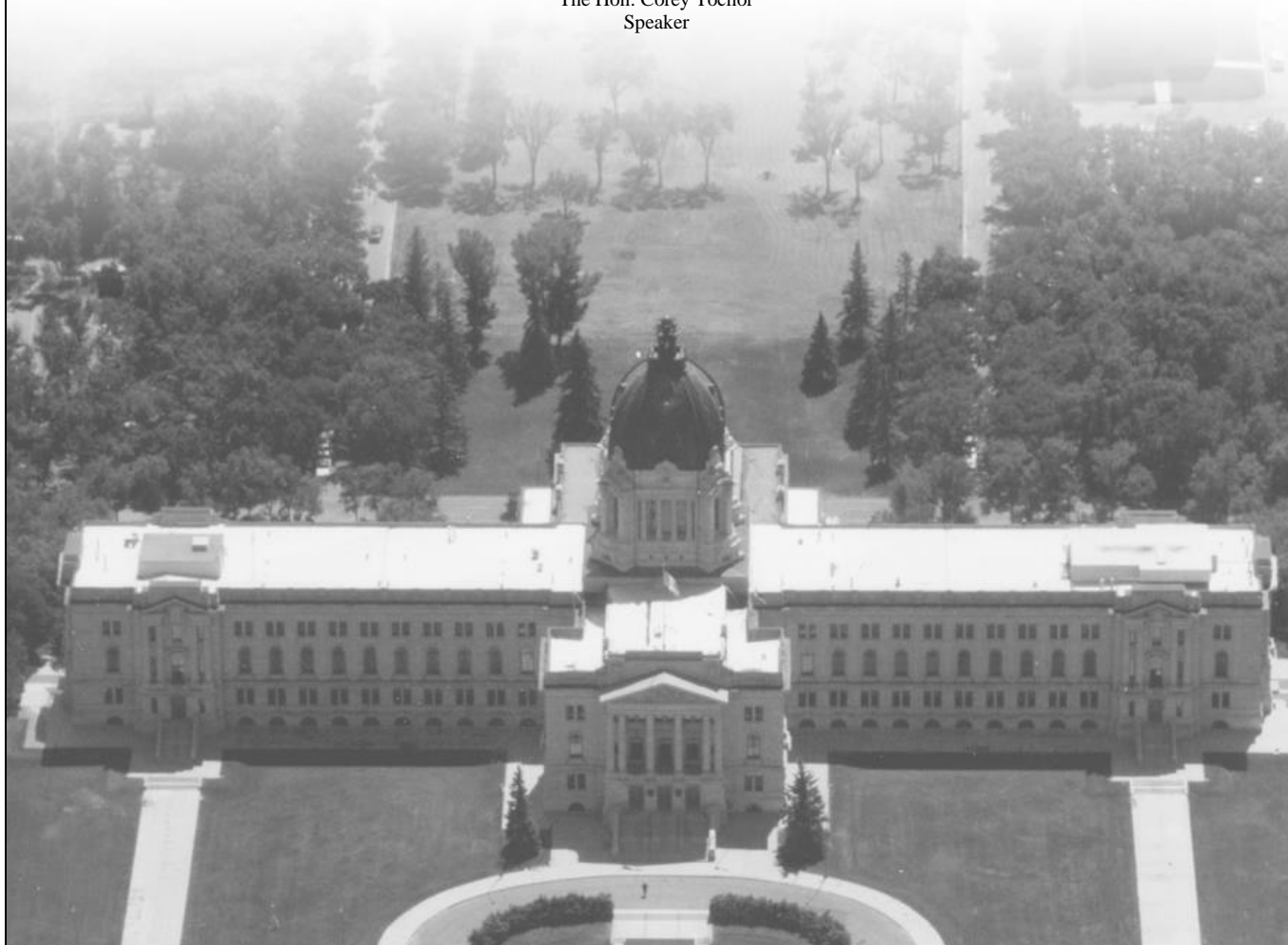
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
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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

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Wilson, Hon. Nadine — Saskatchewan Rivers (SP)

Wotherspoon, Trent — Regina Rosemont (NDP)

Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)

Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

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

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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: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce to you and through to all members of the House, someone who's seated in the west gallery: a great friend to the province of Saskatchewan, and someone who represents an amazing success story here in Saskatchewan. It's Murad Al-Katib. Maybe he'll give us a bit of a wave.

I noticed him when, I think the Agriculture minister was going to introduce him, but I noticed — and he still may — but I noticed Murad was here. And I just wanted to thank him, by way of an introduction on behalf of the entire province, for taking his business idea quite literally from a basement to offices all around the world. In India, when I've been there on trade missions, he's known not just by Saskatchewan members of the delegation, but by those that were visiting in India as the king of pulses, and for good reason.

There are many, many Saskatchewan farm families and businesses that depend on his leadership and his entrepreneurship and the vision that he has had for this company. And so I just want to thank him publicly for what he has contributed so mightily to the economy and the province and the people of Saskatchewan. I wish that he will, I know he'll continue. We met in Toronto when I spoke at the Empire Club. He was there, just having come back from overseas sales, and I think he was having some meetings in that city as well.

So on behalf of the government and, Mr. Speaker, may I say on behalf of members on this side of the House, thank you, Murad. Welcome here to your Legislative Assembly. I'd ask all members to join me in a warm welcome to Murad Al-Katib.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a tremendous honour to join with the Premier and welcome this prairie business giant to his Assembly. And certainly Murad Al-Katib is a pioneer and somebody who's added value to agriculture within our province and who's built international trade relationships all around our world, someone who's taken Saskatchewan to the international stage and has represented us so well and for the benefit of so many here in Saskatchewan. So it's my honour to welcome Mr. Al-Katib to his Assembly.

And you know, I also know that he represents relationships with our international community. I know he maintains strong relationships with Turkey as well, and I know that he's a strong Turkish-Canadian himself. And certainly at this time where we had this horrendous bombing yesterday in Istanbul, I think of certainly Mr. Al-Katib, but also all Turkish-Canadians and all impacted in Turkey itself and around our world and here at home in Saskatchewan who are reeling from this horrific act of

terrorism, Mr. Speaker. So I ask all members to recognize Mr. Al-Katib to his Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina University.

Ms. Beaudry-Mellor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure to stand in the House today and also welcome my good friend, Murad Al-Katib, to the legislature. I do also want to echo the voice of the Leader of the Opposition and say that I hope that your friends and family, and particularly Huseyin's family in Istanbul are safe.

We've known each other for about 20 years, Murad and his wife, Michelle, and I. We're very close family friends. They're like extended family to Kevin and I, and their son, Tariq, is very close friends with my son, Kayman. In fact we actually even have dogs that are sisters, Mr. Speaker.

Murad is most famous for the astounding success of AGT, but I actually just want to take a minute to talk about the fact that they're amazing leaders in our community, both of them. They both do tremendous work. Michelle does tremendous work with the Red Cross. Murad does tremendous work with the Regina Roughriders. They both volunteer constantly for the RMF, Regina Minor Football, for the Saskatchewan Selects. Michelle in particular is an indispensable member of the schools in our communities.

So I just want to say that it's great to see you here recognized in your Legislative Assembly, but that I also want to thank you on behalf of those of us on this side for your community volunteerism work in the community, not just your business. So thanks for that, Murad. And join me in . . . [inaudible].

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you, two special guests seated in your gallery. The first is Aaron Nagy — if you can give a wave, Aaron — and his friend, Frank Stanisci.

And we all know Aaron's no stranger to this House, the good work that he's done around Jimmy's law. But today they're here about football. They work together on a radio program, *Candid Frank Live*. Now Frank apparently is from Toronto, and he's here for the game tomorrow. So he's here stirring up some trouble with that, but Aaron's going to straighten him out. But they're here early for the game tomorrow. I would ask all members to welcome our good friends to their legislature. Thank you.

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

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, it is my pleasure to introduce some special guests to the Legislative Assembly today. Seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, is Greg Magirescu who is the new CEO [chief executive officer] of Creative Saskatchewan — give us a wave, Greg — and Ranjan Thakre who is the new board Chair of Creative Saskatchewan.

Greg is a seasoned senior arts and cultural leader who brings diverse cultural and business experience to the role. He was responsible for bringing the Cultural Olympiad Program to the 2010 winter games in Vancouver. He worked as a bridge builder, connecting diverse groups to design and build the Anvil Centre in New Westminster, BC [British Columbia]. And he's also brought music, theatre, and fine arts programs to communities in Ontario and Atlantic Canada.

Ranjan is a diversified creative industries executive with more than 25 years of experience and a track record of success in leadership. Most recently he served as the interim CEO of the Saskatchewan Arts Board. Ranjan is a seasoned advocate for Saskatchewan's creative sector and possesses extensive experience working with government, business, and other stakeholders in the public and private sectors.

We are pleased to have such experienced leaders joining Creative Saskatchewan. I ask all members to join me in welcoming these two to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of this Assembly, I'd like to introduce a constituent of mine, Charlotte L'Oste-Brown, who is seated in the west gallery. Charlotte was diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis and is in need of a lung transplant. She has been sharing her story to promote awareness about organ and tissue donation. I ask all members to join me in welcoming Charlotte to her Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

While on my feet, Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, seated in your gallery are two guests and constituents of mine: Rick and his daughter, Haley Maddess. And Haley is very interested in politics. They farm, they have a large cattle operation and are just a few miles west of our operation down in the Willow Bunch area. So I ask all members to join in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to join with the Minister of Culture on behalf of the official opposition, welcoming and congratulating and wishing well certainly, the new Chair with Creative Saskatchewan, Ranjan Thakre, and the new CEO, Mr. Greg Magirescu. Wishing them all the best and many successes with the important work that Creative Saskatchewan does. On behalf of the official opposition, Mr. Speaker, welcome to these individuals to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce two constituents of Regina Walsh Acres, and people that are known quite well across the city, Katherine Gagne and her daughter Isabel. You know, Katherine does amazing work with . . . she chairs the public school board. She does fantastic work on behalf of everyone across Regina. She's also very involved with Junior Achievement and very involved with our

Harvest City Church, Mr. Speaker.

But Isabel has a little bit more of an impressive resumé than her mom already. She graduates on Friday with a 97 per cent average in high school. She's won over \$150,000 worth of scholarships already. She's in TD community leadership, a \$70,000 scholarship. She's the first student to receive this from Saskatchewan in over a decade. She's a top honours in SaskTel youth Aboriginal award as outstanding female. She has been a Sask Junior Citizen of the Year. She was the YMCA Women of Distinction's Young Woman of Promise, and she will study international business at McGill this fall with her sister, Victoria. One of her highest achievements is she will be named a prestigious Greville Smith scholar as well at McGill.

And one thing that her mom and dad are both very proud of is that she started Shoe Drive to the Net when she was playing basketball and she realized the team she was playing against didn't have proper footwear for the sporting event. And she's raised over \$10,000 to help kids that don't the proper sporting equipment to get involved with sports. And I think her parents are very proud of her community achievement.

I was able to watch her valedictorian address, and to you, Isabel, I say that we are all proud of you and we all believe in everything you can do in the future. That was one of the main points of your address. I watched it on Facebook, and you did a great job.

So I ask all members to join me in congratulating Isabel. We all know you're going to do well in your future. Come back to Saskatchewan after you're done with McGill and be a leader amongst our community and probably sit here in this Chamber at some point in time, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, it is my pleasure to also rise today and to welcome both Isabel and Katherine Gagne to this Assembly. Katherine is a former colleague and, of course has been mentioned, the Chair of the Regina Public School Board. And I know that they presented their budget last night, and I'm sure they had a late night and an interesting night. So thank you for all your work there.

And I'm not going to attempt to list all of the awards that you have won, but I'd say that's a very, very impressive resumé. We all wish you all the best in your future endeavours at McGill. Thank you for all of your contributions to the community so far, and I'm sure we can look forward to more in the future. Best of luck. Please join me in welcoming them to their Assembly.

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

Mr. Hargrave: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all the members of the Assembly, I would like to introduce three very special constituents and individuals that are seated in your gallery. They were three of the hardest working people I had on my campaign team through the last election. They are my daughter, Angela Weinrich; my

grandson, Noah; and my granddaughter, Layla. So Noah, give us a wave, guys. They're a little shy.

Angela worked pretty much every day on my campaign, working with the computers and door knocking in the evenings when her husband got off work and could watch the kids, and she'd come out door knocking with me. But the kids were there pretty much every day, and they'd do any of the jobs that involved stickers. And of course, Layla was very instrumental in making sure Grandpa had a fresh picture on his desk every day, and so I very much appreciated that.

It's so wonderful for me, Mr. Speaker, to have all my children and my grandchildren live so close to me and take such a keen interest in my political life and work hard for me and show me the support that they do. So I ask all members to join me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly. Thank you very much.

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

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, thank you. To you and through you to all members of the Assembly, I'd like to join with the member from Saskatoon Centre and welcome Aaron Nagy to his Legislative Assembly. I count Aaron as a fairly good friend from Yorkton, very well known in the area. Something that wasn't mentioned is he's very active at the Lions Club; in fact I believe he's on the national board. So I ask all members to join me in welcoming Aaron to his Legislative Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise again today to present a petition to improve PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] coverage for Saskatchewan workers. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners point out that post-traumatic stress disorder can severely impact the lives of Saskatchewan workers, and they point out that delaying both diagnosis and treatment can be detrimental to recovery.

They're simply asking for this government to acknowledge that, while on the job, if the worker's exposed to a traumatic event and then gets a subsequent diagnosis of PTSD, that the traumatic event is presumed to have caused the PTSD, 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 today is signed by citizens of

Strongfield, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, White City. Frankly they're coming in from all over the province, Mr. Speaker. Regina again, and Balgonie. I so submit.

[13:45]

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition from individuals who are concerned about the status of wetlands in our province. Wetlands serve a very vital function in our ecosystem. They take the form of marshes, bogs, fens, swamps, and open water. Wetlands are home to wildlife, including waterfowl. They clean the water running off of agricultural fields. They protect us from flooding and drought, and they are a playground where families can explore and play. In the worst cases, such as some areas on the prairies, as much as 90 per cent of our wetlands have disappeared. But I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Government of Saskatchewan to:

Increase funding to do the proper inventory work, putting Saskatchewan in a better position to manage the water resource.

Speed up the evaluation of high-risk watersheds where there is significant damage annually from flooding. This evaluation must include a recognition of drainage works that could be closed or restored that will alleviate some of the issues downstream with respect to flooding and nutrient loading. And,

Create a sound and transparent mitigation process that adequately addresses sustainable development.

The sequence should first focus on avoiding environmental harm whenever possible before a secondary focus on minimizing the harm, with compensation being sought only when the development is deemed essential and the first two stages cannot be met.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by individuals from Regina. I so submit.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition in support of funding for heritage languages here in Saskatchewan. And we know that after 25 years, the Government of Saskatchewan is discontinuing all support for 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. As a result of the announcement made by the Ministry of Education, many of these non-profit heritage language schools will be faced with the difficult decision of whether or not they can continue to operate.

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

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 all over the province here in Saskatchewan. Thank you so much.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Donation Supports Project Triple Play

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Prince Albert is well known for its hard-working volunteers, and the committee members of Project Triple Play are no exception to this rule.

Project Triple Play is an initiative to build world-standard softball diamonds in Prince Albert. Last week this committee received a huge boost when it was presented with a cheque for \$93,175 from the Federated Co-op, \$40,000 of which came from our local Prince Albert Co-op.

Felix Casavant from Prince Albert minor ball association, Dean McKim, general manager of the Prince Albert Co-op, Ian Litzenberger, Co-Chair of the Project Triple Play committee, and Mayor Greg Dionne took part in the cheque presentation. The money has been earmarked to purchase stadium lighting for one of the new diamonds.

Mr. Speaker, with this generous donation from Federated Co-op, the committee has raised close to \$1 million and are well on their way to surpassing their \$1.5 million goal. Construction of the new ball diamonds is expected to start this September and will no doubt be put to good use by the people of Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join with me in acknowledging the hard work of the Project Triple Play committee and in congratulating them on their latest donation.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

2016 Global Citizen Laureate

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I stand to congratulate Mr. Murad Al-Katib on being recognized as the 2016 Global Citizen Laureate, awarded by the United Nations Association in Canada.

The Global Citizen Laureate pays tribute to a leader with a uniquely Canadian model of success. Mr. Al-Katib's leadership has led AGT Food and Ingredients to develop

Saskatchewan-led solutions to feed the world. He has played an integral role in the agriculture industry in Saskatchewan and his expertise and achievements are certainly well worth celebrating.

With 2016 designated as International Year of Pulses, it's particularly fitting that the 70th anniversary of the Global Citizen Laureate recognizes Murad Al-Katib's achievements. Our province has always been recognized as a producer of high-quality agricultural products but Mr. Al-Katib's innovative spirit has helped to establish Saskatchewan as one of the largest pulse producers in the world.

Pulses have become an integral part of our province's economy and the Saskatchewan story. Mr. Al-Katib's expertise has helped to shape our primary agriculture and value-added processing sector and expand our export potential. His philanthropic efforts and entrepreneurial spirit benefit people beyond Saskatchewan's borders. The benefits of his contributions are far reaching and I applaud his continued efforts.

Please join me in congratulating Murad Al-Katib in being awarded the 2016 Global Citizen Laureate.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Journey to Fitness and Health

Mr. Vermette: — When Alex Bird first applied to go for bariatric surgery, the doctor told him he was too heavy and didn't qualify. Teco says he felt so embarrassed, he decided to make a huge change to his life. When he stepped on the scale, he was 543 pounds. He decided to change the way he ate, and he was going to exercise regularly. The first week into his program, it was hard for him to walk from his truck to his office door without getting back spasms and losing his breath. He met with a number of health professionals including his surgeon, exercise therapist, and a dietitian. He was determined to get fit.

Two years later, a lot of miles walked, he now weighs 288 pounds. He peaked last June. At one point, he lost over 300 pounds, an amazing journey over a two-year period. Alex Teco Bird is a true role model in the sense he went against the odds and proved to himself that anything is possible with commitment, dedication, and hard work. He now enjoys things he could never do like fly on a plane, run, golfing, horse ride, and even a roller coaster ride.

Today Teco gets emails, letters, and messages from folks who thank him for motivating them to get fit and healthy. He speaks at schools in front of large groups of kids to talk about bullying and how kids can lead healthier lives with more confidence and better self-esteem. His message is, you can change too. Great work, Teco. Thank you.

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

Habitat for Humanity's Women Build Projects

Ms. Eyre: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to inform members about a Habitat for Humanity Women Build barbecue that I was invited to attend in Saskatoon on June

24. We all understand that some families need a helping hand to make their dream come true of living in a safe, comfortable, and affordable home. Home ownership can change a family's life, and that's where Habitat steps in. On May 12, ground was broken at 211 Slimmon Road in Saskatoon to mark the start of construction for 12 more affordable homes for Habitat partner families.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to note that one of these homes is being sponsored by Habitat's Women Build program. This volunteer program brings together women from all walks of life who want to learn construction skills and to make a difference by building homes and communities. I'm proud to say this is Habitat Saskatoon's fourth Women Build project. Including the Slimmon Road project, nine homes across the province have been Women Build projects.

Mr. Speaker, we are proud to support Habitat's work, which is part of what keeps Saskatchewan strong. Our government commends Women Build and all the men and women who are taking on the task of building homes for families in need across the province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Recognition Dinner Showcases Tourism Professionals

Mr. Olason: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On June 15th I had the privilege of attending the 23rd annual Tourism Professional Recognition Dinner hosted by the Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council. Mr. Speaker, this event celebrated the professions that make up the robust tourism sector we have here in Saskatchewan. I don't have to remind my colleagues about the tourism opportunities that exist here, from the amazing natural wonders stretching from the south, north, east, and west to the festivals and shows we host.

Mr. Speaker, the backbone of tourism in Saskatchewan are tourism-related jobs. Nearly 65,000 or 1 in 10 workers has a job in a tourism-related sector and there are a growing number of these employees who are attaining their national certification.

Mr. Speaker, the dinner showcased some of the tourism professionals that have demonstrated excellence in their fields. There were dozens of honourees in 28 different occupations. I would like to give a special mention to Cari Lemieux, GM [general manager] of Days Inn Regina East and Mark Regier, CEO [chief executive officer] of Prairieland Park for winning Employer of Choice.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members of this Assembly congratulate the Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council on a successful event and to thank and congratulate all the honourees for their skill and contribution to tourism here in Saskatchewan. Thank you.

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

Need for Organ and Tissue Donors

Mr. Marit: — Mr. Speaker, for someone waiting on an organ transplant list, the call saying that there is an available organ for

transplant could give them a whole new life. Charlotte L'Oste-Brown knows all too well about that reality. She was diagnosed with polymyositis, which triggered her second diagnosis of pulmonary fibrosis. This means she will need a double lung transplant.

Mr. Speaker, Charlotte has had to alter virtually every aspect of her life, including her job, and has been forced to give up many of her favourite pastimes such as golf, curling, and dancing. She's become an advocate for organ and tissue donation and promotes awareness about the importance of organ donation through sharing her story.

Mr. Speaker, our government wants to help those like Charlotte who are waiting for that call. That is why we are asking the Standing Committee on Human Services to review the current approach to organ and tissue donation and to recommend ways to improve Saskatchewan's rate of donation. Mr. Speaker, a single organ donor can save up to eight lives and a tissue donor can save up towards 75 lives.

Today I ask all of you to consider becoming a donor by putting the red organ and tissue donor sticker on your health card and letting your family know your wishes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Shooting Stars Foundation Fundraisers

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Shooting Stars Foundation held two great fundraisers recently: the Black Tie NHL [National Hockey League] Play-off Draft and the Sticks on Rose street hockey tournament.

As some of you may know, I was lucky enough to participate in the playoff draft alongside the rest of Casino Regina's team. We may have been ridiculed for picking the San Jose Sharks, but I've been picking them for the last decade, so I figured I finally had the chance to get the last laugh as our Casino Regina team finished first in the black-tie draft. Mr. Speaker, the Casino Regina team was awarded \$20,000 for winning the playoff draft, and we decided to hand the cheque right back to the Shooting Stars Foundation who will use it to help even more sick children and their families in and around Regina.

Mr. Speaker, Shermco Industries finished second and Greystone Bereavement finished third.

I also had the pleasure of attending the annual Sticks on Rose charity street hockey tournament to cheer on the member from Gardiner Park who played in the tournament. And I must say, for a lineman, he showed very soft hands around the net and had a scoring touch which you wouldn't believe.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking everyone who made Sticks on Rose and the Black Tie NHL Play-Off Draft a success, and also in thanking the Shooting Stars Foundation, Jamie Heward, Mike Sillinger, and Jordan Eberle for all their support for people across our province.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Development of Mining Projects

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, they call it confusion or lack of transparency. But whatever they call it, there's a lot of it coming from members opposite. Whether it's saying that Cenovus was contracted to take 100 per cent of the CO₂ guaranteed, even though that simply wasn't the fact, or the supposed \$70 trillion — that's with a "t", Mr. Speaker — to sell technologies that we don't own and can't sell. Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on. But time and time again, they get their facts wrong.

Now we have the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood who told a group of citizens that the BHP Jansen mine was "... at a stage now where if the board of directors doesn't authorize any more expenditure on this project, they're going to walk away."

And then the Minister of Energy said, "They've never given any indication like that at all."

Now I know we have to be a little careful with what we hear from the scandal-plagued minister, but still. Will the Premier clarify what is happening with BHP and explain to this House the obvious consequences of this kind of speculation from his government?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to report to the House that, notwithstanding the challenges in terms of commodities worldwide, challenges that have affected BHP Billiton, one of the ... if not the largest mining company in the world, I'm happy to report to the House that that project continues, Mr. Speaker.

The pace of due diligence and the pace of the preliminary work on the project has slowed, has slowed commensurate with the prices for potash and also with the worldwide financial and economic situation. So that would have been an opportune time, I guess, for some ... another company perhaps to do as the hon. Leader of the Opposition has indicated that they might be doing with respect to cancelling or stopping the project. I am happy to report that's not the case.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to work with BHP Billiton in ensuring that the government's responsive from a regulatory standpoint, from a royalty standpoint, Mr. Speaker. I think the company is on record as saying they have liked the approach of the Government of Saskatchewan, have welcomed the fact that we have reached out and in a proactive way, wanting to make Saskatchewan a great place to make what is a multi-billion-dollar investment in the province.

[14:00]

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Two very different messages, and now I guess three messages from government. These are important

projects. It's important that the facts are communicated in a direct way that reflects reality. This is also the same member that apparently told farmers in his own riding that local concerns have to sometimes be sacrificed for desperately needed economic development. He said, and I quote, "In the world, sometimes things happen."

Mr. Speaker, all of us are supposed to be bringing our constituents' concerns from our communities to this place, not simply bringing that Premier's, that Premier's agenda back to our ridings, Mr. Speaker.

One community member said, "We have been left with the impression that our community is going to have to sacrifice itself for the sake of the government's resource revenues." And government can laugh and guffaw all they want, but I can tell you the people and farmers through the Southey area deserve a heck of a lot better than that, Mr. Speaker. This is a community that's not saying no to potash. They're saying no to being ignored, to being treated like an afterthought.

Mr. Speaker, after meeting with the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] and then the ministers, this community seems to be even less clear than before. Will the Premier take the extra step, the right step, and make sure that the community's concerns are adequately listened to and addressed? Rushing approval and railroading valid concerns isn't right and it's not fair.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the words or the quotations that are referenced by the Leader of the Opposition with respect to the member in question were taken out of context, Mr. Speaker. I think that's certainly been made clear by the member.

I would also want to point out to the House that it was this government that extended the environmental assessment time period by another 15 days. Mr. Speaker, the point is that we do want to go through the process ... [inaudible interjection] ... Well 15 days on top of a significant environmental process — a period of time, by the way, that was once prescribed by members opposite for major projects. So let's not forget that we've actually extended the period of time ... Well the member, the Finance critic wants to chirp from her seat.

The bottom line is this: we've actually extended what the previous government, the NDP [New Democratic Party] government, thought to be a reasonable time for an appropriate examination of projects of this scale. That has occurred, Mr. Speaker, because we do want to hear from local residents. We do want to take the time to make sure we get the environmental assessment right. And at the end of the day, we hope there's the right balance. We can address those concerns, protect the environment, and also have a welcoming atmosphere for the creation of brand new jobs in Saskatchewan.

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

Funding for Education

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, if the Premier thinks 15

days is going to cut it for a community that's up against very deep pockets, very deep pockets of a state-owned potential potash company impacting families that have farmed for years in our province, that's wrong, Mr. Speaker.

You know, the waste and mismanagement of this government have led to some very damaging decisions. Let's look at Regina Public Schools. Last night they were forced into passing a deficit of over \$800,000. Mr. Speaker, this is a growing school division here in Regina. They're expecting nearly 600 new students next year, and without the adequate funding.

One division director admitted, "The level of government funding continues to be a challenge." And one trustee said, "This has been a very, very troubling year." Troubling, Mr. Speaker, because the government is failing to provide our schools with what they need, with what they were promised, and it impacts all the students. And the Finance Minister can heckle all he wants, but the impact is for students here today. Clearly this government's method of underfunding school divisions isn't sustainable, and it's hurting classrooms today.

Why has the Premier dismissed this reality, broken his promise, dug his heels in instead of ensuring that our classrooms all across Saskatchewan have the resources they need today and for tomorrow?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we spend a lot of time in this House correcting the things that the members opposite say. Yesterday the member from Regina Lakeview asked a question about Regina Public staffing levels. In her question she said, "Currently three occupational therapists have heavy caseloads of close to 20 schools. Now, due to funding cuts . . . one of the three will be gone." We checked with the director of education. The director of education said, actually they turned one of the . . . from a half FTE [full-time equivalent] into a child psychologist.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite was either wrong or leaking information from a meeting that didn't happen until two hours later, Mr. Speaker. That's the question we have from the members opposite because it's fearmongering. It's unnecessary, Mr. Speaker, and it's something that ought not happen.

Mr. Speaker, Regina Public School eliminated 8 consultant positions, 7 through attrition, but what did they do? They hired 15 EAs [educational assistants] and 16 teachers. Mr. Speaker, they balanced their budget. We commend them for their very good work.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Lakeview.

Ms. Beck: — 1993, Mr. Speaker. *Wayne's World* was out on VHS [video home system]. I was 18 years old, working for the summer at Camp Easter Seal. Sure, a lot happened 23 years ago. But we're here to talk about, in this place to talk about cuts to education caused by this government.

Mr. Speaker, instead of objecting to the premise or reading old quotes, I am asking the minister to finally take some responsibility for the Sask Party cuts that have left our

children's classrooms under-resourced and acknowledge the reality today.

Mr. Speaker, last night it was Regina Public, but for weeks we've heard from division after division, board after board about the cuts. Seventy-four staff positions cut in Prairie Spirit, positions lost in Prairie South, budget shortfalls in both Regina and Saskatoon, and everyone scrambling to make up for the money that this minister committed to and then walked away from.

Will the minister at least acknowledge that his bad faith bargaining and refusal to provide proper funding is hurting our kids' classrooms?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, let's talk about a different time frame. Let's talk about February 3rd of this year. The member opposite tweeted out her support for David McGrane's report. The report makes the allegation that education is underfunded by \$2.4 million and advocates tying education funding to GDP [gross domestic product] using a 3 per cent figure.

Well, Mr. Speaker, due to the drop in resource prices, GDP in our province has declined by 1.4 per cent this year. Mr. Speaker, my question to the member opposite is this: does she still support the McGrane report? Does she still want to see a 1.4 per cent or does she want to see the things that we did, which was an increase in funding, Mr. Speaker? Our funding in our province is now \$2.2 billion, an increase of 34 per cent since '07-'08, not the cut that she's talking about.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, how many people have to speak out before this minister takes this situation seriously? We've heard from people all across the province who have said that this is one of the most challenging budgets in years. School divisions have faced record difficult decisions. And this government's budget will have a negative effect on our children's classrooms.

We've heard from a mother whose child is losing the EA that they've had for six years. We've heard from teachers concerned about class sizes and a lack of available resources; an occupational therapist whose caseload, because of this government's cuts, will be simply too difficult to manage; and from the school board trustee who says that the level of funding provided from this government is simply unsustainable.

Mr. Speaker, students and teachers across this province face a challenging year ahead of them. What is this minister's plan to fix the damage done to schools because of this government's cuts? And how does he plan to bring education funding back to a level that is sustainable?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we won't apologize for asking the school divisions to look for economies and look for good and valuable ways to spend their money. Mr. Speaker,

there is only one taxpayer in the province. I have a quote I'd like to read:

But I think the reality is, despite having lots of money, one should not simply throw money at a problem. That isn't the issue here, Mr. Speaker. One should . . . simply throw money at a problem. One should make good investments. That's what good governance is about, Mr. Speaker. It's about making good investments.

Mr. Speaker, that's from *Hansard* May 19, 2016, the member for Saskatoon Riversdale. Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member for Saskatoon Riversdale. We want to make good investments, practical investments to make sure we support the students and we support education in our province because that's what this side of the House is about.

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

Coroner's Inquest

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, the handling of the investigation into Nadine Machiskinic's death continues to draw more and more criticism. Mr. Speaker, Nadine's family deserved so much better for their daughter, mother, and sister. The family is still looking for answers and now Dr. John Butt, the former chief medical examiner of Alberta and Nova Scotia, has told the CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] that a full coroner's inquest is needed to get to the bottom of what really happened.

Concerns have been raised and acknowledged about the investigation. The toxicology report was delayed for months and Dr. Butt specifically points out that there are systemic problems with the death review process here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister agree that a coroner's inquest is needed to review this mismanaged investigation? And will he examine the death review process to ensure this confusion and mismanagement never happens again?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, every death of course, every suspicious death requires the full attention of law enforcement when we're looking at those kinds of things. And certainly, our sympathies go out to the family and the friends of Nadine.

But I also say, Mr. Speaker, we have full confidence in the coroner's office to do their work. I will remind the member that they, the coroner's office is independent of the Ministry of Justice and we have great respect for the decisions that they make.

But I also know, Mr. Speaker, it's very important that the public maintain confidence in the administration of justice, which is what I'm responsible for, Mr. Speaker. We do understand though, Mr. Speaker, that the chief coroner will be announcing an inquest into the death, into Nadine's death very, very quickly and I'll be working with him. Our office will be working with him just to determine what the scope of that inquest will be, Mr.

Speaker. But I'm pleased to stand in the House today and confirm that that inquest will be held.

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

Capacity of Health Care Facilities

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's very good news.

We need greater accountability from this government. Hospitals are bursting at the seams. It has gotten so bad, it's not just people in hospitals who are affected by this over-capacity. Now ambulances are stuck waiting at the hospitals with patients who can't get in. Numbers provided to us by the Minister of Health show that off-load delays have doubled in the Saskatoon Health Region. Ambulances are not able to get back to work, out to save more lives, because they are waiting at the hospital. Will the minister acknowledge that this is a huge concern?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is a concern and that is why, through a number of initiatives that the Ministry of Health is working with, in this case the Saskatoon Health Region, to look to ways to alleviate the challenges that are taking place and the capacity issues that are taking place in our major tertiary hospitals.

Mr. Speaker, we knew as a government with a growing province and a population that's growing each and every year as well as changing demographics of this province, Mr. Speaker, that our hospitals needed to ensure, we need to ensure that we have the proper complement of beds. That's why in our seven major tertiary hospitals the number of acute care beds is up by 12 per cent from the times when the members opposite were in the government. Mr. Speaker, in fact I think in Saskatoon the number, when you look at all three hospitals, it's closer to 17 per cent increase in hospital beds in those, in that city.

Mr. Speaker, it's why we're also funding, through a number of our initiatives, some pilot projects in Saskatoon that is helping to relieve some of the burden and some of the pressures that are caused in our emergency departments. And I'd be pleased to get into those if there would be subsequent questions.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, I know this minister likes to use health statistics from 2013-14. And yes, I'll give him this: it is a couple of decades closer than the numbers used by his colleague, but still not acceptable when we are talking about the current state of our health care system. Mr. Speaker, we know that in March of this year — yes, 2016 — almost half of the ambulance calls in Saskatoon had off-load delays. The amount of time they spent waiting in hospitals totalled 800 hours. If these ambulances are waiting at the hospital, then they aren't able to do their job, and people needing their help will be left waiting. What is the minister's plan to address this situation this year?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I'll try to provide the member with some information that is perhaps a little bit more to her liking when it comes to being more timely.

In 2016 — that would be this year — the Regina pilot of the seniors' home care pilot project had already served 202 distinct clients resulting in a 28 per cent reduction in emergency department visits. Saskatoon Health Region, Mr. Speaker, has also conducted, using a lean event in Saskatoon . . . resulted in a 58 per cent reduction in ER [emergency room] wait times at Royal University Hospital for cardiac patients in the last year.

[14:15]

Mr. Speaker, I can indicate to the members that the member had talked about Sanctum in Saskatoon. Since November 2015 that project will reduce HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] patients' visits to emergency departments by 40 per cent annually, freeing up an average of eight hospital beds per year. Those are just three initiatives, and I would be pleased to go on.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, 800 hours just two months ago. The amount of time they spent waiting at hospitals totalled 800 hours. That's more than a month of waiting squeezed into just one month, Mr. Speaker. And if ambulances have to wait for hours in an ER to get their patients in, other people in need will be left waiting for them.

We've heard from the minister that they have policies for one ambulance unit to watch several patients so that others can get back on the road. Well paramedics say this isn't working because they physically don't have beds to put people in. Does the minister agree that this solution doesn't seem to be working because his lean approach certainly hasn't transformed the health system, and over-capacity is a problem both in and out of our hospitals?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we know that the answer isn't just adding more beds to the hospitals even though, as a government, we have done that because we knew that as a growing population and changing demographics we didn't have enough acute care beds, especially in our tertiary centres. So, Mr. Speaker, under the members opposite there were 1,321 acute care beds in our seven largest hospitals. Today there are 1,473, an increase of 152 beds.

But the answer doesn't lie just in increasing the number of beds. The answer doesn't lie just in improving the services in the emergency department. We need to look at other ways of ensuring that we're providing more appropriate care like the policing crisis teams, like our seniors' house call program, like our Connecting to Care program, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, but I'll also tell you this. We know that this was a

very difficult budget and we have ensured that our ED department waits, our emergency department waits still does have money this year, \$4.7 million to provide support to a number of our health regions. But, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite ran on a platform — and I assume the Health critic had a hand in writing it — that actually would have saw us spending less money in health care this year than what is actually in this budget that we will be passing tomorrow.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, once people finally do get into the hospital, there still isn't space for them. The deputy minister said that "So those situations when hospitals are in extreme over-capacity where, as a last resort, patients are placed in hallways . . ." The Health minister himself then said, ". . . they have produced private areas using, trying to curtain off or cordon off areas using, the staff using supplies they do have on hand." We think what he's referring to here is the blanket and the IV [intravenous] pole forts that I mentioned recently, Mr. Speaker.

We have heard from health regions that these practices can pose fire hazards. And we have heard from sick patients that don't want to be in the hallways with only a blanket for privacy. Now that the minister has finally acknowledged this issue, what is the plan to deal with it? Is this transformational change? Is the Sask Party hoping that hospital tents will be a pseudo-camping experience that will make up for the funding that they've cut to our parks?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with respect to the member's previous question where she wanted to bring up continuous improvement or lean, Mr. Speaker, I do not understand how the member opposite could stand and say that this has not helped patients, Mr. Speaker, when in Saskatoon at RUH [Royal University Hospital] the results for cardiac patients is a 58 per cent reduction in ER wait times for those presenting to RUH. Mr. Speaker, there is a significant reduction, I believe 95 per cent reduction, from the time a patient arrives in Regina at our tertiary centre at the General Hospital, Mr. Speaker, for when their first diagnostic test takes place, a 95 per cent reduction.

I don't know how that doesn't improve outcomes for our patients, Mr. Speaker, but the member opposite is opposed to that.

Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite is saying that we're not spending enough money, I don't know what her plan would have been when in fact their own budget, which I assume . . . Most people thought that Cam Broten was actually the Health critic. But surprise — he wasn't. It was the member opposite. I assume that she would have actually had a hand in writing their platform. And their platform called for them to spend point eight per cent this year when we're going to spend over 1 per cent this year.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Funding for Wakamow Valley Authority

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, layoff notices were delivered yesterday for four of the eleven Wakamow Valley Authority staff as a result of this government's cuts. Bill Lawson, president of Unifor Local 3, which represents the workers, has stated the following: "Moose Jaw residents have been betrayed by our own MLAs. This was not announced as part of any plan or public consultation before the election."

Can the minister tell me this: is this the reason why the Sask Party didn't say a darn thing about the coming attack on the Wakamow Valley Authority, which would have resulted in Sask Party Moose Jaw MLAs getting fired on April 4th instead of the layoffs now faced by a third of the Wakamow Valley Authority staff? Can he tell me that?

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

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the member opposite would know that due to budgetary process, which I know should be well understood at this point, Mr. Speaker, budget decisions are made known to the stakeholders and the public when the Finance minister rises to deliver the budget, Mr. Speaker. The process was followed as standard, and the parks were informed at the appropriate time, Mr. Speaker. This certainly is a difficult budget decision, Mr. Speaker. And the process, the correct budgetary process, Mr. Speaker, was followed in respect to this decision.

Mr. Speaker, we believe in municipalities. They're in the best position to make decisions on their local priorities. And I look forward to the next question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, the Wakamow Valley Authority was founded in 1981, which means that it had survived the disastrous Devine years of 1982 to '91 and the tough decisions of the '90s to clean up that unprecedented mess. Can the minister tell me this: have the last nine years of the Sask Party government been so disastrous as to necessitate . . .

The Speaker: — It's becoming increasingly difficult to hear the answers and questions today. I would ask the Opposition House Leader to rise and ask the question again.

Mr. McCall: — Can the minister tell me this: have the last nine years of the Sask Party government been so disastrous as to necessitate a complete cut of provincial funding for the Wakamow Valley Authority, something which has survived and endured since 1981, through the tough years of Devine and through the tough decisions made in the '90s to clean up that mess? Is it that disastrous, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, just this day we heard the Education critic mock the erstwhile and hardworking Minister of Education for using a valid reference to decisions that were taken in the 1990s, Mr. Speaker, by the previous government.

We've heard the Finance critic, the one who supports in principle the Leap Manifesto. We've heard her from her chair, doing the same thing that the members opposite are doing with respect to decades, I guess, Mr. Speaker. And not 24 hours later, they couldn't wait 24 hours later to engage in this irony, but we have now the critic referencing the Devine years — surprise, surprise. They've tried it in campaign after campaign, Mr. Speaker.

Let me just say to members opposite with respect to decisions that were taken in the budget with respect to urban parks, and not just in Moose Jaw, this government had a look at the revenue sharing we provided to municipalities. Up 120 per cent, Mr. Speaker. We took a look in the case of Moose Jaw where we changed the old NDP rule. Under the NDP when you built a health care facility, the local municipality had to come up with 35 per cent of that. We changed that so Moose Javians would only have to come up with 20 per cent.

And here's why that's germane, Mr. Speaker. The old formula never mattered much with respect to the NDP in Moose Jaw because they refused to build a hospital that was needed. That hospital is built, saving — with the help of MLAs from Moose Jaw — saving Moose Javians \$15 million. And more importantly, finally, rather than NDP talk, there's a brand new hospital in Moose Jaw.

The Speaker: — Order. I caution the members.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

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

Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies to report Bill No. 23, *The Liquor Retail Modernization Act* without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be considered in Committee of the Whole on bills? I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — I request leave, Mr. Speaker, to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this bill and that the bill be now read a third time.

The Speaker: — The deputy minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 23, and the bill be read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the Deputy Premier.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 23 — *The Liquor Retail Modernization Act/Loi de modernisation du commerce des boissons alcoolisées*

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — I move that this bill be now read a

third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Deputy Premier that Bill No. 23 be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

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

Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies to report Bill No. 24, *The Liquor Retail Modernization Consequential Amendments Act, 2016* without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be considered in Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this bill and that this bill be now read a third time.

The Speaker: — The Deputy Premier has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 24 and that the bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the Deputy Premier.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 24 — *The Liquor Retail Modernization Consequential Amendments Act, 2016*

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Deputy Premier that the Bill No. 24 be read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Carried. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

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

Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies to report that it has considered certain estimates and to present a second report. I move:

That the second report of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Chair:

That the second report of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies now be concurred in.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Standing Committee on the Economy

Mr. Makowsky: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on the Economy to report that it's considered certain estimates and to present its first report and move:

That the first report of the Standing Committee on the Economy be now concurred in.

[14:30]

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Gardiner Park has moved the concurrence of the Standing Committee on the Economy be now concurred in. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — 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 House do now adjourn in order to accommodate . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I move that this House do now recess to accommodate committee later this day.

The Speaker: — This Assembly now stands recessed until 2:45 today.

[The Assembly recessed from 14:31 until 14:45.]

The Speaker: — Bring the House back to order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Clerk: — Committee of Finance.

The Speaker: — I do now leave the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

The Chair: — I'll call the Committee of Finance to order. Before I call on the Premier to introduce his officials and make some opening comments, we have quite a number of new members in the House, and I thought perhaps I'll just take a couple of minutes to explain the difference between Committee of Finance and our standing committees.

The Committee of Finance is part of the House, and the rules of debate do apply. One of the more significant things that members will quickly realize is that in Committee of Finance, and we are dealing with Executive Council estimates, the Premier's estimates, so the Premier is the only person who can respond to questions and make comments, unlike standing committees where the ministers can call on their officials to provide answers. Something else that is a departure from our standing committees: when members are speaking, they rise to speak as we do in the House. So those are just a few differences between this committee and standing committees.

So what I will do is I will ask the Premier to . . . Well first of all, as I've indicated, we are dealing with the Executive Council, vote 10 estimates found on page 55 of the Estimates book. And before we begin, I will ask the Premier to introduce his officials. I will then call the vote and the Premier can then make his opening statement. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair of Committees. I'm looking forward to this afternoon's discussion and debate and I am happy to introduce the officials that have joined us today in the Assembly. I'll introduce first and foremost my deputy minister, the head of the public service in Saskatchewan for just a few more hours, sadly. Doug Moen is just to my left, and perhaps towards the end of today I'd like to say a few things more about Doug on the record of this place.

Reg Downs is a senior adviser on Executive Council, to my

right. Kent Campbell is the deputy minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. James Saunders, associate deputy minister, cabinet planning, is immediately behind Mr. Campbell. Jarret Coels, the executive director of House business and research was . . . He's right here now, right behind me. And Bonita Cairns, the executive director of corporate services and a long-term experienced professional within government spanning different administrations, is also here again for estimates. And so in advance I thank them all, knowing I'll have the chance to more properly thank them at the end of the estimates debate.

General Revenue Fund

Executive Council

Vote 10

Subvote (EX01)

The Chair: — Thank you, Premier. The business before the committee is Executive Council, vote 10, subvote (EX01), central management and services. The Premier may make his opening comments.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair of Committees. And I want to say to my hon. friend, the Leader of the Opposition, that I'm looking forward to the next several hours of discussion and debate with him, and perhaps with colleagues if that's his choosing.

And, Mr. Chair, I think Premier's estimates are an important opportunity for the questioning of government, of the Premier's office in particular, with respect to specific budgetary matters within Executive Council. That's the area of government for which I'm responsible as well as Intergovernmental Affairs.

But it's also the opportunity for both sides to contrast and compare, on the broader scale, on the larger issues, our vision perhaps for the future of the province, and perhaps even a discussion of sort of overall policy matters of government. I look forward to both of those elements of Premier's estimates tonight.

And just if I may though, I think it is important for those that are watching to note that this is really actually about the Premier's budget in Executive Council. And so I have a bit of some introductory comments along those lines that I want to share with the House.

Political staff in this building would notionally fall under the purview of the Premier's office, working together with ministers' offices. And I want to inform the House and the members of the Finance Committee that the Saskatchewan Party government has 43 fewer political and other staff, or 24 per cent less than the government we replaced. Overall monthly salaries for our government are 307,899, pertinent to estimates I would say, or 25 per cent less than what was the case under members opposite when they were the government.

With respect to travel, our government is the first in history — and this very much was a matter of debate in the House and certainly affects the business of Executive Council — our government is the first in the history of the province to post biannual reports on the cost of cabinet ministers' travel,

including the cost of accompanying staff. In '15-16, the number of out-of-province trips was down 67 per cent compared to 2006-07, the last year of the previous government. The cost of our out-of-province trips was down 71 per cent since 2006-07, \$77,000 in '15-16. It was \$263,000 unadjusted for inflation when members opposite were the Government of Saskatchewan in '07. In- and out-of-province travel was down 63 per cent. The cost of executive air was down 72 per cent in '15-16 compared to the last year of the previous government.

From a communications standpoint, also the purview of the budget we're talking about today, the value of the communication services tendered in '15-16 for all ministries and Crowns is down 28 per cent since '06-07, a 16 per cent reduction from just last year. So political staff, travel, and communications, all part of the debate tonight, as it should be, all significantly down since the previous government was replaced, and a trend that we'll need to continue, Mr. Speaker.

Those are some introductory comments on the specific matter of the budget of Executive Council, but I know we're going to have a much broader, wide-ranging debate. I look forward to that as well and I thank the Leader of the Opposition in advance for his work tonight.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Premier and to the officials that have joined us here today. And our officials are a little leaner on this side of the equation here today, but I certainly stand with good hon. members and I'm proud to stand with them, Mr. Speaker.

And I would like to join with the Premier in acknowledging the distinguished service of the individual who is sitting beside him today, that being Doug Moen, somebody who has served his province with distinction, who's provided leadership to many governments and to the people of the province. And certainly I'd like to thank him for that leadership and that service here today on behalf of the official opposition.

I think that, you know, the Premier said we'll have questions, obviously, and we'll go forward here today. This is an important opportunity to raise concerns on behalf of Saskatchewan people, to expand on certain items that hopefully greater clarity can be brought to Saskatchewan people. And I'm happy to engage I guess in my first round of Premier's estimates. And as an interim leader I'm here for a good time, not a long time, so I maybe . . . I think I'll have two of these experiences, Mr. Speaker. So we'll get into it for now and I appreciate everybody's participation.

When we look at the Global Transportation Hub and the deal that went down that's under investigation here right now, my question to the Premier would be, when did he learn that he required the 204 acres that was acquired?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I think it's fair to say that the idea, the concept for a global . . . a transportation hub pre-existed our government. I think it's fair to say that the previous government was looking carefully at the opportunities around a hub, a logistics and transportation hub. And perhaps it was only at the officials'

level, or perhaps it made it up to the political level at that time and they rejected the idea. I don't know the answer to that, Mr. Chair.

But I can say that our government was keenly interested in the opportunity. We knew that Manitoba was proceeding with their inland port, I'm forgetting the name just now.

A Member: — CentrePort.

[15:00]

Hon. Mr. Wall: — CentrePort. Aptly named, I guess. And we did believe and industry believed and officials, I believe, at the time in Highways really believed that Saskatchewan should also be heading down this road. And so in a very general sense, discussion on this particular idea and on the concept, and on the fact that our government wanted to look very carefully at the opportunity, would have began shortly after the election. I would expect probably the discussions were more in depth and in detail years, you know, going forward.

With respect to the actual 204 acres, I want to share this with members of the committee. We ought not to preclude the work of the auditor here today. The auditor's doing good work, and a report, we expect to have that released. And I think there'll be some attention paid to all of these questions because the auditor by definition will have looked through minutes of the cabinet. I can tell members of the committee that our government's made sure to make all of those minutes available, every document that the auditor might have needed to conduct a fulsome and complete study into the matter. That co-operation has been forthcoming.

The original . . . The 204 acres, even if it wasn't that specific number, but the need to have a large land assembly to achieve the aims and the goals of a global transportation hub would have happened, could have happened as early as 2012 and, more significantly, later on in 2013 when specific parcels were being identified, I think, by the GTH [Global Transportation Hub] as necessary to achieving the goals.

Mr. Speaker, I know we'll get into the GTH here a bit today. And we're probably not going to be getting into that much specificity because the auditor's reporting, and I don't want to preclude that report in Premier's estimates. But I want to share with members that this has been a significant economic development achievement for the province of Saskatchewan.

There are hundreds of permanent jobs at the Global Transportation Hub that exist there today that would not exist there before, had we not reversed the decision of the previous government just to walk away from this opportunity. There were thousands of construction jobs and new private sector companies that were never here before now located at that facility. There is considerable interest on the part of others to continue to locate at the particular hub. I've been meeting them over the last number of months, as the minister has, because we now have this to offer those who are interested in locating here in Saskatchewan. We have something unique with respect to the hub that didn't exist before.

So we'll, I'm sure, have some discussion about it. I don't think

it's right to get into too much detail about it because I have asked the auditor to do a complete and fulsome review of this matter. Whatever is reported will be made public, and we will be looking forward to following the recommendations that come from that report.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — So the Premier said that the particular parcel that includes sort of this 204 acres, this parcel, that it was about 2012 is what the Premier has said. I just wanted him to clarify and make sure that that's correct.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I can get the specifics, which I think have already been provided, and cabinet minutes have been provided to the auditor. So we can summarize what was provided the auditor if the auditor doesn't have that information.

But my recollection here today is that the broader issue of a larger acreage needed was around that date, I would say to the member opposite, not necessarily specific to the exact parcel, the 204 acres. That's my memory of it. I stand to be corrected and will be happy to check specifically if it was that detail, 204 acres, or just the notion that a larger acreage was needed for assembly to achieve the hub's objectives.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Could the Premier possibly check with his officials just to see where, you know, where the consideration was? So if it was 2012, at that point, just to make sure that he has his, that he's comfortable with the facts he's presenting.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Sure. We can try to provide that in the next number of hours that we're meeting here today.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I mean, it is a bit passing strange that this isn't rather well known. This has been, has had significant attention, and of course it involves a large amount of money and significant concerns and investigation. So it's passing strange that that information wouldn't be here.

And I guess my question to the Premier would be, just a couple of years ago when I would have questioned the minister on this in committee, he said that this land, these parcels had been identified right back at the start as being needed. So that's in direct contrast to what we're hearing from the Premier today . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . It certainly is. So if you go back and check the committee record, it's a record of *Hansard* for us here.

Today my question to the Premier is, why would the minister who's sitting just two over from him here today, and there to consult with the Premier, why would he answer that this was known pretty much from the get-go, the genesis of the GTH, and early on in those very early years of 2008 that this land parcel was identified as being needed? So that was the minister's answer. Why is the Premier's different?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, I should say that there isn't a discrepancy. That's the first point I would make. From the very beginning of our interest in the hub there was . . . It was well known to those involved on the board and the ministers that were responsible for the file that a large parcel of land, geographically where the current, you know, parcel that's under some discussion and debate is located, would be required for

the hub to be successful.

In a general sense, in a general sense, the board had identified those parcels south and east late in '11. Some cabinet discussion early on would have happened in '12, final decisions happening then in '13, late '13. And this is also a matter of the review by the auditor as a result of the government ensuring that all cabinet documents were turned over to the auditor. And so beyond those general dates, I think we're going to wait on the auditor to do her good work, report back to the Assembly and to the public, and accept her recommendations.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — This is in disconnect from what's been shared. And it's not highly believable that there wouldn't be incredible detail on this file by the Premier with what's at stake and the amount of attention that's been on it. So I'm certainly not satisfied with what's been offered forward.

I asked the question directly to the Premier, and I gave a chance for him to seek information from officials. And he stated that 2012 was when it would've been learned that these parcels were needed. But when in committee with the minister, the minister . . . First, government was less than clear about these parcels being required, but when pushed a little bit further said, well that goes “. . . back a little ways [this is the minister] beyond the estimates here tonight, but fair enough. I don't think there's any problem in responding to that. And he goes on with a little more information.

And then specific to it, this is my question to the minister: “Okay. So when was it known to the GTH that you required that land?” And the minister answered at that point, oh it would go right directly here. I recall the flow of information:

Oh it would go [right] back before my time as minister. I think probably right at the very outset of our government taking over in 2007 would've been, that would've been a priority of the GTH, to acquire those lands to accommodate that free-flow access.

And my question back, just to clarify to make sure that “The two smaller parcels accounting to 204 acres, those were identified back in '07?” That was my question, and the minister's response was, “A long time ago, yes.”

And so I guess my question to the Premier: just what's the discrepancy here, stating here today to the people of Saskatchewan, with a lot of time and a lot of resources before you here today, that it was 2012 that government was aware of this, when clearly the minister has, on the record and direct, already that this was . . . that this parcel, in fact very clear the 204 acres in question, that they were required right back to the start of things, right to the start of government. That's his response.

So my question to the Premier: provide some clarity as to why his answer was what it was initially here, or why the minister's answer is what it is.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question was, when did I know about it, the specific parcel. And having then reviewed the specifics, which he asked me to do, I answered that question fully. When the board had identified the

need is another matter. When the board of the GTH has identified the need for the hub to be successful is quite a different matter than the first question he asked.

And so I know that it'll be in his interest to try to portray some sort of discrepancy that simply does not exist. We've seen that throughout this session. And we've seen the NDP have to back away from comments that they've made and allegations that they've made that have been factually incorrect.

Mr. Chairman, I would also say to my hon. friend that the NDP asked for the auditor to look at the matter. I agreed with them and asked that that occur. So there's been a considerable amount of work that's gone on by an independent officer of the province of Saskatchewan. The auditor has undertaken a significant amount of work. We expect the report to be out shortly; we would assume. The report will be released publicly. The members of the House will have a chance to look at the report, on both sides.

And so I would say to my hon. friend, we're going to let the auditor do their work and not go over the details of the work that she's doing, to preclude the work that she's doing. And when the matter is reported out, I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition will have questions in this place and outside this place, as he should, as members opposite should. And I'm sure the government will be required to answer them as we are happy and more than willing to do.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — The Premier is right. My question was, when did the Premier learn of this. So he's saying he learned in 2012. Now my question before to the minister was, when was he aware? . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And so he knew a long time before that. Sorry, the Premier?

An Hon. Member: — Read the quote again. Read your own quote again.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — So the minister identified that he knew back to 2007. So fair enough, if the minister, if the Premier is saying that he wasn't aware until 2012. I just want to confirm that the minister was aware well in advance of 2012, as the minister stated in committee.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — So here's what the Leader of the Opposition has just attempted to do: to quickly read a quote — and I would argue mischaracterize the quote — from *Hansard*, from estimates, of what the minister said in an answer and then try to fabricate some sort of controversy with respect to that quote and what I have just said. Well I'm going to read the quote back to the member. Here's what he quoted the minister saying:

Oh it would go back before my time as minister. [So in other words, the original discussion of the land that would be required for the GTH.] I think probably right at the very outset of our government taking over in 2007 . . . that would've been the priority of the GTH to acquire those lands . . .

And I have shared for members of this House — including the member opposite who's asked the question — that the board itself, together with the CEO, will have been . . . Perhaps it — if the process was working right — would have identified the land

assembly needs prior to any minister knowing because that's how it works. We're going to let the professionals in the public service and the boards that are duly appointed by the government to do the due diligence to operate government entities, in this case the Global Transportation Hub. They're going to take some time to do that. They're going to do their homework as they identify, in this case, parcels that are needed to purchase before it's ever brought to the attention of a minister.

[15:15]

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I appreciate that, and this is getting the facts on the record here, so I'm not characterizing anything in a way that's other than what we're seeking here, is clarity. So the Premier says that he learned in 2012. The minister was commenting about this before and stating that the GTH had known for a long time, back to 2007. When was the minister aware of these 204 acres? Is the Premier suggesting that it was just the board that knew, or when was the minister aware of the need to acquire those lands?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — November of 2012, Mr. Chair . . . 2011.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — So the minister, from the Premier's perspective, wasn't aware that the lands needed to be acquired by the GTH. The suggestion is then that the GTH itself, their administrative team, their board of directors was aware of this before that, but the minister wasn't until November of 2011. Was that when he was then aware of this parcel of land that needed to be acquired?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I think that's correct. I think I follow that correctly. The board and the CEO of the GTH identifying the parcel that would be required happened around almost the same time as the minister assuming the portfolio.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — The land had been identified by the board before that. There was ministers prior to that. Was the minister that had responsibility prior to that, did they have understanding that this parcel needed to be acquired?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I've just conferred with the previous minister, the member for Rosetown, and he recalls that there would have been, again, general discussions on the part of the board and the CEO in terms of the need to acquire more land, but it's highly unlikely that it would have been related to this specific parcel because the route, the bypass route had not yet, as you will know, been established, had been formalized. But it is not his recollection that there was specific discussions of the parcel that we are currently discussing, the 204 acres.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I guess that's just strange in the sense that the minister certainly stated on the record very specifically that it was those parcels that accounted for the 204 acres, was known by the GTH right from the get-go, 2007. That's the . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Let's make sure we get this onto the record properly. I have no desire to have anything but the facts on there . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . You can yell if you want, folks, but the fact that it was laid out there was, to the minister, was that the GTH needed this land at that point.

If you check the *Hansard* record, I specifically entered back into the . . . to ensure that that was the right one. So my question was, “Okay. So when was it known to the GTH that you required the land?” And the minister said, “Oh it would go back before my time as minister. I think probably right at [the time] the very outset of our government taking over in 2007 would’ve been, that would’ve been a priority of the GTH, to acquire those lands to accommodate that free-flow access.” And then just to clarify, my response was, “The two smaller parcels accounting to 204 acres, those were identified back in ’07?” And the minister’s response was, “A long time ago, yes.”

So now we can move on from this for now, but the point being the minister over a year ago sat in committee and said that those 204 acres were known by the GTH a long period ago that they needed to be acquired. The minister was aware that they needed to be when he was in committee. I don’t when he was briefed otherwise. My question is, you know, fairly simple here. If the GTH and if the board of directors and the ministers responsible were aware that that land was required, it also sort of contradicts the response from the Premier just now around the previous minister not knowing those lands were necessarily needed because of changes to the route. The minister said in his response before that those lands were needed in 2007. The point being a whole bunch of other lands were acquired through that period of time. They laid out the footprint that was needed for the GTH and the lands were acquired, and for much smaller amounts per acre of course than what this land went for.

So I guess my question to the Premier is, what’s his understanding? I’m sure he’s asking this question of his team and his cabinet. Why were these lands not acquired sooner? Why were they not acted on in a way that was sooner to save, certainly save dollars for the public?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, I just would disagree with my hon. friend’s characterization of his time in estimates with the current minister. The comments with respect to the land needed, notionally the area, southeast parcel, being known for some time I think is the correct answer the minister gave him. Of course that would be the case if you were to have a successful Global Transportation Hub. Now he did say in estimates with respect to the two parcels accounting for 204 acres identified by the board and the CEO, that general land, that area. I’m sure it would have been identified very early on by the board and the CEO where you’re going to actually have the parcel once the route is determined. But the timeline in terms of specific knowledge for cabinet or even the minister is quite different, and I think that’s reasonable. I guess we’re anxious to see what the auditor’s report would reveal about that, Mr. Chair.

I think a challenge that faced this particular project — and, I would argue, faced any private or public sector entity that was involved in land assembly during this time period — is the nearly exponential growth in the prices of land that we saw across this province, driven by economic growth, by unprecedented economic growth. And so in the case of GTH, when we established it, we did not establish it with the powers of expropriation. And so the short answer to the question of the member is, you’re into then a willing buyer, willing seller proposition in a very, very hot market.

Mr. Chair, I think we’re aware in general that this was the nature of the real estate market at the time in Saskatchewan, and the auditor, you know, may well comment on some of this as well. But I think that’s what drove much of this process, was the reality that the government, through the GTH, needed the land. The GTH did not have powers of expropriation, and so then the willing buyer, willing seller dynamic unfolds in a very, very active and robust real estate market.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — So it goes directly to the question that I finished with on that. So why didn’t government move sooner, recognizing that the GTH needed this land right from the onset? Small parcel, why was that small parcel . . . When government acted on a whole bunch of other larger parcels of land to assemble this land in a very hot market, why did government sit idle while this land potentially was driven up in value?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. To my hon. friend I would say, knowing what we know now, and even shortly afterwards in terms of the market . . . The answer’s yes. I wish we would have been able to buy this land sooner. We would have been able to buy it at a lower cost. I think there’s probably a number of developers and homeowners and businesses that could probably say the same thing about the events, the real estate transactions that they may have delayed in 2011 through 2014-15.

The short answer to the member is, we should have moved more quickly, in hindsight. Perhaps we could have granted some temporary powers of expropriation to the Global Transportation Hub. I think government should be a bit circumspect about expropriating powers for the reasons that actually members opposite have canvassed in the debate. But I think it’s a fair criticism of the government with respect to assembly in this regard. And perhaps it can be a criticism of other entities in the province that, you know, hindsight would clearly show purchases should have been made more quickly and, perhaps on a temporary basis, more powers granted to the GTH to move from a more expropriative position.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — It was identified, as the minister said clearly, by the GTH. We haven’t quite had clarified for us what the GTH was . . . That it was identified by the GTH that this land was needed right from 2007, right from the get-go. And the Premier’s now saying, well that didn’t mean that the minister knew before that, or didn’t mean that he did. He knew in 2012.

Now there was the . . . You know, the Sask Party did have representation on the board of directors, I believe right back to about 2009. Does the Premier have . . . I suspect this has been reviewed by officials. It’s an important file to the province of Saskatchewan. What about the former MLA that was on the board back to 2009? Does the Premier have any understanding of what he knew about this project at that point in time? I think it would have been a former MLA that would have been on it.

[15:30]

Hon. Mr. Wall: — The former member for Cypress Hills was involved as minister early on, and on the board. And no, the answer to the question is no; I’m not aware of his specific involvement or knowledge at this time, I would say to the Leader of the Opposition.

I would also want to point out though, that in discussion with officials, that the Highways ministry was aware that they would need some portion, some part of this parcel that's now in discussion — not all of it and, I would argue, probably a modest part of it — dating back to 2008. So there's a knowledge and a need that there's going to be some land required, not only for the hub, but for the bypass once the route is resolved.

But it's just not known . . . The specific parcel, the specific route, both of these things are unknown. And I think we all would rather that we could go back in time and consider all of the options with respect to the assembly of land at a time of fast-rising prices in real estate.

I would also point out that when we had worked with stakeholders and consulted with the business community on the establishment of the hub, the reason why we didn't originally grant it expropriation powers is that it's effectively a business. In fact there'd be other entities in the province today, one in Saskatoon, that would argue there's a competitive element to this. And so to provide it that competitive of an advantage of expropriation was not the decision that we wanted to take at the time. I'm glad we didn't. But there perhaps would have been other things that government could do to speed up the acquisition and the process in a market that had these fast-rising prices.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Just to maybe get the Premier to clarify the point that was made around Highways and having knowledge of the need to assemble certain parcels of land back to 2008. That's a bit, it's some new information that he's sharing here today. So now this is 204 acres. So it's very small, a little over a quarter section of land, very small parcel. And Highways would have maps; they'd have their information as to what they were considering back to 2008. So back to 2008 for Highways, was this parcel directly under consideration?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I can share with my friend that it's just a general conclusion in the Highways ministry that more land might be needed. The route's not determined yet and, in fact as you'll know, Highways cannot move on assembling land without routes first being determined.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Okay, sure. But they'll be doing preparation and they'll be laying out plans as to what land would be potentially impacted or needed to be assembled. So just to clarify the comments around knowledge back to 2008 and Highways, some of the considerations at that time, did those considerations impact some portion of or in entirety the small little parcel, the 204 acres being discussed?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I don't have the specific amount of acreage that Highways would have been identifying because I'm not sure it existed at the time, other than to say a modest portion of the 204 acres. Highways was looking forward past 2008, as they do for planning.

For example, I think we're working together with the city of Saskatoon to do some very early looks at the perimeter road locations for Saskatchewan's largest city. We're a long ways away from being able to move on that project in a meaningful way. But I think Highways is going to begin to do the planning, identifying generally what might be needed and where and what

the options might be. Until a route is approved, they simply can't assemble, as you'll know, they can't move to assemble land. And so in 2008, Highways identified a modest portion in that area of the same 204 that may be required for transportation purposes.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — So what portion had they identified at that point in time? Of course there's planning documents that would be in place. It's only 204 acres; I mean, a little over a quarter section. So are we talking half of this or how many acres are we dealing with that the Ministry of Highways would have identified back in '08?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well in conference with the Highways minister, unless this was a completely unique situation, there would just not be a specific acreage parcel because that's just not identified until a route's been determined.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — So fair enough, we don't have the exact number, the amount of acreage that was needed, but the Premier's been clear that Highways had identified that they needed some portion of this 204 acres. So he has that understanding and that knowledge, and he says it would be some piece of that. So maybe we can't get that full piece, but just the fact that Highways certainly needed a portion of this land is knowledge that the Premier has and that Highways had back in 2008 — the Premier states — and never acted upon it.

Meanwhile though, if you look in this whole region, a lot of that land had been assembled back in that period of time. In fact some of it had been purchased. Expropriation had been utilized in other cases. There was lawsuits that were in place. So we're talking about a very small portion of land though in the 204 acres, a very small parcel that sat not acted upon by government that certainly by inaction has wasted a whole bunch of money. But let's set that aside. I mean, that's a massive problem for Saskatchewan people, but we'll set that aside. I think that people need to know, deserve the answer.

Now he mentioned, the Premier mentioned expropriation. Certainly that isn't what happened here. The sum that was paid was incredibly handsome, didn't reflect land purchases on any of the other pieces, or even the land that was, had gone through court processes. And then after that, the land was acquired for 103,000 an acre, I believe, which is astronomical, despite even the fact that that's a hot market in that area at a hot time within the province.

But then the Highways ministry afterwards paid far less for the land. They purchased back the 58 acres, almost like they expropriated back from government but, you know, didn't pay the same sum that the GTH had. I guess, how does the Premier explain why Highways would have acquired this land, why Highways would've acquired this land back from the GTH at an amount per acre much less than, you know, than government had acted upon?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I just want to clarify something again. Just very quickly we see the Leader of the Opposition, at the outset of his preamble, try to move towards a representation of the facts that I would argue is not accurate.

If in 2008 the Ministry of Highways is notionally identifying,

not just around Regina but around other communities, land that might be needed, that does not automatically imply that the minister or the Premier's office or the Premier knows about these things. This government's going to go about its business, and officials will do that. And at the appropriate time, it'll come through the process.

And while he's agreeing, I would just ask the hon. member to not characterize things as knowledge of premiers or ministers when the answer's been given that the ministry, which is quite a different matter altogether, has been early on identifying land that is needed. And with respect to the questions, now he's asking very specific to what goes to the heart of the auditor's report. I look forward to the auditor reporting and the recommendations therein.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — No, that's not acceptable, Mr. Chair. The question was . . . Without a doubt we have this Assembly for a reason. This is the people's Assembly. This is the Premier's estimates, so it doesn't cut it. The question relates to land was initially acquired by the GTH for \$103,000 an acre, and then at that point Highways acquired it back, 58 acres. And what did they pay? They paid 50,000 an acre at that point. So I'd like to understand why there's this discrepancy in place, why the GTH would have paid the enormous sum, and why Highways would have then, you know, paid a very different rate.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — First of all, Mr. Chairman, I want to point out for members of the House that this Assembly is a place for these answers to be provided and for there to be accountability. And I'm assuming that's why the NDP called for the Provincial Auditor to look in the report, who is an officer of the province of Saskatchewan, an independent officer of this Assembly.

And so they have asked for a detailed report, I'm assuming so that this thing can be properly reviewed and inquired into, which is what I believe would be happening. I'm sure members opposite agree that the auditor will be doing that work. That report is accountable then to this Assembly. So let's just be very clear here: every single question that the Leader of the Opposition has, that the NDP have about the matter is going to be subject to the debate that will follow the auditor's report, which will be public.

So what we ought not to get into here in these three hours of Premier's estimates is whether or not we're going to be serving the interests of democracy in terms of all the details coming out, because we most assuredly will be. The report was requested by the government and we fully expect all of the recommendations, whatever they say, whatever they might say, will be the matter of debate here and across the province and will also be acted upon by the provincial government.

I will say this with respect to the 58 acres. Part of the deal is that the Ministry of Highways agreed to move soil off the land at no cost to the GTH, which would account for the compensation differential. This amounted to additional compensation that resulted in GTH receiving roughly the same amount it paid for the land, roughly the same amount it paid for the land. The auditor reviewed the transaction in 2014, didn't find any particular issues with it, this transaction. And you know, there might be further comment when the auditor reports.

We'll wait and see.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Just to be clear, we've also, not only have we called for the auditor, we've called for some specific measures that weren't supported on that front by members opposite. We've also called for hearings and for committees, and we supported a judicial inquiry on this front. So certainly this is something that Saskatchewan people care about.

Just if we're looking at this land here again too, certainly part of the question has been what potential relationship or conflict may have been in place with government or with ministers or with MLAs. And I know of course that's been some of the question that's existed around this. I suspect the Premier will have reviewed this very closely, and I suspect he'll have made sure he has the details on this front as it relates to relationships, to government in a larger sense, to cabinet, to MLAs, to those that would have information. Has the Premier identified any . . . I guess, can he speak to the relationships of those individuals that flipped the land that was then purchased by the GTH?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Chairman, in the preamble to the question, the member cites the judicial inquiry that they asked for. And so that means the NDP would believe there would have been a criminal wrongdoing. That means the NDP would believe there was a chance, I think their terms was "breach of trust," which would be criminal. And so I would just ask him, what is he alleging specifically? What conversations or clarification would he have me seek, and of which ministers?

Mr. Wotherspoon: — So we have a Premier that's before us here today who will, I would hope, have reviewed this with a fine-toothed comb, who has had a story, who's had a story with . . . And the very fair question, the very fair question to the Premier, the question to the Premier . . . And he can shout and he can heckle and not answer questions, as we've seen, or have discrepancies in his answers as we've seen here today.

But what we would prefer is some . . . the answer to the question. Has the Premier, in his full review of this deal, has he found relationships? And could he describe the relationships of those that owned the land or flipped the land that was acquired by the GTH with government proper, MLAs, cabinet minister, cabinet ministers. Simple, straightforward question to the Premier.

[15:45]

Hon. Mr. Wall: — The answer is no, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — The auditor's report I suspect is fairly soon here, and at that stage typically of an auditor's report, government should have a very strong understanding of what those recommendations coming out of the auditor's report would be. At this point in time, does the Premier have any commitments on this front, or actions that'll be taken in response to this land deal or the review by the auditor?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, we'll respond fully to the report when it's released.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — As far as the acquisition of SaskPower, of their land out at the GTH, can the Premier speak to that

acquisition and how that land is being utilized?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — There remains plans on the books, and acquisition has been made of land. SaskPower identified the need to centralize and consolidate a number of logistical operations that they have in terms of facilities in different parts of Regina and area and thought it was reasonable to centralize them at a logistics centre. I can tell members of the committee, however, that given the current fiscal challenges that face not just the government proper, but the Crowns, that those plans are currently on hold.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — So the land that was acquired and raised with some concern at the time, I know by myself anyways in committee with the minister, if not another forum, was that you had a minister that was the Minister for SaskPower as well as the Minister for the GTH with the hat on of being the Minister For SaskPower acquiring land. And I believe at the time it was 23 million. I think or I guess the Premier could probably clarify, and that was in December of 2013 just a couple of months before the purchase of the 204,000 acres for \$21 million. So I guess my question: is there any . . . Was that cash needed to move for the GTH, for the GTH to acquire the lands in question?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, there's no connection between the two.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — And the questions that we've had in the past as well is what due diligence was done around the decision to take the people's money, those paying power rates across Saskatchewan, and to acquire land for 23 million. And I think then it was going to be a couple of hundred million dollars of supposed project work for SaskPower out at that facility. But there wasn't much detail as to what the economics or the value case was for SaskPower on this front.

The Premier's now saying that he's stalled this project because of the economic conditions. Has the Premier reviewed the merits of the case for the acquisition of those lands and the development of that parcel of land for SaskPower, the consolidation of facilities that's been referenced?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, I don't have SaskPower officials here, but the minister has pointed out that officials at the corporation identified the need for the project. And I hope that members on both sides of the House will understand that we have an excellent team over at SaskPower. Although I sometimes doubt whether the members believe that, given their line of questioning on previous occasions with respect to energy generation in this province.

But I think we need to give the benefit of the doubt to the executive suite at SaskPower. The project was needed. Things have changed materially in terms of the fiscal state of the province, the economic state of the province, and I think it's reasonable that corporations, private and public, may delay things in light of those changes, in light of economic factors, and that's been the case. There isn't a connection between these two inasmuch as the hon. member would like there to be.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I've got nothing but respect for folks over at SaskPower, but certainly the ministers and their answers

that vary by the day are subject to scrutiny. And I hope it won't encumber the Premier too much to be accountable to the people of Saskatchewan with a few more questions on various fronts. Maybe he has a place he'd rather be, but you know, this is part of the process and it's something you've signed up for; it's something I've signed up for.

Just as far as the actual GTH itself and the actual . . . So the question is, was there the right . . . Was the case something that the government's confident in as to why they require land and consolidating projects over for SaskPower? That's a question that'll stand. Of course we do know that the actual GTH has underperformed expectations. Lots of lofty, boastful language about the number of trucks that would be coming and going by this stage right now that aren't there. And certainly we see parking lots and lots of weeds, but not a whole lot of uptake with the private sector, something that's certainly important to Saskatchewan people to be able to get value back out of the investment that they've made.

Something that we've never quite been able to get from the minister on this front is any sort of a report on full value for money for the GTH, an understanding of what the investment has been to date, what the investment is that's needed both on site by way of utilities, but of course as well by way of highways infrastructure to support the GTH. A very sizable investment that Saskatchewan people have made with their hard-earned tax dollar and no adequate report yet as to what the payoff is for Saskatchewan people, what the return on investment is.

So just looking to the Premier, if he can provide to the people of Saskatchewan if there is information as to the total sum that's been invested not just on site but also the related infrastructure to support the GTH, and what assessments he has that he could share with us that provide confidence and value for money.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Chair, first let me just say that I am happy to be here in this particular position serving with these colleagues on this side of the House, Mr. Chair. I hope the member opposite's happy as well.

I would also want to highlight for the member that we'll get him the total numbers of public sector investment in the GTH, but I completely disagree with his characterization of this being a failure. I know that the NDP desperately want these things to fail. It fits their political narrative. It's why they have attacked things like BD3 [Boundary dam 3] even when frankly the federal government and the International Energy Agency, they've moved on. Even when IBEW [International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers] sent out letters when they were attacking that project not very long ago, criticizing the NDP. This is a major trade union criticizing the NDP for being myopic in its view of Boundary dam 3.

You know, Mr. Chairman, this is part of the reason why I think politically the NDP have struggled is because they need to separate what they think to be their own political interests from what the interests of the people in the province and the economy of Saskatchewan is. And I thought this new leader, the interim leader, would have a shot at doing that, but frankly I'm not sure he's even reached the standard of his predecessor in this regard.

Let me just say this about . . . Oh the Finance critic's shaking her head. The first challenge I think is some of the appointments that he's made and the signal that sent to the economy with people who want to debate about the Leap Manifesto. He made them the Finance critic. He wants to renew his party and he handpicked someone who didn't just vote for it in principle, who signed the Leap Manifesto, someone who's . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well I do have it memorized. It doesn't take much to memorize that because I'd say to the hon. member for Saskatoon Centre, it is shocking that the province of Saskatchewan have an official opposition that would handpick someone that signed the Leap Manifesto, which is basically a death certificate for the economy of this province, and say, you're the right person, Nicole White, to renew the NDP party along with other renewers like Pat Atkinson and Eldon Lautermilch. You know, Mr. Chairman, I would just say that it's important for the members opposite and for us on this side of the House to separate our political interests from the interests of the province.

I want to point out to my hon. friend that while this hub — and I think that CentrePort in Winnipeg would be in the same situation — the creation of a hub, there is going to be some time as it gains momentum. I would argue there is momentum with respect to CP Rail being one of the clients; Loblaw's, there's a private sector company; Consolidated FastFrate, another one; Emterra Group, another one; Morguard Investments, another one; Slinkemo Enterprises, Mr. Speaker.

The private sector investment in the GTH has topped \$485 million so you simply can't stand in this place, in Committee of Finance, and say, well it hasn't been a success, when the numbers I don't think bear it out, especially for a project that for this kind of an infrastructure facility is in its nascent years.

Employment during construction years — 1,800 jobs — and there are 1,860 full-time jobs; 860 families that are benefiting because that hub's there. And if you folks had been in power of course it never would have happened because it just languished on the books.

I think the 860 families would be very interested in the Leader of the Opposition's characterization of the hub being a failure. I think those 860 families that are working at the Global Transportation Hub, who would not be if it were not there, would be very interested, as those coal mining workers and as the BD3 workers were very interested, and members of IBEW. They're hearing the NDP say that those jobs don't count either.

We on this side of the House think those 860 jobs are very important, and there's going to be more. We are going to see more investments at the hub and when we do, I welcome the opportunity to hear from the Leader of the Opposition with respect to his reconsideration of his remarks here today, and his characterization of the hub.

He said he doesn't want to hear about truck movements. Well I'm sorry to tell him there's 4,800 truck movements a week in and out of the GTH. And maybe he doesn't want to hear about them because it generates for the province \$16.4 million in diesel fuel tax alone, and 14.2 million in personal income tax. Maybe that's not important to members opposite. Maybe that's, I don't know, maybe that's something to scoff at or you write

off as not being particularly important.

But I think those trucks that are coming in and out of that GTH, I think they represent jobs in Saskatchewan. I think they represent almost 500 million in private investment. I think they represent around \$15 million in diesel fuel taxes alone, and the chance to see that logistic centre continue to grow and attract investment. You bet we're proud of it on this side of the House, and we hope and wait for the day when members on that side of the House will also be proud.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — What a strange response from the Premier again, Mr. Speaker, somebody who, you know, takes his office of Premier and is every day of the week ready to go into the petty politics. And I'll leave that to, I'll leave that to him. And he says that he's proud to serve the members of his caucus. We're proud to serve Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people. And we're happy to stand up and make sure that we're asking the questions required.

And the Premier can go on and try to mischaracterize what the discourse has been here today, but he got all worked up, all worked up and off track and distracted with a question about the value for money on this investment.

Now the Premier's endeavoured to . . . saying that he's going to get the full scope of that investment, and he'll report that out. He doesn't know it here today but finally, after many questions on this front, it's going to be coming. So we'll know what the total amount of dollars invested is, as well as related infrastructure. And I'd expect as well a thoughtful value-for-money report back to Saskatchewan people and, if we're not meeting expectations, plans to achieve expectations to make sure that the public is served.

And as far as predecessors, I mean, you know, the Premier was referencing a very fine guy, but as far as predecessors and meeting different levels, I guess this Premier knows something about meeting his predecessor's debt level, Mr. Speaker. But we can get into that in a little bit as well, Mr. Speaker.

I do have a question that's been asked multiple times in the Assembly, Mr. Chair, that hasn't been answered, and I'm not looking for lots of political rhetoric on this stuff. I'm looking for answers. On the bypass that's being planned, there's close to about \$2 billion that's at play of the public's dollars at this point. The question's been asked repeatedly: how much of that money will stay within Saskatchewan? We know that the government's lead proponent is a large conglomerate from France. The question to the Premier is, of that \$2 billion, how much of that is staying in Saskatchewan?

[16:00]

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, I have to confess to not necessarily agreeing with or maybe even understanding this line of questioning that we've heard the member opposite . . . And he made this point during a relatively unsuccessful campaign debate, I think, an election campaign.

And so I don't understand it, you know, and here's why. Yes, the consortium is led by a French company. But Areva is a French company. And so profits that Areva makes here in

Saskatchewan go back to Paris where their head office is. We had a chance to meet with the folks at Areva when we were at the climate change conference there. And you know, they're happy with the business climate here, wish the price of uranium would be higher. But I mean the point is, I was in the offices of Areva. That's their headquarters, and so revenue profits are going to go to that company.

There are some companies that operate here in the province, a company that you celebrated quite rightly, sir, in this Assembly. Crescent Point Energy is headquartered in Calgary. And so they do a lot of work here, as we talked about and you, again quite rightly, thanked them for the billions of dollars of work. And some of those profits go to Calgary. It's the nature of an economy. It's the nature of, in our case, open procurement. And in some cases it'll be the nature with respect to P3s [public-private partnership], not in all of them.

I think what has been lost a little bit in the opposition's rhetoric is the fact that 71 per cent of the businesses working on the bypass are Saskatchewan companies. The largest two, Graham and Broda, have a rich Saskatchewan tradition here in Saskatchewan. 150 Saskatchewan businesses, by the way, are participating in P3s across the province.

And I just think it's important for us to remember that, in this market with open procurement, that comes with the Agreement on Internal Trade . . . Never mind New West Partnership. I know the members opposite, they don't like the New West Partnership. But they did like the Agreement on Internal Trade. They signed onto it under Premier Calvert, the latest version of AIT [Agreement on Internal Trade]. And we're working hard to actually improve it now but . . . all the provinces.

But there's an element of open procurement to that that members opposite, I think, practised when they had the chance to govern. We're going to be doing the same thing. We're always going to be looking for top-quality service and the lowest price possible getting that best quality that we're seeking.

But let's just remember that the Broda group of companies is a long-standing and important corporate citizen in the province of Saskatchewan that started out, I think, in the Preeceville area before they moved eventually to Prince Albert. And Graham Construction can trace its roots back to Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. And there are 54 other businesses that are working on the bypass.

So I can also report to the House that the savings of approaching . . . The members opposite might say, well yes, that's fine. Your Areva analogy is fine, but we would never build it this way. We would just have it all built at home, so no French companies involved in anything. And then they would have paid 17 per cent more of taxpayers' money for the deal. It would have cost them \$380 million, I think, more — \$380 million of taxpayers' money — but they would do that for ideological reasons because interestingly, Mr. Chair, in this country, I'm aware of few political parties — maybe none other than this one across from us — that's ideologically opposed to P3s.

The former leader or the current leader — I can't keep track —

Thomas Mulcair of the NDP has said P3s are a good thing. The Alberta government is moving forward with P3s. That NDP government is moving forward with P3s. Liberal governments are pursuing them. It's not an ideological proposition.

In Swift Current, we have a new long-term care facility that came in \$16 million less than a conventional build, on time and on budget, and an outstanding facility. And if you ask the people in Saskatchewan how they felt about that particular . . . in Swift Current, I should say, about that facility, you know, they'd be glad it's done. They'd be glad that it got done on time and on budget much more quickly than it would have been happening if the NDP had been in power and just exclusively cash flow conventional builds.

So I mean I know we're going to debate about it. We're probably going to agree to disagree because he's going to say that well, if we just built it ourselves, there would be no partners from anywhere else involved in these projects.

And we fundamentally disagree. If we can get these infrastructure projects built much more quickly and when they're needed — which is now — and we can do it at a lower cost than conventional builds, then we're going to also open it up to procurement opportunities for others knowing that, in this case, 70 per cent of the work is being done by Saskatchewan businesses.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — It's just strange, though, that we can't get an answer on the question. Setting aside the actual debate and the points that the Premier's putting onto the record here today, the question is of the \$2 billion, and pretty much \$1 billion overrun that's occurring on this thing. How much of that is occurring? How much of that is staying within Saskatchewan?

And you know, and the Premier might, you know . . . We know that this French company doesn't have any specific capacity that was needed or essential for this project. In fact we fleshed that out when we were dealing with some questions on this a while back. And if government came into a problem with this vendor, I know at that point the minister had committed that they would simply move out of the consortium and they'd work with the rest of them. So obviously they don't have some technical expertise that they're bringing to the table that can't be accomplished here.

What we do see though is a project that's gone through the roof, bloated in cost, that not long ago was four to 800 . . . well first 400, then \$800 million, now close to \$2 billion. Now the Premier's cited that there's been some scope changes to this project. And there's been some scope changes. But I would like to . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Right. And I've sat in committee with officials on this front to seek what those scope changes are. And I've had identified a couple overpasses, and the cost attributed to those.

I guess I would like the Premier to just lay out in . . . not all the political stuff and the rhetoric, just the facts. This was once pitched at \$400 million. At that time, government said they'd studied it to death. Now, a couple of years later, we're dealing with that, you know, \$2 billion-plus in a French company leading the consortium.

My question to the Premier: walk us through what those scope changes are in a succinct way, so we can get to many other questions in this estimates and the overrun that have contributed to the overrun.

[16:15]

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, let's be very clear about the \$400 million that the member keeps saying as that was the first cost of the bypass as it is now proposed because that's what you're doing. You're trying to present to the public of Saskatchewan that this \$400 million number was the first price on the bypass as it is currently constituted. This is just incorrect. You know this to be true.

You know that the \$400 million references the southeast Regina bypass only. Eight hundred million more — 800 million more which takes us to 1.2 — is the west Regina bypass, Highways 1 to 11, three interchanges in the east, and service roads. And 1.2 billion are the capital costs of the project. This is a P3, so there's an operational element to this. That gets you to the 1.88 billion. But the capital cost for the bypass is \$1.2 billion.

So let's be very clear about that in this committee, members. And I hope we can be clear about it moving forward. And further I hope that we will be very clear with all that we talk about, that that \$400 million that that member has banded about has no relationship to the project currently before us.

He asked for a layout of the addition. I provided it in terms of the highways and the interchanges. This does not even include the Pinkie Road connector. He has been tabling petitions in this House with respect to the Dewdney road situation. The \$400 million concept wouldn't have contemplated that at all. This one does, \$800 million in these additions to make it an actual bypass and not sort of a half loop.

That's the answer to the member's question, and so I do invite him . . . He can use the \$400 million number. We do, but to say when the project was much smaller, when it was less of a bypass, that was the number. And then when the project expanded to be a true bypass to deal with the elements, with the pieces that I've laid out, it grew to 1.2 — not 2 billion, not 1.88 billion. That's the total contract that involves management. In terms of the capital construction costs of the bypass, it's 1.2 — 400 when it was tiny and now added 800 million. One point two when it's complete and when it will serve the city of Regina for years to come.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — And the record will serve itself as to how governments characterize bypasses and what the costs will be. And at one point, there was a discussion of 400, went to 800, and it kept climbing. And we have a company . . . oh and this scope change we have. But we have, you know, the big dollars of course tied up in this consortium. We certainly have many, many companies that could be working on this in a meaningful way as well, beyond what they are right now.

My question, just on the actual surfacing on Highway 1 East, it's being resurfaced. Now it was resurfaced about . . . I guess I'd like to hear from the Premier when it was resurfaced last, and then what's the resurfacing program on it right now?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, I thank the member for his question with respect to the surfacing history of Highway 1 East. We'll get that information hopefully before we're done here today. I also want to add that the \$1.2 billion construction cost for the bypass — he asked for a complete list — includes system interchanges at Tower Road and Highway 1 West and the Hill Avenue and 9th Avenue interchanges as well.

And he did say this, and here's where we agree. He said, and we hope that Saskatchewan companies will be a part of projects like this. Well, Mr. Chairman, I would suggest that Cowessess First Nation, who is supplying the fuel, is a great Saskatchewan business. PSI Technologies sand/aggregate supplier, this is for the bypass. Dart Services, steel pilings; Inland Concrete, another Saskatchewan company; Broda Construction out of Prince Albert. A&B Rail, they're a Saskatchewan company. Access, a Regina-based co-op, Mr. Chairman; Armada Homes; Alliance Energy; Anlin Welding and Steel Fabrication; Carmacks Enterprises; Clifton Associates; Consumers' Co-operative Refineries; Crestview Chrysler; Enbridge, the portion located in the province; Fraser Strategy; Giesbrecht & Son Cranes; Golden Acres Tree Services; Graham Construction; Graham Pilings; Harris Rebar; Hydrodig; Hymark Services; Inland Aggregates; Jardeg Construction Services — oh the list goes on — JR's Welding Ltd; Keller piling; Mr. Chairman, Crown corporations from the province obviously.

These are Saskatchewan companies. They're all engaged in the bypass. Seventy per cent of the companies that work on that bypass are Saskatchewan companies. Members of chambers of commerce in this province, corporate citizens in their community, not all from Regina certainly but from the province of Saskatchewan.

And by the way, I think that truth is becoming more known. I think the characterizations that we saw from the NDP about this project — the bypass, the routing, the costing, and who actually was benefiting from it — I think what they were talking about, the rhetoric from the NDP prior to the election, was slowly being exposed during and since the election. And people understand this as they see the highway bypass trucks, as they see that Broda camp, the Broda Construction camp on the east part of Regina, as they see Saskatchewan people and know them. They have family members that are working on that bypass. They understand that once again this project maybe didn't fit the narrative for the NDP, and so they've attacked it, and they've been critical about it. But it will be good in the long term for Regina, and it is employing Saskatchewan people and benefiting Saskatchewan families.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Chair, you know, there's a lot of topics I want to get to, but you know, this is important. Of course the Premier's going on at length here to important questions. There's no answer to, of this bloated cost on this project, how much was going to stay within Saskatchewan?

And you know of course, there's other elements like the overpass that was built just a couple of years ago for \$43 million that's now being torn apart and rebuilt and reconfigured . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And so the minister is heckling here. I guess what is the cost of that work right there then? The minister's . . . I was going to get onto another point, but the \$43

million overpass that's being pulled apart and being reconfigured, what's the cost of that work?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Chair, I'm happy to correct the record again. And again right after . . . I guess maybe there were five minutes that passed between me laying out the facts that he asked for, that highlight the fact that the \$400 million number that he uses is not reflective of reality, and the \$2 billion, characterizing that as a capital cost is not reflective of the reality. He uses the word bloated project, bloated costs; it's not true, Mr. Chair. The 17 per cent savings over a conventional build, over \$300 million saved over a conventional build, and the scale of the project has changed, so yes the cost is going to change. The cost of the \$400 million project was sort of for this half loop, this incomplete bypass. The new project with all of the interchanges, with the Pinkie Road connector, with all of the bypasses — by the way 10 more of those, there were two in the original proposal — 10 of them, takes you to \$1.2 billion.

So I would just say to the member, he's going to try in his preamble to slip in what I don't think is necessarily the case when he describes the project, and I am going to correct him every single time. I will correct the record. And members of this side of the House will work to do the same thing with respect to facts that are in debate. The existing Pinkie Road interchange overpass will remain intact. The access ramps will be upgraded. The overpass was designed for the upgrade actually, knowing that the project is coming. The Pinkie Road interchange is being upgraded so that traffic can free-flow in all directions. It's part of the bypass project, and it's contemplated in the budget that I've just highlighted.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Okay. I respect the Premier said he's going to get information to us on the resurfacing, when it occurred before, what's happening now, and also the cost I suspect on this item itself, I would hope.

But I want to shift gears just a little bit. Certainly we know that as an exporter our economy depends on our ability to get product to market and our rail transportation system. Of course we've got multiple avenues to get product to market, and we need improvements on all of those — whether they be highways, certainly on pipelines — but I want to focus more specifically on rail transportation right now.

We have a down cycle within the commodity cycles right now, so we have less pressure on getting that product to market, which is unfortunate. That being said, it's incumbent of us to be acting right now to make sure that we have a system that will be able to perform to get product to market, to make sure that when we get a bumper crop in the bins that it's moved to market and that producers aren't gouged and that all of other exporters through our resource sector and our manufacturers and everyone else are able to do the same.

So this is actually a very important piece, to fix our transportation system for the future economy of Saskatchewan, to make sure that as different commodities come back into demand as we take that bumper crop off here — you know, fingers crossed that all the rest of the summer aligns; the producers have done their hard work on this front — that we can get that product to market.

So just around rail transportation, we know this system is broken. We know that the duopoly is failing the people of Saskatchewan, certainly producers but also businesses and our economy at large. And just wanting to hear what specific actions and recommendations the Premier's bringing forward to fix this very important system for the future.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thanks very much for this question. This is a very important question for the province, especially as you know . . . and there's not enough wood to knock in this Assembly — although there's a lot — for us to talk about harvest this year. But you know, we're hoping and praying, along with our producers, that what has been an auspicious start to the growing season finishes strong as well.

And so the Leader of the Opposition is quite right to point out that while oil-on-rail pressures have lessened and while, generally speaking, commodity pressures have lessened, we know that the kind of crop that's possible now in this province can change all of that, and we just simply don't want to get back to where we were a couple of years ago.

I do want to point out and share with all members of the Finance Committee, or the Committee of Finance, that I was grateful that ministers, the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Economy, and the Minister of Highways at the time were working very directly with the federal government, the previous Harper government, two years ago to try to get some interim measures in place to help alleviate some of the pressures.

And a lot of what Saskatchewan was advocating found its way into C-30, Bill C-30. Although it was imperfect, we were happy to see some moves with respect to transparency for the rail companies themselves, as well as the question of interswitching addressed to some extent. So in February of this year when the federal Transport minister announced that he would be extending those provisions of C-30, we were grateful for that and said so publicly.

[16:30]

But more importantly now, what's been initiated as a result of the work of the federal minister on his announcement in February is a consultative process with all the stakeholders where we're going to be reviewing the recommendations of the *Canada Transportation Act* review that Mr. Emerson has completed.

There are some disappointments we have with respect to the draft. I'll share with all members of the committee and, Mr. Chair, with you, that there's no recommendation to give shortline railways and small shippers more rights to service; that there does not seem to be a fulsome dispute settlement mechanism, which I think is very key, we do; and that no extended interswitching distances were originally contemplated, notwithstanding the extension.

The other thing I want to share with members is that . . . Well there'll be more questions, but I should share quickly that Saskatchewan hosted a New West Partnership summit, and for those members who are new to the House, New West Partnership is the three Western provinces coming together as a co-operative trading region. We decided, because this was

affecting whether it was oil in Alberta, grains in our province, and the port, of course, in BC, that we should get together and have a summit with all of the players there, all of those involved in logistics, in the rail companies, and trucking companies.

And so as a result of that, the premiers recommended that the provinces be more involved, directly involved in the Pacific Gateway Alliance, and the Saskatchewan Minister of Highways and Transportation is a member now of that board. That board is also attended thankfully by companies, by those involved in shipping. And the minister has assured me that there is an interest there.

And so this might seem to be common sense, but I think for those Canadians who know this well, and farmers would, it is a welcome development that the companies are actually there at the table on a regular basis hearing first hand from policy-makers about what is needed. We have seen some improvements, the Minister of Agriculture advises me, with respect to the port itself on the West Coast side of things.

So this is a work-in-progress but we'd better be vigilant about it, and we will be. We need to be proactive. We are, through the work of the New West Partnership, but we welcome the support and the ideas that the opposition might have to make sure we are getting the right message to this particular consultative process in the wake of the Canadian transportation Act review.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I appreciate the recognition in the Assembly here today of the importance of the matter, and certainly some of the recommendations that government's bringing forward. I guess I just couldn't emphasize enough just how important this sort of discussion and then action is for the people of the province.

And as we potentially adjourn the House tomorrow, this is a file that needs sustained focus and attention by government to make sure that we end up building a system that's going to perform, certainly for producers, and making sure that there's fairness where right now of course the risk is all on them. The costs are all on them. So if shippers and rail companies fail to perform, the impacts are right back to producers, and of course this impacts all of our exporters in our province and our entire economy as a whole.

So this is an important area of focus, one that you should be top of desk, top priority for the Government of Saskatchewan, along with addressing other transportation matters. I think the reality is is that a broken rail transportation system also has a very costly consequence on the very infrastructure we're speaking of as well when we're talking about maintaining roads, highways. Whether it's the grids that RMs [rural municipality] are maintaining or whether it's highways of the province, there's a direct cost that we bear for the people of Saskatchewan if the system isn't performing.

Another issue that's important . . . Now it's different this year than it's been in years previous just by way of moisture, but water management is still a very important issue across Saskatchewan. And in some parts, it's having dramatic impact on livelihoods and land and poses a significant risk to many across the province. Certainly illegal drainage and non-enforced drainage has been a concern, and we have specific areas of the

province that are under great pressure, the Quill Lakes being one of them, with no plan being brought forward yet at this point in time. Certainly we need a comprehensive water management strategy, one that respects our agricultural producers, one that values the role of wetlands, one that understands climate change, and we also need action and a plan specifically for the Quill Lakes.

So I guess my question is to the Premier: where are we at, where's he at, where's his government at, on that comprehensive strategy and the very meaningful actions that are required, as well as the plan and action on the Quill Lakes?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I want to thank the member for his question, the Leader of the Opposition for his question, Mr. Chair. Obviously in a province like Saskatchewan, water management is key and so our government has been, not just recently, but from the very beginning, working to improve and to build upon water management strategies for the province, and that includes managing unwanted water.

And I think it's also important for us in Saskatchewan to come to terms with the fact that, and I think this fact, this basic fact, is still right, that about as much water evaporates from Saskatchewan as it goes through our province in the river system as we irrigate. This has got to stop. This is just a huge opportunity lost. And obviously there's some important irrigation projects that happen in Saskatchewan, but we have an opportunity to really build something of an even greater value-added component in agriculture, if we were to turn that around, if we were to lead. And I think the private sector . . . I would not advocate the public sector, the government sort of take the lead in developing irrigation-based businesses, but in terms of providing infrastructure, why that's what governments can do and can do well.

So I just set that aside because I know your question, the question from the Leader of the Opposition, was about drainage and management. We have committed to creating brand new drainage regulations for the province. It will be the first time in 35 years. And also the agricultural water management strategy has been launched, Mr. Chair. We want to take a practical approach to the regulations, and so we're going to phase them over 10 years, at least the enforcement of what we would notionally term sort of the unauthorized drainages. The numbers we have — this is a general estimate; it's very difficult to get a specific number — but between 100 and 150,000 unauthorized drainages in Saskatchewan. We've removed the 1981 restriction, prior to 1981, post-1981. They're all now on the table for action by government and we'll take, we're going to take about 10 years to do that.

With respect to Quill Lakes, here's a challenge for our government, for previous governments. You know, there have been 26 different options canvassed thereabouts by government and again not led politically, but engineers that have either been private sector or with the Water Security Agency or in the Ministry of the Environment, engineers who have looked at this very difficult situation and canvassed 26 different options. And all of them by the way, if I could summarize them maybe a bit unfairly, but for the most it's true — very, very high cost, very, very low result.

Members of this House will know that the government basically put a stop to a project that we had, I know the member would be very personally interested in because of where he enjoys some quality of life in the province and likes to catch the odd walleye, even some big ones, I think. And so we heard, directly from people in the lake chain, concerns with respect to the plan and just decided that obviously, if a consultative process was about listening to stakeholders and people, we better do that. And so that project was halted. But it didn't obviously provide the . . . There was no immediate solution to go to. There were other options, but all of them again high cost, low result.

And so drainage has been identified as one particular response to this. The minister tells me that just roughly there's probably about 100 unauthorized drainage been identified so far. It could be more. That's going to help if we can change that. There are some other Ducks Unlimited areas in the lands in the area that, if there's some action taken there, could possibly help. And so the minister and officials are close to a much more direct engagement with farmers in the area, who are very concerned, and also with those down, you know, notionally downstream. So we continue to work on it. And you know, I think we'll hear more from the Minister of the Environment soon on some specifics to move on the Quill Lakes situation beyond the project that the government stopped.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Thanks . . . Or Mr. Chair. And thank you as well to the Premier. The Premier referenced 26 different options that have been canvassed and that have been laid out by engineers. I would just seek by way of the Premier whether or not he's able to . . . Well he might not be able to table them at this moment, but we would certainly request that information. Is that something the Premier can commit to here today?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I want to say to him that I know the minister would want to sit down with the critic, the shadow cabinet member over there, to talk about, in a general sense, what are these specific issues, and sometimes in greater specificity to the extent they went that far down in consideration. Some of them were probably not considered fully after price and efficacy were weighed early on. For example, I think there was a proposal for a deep-injection well solution which ranged in cost from 980 to 1.2 billion with questionable . . . well maybe not questionable, but not the kind of results that we would want for that sort of an investment.

The focus will be on the drainage issue. We'll also be looking very carefully at management around Ponass, and that's related to some of the DU [Ducks Unlimited] projects that are there. That will be part of the solution.

The biggest part, though, the biggest part of the solution will come from drainage and that's not . . . You know, that'll be a challenge because these have been long-standing practices by farmers who are already under a lot of stress in the area because of the levels of the lake and the salinity and any number of other issues. Certainly I've been there with the member for Melfort and others and met with farmers there, and they're very concerned.

But we do believe, we have an estimate of 38.6 per cent, pretty

specific estimate in terms of a reduction of levels, I guess. If we can complete the focus on drainage, those 100 or so that we know of unauthorized drainage pieces that are going on, we think levels will be assisted by that much.

[16:45]

So between that and sort of reserve, or DU reserve management, whether it's Ponass or the other DU reserves, we think this is a solution that can work. It's not without its challenges, but that can work and in a way that would be cost effective as well.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Well thanks for the responses. Certainly, thanks as well to the Minister of the Environment to meet with our Environment critic. I know she'll look forward to that and to go through an exchange of information.

And thanks again as well . . . Last summer when the Kutawagan project seemed to be advancing at a very rapid speed, and certainly whether it was landowners and producers or those that enjoy our fishery, so many across our province recognizing what was potentially being threatened when you look at the Qu'Appelle Valley watershed and Last Mountain Lake, certainly it was good to see the recognition that this was a major problem. And I guess just to the, I think, literally hundreds that I would have met with during that period of time in some of the meetings and engaged with, thanks to them as well for taking up the cause and stopping something that, at the time, had no environmental review on it and had marginal impact — a cost to it — and marginal impact on addressing the problem.

Moving along to the matter of the consideration of the Yancoal potash mine. So this, from my understanding, is a state-owned entity of China which would be a new entrant and a different type of entrant into our potash market. Of course we've got world-class reserves, a resource within our province, and world-class companies and workers that mine that resource.

And the jobs are important to the people of Saskatchewan. The royalties are important to the people of Saskatchewan. The investment of those companies and the stability of that industry is very important to all the people of the province. And it seems that, and you can correct me here if I'm not aware of some of the analysis that has been done on this front, but it seems to be sort of an afterthought as to whether or not we're compromising our industry, our companies, our jobs, our royalties by having in essence our customer, a large customer with allies as well, owning a mine — we own the resource — owning that mine.

So certainly on this front, before we would ever want to approve and proceed, we would need a very thorough analysis, independent analysis that gives us a high level of confidence that a state-owned potash mine won't undermine that very important industry to the people of Saskatchewan.

I guess to the Premier: what sort of analysis do you have? Who have you engaged in this process, and what conclusions have you found?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I thank the member for the question, I thank the Leader of the Opposition. You know, this is an issue that's important because we have, when we're dealing with

investments from a customer country and state-owned enterprises, we need to make sure that it doesn't necessarily erode the position of incumbents in the province.

And so that's why our ministry has been working very directly with Finance but also communicating to Yancoal that should this project ever go ahead, and I mean, it's a long way from that, but should it ever go ahead, the price will be deemed, the price that they can sell the potash from their mine will be deemed by the Government of Saskatchewan through Finance — on advice of the Ministry of the Economy or perhaps directly from the Ministry of the Economy — to be reflective of the world price. Because I understand what the question is. The question is, well there is state-owned enterprises that buy potash, and now there's a state-owned enterprise that's mining, potentially mining potash in Saskatchewan. Are they going to sell it to themselves at a great discount? That would not be possible as a result of actions we've taken to ensure that price would be deemed at the world level in this case.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — So I just urge caution on making sure that there's really due process in understanding all the potential unintended consequences. This is, you know, a big deal, and you don't have . . . It's hard to undo these sorts of things. So this is the time to really make sure that we understand the consequences and also have the mechanisms in place if you're proceeding, and if you're confident that the mechanisms will in fact serve the best interests of Saskatchewan, the people of Saskatchewan who are the owners of the resource.

I guess the question around having a mechanism, the minister and I had this exchange maybe a year and half ago in committees, but we're at a more advanced stage of consideration on this project here. So as far as the world price of potash, I mean it's set through a market and through purchases and sale. And if you have a new entrant into the market, the concern is that they can undermine, it could potentially undermine that price in a significant way, or the industry, and have a host of different impacts.

So I just want to get a better sense of . . . And I'd be interested in having a report or whatever analysis the Premier has on what sort of mechanism government is contemplating, including how do you establish what the world price of potash is. Because if in the end the supply has increased, the production's increased, and supply and demand, the price is impacted, how do you choose the world prices of something that, you know, the concern is could be directly impacted in a very significant way by the operation?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To my hon. friend, I would say we can provide the details that Finance and the Economy are using to answer that question. It's a reasonable question. If we had those sorts of sweeping powers from this capital here, we might . . . I'm not sure we'd want to be that interventionist, but some might advocate we deem 500 bucks a tonne right now and remove a lot of debate in this legislature about funding and budgets and that sort of thing.

But that's not to take away from the importance of the question because there is . . . K+S comes online and, arguably, though it's a replacement of German production, there's some market impact. BHP does continue, although they slowed down their

due diligence and work. They're going to spend another \$200 million in the province this year.

And so all of these things will impact price, and we've got to make sure that what we're deeming is also fair to incumbents. I think that would have to stand . . . That would be an important test. But we can make sure we provide some of the mechanics and details to, he's right, what is a complex notion here. It sounds easy to deem the price, but there's complexities involved. And we'll undertake to provide the briefing that would be helpful perhaps to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I appreciate the commitment and I look forward to the information. And again, I think there's a level of caution in setting whatever a government thinks world price is. But you know, you have to be very cautious as well to recognize the reason you're putting some mechanism in place is that the world price may be directly impacted and undermined. It's a different industry than oil. It's a different industry than uranium. You know, we're talking about 50-some billion tonnes of potash as a world market, thereabouts. So you know, a new entrant as a mine can have a significant impact on supply and thus price.

I'd like to shift just a little bit into very important work that's needed as it relates to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and actions taken by government — and some that I guess haven't been taken as well — and other actions that are important to First Nations and Métis people all across Saskatchewan. But we addressed some of these issues last week and had, you know, a bit of a . . . glossed over some of the responses. I'd like some specifics as it relates to the timelines on those recommendations that haven't yet been actioned upon by government.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, I'm just searching for the very best way to answer this question as directly as I can to the Leader of the Opposition and would provide him as much information. It's very difficult to . . . We're sort of poring over the 12; where we can't say that things have been fully addressed or partially addressed, going through those and trying to identify, where's the timeline on it? Because for each of those, I want to assure all members of the committee, for each one of those, the internal senior deputy committee that's been focused on our response to the recommendations is working on all of those.

But I would say to my hon. friend, there's just no . . . We don't have a deadline yet. There is a summary of work that's been done by category — child welfare, education, health, justice, missing children, and professional development and training for public servants even — that actually touches on a number of recommendations beyond the 34 to ones that the federal government . . . You know, we would make the case, that are mostly in the federal area.

So there's work under way. I just don't have a timeline. I would say this, that as soon as the minister has an idea at least of timeline to the extent that's possible for some of these 12, that we would want to share them both publicly and obviously with the opposition.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Again this is some of the most important

work for our province and for our future. It's about fairness. It's reconciliation. And it's about building a bright future. So I appreciate what the Premier is saying, and I'm recognizing the limited time that we have here today, although the information and the actual responses and the actions by government on these recommendations is incredibly important.

[17:00]

And so I would request that information. I'd invite that information and laying out, you know, what specific actions are being taken, who's involved in those actions, what's involved, and what timelines are in place until we would be into compliance with those recommendations, or accomplish those recommendations.

When we look at economic conditions across the province certainly there's been a significant impact for many families, many workers all across Saskatchewan. We've had discussions in this Assembly about the impact of job loss and unemployment and we'll look forward to very important measures on this front and discussion as well.

But it's incredibly challenging when you look at the reality and the statistics for First Nations and Métis people within Saskatchewan. And when you look at a year-over-year statistic of an increase of 8 percent for off-reserve First Nations workers in Saskatchewan, an increase to 25 per cent unemployment, it's alarming. It's worrisome. This is about hope and opportunity for many across Saskatchewan. It impacts so many households and so many communities and it's an area that just requires so much more of all of us to partner and to make change.

So I guess on the front of — in a more specific way — employment for indigenous people, unemployment for First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan, building the opportunity that of course strengthens opportunities and conditions for all of us in the province, I'd like to hear what specific actions are being taken to this very alarming reality that's limiting the future of too many across Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, I think one of the most important things we can do with respect to a more fulsome engagement by all Saskatchewan people in the economy, and specifically about Aboriginal employment, is to focus on education. That seems to certainly have been, over my time in this place and the opportunity I've had to meet with First Nations leaders, to be the consistent advice that we are receiving from First Nations leaders in Saskatchewan and, I would argue, also from employers across the province.

And so when we had a chance to form government in 2007, we certainly took that to heart. And part of our growth plan was to have a real focus on Aboriginal training, job training, but also things like adult basic education. And we have seen in the last eight years a significant increase in ABE [adult basic education] availability both on-reserve and off-reserve through different institutions. I can tell members of the committee that in this budget, a very challenging budget where there were some reductions in areas, the budget for adult basic education on-reserve training: \$6 million.

And there was a time when, I think, governments — not in this

province only but all across the country — would rather debate about whose jurisdiction these matters were when it came to things like ABE on-reserve, and we do have to have that debate. At some point the federal government needs to live up to their responsibilities. But this is too important, as the member has said, and so we've made that increased investment. I'm happy to report to the committee that there's been a 93 per cent increase in First Nation and Métis post-secondary education training since 2007, 2008. That's between the Ministry of the Economy and the Ministry of Advanced Education.

And one of the partners that we have reached out to in a significant way has been SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies]. This is an excellent trades school by any definition and so I think we've increased funding to SIIT by 80 per cent. They have this reputation, this track record of ensuring that the training they are providing connects graduates to actual jobs. They have a great relationship with industry, and so we've tried to support that. Even in budgets that are a little tighter, we've said to SIIT, we just want to keep — not rewarding — supporting success. And so we've provided those dollars.

But there is work to do. The gap exists and it's not an insignificant gap between Aboriginal employment and overall employment. But I can report to the House that since 2007 . . . to the committee, off-reserve Aboriginal employment has increased by 19.6 per cent, 7,000 more Aboriginal people employed in this province since just before 2007. So the Aboriginal unemployment rate more currently is at 16.2 per cent. That's what it was in April. In March it was 15.1 per cent.

And obviously these numbers are not acceptable because even as we've seen some challenging times in the economy, we still have the second-lowest unemployment in all of Canada at around 6 per cent. So we're going to continue to work on the gap and identify opportunities to work with First Nations in terms of training, in terms of basic education, but then advanced educational training.

There are specific goals set out in the growth plan. They are featured prominently in the growth plan. Not very long ago we had a very acute labour shortage in the province and we still had a significant number of unemployed Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan which just doesn't make sense. So there's more work to be done certainly and we're going to continue to do that work, difficult fiscal times notwithstanding.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — It's so critical to all of our futures, to our province's future, and certainly to many across the province to see meaningful action on this front. And we do see concerning measures in this budget that aren't improving conditions and opportunities for our First Nations and Métis people across the province.

There was a reference to the TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission] summary of work to date. Would the Premier be able to signal to me whether or not you're able to table that at this point or . . .

Hon. Mr. Wall: — We'll find . . . not this document. We have a larger document we can table.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Sure, okay. So thanks for the

information that'll be committed there.

Just going back and it's touching on employment and labour but also the Chinese state-owned potash proposal. And I believe the EIA [environmental impact assessment] has a request to outsource some of those workers that would be needed. Of course if this project were to be moving forward, it's important to ensure as fulsome of opportunity for Saskatchewan workers as possible. I guess I'd look for . . . And I think when the EIA was, when the company would have engaged in it, they were citing labour statistics from a couple of years ago and certainly we know in Saskatchewan things have changed for Saskatchewan families that have . . . not just First Nations and Métis workers but many workers across Saskatchewan.

So I'm just looking for the Premier's comment on that provision. I know in other cases there has been concern about workers being brought in from China to do that work. We want to make sure that in the EIA, that we're protecting the interests of Saskatchewan people. So just seeking that.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, we would want to take steps as a government, should the project go ahead, to ensure that . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Speaking of water management. To ensure that this proponent, Yancoal, that they would not have access to any streams of employment that any other business was not eligible for, notwithstanding what's in the impact. We would want to make sure that we have a level playing field, and whatever labour streams are available to PotashCorp, for example, those would be the only available sources for any of the potash companies.

But we are on a topic of Aboriginal employment, and I want to offer this in good faith. And we can follow it up if you want with subsequent discussions. But during the last session when your predecessor sat in your chair, we proposed . . . and we didn't want to have any surprises. We reached out over a weekend with the help of the current chief of the AFN [Assembly of First Nations], Perry Bellegarde. And we reached out to Mr. Broten, the leader at the time, to see if there was an interest on the part of the NDP working with us on a consensus or unanimous support in the House for allowing First Nations, SIGA [Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority Inc.] in particular, a greater involvement in the Sask Gaming Corporation.

And I was disappointed, not in the response of other members opposite, because I didn't hear from other members. But I was disappointed in your predecessor — he was probably disappointed in me as well — but because we had engaged in good faith over that weekend and he sort of held a scrum and accused us of trying to hide something or railroad something through in the middle of the night. That was never the intention. The intention was we actually reached out to him and through, in good faith, through Perry Bellegarde.

Since the election, before the election, we've had SIGA and First Nations say, you know, we have a good model. I think we'd all agree that SIGA does a very good job of operating their casinos. I think we'd agree that SGC [Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation] also does a good job of operating their casinos.

But we would like to . . . We'd be willing to explore different relationships with the First Nations with respect to the government-owned casinos. And we are prohibited from doing that by the legislation, which we, you know, campaigned on only making one change to — the liquor retailing. And so we would never make any change to that unilaterally. As I said in . . . earlier on, months ago, the only way we would contemplate any sort of change to even the spirit of that Act as it relates to the Sask Gaming Corporation is if we had a unanimous consent of the House.

And so this isn't about, you know, high pressure. And I'm not asking for the Leader of the Opposition to stand up and say, yes or no. I'm saying that if there's an interest in exploring that, we're willing to do that to the benefit of First Nations, but also gaming in the province, because I think SIGA has, does have a good track record of operating these things effectively.

So the leader doesn't even have to comment on it. I don't want this to be one of those moments. But I just want to put that on the record that we're still interested, and maybe since there's a new leader over there, they have, they'd also be interested in exploring different options that might exist to the benefit of SIGA, First Nations in the province, economic opportunities perhaps, and the Government of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Well thanks to the Premier. Sort of, of obviously you're sort of springing something in Premier's estimates. That's fine. Last time there was very quick consideration of what it was. The details were really not there for an official opposition, to be frank. You know, I'd do more due . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Do you want to heckle? I'd do more due diligence if I'm buying a Dodge Coronet than if I, than what I had at that point in time.

I respect that you've stated this today. I would say though that we had an election just recently, and there was an opportunity if plans were there that government wanted to seek and a mandate that a government wanted to seek, to lay out plans to Saskatchewan people and to seek that mandate.

We never chose to go that route to Saskatchewan people; your party didn't either. And so the . . . When we're dealing with a matter of a Crown corporation and lots of jobs in place and revenues that are drive back to Saskatchewan people and also First Nations and Métis people across Saskatchewan who need and deserve better opportunities all across our province in many different industries, I want to make sure that I'm being direct and consistent with them.

So certainly I'm not going to, you know, I'm not going to . . . I'd be very cautious to opening that consideration. Government had a . . . If this was what government wanted to do, if this was their plan, if this is something that's been considered for some period of time, there's a way to go about that in gaining the support from Saskatchewan people.

So I would want to comment here that we would have a level of, high level of concern with that potential proposal on many fronts, and I think that's in speaking in good faith to the people across our province as well.

Just shifting gears just a little bit, the government I guess on

Christmas Eve went to the heritage language organization and told them that their funding was being peeled back and then scrapped for next year. Pretty strange day at best to communicate that kind of information. And what you're looking at here is 80 schools thereabouts that serve our province. And actually we get incredible value out of this, 80 schools that serve thousands of students at \$50 per student per year, at a total cost of \$200,000. Something that we derive great value out of, recognizing that language is your foundation of culture and that we're a very proud multicultural province, a province of many people and many faiths.

[17:15]

It's a regressive, short-sighted, devastating move for the Government of Saskatchewan to scrap the \$200,000 thereabouts that fund these 80 schools and that leverages the goodwill and care of volunteers and cultural associations all across Saskatchewan to deliver this important learning but also this very important aspect within our community that certainly strengthens us from a social perspective and from an economic perspective. This is regressive and wrong and I'm just simply looking to the Premier. I recognize that you're not going to change a whole bunch of items in your budget, but I hope this is one that you can reconsider here today.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Chair, once again in the member's preamble he referenced that discussion that we had with respect to the casinos in the province. And he knows full well, because we made the case to the former leader, that we would provide all the details to members opposite and work with members opposite. We were earnestly trying to accommodate a request that had come from the First Nations.

And with respect to timing, the ministers have referenced the fact that since the election, post the election, Bobby Cameron, the chief of the FSIN [Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations], has raised this possibility. And I think the member's right though to quickly canvass some important issues, especially the revenue part. Right now in the history in this, where we are in the fiscal life of the province, I don't think we want to be giving up revenue.

But there are a number of other options, including management options with SIGA. And the extension of the offer, not necessarily privatizing, but all of . . . any management change even would materially perhaps put the government in a bad light with respect to the legislation that we have on the Crown corporation protection side of things. So that's why we raise it again today if there's an interest. It does not have to be, nor should it necessarily be, privatization in a technical sense. But do we want to at least have a discussion with Bobby Cameron and the FSIN and SIGA? I would hope the answer to that is yes. Do we want to have it, you know, exclusive of all sides of the House? We can't in my view, because the legislation would in principle, for me anyway, preclude that kind of a unilateral action. So I want to make those points on the matter.

You know, with respect to the heritage language situation, there's going to be difficult decisions that a government makes, regardless of perhaps how long a program has gone on. I think it's important for government to ask the question: well is this, given health needs and infrastructure needs and education needs

and needs in social services, is this on the list of priorities that makes it? And we came to the decision that it isn't, in many respects I think using similar arguments to what the Leader of the Opposition just said: \$50 per year per student, that might be something that parents want to come up with.

You know, my parents' first language was Plattdeutsch, low German. And I kind of wish they would have, they could have taught me, as their parents taught them, both languages at home. And I think there will always be, there will always be that option for heritage language education in the province. But if it's \$50 per student per year, that might be something that families want to get involved with while we focus on core funding in education and the priorities in health care.

And the member may say, well it's only 200 grand. Well all of those things add up. And you know, you can't on one hand sit on that side of the House and sort of decry the fiscal state of the province, if there's an operational deficit for example, and then refuse to accept or even discuss what things might have to, what funds might have to be reduced.

I could tell the member opposite . . . I know he'll take the opportunity the next question to state that if they were the government, they would restore this funding and we should reconsider it. That's not the feedback I've had from Saskatchewan people. They think that this sort of thing can be provided by families, that when we want to focus on the classroom, we should do so and we will. And there are many families across this province who, for a very, very long time, have been teaching heritage languages at home without the benefit of any government assistance.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I think it's short sighted. I don't think the analysis has gone into it to understanding the kind of value in partnership that those dollars leverage all across the province, and the goodwill. And I think if it was analyzed, the actual impact, it would be a positive fiscal impact for the future of our province as well when it . . . in the key role these organizations play in positive settlement and community building within our communities as well.

As far as wanting to scrap this to keep commitments in education, well of course that's laughable. Mr. Speaker, we have strained and in some cases deplorable conditions occurring in education because of the underfunding and strained conditions of this government, and a broken promise, an unprecedented move to not honour the signature on a teachers' contract, something that we are focused on in a big way and something that needs to be addressed by this Premier.

I do want to pass the torch on some very important issues to be addressed by the member from Riversdale, and specifically HIV within the province.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just pointing out that in health committee last week we learned that there were 160 new cases of HIV in 2015, up from 112 in 2014. We learned that in 2015 there were two HIV-positive babies born in Saskatchewan, something that hadn't happened for a few years.

And actually we're waiting on a confirmation for a third baby, obviously which would put it into 2016, but there's another baby who may possibly also be HIV-positive that was identified in 2015.

So this government had an HIV strategy that expired in 2014, and I know the minister's talked about increasing testing, and that that has been the work that's been done. But aside from testing, Mr. Chair, I'm wondering what else this government is going to do about this growing epidemic. This has been described by many people who work on the front lines in health care as an epidemic. Simply increasing testing is only identifying the fact that we do have an epidemic, so I'm wondering what the Premier's going to do about putting this in check.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I want to thank the Health critic opposite for the question. Just before I do that, before she got up, the Leader of the Opposition made some comments about education, and again there was a characterization of chronic underfunding. And I just really do need to point out that that's just not been the case since we formed government, in terms of education.

Members opposite will often say, well you've had record revenue, and that's true. The province has enjoyed record revenue, which we have shared with the school divisions, for example. They have also had record revenue coming from government. Municipalities have had record revenue coming in from government. That's been our approach to this.

Members opposite ask, well where has the money gone? Well the money's gone to fund education. The money's gone to hire 754 more teachers and 164 more student support teachers; a 44 per cent increase in psychologists; a 39 per cent increase in speech-language pathologists; a 64 per cent increase in occupational therapists; a 6 per cent increase in social workers; a 34 per cent increase in operating funding to school divisions when the total enrolment growth has been 9.3 per cent.

And so yes, now that fiscal times are tight, we have an expectation and a hope that we can partner with school divisions and they can work to find ways to provide greater efficiencies, given the fact their revenues, their operating budgets from the Government of Saskatchewan are up 34 per cent in the same period of time enrolments are up 9 per cent. That begs some questions that we think deserve asking, especially at a time such as this in terms of the fiscal challenges facing the province.

I do thank the member for her consistent and important concern around HIV in the province. And I know she's been asking questions, not just this session or the last session, but throughout her time here.

The four-year strategy, because it's called that, certainly does imply that it's ending. The fact of the matter is it's not ending. The funding will continue to be provided for what came from the strategy, which is the hiring of 10 RNs [registered nurse] dedicated to HIV treatment and 30 full-time positions added to increase services for the continuum of HIV care, and increased access to testing for HIV.

And I know the minister has referenced this in answers and the member's heard it before, but there's been 48 per cent more tests in 2015 than just in 2009. And so the number of diagnoses will increase. And it is true then that our strategy, the resources that were put in place by the strategy are under review as to optimum deployment to deal with the fact that because we're reaching out to a greater extent, there are more diagnoses.

The strategy has been paying and will continue to pay for increased access to risk-based testing; infant formula program for infants born to mothers with HIV; outreach clinics in remote, northern, and First Nations communities; and \$460,000 to the Westside Clinic right in the member's constituency, close to the member's constituency, that provides physician and outreach services.

But as I said, you know, notwithstanding the fact that in RQHR [Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region] there's been a 16 per cent decrease in the number of newly diagnosed cases since '14 and a 37 per cent increase in the Saskatoon Health Region since '14, we do see in other areas an increase in access to testing for HIV and so therefore in diagnoses. So the four-year report continues. And is it enough? Well we're going to have to find ways to do more as more cases are diagnosed.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Premier. And, Mr. Chair, just to clarify, it certainly is not enough. These numbers are going up. People who work on the front lines say the testing simply confirms what they already know, and the strategy has expired. I know the minister said in committee that the resources were not gone. But the reality is we need better resources and further resources, Mr. Chair.

Last week in committee we also had an opportunity to talk about the fact that this government . . . The Health minister informed committee that Ministry of Health will be looking for a \$40 million efficiency measure this year, and that this number was agreed upon by cabinet. I'd like to ask the Premier if he can confirm that the cabinet has asked the Minister of Health to make up \$40 million in this year's budget.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, this is not new that governments would ask third parties to find efficiencies. It certainly wasn't new when members opposite were in government. In 2004, the then Health minister, John Nilson, made a similar request. It was \$20 million not 40. But it was a \$20 million efficiencies request from regions. And that's what happens when times are tight, notwithstanding who the government might be. It happened as a matter of, I think, good government practice when the NDP did it. Mr. Nilson was the Health minister. And I think the same is true as well now given the situation that the province faces.

[17:30]

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Premier. So in terms of other ministries needing to come up with efficiency targets then, what other ministries have been asked to do the same and what were those numbers?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, it's true that we're asking all ministries and we'll be asking third parties to come up with efficiencies. That's exactly what the government's asking. We

intend to do the same thing ourselves. We are doing that, and it's been done in the past by governments of different stripes.

Ms. Chartier: — Just to be clear, having spoken to people in the health regions after last week learning about the \$40 million, the reality is the budget is not the budget. I asked if these estimates would in fact be what should be reflected next year in actuals, and I was told no. In Health it would be a \$40 million expectation that it would be lower. And speaking to people in Health, I heard from a few people who used words that are not very parliamentary, Mr. Chair, some serious stress on our health regions.

But again to the Premier, what targets? Was there a formula used? We'd like to know. The people of Saskatchewan would like to know what other ministries are expected to come up with in terms of this budget this year, in terms of efficiency targets.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, this whole debate around health care funding is interesting. The member has been a member of this Assembly for some time and worked as a Health critic for some time, as well with members opposite. I'm sure she helped fashion the health care platform that they ran on which, we heard very clearly from the Minister of Health earlier today, would result in less funding, less funding for health care than what we're proposing in this budget. So that's the credibility gap that she personally has as the Health critic, and I think it's the credibility gap that the New Democrats have.

We have their platform document. Their costing would show clearly for all to see . . . notwithstanding the protests we see about health care funding every day in the House, which is easy to do when you're in opposition. When they were running to be the Government of Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees, they proposed less funding for health care than we're offering so that . . . Yes and the Finance minister said that causes a lot of unparliamentary language as well. When people find out that the people that are advocating, that are critical of another group because they're not properly funding something, just two months ago campaigned on funding it to a lesser degree, there's a bit of a credibility issue there. It strains credibility.

Mr. Chair, in 2004, the Minister of Health announced they were requiring regions to find \$20 million in efficiencies. This is not new, and it's going to happen again at this particular time because of where we're at from a fiscal standpoint.

I would also point out that with respect to health care . . . I mean early on in this session we've had a number of positions advocated by both the Leader of the Opposition and by the critic that has asked the questions, Mr. Deputy Chair, including I think near the first day of the session where I think in what he was hoping to be a gotcha moment, the Leader of the Opposition stood up and asked why we weren't implementing the Fyke Commission which, by the way, was a report not done by our government. It was done by members of the NDP when they were in government.

And here's why. If we would have had the chance to be in government when we received that report, we likely would not have implemented it because it would have closed an additional 15 facilities in the province of Saskatchewan. A reduction,

sorry, in the number of acute care beds and 20 acute care facilities and there would be more health care managers in the system.

That's what they were advocating for on the first day of the session. I think on the second day, they raised the compelling case of Preeceville. Ironically enough, Preeceville would have been closed by the Fyke Commission recommendations that they demanded the government . . . was the same day, the same day, save Preeceville hospital — and by the way, I think there's been progress there — but adopt the report that the NDP passed that would actually close the Preeceville hospital. So there is a credibility issue here.

We're going to continue to ask the regions to find efficiencies. But also in this budget is important and significant investments in the surgical wait times initiative, so we can continue to see the transformation of the longest surgical wait-list in all of Canada. We inherited from members opposite, the social democrats, the party of Tommy Douglas, had this province dead last for surgical wait times in all of Canada. That's changed and now Saskatchewan has the shortest surgical wait times in all of Canada, and in this tough budget there's money for that as well.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — You'll note there was no answer to the question, hon. member's question to that, as far as what the actual number was, and you know we can push that further. You will note that the Premier took a long time answering — well not answering — a question, and I think he's cognizant of the time here today.

My question, you know and some of the comments . . . We could spend all day here on education and the failings of this government when it comes to students across this province and the broken promise to properly fund education across Saskatchewan, the consequences that has for our students in the next generation.

But I have a question that I want to be more specific about: will the Premier support legislation to enshrine the right to form gender sexuality alliances, GSAs, in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, I thank the member for the question. I'd hope that the member will agree that the government takes the matter, gender matters, seriously on this side of the House including changes that we made with respect to gender identity a year ago and then just very recently removing the surgical requirement in terms of vital statistics. And with respect to GSAs, we want them available wherever, right across the province.

And I'm happy to report to the House that the system that we have today is working. The resources that are available online from Education have been downloaded, I think, a thousand times. The Minister of Education tells me there's resources available for every single school.

The school divisions themselves, some have indicated that they would prefer, rather than to have this a prescriptive thing, to continue the process as it is where students aren't required to have to go to the extent of law enforcement in some manner, in some form or function, but rather that these things would just exist and be supported and fully resourced by the government.

And that's the situation today in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — We've noted certain measures that we fully support, and we'll call for more. But it's a matter of human rights, and we have a role each and every one of us can play, standing in this Assembly, to provide some protection to young people and all people across Saskatchewan. And it's an important measure, and I think there's incredible work being done in school divisions. There's good work being done by partners on this front.

But this is a step that we should be able to take on our two feet in this Assembly, and I'm disappointed with the response. Far too many are way too vulnerable on this front. Just look at the horrifying suicide rates as it relates to the queer community within our province.

When we look at another measure that was brought forward recently out of extensive consultation with many across the province, changes to include post-traumatic stress disorder within workers' compensation, a private members' bill introduced by the member from Riversdale . . . This is important to make the changes to ensure that it's covered and that it's assumed to be presumptive under workers' compensation.

I'm seeking from the Premier his support for this legislation or if there's some sort of constructive amendment, but this is the kind of change we should be able to bring forward to the people of the province.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, the review, the member's aware of, is ongoing and legislation will be introduced in the fall.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — We look forward to that work. It's important. Let's get it right though, and let's make sure that it's there for all workers across Saskatchewan. Far too many have been impacted, and it impacts not just that worker but the entire family and our community and our economy as well.

We don't have ample time here, Mr. Chair. I don't know if our House leaders can move for a couple extra hours or days of debate here or not. I am suspecting, reading some body language, that may not be a possibility. If the Premier's game, I'm game. Let's do it. We'll burn the midnight oil. There's lots of important questions.

You know, on many fronts the people of our province deserve better. But they also deserve the facts. And it's concerning, when we look at our finances, the record of this government, a government that didn't save a dime during the best time in Saskatchewan, the best years, Mr. Speaker, record revenues, not a dime saved for the future. Through that period of time, a rainy day fund that was also drained in entirety, not when it was raining, Mr. Chair, but during the best years, during the sunniest times, leaving us particularly vulnerable at that period of time.

And you know, these dollars aren't a consequence of properly funding classrooms because that's not happening. It's not because of taking care of the vulnerable, Mr. Speaker, with practical measures because that's not happening. What we've seen under this government is mismanaged project, wasteful mismanaged project after project that's piled on debt for the

people of Saskatchewan.

Now the consequences are coming due. We have raised these concerns in the past. We were raising them through the best times, saying to government, the way you're going at this and managing these projects just isn't sustainable. But that was brushed off and dismissed of course by the government, sometimes pretending that debt isn't debt isn't debt and calling it well this is this and this is that.

The fact of the matter is \$7 billion of new debt over seven years, Mr. Speaker, \$3 billion of debt in just the last two years. And of course, leaving Saskatchewan people both vulnerable and bearing the brunt of now a downgrade that we see that should have been expected by the government, Mr. Speaker. And the costs come due to Saskatchewan people. Out of all of this, at the very least, I hope a lesson has been learned: a government that burned through cash fast on wasteful projects during the best days and a government that didn't save a dime.

A few years ago, the government commissioned a project to work with Peter MacKinnon to look at long-term savings or a sovereign wealth fund or a heritage futures fund. Of course that sat on the shelf. I guess my question to the Premier. We're in a tighter . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the Premier can go on and on and on and on not answering questions, but the side opposite seems to all of a sudden have a problem when the opposition puts on the record the real facts when it comes to their mismanagement and the finances, Mr. Speaker.

But I guess my question to the Premier, it's important that we leave a lasting legacy for future generations. It's important that we take care of today also. This is something that this government has really mismanaged. They didn't get the job during the best time. What's his plan to save for future generations, and will he ever start paying down debt?

[17:45]

Hon. Mr. Wall: — \$2.7 billion in debt repayment over the last eight years — well that's exactly the answer. He said, when will you ever start paying down debt, and I just told him precisely the answer. Now, Mr. Chair, he doesn't like that answer. He doesn't like the answer because that's operating debt of the province of Saskatchewan.

And we'll walk through this again. Operating debt in Saskatchewan is something we inherited from members opposite who inherited it from another government that his House Leader was happy to talk about today. The difference between capital debt — which has a plan to fully retire, much like a mortgage — and operating debt is a credit card that's got out of control with no plan ever, no date in the future by which you would retire.

We inherited about \$6 billion on that credit card. Is that what it was? \$6.8 billion in operating debt from members opposite who inherited it from other members before them. So we thought we better pay that down. You know, my dad always advised me to make sure take care of your credit cards. The interest rates are higher. There's no structured way to retire that debt if you just pay that minimum payment, and that's what we were doing in the province for a long time. So when we had the opportunity

because of some economic good fortune — I think aided and maybe assisted by government policy — we paid off \$2.7 billion on the credit card, Mr. Chair. I think that makes eminent good sense.

And I think by the way, this whole matter was debated in the election campaign. That's why I find the member's question pretty interesting because he basically relitigated the ballot question in the election. Before the election they were on this, where did the money go, and we answered the question. We answered it on the door steps in this province. We answered it on the airwaves. It was answered in the televised debate. And the answer goes something like \$2.7 billion off the big orange credit card; \$6 billion in tax cuts; \$8 billion in infrastructure investment that will last for a very, very long time.

But let's return to item number two. That's why the NDP have a hard time with the answer to the question, where did all the money go, because social democrats are not hardwired to think of government revenue as not belonging to the government but as belonging to the people of the province of Saskatchewan. They have a hard time with that. They have a hard time with that. And that was their history because, you know, when they were elected, they would view those tax dollars . . . Once some family wrote their income tax cheque or a business remitted their PST [provincial sales tax], well that was now the property of the NDP government.

Mr. Chair, we take a markedly different view of that on this side of the House. We think, when the province is in a position to return the money to the taxpayers to whom it has always belonged, we should take that opportunity. They'll know better how to spend their money than any government of any stripe. When we return it to them in the magnitude of \$6 billion, good things will happen in the Saskatchewan economy. And that's exactly what has happened then, and what is still happening today in the province, Mr. Chair.

This issue, it's strange he would close the night with, well this is a question of management. Mr. Chairman, this is what we talked about in the provincial election campaign. The ballot question — it's only April; it's not that long ago — the ballot question was, who is best positioned to manage the province going forward, to provide the economic plan that can sustain us through some challenging times, can also manage the province's finances? That was, I think, the critical question. That was what our polling said during and since the election campaign. And if the member's interested, we could share some of the polling information. It's not . . . there's some sobering news in there perhaps, but we'll share that post the election.

The bottom line is that people made their choice. And they didn't choose perfection; certainly we've never claimed it. We know as a government that we need to do better in a lot of areas. And it has been our intent, it's been more than an aspiration, it has been our objective and our goal to do precisely that — to seek to do better in any number of files across the government, to be listening to Saskatchewan people, to hear about their concerns.

The member tonight quite rightly pointed to a couple of occasions where government kind of backed off in a direction that we were going because we heard directly from

Saskatchewan people. We make no claim to perfection, but we will always work hard to first of all, keep the promises that we made; and secondly, to stay in touch with Saskatchewan people; and thirdly, to approach policy in this province, to approach especially economic policy in this province in a way that states clearly to people in Saskatchewan and people from outside our borders that we view this province as a leader in Canada, a province and a place that should aspire with all of our resources and all of our people to leading in the country. Leading economically, but leading also in policy innovation, Mr. Chairman — that's the third part of our objective and we're going to continue to do that.

Part of that is defending Saskatchewan's interests outside the borders; that happens a lot lately on the energy sector. And we hope the NDP will come around to some sort of comfort level, to maybe even some pride in the energy sector that we have, so that we are not out there as a voice alone from this legislature but are joined by the NDP in support of the thousands of families that are working in the resource sector in the province.

Mr. Chair, I'm not sure if we're done. I'll let the member ask another question. But if not, I'll thank officials and thank him.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Keep going. I'll ask another question.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — He's got one more question. Well I'll defer him one more question since there's one minute left.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we see more grandstanding from the Premier here today. And the question that was asked was, what is the plan for long-term savings in the province? You know, there was the MacKinnon report; there's the idea of a sovereign wealth fund, a bright futures fund. But this is something the Premier doesn't want to talk about because during the best days he couldn't figure out how to shovel a dollar away for the future. And if he wants to talk about credit card debt and high interest, Mr. Speaker, he should look not past all these P3 projects, one managed by the one with this corporation from France, Mr. Speaker, and the wasteful projects.

And we have a Premier who, instead of answering questions, is getting back into the election. Well you know it was pretty interesting when you go into an election. I think there's one thing . . . You know Saskatchewan people, sure they deserve good management. Yes, they deserve a government that's going to put us in a better fiscal position now and for the future. Is that happening? Certainly not.

They deserve a government that's going to come clean with them, that's going to come clean with them about the true financial position of our province, something that never happened of course before the election, and a government that's going to come clean with them about the impacts. And we see cut after cut within this budget that are small items, small items but have a big impact on vulnerable people across our province, on working people across our province. A government that never said during the election that, oh no, you can't trust our signature on a teachers' contract, and by not honouring that agreement we're going to further strain classrooms all across our province.

And you know, our Premier, I tell you, the guy can speak. You know, I marvel at it. I like listening to him. I wish he'd make more sense at times, Mr. Speaker, but the fact is he can huff and puff and he can politic all he wants, but we need a Premier to be straight with Saskatchewan people, to focus on what matters. And on too many fronts in this budget we just don't see it.

Mr. Speaker, we need to take care of today. We need to plan for tomorrow. We need to deliver for the hard-working, optimistic people of this province, and certainly we don't have this in the budget. So I'll put my question back to the Premier: do you have a plan to repay debt, or is it just \$7 billion over seven years like we've seen? And do you have a plan to save for the future?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, I want to thank the member for getting in one last question because we want to share with him page 29 of the plan. It was in our platform, Mr. Chair. We campaigned on a fiscal plan for the province, notwithstanding challenging times, and the member opposite would have maybe done well to read the platform before he asked the question because it's right there.

Or even better, if he's going to be all . . . If he's going to pose a question with a premise about coming clean and good management, he may have wanted to read his own platform. Now I think he was the deputy leader at the time, so I'm hoping that the former leader of the party actually consulted with him on the development of the plan. I'm pretty sure he did because he would have noted that in the NDP platform there are 18 promises that they failed to account for.

So you want to talk about coming clean with Saskatchewan people, the opposite of coming clean with Saskatchewan people is, you go to Prince Albert and you promise a bridge but you don't cost it, Mr. Chair. You don't cost it. It's nowhere in the platform. The opposite of coming clean with people is to tell those, especially who want a Wollaston road to the north, you tell them you're going to build it, but you don't cost it. It's not in the platform.

You tell people you're going to fix up schools and build new ones — that's a pretty specific promise — but even at that, you don't cost it in the document. That doesn't sound like coming clean with Saskatchewan people. You promise a utility bundle that's worth, a utility bundle promise that's worth \$595 million, but you don't come clean enough to actually cost it out and put it in your platform. And there's a list of, I don't know, there's 18 total.

The Finance minister says, read them all. They told the people of the province, we're going to reinstate cancelled STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] routes. But if they were serious about it, if they were coming clean with Saskatchewan voters, they might have actually costed it in their document. Fix up long-term care facilities, not costed. They're going to do a basic income pilot project — remember that? — except that they didn't cost it. They would expand SaskWater's grid. They didn't cost it.

I don't think anybody in this . . . To borrow a bit from the Education minister, I don't think anybody ought to take any lessons from anyone on that side of the House about coming

clean with people, especially after the last election campaign.

Also in the premise to his question was good management. Well how in the world is it good management to have about \$700 million in uncosted promises, spending that you haven't costed for, and then actually run a health care and an education platform where you're going to fund it less than what's in this current, very challenging budget, Mr. Chair? How is that about good management?

So you know what? It's funny. Over there we've heard, since the election, I think they truly believe that the people just got it wrong. The people got it wrong. They have said that. I think you have said that. Prior to the budget being tabled, prior to the budget being tabled, the members opposite were saying, what? They were saying, well if they would have . . . When the budget was tabled, I should say, they said that if people would have only known this budget — and I think we heard the Finance critic say it — if the people would have only known what was in this budget, the results in the election might have been different. But then there was a poll that came out after the budget, about 1,600 people they asked. And the members opposite were right. The numbers would have changed. There would have been more support on this side of the House than there is for members opposite.

Mr. Chair, I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his questions. I want to thank the critic . . . The Chair is indicating that the Opposition Leader should go first.

The Chair: — I understand the leader has another question.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I'm listening to my House Leader here, and I'm not going to push. I think there's an agreement on time. I have more questions for sure and I have more of a response that I'd love to get into, to some of what was just put forward here . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And of course the Minister of Highways is being her pleasant self, heckling at the end of . . .

What I would like to say, I'd like to thank the Premier for the time here today — not all the answers, not all the actions, but the time here today. I'd definitely like to thank Deputy Minister Doug Moen for his service to the people of Saskatchewan, all of our civil service. And yes, I know, it's always . . . When you're on your feet as a politician, boy, there's so much more I'd love to say right now, but I am cognizant of the time.

Just as far as the comments about an election, Saskatchewan New Democrats understand the outcome that occurred, and we accept what happened. And we don't think . . . We're not going to tell voters that they're wrong. We're going to go out there and we're going to work in earnest with Saskatchewan people, listening to their concerns and building and strengthening communities all across this province. We'll take that work on seriously. That's how we've tried to approach our work in this Assembly on issue after issue, and that's the way we'll go forward day after day. And that's who we're here to serve. And really we have a beautiful, remarkable province with incredible people, a lot of hope and opportunity, but it does take a government delivering where they can. With that being said, unless we're going to move for an extra hour or so, I'll close my comments.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, I want to thank you and the Deputy Chair of Committees for presiding this afternoon, and the table officers. I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for the questions that he's asked, and as well to the Health critic. She was able to make a case for issues that are important as well in health care, and I want to acknowledge and thank her for that. I too want to thank all the officials that have joined with me here today.

But just before I do that, I'm really lucky to work with an amazing group of women and men, the MLAs on this side of the House, who are constant reminders to me personally, and to I think most that they encounter, to each other, that we are here serving the people of the province of Saskatchewan, that we were sent here to do a job and to be in contact and listening to their concerns and their desires and aspirations for their communities and cities across the province. So I do want to thank all my colleagues for their ongoing support and for their hard work on behalf of Saskatchewan people.

[18:00]

We have a great team in Executive Council in both what I might call the east wing and the west wing and I want to thank each of them for their service, not just for an evening like this, but for preparing for it and for what they do year round in trying to make sure that the government's work can continue in a way that is responsible and a way that's responsive as well.

And I would be remiss if I didn't take a chance to say something a little bit about this gentleman from Cabri, Saskatchewan who has served this province mightily for 97 years. He is a remarkable man. I'll repeat myself a little bit from a gathering we had not that long ago in room 218. There aren't a lot of people who can offer up this rare combination. It's all too rare — never mind politics; it's just rare, period — of humility, of good humour, of intellect, of equanimity, and a work ethic that really does I think personify Saskatchewan people when we're at our best.

And he has, with all of those abilities, he has turned down many other opportunities, some of them very recently, I know, that I won't put on the floor of the Assembly unless there's a bet. But some of them have been very, very good offers. He's turned, private and public, he's turned them down because public service means a great deal to him, has always meant a great deal to him. And I want to point out that he's leaving his current capacity as the head of the public service, but he's by no means . . . Maybe going camping for a while but by no means is he finished with that public service. He's going to be involved in public issues and maybe even he'll help the government out so we can live up to the ideals that we all have for government in Saskatchewan a little bit better.

There's Proverbs, I think it's 3:13 — I shared it at the event — that says something like "happy is the man that findeth wisdom and getteth understanding." I have found those things in my friend, Doug Moen. So has the province of Saskatchewan. We thank him very much.

The Chair: — Before we vote the estimates, I'll give the officials a few moments to leave the Assembly before we start voting.

Members, we're ready to vote the estimates of Executive Council. Subvote (EX01), central management and services in the amount of 5,702,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Subvote (EX07), Premier's office in the amount of \$607,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Subvote (EX04), cabinet planning in the amount of 1,109,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Subvote (EX05), cabinet secretariat in the amount of 481,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Subvote (EX03), communications office in the amount of 1,396,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Subvote (EX08), House business and research in the amount of 413,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Subvote (EX06), members of Executive Council in the amount of 133,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Subvote (EX10), Intergovernmental Affairs in the amount of 4,444,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Subvote (EX11), francophone affairs in the amount of 770,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Subvote (EX12), Lieutenant Governor's office in the amount of 691,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2017 the following sums for Executive Council, 15,613,000. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That's carried. There being no further business before the committee, I would invite a member to move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

The Chair: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the committee to rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

The Speaker: — When shall the committee sit again? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting. It now being past the time of adjournment, this Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 18:08.]

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GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Brad Wall
Premier
President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Bill Boyd
Minister of the Economy
Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for The Global
Transportation Hub Authority
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Power Corporation

Hon. Jennifer Campeau
Minister of Central Services
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Transportation Company

Hon. Herb Cox
Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Water
Security Agency
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Corporation

Hon. Mark Docherty
Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for the Provincial
Capital Commission

Hon. Kevin Doherty
Minister of Finance

Hon. Dustin Duncan
Minister of Health

Hon. Donna Harpauer
Minister of Social Services
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Minister Responsible for Immigration,
Jobs, Skills and Training
Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan
Minister Responsible for Innovation
Minister Responsible for Trade

Hon. Nancy Heppner
Minister of Highways and Infrastructure
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Gaming Corporation

Hon. Don McMorris
Deputy Premier
Minister of Crown Investments
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Government Insurance
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Liquor and Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission
Minister Responsible for the Lean Initiative

Hon. Scott Moe
Minister of Advanced Education

Hon. Don Morgan
Minister of Education
Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan
Workers' Compensation Board

Hon. Greg Ottenbreit
Minister Responsible for Rural and Remote Health

Hon. Jim Reiter
Minister of Government Relations
Minister Responsible for First Nations,
Métis and Northern Affairs
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Telecommunications

Hon. Lyle Stewart
Minister of Agriculture
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Crop
Insurance Corporation

Hon. Christine Tell
Minister Responsible for Corrections and Policing

Hon. Gordon Wyant
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Minister Responsible for SaskBuilds