



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

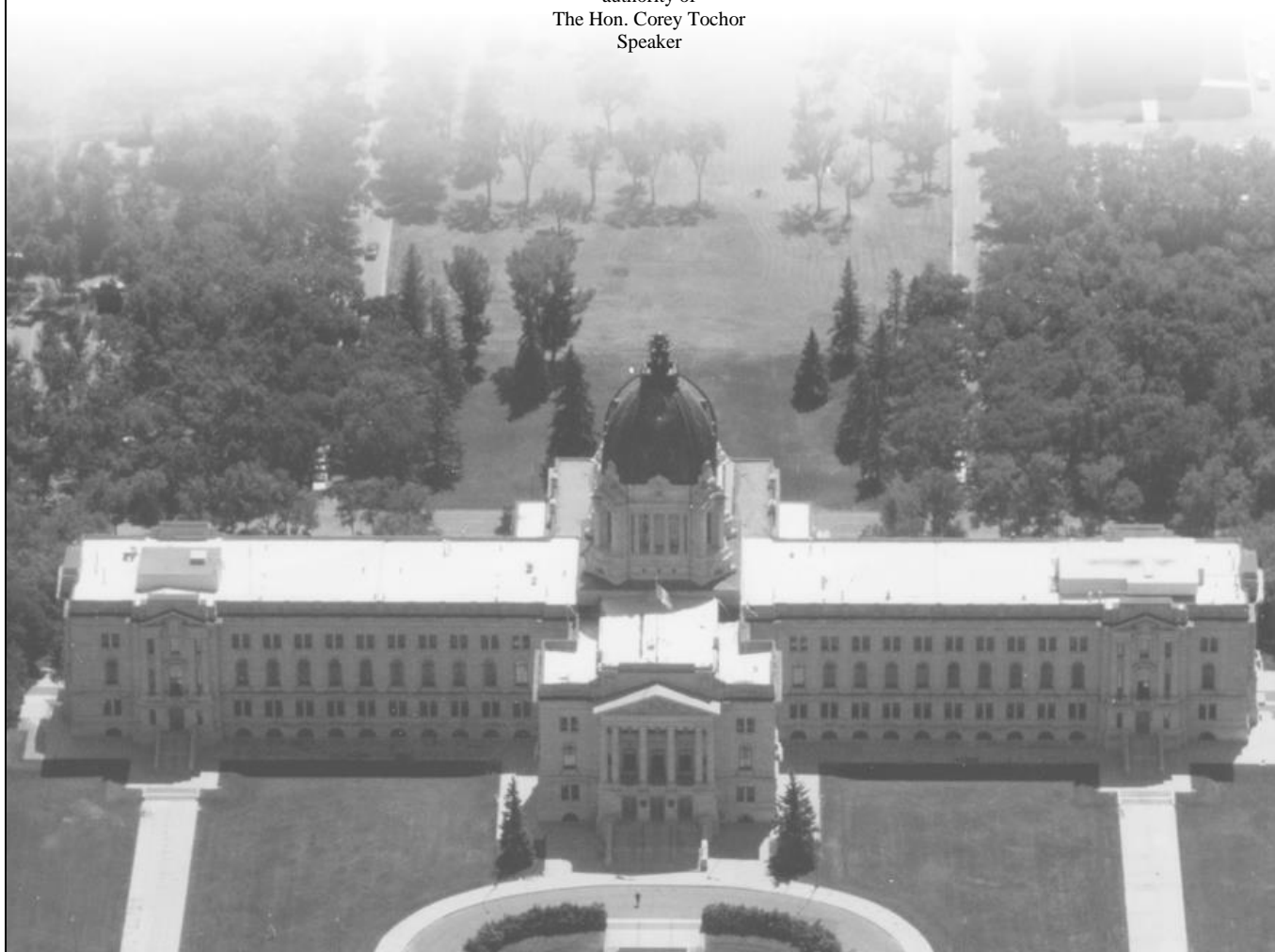
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Corey Tochor
Speaker



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

Speaker — Hon. Corey Tochor

Premier — Hon. Brad Wall

Leader of the Opposition — Trent Wotherspoon

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Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

Party Standings: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 50; New Democratic Party (NDP) — 11

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[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to the House today in your gallery, I think there's about 20 — I've got about 20 names here so if I miss anybody or if I include anybody, I apologize — but it's representatives of the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association, Mr. Speaker.

We'll be meeting with them later on this afternoon, the Health minister and myself. About 12:30, we'll be outside doing a flag raising in recognition of their 100th anniversary of the SRNA [Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association]. And I'll be joining them tomorrow, I believe, for their gala to bring greetings and visit with them there a little bit, Mr. Speaker.

With us in attendance, on my list, are Joanne Petersen, Carolyn Hoffman, Cheryl Hamilton, Betty Metzler, Donna Brunskill, Marlene Smadu, Signy Klebeck, Lionel Tancrede, Joanna Alexander, Terri Belcourt, Barbara MacDonald, Barbara Fitz-Gerald, Donna Marin, Linda Muzio, Trevor Wowk, Regan Bussiere, Julie Szabo, Lesley Stronach, Victoria Kos, and Cheryl Weselak. I ask all members to join me in welcoming them to their Assembly and thanking them for the work that they do each and every day.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to join with the minister opposite in welcoming the guests from the SRNA here today. And on the occasion of your 100th anniversary of serving the people here in Saskatchewan, thank you for all that you do. You do wonderful work. We've had an opportunity to sit down as a caucus and meet with the SRNA and hear the issues and concerns and your goals for providing better care to the people of Saskatchewan. So your voice is a very welcome one in those discussions about how we do better here in this province for our citizens.

So thank you for all that you do. And congratulations on behalf of the opposition on your 100th anniversary, and here's to the next 100 years. With that, I'd like to ask all members to join me in welcoming these folks to their legislature as well.

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

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to introduce, sitting in the west gallery, a great friend of mine. His name is Mike Hughes, and he joins us . . . He actually flew in last night from Brisbane, Australia. And he was supposed to be here Tuesday night, but apparently there

was some sort of a weather issue that happened.

But, Mr. Speaker, Mike Hughes is one of New Zealand's most celebrated endurance athletes. He's one of the best cyclists they've had. He's also a great triathlete. We met at the world championships of the Hawaiian Ironman in I guess it was 1985 — but apparently it was a sport back then, Mr. Speaker — and yes, we raced together all over the world. And it's great that he took a few days to reroute over here, Mr. Speaker. And with that I'd like all members to welcome Mr. Hughes to our legislature.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise again today to present a petition on behalf of the Saskatchewan Seniors Association, who is decrying this government's increase last year to the per-prescription fee by \$5, Mr. Speaker, for the seniors' drug plan. They point out that a budget is upcoming and they're very worried and concerned about what that's going to look like for prescription fee costs, among other things, Mr. Speaker.

They point out that this \$5 per-prescription fee affected 120,000 seniors by approximately, on average, \$80 a year, Mr. Speaker. And they also talk about how this impacts people who are making difficult decisions every day between paying their rent or filling prescriptions, Mr. Speaker, making hard choices: do they pay the utilities or do they get their necessary prescriptions?

So, Mr. Speaker, there's more than 1,000 signatures on this petition. The pages I am tabling . . . I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan take the necessary steps and immediate action to end this discrimination of all people afflicted with illnesses, especially seniors.

Mr. Speaker, this petition, the pages that I'm tabling today, are signed by citizens of Loon Lake, Makwa, Barthel, Meadow Lake, Meota — many places, Mr. Speaker — Unity, among others. I so submit.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here with citizens that are opposing the carbon tax that's being forced on us by the federal Liberal government, also the NDP [New Democratic Party] provincially support wholeheartedly. I will read the prayer:

To cause the government to take the necessary steps and actions to stop the federal government from imposing a carbon tax on the province.

This particular petition is signed by the good residents from the town of Bladworth and Davidson. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to stand in my place to present yet another petition around the Prince Albert bridge, Mr. Speaker. And the need for a second bridge for Prince Albert has never been more clear than it is today and many days after today and many days before today. Prince Albert, communities north of Prince Albert, and businesses that send people and products through Prince Albert require a solution. And the prayer reads as follows:

Respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan ask that the Sask Party government stop stalling, hiding behind rhetoric and refusing to listen to the people calling for action, and to begin immediately to plan and then quickly commence the construction of a second bridge for Prince Albert using federal and provincial dollars.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed this petition come from all throughout Saskatchewan, and we have submitted page after page after page to this government. And the people that have signed this particular page, Mr. Speaker, are from Canwood and from the city of Prince Albert. And I so present.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition to reverse the cuts to the Lighthouse program. The people who have signed this petition want to bring to our attention the following: in April 2014, the minister of Social Services said that the Lighthouse in Saskatoon would "... take pressure off of existing detox facilities, hospitals, and police cells, while keeping people safe, especially in our brutally cold winters." On the very same day, the then minister of Health said, "We want to ensure that individuals with mental health and addictions issues have a safe place to stay."

This government has repeatedly indicated that the Lighthouse stabilization unit keeps individuals out of hospital emergency rooms and jail cells. The estimated savings for the government with the announced cuts in September was under \$1 million, but the subsequent ER [emergency room] costs alone could be several million dollars. In 2015 the Provincial Auditor called upon the minister of Social Services to provide the correct amount of assistance, not to revoke this essential service and thereby putting the most vulnerable at extreme risk.

These ministers are now trying to place the responsibility for repairing budget deficits on those who experience addictions, unemployment, and poverty, and who are living from day to day without proper services.

I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan immediately reverse their recent cuts to funding that allows extremely vulnerable people to access the services of the Lighthouse stabilization unit in Saskatoon, and revisit their imposition

of a strict and narrow definition of homelessness in November of 2015 which forced the Lighthouse to cut back its hours of essential service in February of 2016; and take immediate steps to ensure that homeless people in Saskatchewan have emergency shelter, clothing, and food available to them before more lives are lost.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by citizens of Saskatoon. I so submit.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to present a petition concerning pay equity here in Saskatchewan. And the people signing this petition want to bring to our attention the following: that the citizens of this province believe in an economy powered by transparency, accountability, security, and equity, and that all women should be paid equitably; and that women are powerful drivers of economic growth, and their economic empowerment benefits us all.

And we know that the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives reported that in Saskatoon, 2016, women earned on the average of 63 cents for every dollar that a man makes; in Regina, women earned on average 73 cents for every dollar that a man makes. According to the most recent StatsCan data, the national gender wage gap for full-time workers is 72 cents for every dollar a man makes. Like to read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan eliminate the wage gap between women and men across all sectors where the Government of Saskatchewan has jurisdiction, provide a framework under which this can be done within this term of this Assembly, and that the Saskatchewan government call upon workplaces within Saskatchewan within the private sector to eliminate the wage gap between women and men.

Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition come from the city of Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present to you a petition to increase funding to Prince Albert mobile crisis. Mr. Speaker, the residents of the province of Saskatchewan are concerned because Prince Albert mobile crisis unit has had to close its door during daytime hours, resulting in a loss of resource to people in distress. The daytime closure of Prince Albert mobile crisis unit has put stress on Prince Albert Police Service, Victoria Hospital, and other agencies who may not be trained and/or qualified to provide counselling and intervention services to clients, putting a lot of clients' needs at risk.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Saskatchewan Party government to increase funding to

Prince Albert mobile crisis unit so they may once again offer 24-hour emergency crisis service.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals signing this petition are from the city of Prince Albert. I do so present.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition in support of sexual abuse prevention curriculum in Saskatchewan. Those who signed this petition would wish to draw our attention to the following: Saskatchewan has the second highest rate of sexual child abuse in Canada. Sexual child abuse has lasting impacts throughout the victim's lifetime, and these impacts include PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder], depression, anxiety, panic attacks, low self-esteem, decreased school attendance and achievement, as well as decreased productivity throughout the lifetime.

Victims of childhood sexual abuse are four times more likely to commit suicide. As a province, it is our shared responsibility to protect children and youth, to educate them, as every child has the right to be protected and safe.

Mr. Speaker, I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan Ministry of Education immediately take concrete steps and action to develop and implement Erin's law. Such legislation would ensure that a comprehensive health education program be developed and implemented in the K to 12 system, along with appropriate staff training.

Mr. Speaker, those signing this petition today reside in Regina. And I do so submit.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House again today to present a petition opposing Bill 40 and a potential 49 per cent Crown corporation sell-off. The Sask Party's Bill 40 creates a new definition for privatization that allows the government to wind down, dissolve, or sell up to 49 per cent of the shares of a Crown corporation without holding a referendum.

In 2015-2016 alone, Saskatchewan's Crown corporations returned \$297.2 million in dividends to pay for schools, roads, and hospitals. Those dividends should go to the people of Saskatchewan, not private investors. Our Crown corporations employ thousands of Saskatchewan people across the province and this short-sighted legislation risks sending millions of Crown dividends to Ottawa rather than the people of Saskatchewan.

[10:15]

I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request

that the Government of Saskatchewan immediately stop the passage of Bill 40, *The Interpretation Amendment Act*, and start protecting jobs and our Crown corporations instead of selling them off to pay for Sask Party mismanagement.

The individuals signing the petition today come from Prince Albert. I do so submit.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Canora-Pelly.

Remembering Master Corporal Alfred Barr

Mr. Dennis: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We often have the privilege to stand up and do a member's statement about great events or honouring individuals who have made our communities a better place. Today is no different. I want to recognize Master Corporal Alfred Barr of the 435 Transport and Rescue Squadron, who lost his life in a training accident near Yorkton this past Wednesday. Master Corporal Barr was based out of Winnipeg but was from Lethbridge.

The work of the search and rescue squadrons and technicians is not easy work, Mr. Speaker. However Master Corporal Barr gave the ultimate sacrifice while training to save another's life. His social media pages are filled with stories of going out on calls with the SAR [search and rescue] team. One of the most memorable was his role in saving a family of four after a boat suffered mechanical issues in Hudson Bay. This mission was a success.

Mr. Speaker, many of us owe our lives to the first responders, and we must never forget their sacrifices that they've made in their careers every day. I would like to ask all members to join me in thanking Master Corporal Alfred Barr for his service to our country and offer condolences to his family, friends, and to the SAR community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Coldest Night of the Year Walk in Prince Albert

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This year, Prince Albert, along with many other Canadian cities, took part in the Coldest Night of the Year walk on February 25th to raise money for homeless people across Canada. In fact, fellow colleagues across the province also attended this event in their home communities.

Mr. Speaker, this is the first year that the walk was held in Prince Albert, and over 60 walkers participated. I personally had a team of 15 walkers, and I'm proud to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that my team received the award for the most money raised by a team and an award for the most money raised by an individual team member. In Prince Albert, all money raised through the Coldest Night of the Year was donated to Prince Albert Community Meals, a non-profit organization that provides food to those who are hungry, homeless, and less fortunate.

Mr. Speaker, because of the government's callous cuts and failure to create jobs, homelessness is a growing number in Prince Albert. Caring and compassionate organizations like Prince Albert Community Meals are becoming more and more essential, which is why it was so fulfilling to walk in support of Prince Albert Community Meals and all they provide to my community.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join with me in congratulating the organizers and the participants of the Coldest Night of the Year walk, and to thank Prince Albert Community Meals for helping Prince Albert's most vulnerable. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

World Wheelchair Curling Championship

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An exciting event for curling fans is under way in PyeongChang, South Korea. The World Wheelchair Championship is an elite event, with teams represented from around the world. And as expected with any global curling championship, Canada will be well represented.

Mr. Speaker, this year's Team Canada includes a Moose Javian constituent of mine, Marie Wright. The other members of the team include Jim Armstrong, Ina Forrest, Mark Ideson, and Ellis Tull, and they are led by coach Wayne Kiel from Balgonie.

Mr. Speaker, Marie's story, like that of many others on the team, is one of bravery and overcoming challenges. She took up wheelchair curling when a team needed a female athlete, and from there she knew she found her game. Make no mistake; wheelchair curling is an elite and competitive sport, and the world championships will demonstrate that. The whole team has been working hard and, with the diverse set of skills on the team, they are a formidable force on the ice. And as I speak, they are in a tiebreaker for a playoff position.

Mr. Speaker, I would invite all members of this Assembly to join me in wishing Marie, Jim, Ina, Mark, Ellis, along with Coach Wayne, good luck in this competition. All of Canada is cheering you on. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Heritage Language Day

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, Heritage Language Day, officially known as International Mother Language Day by the United Nations, is held on February 21st of each year. This day is dedicated to the celebration of linguistic diversity around the globe.

This year the theme of International Mother Language Day is Towards Sustainable Futures Through Multilingual Education. Mr. Speaker, it's essential that all learners have access to education in their mother tongue so they can strive and maintain a sustainable future.

We must take the time to promote the preservation of languages used by people around the world as well as languages that are local to us here in Saskatchewan. In fact, local languages play an especially important part in promoting a sustainable future. It is through the mastery of local languages, especially minority and indigenous languages, that culture, values, and traditional knowledge are transmitted; which is why, Mr. Speaker, this government's cuts to heritage language schools are such a shame. Language is a powerful instrument of preserving and developing our heritage, and without proper funding, we risk taking traditional knowledge away from Saskatchewan's future generations.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all members to join me today in recognizing heritage languages around the world, the local languages that are unique to our province, and the good work of the local groups like Saskatchewan Organization of Heritage Languages that help ensure our valuable linguistic and cultural traditions live on. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Wilke, Saskatchewan in Hockeyville Top 10

Mr. Doke: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 9th, 2015, the town of Wilkie lost a staple in its community when the local rink caught fire. Since that date, local teams have had to travel to neighbouring towns of Unity, Cut Knife, Biggar, and Battleford. And although community spirit remain high, any hockey parent or fan knows how tiresome it can be to travel to all away games.

Luckily this past season, hockey was brought back to Wilkie with the town's rink repairs being partially done. We realize that improvements still need to be made, which is where the Kraft Hockeyville comes in. Now in the top 10, the Wilkie community rink is eligible to win up to \$100,000 in arena upgrades as well as hosting an NHL [National Hockey League] pre-season game. Mr. Speaker, winning this grant would mean the world to Wilkie for years to come and set this community up as a destination for our young hockey stars. Voting for the grand prize takes place on March 12th and 13th and, unlike our elections, you can vote as many times as you like. And I would encourage all members to do that.

Mr. Speaker, \$100,000 in arena upgrades can go a long way for a community. I can think of no place or community more deserving than Wilkie, Saskatchewan to be named Kraft's Hockeyville. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moosomin.

Emergency Crews' Response During Blizzard

Mr. Bonk: — Mr. Speaker, as residents of Saskatchewan, we all expect winter weather to be cold, snowy, and icy, but Monday night's blizzard was out of the ordinary. Everyone in Saskatchewan was trying to keep warm in the blizzard conditions, which included gusting winds of up to 90 kilometres an hour and near zero visibility. But some communities had an extra shock when their power went out. Approximately 5,000 SaskPower customers were affected at one point or another

during the blizzard. Residents in Ogema, Coronach, Big Beaver, Radville, Tribune, Viceroy, Minton, Ceylon, and surrounding areas were without power Monday night.

Mr. Speaker, being without power in the winter is not only inconvenient, it can be dangerous. That is why SaskPower crews were out in the worst weather to ensure that power would be restored as soon as possible. As winds died down yesterday, crews were able to fix the problems and all residential customers have power.

Emergency crews do their best to fix power problems, but we encourage everyone to be prepared for winter storms by having an emergency plan and emergency kits with enough supplies to last a couple of days.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking SaskPower crews and all other emergency workers who responded during this blizzard. Thank you.

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

Saskatchewan Women's Basketball Teams Vie for Canada West Championship

Mr. Olason: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan's two universities are representing our province at the Canada Interuniversity Sport women's basketball championship. Both the University of Saskatchewan Huskies and the University of Regina Cougars had incredible records through regular season play, and as the playoffs came around, both teams qualified for a spot at the national championships taking place next week in Fredericton, New Brunswick.

Mr. Speaker, although this is a unique scenario, their skill and dedication to the game make both teams formidable. They will be put to the ultimate test when they play each other next Saturday for the Canada West championship, and the winner will continue on their quest for the biggest prize, becoming national champions.

Mr. Speaker, the dedication and hard work of these elite athletes is an inspiration to the entire province, and the fact that they are playing at the highest level of university sport in Canada speaks to the great talent we have.

Mr. Speaker, I won't share who I'm going to be cheering for, but I would ask all members to join me in congratulating both the Cougars and the Huskies on amazing seasons and wishing them both the best of luck for their game on Saturday. And also I'll wish the winner of the first game luck as they will continue their journey for a national championship. Thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Role of the Global Transportation Hub in Land Acquisitions

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, time and time again I've asked a very straightforward question of that Premier. He's

failed to answer it. There's no excuse for him not to provide an answer. We hope that he will here today. When did that Premier find out that the original seller of the land involved in the GTH [Global Transportation Hub] scandal was the former landlord of the minister of the GTH?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the issue of the GTH has been explored extensively here in the legislature but I think more importantly by the Provincial Auditor. It was our government that asked the Provincial Auditor, an independent officer of this Legislative Assembly, to do a full report, and the Finance critic opposite, the member for Nutana, is saying the government shut it down. The government asked for the Provincial Auditor to do this work. Then the government indicated to the auditor that she would have the full co-operation of the government. And, Mr. Speaker, we took an additional step. We indicated to the Provincial Auditor and her team that they could have access to cabinet documents. That does not happen in every circumstance. The reason we did that, Mr. Speaker, is that we knew there was, in terms of the allegations presented by members opposite, there was nothing there.

There were problems with the acquisition; that, the auditor has noted. She made recommendations in terms of better coordination by government, better policies in terms of acquiring land especially at a time of rapidly escalating land prices and processes. We've accepted those recommendations.

She went on to say in the media after she tabled her report — her extensive report that included on her team, by the way, someone with forensic auditing capabilities — she went on to say there were no red flags in terms of the kind of conduct that's alleged every day by the members opposite, Mr. Speaker. We welcomed the report. We will implement those recommendations and, Mr. Speaker, I hope members opposite will also support the work of the auditor in this regard.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — It's not just passing strange that the Premier won't answer that question. It's weak. It's pathetic. He goes on with a bunch of nonsense and bafflelegab, but not an answer to a very straightforward question. When did the Premier of Saskatchewan find out that the landlord, that the individual involved in this land scandal, was the landlord for the minister responsible?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, all of the personalities involved, including the one that actually sold the land to the government of the GTH — which is not the person the member has referenced — when all of those personalities became known to the government in great detail, when the matter has become a public issue, and when government has responded, Mr. Speaker, on the auditor . . . The auditor's report is quite clear that, in one instance where the identity of someone who was wanting to sell land to the government would not be revealed because it was a numbered company, the government simply wasn't going to proceed. And, Mr. Speaker, the auditor has canvassed these issues.

I know the Leader of the Opposition makes these allegations and characterizes people in the House, and certainly myself included . . . Fair enough. That's part of debate. But the fact of the matter is, I hope that he recognizes that, unlike members opposite when they were in government faced with an issue like this, we voluntarily asked the auditor to look at all of these questions, all of them. And the Provincial Auditor did precisely that. And on the Provincial Auditor's team we are informed, the committee was informed, Mr. Speaker, on her team was someone with forensic auditing capacities, Mr. Speaker. And she went on to say on an open-line show after the report was tabled, in terms of what he continues to allege, that there were no red flags, Mr. Speaker.

Now the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] are also looking at the matter. We've indicated we'll co-operate with the RCMP. I think we should let them do their work, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the work being done and the recommendations that might come from that.

[10:30]

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, no one's buying this revisionist history of this deal that wasted millions of dollars and that stuck millions of dollars into well-connected friends of that government, ripping off taxpayers, ripping off nuns.

And this is a very simple question to the Premier that people expect an answer to, and maybe he can stand up and this time they will save the bafflelegab. A straightforward answer: when did the Premier of Saskatchewan find out that the original seller of the land in the GTH scandal, that he was the landlord for the Minister of the GTH?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Economy and GTH.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well, Mr. Speaker, all of the overblown rhetoric in the world doesn't change the fact that the auditor looked into this matter, Mr. Speaker. The auditor had full authority to look into all aspects of the transaction of the issue. She had access to all of the cabinet documents involved. She had access to all of the individuals of whom . . . she interviewed all of those individuals, Mr. Speaker. What she said at the conclusion of that audit on an open-line show, and I quote:

In any audit, as auditors we're always looking for red flags. And because this is a land transaction we did look for conflicts of interest. We didn't find evidence of conflict of interest or indications of fraud or wrongdoing in the course of our work so there were no red flags there.

Those are the words of the Provincial Auditor, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite may be heckling from their seats; they may not like the conclusion that the auditor came to, but that is her conclusion. We gave her full authority to look into the matter. She did a very thorough job by her own account, by her own testimony before the committee, and we accept the recommendations that she made and those recommendations have been implemented.

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

Changes to Members' Compensation

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, it's pathetic and weak that the Premier of Saskatchewan can't answer that very basic question about his involvement and knowledge of this GTH scandal. But maybe he'll tell Saskatchewan people why he thinks that hard-working Saskatchewan people should pay the price for his mismanagement, scandal, and waste.

You know, at the end of the day, the GTH scandal was caused by that cabinet, by that Premier. Sure it was the friends of that government that got even richer off the deal, but it was hard-working Saskatchewan people and their dollars that were being played with, that were wasted.

So, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier, why will he not commit to cutting the number of MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] in this Assembly? Why won't cabinet fess up and step up and show some responsibility and take a bigger pay cut? And why won't he admit that a 3.5 per cent salary cut for us as MLAs, our salary, is a very different thing than attacking the work and the jobs of hard-working Saskatchewan people that are working hard to have food on the table and a roof over their heads? Mr. Speaker, why won't that Premier take a genuine look in the mirror for their cuts? Why won't he scrap his desperate attack on workers in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Economy.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Here's the question, Mr. Speaker. Why won't the members opposite show up to the Board of Internal Economy to support the reduction to MLA salaries? We gave them two opportunities yesterday. There was a meeting at 8 o'clock. They refused to show up to the meeting. We had another meeting at 4 o'clock which I invited them to yesterday. They refused to show up to the meeting despite the fact government members showed up. I just indicated to the NDP caucus Chair we would like to have another meeting at 2 o'clock this afternoon. I guess we'll see whether they show up to that meeting, Mr. Speaker.

And in addition to that, Mr. Speaker, the government is proposing that we're going to have a 10 per cent reduction in caucus office budgets. They asked for more reductions, Mr. Speaker, so we're putting an additional 10 per cent of our caucus office — which for folks listening, that's the political office of the government and the opposition — 10 per cent additional cut to that. Will they show up for the meeting at 2 o'clock, Mr. Speaker? Yes or no?

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — What a bunch of nonsense again. The members of this opposition will take a 3.5 per cent pay cut. What we're demanding of that Premier that hasn't been straight with Saskatchewan people, that has caused the waste and the scandal, is that that cabinet step up and pay 20 per cent, at least 20 per cent of their bonus money, Mr. Speaker, just for sitting around the table. You know, at the end of the day, it's that cabinet that authorized the \$11 million that were wasted in the GTH scandal.

You know, it was also that cabinet that authorized the \$1 billion-plus overrun with the Regina bypass, with almost \$2 billion going to a company, a conglomerate from France and beyond.

You know, it was that cabinet, that Premier, that caused deficit after deficit after deficit, and that won't even be straight with Saskatchewan people as to the true state of our finances. You know, and it's that Premier and that cabinet that came into office with 20,000 people unemployed, now sadly having 40,000 people unemployed in Saskatchewan.

Will the Premier finally do the right thing? Will he call on his cabinet colleagues to take a 20 per cent pay cut, show some leadership, show some responsibility? And will he scrap his indecent attack on Saskatchewan workers?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Economy.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the question was kind of all over the map, but let me address a couple of items. Firstly the . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Thank you for the members opposite for the assistance. We just sold some land at the GTH, Mr. Speaker, for \$256,000 per acre. They repeatedly cite the figure of us having bought the property for \$103,000 per acre. You know, there were servicing costs involved, Mr. Speaker, but there was clearly . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. \$256,000 per acre is more than \$103,000 per acre.

With respect to cabinet costs, Mr. Speaker, this cabinet has reduced travel by 70 per cent from the time when those members opposite were in government. The cabinet has been reduced in size from the time that those members were in government.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, we are proposing a reduction in MLA salaries, a reduction which those members refused to show up to actually implement. They claim that they support it. They're going to have another opportunity this afternoon to show up and do that. In addition to that, we are proposing a further reduction, Mr. Speaker, of 10 per cent for caucus office budgets. So we're hopeful that the members opposite are going to show up to vote for that as well this afternoon.

So this government is clearly leading by example, Mr. Speaker. We are finding efficiencies in how we're doing things in this Assembly. I know we've already approved a budget of minus 5 per cent reduction for the Legislative Assembly itself. So we're hopeful the members opposite are going to show up this afternoon.

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

State of Provincial Finances

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, that Premier and that Finance

minister love to hear themselves talk and rant, but they sure don't like to look at what they have done. Mr. Speaker, deficit after deficit after deficit after deficit after deficit — I'm almost done, Mr. Speaker — after deficit. And we don't even know how much this next deficit will be. 400 million? 800 million? 1.2 million? 1.4 million? 1 billion?

I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I feel a bit like an auctioneer here. It would be funny, but the costs of their mismanagement, their scandals, and their waste is all too real — billions of dollars. And they're making Saskatchewan people pay the price, Mr. Speaker. Why won't they come clean and tell us how much the deficit will be? Today, not on the same day as their next budget.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have stood in this Chamber and said time and time and time again that we have a revenue problem in this province, Mr. Speaker. We have a situation . . . Well they're all laughing over there, Mr. . . .

This is the gang that supports the carbon tax. At least they did support the carbon tax when the Finance critic went to Edmonton last year in support of the Leap Manifesto. The member from Meewasin supported the carbon tax up until last Thursday and now has come down here, Mr. Speaker, and has compromised his principles in the first week of no longer supporting the carbon tax because that outfit told him it's not politically supported here in the province, Mr. Speaker. So he's changed the position. That's not good leadership material, Mr. Speaker, because the people of Saskatoon Meewasin obviously voted for him based on his principles. Now he's come down here and changed that, Mr. Speaker.

We have a situation in this province — \$1.2 billion in resource revenue down. What this member says, and has said time and time again, Mr. Speaker, this Finance critic has said that we need to increase spending in health care and education by a minimum of 6 per cent. That's what she said on budget day last June. That would be an additional \$500 million of taxpayers' dollars, Mr. Speaker. Will she correct that today? Does she still believe that?

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

Ms. Sproule: — All I could say, Mr. Speaker, is wow. This minister is raising the whole definition of alt facts to a whole new level. Mr. Speaker, that government would be a lot . . . or that response would have been acceptable if it wasn't coming from a government that has added \$3.5 billion to the debt in just two years. The finances are a mess because they cut first and they measure later. It was said they cut important supports, but they didn't know how much they'd save. With health care, they cut local voices but they didn't know how much they'd save. With the people who clean this building, Mr. Speaker, they cut, but they don't know how much they're going to save.

Even with Bill 40, they want a backdoor way into selling off our Crowns without asking the Saskatchewan people. But they didn't realize this would cost the Saskatchewan people even more than privatization. If they sell more than 10 per cent,

they're going to be on the hook to pay corporate income tax to Ottawa. So why? Why, Mr. Speaker, is the Sask Party so intent on sending money to Ottawa instead of supporting Saskatchewan people?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we should compare records in office, Mr. Speaker. We should compare records of our record in office versus their record in office, Mr. Speaker. We have 13 new long-term care homes in this province versus 1,200 long-term care beds shut down by the members opposite when they were in office, Mr. Speaker. We have 3,000 more nurses of all different designations working in this province, as opposed to over 400 nurses being fired by them when they were in office, Mr. Speaker.

We have a new children's hospital being built in Saskatoon. We have a new mental health correctional facility being built in North Battleford, Mr. Speaker. What did they do when they were in office? They shut . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well I know you're not proud of your record, but you should listen to it. They shut down 52 hospitals in the province, Mr. Speaker, including the Plains Health Centre.

We have, I think, 40 new schools being built, have been built or being built in this province, Mr. Speaker, since this government came to office, since this Premier came to office. They shut down 176 schools when they were in office — one a month, Mr. Speaker — and fired over 400 teachers in the province.

Mr. Speaker, we are proud of our record here. We are going through some difficult financial times. Nobody, nobody is disagreeing with that, Mr. Speaker. We will deal with that with a plan to deliver a balanced budget come March 22nd. You can be assured of that.

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

Intent of Bill No. 40

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, you don't need to define, redefine, or ill-define a word that everyone already understands. The members opposite are searching desperately for a fig leaf to cover up their desperate sell-offs. But you know what? They're coming up short. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, their arguments just don't stand up.

The Sask Party's desperate sell-off of our Crowns is self-serving, but will be punishing to our province. Let's be clear. They have not taken Bill 40 off the table. They want to change the law so they can sell 49 per cent of each of our Crowns to private companies from who knows where.

Saskatchewan jobs are at risk. If the Sask Party was really serious about listening to the people of Saskatchewan and leaving our Crowns public, they would scrap Bill 40, but they have refused. They have refused to commit to our Crowns. They have refused to commit to workers. They have refused to commit to Saskatchewan people. Mr. Speaker, here's another chance. Can this government commit to not selling our Crowns and commit to scrapping Bill 40?

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, members of the opposition can stand every day and ask that question and the answer will be the same every time I stand up. And the answer is no, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation which we brought forward will define the word "privatize," Mr. Speaker. Nowhere in the Act, nowhere in *The Crown Corporations Public Ownership Act* is that word defined. And even members on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker, have stood and said there's many definitions for that word.

So it really draws the question, Mr. Speaker: why didn't they define that word when they brought that legislation onto the floor of the House when they were on this side of the House? What was their motivation, Mr. Speaker, for not defining it? Because I refuse to believe, Mr. Speaker, I refuse to believe that it was nothing but an intentional act on the part of the New Democrats when they were on this side of the House not to define that word for their own purposes, Mr. Speaker.

So somebody should be asking the question. Somebody should be asking the questions of the members that were on this side of the House that are still over there. What was their intention by not defining the word in the first place?

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

[10:45]

Usage of the Weyburn Court House

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, in Weyburn not long ago, cabinet ministers attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the renovations to the Weyburn Court House. The ministers were pleased to do the photo op at that time. They were pleased to boast about spending \$8.4 million.

The former minister of Government Services said, "Due to the commitment of the community, this facility will remain a vital part of Weyburn for many years to come." The member from Weyburn-Big Muddy and the Minister of Energy also said, "It's important for the community to have the court house functional and active."

This is more than a little strange, Mr. Speaker, because fast-forward a couple of years and this beautiful courthouse now sits idle almost all week. Meanwhile the people of Weyburn and area must go to Estevan for most court services. My question to the minister: how does any of this make sense?

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Mr. Speaker, to correct the premise of the question, the Weyburn Court House is not closing, Mr. Speaker. Provincial Court continues to be held in Weyburn, Mr. Speaker, to the service of the people of the city of Weyburn and the surrounding

communities.

Mr. Speaker, what we have done, in consultation, is moved a number of the Queen's Bench services out of Weyburn, which will now be performed out of Estevan, Mr. Speaker. We feel that that's in the best interests of the administration of justice, Mr. Speaker, and we have done that in consultation with the court, Mr. Speaker, and with my Ministry of Justice, Mr. Speaker. So to correct the record, the courthouse is not closing. It's a beautiful building adorning the downtown of Weyburn, Mr. Speaker, and it will be operational for many years to come.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Youth Suicides in the North

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. For months we've been asking this government for real action on the suicide crisis in northern Saskatchewan, and those attempting suicide as well. And for months youth in the North have been left to suffer in silence. The counselling and supports that are so desperately needed in the North just aren't there. Each time we have another suicide, the ministers offer their thoughts and condolences. And, Mr. Speaker, thoughts and condolences are nice, and I'm sure they're meant to be sincere. But words only go so far. Will the minister today commit to providing good and continual supports to northerners facing this crisis?

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

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, the member from Athabasca reflected my sentiments exactly. Of course we offer our thoughts and prayers to these people that are suffering these terrible tragedies up in the North, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to do that, as well as the member opposite. I know he probably has a knowledge of the families that are affected.

Mr. Speaker, as a government we're very aware of the challenges that are faced in the North when it comes to different situations. Sometimes it's recruitment and retention issues, Mr. Speaker. But this government's been working very hard with the community leaders in the North to try and find some answers. There's no easy answers to a situation like this, especially when it comes to mental wellness and suicide.

Mr. Speaker, just last month — I think it was February 22nd — a group of ministers went up to La Loche and met with the leadership up there, the mayor, had some good conversations and some strategic planning I believe, and had some ideas that were discussed. I also just met with the mayor of La Loche and the New North executive just over a week ago I think, February 27th, in P.A. [Prince Albert] and we discussed many of these very challenges, Mr. Speaker, and how we can move forward. They're coming up with some good ideas, Mr. Speaker.

But the ministry's been working with the region, implementing more resources, Mr. Speaker. We've increased the clinic times available at the La Loche facility and we have increased more resource there, Mr. Speaker. And I'd be happy to answer in more detail in the next question.

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

Support for Vulnerable Children and Youth in the North

Ms. Rancourt: — Mr. Speaker, we know that the North is left woefully short when it comes to getting the needed support. Prince Albert was short 30 social workers — 30 workers, Mr. Speaker — and 15 of those worked directly with children and youth. Mr. Speaker, this is a region that needs more support, not less. The Premier has made commitments to support the North and address the suicide crisis, but now they're threatening more cuts. One thing is clear: what won't make the situation any better is cutting a day of work from each social worker every month. The government sees dollar signs, but the people in my community won't get the services they need.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot afford to lose another youth to suicide and substance abuse. Will this government commit to not cutting social services and mental health and addiction services in the North?

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

Hon. Ms. Beaudry-Mellor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for the question. Obviously the situation in the North is of great importance to everyone on this side of the House, as it is to members opposite on the other side of the House.

With respect to child and family services up in the North, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to report that we have been able to fill a number of the positions that were formally vacant. Like many employers . . . And we also have a number of interviews scheduled in the coming weeks, additional staffing actions we are also working on which I'll talk about shortly.

Like many employers, the Ministry of Social Services has faced many challenges with recruiting qualified people for positions in the northern communities, including Prince Albert. We need qualified applicants to apply on those positions, and so I've directed the ministry . . . We're reaching out to post-secondary institutions for both a Bachelor of Social Work and Bachelor of Indigenous Social Work programs to try to fill those needs.

In the meantime, of priority to us is that we are deploying staff from other areas to make sure that vulnerable children and youth are served in the interim, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Global Transportation Hub and Details of Land Transactions

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And as always, it's an honour to rise here in the Assembly to raise the issues of concern in the Assembly. I have to say the issue I'm speaking about today is probably one of the most frustrating

issues that we've had to deal with since I came to this Assembly in 2011, for sure. And the frustrations are deep; they're concerning. And I think we see an attitude here from this government that really speaks volumes to the future of our province and the way they're treating not only providing us with the information we need to properly do our work, but also just how finances are being handled in this province in general.

Now the motion I'm going to introduce is going to talk about, or that I'm . . . yes, that I'm going to move, is talking about the way this government has blocked a number of key witnesses who know much about what happened with the GTH, and particularly the purchase of the east parcels.

We've seen a government that has stopped these people from testifying at the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. There are a number of concerns about that. We also see them shutting down discussion on the topic as a committee and, unfortunately, that will result in avoiding scrutiny of the spending of government, which is obviously the role of the Public Accounts Committee.

As a result, once again we see a government that refuses to be open and transparent about the situation of the GTH, and I think we're seeing that on a number of levels here, Mr. Speaker — on the budget, on the state of the finances. We know that the Minister of Finance has information available to him to tell us what the actual deficit is right now, but he refuses to do so, and he's going to hide that behind the presentation of the budget for next year. So those are very concerning issues, Mr. Speaker. And these are things, I think, that are important to have this debate today to discuss how this is happening in the House at this time.

One of the things I want to talk about today is a review maybe for backbenchers who aren't really familiar with this is, what is the mandate of the Public Accounts Committee? And it's found in the manual for the Public Accounts Committee; it's available online. But just to take a little review on that, the Public Accounts Committee is supposed to "Review and report on observations, opinions and recommendations on the Reports of the Provincial Auditor . . ." They also "Review, amend . . . and approve the estimates of the Office of the Provincial Auditor." And there are a number of other responsibilities that they have. So I think the first one that we're talking about is obviously to review and report on the recommendations, observations, and opinions. So it's not just the recommendations, Mr. Speaker, but it is the observations and opinions of the Provincial Auditor.

I've looked at other places. The UK [United Kingdom] parliament has a description of . . . They call it the committee's remit, which I think is the mandate of the committee. Anyways in the UK, "This Committee scrutinises the value for money — the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness — of public spending . . ."

And when we look at what has happened with the purchase of the east parcels at the GTH, Mr. Speaker, that is obviously a waste of at least \$11 million of public dollars. And they can dismiss it, and, you know, scoff at any concerns about that because they're now selling land at the GTH. Obviously, Mr. Speaker, that's apples and oranges because we know that that land has now been improved and is definitely worth more

money, as any improved land in any industrial park would be. I mean, that's common sense, Mr. Speaker.

But to suggest that because they're able to sell it means that it was okay, that it was okay, Mr. Speaker, to waste callously \$11 million on a whim without any sort of explanation, with lots of cabinet ministers and former cabinet ministers who are in the Assembly today who know exactly what happened, and not provide an explanation to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, that is definitely reproachful. And I think this needs to be continued first and foremost in this Assembly until this government starts sharing information and becomes much more open and transparent about its activities in relation to that purchase. And I mean, we're not even touching the other issues in terms of the east portion of the bypass, the west portion of the bypass south. I mean this is . . . the volume of these transactions is beyond belief.

And I think, you know, for the committee, or for the Assembly to be aware, for example, the extent of the spending that we're looking at, on 23rd of February 2017 we see a special warrant coming out of cabinet for an additional \$70 million for the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure. This is above and beyond the money that was asked for at budget time last year, Mr. Speaker. So you have to ask yourself, what is going on with that bypass? And I mean, that ties into the whole discussion on the GTH as well.

But we know that 50 per cent of that spending extra money is on the bypass. We have a government who's committed to a P3 [public-private partnership] arrangement with a foreign company where we don't know what the contingencies are. We don't know what the timelines are. We don't know what off-ramps this government has even negotiated on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan to put a slowdown on that until we have the actual money in hand to be able to help pay for it.

Instead we see special warrant after special warrant asking for an additional \$70 million — \$70 million, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan to deal with that very, very expensive . . . and the overruns in a P3 that we can't even get accountability for it because we can't even see the contract. This is alarming, Mr. Speaker. The people of Saskatchewan should be alarmed. Those backbenchers should be alarmed, and they should be raising concerns. Even former ministers who are now backbenchers should be saying to their cabinet, hey guys, you better whoa. You better slow down and better take a look at some of this stuff.

I just want to share with the committee, this is from an article from publications that you find in the Government of Canada. It's a research study for the *Commission of Inquiry into the Sponsorship Program* and related activities, 2005. You'll recall, Mr. Speaker, that was well known as the Gomery Commission. And this article talks a little bit about what is a public accounts committee supposed to do. Because we hear this Premier say, we heard him say it today: the auditor did a report. Everybody move on. Nothing to see here. Just move on. Well, Mr. Speaker, that is not a good representation of what the role of the Public Accounts Committee is. And it's concerning to hear the leader of this province of Saskatchewan misleading the people of Saskatchewan as to the proper role of the Public Accounts Committee.

I want to quote from page 67 of the article. The author is Jonathan Malloy. And he says . . . And this is a quote from the standing order of the House of Commons, which is the basic mandate of the federal public accounts committee. He says:

The Committee then selects the portions of the report [the auditor's report] it wants to scrutinize and calls public servants from audited organizations to appear before it to explain the Auditor General's findings.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we have tried time and time again. There are members of the Public Accounts Committee here today, and we have tried time and time again to call members from the public service, from the audited organizations to appear before the committee to explain the auditor general's findings. This is common. This is usual. This is normal. And yet we have a committee that refuses to allow those people to come before the committee. This is alarming. This is concerning. This is blocking democracy, Mr. Speaker. It will leave a black mark on the history of this government and this expression of democracy here in Saskatchewan. And the people of Saskatchewan are concerned, and they are watching, Mr. Speaker.

[11:00]

Another quote I'd like to share from this article describes a little bit more about how this procedure should work, despite the efforts of this committee and this Premier and this government to shut down hearings from those people. And I'll quote, and maybe the Premier will find this interesting. Here's the quote:

While the Auditor provides the Committee with fodder for discussion, the Committee provides a public forum for the further examination of government activities.

The PAC provides several distinct strengths to the Auditor General's inquiries. First, it can draw further attention and notice to issues raised by the Auditor General. While AG reports usually receive good or exceptional media coverage, this coverage may focus on minor sensational items, rather than more substantive and complex issues. Even when coverage is more thoughtful, journalists rarely have the time and space to dig deeply and sustain their inquiries. The PAC is able to revisit reports, often after the initial wave of attention, and attract further sustained attention to issues and problems.

Second, committees offer a venue for the Auditor General and public servants alike both to present fairly their perspectives and to hear the other side in a public forum. Auditors are given further opportunity to . . . [express] their concerns, while public servants have an opportunity to answer and explain.

I want to repeat that, Mr. Speaker, just so that we all understand the role of public servants in the PAC [Public Accounts Committee]. It says, ". . . public servants have an opportunity to answer and explain." Based on what the auditor said, public servants are then given the opportunity to answer and explain.

Mr. Speaker, time and time and time again, we have seen this committee, under direction of who knows who, to come forward and block the people that are able to answer and

explain all of the important questions that arise out of the auditor's report. I think the Premier's characterization of this is shameful. I think that the current minister's characterization of the auditor's report is also shameful. It's disingenuous, and it really needs to be looked at, Mr. Speaker, because the people of Saskatchewan see right through this blocking of testimony.

The third thing I'll just share quickly with this article, it says:

. . . the Committee provides additional public and visible pressure on governments to change or account for their actions. While its reports and recommendations may not have immediate influence, they remain important and easily accessible aspects of the public record.

I think the final thing I'll share from this article, and I know time goes quickly in these debates, is this notion from the author. He says:

Key, however, is the PAC's ability to question publicly witnesses, unlike either the Auditor General or Question Period. In this way, the Committee does indeed hold government to account, publicly, for its actions. Whether the media pays much attention is perhaps not important; what is important is the public record and the potential for further attention. A PAC appearance is not taken lightly by public servants [when they're allowed to appear], and this provides powerful and transparent follow-up of the Auditor General's investigations.

So again, Mr. Speaker, we hear that the role of PAC is to do a transparent and powerful follow-up to the auditor's recommendations. So for the Premier to suggest that we shouldn't be concerned with it, we should just move on, and that the auditors say her work is final is, as I say, Mr. Speaker, it's misleading. And I think, you know, it raises more questions. Why are they blocking these people? Why won't they put forward . . .

The one individual, to me, who knows exactly what happened at the point of sale is the current deputy minister of the Ministry of Economy, Mr. Laurie Pushor. If he cannot come before the committee . . . He's in the building when the committee is meeting, Mr. Speaker. And it seems to me that it's incumbent upon him or his current boss, or perhaps his former boss who directed him, the member from Kindersley who directed him to make a deal that was against all common sense . . . It was against all known management of real estate deals to make that deal, and not be able to be accountable to the public through the Public Accounts Committee is more than . . . I don't know. It's outrageous, Mr. Speaker, and it's frustrating to see this government block this individual. If he can't do his job, why is he in the job, Mr. Speaker? And I think that it's very important for the public to understand that individual has either refused or been denied an appearance before the Public Accounts Committee to answer for his actions.

I worry about what the Premier said about the role of Public Accounts Committee. We have him in the House on November 29th saying . . . Mr. Speaker, there was a question about why he wouldn't allow Laurie Pushor to come to the committee. He says:

Mr. Speaker, the same key witnesses that the Provincial Auditor interviewed through the course of her work? You mean those witnesses, Mr. Speaker? Yes, that's what he means. Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House think the Provincial Auditor and her professional staff, those are the right people to ask those questions, to interview those witnesses . . .

Well, Mr. Speaker, he couldn't be more wrong. He knows that that's not correct, and why he's saying those things in the House really sort of, I think, obfuscates what is really going on here. And we see this obfuscation over and over again. We saw it today here in question period, Mr. Speaker. So there's so many concerns, I think, in terms of what the government is doing here on so many levels that it's alarming.

We see committee members being directed by the House Leader, Mr. Speaker. We all know what the role of a House Leader is in politics, Mr. Speaker, and it's not to be neutral, Mr. Speaker. There's an advocacy role on the part of the House Leader that I think . . . I really question when we have a House Leader showing up at a Public Accounts Committee and controlling the conversation, and leading . . . despite the fact we have a Deputy Chair who is responsible for doing that. So at this point, Mr. Speaker, I'm running out of time. I'm going to introduce the motion, and the motion is this:

That this Assembly condemns the government for blocking key witnesses who know important details about the Global Transportation Hub (GTH) land deal from testifying at the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, for shutting down discussion on the topics, for avoiding scrutiny of government spending, and for failing to be open and transparent with the people of Saskatchewan.

I so submit.

The Speaker: — I take the motion from Saskatoon Centre as read. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Saskatoon University.

Mr. Olouson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to stand in my place and join this debate today. It will come as no surprise that I will not be supporting the motion. Since last May in this place we have gathered around and gone over and over this topic. There was nothing to talk about then, and there's even less to talk about now.

Mr. Speaker, the GTH is now a very important part of our economy, providing hundreds of jobs as well as over 1,800 construction jobs as it was being built. Every week, over 4,800 truck movements are completed in and out of the GTH. It is truly a hub, and a very important piece that allowed us to export over \$26 billion worth of goods to the world in 2016.

Mr. Speaker, we debated this subject last fall and many of the points made by the members from Moosomin and Martensville-Warman are still relevant today. So if some of it sounds familiar, it is.

On February 9th, 2016 an order in council was signed that requested the Provincial Auditor to perform a special audit to examine whether or not the Government of Saskatchewan

followed appropriate procedures and received appropriate value with respect to the land acquisition at the Global Transportation Hub. Mr. Speaker, this included the examination of any transaction leading up to the said acquisition.

Section 25 of *The Provincial Auditor Act* states:

The provincial auditor may examine any person on any matter relating to any account that is subject to an examination or audit by him . . .

Under that authority, the Provincial Auditor released her report on June 30th of 2016. The auditor did find a number of instances where the proper processes were not followed. She identified those instances and made recommendations on how to address them — two recommendations specifically for the GTH, and eight recommendations for the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read those recommendations and I'll let you know how we're making out with each of them. For the GTH, Mr. Speaker, the No. 1 recommendation was:

We recommend that the Global Transportation Hub Authority require, for its Board's review and approval, the preparation of business cases for major land acquisitions or significant new initiatives.

The Global Transportation Hub Authority is making progress towards complying with the recommendation. No. 2, Mr. Speaker, was:

We recommend that the Global Transportation Hub Authority require and keep documentation of review of land appraisal reports it uses when making offers to purchase land.

The Global Transportation Hub Authority is making progress towards complying with that recommendation, Mr. Speaker.

For Highways and Infrastructure, there was eight recommendations, Mr. Speaker. And I'm happy to say that the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure has complied with all of them, and here they are:

1. We recommend that the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure explore alternate approaches to optimize the timing of land acquisitions for major public improvement projects.

2. We recommend that the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure require staff responsible for acquiring land for public improvement projects to periodically document conflict of interest.

3. We recommend that the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure require staff to clearly document the results of review of appraisal reports used to acquire land for public improvement projects.

4. We recommend that the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure clarify its policy for paying permanent damages for partial takings of agricultural land to

landowners for public improvement projects.

5. We recommend that the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure follow written approved policies in effect related to determining compensation associated with land acquisitions for public improvement projects and keep related supporting documents.
6. We recommend that the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure provide for an internal review of compensation performed by a second person other than the preparer associated with land acquisitions for public improvement projects prior to making offers to landowners.
7. We recommend that the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure follow its delegated signing authority when acquiring land for public improvement projects. [And]
8. We recommend that the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure publish information to help landowners understand their property rights and how it determines due compensation for land for public improvement projects.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure has complied with all eight of those recommendations.

Now I'd like to move on to a few of the GTH highlights, Mr. Speaker. Public sector investment in the GTH has topped \$485 million. Employment during construction, as I said before, created 1,804 jobs.

The GTH serves as an instrument of trade by providing a world-class infrastructure to allow efficient and effective movement of goods by rail and truck and assist Saskatchewan producers in accessing supply chains for their products.

The GTH is in its sixth year of operation. It's admired by its industry peers who understand that the logistics hubs take 20 to 25 years to reach full maturation. The GTH offers greenfield build opportunities. It's centrally located between Canada's largest sea ports. GTH also offers integrated rail, intermodal, and highway infrastructure. It's a logistically superior design for maximum efficiency of truck movement.

It's a foreign trade zone, Mr. Speaker, which provides single-window access to Canada's duty and tax relief programming. The GTH received its foreign trade zone designation from the Government of Canada in August 2015. With only a small selection of Canadian communities having this status, being able to offer clients eligibility for programs like duty deferrals is a significant competitive advantage for the GTH.

And while we're talking about that, Mr. Speaker, some export facts from Saskatchewan, and these are pretty good.

Saskatchewan provides 65 per cent of the world's lentils, 55 per cent of the world's peas, 39 per cent of the world's durum wheat, 30 per cent of the total worldwide production of potash, and 15 per cent of the world's uranium. Saskatchewan is the

second-largest exporter of oil in Canada. It exports goods to over 150 countries. Saskatchewan's exports per capita is \$22,844. It's number one among Canadian provinces. And 1 in 5 jobs in Saskatchewan depends on exports.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan exports to South Korea were nearly 300 million in 2011. About that same time, our competitors in that market signed free trade agreements with South Korea and quickly became the suppliers of choice. Our exports sunk to 85.5 million by 2014.

Canada's free trade agreement with South Korea was finally implemented in 2015 and exports that year rose to \$104 million. In 2016, in year-to-date statistics, it rose over 72 per cent from the low point to over \$147 million.

[11:15]

The GTH is also making inroads into China. The GTH was invited to sign a co-operation agreement with one of China's largest economic development groups, the China Overseas Development Association, or CODA. During a signing ceremony on September 24, 2016 in Beijing, CODA's Secretary-General Zhenwei said that the GTH is an ideal platform for Chinese businesses to enter the North American marketplace. This strategic location, high efficiency facilities and services, and supporting government policies make the GTH an attraction for Chinese government organizations and enterprises.

In a room filled with 400 attendees, Mr. Zhenwei noted that the GTH aligns with China's national initiative of going global, where major industries are seeking expanded business opportunities in foreign countries. "We are encouraged [he said] as Saskatchewan is eager to strengthen its economic and cultural relationship with China, its enterprises, and its people."

So, Mr. Speaker, I think in closing I'd like to say a few things. The Premier asked the Provincial Auditor to do a complete review of this matter, which she did. During her work, the Provincial Auditor interviewed everyone she felt was necessary. She mentioned that any members and officials she spoke with were forthcoming with all of their information. We are confident in the work that the Provincial Auditor has done and we trust that she's done a thorough job.

The auditor found a number of instances where proper processes were not followed. She identified those instances and made recommendations of how to address them. We are following those recommendations.

Now the members opposite made a number of irresponsible and false allegations before, during, and after the last election campaign about conflict of interest and breach of trust. Here's what the Provincial Auditor said about that: "The audit did not find evidence of conflicts of interest, or indications of fraud or wrongdoing by the GTH management or Board of Directors."

Mr. Speaker, I won't be supporting the motion. Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today and join in on this very important debate. It's also an honour for me to be the opposition representative on the Public Accounts Committee along with my colleague, who is the Chair. It's a really important role.

The committee has a very important function in government, and I've learned that through mentorship both from my colleague the Chair as well as the former representative on PAC, the Leader of the Opposition. Through that I've learned the importance of the scrutiny role that PAC has and the importance that it has as a committee that's somewhat different from the other committees, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in that it does not analyze or present policy decisions, but it's actually supposed to be, in a non-partisan way, looking at government functions to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being spent as wisely as possible.

So that's what's the alarming thing, the most alarming thing about the way that the GTH and the auditor's report has been moving through PAC and the way that members opposite have been essentially shutting down debate — not only shutting down debate on PAC with respect to this report but also limiting and blocking important individuals from testifying at committee meetings, which is completely different from experiences that are supposed to happen at PAC, experiences that I've had on PAC thus far, and experiences that colleagues who came before me have had on PAC. It runs completely counter, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the purpose and the role of Public Accounts.

Now as the opposition representative on PAC, I've been the one frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who's been tabling motions to request that these important individuals come before PAC and testify. It's been standard practice that the individuals who are relevant to the issues that we're discussing are there and are available. Never in any other auditor report meeting that we've had on PAC has there been an instance where we weren't able to get the relevant people to come forward and to help us answer our questions, which is our job, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as members of the committee, is to actually ask questions. And in no sense has it ever been seen as a discount on the hard work of the auditor. It's, frankly, simply our role, as it should be — both as MLAs and as members of the PAC committee — to make sure that we are effectively using taxpayers' dollars.

And it's been six times, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where I have asked for the relevant officials to come forward and to be allowed to testify, and six times the members opposite have voted down the motion that I have made. And each time I present this motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I remind the committee members of the importance of their role and the importance of our role collectively on PAC as a scrutiny committee, the importance of the ability for us to ask questions of all relevant officials.

The only officials that we've been allowed to talk . . . to ask questions of at PAC so far have been two officials: one gentleman from GTH who was not around during the . . . when the crux of the decisions around this GTH land scandal occurred, and we've most recently learned actually wasn't around as he was on holidays during when the real crux of the decision was made. And the other gentleman that we've been

allowed to ask questions of is a gentleman from the Ministry of Highways, similarly wasn't around when the majority of the decisions around this land purchase was done and similarly was on holidays during a large portion of when the actual decision was made to . . . when the actual land purchase occurred, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So when my colleague from Saskatoon Nutana, who has done a very fantastic job in terms of unearthing and probing through the documents that we were able to receive, as well as the auditor's report, and ask questions, often we get a response back that the officials that are present don't know the answers to. And they tell us that they don't know, and yet these are the only officials that we've been given an opportunity to question.

Not only that, but we've also tabled motions asking for further time, which have been voted down by the members opposite. We've also most recently, as of this week, tabled a motion . . . Because at last committee meeting we were given a lot, several, at least several dozen undertakings from the officials who were there, again because they didn't know the answers to the questions that we had. They made undertakings to present, to provide the committee with further documentation. When I tabled a motion this week asking for an opportunity for us to have a meeting to, once that documentation is tabled, for us to be able to ask our relevant questions to those officials about that documentation, yet again members opposite voted down that motion.

It's very frustrating. It's very frustrating when our important role as a scrutiny committee is being thwarted for partisan reasons. It's very frustrating when we're not able to do our job. It's very frustrating when we're not able to get the answers that we need to for the taxpayers. It's the whole purpose of our job on Public Accounts, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And the members opposite should know darn well what our role is on Public Accounts and the value of it. And I think . . . I know because we all had an orientation session after the 2016 election and we were all provided with the Public Accounts procedures manual, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So this should be coming as no surprise to the members opposite when the procedures manual lays out exactly what our mandate is. And our mandate has always been to question findings of the auditor in terms of uncovering further information ensuring that taxpayers' dollars are being using effectively and efficiently.

I want to read into the record the mandate of the committee because it seems like the members opposite have forgotten what it is.

The mandate of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts consists of the following:

1. Review and report on the observations, opinions and recommendations on the Reports of the Provincial Auditor (as designated for referral to the committee by *The Provincial Auditor Act*) and the Public Accounts of the Province of Saskatchewan. These documents are permanently referred to the committee as they become available.
2. Review, amend (as considered appropriate), and approve

the estimates of the Office of the Provincial Auditor.

3. Consider and report any bills related to the Provincial Auditor that may be referred to the committee.
4. Conduct a competition for the position of the Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan and unanimously recommend to the Legislative Assembly an individual for appointment.
5. Recommend, after consultation with the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies, the names of individuals for appointment to the Audit Committee of the Province of Saskatchewan.
6. Undertake any other activities as directed by the Assembly or [presented] . . . by statute.

Mr. Speaker, we all received, during our orientation, copies of CCAF and the CCPAC [Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees] guides to parliamentary oversight committees and relationships, and the importance of PAC and the role and function of PAC in a commonwealth democracy like ours, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I want to read some of this into the record because I'm not sure if members opposite forgot to read this material when they went to their orientation. You know, that's the glass-half-full optimist view — maybe they just forgot and maybe they're just waiting for us to remind them what it is.

This is a quote from the *Parliamentary Oversight-Committees and Relationships*. And being cognizant of the time, I have a lot of . . . There's a lot of information in all of the documentation that we received during our orientation. I encourage members opposite to read all of it. But what I read into the record is just but the tip of the iceberg in terms of what we should be doing. So:

In theory, PACs, which are legislative oversight committees, should be the cornerstone of financial accountability and governance in the public sector. The PAC is supposed to work in tandem with the legislative auditor, known as the Auditor General or Provincial Auditor in Canada, depending on the jurisdiction, to hold the government to account for its use of public funds and resources.

It's not an indication that we don't agree with the auditor's report or findings. It's not an indication that we are questioning her work. It's very simply our role and duty as committee members to do it. And I don't understand why the members opposite have suddenly forgotten that this is the importance of their role, and this is what their role should be.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's also interesting that, so far in the debate from members opposite, we have members who are so afraid to talk about this matter that all we've gotten are quotes from the Provincial Auditor's findings and the recommendations as provided by the ministries.

I know we'll have a few more people join the debate. I'm hoping for a little bit more dialogue of relevance. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Mr. Bradshaw: — Well thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and it's a privilege and an honour to be able to speak to this preposterous motion, Mr. Speaker. When I sit there and I look at the motion, the way it goes through and it says, you know, "... shutting down discussion on topics ... [and] avoiding scrutiny of government spending ..." etc., etc., Mr. Speaker, this motion just doesn't pass the smell test.

I think part of the problem is, I think part of the problem is, Mr. Speaker, is that the NDP is actually jealous, because they never wanted to see this province move forward. You know, they looked, they actually looked at the Global Transportation Hub back when they were on this side of the House. But the old story, you know, they never got around to it. So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's jealousy that's actually driving this witch hunt.

Mr. Speaker, all the questions have been answered by the auditor; every single thing. And they keep on going back to Public Accounts, and they keep on coming back with the same questions. They keep on getting the same answers which is answered fully. It's been answered in this House. It's been answered in Public Accounts. But yet the NDP still, for some reason, have got to sit there with their witch hunt and keep on looking and trying to find something, anything. They just can't come up with anything new.

Mr. Speaker, the things that have happened in this province since this government came into power in 2007 . . . We wanted to see this province going forward and the Global Transportation Hub is one of these fine models that is moving this province forward.

What they wanted for answers out of the Global Transportation Hub, like I said, the auditor went through. She even had . . . she even went so far as getting all the cabinet documents. Everything was there. It was laid out. She never had a problem interviewing any of the witnesses. All of the witnesses were very forthcoming. Everything has gone through.

And I guess it's been read before and it's been read many times, but I'm going to throw those quotes back in there again as to what the auditor said, and I'm going to quote, "The audit did not find [any] evidence of conflicts of interest or indications, [or indicators] of fraud or wrongdoing by the GTH management or Board of Directors." And that includes the former minister.

[11:30]

She also said on July 4 on the John Gormley show:

In any audit, as auditors we're always looking for red flags. And because this is a land transaction, we did look for conflicts of interest. [And] we didn't find evidence of conflict of interest or indications of fraud or wrongdoing in the course of our work so there . . . [was] no red flags there.

That's the Provincial Auditor. Now for some reason the NDP thinks that they want to take on the job of the Provincial Auditor which . . . The Provincial Auditor is an independent

person within this legislature but the NDP, they think that they should take on that job of the auditor. They want to call everybody.

And I have to give credit where credit is due. I have to give a lot of credit to our member from Cut Knife-Turtleford, the Deputy Chair for keeping everything on track. I told him I'd give him a compliment today, Mr. Speaker, so . . . But anyway, he has done a great job and so has the whole team on PAC.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing there, and yet the NDP continue, continue to slander the good members, the honourable members of this House on this side. I don't know what their thoughts are, but like I was saying before, I think I've come to the conclusion that the only thing they're coming up with is they're jealous because they couldn't figure out a way to move this forward. They couldn't figure out a way to have the GTH.

The fact is, I'm just going to step back for a second and take a look at the former Premier Calvert who wouldn't go on the trade missions which the GTH is all about. It's helping move our product forward, and Mr. Calvert wouldn't even go on those trade missions. This government has worked hard at moving, moving the province forward and bringing things that the NDP couldn't even dream about. Of course, they couldn't even think about raising the population of this province either, so that's a completely different story.

But when you look, the GTH is . . . when you put it into this province, it's almost like a seaport in the middle of the prairies. This is a place that there are very few of them out there where people can ship stuff through. It's an excellent trucking port. It's been approved for the export market, for the customs market. This is something that is absolutely fantastic for our province.

But the NDP, the NDP is jealous, so they go on their witch hunt and try and bring up something, something, anything that is wrong with it. Even though they've been given all the answers, every day they bring it up in question period. They bring it up to the media. But what is happening is truly they're losing credibility on this. But they don't seem to understand that, Mr. Speaker, that they are losing credibility for bringing something forward that the auditor has already gone through and checked into thoroughly, thoroughly and found out that there was absolutely no conflict of interest within there and no red flags, Mr. Speaker.

She did have some recommendations. I think there was 10 recommendations of which eight have already been approved by the Department of Highways. And there are still some GTH recommendations that they're working on so that they can comply with. So, Mr. Speaker, yes there were a couple of mistakes made, but these that the Provincial Auditor has flagged are being worked on and improved as we speak.

Mr. Speaker, when you take a look at the hundreds of jobs, the thousands of jobs that are coming to this province because of the GTH, this makes a big difference to the province of Saskatchewan as we are an export-driven province and everybody knows that. And, Mr. Speaker, the thing is, is without the government on this side of the House looking to move this province forward, these things would not have been

happening. And, Mr. Speaker, that's why I say the NDP . . . It's a witch hunt. They're jealous because they couldn't get it done, and they're mad that we are. And they're just trying to slander everybody for that simple reason and that reason alone.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at even the truck movements out of there, there's 4,800 truck movements per day, and this is just the beginning of it, Mr. Speaker. When you take a look at how this is going to move on and continue to be a grandstanding example of what Saskatchewan is, of what Saskatchewan has become, we're going to be that top province in all of Canada, Mr. Speaker, because of the foresight of the people on this side of the House to move this province forward.

Mr. Speaker, when we export as much as what we do, when we're based on agriculture especially in this province and our trade going across to the rest of the world, we desperately need something such as the GTH to help us do that. And I know this has been read in there before, but you know, we export goods to over 150 countries. We're an export province. This is where we get our money from. Unfortunately some of the revenues have kind of dropped off on a few of the things here as of late, but we all know that that's going to come back.

Now when you take a look at . . . We export 60 . . . I'm going to run out of time. Mr. Speaker. I will not support the motion.

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

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to rise in my place today and to support my colleagues, the member from Saskatoon Nutana, the member from Regina Douglas Park, who are very accomplished legal professionals that have made the decision to enter the political life to do exactly what we've spoken about, is to bring credibility and thoroughness, and to certainly examine the role of government and how they're spending our hard-earned taxpayers' dollars.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it was with great amusement that I listened to the member from Saskatoon University and the member from Carrot River. And the challenge I have to them today, that in the event, in the event in a short order, that obviously the Premier alluded to a police investigation. That if it is found that there has been some very poor dealings that the government undertook, and there has been some serious allegations that have been made, and now the police are investigating this issue.

And if there is guilt found, I would assume that since they're willing to stand up today to defend against this motion, that at that time they'd stand up and they would resign their seat for the simple fact that they stood up to defend something that I don't think they know the full breadth of the problem when it comes to the GTH land scandal. And when they get up and try and defend it by trying to distract people's attention, Mr. Speaker, I think that there should be repercussions for that.

And I would hope that I would see both the Carrot River MLA and the Saskatoon University MLA stand up and say, we were wrong and we therefore resign. When that day comes, Mr. Speaker, I think they'll find that we're going to be asking them. They should be compelled to do that. They should be compelled to do that.

Why, Mr. Speaker? Because this whole thing stinks, that's why, Mr. Speaker. The government continues to deny the Saskatchewan taxpayers the right to answer questions, us to answer questions on behalf of the taxpayers of how their money was wasted on this scandal.

Now people across the way can say, oh it's all the NDP's fault. And the member from Carrot River, the member from Carrot River said, well we're losing credibility on this. Absolutely you are, sir. You're losing a lot of credibility as this thing does indeed stink. This thing stinks, and there's more information coming our way each and every single day on this deal. And you should not defend a deal that stinks . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — I'd ask the member to make his comments through the Chair. I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Now, Mr. Speaker, if this deal stinks, those that wish to stand up to defend it should be held to account. Now what happens . . . I'm not going to belabour what the auditor said because the auditor is tired of the Saskatchewan Party using her as a shield against accountability. Now, Mr. Speaker, what's really important, what's really important is the auditor's simply . . . There's two things I want to say about the Provincial Auditor. Her report was scathing and it exonerated no one, Mr. Speaker. And we have more details on that coming forward. If you want to go there, we're willing to go there.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what is this debate all about? What is the 75-minute debate all about? We want answers on the GTH deal that those folks . . . [inaudible] . . . across the way, and they have steadfastly blocked that effort. They have blocked that effort, Mr. Speaker.

Now we set aside the auditor's role. Now let's go to the media. The media have been asking for this, Mr. Speaker. The media have asked all kinds of questions, and every time they go through the freedom of information Act, they got three-quarters of every page blacked out. They use the word "redacted" but really it's blacked out. So how do you pay for information from the government when 90 per cent of it's blacked out, Mr. Speaker? Even the media can't get information.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the most important things that I think that we ought to share here is the fact that in general, being the former Highways minister, Mr. Speaker, we had great trust and confidence in our officials. Now the officials are non-political. They are non-political, Mr. Speaker. So I want to quote from one of the officials within Highways. Because what happens is when Highways purchases land, it goes through the officials, and the officials decide a wide variety of matters — whether the land is going to be forcibly taken away, the price of the land, whether the land is needed — all these really important issues that the Sask Party didn't seem to follow at that time, Mr. Speaker. And generally they bring forward a recommendation to the minister and then the minister decides a course of action.

But that was not the case with the GTH land deal, Mr. Speaker, because . . . And I quote from a document, a report, Mr. Speaker, and this goes CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] News. It was posted just a month ago, Mr. Speaker, February 8th to be exact. And I quote:

The man who was in charge of making sure Saskatchewan's Ministry of Highways followed its own land buying rules says it failed miserably three years ago, [to buy land] when it purchased property from the Global Transportation Hub.

And again, Mr. Speaker, another quote is:

In early 2014, Jeff Grigg, then-director of property standards with the ministry, was alarmed that Highways was "under significant political pressure" to buy land from the GTH at a vastly inflated price.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it goes on, and this is one of the comments of one of the officials, who said, "Ridiculous. How did it ever get there? There's no appraisal that gives that number. There's no indicator not even in the ballpark of that number." And that was Jeff Grigg, former director of property standards for the Ministry of Highways.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have Highways officials that are willing to stand up and speak out against this deal. We have the media who have been steadfastly denied access to information. We have the auditor's report that was scathing and exonerated no one. And, Mr. Speaker, finally we have nuns, people that have dedicated their lives to the service of their fellow man, and they came forward and they explained to the people of Saskatchewan how they were ripped off on this deal.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is not the NDP that went and told the nuns to say that. It was not the NDP that went and told the media to investigate this. It was not the NDP that told the auditor's report to try and exonerate anyone. And it certainly wasn't the NDP that forced Highways officials to come forward. These are all independent people that came forward and offered their opinion and advice on this deal.

And, Mr. Speaker, from our vantage point, this deal stinks, Mr. Speaker. It went from a \$400 million cost to well over, or close to \$2 billion. And, Mr. Speaker, it is the largest infrastructure in the history of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, on one page, on one component of this deal, there's an odour, and we're going to find out why.

[11:45]

And, Mr. Speaker, I can point out to the people of Saskatchewan, in particular the Saskatchewan Party government, fasten your seatbelt folks because this ain't going away for the next three or four years. There's more and more and more information that is coming forward because \$2 billion is a lot of money. Two billion dollars is money that the people cannot afford in Saskatchewan to have wasted, Mr. Speaker.

And we all believe in investment, Mr. Speaker, and infrastructure. We believe that we have to have smart growth, smart growth to ensure Saskatchewan's future is building an economy that creates jobs and opportunity for our people, for people that have to pay their mortgage. And the list goes on as to the many people that need work.

But what people can't stand, Mr. Speaker, what people can't stand is when the government stops any effort of accountability.

They put a wall in front of us. And when you talk about accountability . . . And all these ladies wanted, the ladies that represent the NDP on Public Accounts, all they wanted, Mr. Speaker, was to ask a few witnesses to come forward, Mr. Speaker. They asked a couple of witnesses to come forward that still work for government to give us information that they would have.

And, Mr. Speaker, the entire Sask Party caucus across the way come along and they blocked that effort. They blocked that effort on a \$2 billion deal. And then when I hear the Minister of the Economy start whining about us not going to a Board of Internal Economy meeting, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to him, perhaps you should open the public accounts to witnesses on a \$2 billion deal, Mr. Speaker, on a \$2 billion deal. And then we'll begin to open the meetings on a, discussion on a 3.5 per cent decrease of which the NDP are supportive of, Mr. Speaker.

That's the audacity, that's the audacity that we've been seeing from the Saskatchewan Party. So, Mr. Speaker, fasten your belts — fasten your belts, Sask Party — a \$2 billion boondoggle. We have tons of questions and we're getting tons of information. And this issue ain't going away, Mr. Speaker. And that's why I support the motion that calls for greater accountability because the people of Saskatchewan have the right to know how their taxpayers' dollars were wasted by that government, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

Hon. Ms. Wilson: — Well thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand in my seat today to debate the opposition motion which, I want to state immediately for the record, I do not agree with.

Now with respect to the motion, our government has directed the provincial auditors to do a full review to ensure full disclosure and then to go on to the conclusion of the review, to move on to the work of the people that we were elected for — the people of Saskatchewan. And they should know that this government has had the first ever AAA credit rating and the fourth lowest unemployment rate in Canada, despite the low resource prices.

And I'd like to thank the member from Saskatoon Nutana for putting this motion forward. I'd like to thank her so we can publicly stand and defend our government for all the wonderful work, for all the wonderful things that we have accomplished in less than a decade. And I would like to share some of them with you today, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Our government has learned some very valuable lessons from this experience. We accepted the auditor's findings and recommendations, and we are taking corrective action. We are moving forward, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Our record, as compared to the NDP record, is thus: from 2008 to 2015, with our government, Saskatchewan has had the best economic growth rate in Canada, averaging 2.5 per cent per year, well above the national average of 1.6 per cent.

Since 2007 to 2016, Saskatchewan has had the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. We've been a have province

every year since 2007, and we continually grow in population: in nine years, over 150,000.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, across the world people choose words. The Oxford English Dictionary has declared "post-truth" the Word of the Year for 2016. Post-truth is defined as "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief."

It's official, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Truth is dead and facts are now passé, considered so-last-year's sentiment. In a wide world of social media and general information, to research and challenge the sources is not as important as tidbits, tweets casually flung your way and quickly retweeted without valid evidence.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, post-truth refers to a profoundly dangerous trend that affects all of us, elected officials and citizens of Saskatchewan. With the speed of social media, we all have to be more cautious when the truth is no longer respected, and we have to rigorously fight back with established publications and quality peer reviews and research. Global Transportation Hub employment during construction has created 1,804 jobs. Global Transportation Hub is a very valuable tool for our province and across the nation.

A growing distrust of factors offered up by qualified establishments has been finding a footing for some time. Post-truth, the final Word of the Year 2016 is meant to be one that captures "... the ethos, mood, or preoccupation of that particular year and to have lasting potential as a word of cultural significance." Our recent federal election and the election to the country south of us, America, USA [United States of America], has created some of this drama, the public finding politicians far more entertaining than they should, our good work and legislation forgotten to those online with social media technology.

Viewpoints in an ideological, growing group rejecting mainstream ideas is becoming increasingly prevalent. Post-truth describes basic human behaviour swayed by emotions and personal beliefs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reality of today and how we deal with debates and arguments is our new reality. Our government has real facts and a good set of teeth to take a bite out of the heavy burden we are currently involved with in this great province due to global resource prices. This government deals with the issues we are facing with in our nation today. We are not immune to those in need and the suffering. This government continues to address the challenges the vulnerable and sick face daily.

Saying all that, Mr. Speaker, here are the facts regarding the Global Transportation Hub. The Premier asked the Provincial Auditor to do a complete review of this matter, which she did. The auditor found a number of instances where proper processes were not followed. She identified these instances and made recommendations of how to address them.

Yes, it's true a prolonged downturn in global commodity prices has resulted in a significant shortfall in government revenues. We are in a manageable situation, however, when compared to

neighbouring provinces. Here in Saskatchewan, our government has worked since forming government to build a strong financial footing and the trust of the people. Our government will continue to work through our challenges and come out stronger than ever with the people's co-operation and resilient strength they have shown since their ancestors have settled this country.

Our government is known . . . and will continue to help our communities and neighbours by interacting and engaging with people and navigating government agencies for their access to a better quality in both rural and urban areas. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is my home, my Saskatchewan, and I and my government will continue to strive for excellence and quality of life we all want for our families and communities. Policy and government programs are a necessity to governments, and we will continue dialogue with the people of Saskatchewan to continue to honour our commitment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan provides so much for the rest of the world, and with the Global Transportation Hub, we can even do better. At the moment Saskatchewan provides 65 per cent of the world's lentils, 55 per cent of the world's peas. Saskatchewan is the second largest exporter of oil in Canada, and we export goods to over 150 countries. One in five jobs in Saskatchewan depends on exports.

During her work, the Provincial Auditor interviewed everyone that she felt was necessary, and she had access to any cabinet document that she felt was needed. The auditor mentioned on numerous occasions that any members and officials she spoke with were all forthcoming with all of their information.

So in conclusion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, engaging with the people of Saskatchewan is a vitally important aspect of our government's process for public feedback and the role it has to play in formulating policy. Public empowerment and engagement advances our province, our province's quality of life. So I do not support the motion, but I do support our government's decisions. I support the auditor. I support our exports, and I support our international trade. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — The time for debate has expired. Questions. I recognize the member from Arm River.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government takes the auditor and her findings very seriously. That is why our government has fully accepted all the recommendations that the auditor has made, and we thank her office for their hard work. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the member from Regina Douglas Park. We agree with the auditor and her recommendations. Why don't you respect and trust the Provincial Auditor?

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's very clear that we respect the work of the auditor, as we always do as members . . . [inaudible] . . . of this House. I'll tell you what we won't do. We won't hide like members opposite. We won't block like the members opposite. We will let the Public Accounts Committee

do its job.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, on November 28, 2016, in PAC committee, the Provincial Auditor stated that regarding the audit into the GTH it “. . . did not conclusively state that there was no conflict of interest, fraud, or wrongdoing with respect to these land transaction related to GTH.” And she had to stand up and say that after the minister from Meadow Lake stood up 150 times and hid behind that report.

So in light of these facts, this truth, to the member from Carrot River: will you stop pointing fingers at the NDP and demand that your government start taking accountability and start answering questions?

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

Mr. Bradshaw: — Thank you for that question. And I have to kind of wonder how she put that because here I'm going to read again the quote. On July the 4th the Provincial Auditor said, and I quote:

In any audit, as auditors we're always looking for red flags. And because this is a land transaction, we did look for conflicts of interest. We didn't find [any] evidence of conflict of interest or indications of fraud or wrongdoing in the course of our work, so there are no red flags there.

I think that's fairly self explanatory. Thank you.

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

Ms. Lambert: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, on July 4th, 2016 the Provincial Auditor said, and I quote:

In any audit, as auditors we're always looking for red flags. And because this is a land transaction, we did look for conflicts of interest. We didn't find [any] evidence of conflict of interest or indications of fraud or wrongdoing in the course of our work, so there were no red flags there.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the member from Saskatoon Nutana. The Provincial Auditor has said that there are no red flags and no conflicts of interest. Why doesn't your party have confidence that the auditor and her team have done a thorough job?

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish the member would continue the story appropriately because she's only telling half of the story here, Mr. Speaker. What I wanted to tell you is that this what the auditor had to say about what she just read into the record and she said this on the record. That was a press release by the way. This is on the record in *Hansard*. Here's what she said on November 28th.

She said:

Thank you very much, Madam Chair . . . Thank you for the opportunity just to, I just wanted to reinforce a couple of points that we raised at the last meeting. And the reason that I do that, that I wanted to do is that our office is a bit concerned that our finding — which is the audit did not find evidence of conflict of interest, indication of fraud . . . is not well understood and . . . [I really think I] overshadowed . . .

I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I think the members should listen to this:

. . . is not well understood and has . . . overshadowed our audit conclusion.

. . . our office did not do a forensic audit or audit the activities of private sector individuals or corporations.

[12:00]

So that member needs to understand and read ahead a little bit to recognize that what the auditor said in July was only part . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — The next question. I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the member from Saskatoon University. Are you aware of any members being interviewed by the RCMP in relation to the GTH land investigation?

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

Mr. Olason: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The answer to that question is no. And I just want to reiterate, in the auditor's report to the Public Accounts Committee, Mr. Speaker, she made the recommendations to the GTH and to Highways and Infrastructure. Both ministries have accepted those recommendations and have either implemented them or are in the process of doing so. We believe that the Provincial Auditor and her team have done a thorough job and are pleased to see that all recommendations have been accepted. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moosomin.

Mr. Bonk: — In her work, the Provincial Auditor interviewed everyone that she felt was necessary for her report. She mentioned on numerous occasions that any members and officials she spoke with were very forthcoming with information. On this side of the House we are confident in the work that the Provincial Auditor has done, and we trust that she has done a thorough job.

Mr. Speaker, to the member from Saskatoon Nutana: why do the members on your side of the House think they can do a better job than the auditor has done?

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sadly, we have another backbencher who hasn't done his homework, Mr. Speaker. On November 28, this is what the auditor said. She said, our office did not . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well just listen to this: “. . . our office did not do a forensic audit or audit the activities of private sector individuals or corporations.” We know that that one private sector individual was the one who was friends with the former minister, who was minister at the time when he made \$6 million.

That was not within the purview of the audit. And why don't you want to know the answers to that? Why aren't you guys curious about what exactly happened between the minister responsible and his landlord who made \$6 million and the auditor could not look into that? She was not allowed to from the scope of her investigation. And that Premier and that minister now currently responsible are not bringing those individuals forward to tell us what really happened.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members on this side of the House have been all across the province hearing from constituents, our constituents and their constituents, Mr. Deputy Speaker, asking questions about this land scandal.

So to the member from Carrot River: have your constituents not asked you about this scandal? What do you tell them about it when they ask you?

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

Mr. Bradshaw: — Well, I'd like to thank the member for the question. And really the people from Carrot River Valley don't think this is a scandal at all because they believe in what the auditor is saying, contrary to what, contrary to what the opposition is saying.

You know, during her work the Provincial Auditor interviewed everyone that she felt was necessary. And they had access to any cabinet document that she felt was needed. She mentioned on numerous occasions that any members and officials she spoke with were forthcoming with all their information. Our government and the members of the Public Accounts Committee are confident that the Provincial Auditor and her team have done a thorough job. That's the answer, and that's what I tell my constituents, and they certainly believe me ahead of believing anything that the NDP is going to be saying.

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

Ms. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm not sure if the members opposite are aware, but the GTH received its foreign trade zone designation from the federal government in 2015. An FTZ [foreign trade zone] provides tremendous opportunities for Saskatchewan exports and imports that ultimately allow us to get our goods to market. Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the member from Regina Douglas Park: does she recognize that having a GTH FTZ gives Saskatchewan a competitive advantage in accessing international markets, or are

they still ideologically opposed to free trade?

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's such a ridiculous question, and it has nothing to do with the fact that this government wasted millions of dollars on this ridiculous scandal. Our job on Public Accounts Committee is to scrutinize the work of government to ensure that we're using taxpayer dollars effectively and efficiently. It has nothing to do with the process of the GTH. It has everything to do with the use of taxpayer dollars. And it's ridiculous that this government keeps hiding from what is the truth, and what is the truth about the scandal that's happening here today.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the member from Carrot River Valley: did he know the former GTH minister's landlord, Mr. Tappauf, was never listed on the title, even though he made \$6 million on the transaction? Does that sound right to him, Mr. Speaker?

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

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, there they go coming out with their slanderous comments again, when the auditor went through and came up with the decision there wasn't any conflict of interest. Why can't they, the NDP, believe that?

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Estevan.

Motion No. 3 — Mining Investment in Saskatchewan

Ms. Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mining represents an important element of our province's economic framework. And it is a privilege to be able to stand and talk about that today. At the end of my speech, I would like to bring forward the motion as follows:

That this Assembly commends the Government of Saskatchewan for having very attractive mining policies which has led Saskatchewan to be ranked the most attractive jurisdiction for mining investments in the world.

This is very good news for the province of Saskatchewan and this government. This shows that we as a province have been doing the right thing to ensure Saskatchewan is a great place to live, work, and invest. It truly shows that we are open for business.

Mr. Speaker, just last week the Fraser Institute released its annual report on the most attractive mining jurisdictions in the world. And as I stated already, this is very good news for Saskatchewan. Out of 104 jurisdictions surveyed, Saskatchewan was named the number one jurisdiction in the world for mining companies to invest. Needless to say, this most certainly caught

my attention. And if it has not caught the attention of everyone else, it certainly should.

When looking into details of the report, we see that our province moved up from second place last year to first place this year, and it also ranks well in every other category. Mr. Speaker, the report I am speaking of is the results of the 2016 annual survey of mining and exploration companies. The survey is an attempt to assess how mineral endowments and public policy factors such as taxation and regulatory uncertainty affect exploration investment. The survey results were tallied. The provinces, states, and countries, according to a number of factors, included the extent that public policy factors encourage or discourage mining investment.

Mr. Speaker, we have committed to making Saskatchewan a great place to live, work, and invest. And our number one ranking is proof that we have kept that promise. We will continue to reject those who would impose ideology over practical solutions of our economy, whether that is the federal carbon tax or the NDP Leap Manifesto.

Mining contributes to the economic growth worldwide, and Canadian mining companies operate in jurisdictions around the world. While mineral potential is obviously a very important consideration in encouraging or dissuading mining investment, the impact of government policies can also be significant in encouraging or discouraging investment in this important area of economic activity.

When I was reading through the news articles on this topic, the Minister for Energy and Resources said:

Saskatchewan enjoys an excellent reputation in the mining sector. We are gifted with a variety of resources, and as a government we are doing our share to encourage the industry and to make sure that we are competitive and friendly to investment. We have maintained a stable royalty structure over the last number of years, supported by clear government policies that have helped Saskatchewan remain a destination of choice for investors and business.

He also stated:

Aside from having high-quality geoscience information, we place high priority on collaboration with our stakeholders in the industry to help [ensure we] reduce red tape wherever possible.

The words of that Minister for Energy and Resources used could not be truer. When I look into the details of the report put out by the Fraser Institute, I clearly see, under the investment attractiveness index, that over the past four years Saskatchewan has gone from sixth place to first, proving that we continue to make Saskatchewan more attractive for investment. And we will continue to strive to keep Saskatchewan an attractive place to invest.

Mr. Speaker, if we compare our results with the neighbouring province of Alberta, you will note that four years ago they were listed at 14th on the attractiveness index. But if we look at the chart, we can see now that they sit in 47th on attractiveness

index. Mr. Speaker, the reality is, policy matters.

As part of the consideration that went into the survey, it was designed to capture the opinions of managers and executives about the level of investment barriers in jurisdictions in which their companies were familiar. And once again, I will state that it would appear as though we are doing a great job because we were number one.

Now I would be remiss if during my talk about success with mining in Saskatchewan if I did not take the time to talk about mining in my constituency, something I'm very proud of. Westmoreland Coal Company is Saskatchewan's sole coal producer. They have operations in both Estevan and Poplar River mines. These coal mines in Saskatchewan show that our province is a great place to invest. I also need to add that our government's innovation in carbon capture and storage is keeping our coal industry vibrant. That's why IBEW, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, a union, came out publicly in support of Boundary dam 3.

In 2014, the American-based Westmoreland acquired shared international coal mines in Saskatchewan, which once again proves that Saskatchewan is a good place to invest.

Coal production in Saskatchewan over the past few years has been as follows: in 2013, there were 8.9 million tonnes; in 2014, we had 6.4 million tonnes; and in 2015, we had 9.3 million tonnes. And I might note that since the Saskatchewan operations, Westmoreland has signed a new long-term agreement with SaskPower.

The economic spin-offs of an operation like Westmoreland being in my constituency do not go unnoticed. This company employs hundreds of people directly as well as hiring countless numbers of contractors to help ensure that their operations run smoothly. And not only do they create employment for the people of Estevan and the surrounding area, they do a great job at being corporate citizens as well.

[12:15]

They're active members of the community and are continually donating to several different deserving organizations within the constituency. An example of this is Estevan's annual United Way telethon. In 2016, a total of \$398,000 was raised. This could not have been achieved without great corporate sponsorship like Westmoreland Coal. Every year the people who are employed at that mine have money come directly off their payroll deductions to contribute towards United Way, and then the company matches those donations.

In 2016, the employees and management of Westmoreland donated a total of \$74,000 to our United Way campaign. The money that is donated there goes to over 40 deserving member agencies in and around the Estevan area. So as you can see from my example above, the mining industry in my constituency brings very positive direct and indirect outcomes.

And coal mining is not the only mining that takes place in Saskatchewan. I'm going to state some facts about mining in Saskatchewan that I find quite interesting, and I hope you will also, Mr. Speaker.

A preliminary estimate by Natural Resources Canada indicated that Saskatchewan accounted for about 17.5 per cent of Canadian exploration expenditures in 2016. That was up from 13.9 per cent in 2015 and is ranked second nationally, only behind Ontario. Since 2005, the potash industry committed over \$20 billion for expansions to current operations and the development of new mines in Saskatchewan. The expansions, which are near complete, are expected to nearly double Saskatchewan's potash production capacity.

In addition, several companies are considering constructing new potash mines, including global mining giant, BHP Billiton limited. As well K+S Potash Canada is in the final stages of commissioning Saskatchewan's newest potash solution mine at the Legacy site adjacent to Belle Plaine. The \$4.1 billion mine will be capable of producing 2 million tonnes of potassium chloride annually and is expected to generate its first production in the summer of 2017.

A total of 10.11 million hectares of Crown land were disposed of for minerals, potash, and coal as of December 31st, 2016. Over the past few years, uranium discoveries in the Patterson Lake South areas north of La Loche and diamond-bearing kimberlite discoveries north of Deschambault Lake have resulted in industry acquiring significant land positions in those two areas.

The increased staking activity has been facilitated by the mineral administration registry of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan's new online mineral disposition acquiring system. In 2015, Saskatchewan produced 11.1 million tonnes of potassium oxide. Uranium production for 2015 was 34.6 million pounds. This number is due largely to ramping up of production at Cigar Lake mine. As well, Silver Standard Resources Inc. reported that production at the Seabee operation, Saskatchewan's only active gold mine, achieved 77,660 ounces of gold in 2016. In total, the Seabee mining operation has produced over 1.2 million ounces of gold since commencing the mining in 1991.

A survey conducted by the Ministry of Economy estimated that 226 million would be spent on mineral exploration in Saskatchewan in 2016. This is an increase from the year before and shows strength in mineral exploration. Past exploration for the last few years have added hundreds of millions to our provincial economy. For example, in 2015 it was 211 million; 2014, 216 million; 2013, 236 million; and in 2012, \$323 million were added to our provincial economy.

This is more good news for Saskatchewan because as long as industry is prepared to spend money in the province of Saskatchewan on mineral exploration, that will mean ongoing business is happening in the province of Saskatchewan.

All of the mining I speak about above is done by a multitude of great companies across the province of Saskatchewan and the economic benefits that have come to the province of Saskatchewan have been phenomenal. These companies demonstrate that Saskatchewan is a better place to live, work, and invest. These companies bring corporate tax dollars to the province of Saskatchewan. These companies bring good paying jobs to the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

As I noted above, these companies are great corporate citizens and contribute not only to the communities they live in, but also to the province of Saskatchewan as a whole by generous donations they make to non-profit organizations that are giving back to the people of Saskatchewan who may be less fortunate and need a helping hand.

Mr. Speaker, we are talking a lot about the finances of the province of Saskatchewan of late. So it is interesting to note that mineral sales over the past four years have been as follows: in 2013, 7.1 billion; 2014, 7.3 billion; 2015, 8.2 billion; and in 2016 we are projecting 6.5 billion. The decline is primarily attributed to lower realized prices for potash and uranium, which in turn means less revenue for the province of Saskatchewan. The fact remains though that our province is still seeing tremendous investment in mining and our resource sector.

Now this does not happen overnight, nor does it happen by accident. This has taken hard work and dedication on behalf of both the Government of Saskatchewan and our mining industry to make this work — true collaboration to do what is right to ensure that Saskatchewan is a place where these companies want to do business; from a government standpoint, ensuring that we are competitive and friendly to investment, ensuring we have a stable royalty structure, ensuring the policies that are in place are clear to help encourage investors to do business in our province, as well as trying to reduce red tape wherever possible. I have great faith in the future of our province and that our government will continue to help Saskatchewan be a great place to invest.

Mr. Speaker, I am also proud to stand here today to share that on Friday, February 17th of this year, Mosaic K3 mine near Esterhazy reached potash at an astounding depth of 3,350 feet. Development started in 2009, and after many cycles of drilling, blasting, mucking, and years of hard work, they struck potash. This is the third production shaft now in operation at the Mosaic Esterhazy site.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the skilled workers of Mosaic potash. These people, along with the policies and the record of our government, has made Saskatchewan the number one jurisdiction in the world for investment. Mr. Speaker, Mosaic's K3 mine is another example of how Saskatchewan, even in the midst of lower global commodity prices, has seen continued strength in the mining sector.

I gave you some facts about coal in my constituency, and I'm going to give you a few facts about potash now. Potash production in Saskatchewan has been continuous since 1962 when Mosaic completed its K1 mine in Esterhazy. The potash reserves in Saskatchewan are massive. By conservative estimates, Saskatchewan could supply world demand at current levels for several hundred years.

The Saskatchewan potash industry typically accounts for approximately 30 per cent of the world's production, directly employs approximately 5,000 people, and contributes to the livelihood of thousands more. The long-term prospects are excellent for Saskatchewan potash industry. Higher population growth, combined with growing world income levels and

increased biofuel consumption, will ensure that the global demand for potash will increase over the long term.

And a couple interesting facts about uranium. Saskatchewan accounted for 22 per cent of the world's primary uranium production in 2015 and was the second largest producer behind Kazakhstan. Saskatchewan has been producing uranium continuously since 1953 and is recognized as a long-term and stable source of uranium.

In 2015 total employment by uranium industry, including contractors, was approximately 3,900 people. Saskatchewan's northern residents account for roughly half of those employed, which approximately 50 per cent of those are of Aboriginal ancestry.

Mr. Speaker, while our government has made Saskatchewan a great place to live, work, and invest, the record of the NDP is very different. It seems like the NDP do whatever they can to make investment less attractive. Now the members opposite seem to have forgotten about their past, while unfortunately their present isn't any better.

When our government announced that we would stand up to the imposed federal carbon tax, the Premier asked the interim Leader of the Opposition to join him in condemning it. He refused. He refused to stand up for Saskatchewan, not to mention that the most recent addition to caucus has come out publicly and endorsed the carbon tax.

The member from Saskatchewan Nutana made her beliefs clear when at the federal party's convention in Edmonton. That member voted in favour of the principles in the Leap Manifesto. The document says, and I quote, "There is no longer an excuse for building new infrastructure projects that lock us into increased extraction decades into the future." And then it went on to say, "... Canadian-owned mining projects the world over."

With that extreme ideology thinking, I shudder to think of what the state of the province would be in if the members opposite were in power. Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the members opposite have not learned from their past. While they are caught up in ideology, our government will continue to make Saskatchewan a world-class place to invest. I could go on, but I think I've made my point.

Mr. Speaker, let's continue to have great policies that will bring investment and industry to the province of Saskatchewan. We should be proud of our ranking as number one jurisdiction in the world for mining investment. And with that, I would like to move the following motion. The motion reads:

That this Assembly commends the Government of Saskatchewan for having very attractive mining policies which has led Saskatchewan to be ranked the most attractive jurisdiction for mining investment in the world.

Mr. Speaker, I move that for the record.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Estevan has moved:

That the Assembly commends the Government of Saskatchewan for having very attractive mining policies, which led Saskatchewan to be ranked the most attractive jurisdiction for mining investment in the world.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Kaeding: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am looking forward to participating in the private member's motion that's currently on the floor right now, but at this time I would like to move to adjourn debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Melville-Saltcoats has moved to adjourn debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move that this House do now adjourn.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved that this House does now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried. This House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:30.]

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Premier
President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Tina Beaudry-Mellor
Minister of Social Services
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff
Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission

Hon. Kevin Doherty
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Minister of the Economy
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Liquor and Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for The Global
Transportation Hub Authority
Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan
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Hon. Gordon Wyant
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Minister Responsible for SaskBuilds
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Power Corporation