



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

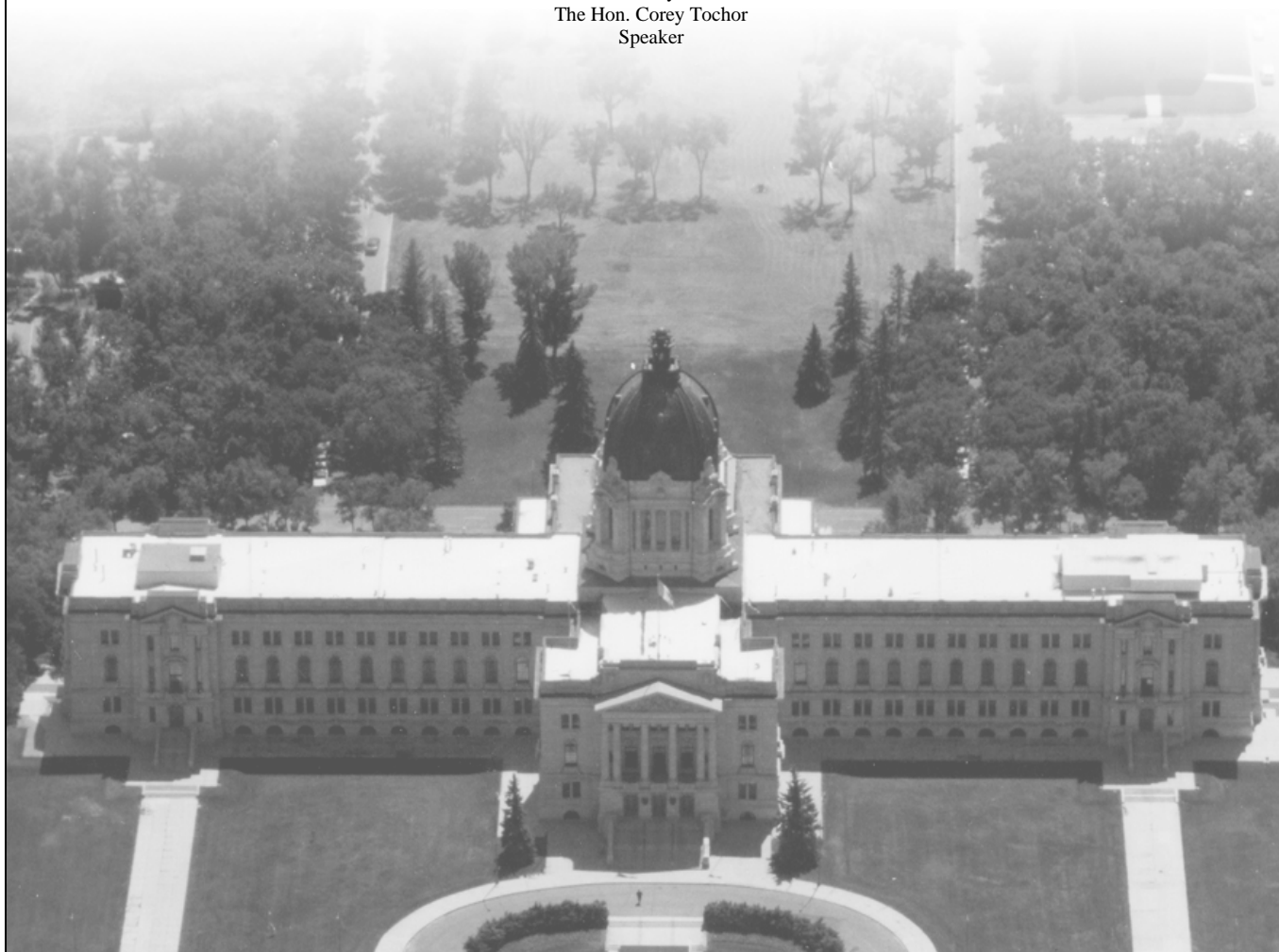
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**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)

Published under the  
authority of  
The Hon. Corey Tochor  
Speaker



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

**Speaker** — Hon. Corey Tochor

**Premier** — Hon. Brad Wall

**Leader of the Opposition** — Trent Wotherspoon

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

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

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

**Bonk**, Steven — Moosomin (SP)

**Boyd**, Bill — Kindersley (SP)

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

**Brkich**, Greg — Arm River (SP)

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

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

**Carr**, Lori — Estevan (SP)

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

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

**Cox**, Herb — The Battlefords (SP)

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

**Dennis**, Terry — Canora-Pelly (SP)

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

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

**Doke**, Larry — Cut Knife-Turtleford (SP)

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

**Eyre**, Hon. Bronwyn — Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota (SP)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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**Kaeding**, Warren — Melville-Saltcoats (SP)

**Kirsch**, Delbert — Batoche (SP)

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

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

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

**Marit**, Hon. David — Wood River (SP)

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

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

**Meili**, Ryan — Saskatoon Meewasin (NDP)

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

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

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

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

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

**Olauson**, Eric — Saskatoon University (SP)

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

**Phillips**, Kevin — Melfort (SP)

**Rancourt**, Nicole — Prince Albert Northcote (NDP)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Clerks-at-the-Table**

**Clerk** — Gregory A. Putz

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

**Principal Clerk** — Iris Lang

**Clerk Assistant** — Kathy Burianyak

**Sergeant-at-Arms** — Terry Quinn

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

**The Speaker:** — I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome everyone to the Chamber and remind our guests not to take part in debate, which means no applause, and please refrain from using electronic devices, which includes phones and cameras.

I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would request leave of the House to make a few comments and then ask for a moment of silence in the wake of the events in London today.

**The Speaker:** — Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

#### STATEMENT BY A MEMBER

##### Response to Attack in London

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, to members for leave, and to our guests as well.

Mr. Speaker, there are many reminders in this Chamber of the relationship that we have as a country and, in particular, this room has to the palace of Westminster, to the parliament in London. There is an invisible thread that ties Westminster, the mother parliament, to us, and more importantly there are bonds of affection and affinity and shared values that we have with the people of the United Kingdom, a shared love of freedom and of democracy.

Mr. Speaker, Winston Churchill once said, courage is the first of human qualities because it is the quality that guarantees all of the others. Mr. Speaker, today I know people across this country and across the province of Saskatchewan and in this House will be praying for courage for those who are fellow citizens of the Commonwealth in the United Kingdom in London. We will also be praying for their resolve, and ours, to ensure security, to protect freedom and liberty. And we will also be praying, Mr. Speaker, that they would find a peace that passes understanding.

And so in honour of those three who were killed today and others that were hurt and many others who are scared, there and in other places around the world, I think it would be fitting were we to begin this day with a moment of silence. And I would request that we do that at this time.

[The Assembly observed a moment of silence.]

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Requesting leave to respond.

**The Speaker:** — Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join in to the statement of the Premier and to certainly thank everybody for taking a moment of silence in response to this horrifying attack, this horrifying tragedy, on a great ally and on a house of democracy, the UK [United Kingdom] parliament here today. Certainly our thoughts and our care are with the victims' families, and our thoughts are with all those that will have been a part of responding to this tragedy as well.

We stand in solidarity, solemn solidarity, with parliamentarians in the United Kingdom. We stand together with our allies. We stand together as a province and a country at times like these.

Sadly, we're also reminded of recent tragedies in Canada where our house of democracy in 2014 experienced a similar tragedy, or recently where a place of prayer in Quebec City experienced a horrifying shooting as well.

These cowardly and these horrifying attacks and tragedies must always cause us to stand together. They must always cause us to be reminded of why we need to work for democracy and why we need to always work for safety and for security and, importantly, for peace and unity. As the official opposition, we stand with the Premier, all the people that are here today, in our entire province, our country, with the people of the United Kingdom.

#### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

##### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well there are a number of guests that have joined us here today as is the tradition, the proper tradition on budget day. And so, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the fact that each is worthy of their own individual introduction, I think it's important that we provide a more general one as we have done in past years. And so on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, and significantly on behalf of the Minister of Finance, I just want to say to all of those who've attended, thank you for coming today.

More importantly, thank you for what you have been doing in the days before this one. No doubt you have been engaged, some of you with your associations, some of you as individuals, with the members on either sides of the House trying to provide input and feedback, working to provide input and feedback into the budget process. And you know, Mr. Speaker, that's a bulwark of our democracy here. That's a strength of our system, and it's on full display here in this room today in our chambers. And so, Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of the House to join with me in welcoming these guests to their Legislative Assembly today.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, it's my honour to join with the Premier here today to welcome all of those that have joined us in their Assembly here today, on Treaty 4 territory, in the homeland of the Métis. And simply we're joined by people from all across our province that work tirelessly day after day to strengthen and build our province.

And it's on behalf of the official opposition, a grateful official opposition, thank you for being here today. But most importantly, thank you for what you do each and every day to serve Saskatchewan, to build Saskatchewan, to extend opportunity in Saskatchewan. Thank you for what you do on those fronts. So on behalf of a grateful opposition, on behalf of a grateful province, I ask all to join with me to extend a very warm welcome and a very sincere thank you.

### 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 to reverse the cuts to the Lighthouse program. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners point out that in April 2014 the minister of Social Services said that the Lighthouse in Saskatoon would “. . . take pressure off existing detox facilities, hospitals, and police cells, while keeping people safe, especially in our brutally cold winters.” The petitioners point out on that same day the minister of Health said, “We want to ensure that individuals with mental health and addictions issues have a safe place to stay.”

They point out that this government has repeatedly indicated that the Lighthouse stabilization unit keeps individuals out of hospital emergency rooms and jail cells. Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we could not agree more. But the petitioners point out that these ministers are now trying to place the responsibility for repairing budget deficits on those experiencing 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 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 services 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 petition is signed by citizens of Saskatoon. I so submit.

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

**Mr. Cox:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today

to present a petition from citizens who are opposed to the federal government's decision to impose a carbon tax on the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, these citizens believe that we have a better solution right here in Saskatchewan, a Saskatchewan-made solution if you will, Mr. Speaker. And that's right down at Boundary dam 3.

Mr. Speaker, this is a far better way to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions globally and in our province than what any carbon tax will do. The potential for that plant, Mr. Speaker, would be the equivalent of taking 250,000 cars right off our highways by the reductions from that plant. And with the number of coal plants that are being built around the world, Mr. Speaker, this can certainly be a global solution. Technology and innovation is a better course. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause the Government of Saskatchewan to take the necessary steps to stop the federal government from imposing a carbon tax on the province.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the citizens of Shellbrook, Leask, Parkside, Blaine Lake, Canwood, Prince Albert, Stump Lake, Debden, Kinistino, Cochin, Glaslyn, Medstead, Livelong, Turtle Lake, Birch Lake, Martensville, North Battleford, Gordon, Mervin, Spiritwood, Edam, Chitek Lake, Waterhen Lake, Rabbit Lake, Saskatoon, Glenbush, Eatonia, and Bellevue. Mr. Speaker, I do so present.

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

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm standing in my place to answer the call and direction of the member from Prince Albert Northcote for anyone, someone to help her in her petition for a second bridge for Prince Albert. The need for a second bridge for Prince Albert has never been clearer than it is today. Prince Albert and communities north of Prince Albert and businesses that send people and products through Prince Albert require a solution. So therefore, Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads as follows:

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 planning and quickly commencing the construction of a second bridge for Prince Albert using federal and provincial dollars.

And as we do day after day, Mr. Speaker, we stand up here and present petitions from people that have signed these pages from all throughout Saskatchewan. And on this particular page, Mr. Speaker, the people are primarily from Prince Albert. And I so present.

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

**Ms. Sproule:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition opposed to Bill 40 and a potential 49 per cent Crown corporation sell-off. The people who've signed this petition wish to bring to our attention the following: that 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; that in 2015-16 alone, Saskatchewan Crown corporations returned \$297.2 million in dividends to pay for schools, roads, and hospitals. And over the last decade, Mr. Speaker, that's well over \$3 billion. Those dividends should go to the people of Saskatchewan, not private investors. Also our Crown corporations employ thousands of Saskatchewan people across the province.

So I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Government of Saskatchewan to 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 people who've signed this, by the way, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Moose Jaw, Qu'Appelle, Regina, and Bienenfait. I so submit.

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition in support of Wakamow Valley Authority. The undersigned residents want to bring to our attention the following: that as a result of the passage of *The Wakamow Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2016* on June 30th, 2016, the Wakamow Valley Authority lost its statutory funding of \$127,000 from the Saskatchewan government in addition to the \$30,000 in supplementary funding. And on June 21st, 2016, provincial government members, including the two members from Moose Jaw, voted in favour of this bill, resulting in cuts to Wakamow and subsequent job losses.

I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly call on this government to immediately repeal *The Wakamow Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2016* and reinstate statutory funding to the Wakamow Valley Authority.

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

Mr. Speaker, people signing this petition come from right across the province, but largely from Moose Jaw. I do so present. Thank you.

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

[13:45]

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to present to you a petition to increase funding to Prince Albert mobile crisis. Mr. Speaker, Prince Albert mobile crisis unit has had to close its doors during the daytime hours, resulting in a loss of resource to people in distress. Mr. Speaker, we have a

high suicide rate in Prince Albert. We are the third-largest city, and we need a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week service, crisis intervention service. The daytime closure of the Prince Albert mobile crisis unit has put stress on the 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.

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, this issue is really important for all residents of this province. And these petitions right here today have been signed by residents from Regina and Yorkton. 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 regarding child care in the province. Those who are signing this petition wish to draw our attention to the following: across Saskatchewan, licensed non-profit child care centres are taxed inconsistently. Many of our licensed non-profit child care centres pay commercial property taxes, and this is not something that's done in Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, BC [British Columbia], or New Brunswick.

Child care is essential to the economy, yet most centres struggle to balance their budget. This issue threatens both the number of child care spaces as well as the quality of care. Quality child care has an enormous positive impact on a child's future and yields high rates of economic return. Child care centres are institutions of early learning and childhood development, and it is appropriate that they have the same tax treatment as schools.

Mr. Speaker, I will read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan recognize that licensed non-profit child care centres provide programs that are foundational to a healthy society by including them in *The Education Act* and, Mr. Speaker, exempt all licensed non-profit child care centres in Saskatchewan from property tax through changes to appropriate legislation.

Mr. Speaker, those signing this petition today reside in Regina and Qu'Appelle. I do so submit.

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

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition calling for a reversal to the cuts to the Aboriginal court worker program. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners wish to bring to your attention the following: that the Government of Saskatchewan cut the budget for the Aboriginal court worker program in the 2016-17 provincial budget. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners point out that this has been a highly effective

program. It's an investment that works to keep people out of prison, works to make communities safer. And, Mr. Speaker, the petitioners are well aware that while the government was busy cutting the funding to this program, they were also pointing to it as part of their response to the calls to action for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Mr. Speaker, it's highly unfortunate to say the least:

In the prayer that reads as follows, the petitioners respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan reverse its short-sighted and counterproductive cuts to the Aboriginal court worker program.

Mr. Speaker, this particular set of petitions, in addition to those from around the province, has been signed by individuals from Regina, Saskatoon, Air Ronge, La Ronge, Cupar, Melville, North Battleford, Prince Albert, Manor, Oxbow, Moose Jaw, Cowessess, Sedley, Melfort, Swift Current, and Shell Lake. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

**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 another petition to ensure job security for victims of domestic violence. Saskatchewan has the dubious distinction of having the highest rates of domestic violence by intimate partners amongst all Canadian provinces.

One in three Canadian workers have experienced domestic violence, and for many the violence follows them to work. Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has already enacted legislation and Ontario is on its way to enacting legislation that ensures job security for victims of domestic violence.

I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan enact legislation that requires all employers to provide a minimum of five paid workdays and a minimum of 17 weeks unpaid work leave with the assurance of job security upon return for all victims of domestic abuse in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, last week the opposition tabled a private member's bill calling for the implementation of this exact measure in addition to two other measures we'd like to see implemented. We are hopeful that the government will take that on shortly.

Individuals who are signing this petition today come from Ituna, Melville, Midale, Radville, Weyburn, and North Battleford. I do so submit.

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

**Mr. Meili:** — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present a petition to stop the redirection of funding of the Northern Teacher Education Program Council, Inc. NORTEP [northern teacher education program], as it's known, has been a very successful program for 40 years, with high graduation rates and

almost all of its graduates staying in the North and staying in the teaching profession. It's been an opportunity for people in the North to have good jobs and for youth in the North to have great role models. But the proposed changes, Mr. Speaker, jeopardize support for tuition, support for books, and support for accessible, affordable student housing.

It's not too late, Mr. Speaker, to honour the five-year agreement that was signed and preserve this program that's been doing such great work for the last 40 years. 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 immediately restore their five-year agreement to fund the Northern Teacher Education Program Council, and continue to fund NORTEP-NORPAC programs in La Ronge.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Pinehouse, La Ronge, Air Ronge, Sucker River, La Loche, Weyakwin, Cumberland House, Battleford, Cole Bay, Canoe Narrows, Timber Bay, Green Lake, Canoe River, Beauval, Debden, Sandy Bay, Stony Rapids, Brabant Lake, Dundurn, Buffalo Narrows, Stanley Mission, Montmartre, Raymore, and right here in Regina. I do so present.

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

#### Honouring Freda Ahenakew

**Mr. Forbes:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the renaming of the 20th Street branch of the Saskatoon Public Library in honour of Cree language advocate Freda Ahenakew. I was pleased to attend the official renaming ceremony on February 10th at Station 20 West.

Carol Cooley, CEO [chief executive officer] and director of the Saskatoon Public Library, said that Ahenakew's work preserving the indigenous languages, particularly Cree, has had profound and lasting effects throughout Canada.

Ahenakew returned to high school as an adult to set an example for her 12 children. She went on to university, earning a Bachelor of Education degree and a Masters of Arts degree. Her graduate thesis, *Cree Language Structures: A Cree Approach*, was published and has been reprinted 18 times. She received numerous honours and awards. She was invested in the Order of Canada in 1998 and awarded the Saskatchewan Order of Merit in 2005.

Dolores Sand, Freda's daughter, said, and I quote:

The family of the late Dr. Freda Ahenakew is extremely pleased that our mother, *kohkum*, and *capān* is to be honoured for her life's work by dedicating a library in her name.

The renaming is part of the library's commitment to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action, and was done after consulting with indigenous elders. Mr. Speaker,

I ask all members to join me in congratulating the Ahenakew family and the Saskatoon Public Library on this wonderful acknowledgement of Freda Ahenakew, an incredible indigenous role model. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **New Schools Completed in Saskatoon Westview**

**Mr. Buckingham:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to stand today to highlight this government's commitment to our education system, with the completion of two new schools in my constituency of Saskatoon Westview. Ernest Lindner, Saskatoon Public, and St. Lorenzo Ruiz, Saskatoon Catholic are the two new schools in Hampton Village. They are both wonderful facilities which will be home to over 1,000 students and 90 child care spaces when they open in September.

I've toured the schools surrounding Hampton Village in Dundonald and Westview, and I can say that these schools will also benefit from smaller classroom sizes and less pressure on resources.

I am proud of this government's record when it comes to education. Our record is one of opening 40 new schools, including 21 this year along with 25 major renovations, while the NDP's [New Democratic Party] record when revenues were tough was closing 176 schools.

Mr. Speaker, the previous member for my constituency, the previous leader of the opposition, along with the rest of that party, voted against the budget that included the capital funding for these two new schools in my constituency. Soon the Minister of Finance will present the budget to the people of Saskatchewan. Will they continue to vote against new schools that keep young families in Saskatchewan? Mr. Speaker, we will find out. Thank you.

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

#### **Players' Benches Installed for Outdoor Hockey League**

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Outdoor Hockey League is an initiative of the Ehrlo Sport Venture program, a community outreach project to enable inner-city recreation by reducing barriers to participation in sport and physical activity. The Cathedral Knights are one of nine outdoor hockey league teams in Regina that offer barrier-free recreational hockey to neighbourhood kids.

This past year Ehrlo Sport Venture, along with the Cathedral volunteers, partnered with the city of Regina, NuFab Building Products, Great Canadian Oil Change, Rapid Lawn Service, Century West Homes, the Cathedral Community Association, and Central zone board to install players' benches at the Leslie Park rink. Mr. Speaker, the players' bench project at Leslie rink is an example of what can be achieved when government, community groups, corporate sponsors, and volunteers all come together.

Ehrlo Sport Venture has been working with the city of Regina to assess maintenance needs at all nine outdoor rinks. Mr. Speaker, the Cathedral rink celebrated the installation of the players' benches on Hockey Day in Canada on February the 18th. I was honoured to attend this ceremony along with Andrew Stevens, our local councillor; Erin Weir, MP [Member of Parliament] for Regina-Lewvan; and Amanda McConnell, coordinator of Ehrlo Sport Venture; along with project sponsors, volunteers Peter Joyce, Mark Johnston, Jeff Woodward, as well as Cathedral players and parents. A ceremonial puck drop was followed by an outdoor scrimmage, hot dogs, and hot chocolate, Mr. Speaker.

I ask all members to join me in recognizing the Cathedral Knights as well as the players, coaches, volunteers, and sponsors.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

#### **Advances in Provincial Health Care**

**Mr. Kaeding:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take a moment to reflect on how far health care in this province has come over the last decade. Since taking office in 2007, our government has invested almost \$1.3 billion in health capital facilities and equipment, more than double the investment made in the previous nine years. This includes the Humboldt District Health Complex, the new Moose Jaw hospital, 13 long-term care facilities, the children's hospital of Saskatchewan, and the new Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford.

In addition to health care facilities and equipment, Mr. Speaker, our government has already nearly doubled funding for health programs and services. Unlike the NDP, our government has not forgotten about rural Saskatchewan. That is why there are now 750 doctors, more doctors practising in Saskatchewan, and over 3,000 more nurses of every designation.

Innovative approaches such as collaborative emergency centres and Telehealth are emerging as ways of ensuring continued access to health services.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP record is closing 52 hospitals, long-term care beds, and 176 schools. They continue to vote against our budgets, which include building new hospitals, highways, and schools. Will they continue to vote against investments in health care? We will find out.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Martensville-Warman.

#### **Government Investment Practices**

**Ms. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite like to ask, where has the money gone? Well we are happy to answer that and talk about our record.

Mr. Speaker, our government has paid off \$2.2 billion of provincial debt, which has saved our province millions in annual debt servicing costs. Saskatchewan leads the country with the lowest government debt per capita. By keeping this debt low, we ensure the ongoing competitiveness of

Saskatchewan's economy. Mr. Speaker, our government has also reduced taxes, saving Saskatchewan people \$6.7 billion. One hundred and twelve thousand people have been completely removed from the provincial tax rolls. We provided Saskatchewan people with a plan to lower taxes, repay operating debt, cut red tape, and invest in much needed infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, that is where the money has gone. It has gone into investing in Saskatchewan families and their future.

Now the members opposite have voted against every single one of those investments. They voted against every budget that has included new hospitals, new schools, better highways, and lower taxes, and yet they have never once presented an alternative.

When the Minister of Finance reveals the upcoming budget, will they continue to vote against responsible financial planning? Will they perhaps finally present an alternative, or will they keep playing politics? I guess we'll find out.

[14:00]

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

#### Status of Regina Bypass Project

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to talk about the largest infrastructure project this province has ever seen, the east Regina bypass, Mr. Speaker. This freeway consists of 14 interchanges, 60 kilometres of four-lane highway — 40 of it brand new — as well as 55 kilometres of new service road. It is designed to move traffic efficiently and effectively to and from our capital city. Mr. Speaker, it's on time, it's on budget.

Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, this will increase the safety for those entering this new freeway, especially those from the communities of Balgonie, Pilot Butte, White City, and Emerald Park.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the interim leader comes in here day after day and misrepresents the facts. I could see it, Mr. Speaker, if he didn't know better, Mr. Speaker, or he was completely out of touch, which some may think. Mr. Speaker, but I will say that that member asked for a detailed briefing from the Minister of Highways. He knows better.

Mr. Speaker, I will close by asking the provisional leader to do one of two things: either start representing the facts honestly to the people of Saskatchewan or ask the NDP to move their leadership ahead so he can be surgically removed as a leader, Mr. Speaker, unlike the last two leaders that sat in that chair.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Kelvington-Wadena.

#### Provincial Budget Will Meet Challenges

**Mr. Nerlien:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Although our economy has been through some tough challenges in the past

few months, we have seen strong indications of its resilience. In February we had the highest growth rate in Canada, with 8,000 jobs being created in Saskatchewan.

In March we were rated as the most attractive jurisdiction in the world for mining investment by the Fraser Institute. Manufacturing sales totalled 1.36 billion in January, an increase of 3.4 per cent from the previous month and the highest percentage increase in Western Canada.

Saskatchewan workers had the highest month-over-month percentage growth in average weekly earnings among the provinces in December. In January, Saskatchewan had the second-highest month-over-month retail sales growth rate in the country at 3.7 per cent, compared to the national rate of only 2.2 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, our government's attractive investment policies and continued investment in our economy has once again helped to keep Saskatchewan strong. It is however important to know that the economy and the provincial budget are two different things. While our resilient economy is showing signs of strength, our budget challenges remain with low commodity prices. That is why our government will be putting forward a budget today that will be meeting these challenges. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### QUESTION PERIOD

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

#### Auditor's Report and Details of Land Transactions

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, after not being straight about our province's finances and not releasing a third quarter financial report, we're all looking forward to seeing the facts and what the Sask Party and that Premier have been hiding from Saskatchewan people.

But, Mr. Speaker, the other thing that everyone wants to know — and that they deserve to know some facts about — is the Sask Party's GTH [Global Transportation Hub] land scandal. I know the . . . We all know the usual lines that come from the Sask Party. In fact any casual observer of this Assembly can probably almost recite those tired, irrelevant lines.

But I want to get past that. This isn't about the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] investigation into the matter. It's not about the scathing auditor's report. It's a simple question that only the Premier can answer, a question that the Premier sadly dodges day after day. When did he, the Premier, first learn that the original seller of the land involved in this scandal was the landlord to the former minister of the GTH?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, first of all that question has been answered. I've answered it. But more to the point, Mr. Speaker, members on this side, myself included, we generally don't know the specifics and the names around transactions if they never took place. This deal that he asks breathlessly about every day in question period, this specific transaction, never happened, Mr. Speaker. And if he wants to



confirm that, he should go to the auditor's report.

The auditor's report indicates that that transaction never happened, Mr. Speaker. I dare say there are a number of transactions, land transactions, in the province that might involve the government, and if they don't go ahead for whatever reason, I probably don't know the names of those people either.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, that's pathetic and weak. The Premier has not once answered that question. As for the actual transaction, the landlord of the former minister made \$6 million in this deal. You can try to deny that; it'd be like denying the state of the finances as he does day after day.

And you know, again we see a Premier that won't answer simple questions, and it's the same in the Public Accounts Committee, where even the . . . You know, he found his voice here today. But the former Highways minister was sitting in the room as a member of the committee just yesterday, and the Sask Party members refused to even allow him to answer some simple questions about what he knew as the Highways minister that was there, you know, as the scandal was going down.

You know, the former Highways minister has recently been welcomed back into the caucus, so why does the Premier not trust him to answer simple questions about this scandal? And how on earth is it acceptable to refuse to allow ministers to answer questions at committee? What is he so desperately trying to hide?

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

**Hon. Mr. Harrison:** — Mr. Speaker, they can dismiss the work of the auditor all that they want. The fact of the matter is the auditor looked into this matter in great depth. The auditor had access to all of the documents that she requested access to. The auditor had access to all of the individuals involved in this transaction. The auditor did a very thorough job, and the auditor issued a report, Mr. Speaker, on the basis of that very thorough job.

I would quote the auditor as she said on an open-line radio show with respect to the very thorough job that she did. And I would quote her, Mr. Speaker:

. . . in any audit, as auditors we're always looking for red flags. Because this is land transactions, 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.

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

### Regina Bypass Project

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Again no answers, no accountability, no transparency. Saskatchewan people deserve to know why their \$11 million went to these two Sask Party supporters. You know, and they need to know this because we have a Sask Party

Premier who's threatening the very jobs and their contracts, Mr. Speaker, the contracts with those that are working in our classrooms, those in our hospitals, those in our care centres. And he's disgracefully fired the lowest-paid public servants in the province.

At the same time, the Premier tells them that he won't even look into the contract with the multinational conglomerate based in France and beyond. That's the \$2 billion contract for the Regina bypass that went from the original price tag of \$400 million. A billion and a half is apparently perfectly normal, and apparently humorous for a Premier that can't manage and couldn't get the job done during the best years, Mr. Speaker. The Premier says Saskatchewan companies and workers should be happy with whatever subcontracts the conglomerate decides to hand to them.

Mr. Speaker, how is this right and fair? How is it that this billion-dollar-plus overrun is safe from scrutiny by Saskatchewan people while Saskatchewan people's jobs are on the chopping block? And will the Premier finally answer the question: of that \$2 billion in the billion-dollar-plus overrun, how much of the money is staying with Saskatchewan companies? How much is going to France and beyond?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, there is just so much wrong with that preamble, as there is day after day. No wonder he's the interim leader; no wonder there's help coming from Saskatoon Meewasin, Mr. Speaker. It can't happen a moment too soon because, Mr. Speaker, day after day in this House, we have the leader, the interim leader of the NDP stand up and provide for the Assembly facts as he would present them that are just fundamentally not true.

The project that he refers to, when it was \$400 million, was tiny in scope, much smaller in scope. We worked with the communities involved, with the city of Regina, and expanded it into be the most significant, largest infrastructure project in the history of the province — a bypass, a true bypass around the city. And so therefore the scope increased.

There's no information hidden. It's available on the Internet, Mr. Speaker. There's been a public and transparent value-for-money audit. The project is on time and on budget. It's creating 8,200 jobs here in the province. There are literally dozens of Saskatchewan companies that are participating in that work, Mr. Speaker. The member ought to drive out and talk to some of the employees that are working out there. The Finance minister's offered to take him out, and he's actually pretty busy today, Mr. Speaker.

So I would just say to the Leader of the Opposition, to the interim leader of the NDP, it's the biggest infrastructure project in the history of the province. It will benefit the city that he represents and the constituency he represents. It's time to put down the talking points and do what's right for his constituents and for the city of Regina, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Government's Fiscal Management

**Ms. Sproule:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, that diatribe certainly didn't answer the question about how much. How much exactly of that \$2 billion is being sent out of province or shipped overseas? But that's nothing new, Mr. Speaker. They don't know how to stimulate the economy for future growth, and they are the government that blew through the dollars when times were good. They sold out to foreign contractors and consultants, and meanwhile they are now attacking working Saskatchewan people. They've cut jobs. They've cut schools. They cut our hospitals and cut our care centres.

It's that cabinet that made the decisions that got us here, Mr. Speaker, not the people of Saskatchewan. And it's those cabinet members who signed off on the scandal, and it's those same cabinet members who are refusing to accept any responsibility for their failures by taking a 20 per cent pay cut for their ministerial bonuses. After all of the hiding and broken promises, the desperate sell-offs, the schemes, and the cuts, after ten years, why does that minister refuse to accept responsibility for the Saskatchewan Party's financial mess?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, once again it's very important to correct the preamble of the hon. member opposite, the Finance critic for the NDP, Mr. Speaker. She actually took a bit of a shot at the economic policies of the government, Mr. Speaker. That's interesting because, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you this: when we had the honour of forming government . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Now the member might want to listen to the answer to the question that she's asked. When, Mr. Speaker, we took over from members opposite, when we had the honour of forming government, we took over from an NDP government that presided over — now get this — the worst job creation record in all of the Dominion of Canada, Mr. Speaker.

All these years later — I guess eight or nine years later, Mr. Speaker — what's the change? Sixty thousand more jobs than were here in 2007, and the second-best job creation record in the country. The last jobs report was out on Friday, and what did it have to say? Notwithstanding the commodity price challenge we face, notwithstanding the headwinds in the resource sector, this province, your province, the province of Saskatchewan led every other province in the country, creating 8,000 new jobs, Mr. Speaker. That's the record on this side of the House.

We've seen statistics that also support and burnish the record of the economy of the province of Saskatchewan in terms of retail sales, manufacturing sales, Mr. Speaker, and most importantly of all, one of the fairest measures of the success of a jurisdiction is the question, are more people moving in than moving out? Under the NDP we lost a generation of people to other provinces. Today, Mr. Speaker, we have more people living in the province today than we've ever had, presided over population growth that brought us to 1.15 million people, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Sproule:** — Mr. Speaker, for weeks in this House, day after day, we've talked about how the Sask Party's projected deficit just kept growing. It started as a surplus before the election, and then a \$200 million deficit, then a \$400 million deficit, then an \$800 million deficit, then \$1.2 billion deficit. Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party has run more deficit budgets than surpluses. They've blown through billions with their mismanagement, their scandal, and their waste.

But it's the people of Saskatchewan who they are forcing to pay. Two billion dollars spent on the Regina bypass, one and a half billion on the carbon capture boondoggle, and millions going to the pockets of Sask Party supporters in their GTH scandal.

Saskatchewan people are losing jobs. There are cuts to our kids' classrooms and to our hospitals and care centres. Mr. Speaker, when, when will the Sask Party just admit that they blew through the savings and wasted too many opportunities? And when will they admit they were wrong and apologize to Saskatchewan people about their mismanagement, scandal, and waste?

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

[14:15]

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, Mr. Speaker, for the first time in the history of the province, the government's finances that she's assailing from her place in the legislature received a AAA credit rating. It never happened under any other government; it's happened today in the province of Saskatchewan. I think it's a reasonable indicator of the financial affairs in our province, Mr. Speaker.

I would also point out for members opposite, and they'll be aware of this, that we have seen three years now, successive years, of resource revenues dropping by over a billion dollars — by over a billion dollars, Mr. Speaker, roughly 8 to 9 per cent of the province's budget. Mr. Speaker, there were forecasts from any number of private sector forecasters that would indicate that strengthening was expected in those revenues, certainly by now and going forward into the next fiscal year, and they're not happening. They're not happening.

Mr. Speaker, so some governments in this country have chosen to ignore that fact. Some very near to us have decided to ignore that fact and just indefinitely . . . that share the member's political ideology and brand, I would say. They've decided to just punt, to just kind of kick the can down the road and indefinitely deficit finance.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to take a different approach on this side of the House and in a few minutes, the people of Saskatchewan will hear the plan. And it's more than a budget; it is a plan for this province to deal with that, to balance the budget and also, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that our economy that's created that, well, nation-leading job creation record, that's provided for that, Mr. Speaker, that that economy remains strong for decades to come.

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

### Regina Bypass Project

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before the last election that Premier and those ministers hid the budget from the people of Saskatchewan. The Premier hid his planned cuts. The Premier hid the deficit. The Premier hid his plans for our Crown corporations.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that the election is over, can the Premier please share with us the details of the Regina bypass contract, the full contract? The people of Saskatchewan have a right to know the full value of that contract. And when will the Premier and the minister stop protecting the commercial interests of a foreign conglomerate? Do your job and put the best interest of Saskatchewan people, Saskatchewan taxpayers' interests, first. When will the Premier release that full contract?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, the information the member seeks is carefully hidden on the Internet. He can avail himself of all of that information. The Internet, Mr. Speaker, I assume it's available to members on that side of the House as well. If it isn't, Mr. Speaker, we can provide perhaps some Wi-Fi capacity.

They keep referencing, Mr. Speaker, the conglomerate. What they have not yet acknowledged, of the 134 businesses involved, Mr. Speaker, in delivering services and building the bypass, the Deputy Leader of the NDP might want to know that of the 134 companies involved, 95 are from the province of Saskatchewan.

And I think those companies would want to hear from that member. He might want to call those businesses and apologize. So should the interim leader of the NDP. But it would take a long time to make those calls. He would have to call 4Refuel Diesel Supply in Saskatoon, A&B Rail in Regina, Aaron Taylor Kary in Regina, Abell Pest Control in Saskatoon, Access in Regina, Acklands Grainger in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, there's a lot on the list here. I'll keep going through them. We're still not through the A's yet, Mr. Speaker.

There is Alliance Pipeline, Amec Foster Wheeler crusher control, Anlin Welding and Steel Fabrication, Apperley Electric, Armada Homes. The list goes on, Mr. Speaker. Ninety-five of the 134 companies involved in the bypass are taxpaying Saskatchewan businesses that have been smeared, frankly, run down by members opposite. They owe them an apology. We're going to continue with the bypass project, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Belanger:** — It's a bit rich coming from the Premier that hid the budget from the people of Saskatchewan and had an election first because he didn't have the courage to share with the people of Saskatchewan the true state of the finances. And there's not one single amount of money on the Internet that he made reference to, Mr. Speaker, not one dollar amount. And people of Saskatchewan have a right to know what have we spent on \$2 billion of expenditure in Saskatchewan's history,

which is a large infrastructure project.

And I did glean out from the site that the Premier made reference to, Mr. Speaker, and in bold letters it says this could be the largest overrun in the history of the province of Saskatchewan when it comes to infrastructure work, Mr. Speaker. I made that last part up, but that point, Mr. Speaker, is that the people of Saskatchewan have the right to know. What does the contract say and how much of the money is staying here in the province of Saskatchewan?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, we should give the Deputy Leader of the NDP a round of applause because he just said one of the frankest, most honest things I've ever heard said in the Assembly. He just said, in terms of that quote he attributed to the 1,600 pages that are on the website, he said that he might have made that part up. I think he said, I might have made that . . . Well it's absolutely lost on the Deputy Leader why that might be a problem, Mr. Speaker. Because if he's going to make a question and predicate it on a statement that he attributes to the government website, and then says, but I may have made that stuff up, it might actually hurt his credibility, Mr. Speaker. Now I'm not sure . . . We on this side of the House have had an inkling that that's what's been happening for a very long time by members opposite.

But, Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is there are 1,600 pages on the website, 1,600 pages disclosing this particular deal. And if he goes and looks at the deal, he'll find out that there's other Saskatchewan companies: Aussie Welding and Manufacturing from Holdfast; Banff Contractors from Saskatoon; Bobcat in Regina; Brandt, Mr. Speaker; Broda Construction out of Prince Albert. Broda Construction — a what? — about a 100-year-old Saskatchewan company that has been employing Saskatchewan people in P.A. [Prince Albert] and here in Regina and around the province for all of those years, they deserve better from members opposite. They deserve better, to be smeared as some sort of foreign conglomerate. Ninety-five out of 130 companies are from Saskatchewan. They deserve respect from members on this side and that side of the House.

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

### Carbon Capture and Storage Project

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, the only thing that that government does better than not answer questions is to preside over mismanagement, scandal, and waste. No one does it better, Mr. Speaker. One simply needs to look no further than the \$1.5 billion job-killing carbon capture boondoggle.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people are on the hook for this money. It provides only a fraction of our power. It has been plagued by problems, has cost \$1.5 billion so far, and we know that those costs just keep growing. We just found out that a \$70 million test facility is not paid for yet. But the Sask Party will just drop that cost on the backs of Saskatchewan people too. The head of SaskPower himself isn't even clear that we can use this \$1.5 billion plant to generate power in the next few years. This is ludicrous, Mr. Speaker. How in the world can this

government justify this massive cost to the people of Saskatchewan?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, that project, Boundary dam 3, is very important not just to the Government of Saskatchewan, not just to southeast Saskatchewan where you'll find a lot of people working in the coal industry and a lot of people working in the coal-powered industry who would like to think that they have a future in terms of cleaner energy, a mix, not just here in Saskatchewan but globally as well. Mr. Speaker, those folks down there, as evidenced by the fact that IBEW [International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers], the union that took exception with this line of questioning in the past, the folks down there are proud of the fact that Saskatchewan can play a leading role in the technological solution on climate change.

Mr. Speaker, it's our belief that when you've got 2,000 coal plants on the books around the world in places like China and India, that Saskatchewan and indeed Canada can focus on leading technology that will actually do something about the problem — not shift it around with different fiscal schemes, not tax it and hope it might work when we know those taxes haven't worked, Mr. Speaker. And that's probably where we differ with members of the opposition, honestly and respectfully.

They would rather move away from the technological solution and towards a carbon tax. The potential future leader of the party has endorsed Prime Minister Trudeau's plan to impose a carbon tax on the province of Saskatchewan. I haven't heard the leader, the interim leader of the NDP reject it categorically. We can only assume that that's the plan of the NDP were they ever to return to this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. In a province like Saskatchewan, dependent on agriculture, oil and gas, and manufacturing, we can never go to that day when a government, an NDP government would have the chance to impose a carbon tax or agree with the federal Liberal government's imposition of a carbon tax in this province. That's where this government stands. That's where we'll continue to stand, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, the Premier tries to act like people all over the world love this thing. But no one has signed up to be in any level, any level of their fan club — not one. The minister needs to learn lessons from his colleagues who were plagued by scandal. He needs to be more open, transparent about the realities that this project is facing. The people of Saskatchewan deserve to know just how much money they have sunk into this carbon capture mess.

They do know that it's caused their power bills to go up four times in the last two years. They do know that they're paying on average \$120 extra per year on their power bill, but they aren't being told why. Mr. Speaker, this just-trust-us approach won't cut it, not when the Sask Party has steered us wrong too many times before. This project is making businesses pay more and it's costing us jobs. So can the minister please, please take responsibility for this project which has become a \$70-a-tonne, job-killing carbon capture tax?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, once again we reject the preamble of the member opposite. The fact of the matter is that the International Energy Agency is keenly interested in and supportive of the world-leading work that's occurring in Saskatchewan, something that members on that side of the House I would hope would be proud of, Mr. Speaker.

I think it's very important to note that the approach from the Government of Saskatchewan is one of balance when it comes to climate change. We do believe we need to reduce emissions here in Saskatchewan. We do believe SaskPower needs to move towards renewables, and we have set a bold target for SaskPower to achieve that, Mr. Speaker. Part of that clean energy mix we know in the future will be cleaner coal, Mr. Speaker, a plant that currently is operating two times cleaner than natural gas, Mr. Speaker, and has the interest of people in the United States and people around the world, Mr. Speaker.

The alternative is to look at what the NDP have favoured both nationally and here in the province, which is a carbon tax or a cap and trade. We know that would disproportionately hurt the province of Saskatchewan. Well the Finance critic who signed the Leap Manifesto, the Leap Manifesto at their convention in Edmonton, and they would like . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well she endorsed the Leap Manifesto. And, Mr. Speaker, that particular manifesto, if it ever had the chance to be implemented, would wipe out our oil and gas industry. It would wipe out the coal industry. It would wipe out pipelines in this country, Mr. Speaker. And we are never going there.

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

### Government's Fiscal Management

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, it's rather astounding what we see here today: a Premier not showing an ounce of contrition; a Premier that hasn't been straight to Saskatchewan people on front after front; a Premier that couldn't get the job done during the best years in Saskatchewan's history; a Premier that didn't save a dime for the future and drained the rainy day fund; a Premier that left Saskatchewan vulnerable; a Premier who, in this Assembly just last year, said to all the people of Saskatchewan, looking in the whites of their eyes, that the deficit was going to be \$400 million.

Of course that was nonsense. He wasn't straight with Saskatchewan people — \$1.2 billion and who knows what; maybe we'll find out here shortly. A Premier that looked in the whites of the eyes of Saskatchewan people as it relates to their Crown corporations, put hand over heart and said he promises not to privatize our Crown corporations. When he learns that he can't win a referendum, was he breaking his word? What does he do? He does indirectly what he can't do directly. We have a Premier that's not being straight with Saskatchewan people on front after front.

We have a budget that's going to be presented here today — a Premier that's run deficit after deficit after deficit; a Premier who said one thing on budget day and as the ink rolls in, the reality is something else; a Premier that's threatening Saskatchewan people with his desperate sell-off of our Crown

corporations.

My question to the Premier today: will he be straight, will he be straight today with Saskatchewan people? Will he finally start to come clean on his GTH scandal? And will . . . Oh, he can guffaw all he wants about the hard-earned dollars that he's ripped off from Saskatchewan people, but we'll keep fighting for answers. And will the Premier do the right thing, finally take to his feet and apologize to Saskatchewan people?

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

[14:30]

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — My friend, the interim leader of the NDP, is demanding apologies. He sits beside his own hand-picked Deputy Leader, who admitted in this Assembly moments ago that he was making stuff up, that he was not being straight with members in the House on an important day like this when the galleries are full. Mr. Speaker, there might be an apology that's required, but he might want to look to his right and seek that apology.

Mr. Speaker, I would just share this with my hon. friend. Notwithstanding the challenges we've faced which has seen resource revenue drop by about a billion two for three years running, Mr. Speaker, consider this. And that has depleted the rainy day fund, there's absolutely no doubt about it. But what happened before that, before . . .

[Interjections]

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — But, Mr. Speaker, before and during those three years, what was happening with the resources of this province? What decisions was the government making with the strong economy that we were seeing and with additional revenues?

Well how about we cut taxes cumulatively by \$6.7 billion? That's what the government did, Mr. Speaker. We dropped over 100,000 low-income people off the tax rolls completely. That's what we did, Mr. Speaker, with those resources. 9.6 billion in infrastructure, doubling what members opposite did when they were sitting on their own pile of money for the eight years ahead of the last election.

Mr. Speaker, there are today in the province of Saskatchewan . . . He wants to know where the money went. He claims to want to fight for the public sector. How about a nod to the fact that today, as a result of actions on this side of the House, there are 3,000 more nurses of every designation practising in the province today. There are 750 more doctors practising today than members had when they were in office. 750 more teachers, Mr. Speaker, working in the province today because we have more students. There are 40 new schools in Saskatchewan today, after this time in government. Compare that with members opposite who in tough times — and good times — closed 176 schools, Mr. Speaker, one a month, Mr. Speaker.

That's where the resources have been invested in — tax reduction, infrastructure investment that has created the

Saskatchewan advantage, an advantage that incredibly has our economy leading Canada in job creation just last Friday, Mr. Speaker.

We know we've got work to do and we're going to hear more in a few moments from the Minister of Finance about the plan we have to get to balance, and the plan we have to keep this province strong.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### TABLING OF ESTIMATES AND SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

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

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

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

The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2018, and supplementary estimates — March of certain sums required for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2017, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

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

Please be seated. I recognize the Minister of Finance.

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

**Hon. Mr. Doherty:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, colleagues, and guests here today. I am honoured to rise today to present our government's 2017-18 budget, my second as Minister of Finance for this government, Mr. Speaker.

Before I begin my remarks, I'd like to join the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in welcoming all of our guests here today, and delighted you could join us. I have some friends and people that assisted greatly in getting me into this place here today joining us, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately my mother couldn't be with us today. She's visiting one of my sisters in British Columbia, and other members of my family had to work, so they couldn't make it. But I am delighted to be joined by some good friends here today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is facing a challenge. Today's budget is about meeting that challenge.

It has now been two and a half years since the price of oil started to drop in the fall of 2014. Now, Mr. Speaker, I wasn't the Finance minister then, but I vividly recall the worry of oil dropping from \$100 to \$80 a barrel, as a member of the treasury board. Today, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you I would like the

opportunity to again worry about \$80 oil. It has spiralled down to under \$30 eventually, before starting its very slow and very modest climb, with stumbles along the way. But even as this was happening, other parts of Saskatchewan's diverse and resilient economy have remained relatively strong.

The latest unemployment numbers released just two weeks ago showed Saskatchewan with the strongest job growth in all of Canada. But, Mr. Speaker, the economy is different than the budget. So as low oil and potash prices continue to last longer than many had initially forecast, Saskatchewan's resource revenues have declined by over a billion dollars a year, depleting reserves and the rainy day fund.

And so our budget challenge is clear. We must move away from our reliance on resource revenues. We must return the budget to balance. Mr. Speaker, today's budget is our government's plan to do exactly that. Our plan will return the budget to balance by controlling and reducing spending, by modernizing and expanding the tax base, and ensuring our economy remains strong. Our plan includes a number of revenue measures to help meet the current financial challenge and provide greater revenue stability while at the same time maintaining the Saskatchewan advantage of low personal income tax and business tax rates.

And our plan controls and reduces spending while continuing to invest in programs, services, and infrastructure for the benefit of all Saskatchewan people. Mr. Speaker, this budget sets our course, our plan for returning to balance and keeping Saskatchewan's economy strong for the 1,155,000 people who now call this great province home.

After careful consideration, our government made the decision that returning to balance in one year would've been too drastic of a shock to the economy and to the delivery of government programs and services. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, a deficit of \$685 million is budgeted for this coming fiscal year. A smaller deficit of \$304 million is forecast for 2018-19, and we will return to balance in three years with a \$15 million surplus forecast for 2019-20 and a \$183 million surplus forecast for 2021 fiscal year.

Now the total revenue with this budget is forecast at \$14.17 billion, up 1 per cent or 141 million from last year's budget, but up \$471 million from our third quarter forecast. Expenses forecast at \$14.8 billion, up 342 million from last year's budget or 2.4 per cent, but down \$183 million from our Q3 [third quarter] forecast.

This year's budget and each year of our four-year medium term forecast also includes a \$300 million contingency to protect against unexpected in-year revenue declines, potential expense pressures due to higher utilization, and unforeseen costs related to natural disasters such as floods and/or forest fires.

Mr. Speaker, as we developed this budget and our four-year fiscal plan we needed to take a hard look at everything we do across government. We needed to ensure the sustainability of high-quality public services and programs, in particular those core services that Saskatchewan people expect and deserve from their government. In those areas, our job as government is clear: to provide the best possible services to Saskatchewan people at the lowest possible cost to taxpayers.

In order to control spending, it was critical to focus on priorities. That means we will continue to fund important public services while at the same time always looking for more cost-effective ways to deliver these services. It also means that in some areas government funding will be reduced, suspended, or eliminated entirely. Those decisions were needed to meet the challenges of controlling spending in this budget and putting Saskatchewan on track to balance the budget within three years.

Mr. Speaker, government currently spends about \$7 billion a year on public sector compensation, so any meaningful effort to reduce spending must include an overall reduction in that area. This budget includes a \$250 million reduction for compensation across the entire public sector, starting in the 2017-18 fiscal year. That's about 3.5 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

On March 7th the Premier announced that our government would start at the top by the Premier, ministers, and MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] taking a 3.5 per cent pay cut. We have been clear: we will not ask our public sector workers to do anything we are not prepared to do ourselves as elected officials. Staff in the Premier's office and ministers' offices will take nine unpaid days off this year, reducing their pay by about 3.5 per cent. The reduction to MLAs' and political staffs' salaries will save about half a million dollars a year, Mr. Speaker. That's a good start, but we must go much further.

We expect the 3.5 per cent compensation savings across government to be achieved through negotiations with the unions that represent in-scope employees. The 3.5 per cent compensation savings will also be required of government's out-of-scope employees. Now there are many ways to achieve these kinds of savings across government, Mr. Speaker, but we are not prescribing any specific measures. Instead, our government is setting a savings target as the funder of public sector compensation. We are hopeful that various employers and their respective bargaining units will work together to achieve these savings through negotiation.

Mr. Speaker, we are announcing in this budget that the Saskatchewan Transportation Company is being wound down by the end of May 2017. Over the past 10 years STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] ridership has declined significantly and costs have gone up. For many years STC has only been able to continue operating with a large annual subsidy from taxpayers and that subsidy has grown every single year. Ten years ago the STC subsidy was \$25 per passenger. Today it is \$94 per passenger. Eighty-five million dollars would have been needed from government to continue operating STC for the next five years. Given other priorities like health care, education, social services, and infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, STC has become simply an unsustainable model.

Our government recently announced the wind-down of executive air service which was used primarily to fly members of cabinet to meetings and functions around the province. Since our government took office we have reduced the use of executive air by 73 per cent, but it no longer makes sense to continue the service, Mr. Speaker. This decision is expected to save up to \$1 million annually for taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, our government thanks the hardworking and professional staff of both STC and executive air for their many

years of dedicated service to the government, but more importantly, Mr. Speaker, to the people of Saskatchewan.

There are other reductions throughout government. In Health some services that were provided by the regions and are available from the private system are being phased out or reduced: The Hearing Aid Plan, podiatry services, orthotics, and equipment to help with sleep apnea. Coverage will continue to be provided by government for low-income residents for those services, however chiropractic services will no longer be covered for anyone.

Long-term care fees will increase to some residents, based on income. About 50 per cent of residents will not be affected and the province will continue to subsidize 83 per cent of the overall cost of long-term care here in the province.

The community rink affordability grant has been suspended. Regional park funding has been reduced by 50 per cent and funding to the Meewasin Valley Authority has been decreased by \$409,000.

There will be a legislative and governance change related to Wascana Centre Authority to strengthen the park. Government is assuming responsibility for Wascana Centre Authority and integrating it into the Provincial Capital Commission. This change will strengthen the park and benefit the capital city and the entire province, Mr. Speaker. The partners, which include the City of Regina, the university, and government, will all continue to have input into decisions.

And while we continue to renew infrastructure in our provincial parks, continue to invest in our arts community, and continue to grow a creative economy, there will be reductions in those areas to help us to meet this financial challenge. Funding to regional libraries is being decreased by \$3.5 million and funding for Regina and Saskatoon public libraries is being eliminated, a reduction of \$1.3 million. And the Saskatchewan advantage grant for education savings or SAGES will be suspended effective January 1, 2018.

Now while government funding has been reduced in all of those areas, it is important to look at the strong funding base we have established across government. Health care, education, and social services and assistance make up about three-quarters of the overall budget. Since 2007, our government has increased funding in those three areas by \$4.4 billion or 72 per cent.

[14:45]

Now health care is our number one priority in spending for this government, Mr. Speaker. This budget invests \$5.6 billion in health care, up \$39 million or point seven per cent from last year. Over the past decade, health funding has grown by almost \$2 billion or 53 per cent. This budget includes a new \$12 million investment to address over-capacity pressures and emergency department wait times in Regina and Saskatoon, as well as \$24.4 million to address services pressures and operating costs in those health regions. This budget also commits \$83.7 million for health capital, up 12.3 million or 17 per cent compared to last year.

The Saskatchewan Cancer Agency will also receive more than

\$170 million, a \$3.3 million increase in funding, to provide treatment to more cancer patients. The health budget includes 3.4 billion in funding for regional health authorities. This is an increase of 1.2 per cent over last year and 58 per cent more than the RHA [regional health authority] allocation in 2007.

Now health system transformation and the shift to a single provincial health authority will support our government's efforts to meet the challenges our province is facing. Savings of between 10 million and \$20 million will be gained over time through reduced administration and increased efficiencies beginning in 2018. But the true value is that the change is driven by our government's commitment to improve front-line care for the people of Saskatchewan.

Now total funding, total education funding, Mr. Speaker, including pre-kindergarten to grade 12 and post-secondary education, is budgeted at \$3.6 billion, down 45 million or 1.2 per cent from last year. Our government continues to invest in student success in the pre-K [pre-kindergarten] to grade 12 system by providing more than \$2 billion for the education of our young people. That's 6.7 per cent less than last year, but much of this decrease is due to a \$262 million decrease in funding for 18 new joint-use schools in nine locations in Regina, Saskatoon, Warman, and Martensville. And what is the reason for that funding decrease, Mr. Speaker? It's because construction of these 18 new schools will be completed 100 days from today, and those 18 new schools will be open to students this fall.

In addition, there is \$2.1 million in this budget to begin planning for two new school projects in Rosthern and Weyburn. This budget provides Saskatchewan's 28 school divisions with \$1.86 billion in school operating funding. In addition, this budget provides nearly \$56 million in child care funding, providing for 889 new spaces to be created across the province. This will bring the total number of new child care spaces created in the past 10 years to more than 6,500.

Earlier today our government received and released the final report from the panel on education governance renewal. I'm pleased to advise, Mr. Speaker, that we accept all of the recommendations in the report. This means we are keeping elected school boards in Saskatchewan, and there will be no major school division boundary changes. Legislative changes will be made in the coming year to clarify roles within the education sector and create efficiencies. We will also find ways to better engage with First Nations and Métis on education.

There was also a clear message in that report, Mr. Speaker, that more must be done to control spending in the education sector. As a result, our government will introduce amendments to *The Education Act* that will create a framework for shared services and consistency in areas such as procurement, busing, payroll, and the salary range for school division administrators and elected trustees.

Mr. Speaker, this budget also continues to invest in our post-secondary students. High school graduates from Saskatchewan will continue to receive \$500 per year off their tuition for up to four years through the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship, and post-secondary graduates will continue to get their costs back through the graduate retention

program, which provides up to \$20,000 in income tax credits to graduates who live and work in Saskatchewan. Post-secondary students will also continue to benefit from more than \$46 million in key financial supports.

Mr. Speaker, over the past decade our government has invested \$8.3 billion in post-secondary institutions and student supports. However, in recognition of the fiscal challenges facing the province, overall spending at the Ministry of Advanced Education in this year's budget will be reduced by \$44 million or 5.8 per cent. Post-secondary institutions will receive a 5 per cent reduction, \$30 million in total in base operational funding.

Despite this reduction, this budget continues to provide strong support for Saskatchewan's post-secondary institutions, with \$649 million in operating and capital funding. And starting in August, students applying for loans will access upfront provincial grants targeted to those students who need it the most. When combined with the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship and federal grants, the new system will cover most, in some cases all, of a lower income undergraduate student's complete tuition costs. The new, more transparent system will let students know how much they can borrow for their education and how much they can expect to receive in grants.

Social services and assistance funding is expected to be \$1.4 billion in this budget, Mr. Speaker, an increase of \$113 million or 9 per cent over last year, a record amount. In the past decade, funding in this area has grown by more than \$450 million or 51 per cent. This level of funding demonstrates our government's commitment to supporting at-risk children and families, people with disabilities, seniors, and low-income people.

This budget increases funding for disability programs by \$2.3 million to more than 209 million. This increase will support individuals with intellectual disabilities to participate in their communities. An overall increase of more than \$67 million for income assistance will help address larger caseloads and more complex cases.

This budget also provides increased funding for the seniors' income plan, the personal care home benefit, and the Saskatchewan employment supplement. We are continuing to invest in our current income assistance programs to meet the needs of Saskatchewan people. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we recognize that these programs are outdated and at times overly complex. We need a new program that's simpler for clients and workers, that focuses on the basic needs of our most vulnerable people, and it is sustainable for the future. Work is well under way on an income assistance redesign that will transform our current programs and help us achieve these goals.

Now social services' budget also includes some reductions. The first home plan for recent graduates will be suspended, saving \$8 million. Changes will also be made to some benefits in the transitional employment allowance, the Saskatchewan assistance program, and the Saskatchewan assured income for disability program, saving 10.6 million.

Our goal is to focus our resources on helping those who have no other means of support. The changes we are making this year in social services will help us to meet the basic needs of a growing number of people while we transform income assistance to

better support those in greatest need.

Mr. Speaker, while three-quarters of every tax dollar will continue to be spent on health care, social services, and education, this budget funds important programs and services in other areas as well. Investing in infrastructure continues to be a priority for our government. Overall this budget includes \$3.7 billion for investment in Saskatchewan infrastructure. In addition to providing much needed highways, hospitals, schools, and bridges for our growing population, capital projects create well-paying construction jobs here in the province, which helps keep our economy strong.

In this budget, 1.6 billion is being invested in infrastructure by government ministries and agencies, and our commercial Crown sector is investing 2.1 billion. This year's 1.1 billion allocation to the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure constitutes the second-largest highways budget in Saskatchewan's history. This level of funding demonstrates our government's commitment to provide infrastructure that grows our economy and improves safety for all Saskatchewan people.

This year's budget includes \$500 million for the Regina bypass and 343 million to start or continue construction on other transportation projects across the province. This budget also invests more than \$53 million to build, operate, and maintain highways and airports in northern Saskatchewan, as well as more than 20 million for urban and rural municipal road projects and airports.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that there is still more work to be done, but our government's record is clear. With this year's budget, we've now invested more than \$7.4 billion to improve more than 12 000 kilometres of roads and highways in our province.

Major Crown projects in the coming fiscal year include \$1.3 billion at SaskPower, primarily to renew distribution and transmission systems along with expansion and renewal of electricity generation assets to meet customers' growing power needs. Investment of \$302 million is projected at SaskTel to increase and upgrade its wireless and wire line networks, improve customer service through network growth and modernization, and continue the rollout of Infinet, its high bandwidth broadband service. SaskEnergy is forecast to spend \$292 million to ensure safe and reliable service that meets continually growing customer demand. And SaskWater plans to invest \$81 million in 2017-18 to address aging infrastructure and customer growth.

Mr. Speaker, capital spending in this province is up dramatically since our Premier and this government took office in late 2007. Annual private and public capital investment has increased by nearly 75 per cent in Saskatchewan. We've gone from annual capital investment of 8.3 billion in 2007 to 14.5 billion forecast this year. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the total capital investment in private and public projects in Saskatchewan since our government was elected in 2007 to the end of this year will be \$158 billion.

That massive capital investment by both government and the private sector is a tremendous vote of confidence in the future of our province.



Mr. Speaker, this budget maintains the municipal revenue-sharing formula introduced by our government shortly after taking office to address the long-standing underfunding of municipalities by the previous government. This year Saskatchewan municipalities will receive almost \$258 million in revenue sharing, more than double what they received a decade ago, based on our formula of one point of PST [provincial sales tax] revenue from 2015-16.

But at the same time, Mr. Speaker, we are asking municipalities to share in our efforts to meet the current financial challenge. This budget will discontinue SaskPower and SaskEnergy's grants in lieu of taxes to municipalities. Because this change disproportionately impacts the city of Regina, measures will be taken to mitigate that impact.

Mr. Speaker, one area where our government has heard concern in recent months, up to as recently as last week's SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention, is the need to reduce crime, particularly property crime in rural and remote areas. That is why we have allocated \$1 million for initiatives to respond to the recommendations of the caucus committee on crime reduction. This report will be released in the coming weeks, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, our government made every effort to control and reduce spending while still providing the level and quality of government services that Saskatchewan people expect and deserve. But those efforts alone were not enough to deal with the resource revenue shortfall. We still needed to reduce our reliance on resource revenues. We needed to expand the tax base, but to do so in a way that maintains our Saskatchewan advantage.

As a matter of fact, the 1999 Saskatchewan personal income tax review said that income taxes have a greater negative effect on the economy than consumption taxes, and reducing personal income tax rates while increasing consumption taxes would achieve economic efficiency and growth. That makes sense, Mr. Speaker, and that is the approach we have taken.

So while some taxes will increase, there are also gradual reductions to income taxes for every Saskatchewan taxpayer in support of our government's plan for growth. Mr. Speaker, in this budget, effective midnight tonight, provincial sales tax is being raised by one point, from 5 to 6 per cent, to help meet the current financial challenge. Saskatchewan will continue to have the lowest provincial sales tax rate in Canada amongst provinces that have a provincial sales tax.

The PST base is also being expanded, effective April 1st, by eliminating or reducing a number of exemptions to provide greater revenue stability. The PST will now be applied to children's clothing, restaurant meals and snack foods, insurance premiums, construction services, and permanently mounted equipment used in the resource sector.

The exemption for used cars will continue but the value of a trade-in will no longer be deductible in determining the PST on the purchase of a new vehicle. However, Mr. Speaker, the exemptions for basic necessities including groceries, heating fuels, residential electricity, prescription drugs, and reading materials will continue.

[15:00]

Mr. Speaker, as we shift our tax base toward a greater reliance on consumption taxes, we will reduce taxes on income and productivity. This budget lowers all three Saskatchewan income tax rates by a half point on July 1, 2017 and by another half point on July 1, 2019. And for those individuals and families whose income is below the level where they pay income tax in the province, the Saskatchewan low-income tax credit will be enhanced by \$100 per adult and \$40 per child. Mr. Speaker, that means that every Saskatchewan taxpayer at every income level will see a decrease in their income tax rate and those whose income is too low to pay income tax will see an increase in the low-income tax credit they receive.

Mr. Speaker, it's worth remembering that since 2007, this government has delivered the largest tax reductions in Saskatchewan history and removed 112,000 low-income residents from the income tax rolls altogether. Even with this PST increase, every Saskatchewan resident at every level of income will still be paying significantly less in income tax and PST combined than they did in 2007 under the previous government. A single person with \$40,000 income will pay \$749, or 20 per cent less in taxes in 2007 . . . than in 2007, while a family of four with \$50,000 family income will pay \$2,366, or 77 per cent less than they did in 2007.

Mr. Speaker, this budget also lowers the general corporate income tax rate by a half point on July 1, 2017 and by another half point on July 1, 2019 to 11 per cent, from 12 to 11, while maintaining our manufacturing and processing tax rate reduction as well. When these changes are fully implemented, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan will have the lowest corporate tax rate and the lowest tax rate on manufacturing and processing in the entire country, giving Saskatchewan a tremendous advantage to attract new business investment and jobs to our province.

In addition, in this budget we are following through on our election commitment to introduce North America's first tax incentive for patents. The new Saskatchewan commercial innovation incentive will reduce the corporate income tax rate to 6 per cent on taxable income earned from the commercialization of patents and qualifying intellectual property. This incentive will be provided to companies that contribute substantially through job creation and new investment to economic development here in Saskatchewan. The incentive will provide a lower tax rate for a period of 10 years. Companies will be able to extend the benefit period to 15 years if the qualifying intellectual property was substantially developed here in the province. It's another Saskatchewan advantage that will attract investment, opportunity, and jobs to our province, Mr. Speaker.

This budget also reforms the research and development tax credit to better target smaller and medium-sized Saskatchewan innovation companies. And the oil processing investment incentive encourages processing of our oil resources in the province with royalty credits on new production.

There are a number of other revenue measures in this year's budget, Mr. Speaker. Effective April 1, the current partial fuel tax exemption for bulk purchases of gasoline is eliminated, and

the exemption for bulk purchases of diesel fuel is being reduced to 80 per cent of purchases. As well there will be changes to the labour-sponsored venture capital tax program in 2018.

The budget also eliminates the employees' tools tax credit, effective for the 2017 taxation year, and education and tuition tax credits effective July 1 of this year. Unused education and tuition amounts carried forward from previous years can still be claimed, but new credits cannot be earned after June 30th.

The annual indexation of personal income tax system is being suspended starting with the 2018 tax year. And effective midnight tonight, tobacco tax rates will increase by 2 cents per cigarette, from 25 cents to 27 cents with corresponding increases for cut tobacco. Effective April 1, wholesale liquor markups will go up across the board by between 4 and 6.8 per cent.

Prior to 2013, Mr. Speaker, credit unions received preferential federal and provincial corporate income tax treatment by way of a lower tax on a portion of their income. In 2013, the federal government began a five-year phase-out of its preferential tax treatment. This budget begins the phase-out of the preferential provincial tax treatment over four years, beginning in 2017, for credit unions. This budget also raises the corporation capital tax rate on financial institutions from 3.25 per cent to 4 per cent, effective April 1.

The budget also sets out the education property tax mill rates for 2017. Mill rates for all classes of property have been lowered. However, because of reassessment and increased property values across the province, actual tax revenue collected through education property tax will increase by about 9.8 per cent.

The EPT [education property tax] change for each specific property will vary based on the reassessed value of that property. The education property tax system was redesigned and property taxes were lowered significantly in 2009. As part of that redesign, the government committed to a 60/40 split for the funding of education — 60 per cent coming from the government grants and 40 per cent from EPT. In recent years, education property tax has remained unchanged while education costs have continued to increase. This budget restores that 60/40 balance.

In total, Mr. Speaker, measures being taken this year will add a projected \$900 million in incremental tax revenue, significantly decreasing the province's reliance on resource revenues to fund government services. When taken as a whole, the impact of these measures on real GDP [gross domestic product] on our economy is minimal. The negative impact of the tax measures is largely offset by the positive economic impact of the income tax reductions combined with government spending, including ongoing investment into infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, at a time when resource sector challenges remain, there are signs of confidence and renewal in our economy. A few weeks ago Saskatchewan was named the best place in the world to invest in mining. Number one in the world, Mr. Speaker, up from number two ranking just last year. Competitive tax regimes, efficient permitting procedures, and certainty surrounding environmental regulations and land

claims were among the reasons for our province's top rating. As a government, we're doing everything we can to encourage industry and ensure we are competitive and friendly to investment in mining and in all the other sectors of our economy.

Our agriculture industry has also become a big part of Saskatchewan's economic success story. Even with the late harvest and significant amount of crop left in the field from last year, Saskatchewan producers took off the second-largest crop in our history, more than 35 million tonnes. Crop production has surpassed 30 million tonnes for four consecutive years as ag exports have doubled over the past decade.

And our province continues to grow. When our government was first elected, even before we were elected, we set a goal of growing Saskatchewan's population by 100,000 people in 10 years, Mr. Speaker. It was a goal that was called impossible by some. 2017 marks our government's 10th year in office and our population has grown by over 160,000 people in the past 10 years.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we are tabling a plan to ensure that that growth continues. The challenge we are facing is clear. In 2014-15 our province received \$2.6 billion in resource revenue. Just two years later in 2016-17, falling resource prices have cut that amount in half to just 1.3 billion. Our projections show that resource revenue will remain at about the same level in the coming year. That's a \$1.3 billion hole in our budget at a time that our province's population and demands on government services continue to grow. That's a challenge. How do you close a \$1.3 billion gap while ensuring Saskatchewan's economy remains strong and our province continues to grow? There was no quick fix or easy solution, Mr. Speaker.

This budget meets the challenge by taking a number of significant measures, including some difficult but necessary measures on both the revenue and the spending side. We know that moving too far too fast could jeopardize the economic strength of our province, so this budget will meet the challenge by returning to balance over three years.

On the spending side, we have made decisions about the size and the role of government in order to ensure that important government services are affordable and sustainable in the long run.

On the revenue side, this budget represents a fundamental shift in our tax system toward consumption, but away from income and productivity, and away from our reliance on resource revenues. So while this budget does include an increase to the PST, it also delivers an income tax reduction for every Saskatchewan income tax payer at every income level. This fundamental change in our tax system will help close the revenue gap while at the same time keeping our economy strong.

It is important that we return to balanced budgets, Mr. Speaker. And it is important that we continue to ensure a strong and growing economy. Mr. Speaker, this budget will meet that challenge and will keep Saskatchewan strong. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Hon. Mr. Doherty:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Moosomin:

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

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance, seconded by the member from Moosomin:

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

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

**Ms. Sproule:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well here we are. After months of the Sask Party hiding the state of the finances, dropping hints, and floating trial balloons, their budget has finally been released. And on every page there's another broken Sask Party promise, a tax hike, or a cut that will hurt Saskatchewan families trying to get ahead.

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party has forgotten who they're working for. This is the budget of an arrogant government that learned nothing from a decade of wasting Saskatchewan people's hard-earned money. They blew through the savings and racked up massive deficit after deficit, on and on — 6 out of 10 deficits, Mr. Speaker. With their scandals, they arrogantly and recklessly spent the people of Saskatchewan's money, and now it's those people, families, and workers that are being forced to pay for this government's mismanagement, scandal, and waste.

To sum it up, the Sask Party have once again failed Saskatchewan people. They said they would cut the debt. Well there's a projected debt of \$18 billion, Mr. Speaker. They have managed to double the debt since 2013. That's four years. It's unbelievable, Mr. Speaker.

Over and over again the Sask Party has promised to not raise taxes. Well there's a billion dollars worth of tax increases here in this budget, Mr. Speaker. On top of an increase to the PST, everything from power bills to children's clothes, restaurants, fishing licences, and even a case of beer will cost the people of Saskatchewan more.

The only people coming out on top will be Saskatchewan's wealthy and well-connected, who will get a \$38 million tax break. They're also giving a break to the biggest Saskatchewan corporations.

And, Mr. Speaker, families got cuts too. The Sask Party gave them cuts to parks, cuts to health care, cuts to the STC, which people across the province depend on for travelling, accessing medical appointments, and shipping important packages.

Mr. Speaker, less than a year ago, the then-minister responsible said STC is a needed service and it was safe from a sale. Now they're scrapping it and throwing those workers onto the unemployment lines, all out of the blue and without asking permission of the owners, Saskatchewan people. Mr. Speaker, this is a bad sign for our other Crowns like SaskTel.

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party has things so backwards in this budget that instead of stimulating the economy, they're actually starving it. They've cut \$1.3 billion out of the economy, and they aren't investing enough in renewable energy, and they aren't investing enough in diversifying the economy. And they're actually punishing economy stimulators like the construction industry.

Now, Mr. Speaker, maybe the Finance minister and the Premier remember their days as staffers, those days full of excess and waste, those days of buckets of fun for insiders. But they apparently forgot how it all ended. And they forgot that after the dust settled on their mismanagement, all of their scandal, and of course their waste, another government came in and had to clean up the mess.

Mr. Speaker, maybe the Sask Party didn't expect a third term. It's the only thing that makes any sense because this government had a decade of record resource revenues, and they drained \$2 billion from the rainy day fund and billions in surpluses left from the former government. Mr. Speaker, they blew it all in the sunniest times, during some of the best years this province has ever, ever seen. And they spent every single dollar that came in, and billions more. Mr. Speaker, that's the terrible financial management that has become a hallmark of this government, mismanagement like their \$1.5 billion carbon capture boondoggle that has led to four separate rate hikes in just the last two years. Families are paying \$120 more just to keep their lights on.

[15:15]

Scandal like the Sask Party's GTH scandal and the Regina bypass that has ballooned to nearly \$2 billion from an original cost of \$400 million. Just imagine, Mr. Speaker, just imagine if the Sask Party had decided not to blow over \$2 billion in waste on those two projects alone. But then, Mr. Speaker, maybe their friends may not have liked that. And that might be why they are now refusing to make any changes to our outdated campaign finance laws.

You see, the Sask Party's all too keen to allow out-of-province corporations to hand over millions in dollars in donations. And until recently, the Sask Party had no problem attacking Saskatchewan workers with threats of wage reductions while their leader took half a million dollars in top-ups from large corporations and out-of-province donors. Mr. Speaker, these practices fly in the face of democracy, and they raise very serious questions about just who this government is looking out for in the midst of all these cuts.

Mr. Speaker, not long ago that Finance minister stood in this House and told us that they would balance the books. He told the people of Saskatchewan not to worry. He said they wouldn't have to make cuts. He said they wouldn't have to raise fees or taxes. And, Mr. Speaker, every single one of them campaigned on those same promises. But then, just after last year's election, they changed their tune and they revealed that there was a \$400 million deficit. And then just a few months later, that number grew to 800 million, and then it was over a billion.

Now while the Sask Party's been letting the deficit grow, they've been leaving Saskatchewan people behind. Close to

40,000 people are out of work, twice as many as when they came into government. Mr. Speaker, instead of investing in job training, post-secondary education, and stimulating the economy, they have cut it all. And in this budget they are making the same mistakes all over again.

Mr. Speaker, bankruptcies are still on the rise. Jobs are being lost from health care, education, and from both the public and the private sectors. Now the Sask Party has blamed these job numbers on low commodity prices, but year after year during this downturn they have stood idle and refused to diversify our economy. They did nothing to create jobs and put Saskatchewan people back to work. In fact, instead of getting to work, the Sask Party has been throwing around phrases like “transformational change” and “everything’s on the table.” Well their cuts have meant that teachers have been fired, health care workers have been fired, and now they’ve even fired the janitors that work in this building.

This is a government that after promising they would not sell off our Crowns, they openly mused for months about selling SaskTel. And then once they realized that there was no way they could ever win a referendum, they then introduce a bill that would allow them to sell off 49 per cent of SaskTel and each of our other Crowns.

Mr. Speaker, today we see they didn’t even want to wait for that bill to unilaterally shut down STC. Mr. Speaker, it’s unacceptable, and it’s wrong for this government to think that they can take the Crowns that belong to everyone and just take them away and wind them down or sell them off without talking to the owners, all of Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that loves to cut before they figure out what the real impacts will be. We saw that when they announced that they would be cutting health regions. The minister couldn’t even tell us how much money the cuts would save, and the Sask Party also didn’t know how much money they were saving when they callously cut funding to the province’s most vulnerable by slashing the SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] program. And now they’re doing the same thing again with the cuts in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, they don’t know the full impact of raising the costs of children’s clothes and restaurant food by 6 per cent. And they don’t really know what, if anything, will be gained by throwing away over \$200 million in tax breaks for corporations. Ready, shoot, aim. Mr. Speaker, they’re gambling with the day-to-day lives of Saskatchewan people and the future of our province.

Now Mr. Speaker, they act like taking a 3.5 per cent pay cut on MLA pay just so they can use it as an excuse to cut the pay of Saskatchewan workers by the same amount is somehow leadership. Well Mr. Speaker, let me tell you, cutting 3.5 per cent of a minister making \$145,000 a year is much different than cutting 3.5 per cent of a teacher’s aid making \$24,000 a year. That’s not leadership, Mr. Speaker. It’s unacceptable.

Now real leadership would be for the Finance minister and the rest of cabinet to admit that this deficit is their fault. Real leadership would be for cabinet to apologize to the people of

Saskatchewan and to agree to cut their pay by 20 per cent and to commit to reducing the number of MLAs in this Assembly.

And Mr. Speaker, a first step to real leadership would be to finally enact the legislation that they promised Saskatchewan people: balanced budget legislation that is necessary because they scrapped the growth and financial security fund Act. Mr. Speaker, they scrapped the legislation in a clear move to avoid accountability. They drained the rainy day fund, and then they violated that Act by running a series of deficits. But instead of accepting any responsibility for breaking the law, they just threw the law out. Mr. Speaker, in yet another story of a promise broken, they committed to have a new law in place by last fall. They promised they would hold themselves accountable, but after looking at this budget, Mr. Speaker, it’s clear that they have learned nothing.

How can Saskatchewan people trust a government that goes back on their contracts with teachers, that cuts funding to our kids’ classrooms, and continues to threaten to take local voices away from education? How can we trust a government that cuts health care, plows ahead with desperate sell-offs, and cuts supports to the province’s most vulnerable?

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that has spent the past year hiding the true state of the finances from the Saskatchewan people. How can we trust a government that hid in their budget an attack on our cities, a cut of tens of millions of dollars in grants in lieu of payments by public utilities? It punishes our communities, and it will hurt Saskatchewan families.

Mr. Speaker, this budget, with its skyrocketing debt, massive tax hikes, callous cuts, and lack of strategic investment leaves too many behind and does nothing to build hope in the future. This isn’t the budget that Saskatchewan people and their families want, and it certainly isn’t the budget they need.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge Sask Party members to finally look in the mirror. Take some responsibility and stop making Saskatchewan people and their families pay the price for the Sask Party’s mismanagement, scandal, and waste. Mr. Speaker, I always hold out hope for members opposite, that some might rise in their place and share with us what they are really hearing from their constituents. But at this point I would like to move that this debate now be adjourned.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

### Resumption of Budget Debate

**Hon. Mr. Merriman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to move the following motion:

That the debate on the motion “That the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government” be resumed on Thursday, March 23rd, 2017.

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

That the debate on the motion “That the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government” be resumed on Thursday, March 23rd, 2017.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

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

**The Speaker:** — Before I place the question on adjournment, I would like first to thank all of our guests that came here today and for everyone for following the rules of the Assembly. And now I would like to extend the invitation to our guests to join the members for tea in the Legislative Library, which is right outside the main doors to your right, or in room 218, out the doors and to your left.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried. This House is now adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 15:25.]



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**Premier**

**President of the Executive Council**  
**Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs**

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

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

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**Hon. Dustin Duncan**  
Minister of Energy and Resources  
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated  
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan  
Telecommunications

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**Hon. Joe Hargrave**  
Minister of Crown Investments  
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan  
Government Insurance  
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Transportation Company

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Minister of Government Relations  
Minister Responsible for First Nations,  
Métis and Northern Affairs

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Liquor and Gaming Authority  
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Transportation Hub Authority  
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