



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

of the

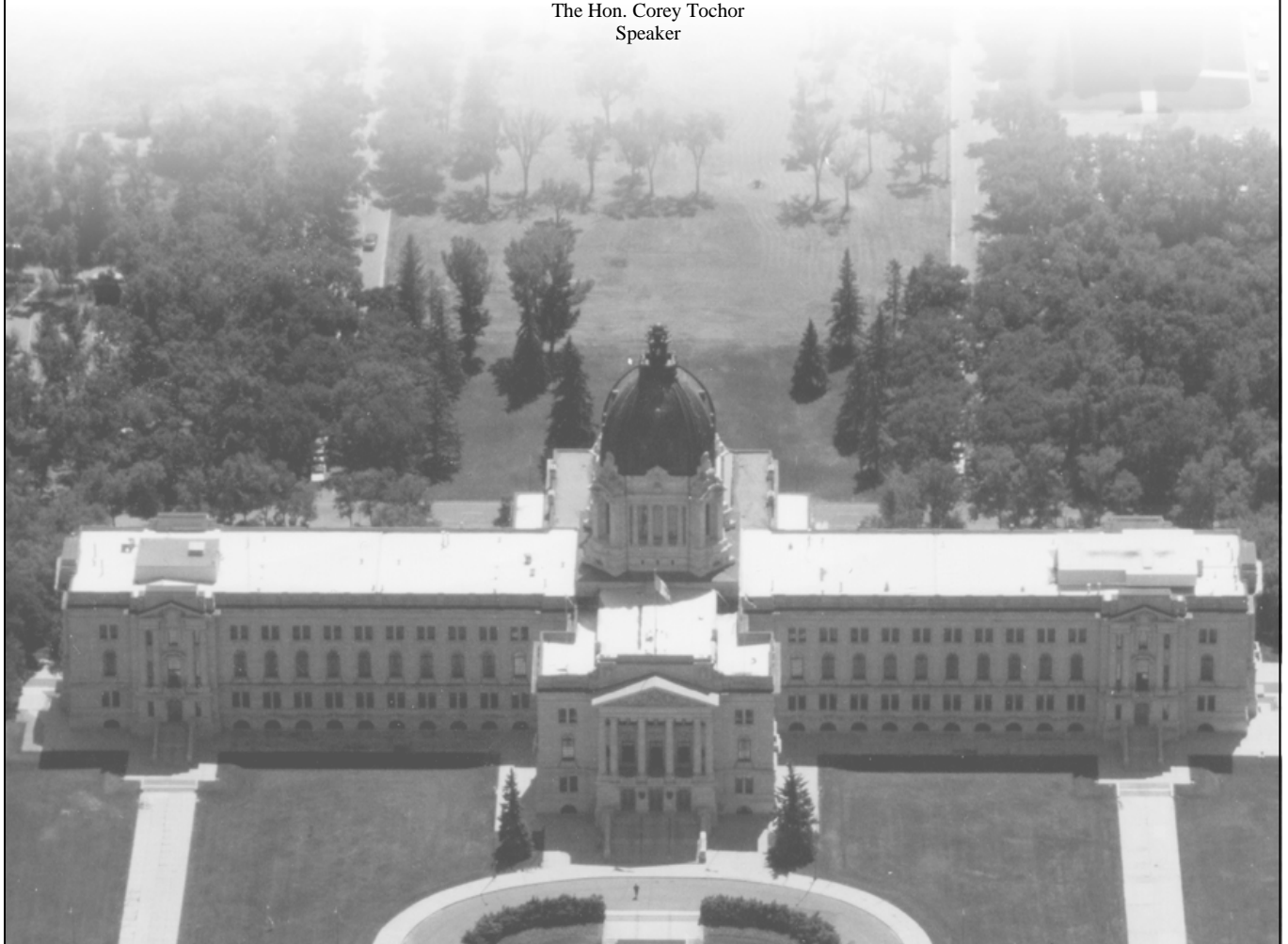
**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

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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)

**Heppner**, Nancy — Martensville-Warman (SP)

**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)

**Reiter**, Hon. Jim — Rosetown-Elrose (SP)

**Ross**, Laura — Regina Rochdale (SP)

**Sarauer**, Nicole — Regina Douglas Park (NDP)

**Sproule**, Cathy — Saskatoon Nutana (NDP)

**Steele**, Doug — Cypress Hills (SP)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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**Party Standings:** Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 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 Buriandyk

**Sergeant-at-Arms** — Terry Quinn

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[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, I would request leave of the House for an extended introduction.

**The Speaker:** — Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to colleagues in the House for the opportunity to make a very special introduction. Seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to be able to introduce to you and through you someone who's no stranger to members of this Assembly. He is the province of Saskatchewan's chief of protocol, Jason Quilliam, and he's accompanied today by his wife, Candyce, and his son Cade. Mr. Speaker, we recognize Jason today as he prepares to take an eight-month leave of absence from his government duties to serve with the United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Speaker, Jason has been a member of the Canadian Armed Forces and the Canadian Army reserve for nearly 20 years. His service includes two tours of duty in Afghanistan, where he was a military police officer. Since 2011 Jason has been a member of the army reserves in Saskatchewan. He's presently the officer commanding 16 Service Company, a subunit of 38 Service Battalion. In that role, he's responsible for training soldiers for combat support operations. And, Mr. Speaker, Jason attends to his duties in the reserves one night every week and one weekend every month, even as he is serving in an exemplary way as the chief of protocol for our province.

Mr. Speaker, this is Jason's first peacekeeping mission. He'll be among nine Canadians on the mission serving at forward headquarters in the city of Goma as deputy chief of staff for the operations coordinator. The mission involves 16,000 troops from 50 countries, and it is vitally important. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has long been afflicted by conflict and by violence, and just a couple of days ago, the United Nations warned that the security situation is deteriorating. The war-weary part of our world where Jason has volunteered to go in an effort to provide . . . to bring peace to that country and to those people.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say that Canadians deeply and greatly appreciate the service of those best among us who are prepared to serve in this way. And it is a matter of great pride for every member in this Assembly and for all of Jason's colleagues across the public service and the Government of Saskatchewan, that he has made this decision, that he is volunteering for this eight-month leave to go to Congo.

Mr. Speaker, a Greek historian once said the secret of happiness is freedom and the secret of freedom is courage. We are grateful for Jason's courage today, and our thoughts are with him and Candyce and with Cade. I'd ask all members to welcome this family to their Legislative Assembly.

**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 and to welcome our chief of protocol, Jason Quilliam, to his Assembly, along with his family Candyce and Cade, I believe, here today.

And on behalf of a grateful opposition, on behalf of a grateful province, I join the words of the Premier to thank you for your service and sacrifice. This is an extraordinary commitment that you are taking on, the leave that you're embarking on. And the mission you're embarking on is an incredibly important one. You're a proud member for many, many years of the Canadian Forces, and the service and sacrifice that you demonstrate is something that we're all thankful for.

It's also worthy to note that, as you depart and as you take this voluntary leave and as you place yourself at risk for the benefit of others, there's an enormous service and sacrifice and an enormous weight that is on the shoulders of your family. And we thank Candyce and we thank Cade for sharing you with this mission. And we wish you health. We wish you security. We offer our sincerest thanks for your courage and for your commitment, and we recognize the commitment of your entire family.

So on behalf of a grateful opposition, a grateful province, we wish you safety and best wishes and thanks on this journey. A safe return and looking forward to your return again and your leadership as chief of protocol. Thank you, Jason.

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

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd request leave for an extended introduction.

**The Speaker:** — Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This week Saskatchewan and specifically Regina has welcomed some of the biggest names in the Canadian Football League for CFL Week. Seated in the gallery we have a number of accomplished athletes and representatives of the Canadian Football League Players Association, the CFLPA. By accomplished, I mean every one of these current and former athletes seated in the gallery today are Grey Cup champions. These gentlemen are here in Regina participating in a number of public events with fans and taking part in some important meetings and discussions, one of which the government will be honoured to host today.

Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, I'd like to introduce some of the CFL's very best, and the president, the vice-president, and executive director of the CFLPA. Seated in the gallery is Chris Getzlaf. Chris's is a familiar name to all of us. He is a former Saskatchewan Roughrider who is currently playing slotback for the Edmonton Eskimos. Chris played a major role in the Riders' Grey Cup championship in 2013, and he was named the Grey Cup's Most Outstanding Canadian that year. Born and raised right here in Regina, along with his NHL [National Hockey League] hockey-playing brother, Ryan, Chris, we're glad to have you home, and we welcome you here today.

Next I'd like to introduce Mike Reilly. Mike is the quarterback for the Edmonton Eskimos. In 2015 the Eskimos were the Grey Cup champions and Mike was named Grey Cup's most valuable player that year. Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to introduce to you, seated in the gallery, Mr. Nik Lewis. Nik is a slotback with the Montreal Alouettes. He was a two-time Grey Cup champion with the Stampeders, winning the cup in 2008 and 2014.

The Premier said to me that it might be a career-limiting move to introduce Nik here. He said rather we should maybe have him forcibly removed from the Chamber for what he's done to the Saskatchewan Roughriders, but it would take two very big security guards or a couple of members to help along to do that, so maybe we won't.

As I mentioned earlier, we have President Jeff Keeping, Vice President Keon Raymond, and Executive Director Brian Ramsay of the Canadian Football League Players Association. On the field, Jeff was an offensive lineman with the Winnipeg Blue Bombers, and a Grey Cup champion with the 2012 Toronto Argonauts. Keon is a former Calgary Stampeders, and in fact he and Nik were both Grey Cup champions with the Stampeders in 2008 and 2014. And Brian is a former Edmonton Eskimo and 2015 Grey Cup champion.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina Gardiner Park, our own Grey Cup champion, and I will be meeting with the players and Jeff and Keon and Brian to discuss a player-centred approach to education and awareness of concussions in contact sports. Take Me Out, Coach, My Head Hurts is an initiative that aims to directly engage young athletes and empower them to overcome pressures to stay in the game when hurt. Through the development of training and workshops, this program will provide tools to young players that provide them with confidence to be advocates for their own health and safety. I look forward to our discussions later today and I applaud the work of the Canadian Football League Players Association in doing so as far as concussions and awareness for our youth go.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in welcoming these CFL athletes and members of the CFLPA to the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly this morning. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A very nice introduction by the minister. I'd like to join with the minister opposite and welcome these CFL players, these leaders within their sport to the Saskatchewan legislature, to Rider nation, Mr.

Speaker, where green is the colour, Mr. Speaker. Maybe a career-limiting move, I would agree, in making some of these introductions, but there is no shame in introducing the pride of Regina, pride of Saskatchewan, Chris Getzlaf, to his Assembly, a true champion on all fronts, someone that we've certainly all cheered for on the field and somebody who's given back to this community and to this province along with his family on many other fronts as well.

To, you know, Nik Lewis and to, you know, Mike Reilly, we wish you good times here in Saskatchewan here for this brief stay. We wish you interceptions and dropped balls and fumbles in the months to follow.

It's really special to have the CFLPA in Regina, in the heart of Rider nation, for the meetings that you're conducting. And it's really important to recognize the important leadership that you're taking, on the field and off the field. And the work around concussions is incredibly important. As someone with a two-year old boy, you know, we play football. We play hockey. We like all these things. I really value what you're doing as well in making sure that we're approaching sport in the safest way that we can. So thank you for being here.

It's exciting this time of year. You know, the snow's melting. Spring camps are getting ready to be fired up. All across our province people are getting geared up for Rider training camp. And it's a pleasure to have you here. We wish you well, except for when you're here on home turf. And thanks for being here in our Assembly here today.

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

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, in your gallery a good friend of mine from Saskatoon, Kirby Christensen, has joined us today. Kirby is a successful contractor in the city of Saskatoon. But more to the point, Mr. Speaker, he's a mechanic, and so I spend an inordinate amount of time in Kirby's shop working on my various cars. Truth be known, Mr. Speaker, it's usually Kirby that's doing most of the work, but I have learned a lot from him over the last number of years, Mr. Speaker. So I know he's come to enjoy the proceedings and view the proceedings here today, Mr. Speaker, so I'd ask everyone to join me in welcoming Kirby to his legislature.

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

**Ms. Young:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to introduce a couple of guests and friends of mine seated in your gallery: the mayor of the city of Lloydminster, Mr. Gerald Aalbers, and his lovely and very supportive wife, Christine.

Mayor Aalbers was just recently elected as our mayor in the November 2016 municipal elections, beating out two other candidates. Gerald and Christine and their family have been long-time members of the city of Lloydminster and have a great understanding of the unique challenges a bi-provincial community like Lloydminster encounters. And I am very confident, Mr. Speaker, that through his great leadership, tenacity for getting things done, and his commitment for doing

what is in the best interests of the citizens of Lloydminster, that we will continue to show growth and prosperity in our community.

On just a little side note, I understand that the Premier and the mayor are acquainted from days long ago when they were both students in res at the university here, and working jobs in Lloydminster . . . or in Regina. So I ask all members to join me in welcoming Christine and the mayor to their Legislative Assembly.

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

**Ms. Rancourt:** — I am asking for a leave for extended introduction.

**The Speaker:** — Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all I also want to welcome the mayor of Lloydminster here and his wife Christine. It's nice to see you here. I met the mayor at the mayor's meeting that we had a few months ago and we talked about some of the challenges that Lloydminster has as a city in our province, and a border city. And it's going to be really good and interesting to have those discussions together and work together to make sure Lloydminster prospers. So thank you and welcome for being here.

[10:15]

I also have a few other guests that I'd like to introduce, Mr. Speaker. I have a few friends from Prince Albert here, and the first one I'll introduce is Troy Parenteau. Troy is a wonderful teacher. He's a kindergarten teacher, and he has 40 little ones that he takes care of day to day. So I have to believe that he has to be one of the most patient people that I know because I know I can't handle more than two at a time.

But also Troy is very passionate about his Métis culture. Troy teaches jigging to a variety of youth in Prince Albert, and he brings them around to different competitions. He also does exceptional beading work, and I have some of his art on display in my office. And so he's very talented and extremely motivated, and he's always available if you need a helping hand. And so thank you, Troy for, you know, sharing your Métis culture to the kids in Prince Albert. We really appreciate that.

I also have Zach Nelson here, Mr. Speaker. Zach is a young man with an old soul. And when Zach graduated, his class said that he would be the most likely to move into a seniors' complex shortly after graduation. And I believe that's true, you know, Mr. Speaker, because Zach has a love for curling and playing cards and baking and of course, politics. And so he fits in really well when he goes and visits some of the seniors in the seniors' complex.

But Zach also is very passionate about human rights and

protecting the most vulnerable, and so he's a great asset to have as a casual worker in my office. And I really appreciate everything he does for our community as well.

I also have my constituency assistant here, Mr. Speaker, Rose Rothenburger. And she's a long-time friend and one of the main political influences in my life. Mr. Speaker, Rose was the constituency assistant for the previous MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for Prince Albert Northcote, Eldon Lautermilch and Darcy Furber. And she managed to get me sucked into the political world by getting me involved with the executive way back when and kept me involved.

But Rose is very respected by many in the Prince Albert area, Mr. Speaker, and she's involved with a lot of community groups. She's a very talented writer and a very compassionate, caring individual and is often the person that you would call if you need a soft shoulder to cry on because she always has the perfect words to say. And I think those characteristics is what makes her such an amazing constituency assistant. I appreciate all the work she does for our office and the people in Prince Albert.

And, Mr. Speaker, last but not least is my partner, Darren. Darren is my best friend, and I really appreciate all the support he provides for me. It's really nice to share your life with someone that has a lot of similar interests that you have, Mr. Speaker. Darren and I are really sports orientated. We love hockey. We love baseball, and we love football. And I'm a little bit jealous right now that he gets to sit up there with our CFL, our idols, you know, and I have to sit down here and look above.

But also Darren and I share a lot of passion with regards to politics, and he's always there for a phone call when I need to share some of my concerns. But yes, the leader here also mentioned that we're season ticket holders for the Roughriders. We make sure we get to every game, and so we certainly enjoy going to the CFL games. I welcome them also here, but again I wish I could be up there. But anyway, I'm here working.

So I would like to ask that all members of the Assembly welcome these guests to their Legislative Assembly.

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

**Mr. Kaeding:** — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, I would like to welcome 37 bright and energetic grade 7, 8, 9 students from the Churchbridge Public School. Now this is my alma mater. They've promised me that my name is finally taken off the bad boy list in the teachers' lounge. Accompanying them today are two teachers, Ms. Bailey Marshall and Ms. Erika Strimbold, two of Saskatchewan's new 750 teachers that have come to the province. EAs [educational assistants] with them are Ms. Rita Swanson and Carolyn Debnam, and parent chaperone, Ms. Shannon Dul. So I'd like all members to welcome Churchbridge Public School to their Legislative Assembly.

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

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too

want to, along with my colleagues, in thanking and recognizing Jason Quilliam in his contribution to our country, to his son Cade, and his wife Candace.

There's no question that as a son of a World War II veteran, we've been raised in a home that really stresses the importance of recognizing those that serve our country. I had a number of family members join the military. So whether it was my older brother going to help with the famine in Africa, or a younger brother dealing with the conflict in Bosnia, it's also very important to recognize those that serve our country and serve countries all throughout the world under the Canadian flag.

So, Jason, I wish you safe journeys. Return to us as quickly as you can, but above all else to tell you a great big thank you from a grateful nation. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw North.

**Mr. Michelson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the west gallery I want to acknowledge a group that came from Moose Jaw. And they're here generally every Thursday as part of the prayer group that comes here and watches the proceedings and extends their best wishes and their prayers on behalf of both sides. So I want to acknowledge them and thank them for their service, and welcome to their Legislative Assembly.

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

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With leave to make it an extended introduction.

**The Speaker:** — Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried. I recognize the member.

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you very much, and thank you to members for agreeing to an extended introduction. I want to take the opportunity to introduce two individuals accompanied by the director of visitor services, Lorraine deMontigny, two individuals that are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. And I am talking about Mr. Marc Buchholz and Ms. Noela Bamford. If they could please rise and be recognized.

Mr. Speaker, these two individuals, there are lots of different paths to the legislature as we're all well aware, but these two individuals are here because they went flat out in a bidding war at the Regina Symphony fundraiser and won an all-expenses-paid trip to the legislature, if you can imagine, Mr. Speaker. But all jesting aside, Mr. Speaker, the trip to the legislature was part of the heritage package. I believe they'll be over to the Government House as well to see how things are working there. They'll have some interaction with the city of Regina. But this is all in aid of support for the Regina Symphony Orchestra.

And I'm proud to say Marc is a constituent of mine and a registered nurse in the city of Regina, Mr. Speaker, and an avid supporter of the arts community here in the city. And Noela is a

retired public servant, Mr. Speaker, and since then has been also very active in her support of the arts community in the city. And I look forward to meeting with them later on and getting their take on how things went. Noela, once upon a time, was a legislative analyst. I'll be interested to see her take on the proceedings in that regard, Mr. Speaker.

But these two individuals are here today because of their interest in the legislative process and in our heritage as it relates to that in the city of Regina, Mr. Speaker. But they're here for their support of the arts and for the Regina Symphony Orchestra in particular. So I want to welcome Marc and Noela to their Legislative Assembly.

**The Speaker:** — I'll take this opportunity to introduce two people seated in my gallery that are pillars of the community in Saskatoon: Rick Peddle, if you could give us a wave, and Brent Hillstead. I'm honoured to have them in the Assembly today, and they're good friends of mine. They are actually past presidents of the Kinsmen Club of Saskatoon, good friends of mine, members of the Rider nation. And if we are having troubles, to the Sergeant-at-Arms, in removing the riff-raff that sometimes are in the gallery today, I'm sure they'll help out. But please welcome them to their legislature.

## PRESENTING PETITIONS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw.

**Mr. Lawrence:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to present the petitions who are opposed to the federal government's decision to impose a carbon tax on the province and people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, these citizens believe and know that we have a better solution right here in our province, a Saskatchewan-made solution, Mr. Speaker. And that's right down where I'm from, down in Estevan at Boundary dam 3. Mr. Speaker, this is a far better way to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions globally and in our province, way better than any carbon tax will ever do. The potential for that plant, Mr. Speaker, is removing the equivalent of removing 250,000 cars off our roads and our highways by the reductions that are already going on in that plant. And with the number of coal plants that are being built around the world — over 2,000, Mr. Speaker — this certainly can be a global solution way more than any imposed carbon tax. Technology and innovation is a much 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 Moose Jaw. I do so present.

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

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise

again today to present a petition to reverse the cuts to the Lighthouse program. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners point out that in April of 2014 the minister of Social Services said that the Lighthouse in Saskatoon would "... take pressure off of existing detox facilities, hospitals, and police cells, while keeping people safe, especially in our brutally cold winters." The petitioners point out that on that very same day, Mr. Speaker, 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, but their actions contradict their words, Mr. Speaker.

These ministers, the petitioners point out, 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. And this budget yesterday will continue to hammer away at those most vulnerable, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan immediately reverse their recent cuts to funding that allows extremely vulnerable people to access the services of the Lighthouse stabilization unit in Saskatoon, and revisit their imposition of a strict and narrow definition of homelessness in November of 2015 which forced the Lighthouse to cut back its hours of essential service in February of 2016; and to 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 Athabasca.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to stand in my place today under the directive and request from the member from Prince Albert Northcote for anyone, someone to help in her battle for a second bridge for Prince Albert.

I'm proud to stand in my place today to present a petition as it relates to a second bridge for Prince Albert and, Mr. Speaker, a second bridge for Prince Albert has never been clearer than it is today. Prince Albert, communities north of Prince Albert, and businesses that send people and products through Prince Albert require a solution. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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

And, Mr. Speaker, as we have done so day after day, petition after petition, I presented names of people that have signed in support of the second bridge for Prince Albert. And these

people have signed from all throughout Saskatchewan. And on this particular page, Mr. Speaker, they're primarily from Prince Albert and Shell Lake, and I so present.

[10:30]

**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 undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan who signed this petition would like 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's Crown corporations returned 297.2 million in dividends to pay for schools, roads, and hospitals — those dividends should go to the people of Saskatchewan, not private investors; and that our Crown corporations employ thousands of Saskatchewan people across the province.

Under section 149 of the *Income Tax Act* of Canada, Crown corporations are exempt from corporate income tax provided not less than 90 per cent of the shares are held by a government or province. The Sask Party's proposal would allow up to 49 per cent of a Crown to be sold without being considered privatized, and therefore this short-sighted legislation risks sending millions of Crown dividends to Ottawa rather than to the people of Saskatchewan. I'll 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.

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

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to raise a petition regarding pay equity here in Saskatchewan, and the undersigned residents want to bring to our attention the following: that the citizens of this province believe in an economy powered by transparency, accountability, security, and equity; and that all women should be paid equitably; and that women are powerful drivers of economic growth and their economic empowerment benefits us all.

And we know that the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives found that in Saskatoon in 2016, women earned on average 63 cents for every dollar that a man makes, and in Regina, women earned on average 73 cents for every dollar a man makes. And according to the most recent StatsCan data, the national gender wage gap for full-time workers is 72 cents for every dollar a man makes.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition come from Saskatoon, Leroy, and here in Regina. I do so present. Thank you.

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

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand today to present to you a petition to increase the funding to Prince Albert mobile crisis. Mr. Speaker, Prince Albert mobile crisis unit has had to close its doors during daytime hours, resulting in a loss of resource to people in distress. Mr. Speaker, the services that mobile crisis provides falls under the mandate of a lot of the different ministries here, and they're not requiring a whole lot of money to reopen to 24-hour, seven-days-a-week services. And it would be nice if the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Social Services could get together and work out a plan so that we could re-establish services within the crisis unit in Prince Albert mobile.

The daytime closure of Prince Albert mobile 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. And we know when we provide services right at the point of impact that the cost of services later down the road is a lot less, so this would be a cost-saving measure.

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 [like is advertised on a lot of the websites that we find on the Internet].

So, Mr. Speaker, like I was saying before, a lot of residents across the province are concerned about the cuts to mobile crisis in Prince Albert. And this particular petition is signed by residents from North Battleford and Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition in support of sexual abuse prevention curriculum in Saskatchewan.

Those who have signed this petition wish to draw our attention to the following: to the fact that Saskatchewan has the second-highest rate of child sexual abuse in Canada and

that statistics show that 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 6 boys will be sexually abused by the age of 18. Up to 90 per cent of perpetrators are known to the victim, and it is estimated that 95 per cent of these cases will never be reported. Victims of childhood sexual abuse are four times more likely to commit suicide, and currently there is no comprehensive elementary or secondary curriculum regarding the prevention and reporting of sexual child abuse in Saskatchewan.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan take immediate and concrete action to develop and implement Erin's law, which would ensure that a comprehensive health education program be developed and implemented which would require age-appropriate sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention education in grades pre-K through 12, along with training staff on the prevention of child abuse.

Mr. Speaker, those signing the petition today reside in Regina and Emerald Park. I do so submit.

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

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition calling for the following to be brought to the attention of the legislature: the fact that currently Saskatchewan's change of name Act, 1995 includes the following options for change of name by election: the surname of the person's spouse, a hyphenated form of the person's surname and the surname of the person's spouse, the person's pre-marriage surname, and the person's birth surname.

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners point out that it does not allow for residents of Saskatchewan to assume their spouse's surname and retain their own surname as a given or middle name without altering their birth record. And so, Mr. Speaker:

In the prayer that reads as follows, the petitioners respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan amend Saskatchewan's current change of name Act, 1995 to include the following option for name by election: the surname of the person's spouse with the person's own surname as a given or middle name.

Mr. Speaker, this petition was brought forward by a constituent of mine, Kim Banadyga. She has gathered more than 500 signatures on this petition from citizens in places including Regina, Pilot Butte, Fort Qu'Appelle, Oxbow, Griffin, Sifton, White City, Moose Jaw, Estevan, Assiniboia, Esterhazy, Wawota, Indian Head, Humboldt, Lumsden, Balgonie, Vibank, Copper Sands, Balcarres, Bengough, Mossbank, and Kronau.

Mr. Speaker, I'll be also providing a copy of the letter that she has written of the petition itself to the Minister of Justice for his consideration and prompt action. I so present.

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

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition to ensure job security for victims of domestic

violence. Saskatchewan has the dubious distinction of having the highest rate 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. Victims of domestic abuse, Mr. Speaker, should not be further victimized at work. Employers lose \$77.9 million annually due to the direct and indirect impacts of domestic violence. 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 members on this side of the House tabled a private member's bill calling for the implementation of this measure along with two other very important measures to help support survivors of domestic violence, Mr. Speaker. We're hopeful that the government will support our private member's bill.

Individuals who are signing this petition today come from Regina, Indian Head, Maidstone, Battleford, and North Battleford. I do so submit.

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

##### New Schools in Martensville

**Ms. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand today to highlight this government's commitment to our education system with the completion of two new joint-use schools in my constituency: Lake Vista in Prairie Spirit School Division and Holy Mary in Saskatoon Catholic are the new schools in Martensville. They are both state-of-the-art facilities and will be home to over 600 students and 90 child care spaces when they open this fall.

Martensville has seen amazing growth over the past several years; they have actually doubled in size since 2007. Mr. Speaker, Martensville is full of young families and children who will benefit from increased access to child care and the K to 8 school. This new joint-use school will also benefit the community as a whole with increased access to fitness studios and a community resource centre. These facilities will be available to the public after regular school hours, and as Larry Pavloff, the Chair of Prairie Spirit School Division said, "These learning centres are more than schools. They're going to be hubs of activity for the community as a whole."

Mr. Speaker, our record is one of opening 40 new schools, including 21 this year alone, along with 25 major renovations. Mr. Speaker, this is vastly different from the NDP [New

Democratic Party] when, facing tough times, they chose instead to close 176 schools. Mr. Speaker, these new schools opening this fall in my constituency are evidence of our government's commitment to education and meeting the challenges of growth. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

##### Buffalo Narrows Basketball Team Makes Trek to Hoopla

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm so very happy and proud to rise in this House to recognize the Buffalo Narrows Twin Lakes School Eagles boys' basketball team on a tremendous season and wish them great luck as they make the trek this weekend for the provincial high school basketball championship tournament.

The road to Hoopla has led 48 teams, representing all 14 of our athletic districts, to Regina this weekend where a total of 54 games will occur over the next three days to determine our provincial champions. Mr. Speaker, the Twin Lakes Eagles ranked number six in the province, defeated number three-ranked Davidson 96 to 84 to win the 1A Boys Regional Championship and advance to Hoopla.

The Eagles players range from grades 8 to 12 and they are coached by two dedicated coaches, David Wells and Luke Kuypers. And under these coaches' leadership, they upset the defending champions from last year from Davidson in overtime to earn their berth into the championship.

Coach Wells has been teaching and coaching Buffalo Narrows for the past eight years along with Luke Kuypers. He believes basketball is a vehicle for bigger things, and as he says:

You just treat basketball as something to get them into a group and keep them positive. You're trying to teach life skills, you're trying to open world views, you're trying to create relationships.

For history and for the record, I'll read out the roster of these accomplished students: Jonah Koebernick, Riley McCallum, Parker McCallum, Manileas Felske, Garrett Campbell, Mervin Aubichon, Dawson Laliberte, Seth Montgrand, Colin McPherson, Conan Kusch, and Shane McCallum.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the Assembly to recognize the Buffalo Narrows Twin Lakes basketball team on a tremendous season. And good luck this weekend, boys. Our hearts are with you.

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

##### Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And now on the very serious side, March is designated as Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. Colorectal cancer is one of the most commonly diagnosed forms of cancer in Canada. That is why screening and early detection are so important for both men and women between the ages of 50 and 74.

I'm very proud, Mr. Speaker, to say that Saskatchewan's Cancer Agency screening program for colorectal cancer is leading the country with a participation rate of 50 per cent. This program saves lives, as this cancer is 90 per cent preventable.

Mr. Speaker, our government is pleased to continue funding the Cancer Agency to ensure that this population-based screening program is available throughout the province. Whether individuals receive the screening test during this awareness month, or at another time of year, we want to encourage them to take the very simple test when they receive it in the mail. It can be done in the privacy of their home and can bring peace of mind, knowing that they've taken steps against a disease that might otherwise go undetected in its early stages. When detected early, the outcome is generally positive for patients and their families.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### First Nations Provincial Spelling Bee

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in this House today to recognize Saskatchewan's second annual First Nations Provincial Spelling Bee. This bee is the first ever province-wide First Nations spelling bee in Canada. It is a wonderful opportunity to not only promote literacy, but also to demonstrate the amazing talent and academic promise that children of Saskatchewan represent.

[10:45]

Last year, the inaugural competition was held in North Battleford and was a huge success. This year I'm happy to say that the bee is coming to Saskatoon and will be held in my community at St. Mary's Wellness and Education Centre, tomorrow, March 24th.

There are 157 First Nations students from approximately 43 on-reserve and urban schools from all over Saskatchewan, ranging in ages from 6 to 14, registered to take part in the competition. First-place winners will advance to the national competition in Toronto.

Mr. Speaker, none of this would have been possible without the hard work of the First Nations spelling bee committee: Pauline Favel, president of the First Nations provincial spelling bee; Lillian Denton of Saskatchewan Indian and Gaming Authority; Lori McAuley from the Saskatoon Tribal Council; Linda Okanee, CPA CMA [chartered professional accountant, certified management accountant]; and St. Mary's community coordinator extraordinaire, Cecile Smith.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask that all members join me today in wishing the students success in their competition, and on congratulating the committee on an exciting and educational endeavour. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Read Saskatoon Promotes Literacy

**Mr. Olason:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this month, I had the pleasure of attending the Read Saskatoon Lit Up! event, along with the Deputy Premier, Attorney General, and the member from Saskatoon Westview, where once again I saw that literacy is an essential part of one's life. Literacy skills are directly related to someone's ability to secure a job, the wage they will make, and their ability to participate in the community. Last year Read Saskatoon reached 3,500 people with their programs.

At the event, Read Saskatoon recognized Masesi Masilela. In 2008 Masesi and her family moved to Canada from South Africa. Her son's preschool teacher introduced her to a free two-hour program that was offered by Read Saskatoon. She acquired practical skills that she was able to apply at home and made it possible to become her children's first and best teacher.

Mr. Speaker, as Masesi's children's reading skills improved, their self-esteem and attitudes towards learning did too. After her children aged out of the programs, she decided to stay on as a volunteer to help equip others to grow in their literacy skills to ultimately have a better life. Masesi's is one of many stories of lives being made better by increased literacy. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in thanking the 250 volunteer literacy tutors at Read Saskatoon who are helping everyone reach their full potential. Thank you.

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

### Canadian Football League Fan Week

**Mr. Makowsky:** — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to report to the House, as mentioned in introductions already, that Regina is playing host to the first-ever Canadian Football League Fan Week at Evraz place. This event is a chance for the CFL to showcase, during the off-season, current CFL players, pay tribute to past legends, as well as feature future stars at the annual combine this weekend. CFL Week is focused on the fans, giving them an opportunity to mix and mingle with their favourite players, put their skills to the test while learning more about the game.

I had the pleasure of attending the Canadian Football Hall of Fame reception last night at the new Mosaic stadium, and it was introducing the new Hall of Fame inductees. And I'll briefly go over them: the builders were Stan Schwartz; and from the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] Huskies, we all know Brian Towriss in this House. The players, a very impressive list: Anthony Calvillo, Kelvin Anderson, Mike O'Shea, and Geroy Simon.

Of course I believe Saskatchewan is the obvious place to host this inaugural event. No secret that Rider Nation is the greatest and most loyal fan base in all of Canada, and it's great to see many of those fans, and maybe even some future CFL players, in the fan zone having a great time practising field goals, throwing accuracy, testing their speed, and all those sorts of skills. The highlight for many, I'm sure, is getting a picture with the Grey Cup trophy.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in welcoming CFL Week to Regina and wish the league the best on this event this week coming up and of course the upcoming season, we're all looking forward to it. Thanks.

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

### Saskatchewan Shows Population Growth

**Ms. Carr:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to share with members of this Assembly some great news from Statistics Canada released this morning. Our province's population once again showed growth in the last quarter of 2016, growing by almost 3,000 people and the province growing by more than 17,000 last year. Mr. Speaker, as of January 1st this year, our population is 1,158,339. Both the quarterly and annual population gains were the third highest among the Canadian provinces.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to use the words of the member from Athabasca to assure you that I didn't, quote, make that part up, as the member opposite apparently did.

Our province's population and job growth show that despite the budget challenges that we are addressing, our economy remains strong and resilient. These real numbers show that Saskatchewan is a great place to live, work, and raise a family. Mr. Speaker, growth is our record, while on that side, the NDP recorded unprecedented decline. When the NDP were in government, our population declined 23,000 people from '97 to 2007.

Mr. Speaker, our economy is moving forward, and our government is working hard to keep Saskatchewan the best place to run a business and raise a family. Thank you.

### QUESTION PERIOD

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

### Details of Land Transactions

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, before we get to some of the very serious concerns and questions about the deceitful, indecent, and mean-spirited budget of the Sask Party, I want to follow up on an interesting response of the Premier yesterday on another matter when I asked him when he first — asked him again, because of course he's dodged answering this question time and time again — when he first learned that the original seller of the land involved in the GTH [Global Transportation Hub] scandal was the landlord to the minister, the then minister of the GTH. The Premier finally found his feet on this matter, but no answer.

Now of course this was discussed in cabinet, and he would have been there. And of course the seller, the business relationship of the former minister, made \$6 million before flipping the land to another Sask Party supporter who made \$5 million.

But the Premier said yesterday that he had already answered this question. And of course that hasn't been on the floor of this Assembly — I've asked him it time and time again. Maybe that was with the RCMP. I'm not sure where. But he hasn't shared it

with Saskatchewan people. So direct to the Premier: when did he find out that the seller of the land had a direct relationship with the minister responsible?

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

**Hon. Mr. Harrison:** — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course the auditor has addressed all of these matters. The auditor has looked into this matter in great detail and issued a very thorough report predicated on her research and her talking with all of the individuals involved, of her examining all of the documents which she felt that she needed access to examine.

The auditor made a number of recommendations coming out of that very thorough report — 10 in fact, Mr. Speaker. We accept those recommendations. We're implementing or have implemented all of those recommendations. The auditor commented at the conclusion of her report, as she said on an open-line radio show with respect to this matter:

... 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.

### Provincial Budget

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Strange, Mr. Speaker. The Premier's refusal to give a straight answer on that question is really troubling, Mr. Speaker. It should be pretty simple. It's rather unbelievable and it's unacceptable.

You know, yesterday the Premier refused to let the Finance minister defend himself and the failures in his last budget. But I wonder if the Premier is so eager to defend the budget presented yesterday. This is the Premier who, time and time and time again, long before the last election, through the last election and up until just a few weeks ago, promised that he would never raise taxes.

Well, Mr. Speaker, from children's clothes to construction renovations projects — the epitome of a job-killing tax — to fishing licences, all the way to a case of beer, they're raising taxes. On top of that, they're actually jacking up the PST [provincial sales tax] a percentage point, which means taxes on everyday items are jumping 20 per cent — a billion-dollar tax hike from a Premier that said he'd never raise taxes. Will the Premier at the very least admit that he's broken his word? Why wasn't he straight with Saskatchewan people?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, it's fact-check time again for the interim Leader of the Opposition. He was in this Assembly when the former Finance minister, Ken Krawetz, delivered a budget wherein he indicated that at some point down the road we'd have to raise taxes, specifically EPT [education property tax]. I was here. I voted for the budget

where those statements were made. So for him now to portray some sort of commitment that frankly did not exist, certainly during the last election, because we expressly said we would have to increase taxes, is just more of the same. It's more of the same that we have come to expect from the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, the budget was characterized by a number of difficult decisions. I want to say that none of the decisions we took were as difficult as what faced a number of public servants, valued public servants, who went to work yesterday morning and received a notice that the government would be changing direction, winding down some services. And our thoughts are with those employees.

I would also point out to my hon. friend that in 2000, with respect to the tax issue, that in 2007 under the NDP, a person making \$40,000 paid \$3,688, Mr. Speaker. This year, even after the PST changes, even after all the changes, that same individual will have paid \$2,939, down 20 per cent even after these changes.

A family of four with a combined taxable income of 50,000 will save 77 per cent in taxes even after these changes. Even after these changes, 77 per cent lower taxes paid by that family than when members opposite were in government, Mr. Speaker. We stand by our tax reduction record.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, remarkable. The Premier, who said he'd never raise taxes, is increasing taxes by a billion dollars. He can spin this any way he likes, but that's the truth, Mr. Speaker.

You know, and the Premier said going into this budget that there'd be a shift, I think is what he described. Well there's a shift all right, Mr. Speaker. There's a shift to breaks for the wealthiest, Mr. Speaker, at the expense of everyone else. And there's shiftiness in this budget everywhere you see, Mr. Speaker.

You know, those who make out pretty well in this budget are the wealthiest, Mr. Speaker, the wealthy and well connected to that Premier, with a tax cut, if you can imagine, for the highest wage earners, an effective cut of 6.5 per cent — a full reduction of one point of their tax bracket. This is inexplicable. And it's as inexplicable as the cut to the corporate income tax at this point in time, a time where the Premier's taking a pound of flesh from Saskatchewan families, a break and a gift to the corporations of Saskatchewan of an 8 per cent cut in their taxes, Mr. Speaker. How can the Premier justify these unneeded gifts to the wealthiest and most connected at a time that he's breaking his word, and that he's pounding Saskatchewan people and families with tax after tax after tax?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again I need to correct the record, Mr. Speaker. The commitment that he is attributing to me with respect to taxes was not made. Moreover, I hope the member will be fair enough to admit . . . Because he was here in this Legislative

Assembly; I think he was the Finance critic when the Sask Party Finance minister of the day indicated we were going to have to raise EPT. We signalled that that change was coming. It didn't come the year after that. We've made a change with respect to this year's budget. Those are the facts. And I hope he's still fair enough, I hope he's still fair enough in this place to agree that that was the case.

Mr. Speaker, I would also point out that today in the province of Saskatchewan 17 per cent of Saskatchewan people pay 50 per cent of the income taxes, Mr. Speaker, and so we need to be mindful of low-income people. That's why we've dropped 112,000 low-income people off the provincial tax rolls. That's why we've increased the low-income tax credit to protect against some of the PST changes even in this budget. That's why we will lower taxes for all brackets of income under this plan going forward, so that we have the lowest or the third lowest income taxes for families when this plan is fully implemented.

But we also have to recognize that if 17 per cent of the population is paying 50 per cent of the taxes, we need to be competitive for them too. We need to make sure that they stay in the province, that they are paying those taxes in this province. And, Mr. Speaker, part of our plan is to have the most competitive taxes for manufacturing and processing. That comes from lowering the corporate income tax rate. When you lower it by a point, you lower the manufacturing and processing tax as well. And when our plan is fully implemented, we will have the lowest manufacturing and processing tax in the Dominion of Canada as part of our effort to continue to diversify Saskatchewan's economy.

[11:00]

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, it is indecent for the Premier to be cutting taxes for the wealthiest in Saskatchewan while he's pounding Saskatchewan people and businesses on front after front. It's out of touch with Saskatchewan people; it's bad fiscal policy, and it's just not fair. How can the Premier justify hiking a tax, introducing a tax, a 6 per cent increase on children's clothes and children's shoes, for everyone, collecting a whole total of \$50 million while he gives away hundreds of millions of dollars to the wealthiest in Saskatchewan?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, I had the honour of first being elected to this Assembly in 1999, and at that time the NDP government of the day had looked at this question with respect to taxes and what's the best tax to lower, Mr. Speaker, in order to create the right environment. And that NDP report recommended to the government of the day that there be a shift in taxation. A shift . . . Well the members opposite don't want to hear the answer. I'm telling them that the government of the day, this government, agrees with the report that their government received in '99, that it's good economic policy. He just questioned the fiscal policy of the government.

It's always good economic policy; it's good fiscal policy to move, to shift taxes towards consumption, away from income,

away from income taxes for families.

Mr. Speaker, we've been doing that over the last number of years to the point that even with the changes announced yesterday, in 2007 under the NDP government, a family of four with 75,000 combined income tax paid \$6,096 in provincial income tax and PST. After this plan is fully implemented, actually just even in the first year, that same family will pay \$2,000 less in taxes than they did when members opposite, through high taxes and bad policy, were driving a generation of Saskatchewan people out of the province. That represents, even with the changes yesterday, for that family, PST and income tax, a reduction of 31 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, it's become abundantly clear that we don't just have a deficit of billions of dollars under the Sask Party; we have a deficit of decency, Mr. Speaker. And it's pretty clear with answers like that and spin like that, it starts to make sense why we're in this mess. You know, what corporation, what corporation would base their decision to stay or leave Saskatchewan based on 1 per cent when we're currently in line with our neighbours? Come on, Mr. Speaker.

They say it's about supposed job creation. Well the vast majority of new jobs are created by small businesses and entrepreneurs across Saskatchewan. But the only thing the Sask Party is giving small businesses is tax increases — more tax increases through the PST hike, the massive PST expansion including on construction labour, the epitome of a job-killing tax, and the elimination of exemptions. Why is the Premier punishing hard-working, homegrown job creators, the small businesses of this province?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the premise of the member's question is, why are you trying so hard to be better than Alberta? That basically was the premise of his question. He said we're about the same as Alberta. By the way, we're not the same as British Columbia who we compete with for investment and jobs. But his point is, why don't you want to . . . we're about the same as Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, on this side of the House, we'd like to be more competitive than the province of Alberta. They've raised their income taxes. They've raised their corporate income taxes. And they have introduced a massive carbon tax, Mr. Speaker. We're not going down that road. We'll undertake this shift, but Saskatchewan families will still pay less than they did when members opposite had the chance to do more than talk, when members opposite had the chance to act on the tax front, Mr. Speaker, and their taxes that they imposed on those families' income and PST were much higher.

I would also ask my hon. friend if he's ever considered the fact that many of the farms today, many of the farms in our province today that have been helping to drive economic growth and create the Saskatchewan advantage, are incorporated. They're incorporated. And some of them are fairly significant, Mr. Speaker. I think it's an important signal to agriculture, to manufacturing and processing, to all of those companies across

Canada that are interested in a healthy investment climate, that this province isn't satisfied just tying another jurisdiction. We want to be the most competitive. We want to see our population continue to grow as it is now. We want to continue to lead the country in job creation, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, it defies common sense. It's a bad fiscal policy, and it's certainly not fair for that Premier to try to defend tax cuts, tax breaks for the wealthiest and most connected, Mr. Speaker, at a time where he's taking a pound of flesh from Saskatchewan people and where he's running a massive deficit once again, Mr. Speaker.

You know, maybe those half a million dollars are so stuck in his pocket from big corporate money, Mr. Speaker, through his inappropriate . . .

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — I caution the members with the verbiage used. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — It's a question about who's pulling this Premier's strings, Mr. Speaker. But clearly he's forgotten who he's serving.

I want to quote the vice-president of prairie and agri-business, Marilyn Braun-Pollon, from the CFIB [Canadian Federation of Independent Business]. She said she wanted to be positive about the budget, but she can't, Mr. Speaker, because it is “. . . brutal from a small business perspective.” Brutal from a small business perspective. She tweeted, “We fear a \$908 million tax hike will make a bad situation worse.”

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier tell us why the Sask Party is making a bad situation worse instead of getting us on to the road to economic recovery?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the road to economic recovery is well under way. Mr. Speaker, consider . . . Well the members opposite are laughing. The last job report that came out days ago had your province — that you should be proud of — leading the country with 8,000 new jobs created. In statistic after statistic, whether it's manufacturing, whether it's retail sales, we are leading the country right now. We want to continue that. We want to ensure that this province continues to be competitive.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's why we've unveiled not just a budget for one year, but a plan. And if that plan calls on us to shift away from reliance on resource revenue and also to shift towards consumption taxes, away from income taxes . . . And you know, the member can point to the CFIB and they don't like the budget. My understanding is the Regina Chamber of Commerce very much liked the budget and they represent, they represent businesses right in the member's constituency. My understanding is that the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce had positive things to say about the budget and its long-term plan.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to ensure that, unlike other jurisdictions, we've got a plan to get to balance. And while we move to balance, we will remain and become even more competitive so we continue to lead in job creation, Mr. Speaker, so that we can continue to have people moving to the province, which is a far cry from what happened when members opposite were in office.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, a plan. A plan is what the Sask Party, almost a decade into government, are apparently bringing Saskatchewan people. Every year they come forward and say they've got a plan. They say the budget's balanced, Mr. Speaker. Of course you see the reality. And now with this supposed plan from the Sask Party as deficit as it is — it includes 8 out of 12 deficits, Mr. Speaker — and it doesn't help support the job creation that we need.

Their own numbers show that \$258 million are lost year to year here in corporate tax revenues. And what makes matters worse is the Sask Party's giving away tens of millions of dollars more on this front while they're taking a pound of flesh from Saskatchewan people, throwing hundreds of people out of work, cutting the things that matter to hard-working people and families all across our province.

Mr. Speaker, has the Sask Party really become that arrogant? Are they really that out of touch? Mr. Speaker, I don't probably expect the Premier to answer that question. So I guess a very direct one: who asked him for the 8 per cent cut to the corporate tax rate?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, the number he just attributed to corporate income tax, well it's wrong. That's the reduction, that's the reduction in personal income tax. That's money back in the pockets of Saskatchewan families, of low-income people, of middle-income people, and yes, of high-income people — across-the-board tax relief, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the member to read the budget, Mr. Speaker.

Moreover he wants to talk about . . . he wanted to talk about deficits, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say this, that obviously there is a revenue challenge that we're facing in the province. And we often hear members talk about, whatever happened to the money that we inherited in 2007? I have the documents from the NDP's last budget, 2007-2008. Here's the NDP's last budget. They reported, they reported a \$75 million General Revenue Fund surplus but a \$700 million summary financial deficit, Mr. Speaker. That's what they handed to future government on the summary basis, \$700 million.

Mr. Speaker, one other point. They always talk about their rainy day fund they left behind. Here's what they did with the rainy day fund: they took \$510 million out of the rainy day fund to balance the budget because it was an election year, leaving only \$378 million worth of balance, Mr. Speaker, in that fund. If they want to talk about rainy day funds, we're happy to do it all day long, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — If we could balance the budget on, you know, yelling and spin, Mr. Speaker, we'd be in pretty good shape in the province of Saskatchewan. This is just not believable. It's not credible, and it's their budget.

In the leaflets that they actually published to promote their mean-spirited, deceitful budget, they're saying that they are investing in their priorities. Investing in their priorities. That's what it says, Mr. Speaker. They gave a tax break to the wealthiest, Mr. Speaker, but they're selling off STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] after promising of course that that wasn't on the table.

Seniors, workers, and families throughout the province rely on this bus service to get from place to place, to ship packages which supports businesses and farms all across our province, and to access health care. It's a lifeline to people all across our province. And of course that Premier promised, looked people in the whites of their eyes and said he wouldn't sell it off, but he's doing just that. How can the Premier justify making the wealthiest a priority over seniors and rural Saskatchewan families seeking health care by selling off STC?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, we're not selling STC. This is not a privatization. Well the members are laughing. There's not a commercial interest here to privatize. And we don't think this is funny, unlike members opposite. We don't think it's a laughing matter because we know that the lives of 250 or so valued public servants changed significantly, and not for the better, yesterday as a result of a decision that we took. And so we didn't come to the decision easily, Mr. Speaker.

But I would point out for members opposite that over the years we have seen ridership decline and decline and decline to the point where the previous per-passenger — I think around 2010 — the per-passenger subsidy from taxpayers to the STC, to the bus company, was about \$35 per passenger, \$25 a passenger. I think at that level, I think at that level, Mr. Speaker, we would have had a different discussion, maybe even a different decision. But here's what's been happening. As riderships decline and costs have increased, that per-passenger subsidy is well up over \$90, almost \$100 per passenger, Mr. Speaker.

And at some point you have to ask the question, is that the core function of government, to subsidize to \$90 a passenger for a bus company? Or is it rather health care and education and infrastructure, Mr. Speaker? And so we've made our decision, and it was not an easy decision to make, Mr. Speaker.

I understand that even this morning the minister's office has received calls from other bus company operators in the country — one in particular, I understand — that are inquiring about routes. We've indicated there's not a sale here. But certainly, certainly we have the Highway Traffic Board that determines running routes in the province, and I'm sure if other operators, as happened in the past when the NDP cancelled routes, if other private sector operators are wanting to take over those lines for either freight or passengers, they would be welcome to do so, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — The Premier wants to get up and talk about the core function of government. A core function of a Premier is to be straight with Saskatchewan people. This is a Premier who didn't say boo about this in the run-up to the election, through the election, or beyond. He looked in the whites of the eyes of Saskatchewan people. Hand over heart, he pledged that he wouldn't sell off the Crown corporations. This is deceitful and it's damaging, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that the Premier's word just isn't worth much. To the Premier: does he have no shame?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the reality of the province's situation, as we have already discussed, is that for now, the third year resource revenue . . . Well the Leader of the Opposition asked a pretty serious question and made some serious allegations about me and members on this side of the House. I hope he would have the respect and decency to listen to the answer, even if he doesn't agree with it.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to be into our third year of resource revenues down by over a billion dollars. It's pretty clear that this is the new norm, that resource revenue for the province of Saskatchewan is going to . . . and for other provinces that depend on natural resources, that the new norm is that we have lower revenues.

[11:15]

So we have to do two things. We have to look at the revenue situation, and yes, there are revenue increases in the budget, some significant ones to be sure. But we also have to control spending and make some difficult decisions around expenditures, around existing programs that we have, around services.

And, Mr. Speaker, I can share with members a fact that I'm sure they're aware of — unfortunately the service was not being utilized. The bus service would have required 85 to \$100 million in more investment over the next five years. Mr. Speaker, if we have those kinds of dollars, we're going focus them in health care and education, social services and infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, that will be the priorities of the government.

And we regret obviously the fact that this has affected, in a very bad way, the employees of that company who were valued. But it's one of the tough decisions in this budget that we think will keep us in good stead, that will get us to balance in three years, and that will keep the province strong.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, it's a deceitful budget on front after front. Mr. Speaker, it's callous and it's mean-spirited. We have a Premier that wasn't straight with Saskatchewan people in the run-up to an election and ever since, Mr. Speaker.

The reality, when you look at the budget, last year alone this province increased debt by \$3 billion. If you look at what this government has done, they've increased debt since 2013. In just five years, they've doubled the debt all the way to \$18 billion.

Of course you didn't see any of that featuring on the billboards in the last election, Mr. Speaker. You didn't see this Premier being straight with people about his sell-off schemes. You didn't see him being straight with his callous plan to shift benefits to the wealthiest at the expense of the rest of us, Mr. Speaker, and he didn't put forward his schemes on the cuts, Mr. Speaker. And I guess at the heart of it, Saskatchewan people expect their Premier to be straight with them.

My question to the Premier: was he afraid that Saskatchewan people would have held him to account? Was he afraid that if they saw the costs of Sask Party mismanagement, scandal, and waste that they would have held him to account? Was it that if they saw their schemes and their actual plan and their deficit of values that they would have held him to account? Why wasn't this Premier straight with Saskatchewan people?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the member that he should be straight with the members of this House in question period in his preambles, that his facts should be accurate, that his characterizations, which are very serious, should be accurate. Mr. Speaker, he will know that this government has paid off — and obviously with these deficits we're now eating into it — not completely, but we've paid off \$3 billion in operating debt.

Mr. Speaker, CTV [Canadian Television Network Ltd.] news Edmonton just did a report. They looked at the national situation. And guess, Mr. Speaker, which province has the lowest operating debt per capita in all of Canada, even lower than our neighbours in Alberta owing to some decisions that their counterparts in that province has made? Mr. Speaker, it's the province of Saskatchewan — the lowest operating debt in Canada even as we've gone through three years of very difficult times with respect to revenue.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, this province has the second-best, the second-best debt-to-GDP [gross domestic product] ratio in Canada, the second-best. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's earned credit rating upgrades. We've been able to achieve this even though we've faced the headwinds of low . . . Well the member shakes his head. These are the facts, Mr. Speaker.

Operating debt that was inherited from members opposite has been reduced. And even in this budget, even in this budget with the deficit, the operating debt of the province is down 15 per cent.

Well they don't like this answer, Mr. Speaker. There's a record of more debt. There's a record, Mr. Speaker, of people leaving the province. There's the worst job creation record in all of the country when they left office. And all of that has turned around and, Mr. Speaker, our work in this budget is to ensure that that turnaround continues.

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

**Hon. Mr. Merriman:** — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I'll listen to the point of order from the Government House Leader.

## POINT OF ORDER

**Hon. Mr. Merriman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On four times in question period, at the clock at 24:30, 5:24, 2:05, and 0:15, the interim leader of the NDP used the phrase “deceitful.” And I’ll refer you to Beauchesne’s, debates, March 22nd, ’77, page 4257, where the word “deceived” was ruled out of order. They also ruled the word “deliberately deceived” in August 5th, 1960, page 7640. And I’d ask that the member withdraw and apologize.

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

**Mr. McCall:** — Mr. Speaker, I would submit to you that the Leader of the Opposition put his remarks very much in accordance with the rules of this Assembly and within the practices and traditions that are outlined by the great people like Beauchesne’s and Bourinot’s and on.

Mr. Speaker, it’s also well understood that there’s no such thing as a list of words or phrases that can or cannot be used. But it also depends very much upon the usage, Mr. Speaker, and if the Leader of the Opposition is referring to a deceitful budget, that that is very much within the accepted use of these terms, Mr. Speaker, and not involving what the member across is alleging.

Mr. Speaker, I’d invite you to review the record and return to the House with a judgment as such. But, Mr. Speaker, in that judgment, I’d urge you to find the member’s point to be not well taken.

**The Speaker:** — I believe I’m able and willing to rule on this point of order today, and I do find it in order. And I believe the Leader of the Opposition’s verbiage used today does not add to the decorum, and I would ask that he withdraw and apologize for his remarks today. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, with due respect, I will not apologize for a . . .

**The Speaker:** — I caution the Leader of the Opposition that there are sanctions that the Speaker has when a member would refuse to withdraw and apologize for remarks. I’d give the opportunity to stand and withdraw and apologize for his remarks or they will be the next step taken by the Speaker.

So I’d recognize the Leader of the Opposition right now, please.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — I can’t apologize for this deceptive budget and the deceit of this Premier, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — Mr. Trent Wotherspoon, I hereby name you for disregarding the authority of the Chair, and pursuant to the rule 57(2), the member is suspended from the services of the Assembly for the remainder of the sitting day.

[Interjections]

Order, order. Order.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

## SPECIAL ORDER

## ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY  
(BUDGET DEBATE)

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Doherty that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.]

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

**Ms. Sproule:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m planning to address further comments on yesterday’s budget that was introduced. But before I do that I would like to introduce a couple of guests in our Assembly, with leave of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** — Unfortunately the Chamber was loud during the member’s motion. I would ask her to repeat her motion please.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to request leave to introduce guests in the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** — Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Agreed. I recognize the member.

## INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Ms. Sproule:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And on behalf of our intrepid leader, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce his constituency assistant, Gloria Patrick, and her daughter Kaitlyn here in the Assembly today. I think they just saw a remarkable demonstration of courage, and I think it’s important for them to be able to witness that. So on behalf of the Assembly, I’d like to welcome these guests to their Assembly.

## SPECIAL ORDER

## ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY  
(BUDGET DEBATE)

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Doherty that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.]

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

**Ms. Sproule:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At this point I would like to continue with my comments on the budget motion. And as part of my comments today I will introduce a motion at the end of my comments to make an amendment to the budget.

But I thought, you know, I had enough to say yesterday on an

interim basis and obviously there's a lot more to be said about this budget. But this morning I think I would like to talk about what I'm hearing from people that I know, from my constituents and from people that I've made connections with through my critic duties, Mr. Speaker.

There's a lot of people that are really, really upset about this budget. I think we've all seen the news cycle over the last few hours and we understand how this budget is starting to trickle down into people's consciousness and they're becoming very aware of the serious impact of this budget on them.

And first of all I just want to talk a little bit about what some of our leaders in the province are saying about this budget. So first and foremost we have the mayors. We have the mayor of Saskatoon and the mayor of Regina who've weighed in on the serious impacts that this budget has caused for them.

For example, we have a quote from Saskatoon mayor Charlie Clark, and here's his quote: "We had no idea this was coming and it's a huge financial impact. It's unprecedented for the city to take a one-time hit like this."

Now in terms of the . . .

**The Speaker:** — Why is the Government House Leader on his feet?

**Hon. Mr. Merriman:** — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — What is the nature of the point of order?

**Hon. Mr. Merriman:** — [Inaudible] . . . long tradition in this House that members know that they are not supposed to comment on the Speaker's ruling. The member from Nutana commented on an act of courage of her leader being asked to leave this Assembly and being named. Mr. Speaker, I would see that as commenting on the Speaker's ruling in the general public and I would encourage you to review *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I'll give the opportunity to the Opposition House Leader to make comment on the point of order.

I recognize the member from Nutana.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do apologize for my error in that rule, so apologize to the House. I'll carry on with my comments, if I can, or do you have anything else to say? No? Okay. Then I'll just carry on with my comments, Mr. Speaker.

We have the mayor of Saskatoon weighing in on this budget. And I mean these are important issues that are facing the city, facing the city of Regina, facing all the urban centres, but this one small item that they slid into the budget where SaskPower and SaskEnergy are now being allowed to not pay taxes or grants in lieu of taxes for the property that they occupy within urban areas — well within the whole province for sure — Mr. Speaker, that's a \$23 million hit on urban municipalities and rural municipalities. I think in particular though, we know of the \$23 million hit, more than half of that goes to our two major cities, Mr. Speaker.

And it's one thing for the government to make these kinds of changes when they consult in advance with urban municipalities to find out how it's going to impact their budgeting and how it's going to impact their planning. But to throw this at them on budget day without any forewarning, Mr. Speaker, has put both of our major cities in Saskatchewan in a very, very difficult situation. So that's the kind of irresponsibility that our leader was talking about earlier, Mr. Speaker. It's the kind of callous disregard for the impacts of this budget on the people that are the leaders in our province and the cities that are a large part of our economic engine and a large part of the fabric of our province.

We have Regina Mayor Michael Fougere who also talked about this. And one of the quotes he gave in terms of the budget was that "You peel back the onion and you see other things . . . We have some significant issues to deal with."

And of course we know that Regina is impacted similarly with this removal of this grant that the cities rely on for property taxes. These utilities use this property as much as any other person uses property. Residential people use property. Businesses use property. And here we have our Crown corporations now no longer participating in that property tax scheme by being allowed to not be required to pay these grants-in-lieu.

We have the Meewasin Valley Authority CEO [chief executive officer], Lloyd Isaak, weighing in on this. What did Mr. Isaak say? He said this is a "very difficult day" for Meewasin. "A \$409,000 hit to our budget is a very substantial cut."

Now, Mr. Speaker, you know we've had these discussions in this House before. We know that the province is a tripartite member of a three-part team that recognizes the value of the Meewasin Valley Authority for the people, foremost of Saskatchewan and the people of Saskatoon. This is an ecological jewel. This is a park that provides a lot of service for the people that come to visit, but it's also a very important ecological waterway.

[11:30]

And the work that the Meewasin does to protect the ecological value is being callously disregarded with this cut and this failure on the part of this government to accept their responsibilities for the importance of this particular valley authority. It's an internationally recognized, highly achieving valley authority, Mr. Speaker, that's seen as a model across the world. But the callous disregard that we see from this government is one that I think they will regret unless they finally realize that they have some responsibilities here and act accordingly.

It's interesting hearing from Vice-President Marilyn Braun-Pollon of the prairie and agri-business section of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. And her quote is this; I'll share this with the Assembly: "It is brutal from a small business perspective . . ."

And I'm just going to stop at this point, Mr. Speaker, and share with you some comments that I got this morning from one of my constituents who runs a business in Saskatoon in relation to

furnaces and air conditioning systems and the like. He is so upset, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure I can actually articulate well enough the concern that he has about the changes to the PST when it comes to construction. He has all kinds of quotes. I tried to write them down as best I could.

But one of the things that really struck me that he said is "This change to the exemptions for the PST will put a zipper on the wallets of the public." And I don't think that he could be more . . . that he couldn't capture it any better, Mr. Speaker. This is a shutter on the construction industry in Saskatoon and I believe across the province.

He says, further to that, he says, "My business is going to be hammered." He knows that business is going to fall off significantly because of this decision, because homeowners . . . because renos, people doing new furnaces and new air conditioning units or any other kind of home renos are going to have to think hard and seriously about paying 6 per cent extra on top of what they've already budgeted for these.

He says a few years ago when there was a grant for homeowners to improve their furnaces and their heating systems in their homes, after that grant was removed he said there was a two- to three-month shockwave that went through his entire industry, and that there was some months during that time when he would only be working one or one and a half days because of the impact of that program. He says the impacts on this program are going to be considerable.

He says, and this is a quote, "This will drive business underground." This is going to drive the underground cash economy, Mr. Speaker, in ways that this government has not even contemplated. And in his view it is also going to endanger public safety.

And these guys never thought about any of that. This is going to endanger public safety. We're going to see the inspection side plummet because people are going to be doing this outside of the normal regulatory scheme. We're going to see a fall in the number of permits. And we're going to see people's lives being put at risk because they're being driven to the underground economy to do these kinds of repairs to their homes, Mr. Speaker.

This is what he has to say about this government. He says, "To call yourself a business-friendly government and have no concept of how a business runs [he says] is shocking. Because [he says] this government has no idea how the collection of PST works."

In fact, he says he sometimes thinks that businesses in Saskatchewan are nothing more than a capture system for taxation because the burden is on the business owner to do the capture of the taxes. The burden is on the business owner to make sure that those taxes are forwarded to the government. And we also see this government removing any commissions for the collection of this tax so business people not only have to do the collection. They not only have to remit those taxes to the government. They're doing that for free, Mr. Speaker, on their own time.

He says this is going to create a vacuum in the construction

industry. It's going to elevate costs for everyone associated with it, he said, and on the administrative side alone it's ill conceived. He said nobody knows what is going on. He says home builders . . . He's called the home builders' association; they don't know what's going on. He's called Finance. He can't get an answer from the Ministry of Finance. He's called the contractors' association. No one has any information on how the heck this is supposed to work come April 1st when he is supposed to start charging PST on his contracts, and then at the same time, how he's supposed to not pay PST when he goes to Home Depot to pick up a valve clip.

I mean, Mr. Speaker, the thoughtlessness with which this is being imposed is going to cause extreme hardship, just the process itself, let alone the serious impact it's going to have on independent businesses here in the province.

So that's just some of his comments. I didn't capture them all unfortunately. But I do want to share some comments that I've heard from other people, and I will take to Facebook for a couple of comments that I do want to share, Mr. Speaker. This is from a woman that lives in the Rosetown, Shellbrook riding. I'm just going to pull up her quote, Mr. Speaker. She has a rural perspective, I think, that's worth sharing with the Assembly in terms of the impact of this on rural folks. Too many comments afterwards, lots of comments. I know, it's hard to keep up. I had it queued up, but then it bumped it down, Mr. Speaker. There's too many people . . . Oh boy, there's another good one. I'm just going to look up her name, Mr. Speaker.

But this person lives in the rural areas. She is a public worker, public service, or works for the public service . . . Here we are, yesterday's provincial budget, I'll just put this into the record:

Yesterday's provincial budget was disheartening. Yes, as a rural resident this budget will negatively affect my family. Yes, as a public sector worker I'm expected to have my wage cut by almost two week's pay even though it isn't a high wage to begin with and I generally put in about an extra 25 per cent volunteer hours a week for my job already. Yes, as a librarian I realize there was a direct attack on Saskatchewan libraries with no understanding about the valuable role libraries play in communities across this province. We are much more than books. Yes, as a resident of the province. I will now have to pay more taxes.

Yet it is not for myself I am disheartened. Today I can't help but worry about the province's elderly, the people who will need health care, workers whose pay will be cut but don't have a second income in their home to help meet their basic needs, students, victims of domestic violence, who weren't even given a thought although Saskatchewan leads the country in this area.

People who rely on STC. It wasn't that long ago that I did. And because of where I live, all the rural residents who are expected to do more with less. Things only happen in rural communities because of dedicated volunteers who generally volunteer for many things. These folks are already over-burdened.

The government likes to talk about keeping Saskatchewan strong. They do not seem to realize that a community's real

strength comes from its people being healthy, educated, and respected.

That's a powerful statement, Mr. Speaker. And these are the kinds of things I'm hearing from people that I'm connected to. Here's another email that I got this morning, a couple of observations on the budget from a rural perspective:

This government fought against a carbon tax because it would make farmers uncompetitive. The option existed to refund carbon taxes to export industries through gross margin triggers or other means which would have maintained the effectiveness for the environment while leaving our agriculture sector whole. How is it better to put on a gas tax for farmers and get no recognition now under the federal expectations?

Good question, Mr. Speaker. This individual goes on to say:

STC was the only courier company who could deliver parts and other packages to our farm community, as couriers do not have rural depots and do not deliver to post office boxes. How is rural Saskatchewan to receive the excellent parcel service in the future? Is Saskatchewan the only jurisdiction in the world to completely eliminate public transit in a time period where we are rapidly learning the importance of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and damaging the environment for our children and grandchildren?

His third point:

Does this government really think that consultations with cattle producers on the future of community pastures is best done during calving and seeding? This is a government which claims to have rural roots. Have they forgotten the seasonal load of mixed farmers involved in our pasture programs? Have they been in office that long?

Mr. Speaker, those again are some very powerful comments that I think reflect the feeling of people in the rural areas. This is another email I got this morning from . . . Oh, I think it was a text. Sorry, there's too many social medias going on here. This is an email from somebody who was talking about the ending of the Saskatchewan pasture program, and he was saying his opinion is why are they cancelling this program. And this is what this individual says:

The same reason PFRA pasture program was cancelled. It did not fit with the conservative political philosophy that private ownership would lead to the best and highest use of that land — financial use, that is. A narrow perspective that ignored actual data that lands were already revenue neutral or sometimes revenue generating and not a cost. A narrow perspective that also ignored values to society other than money like nature appreciation, carbon sequestration, watershed protection, wildlife habitat, etc. Narrow and short-sighted perspective. Like the PFRA lands, these were already once in private hands decades ago, and ended up coming back into public hands because of major market failures, tax arrears, and land abandonment.

Stupidity is being repeated by doing the same thing again and expecting a different result. In the short term a small

number of investors will make money reselling the land when times are good. In the long term it will cost the taxpayers greatly when market failures require public funds to rescue the new owners. Stupid. Did I mention it was stupid?

So that was from Facebook as well, Mr. Speaker. And I do have someone from Meadow Lake who has weighed in on the library issue. His wife is a librarian here in Saskatchewan, and I just want to find his email. Here it is. This is what he sent in to CBC Radio today for *Blue Sky*, but he was wanting to share it with me as well. And this is what he said:

In the time of tough economics where the stated aim of the government is to get people working, slashing the provincial libraries has got to be the most counterproductive move imaginable.

Many listeners may not realize the extent of services that libraries provide. For people who are struggling to find employment, to further their education, to improve their literacy skills, and to access the many services that are now exclusively web-based, the local library is an irreplaceable and essential resource.

The government will save several million dollars by cutting our libraries off at the knees. This amount of money is but a drop in the budgetary bucket, and the savings will not make a noticeable dent in the deficit. However the harm done to the public by the loss of our libraries will be unforgiveable.

Mr. Speaker, I've also heard from seniors in my office. They are very worried about the cuts and fearful about what it means for them.

So those are just some of the comments I've received generally, so far, in the last few hours from folks that are concerned. I know that there are other people who have weighed in. Obviously the Western Canada for restaurants have weighed in on this. The quote there is, "The government has decided to kill food tax fairness." So our restaurant business is going to be severely hit.

Universities. We have University of Regina President Vianne Timmons saying:

It's a huge number. It's millions and millions of dollars. So it will mean that we will lose positions — absolutely, there will be positions lost. Services for students potentially lost. We will have to look at everything we do. It will be a tough, tough year for us, and tough to manage this.

From University of Saskatchewan President Peter Stoicheff, he said, "I can't side step the fact that a minus five [per cent in funding] is probably the largest single budget cut we've ever had in our history," Mr. Speaker. And we've certainly had tough times in this province's history, so it's interesting that he would single that out.

Pat Maze, president of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation says, "We're already at bare bones. There's no way to escape it.

There will be cuts in the classroom.”

And then of course, this STC customers like Cara Severson says, “You guys don’t know what you’re doing to small communities. Think about the little people.”

And finally from the poorest of the poor, the Friendship Inn, we have the executive director of Saskatoon’s Friendship Inn, Sandra Stack saying, “Your life on Earth is fragile and now to say that your life afterwards is not worthy of anything, not even worthy of a funeral service, that’s not very fair.”

Mr. Speaker, there are more quotes for sure. I guess one more to share is from Peter Gilmer who’s an advocate for the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry, a powerful advocate for poverty folk, people hurt by poverty here in Saskatchewan. And this is what he said, “They are going to hurt lower- and middle-income people the most and that is not the route they should be looking at in terms of revenue generation.”

So, Mr. Speaker, I know that others want to speak to the budget as well, but I think we need to take a close look at the motion that was tabled yesterday. This budget does not serve the people of Saskatchewan. This budget does not meet the requirements of decency and fairness. This budget is, as our leader has said, it’s a deficit, not only in money, but it’s also a deficit in decency.

[11:45]

And so I’m going to move the following motion, and it will be seconded by my colleague. The motion reads this:

That all words after “that the Assembly” be deleted and the following be added:

disagrees with the government for tabling a budget of broken promises, callous cuts, and tax hikes that makes Saskatchewan families pay for the Sask Party’s mismanagement, scandal, and waste.

I so move.

**The Speaker:** — We’ll take the motion as read. The member from Saskatoon Nutana has moved an amended motion. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Saskatoon Centre.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to enter into the budget speech this year, and I first want to thank my colleague, the Finance critic from Saskatoon Nutana, for outstanding job and providing the analysis and standing up, standing up. It’s not easy when you have to speak really truth to power and saying, this is not right. This is not right. And she has done an incredible job and will do in the days ahead.

I want to thank our leader for doing the same, relentlessly speaking what’s right and calling out the government for their deficiencies in what they have said to the people of Saskatchewan on one hand, and then on the other hand changing their tune. And we wonder why, we wonder why, and we’ll talk a lot about that, like who is actually paying the tune.

I also want to thank our staff, and I want to thank our public servants right across government for this very difficult time. They’re preparing a budget. They’re working in their ministries, and they all know that the shoe . . . something was going to be happening yesterday. And of course they do that in a professional way because, in the end of the day, they’re working for the people of Saskatchewan, and they do a very good job of that.

And even if it means like in the case of the cleaners in our buildings here, they will clean until the end of June. They will do the job that they’ve always done. They will do it as professionally as they can even though they have a hard time, I imagine, with the reality of what’s going to be happening with their positions. Whether it’s the cleaners, people at STC, they have done such an incredible job and will. And I just want to say, and I think all the members on this side of the House will say a big thank you to them.

On the other hand, you have a government on the other side who does not act that way, does not act at all like that, has forgotten who they’re working for. And we have some real concerns about that, real concerns because it becomes clearer, clearer every day . . . And you know, yesterday was the best day of budget because they get to put the spin. They get to put the numbers in the best light possible. But as it starts to roll out and starts to unravel, starts to unravel, and the numbers start to add up. We start to understand how bad this budget is, what terrible managers they are of provincial resources in the economy here, in terms of the provincial government. And so we have some grave, grave concerns.

And I am very proud and honoured to second the motion that our Finance critic, the member from Nutana, has put forward. But I do want to talk about some of the things that they have put forward, and we have some grave concerns, you know. And right off the bat, as I said, we talk about who is paying the tune. Who is paying the tune?

This is the government here that just has dug in their heels about updating, modernizing our political donations laws. We see it right across Canada, even in the, you know what some people call it, the wild west of BC [British Columbia]. And I think Saskatchewan should be included in that. We see the Premier, Christy Clark, even willing to say maybe we need to take another look at this.

Maybe we need to take a look at big business and union contributions to our political parties because we have to make sure — and if there’s ever an example today, it’s clearly our budget — whose priorities are they really working for? We see that the tax cut, they’d like to say it’s for everyone, for everyone. But we know the top bracket, the top bracket is worth \$38 million. And I just want to put that, as you say, put a pin in it: remember \$38 million we’re giving to the top tax bracket, and why? And why are we doing that? Why are we doing that?

When we think about some of the cuts this government has made that don’t even come close to that \$38 million annually, annually, we can talk about STC that the government, the Premier paints in the worst possible position of some 85 to now today we hear it’s 100 million. Tomorrow, on Monday, we’ll probably hear it’s 120 million. They keep adding this up, and

the spend gets more and more. But if you do that, that's maybe \$17 million a year, we understand, and a better number probably is 11 or 12 million a year. So you compare that \$38 million tax cut to the top bracket to \$11 million for keeping STC going, where are your priorities? Where are your priorities?

And I'll keep referring to that. I'll keep referring to that because throughout this you really do have to say — and they will say and the Minister of Finance will say — these are tough choices. These are really difficult. It's about your priorities. It's about your priorities, and who you're giving the tax breaks to and why. We have some real questions about that.

So the Sask Party is making Saskatchewan families pay for the government's mismanagement, scandal, and waste. And truly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you've seen over the years, where we've talked about the smart meters, whether we can talk about CCS [carbon capture and storage] or bypass or the GTH, the list is long. The list is long and it's real.

And it's real, and I know, you know, the member from Moose Jaw likes to deny all of that. But it's long and it's true — skyrocketing debt, massive tax hikes. And here we have, it is massive tax hikes. You saw on the cover of the *Leader-Post* and the *StarPhoenix*, yes, the tax hikes that are happening. And the cuts and lack of strategic investments leave too many behind in our province and does nothing, nothing to build hope in this future.

And I want to say, and I think this says it all, as my colleague from Nutana says, "Every page of this budget . . ." And I quote her: "Every page of this budget shows another broken promise, a tax hike, or a cut to Saskatchewan families trying to get ahead."

Well you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's 40,000 people out of work, and I find it, I find it callous that this government here will get up and brag and brag. And last Thursday they were busy congratulating themselves, patting themselves on the back, on job creation numbers.

We are happy for everybody who has found a job in this province, no doubt about it. But there are too many people, too many people looking for work. And at the end they will say, well we've got more work to do. We've heard that for 10 long years — more work to do. Well when will you get down to work and do your job? When will you get down to work and do your job? There's more people looking for work today than when you took over as the government, and you know that to be true. They know that to be true, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But what do they do instead is they pat themselves on the back and self-congratulate themselves and have a big laugh, have a big laugh. And the ministers in the front row will self-congratulate themselves about their numbers that they have spun and say, what a great job we have done. But that's little cold comfort to people who are going to the food bank this afternoon and thinking about the increase in the PST and all of that, the cuts in the ABE, the adult basic education that's been cut. It's very cold comfort, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So they promised . . . This is what the Sask Party said. This is

what they said to the people of Saskatchewan, that they would not raise taxes. And here they have. A billion dollars in tax increases and fee increases on the middle class and job creators, the people who make this province work. They're raising taxes. They promised to pay down the debt. But now we know the debt will be over \$18 billion — \$18 billion. And I want to hear them talk about that number in their canned speeches when they get up to speak. Will they talk about that? It's double Saskatchewan's total debt from 2013.

And again let's remember what I put up there, \$38 million tax cut to the wealthiest people in Saskatchewan. Thirty-eight million dollars, why? Why do we need to have that, Mr. Speaker? You know, this is a really important question. And we've added, of course, the PST up by a per cent and all of that, you know.

I do want to say, you know, last year, last year we talked about the heritage, the language schools, and I presented many petitions about that and asked for a small increase of . . . actually that being reinstated. I think it was less than \$200,000. It was a bit of a canary in the coal mine because we knew the other shoe was going to be dropped. This was the first thing that was going to come. But here you have such a . . . You know, really showed what was going to be happening.

But here's what Patrick Maze, the president of the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation] says, "We are already at the bare bones. There's no way to escape it. There will be cuts in the classroom." This is what he's saying because he's in the classroom. He knows what's going on. Now those folks over there are so far removed from reality here, they really don't know what's going on. That's what's going to be happening. And they can spin it. They can spin it, and they can shout all they want. They can shout all they want, but this is reality.

Now I want to talk a little bit as Labour critic. It's important that I get on the record a little about labour. We are waiting for the Workers' Comp report. We want to see that there's actually action happening from there, especially around WCB [Workers' Compensation Board] where they had all these refunds, some over \$400 million last year given back. But what do we see happening now?

There are a couple of big issues out there that we need to see action. One is around post-traumatic stress disorder. We were very happy last year to see in the fall the government move at the behest of my colleague from Saskatoon Riversdale to move on action on that. They said it was a new day over at WCB, that people would be looking at that, and the benefit of the doubt would be going to the workers. They would not have to go through the hoops that they once had to do. But we've seen little change, little change in that situation. We know of many cases where people are actually facing extreme mental health challenges, and this government promised changes to that.

Here we have first responders, first responders, people who are putting themselves in the line of duty, in the face of danger, to help us — whether they're firefighters or police or first responders — and this government needs to step up to the plate on PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder]. And we are looking for that. We're looking for that.

The other area that we need to see movement on, and it was interesting because the member from Nutana, when she was reading Facebook comments, talked about this, and this is around domestic violence. Here we have . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Did the member from Moose Jaw want to chirp in on domestic violence?

Oh. Okay, thank you. I think this is a very serious matter, Mr. Deputy . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, now we have Martensville, Martensville wanting to chirp in on domestic violence. Oh come on, let's hear what you have to say about that because I hear resounding silence over there on something that's hugely important in our society. And we need to step up, and not one word in the budget, not one word in the budget. And Martensville pointing her finger to the Deputy Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I'm talking to members opposite, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is hugely important, hugely important. Not one word, not . . .

[Interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order. I'd ask the members to come . . . I'd ask the members to come to order. All members will have a chance to enter into the debate. Currently the member from Saskatoon Centre has the floor. I recognize the member.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a huge important issue, and we need to see leadership from this government, not just words. So we're looking forward to that in the next days ahead. Not weeks or months, but days.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is hugely ironical, the mess that we find ourselves . . . this government has created, that they're expecting the cleaners, our cleaners, to clean it up. This is incredible. The cabinet will not take responsibility for the mess that they've created in 10 years, some of the best years that we've ever had in this province in terms of resource revenue windfalls. They were windfalls, but they treated them as if they were ordinary years and we should build our budgets on it. This is a mess that this government created, and they failed to take responsibility for that.

And, Mr. Speaker, there's many pieces I want to speak to. One is STC, I think is a huge . . . plays a huge role here in Saskatchewan. We're just starting to see the comments come in, talking about how important STC is to the people of Saskatchewan.

Again, they chose. They chose. The members over there all voted in favour — they must have done it in caucus and cabinet — that they would rather have a \$38 million cut to the top 1 per cent or the top bracket of income tax, 38 million . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No, this is what it is: 38 million to the top bracket or cut STC.

[12:00]

They decided, and that was going to be between 11 million, in worst case 17 million. What did they choose to do? They chose to cut the income tax of the top bracket of income earners in Saskatchewan. Shame, shame on them.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have to speak about Meewasin, taking

away the statutory funding for that. That is incredible. That is a big mistake from those folks over there. They know they have a huge role, just like they did in Moose Jaw and with the urban parks across Saskatchewan where they have a role to play, because in each one of those land areas there's Crown land, and each one of those parks has a river running through it.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know that river, that water belongs to the province. Who is supposed to be the steward of that water? Of course it's the province. And they're stepping away from it, when we had the visionaries in the '60s and '70s saying, we've got to solve this problem. That's our responsibility. We've got to do it through a partnership. We're not going to do it through a charity model of maybe this year we'll give them 500,000; maybe next year it'll be 200,000; maybe it'll be 700,000. No.

Cutting the statutory funding is completely wrong, and they need to step up to the plate and accept their responsibility as stewards of the provincial waterways and of the Crown land that's within the city of Saskatoon and Moose Jaw and the other areas.

So, Mr. Speaker, we've talked about the library cuts, you know, and I've read the comments on Facebook. And it's simply, who cuts libraries? Who cuts libraries? Really? Again, here is a situation. Remember the \$38 million, the tax cuts to the top bracket versus cutting libraries. Really, really, is this what this is all about right now that we've come to?

And the attack on young families, and we'll go on that. And I want to just take a minute. I know my time is running short, but I am really looking forward to hearing my colleague speak about social services. But it's near and dear to my heart because I've watched this over the last 10 years. And I want to talk about two particular areas in that. One is around the housing supplement that is this year scheduled to be, according to the book, \$51.285 million, \$51 million. Last year's estimate was \$37 million. That's an increase of \$14 million, almost over 30 per cent increase.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you were here 10 years ago when that program was launched. Do you remember how much it was then, in the 2007-8 budget? The folks over there? \$5.6 million. It's almost increased 10 times, 10 times — \$51 million. Ten years ago it was \$5.6 million. Now I want to be clear: don't cut this program, very important program. But this really shows the lack of management of this government.

We've called for analysis of who gets the \$51 million. And I've said this story many times. They will say over there, well of course the tenant gets it. But we know the tenant instantaneously gives it to the landlord. Who are the landlords? . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh I see, they say, that's how it works. There you go. It's all done. Who are the landlords who are getting \$51 million? Have they ever asked the question? Maybe we should figure out who's getting the \$51 million.

Now if you remember we talked at the beginning about who's paying the tune over there. How many of these landlords have made donations? How many of these out-of-province . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I don't know. I don't know. I have said it outside and I've said it in committee, and I will say it

anywhere because these guys don't know. They don't know who's getting the \$51 million.

Is it Boardwalk in Calgary who makes a nice donation to these folks? We don't know because they don't know. They don't want to know. Who is getting the \$51 million? And this is the kind of leadership we have from over there. And they say, say it outside. What am I going to say outside? They don't know what they're doing. Of course I'll say that outside. You don't know what you're doing. You don't know what you're doing. That's quite simply the state of affairs for that side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The other one that I want to talk about is child care parent subsidies. In 2008, 2007-2008, there was \$16 million set aside for that. The actual spending was pretty close, 15.9, the actual spending. But what do they have planned this year for child care parent subsidies? I look down here, 12.9. They're eliminating \$3 million from child care parent subsidies. Now we didn't hear about that yesterday, did we? You know, they're not talking about that, helping young families, because there's less subsidies — \$3 million off of \$16 million. That's a huge cut. That's a huge cut, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of questions about this budget, and we start to see it unravel as we pore through this more and more, but here are just two examples, two examples within social services. But the most, I think, the most appalling — but it is the most indicative of the people over there — to lift a million dollars from funeral expenses for people on social services. Nobody wants to be on social assistance, and if you have to die in poverty, how sad is that? That is incredibly sad. If you're dying and you're . . . And here it is. Four hundred funerals that they won't pay for, for a cost of a million dollars.

But again remember that \$38 million they've voted for, for the top bracket, \$38 million, not even close to a million dollars. But this is the kind of mean, vindictive people that are running our government on that side who refuse to take any responsibility for the state of affairs. But not to pay for funeral expenses, how cold is that? It almost looks like out of a Dickens book, doesn't it? Have we got to that? Have we got to that in Saskatchewan, you know? A million dollars, but we're cutting taxes for the richest, the very richest in the province.

I tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my honour to second the motion of the member from Saskatoon Nutana. Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. Bonk:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my honour and my pleasure to rise and profess my unqualified support for the motion now before the Assembly, a motion which recognizes the efforts of the Minister of Finance and the many officials who have played a part in crafting such a sound plan that we now see before us.

Before I continue, Mr. Speaker, I hope you'll indulge me as I make a few more personal remarks. I'll begin where I should, by thanking my wife Candace and my daughter Emma. Without their unqualified support and daily efforts, I would not be here.

I'd also like to thank publicly my father Lorne for keeping things running smoothly at the farm. Mr. Speaker, without the unconditional support of our families, none of us who have the privilege to serve in this House would be able to be here.

More broadly, I'd like to once again thank the good people of Moosomin constituency. They have put their faith in me and I vow to repay that debt with my service and loyalty. Mr. Speaker, Moosomin is a great example of the new vibrant, dynamic, and growing Saskatchewan. Even with the current downturn in resource revenue, Moosomin is moving forward. In my constituency you will see mine expansion by PCS [Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Inc.], new crop input facilities, world-class manufacturing, a proposed new potash solution mine on the horizon, and the promise of a strengthening oil sector. All of this activity is welcomed and the sign of a bright future.

However, none of this economic activity replaces or supersedes the backbone of Moosomin constituency, which is agriculture. What you see today in my constituency is the product of what happens when innovation and entrepreneurship are allowed to thrive. Activities in Moosomin today lend proof to the time-honoured proposition that government does best when it gets out of the way. Government does best when it supports innovation and promotes opportunity, instead of stifling that opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, Carl von Clausewitz came from the land of my ancestors. He was a Prussian military officer in the early 1800s. He was a military tactician, a political theorist, and a noted author. Most importantly, he was a profound realist. Clausewitz wrote about the qualities of mind needed to emerge unscathed from the unforeseen circumstances that life might throw at us. This has been a topic that has been on the minds of many in our province given recent events.

The first quality of mind needed, Clausewitz said, was intellect. He writes, “. . . even in the darkest hour, [that the mind] retains some glimmerings of the inner light which leads to truth.” The second quality needed, said Clausewitz, was courage, courage to follow that light wherever it may lead.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday in this House we saw something extremely rare. We saw both of these qualities, intellect and courage, intertwined in working simultaneously for the betterment of the people of our province.

Yesterday my friend and colleague, the Minister of Finance, looked the Saskatchewan citizens squarely in the eye. The minister presented a complete, frank, and transparent account of the economic conditions in our province. And while some chose to focus on the considerable challenges that lie ahead, the minister wisely focused on the tremendous accomplishments that have taken place since 2007 and his confidence in the future.

Saskatchewan has emerged as a have province, a province so alive with opportunity that our children are no longer forced to leave to find a job. It's an economy where people are encouraged to work hard and allowed to retain more of the fruits of their labour. It's an economy that lies in stark contrast to the NDP years where the people of Saskatchewan wandered

in the margins. We have gone from economic wilderness to the centre of action.

None of this diminishes the cold, hard reality that resource revenues have fallen by more than a billion dollars a year. To put this in unadorned and stark language, in the fiscal year of 2008-2009, non-renewable resource income made up about a third of the total revenues or 32 per cent. This budget year, resource revenue is lower than we've ever seen it before at 10 per cent of total. This billion dollar shortfall has depleted the rainy day fund. And while there are promising signs of recovery on the horizon, it may take us a bit longer than expected before the government revenues also begin to rise.

Mr. Speaker, this is where our government and our Minister of Finance are demonstrating true leadership. He could've chosen a path demonstrated a few short days ago by our neighbouring province to the west. Our Minister of Finance could've chosen to ignore this problem and allow the deficit to grow endlessly, but that's not leadership. That's not following the glimmer of light that leads to the truth.

Mr. Speaker, some governments don't seem capable of making difficult choices, perhaps it's indifference. It might be lack of discipline or the feeling that someone else will deal with these important challenges down the road. But again, Mr. Speaker, that's not leadership. That's not the way we deal with things in the new Saskatchewan. We do what our Minister of Finance has done. We look the people of Saskatchewan squarely in the eye and outline a plan that's fair and transparent. We outline a plan that is measured and effective. We outline a plan that is responsible and fiscally prudent.

Mr. Speaker, this was the plan we saw yesterday in the budget. The deficit of this year, Mr. Speaker, is forecast to be \$685 million. It will decrease in 2018-2019 to a deficit of \$304 million. Saskatchewan's budget will come into balance in the following fiscal year with a small surplus. We will continue to be in surplus from that point.

Saskatchewan's fiscal plan will follow that glimmer of light to the truth. This budget has given the Saskatchewan people the truth. It has also given them a plan to meet our challenges. This budget is a plan with a clear road map to returning to balance. This plan outlined in the budget, Mr. Speaker, is not business as usual. It is a blueprint for change. It will move Saskatchewan from a jurisdiction with a heavy reliance on resource revenue to a system that is more predictable, more reliable, and more able to encourage growth and opportunity. This is a profound structural shift, a shift born of necessity, but one produced by intellect and courage. This is the challenge, Mr. Speaker, that the minister has presented to the people of Saskatchewan. This is the challenge that he knows we have the will and the fortitude to meet and surpass.

And the plan presented in this budget is one that doesn't undermine the programs, services, and infrastructure that the people of Saskatchewan have worked hard for and which they value. It's a plan which controls and reduces spending in a measured and reasonable way while being responsive to the needs of Saskatchewan's people. It's a plan, Mr. Speaker, that restructures and modernizes our tax base and ensures that our economy remains strong. It's a plan that for the first time has a

built-in contingency of \$300 million. It's responsible and prudent to plan for the unexpected. It's a plan that provides our province with revenue stability. It's a plan with a clear end goal — a balanced budget.

Saskatchewan's economy may have some challenges, Mr. Speaker, but the diversity that our government has built into the system continues to shield us from some of the worst impacts of the resource downturn. Mr. Speaker, we don't deny that this shortfall has occurred. We don't deny that something has to be done with it. But again our diversity will make the job of meeting the challenge more possible and less painful.

[12:15]

Take Alberta, for instance. The province of Alberta relies on oil and gas production for over one quarter or 26.2 per cent of their budget. In Newfoundland and Labrador, they expect it to cover 18.1 per cent of revenue. In Saskatchewan, we have the lowest dependence on oil and gas production, expecting it to only make up 14.9 per cent of our revenues. And one of the drivers of this diversity, Mr. Speaker, is our continuing growth in exports.

For this, Mr. Speaker, we can justifiably honour and give thanks to the efforts of the Premier of Saskatchewan — his trips to Japan, his trips to China, his trips to the Philippines and Singapore. With enthusiasm and relentless energy, our Premier has gone around the world telling the Saskatchewan story. He has with his presence demonstrated Saskatchewan's desire to become a major international player. He has profiled Saskatchewan as a supplier of high-quality food, fertilizer, and reliable energy. The Premier's efforts lie in stark contrast to the years of NDP indifference to the world outside our borders.

And, Mr. Speaker, the Premier's efforts have made a substantial difference as demonstrated by these numbers. In the last 10 years, oil production is up 34 per cent. Uranium is up 99 per cent. Wheat is up 141 per cent; potash production up 153 per cent; peas up 217 per cent. And it gets better, Mr. Speaker — canola up 467 per cent; canola oil up 864 per cent; and lentils. Mr. Speaker, in the last 10 years, the production of Saskatchewan lentils is up 992 per cent. Saskatchewan now supplies 90 per cent of the lentils and 60 per cent of the peas being prepared in the kitchens of India, the second-most populous country in the world.

You know, Mr. Speaker, if you have a bowl of Cheerios for breakfast, you're likely eating Saskatchewan oats. If you spend your vacation in Seattle, Washington and decide to take in a Mariners baseball game, have a hot dog. They're supplied by a Saskatchewan company. Don't forget the mustard. It was likely made with Saskatchewan mustard seed. If you're lucky enough to visit China, don't forget to stop at Shanghai Disneyland. Cookies there are made with Saskatchewan flax.

There are now more than 300 food companies operating in the province, Mr. Speaker, generating more than \$4 billion in revenues and employing around 5,000 people. For all of this abundance, Mr. Speaker, we can thank the hard-working farm families of Saskatchewan. We could also thank the tireless efforts of our Premier who has made our province a force to be reckoned with in the international food markets.

We are also leading the nation in manufacturing sales, Mr. Speaker. The latest numbers say that these sales have increased 12.2 per cent over last year, and that's nearly six times the national average.

The diversity that has been built into the Saskatchewan economy has helped, at least in part, to cushion the blow in the drop in renewable resource revenue. I cringe to think of what would have happened if this challenge had been faced in our province during the dark, dreary days of the NDP.

Farm equipment manufacturing is another major contributor to the diversity and prosperity of the Saskatchewan economy. Mr. Speaker, Morris manufacturing in Saskatoon and Yorkton, Bourgault Industries in St. Brieux, SeedMaster, Emerald Park, Brandt Industries in Regina are just a few examples of our burgeoning farm implement manufacturing sector.

In my travels opening markets and working with businesses in Europe and Asia before I entered this House, Mr. Speaker, it always gave me a thrill to see farm implements that were made right here in Saskatchewan, like Seed Hawk made in Langbank in Moosomin constituency, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan products made by Saskatchewan people with Saskatchewan know-how and innovation.

The success of our farm implement sector and other Saskatchewan manufacturing enterprises is due in no little part to our province's competitive manufacturing and processing tax which will now be, as a result of this budget, the lowest in Canada. This means more jobs created, an increased tax base, and more opportunities to get Saskatchewan products and ideas to the world.

We will be and continue to be the most competitive jurisdiction in Canada for manufacturing and processing sectors. These incentives just add to the focal points of diversity our government has built into our economy over the past decade.

Mr. Speaker, this is Saskatchewan. This is a province full of hard-working, ambitious, and inventive people. All they ever needed was the proper encouragement. All they ever needed was a few building blocks to allow them to get on with the job, unburdened with unnecessary administrative interference. These are the people who have helped us build a system that will ensure Saskatchewan will meet the challenge.

Mr. Speaker, we are building on other strengths in our province as well. Even in these challenging times, we are still creating jobs. In the month of February, Stats Canada is telling us that there were 15,300 jobs created in all of Canada. Can you guess how many of these jobs were created in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker? If I said over half, you'd likely think I was kidding, but the numbers don't lie. There it is, in black and white: 8,000 new jobs in Saskatchewan in February. More than half of the new jobs in Canada in the month of February, Mr. Speaker, were created right here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, in December we hit another milestone. For the first time in Saskatchewan history, the average weekly wage hit and went over \$1,000. Plus more of that money will stay with the wage earner, given our personal income tax regime which is the most competitive in the country.

Did you know, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan was recently named the best place in Canada, and the fourth-best place in the world to invest in petroleum exploration, and the best place in the world to invest in mining? In Canada, we led oil exploration and activity in 2016, and we're well on our way to continuing that trend in 2017. Calgary-based Crescent Point Energy has decided to put its faith in Saskatchewan to a tune of 80 per cent of its budget, fully \$1.16 billion this year.

And before I fail to mention it, Mr. Speaker, we are steadfastly opposed to a federally mandated carbon tax. And it points to another area that demonstrates the strength and vitality of our province which will help us meet the challenges coming our way.

For 10 years now, Mr. Speaker, in every quarter of every year of the last decade, Saskatchewan's population has grown. This hasn't benefited cities alone. Every municipality in our province has shared in this unprecedented growth. Cities, towns, villages, rural municipalities have all shown population increases. We are now home to nearly 163,000 more new residents. That would be like adding five Moose Jaws to our population, 10 Yorktons, or, Mr. Speaker, 47 Moosomin's . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Exactly. Roughly 60,000 of these new residents are in our Saskatchewan workforce . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . It is. More than we need.

Given all this, Mr. Speaker, you would expect to hear some optimism from the members opposite. You'd expect to hear at least some grudging respect for the significant accomplishments we've made since 2007. Strangely, that never happens. I find it odd, Mr. Speaker. I find it odd that members opposite would have such a limited recollection of recent events. Lost in the mists of time is the fact that 20 years ago Saskatchewan was paying over a billion dollars annually in interest payments on debt, NDP operating debt, Mr. Speaker. It's an interesting case of politically selective amnesia.

I find it hard to believe our province could even bear those large debt financing repayments. Hard to believe, Mr. Speaker, because of the anemic NDP economy at that time. It was far less robust and diversified than the economy we see today, far less robust . . . and the growing concern that was fashioned by our citizens in our province during our years in government. Mr. Speaker, our government paid down the operating debt by a third — \$2.2 billion, a fact never mentioned by the members opposite. Forgotten by the NDP is the reduction in the interest burden carried by the people of Saskatchewan. That debt payment burden has dropped from over a billion dollars annually under the NDP to \$292 million now. That's less than a third of what it was when that party was in power.

And today, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has a AAA credit rating. And today, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has the second-lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in Canada. Despite the challenges we now face, our government has continued to provide tax relief to the people of Saskatchewan: \$6 billion in total. Our government has invested \$20 billion in infrastructure improvements, which I will talk about later.

And before we have to listen to the NDP's predictions of doom and gloom, Mr. Speaker, before we cast our eyes upward to beware of the falling sky, before all of that, Mr. Speaker, let's

remember that right here in Saskatchewan in 2017, Saskatchewan individuals and families will continue to benefit from the growing economy our party has helped create.

If we look, for example, Mr. Speaker, at the city of Regina, if we look across all income levels, we find that our provincial taxes compare very favourably with the rest of Canada. Saskatchewan's provincial tax is either second or third lowest of the 10 cities surveyed in all of Canada. The second or third lowest, Mr. Speaker, and when you factor in utilities we're still second or third lowest.

Mr. Speaker, the more I look at the budget document, the more I feel this budget is a model of Saskatchewan values. In my youth, growing up on a farm in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, I, like most farm boys, had chores to do before and after school. My parents never hesitated to remind their children that the food on our table was there in large part due to the calluses on our hands. It was under their guidance that I learned my first lessons in responsibility.

Responsibility, Mr. Speaker, it's a core Saskatchewan value. And our government is taking responsibility for the challenge that we have to meet — not next decade, not next year, but right now. And we're asking the people of Saskatchewan to bear some of that responsibility.

This budget will do this by shifting from a dependence on resource revenues to more emphasis on taxing consumption. The variety of changes in that area of taxation will be largely offset by lowering personal and business income tax rates and introducing new-growth tax incentives such as I pointed out, the lowest manufacturing and processing tax rate in Canada.

It's important to note that if you take income tax paid by Saskatchewan individuals and families and add it to the amount of the increase to the PST, the total tax of individuals and families will still be less than it was in 2007 under the NDP. And our government will not ask others to do what they wouldn't do themselves. We would never ask the public sector to take a 3.5 per cent decrease in wages if we weren't willing to do it ourselves.

When the Saskatchewan Party came to power in 2007, we were faced with an infrastructure deficit that we immediately started to address. It is a responsibility that we continue to take seriously. This budget continues that commitment by designating \$3.7 billion to be invested in Saskatchewan's infrastructure. This includes, Mr. Speaker, a commercial Crown corporations investment of \$2.1 billion: \$1.3 billion will be invested by SaskPower to renew distribution and transmission systems; \$292 million will be spent by SaskEnergy to meet the demands of the province's growing customer base. This budget also includes \$81 million that will be used by SaskWater to deal with aging infrastructure and the requirements of a growing population. And \$1.6 billion is being invested by executive ministries and agencies for other important infrastructure initiatives like highway construction and improvement and municipal infrastructure.

Which brings us to another core Saskatchewan value, Mr. Speaker, that's closely tied with responsibility, and that's compassion. I have to commend the Minister of Finance for not

choosing the easy targets to make up the shortfall in the province's resource revenues. Nearly three-quarters of our budget, Mr. Speaker, is made up of spending at the ministries of Health, Social Services, and Education.

Health care will always be one of the cornerstones in our government's commitment to the welfare of Saskatchewan's people. Therefore, even in these challenging times, health care will receive a boost of point seven per cent in this budget.

Saskatchewan has the second-lowest wait times from doctor to specialist and the lowest wait times from specialist to treatment. And do I need to mention the 3,000 more nurses and the 750 more doctors now practising here? And the Ministry of Health will do their part by amalgamating the 12 health regions under a single health authority by the end of 2017. Much of the expected savings will be in administration costs.

Social Services will enjoy a 9.1 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker. Funding for child and family programs, disability initiatives, and income assistance programs, among many others, will still be covered. And while the budget includes a 1.2 per cent decrease to education funding, let's keep in mind that in the last decade the total spending on education by the Saskatchewan Party government has more than doubled.

Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan we get up in the morning ready to put in a hard day's work. When we are faced with challenging times, we don't look for simplistic solutions. The easy answer has never been our fallback. We have all shared the benefits of an economy built by Saskatchewan people with the encouragement of our government, an economy that takes us from the wilderness of being a have-not province under the NDP to being the vibrant and progressive province that we have seen. Mr. Speaker, this keeps attracting people to its promise.

We have had a shortfall in non-renewable resource revenues of over a billion dollars for three years, Mr. Speaker, and the challenge is clear. And we will meet that challenge. Saskatchewan people want to know, is there a plan. And this budget shows them very clearly that there is a plan. They know that our government will continue to invest in programs, services, and infrastructure projects that are valued by the Saskatchewan people because this government has built a solid foundation of base funding that has grown over the past 10 years. We will roll up our sleeves. We will share in the work of getting this province back to a balanced budget, just as we have shared in the times of plenty.

[12:30]

This government has helped its citizens build an economy that will prove resilient to the shocks of uncertain revenue sources. We will meet the challenge that has been presented to us with conviction and resolve that has characterized Saskatchewan people throughout its history. Shifting to a tax system based on consumption and away from an economy based heavily on resource revenue, while reducing personal and business taxes and increasing incentives, will help us stabilize the underlying tax structure of our province.

This government will not meander down the road to endless deficit. We have no time for selfies. We will act now. This

government will react responsibly and to meet the challenge, and we will ask our citizens to take a share of that responsibility. This government will take action on the deficit today, not tomorrow, not leaving it for someone else to deal with. This government will not postpone the day of reckoning. We will not leave a black hole of debt for our children to deal with. As the Minister of Finance has outlined in his budget, we have a plan, and we will meet the challenge.

There are two qualities of mind needed to emerge unscathed from the unforeseen circumstances that life throws at us. The first quality is intellect — the ability to see, even in the darkest hours, the glimmerings of the inner light that leads to truth. The second quality is courage — the courage to follow this light wherever it may lead.

I saw these two qualities on display yesterday during the remarks by our Finance minister. I saw them in abundance. And for this reason, Mr. Speaker, it will be an honour and a privilege to support the motion:

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

And I do not support the amendment. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Biggar-Sask Valley.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand in my place and speak to the budget. First I'd like to thank a number of people. First of all I'd like to thank my constituents who, you know, it was very humbling to have the support that I received. Of course being on the team with the Premier was a big part of it, but I just want to thank my constituents one more time for returning me to this legislature.

To my wife, Cindy, who's an educational assistant at Biggar Central 2000 school, and I recognize my son, Marshall, who works in the service industry in Saskatoon, and my daughter, Alex, who is completing a degree in social work at the U of S as well. My daughter, Lacey, is on maternity leave right now from Nature Saskatchewan. Her and her partner, Nick, made me a proud grandpa last June. They had a little girl, and they named the baby Amara. Six pounds, two ounces, so I'm very proud to be a grandpa. Nick has a five-year old daughter from another relationship, Surayya. So she also calls me grandpa as well, so that's good with me.

I want to also thank my constituent assistant, Janet Hanson, who's been with me for five years now, and also to my casual constituency assistant, Desiree Hinse. And I've spoken about Desiree in the past. She has a little three-year-old boy, and little Zane also calls me grandpa. So I'm blessed with lots of grandchildren.

As government caucus Chair, I want to take this opportunity to thank John, the chief of staff, and all the staff in the caucus room for the great work that they do for me and obviously for all of caucus and the help that they give us.

The budget came down, as we know, and as the Premier said, it's a plan. It's not a one-year document. It's a plan over three

years to get to balanced budget. And I think that's very important as we move forward to recognize that and keep that in sight, because of the deficit that we were going to run if we did not do something about it, which was caused by, you know, a drastic reduction in resource revenue. And so this plan's going to unfold over the next three years to a balanced budget.

I think I really want to start out with some facts about taxes in this budget which are very relevant and important that people know these numbers and what's happening. Saskatchewan has — still has, even though we raised the PST by one point — still has the lowest PST rate of any province with a provincial sales tax.

A family of four in Saskatchewan pays no income tax on their first \$50,495 of income and has the highest tax-free threshold in Canada. And as a result of this budget, Saskatchewan individuals and families will pay among the lowest income taxes in Canada, ranging from the lowest to the third lowest for most, depending on the level of income. Even with this PST increase, every Saskatchewan resident on every level of income will still be paying significantly less in income tax and PST combined than they did in 2007 under the NDP.

A single person with \$40,000 income will still pay \$749 less than in 2007, a 20 per cent reduction. A family of four with \$50,000 income will still pay \$2,366 less than in 2007, a 77 per cent reduction. A family of four with \$75,000 income will still pay 1,886 less than in 2007, a 31 per cent reduction. A family of four with \$100,000 income will still pay \$1,951 less than 2007, a 20 per cent reduction.

When the tax changes announced in the budget are fully implemented, Saskatchewan will have the lowest corporate tax rate, the lowest taxes on manufacturing and processing, and nation-leading research and development incentives, giving our province a tremendous advantage attracting new investment, jobs, and opportunities to Saskatchewan.

When this budget is fully implemented, Saskatchewan will be the only province in Canada with no carbon tax of any kind, and that's something we are very proud to know and to oppose a carbon tax in this resource-rich province.

Getting into some of the individual items in the budget, I want to start out with Highways and Infrastructure because in Biggar-Sask Valley constituency, there's a number of the main arteries cross through or near Biggar-Sask Valley. And the NDP opposition love to say, well where did all the money go? Well I want to point out where the money went, just inside Biggar-Sask Valley.

You know, across this province, the major arteries are in pretty good shape. Thin membrane highways continue to be a challenge. We have over 5000 kilometres of thin membrane highways, and you know, just as we know with budgetary pressures, you just can't fix everything as soon as we'd like, but the major arteries that cross near or through Biggar-Sask Valley — Highways 16, 4, 14, 12, and 11 — and they're in pretty good shape. I have to . . . You know constituents tell me that all the time.

Now last year our government put a lot of money into thin

membrane highways, and Biggar-Sask Valley had improvements on No. 376 from Asquith to Maymont and parts of Highway 51 near Biggar. It was incredible to have people phone the office and thank the government for the work we did on those thin membrane highways, and so we really appreciated that. And you know, as I said before, we'll continue in the future to improve highways and put money towards thin membranes as we deal with this budget deficit.

But I want to go into some of the highlights of the Highways and Infrastructure budget. \$1.1 billion in 2017-18 for the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure budget will see work continue on major projects and 990 kilometres of provincial highways across Saskatchewan over the coming year. This year's budget includes 343 million to start on or continue construction across the province, as well as \$500 million for the Regina bypass.

And the other highlights in the Highways and Infrastructure budget are major projects to improve safety and increase capacity on some of Saskatchewan's busiest highways. Going to continue work on new overpasses at Warman and Martensville. And there's an example of, you know, the province is so well connected. My constituency, parts of it is north of Warman and Martensville, and it's not only going to help the people of Warman and Martensville, but all the many people that drive from my constituency to work in Saskatoon or travel for business.

Going to continue work on twinning Highway 7 between Saskatoon and Delisle, work on twinning Highway 39 between Estevan and Bienfait, construction of two sets of passing lanes on Highway 5 between Saskatoon and Humboldt, and further planning for future twinning and passing lanes on Highway 6, 39 from Estevan to Regina, and begin planning for passing lanes on Highway No. 4 north of North Battleford and Highway 7 from Rosetown to the Alberta border.

One hundred and fifty kilometres of rural highway upgrades include Highway 4 south of Cadillac, Highway 51 near Kelfield, and Highway 80 north of Esterhazy, Highway 322 north of Sifton. Repairing and upgrading 990 kilometres of provincial highways including 150 kilometres of rural highway upgrades, 300 kilometres of repaving, 140 kilometres of sealing, and 400 kilometres of other treatments.

Investing more than \$53 million to build, operate, and maintain highways and airports in northern Saskatchewan, 30 major bridge rehabilitation and replacement, as well as numerous culvert projects across the province, and more than \$20 million for urban and rural municipal road projects and airports — funding that is over and above revenue-sharing.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's where some of the money went, as the NDP like to point fingers and make accusations, that has gone into the future and also in the past. The major investment in highways and infrastructure is so vital to our economy which continues to grow. And it's taken our government this long to start to get back to the point where the highways are in fairly decent shape.

When we came into government, there was very little done on highways. Saskatchewan really was, well quite frankly, a

laughingstock to many people who travelled across the province when the NDP were in power. It was just a terrible situation of highways and roads in Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, in a big part of Biggar-Sask Valley, many constituents are in agriculture. It's very important to the provincial economy and very important to Biggar-Sask Valley. And the Ministry of Agriculture's budget for 2017-18 is \$388.6 million which continues to support Saskatchewan's strong agriculture industry. Business risk management programs will be fully funded with an investment of 264.1 million, an increase of almost 4 per cent. Funding of 71.2 million is going to be provided for strategic initiatives under the federal-provincial Growing Forward 2 agreement. The budget continues the province's investment in agriculture research with 26.8 million. For crop insurance premiums, the program delivery, 172.2 million is being provided.

And the budget includes the decision to end Saskatchewan pastures program and consult in the future management of this land. This will be the last year for the Saskatchewan pastures program operating in its entirety. Public and stakeholder engagement, along with First Nations and Métis communities, consultations on how the affected pasture land should be managed in the future will start in the coming days.

As we know, Mr. Speaker, it's been a difficult fall. I believe this is the record number of acres that have been left out over winter. So there's challenges. But I believe our Agriculture minister and our government have put in place, you know, the safety nets and crop insurance that will help our producers through this rough spot and continue the, really the exceptional farming economy that we've had for many years, and the importance, as I had mentioned, of agriculture to the economy and to the constituents of Biggar-Sask Valley.

[12:45]

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, health care is always high on the list. Our budget, that's the largest expenditure of our budget, is in health. So we're doing a number of things there. In this budget we're investing \$5.2 billion in core health services. And this budget has increased \$38.6 million or point seven per cent from the previous budget, more than 51 per cent increase since 2007.

That's an amazing number when you think about . . . That is how much the health budget has increased — 51 per cent since 2007. So health is always and it will continue to be, you know, a high priority for the government and, you know, which obviously put pressures on the budget.

Now we're not . . . We're keying on some, you know, fundamental areas or hot spots, if you like. The budget is going to increase to the regional health authorities by 1.2 per cent over last year. That's 57.9 per cent more than the regional health authorities were allocated in 2007. So this money is going to include a \$12 million investment to address over-capacity pressures which, you know, we recognize, and emergency department wait times in Regina and Saskatoon. So despite the pressures on the budget, we're focusing and keying on those hotspots or areas like emergency department wait times. Also 24.4 million in funding to address service pressures and

operating costs.

We continue to commit funding in the tune of \$250,000 to the Canadian National Institute for the Blind; providing \$750,000 to the HPV [human papilloma virus] vaccination program for boys. And this is important. We've been providing this vaccine to girls for some time, and now we're going to provide it to boys.

And a number of other commitments. You know, our budget is firming the province's commitment to the children's hospital of Saskatchewan. Investments including \$5.5 million for the children's hospital, which will also receive \$8 million for information technological needs and 4.4 million in operating funds; the Leader Integrated Facility will receive \$6.7 million. And 3.5 million will fund electrical renewal projects at Regina General and Pasqua hospitals. Our commitment to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency is strong as always. They will receive \$170 million — a \$3.3 million increase in funding to provide cancer treatment to more patients.

And we'll establish an autism working group that will be tasked with creating a Saskatchewan model for individualized funding. The working group is expected to complete its work by late fall 2017. It includes parents, service providers, and advocates for the autism community.

The province will phase out or reduce some provincial programs and services to help ensure it can continue to provide essential core services to residents. Residents will be able to access services through the private system, and in most cases, coverage for low-income individuals will continue to be provided by the government.

Special care home or long-term care fees will increase for some residents, based on income. Approximately 50 per cent of the residents will not be affected by the change and will continue to pay the minimum monthly fee. The province will continue to subsidize 83 per cent of the overall long-term care.

And so again, the NDP opposition want to know where the money goes. That's where it's going in this budget. We continue to support the essential services that government provides.

But in the past, Mr. Speaker, they've said, well, where did the money go? Well, I invite the Health critic from the NDP to come to Biggar and tour the new long-term care home that's been open now for a couple of years, and also the renovation of the hospital, which is, the new long-term care home is attached to. I welcome her to come and tour the facility and then I challenge her to stand out in front of that facility and complain about where the money went, because the people of Biggar, the elderly, greatly appreciate the new long-term care home. The hospital, we have two doctors; a third is on its way, and so I think the people of Biggar would have some issues with the opposition and the member's comments about where the money went.

In education, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government has released the final report from the advisory panel on the education governance renewal. The government is accepting the findings in the report, including keeping elected boards, no major school

division boundary changes, keeping the focus on education sector strategic plan, making legislative changes to clarify roles within the sector and create efficiencies, and improve engagement with First Nations and Métis residents.

There was a strong support during the consultation for local elected trustees, and for maintaining the current public school division boundaries. There was also a clear message heard to control spending in the education sector. Therefore, the government plans to introduce amendments to *The Education Act* that will create a framework for shared services like procurement, transportation, payroll, salary range for school division administrators and elected trustees.

I think that paragraph is very important. So it's going to be very interesting to see, as the amendments are rolled out, the very important work that the Minister of Education has done on this file. There's numerous things that's included in the budget. Just a few of them: Saskatchewan's 28 school divisions will receive \$1.86 billion in school operating fund, which includes the revenue collected from the education property taxes. This is down \$22 million from the previous budget. It represents a 1.2 per cent reduction year over year. Yes, it's a reduction, but I believe that with this budget and the change in amendments to *The Education Act*, we're going to find considerable savings that will be used to put towards front-line services — teachers and things that are so important to the education of our children.

Overall, the budget provides \$2.02 billion for education, a 6.7 per cent decrease in funding compared to last year. Much of the decrease is due to a \$262 million reduction in funds required to construct 18 new schools in Regina, Saskatoon, Warman, Martensville, which are scheduled for completion in 2017. Once again, to the opposition's complaints about where the money went, well that's where the money went. It went into schools as well.

And there are a number of things that are going to continue under construction in the future, so this is a very important budget. The one item is \$55.8 million for child care funding. 889 new spaces will be created, including 810 spaces at the 18 new joint-use schools in Saskatoon, Regina, Warman, and Martensville, bringing the total number of new spaces created in the past 10 years to more than 6,000. That's very important.

The one item that I'm very proud of, that is essential, is the budget for Social Services. You know, we continue to support Saskatchewan's most vulnerable people with an increase of \$73 million, or a 6.9 per cent increase to the Social Services budget. This increase brings the ministry's budget to \$1.125 billion, the largest ever Social Services budget in history.

So that's so important that, you know, this funding is there for people that are, you know, the most vulnerable in our society. Children and family programs budget will increase by 13.4 million to 256.3 million. Disability programs will see an increase of \$2.3 million, and \$25 million for transitional employment allowance to 61.5, and 15.9 million for the Saskatchewan assured income for disabilities, 10.5 million for Saskatchewan assistance programs, and \$14 million for the Saskatchewan rental housing supplement, just to name some of the things that Social Services do.

Funding has also increased for the Saskatchewan employment supplement, personal care home benefit, and seniors' income plan.

So, Mr. Speaker, just got a few more minutes. I want to speak to the shutting down of STC. And you know it's a service that's probably more important to the rural constituencies in rural Saskatchewan, but the projected deficit or subsidy to STC over the next five years is \$85 million and the reason because really few people ever use STC. The route from Saskatoon that goes through Biggar, out to Unity and back, it's a kind of average ridership of like one and a half people.

Freight, there's a lot of freight being hauled by STC, but a lot of businesses are not using STC. There's the courier system, Canada Post, or priority post that is widely used and, you know, it's even with STC and the other couriers. It's fostered a private business who offers a unique service. They will go in and pick up parts or supplies, whatever, for businesses in Biggar and they'll go right to the business in Saskatoon, generally, and bring that stuff back to Biggar. So I suspect with the shutting down of STC, that business will expand, and it's going to be great opportunities for other businesses to expand and take up some of the role, especially in the freight side of STC.

As far as ridership, I mean it's just not a lot of people using the bus service and so in these times of restraint, I think it's only appropriate that STC be shut down.

I'd like to speak a little bit about municipal infrastructure. We have continued to give the municipalities 1 per cent of the PST for revenue sharing, and that's something we heard loud and clear from the towns and villages and cities. Urban revenue sharing for all cities, towns, villages, and resort villages will amount to \$165.7 million in 2017-18. Revenue sharing for rural municipalities, which includes urbanized hamlets, will total \$72.8 million. Northern municipalities will receive 19.2 million. Saskatoon, the province's largest city, will receive 46.4 million. And Regina will receive 40.5 million in municipal revenue sharing. So I think that's very important that our budget recognizes that.

I only have about one minute and I'd just like to wrap up my comments by saying that this is a plan for the future. This budget is going to be, the plan's going to be over three years. And I just want to be very clear that I totally support the motion by our Finance minister and I will not be supporting the amendment by the official opposition. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — It now being the time of a normal adjournment, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 Monday, p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.]

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